

## Presenting Asia through early cultural films and the Bulgarian cinema magazine *Pathé Week* (1914)

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**Abstract.** The text is part of a larger study on different aspects of the development of early cinema art, film distribution, cinema discourses and markets in Bulgaria, viewed in a European context. The focus of the article is on the introduction of Asia on European screens through short documentary films, and the important role in this respect of the magazine *Pathé Week*, 1914. This periodical was one of our first professional, specialized movie magazines, representative of the Bulgarian branch of the French giant Pathé Frères. Many of the texts are related to the so-called pictures, views from Asia - short cultural documentary films that, on the screen, introduced the public to the specificities of the East (Japan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, India). The most important feature of this research work is the discovery that the majority of Pathé Frères's cultural films were shown in Bulgaria before being screened in France.

**Keywords:** early cinema, Bulgaria, Asia, movie magazines, film archives, Pathé Frères

The first decades of film projection in Bulgaria are certainly an interesting topic of research in the perspective of film studies and history. The history of cinema culture and the film industry in our country may lead us in many directions. One of these is the screening of motion pictures produced by foreign (mostly European, and later, American) producers, and the local reception of these films. A special aspect of study focuses on titles related to Asia in general.

In the first years of film production - specifically, until World War I - the films that reached the Bulgarian viewer were short melodramas and documentaries. In one way or another, they articulated the unfamiliar and exotic world of the East. Feature films often presented plots connected with characters and locations strongly influenced by Asiatic cultures. The reason for this lies in global cultural phenomena such as *Chinoiserie*, *Japonisme*, and even the concept of the *Yellow Peril*. The films distributed in our country were not made by Asian cinematographers - whose works would appear later, during the 1920s, when the film press would begin to discuss and review them. But in some of the films

shown in Europe, we meet with performers from Asia, for instance, the Japanese kabuki actress Hanako (Martonova 2016, 75-82), who toured Bulgaria as well.

Documentary views, which were brief, generally cultural films, are something different. They were shot on location by camera operators hired by the production company (meaning a branch of the company in a foreign country). The Lumière brothers were pioneers in this cinematographic study of Asia through camera-equipped envoys.

Film companies were not the only ones to show interest in the Orient and the Far East. Banker Albert Khan's visual collection *Archives de la Planète* started out from Japan and China in 1908, accompanied by Alfred Albert Dutertre, the mechanic-driver who also performed the function of camera operator. Khan's idea was mostly to record and preserve on photographic film and movie reels images from various corners of the world, sending 50 teams in 52 countries for this purpose.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, one of those places was Bulgaria.

In 1913, Stéphane Passet, one of Albert Khan's envoys, who had travelled to China, Mongolia and India in the previous year, 1912, shot 28 photographs, on autochrome film plates<sup>2</sup>, in Melnik and the Melnik region. Passet was both a photographer and a camera operator, but regrettably did not shoot motion pictures in our country.

Five years later, after the end of World War I, in 1918, the photographer (but not camera operator) Léon Busy arrived in Bulgaria as part of his mission to Greece and Turkey. Before depositing in the *Archives de la Planète* 14 photos taken in Sofia and Vladaya, Busy had visited the French colonies of Indochina. In all, the Khan Museum (see Albert Khan Museum) preserves 66 autochrome pictures from Bulgaria, of which 41 have been digitalized<sup>3</sup>.

One of Khan's many important operators and photographers taking pictures in Asia was Roger Dumas, who travelled through India and Japan in the years 1920-1930. The main purpose of enlarging the collection was to form a treasury, a kind of cinematographic and photographic atlas to be handed down to the next generations. Khan could afford this expensive venture because he was a powerful banker who had good financial relations with the political elite of Japan. A personal friend of his was the former Japanese ambassador to France, Ichiro Motono, who introduced him to the business and aristocratic circles of the Land of the Rising Sun and to the imperial court. In fact, Khan's first visit to the Asian archipelago was in 1896. The banker was a philanthropist, an idealist, and an internationalist. Through the Utopian megaproject *Archives de la*

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<sup>1</sup> A recapitulation of the total amount of material for the period from 1908 to 1930, photographed during the whole project, gives the following: over 100 hours of film material (183,000 m of film), over 4,000 stereoscopic plates and over 72,000 autochromes (Castro 2006).

<sup>2</sup> An early photographic technique for making colour pictures, patented by the Lumière brothers in 1903 (see Autochromes contemporains).

<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the French Cultural Institute in Bulgaria organized a large photo exhibition at the National Art Gallery, presenting around 100 autochromes from the Albert Khan collection, selected by Ivo Hadzhimishev (curator of the exhibition). It presented photographs from Bulgaria and various other parts of the world, including the Far East.

*Planète*, he believed he could promote world peace and understanding between different cultures.

The subjects photographed and filmed by Khan were important for the depiction and promotion of Asia. Thanks to the banker's contacts, the camera operators received privileged access to places that had remained outside the scope of other production companies. Such for instance were the palaces of the Japanese aristocracy and the Indian maharajas. Khan's archive contains dozens of colour portraits of princes and princesses of the Japanese imperial court. Among the most exciting images are scenes from the life of ordinary people: autochromes of silk farms, Buddhist and Shintoist monks (in Indochina, including Vietnam and Cambodia, and in Japan), shaman rituals (Vietnam), the magnificent Angkor Wat, long before it was destroyed by the Khmers Rouge (Cambodia), captivating performances and rehearsals of the Cambodian Royal Dance Theatre (an exceptionally valuable document on the development of this local theatrical tradition), schoolchildren, porcelain traders, civil servants, tiger hunters in India, meetings between maharajas and the British elite, kabuki performances, popular actors, geishas, opium deliriums, portraits, etc. As Petya Aleksandrova notes, "*In the spirit of that time, the attempts to gather scholarly documentation, not to say, make a scholarly collection, were a result of the newly emerging fashion of registering sound and images, but foremost of the positivistic philosophy according to which photography and cinematography reflect the world objectively!*" (Aleksandrova 2015, 93).

A select part of the Khan's photographic and film archive can be viewed on the wonderful TV series of BBC4 *The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn*, 2007-2009:

- ***Edwardians in Colour***<sup>4</sup>
  - *A Vision of the World*
  - *Men of the World*
  - *Europe on the Brink*
  - *The Soldiers' Story: The War*
  - *The Civilians' Story*
- *Europe after the Fire*
- *Middle East: The Birth of Nation*
- ***Far East: Expeditions to Empires***
- *The End of the World*
- ***Japan in Colour***

Paula Amad emphasizes that, in contrast with most film companies, the commercial aspect of the collection was not fundamental to Khan's venture: "*The films were not intended for public viewing, and their use for charitable or any*

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<sup>4</sup> Presented in semi-black script are the films containing visual material from Asia. For more on the Albert Khan archive, see Paula Amad's excellent study, in which she connects the banker's cinematographic venture to the philosophy of Henri Bergson, and the various philosophical perspectives on the archive: Amad 2010. Also see Werner 2015, 438-450; Aleksandrova 2015, 91-97.

other purpose was not allowed. [Jean] Brunhes<sup>5</sup> screened them at his academic lectures in the Collège de France, in the Sorbonne and on his lecture tours in Canada, Spain and Switzerland. Kahn screened them at his home in Boulogne to his friends and to members of his *Société Autour du Monde*, which took in a remarkable group of individuals including Rabindranath Tagore, Henri Bergson, Colette, Louis Lumière, Thomas Mann, H. G. Wells, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, André Michelin and Auguste Rodin” (Hoorn, Creed 2012, 758).

Unlike Kahn, the leading film and production companies, such as Lumière and Pathé Frères - had clearly set commercial aims. Investments in technology and in travelling camera operators were expected to gain returns through sales to local and global distributors. When working in the Far East, the envoys of the large cinema companies sent back reels for editing. The visual subjects were mainly related to geographical, architectural, ethnographic and other specific landmarks of Eastern cultures. The brief newsreels were screened in movie halls before the main feature. These were part of the general bulletins or current news of the production company. Their main purpose was to transmit information on political, historical, military events, including those in the major empires (Kardzhilov 2011, 39-58), in the hotspots of the world and the colonial territories.

Research on early films is very difficult in Bulgaria, as many of the films no longer exist. Access to others is limited because they are preserved in foreign film archives, and if the respective archive does not provide streaming through a specialized site of its own or through *YouTube* (or other platforms for sharing films), viewing is impossible.

Particularly valuable for reconstructing the history of film distribution in Bulgaria are the documents and the traces left in printed editions. The present article emphasizes the testimonies related to screening that are found in one of the earliest Bulgarian professional specialized film periodicals, *Pathé Week* (1914, Bulgarian: *Sedmitsa Pate*).

In fact, the miracle of cinematography was already a topic of publications in our country dating from before World War I, but there were no specialized periodicals advertising, analysing and/or collecting information about the exciting developments in the newly emerging seventh art. Various announcements about forthcoming screenings were placed in daily and weekly newspapers. At first, only the titles of films were mentioned in these announcements (submitted by owners of movie halls advertising their shows)<sup>6</sup>, and the hour and place of

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<sup>5</sup> A friend of Kahn's, he was the first director of the *Archives of the Planet*, author of *La Géographie humaine* (1910), an innovator, in academic circles, in the use of photography. “In their missions, the photographers strictly follow the classification of Brunhes regarding the four sectors: geography of basic human needs (‘Man is subject to his basic needs: food, clothing, sleep. His house is an essential phenomenon.’); the geography of exploitation of the land (‘Man relies on the land, he foresees and anticipates his future requirements, begins to cultivate the land, to domesticate animals, to exploit mines and quarries.’); political and social geography (‘Everywhere, man lives in groups. There emerge the family, societies, the division of the land, legislation.’); the geography of history (‘Man created states. The roots of human history are everywhere. But history consists of the most complex elements, and the furthest away from the elementary geographic conditions.’)” (Aleksandrova 2015, 95).

<sup>6</sup> Another difficulty for researchers is that the title is often given in a Bulgarian version that is far from the original, which presents a challenge to its identification.

the projections. Cinema was looked upon at first as a cheap entertainment<sup>7</sup> for the mass public.

The main international distributors working on Bulgarian territory were the French giants *Gaumont* and *Pathé Frères*, as well as their competitors *Eclair*, *Savoy*, the Italian companies *Ambrosio*, *Itala*, the Danish *Nordisk*, the American *Vitagraph*, etc. The major movie theatres in Sofia were *Modern Theatre* (*Moderen teatar*) and *Odeon*, whose owners had excellent connections with *Pathé Frères*<sup>8</sup>. “Today, it is known that in 1912, in the capital city, there were at least eight ‘establishments’ where films could be viewed” (Kardzhilov 2016, 471). Some of them were professional movie theatres. Others were establishments where various spectacles and entertainments were held, including vaudevilles, chantants, variety shows, dance and song programs, shows; between the live performances of artists, were wedged in attractions consisting in cinematographic projections of moving pictures. At the time of the Balkan Wars, many of the theatres were shut down and part of their property (films, projectors, motors, lighting, etc.) was sold for the needs of the mobile cinematographers and war correspondents. In the second half of 1913, movie theatres, such as *Modern Theatre* and *Odeon* in Sofia, resumed their regular projections and even enhanced their international connections (Yanakiev 2003, 19-28). Something very important happened that year in Bulgarian movie culture: the French company *Pathé Frères*<sup>9</sup> opened a branch in Sofia, whose chief representative was Louis Pitrolf de Berry<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 1). In the following year, 1914, Berry began publishing his own movie magazine, *Pathé Week* (Fig. 3).

This was mainly an advertising periodical but it also aimed to spread knowledge about, and popularize cinematography. Moreover, it stimulated the curiosity of the public regarding *the foreign*, the *other*, and used the movie screen as a kind of window open to unfamiliar cultures. Cinematography, as a social media, actively took part in the work of cultural legitimation; in gaining access to the new technical wonder and art, Bulgarians became part of the European and world cultural community. Films are certainly artifacts that take the viewer to

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<sup>7</sup> In his memoirs, Vasil Gendov, father of Bulgarian feature films, often mentions that he was called a circus buffoon and idler, a boy who, in wanting to do films, disgraces himself despite his good family background. As for cinema, it is called a farce, clownery, a disgrace, monkey business, the disreputable profession of a *chantant* entertainer (Gendov 2016).

<sup>8</sup> In fact, at that time this was the largest cinematographic company in the world, possessing high-quality motion picture cameras and films, with branches throughout the world and enormous financial capital. With regard to Bulgarian trade relations, see Kardzhilov 2016, 449-450.

<sup>9</sup> The French company was the partner of two competing Sofia movie theatres. Starting from 1909, *Modern Theatre* was the representative of *Pathé Frères* for Bulgaria and Macedonia, and, as a joint-stock company, became an important and powerful film distributor for the Balkans and the Near East, with branches in Bucharest, Athens, Salonika, Istanbul, Belgrade, and Smirna (Izmir). In the period 1910-1912, the French company strengthened its ties to the Sofia movie theatre *Odeon* through the company's representative for Serbia and Bulgaria, the Belgrade citizen Svetozar Botorić, who delegated the rights to the architect Naum Torbov.

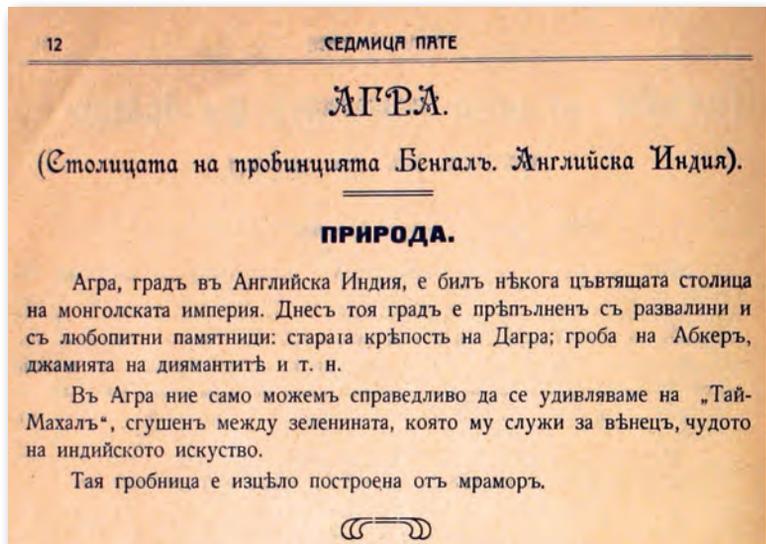
<sup>10</sup> De Berry worked with Botorić in 1911. In Sofia, the *Pathé Frères* films were mostly shown in *Odeon*, but this did not exclude screenings in *Modern Theatre*.



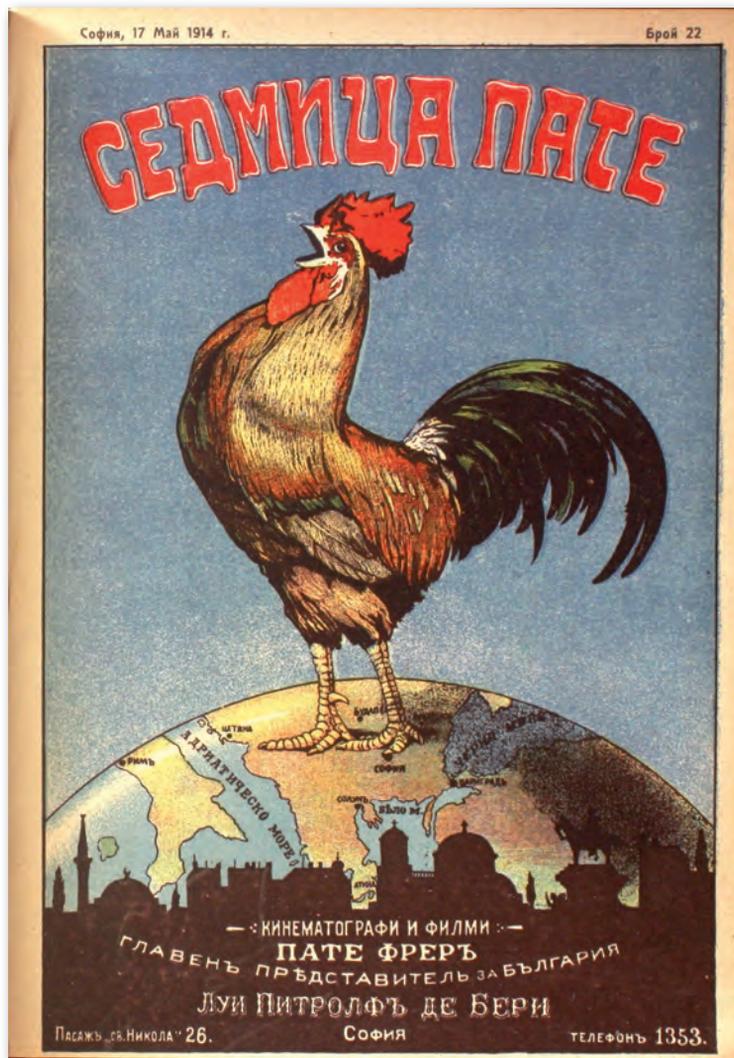
**Fig. 1.** This photo was taken in Sofia, Bulgaria, in the legendary photo studio of Dimitar Anastasov Karastoyanov. According to the film researchers at National Film Archive of Serbia (Југословенска кинотека (<http://www.kinoteka.org.rs/>), Belgrad), most probably the man on the left is Louis Pitrolf de Berry - the editor of the Bulgarian magazine *Pathé Week*. In the middle is certainly Svetozar Botorić - the first Serbian producer and representative of *Pathé Frères* in the Balkans. On the right is an anonymous Bulgarian officer. Circa 1913-1912.

I want to express my exceptional gratefulness to my colleague Petar Kardzhilov (film historian, PhD, DSc) who provided the archival photo.

**Fig. 2.** The publication in *Pathé Week* "Agra - the capital of province Bengal, British India" (Archival source: *Pathé Week Magazine*, (Sofia), 12 February 1914, 9, 12, National Library "Ivan Vazov" in Plovdiv)



**Fig. 3.** Cover of the Bulgarian cinema magazine *Pathé Week* (1914), edited by Louis Pitrolf de Berry, representative for the Bulgarian branch of the French giant *Pathé Frères* in Sofia



**Японскитѣ майстори.**

Както въ искусствата, така и въ другитѣ занаяти, японцитѣ се отличаватъ съ сръчностъ, съ вкусъ и съ една фантазия достойна за удивление. Отъ тоя филмъ се срѣщатъ типични детайли, които рисуватъ работния японски народъ съ характернитѣ му особености.

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**Fig. 4.** The brief commercial announcement for *Les Artisans japonais* (*The Japanese craftsman*) (Archival source: *Pathé Week Magazine*, (Sofia), 12 July 1914, 29, 7, National Library “Ivan Vazov” in Plovdiv)

a distant otherness; but prior to the film projections, this distant otherness was placed on the pages of the first Bulgarian movie magazines.

The weekly *Pathé Week* ran, in all, to 30 issues and was a somewhat elite publication. The paper on which it was printed was exceptionally luxurious, glossy, dense and heavy. The printing was of high quality, as evidenced by the preserved issues. The texts related to the topic of “Asia” in the magazine are not abstractly informative but are entirely connected with advertising projections of *Pathé Frères* films. **The most important thing to be emphasized in the present study is the discovery that most of the films of *Pathé Frères* were screened for the first time in Bulgaria, and not in France! Also, the length of the films shown here was greater than indicated in the company’s original catalogue!** This fact indicates that Louis Pitrolf de Berry had excellent relations with the company centre in Paris and was able to bring to Bulgaria, before anywhere else, the titles newly arrived from the company branches. Unfortunately, the texts of the “Asiatic” announcements published on the pages of *Pathé Week* make no mention of the film crews: there is no information regarding the director, operator; but in general, such information was rarely presented in early documentaries.

The Bulgarian viewer was able to enjoy vivid pictures of distant Eastern lands before the French viewer (and maybe before all others). The brief documentary works are very important for researchers, as they not only show life in Asian countries but also represent valuable archive visual material and shape people’s notions of these countries. They place the East within the field of Western cinematography. For its part, the dissemination of these films in Bulgaria established dialogue between cultures along the East-West axis, as well as between Europe and the Balkans.

Let us begin from the easternmost point. From the Japanese branch of *Pathé Frères*, two cultural films (also called “views”) shot in Japan arrived in Bulgaria. *Pathé Week* authentically presented a picturesque image of the Far Eastern country in its publications. The first of these “views” carried the French title *Comment on voyage au Japon* and was designated as a nature film. Here is the text describing the cinematographic picture: “In Japan, with the exception of official social circles, who travel by car, the means of transport are quite picturesque. Foremost, the ‘dzhins’, a particular kind of porters, draw small carts<sup>11</sup> - pus-pus - which can be hired by the hour or for a course, as are buggies in our country. In the mountains, a special kind of litter chairs<sup>12</sup> are used; and on rivers, a special kind of mauna<sup>13</sup>, funny little caskets

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<sup>11</sup> This refers to the so-called Japanese *jinrikisha* (じんりきしゃ / 人力車). The word comes from the quasi-Chinese reading of the hieroglyphs for “man” - *jin*, “force” - *riki*, and “car” - *sha*. The *jinrikisha* had two wheels, and seated one or two passengers.

<sup>12</sup> In Japanese, *kago* (駕籠), a kind of litter. The passenger sits in an open net, which is covered with a cloth and attached to a long stick (usually of bamboo) carried on either side by bearers (two or four). It was used to transport passengers from other than the Samurai class (artisans, farmers, traders) during the *Edo* period, and gradually fell into disuse during the periods *Meiji* and *Taishō*. The Samurai elite and the aristocracy used *norimono* / 乗り物, a kind of luxury covered palanquin that was especially popular in the *Tokugawa* period.

<sup>13</sup> In the Bulgarian archival source, the dialect word *mauna* (fem.) is used; it was adopted into Bulgarian from the Arabian-Turkish word *mauna*, a large boat. So far, it is not clear what this word referred to in the Japanese context. It probably meant a *rendai*, a kind of sailing vessel.

*made of white wood, driven with a single oar that also serves as a motor and rudder. On navigable rivers, the streams are used, along which barges with sails are skillfully steered by experienced navigators*" (How to travel in Japan 1914, 15).

Clearly, the content of the film is presented in a very visual manner, especially with the use of the onomatopoeia *pus-pus* (similar to the motorized rickshaw *tuk-tuk* in Thailand)<sup>14</sup>, which marks the rhythm of movement, the driver's sliding feat and deep breathing. The Bulgarian reader/viewer was provided with a slightly shortened version of the plot. The original French annotation ended in an even more picturesque way, presenting a lovely and magnificent view of nature: Japanese junks are drawn along the roads next to the rivers by little yellow men. The whole action takes place in the natural Japanese decor of deep valleys that dent the blue sky, which is traversed by noble falcons. All this could be seen in the film as well.

The brief commercial announcement for *Les Artisans japonais* (The Japanese craftsman 1914, 7) whets the curiosity of the Bulgarian viewer: the emphasis is on traditional crafts and skills: "*As in the arts, so too in other crafts, the Japanese are distinguished by their skill, good taste and imaginativeness that is worthy of amazement. The film contains typical details depicting the industrious Japanese people with its characteristic particularities*" (The Japanese craftsman 1914, 7) (Fig. 4). The same brief text is given in the original French version.

The cinematographic voyages of *Pathé Frères* continued in Central, Southern and Southeastern Asia. The films arrived from the company's Russian and Oriental branches.

The Bulgarian viewer was introduced to the architectural heritage of Turkestan (which at that time held a key position along the Silk Road) by means of a screen excursion through the "*aristocratic appearance*" of Samarkand<sup>15</sup>, said in the brief announcement to be one of the four paradises. The advertisement emphasizes the mosques and madrasas<sup>16</sup> and the beautifully built houses (Old Samarkand and its ancient temples - across Russian Turkestan 1914, 6). This emphasis was probably meant to attract the public: because of Bulgaria's past history as part of the Ottoman Empire, this type of Islamic religious architecture was somehow more familiar to the Bulgarian viewer at that time compared with the unknown, unusual elements of religious buildings typical for the other Eastern religions. A comparison with the French

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<sup>14</sup> The phrase *pusu pusu jinrikisha* / プスプス人力車 exists in Japanese. Very curiously, that is what rickshaws were called in Madagascar. Whence and how the expression appeared is a topic for a different study. Thanks go to the expert in Japanese studies Dr. Eleonora Koleva, who consulted us on the specific terminology related to transportation.

<sup>15</sup> In the Bulgarian publication, the expression is translated as "aristocratic appearance", while in the French original of the catalogue, the announcement refers to the "very artistic aspect" of the city, which attracts many students. Before the Russian revolution, Samarkand was part of the Russian Empire. After 2017, it was on the territory of Turkestan ASSR. In the period 1925-1930, it was the capital of Uzbekistan.

<sup>16</sup> A secondary or higher Muslim school. The most famous one of these in Samarkand is *Ulugh Beg*, built in the 15th century and today included on the UNESCO world cultural heritage list. Quite possibly, this is precisely the building presented in the film.

catalogue shows the film contained views of additional sites, because the camera operator's stroll registered the colourful commercial part of the city as well. He even went beyond Samarkand, heading west to Bukhara, to show in a poetic manner the carpet sellers of that city, seen through a veil of shadows of Jewish traders. Unfortunately, these picturesque elements were not indicated in the Bulgarian announcement.

Another heavenly picture depicts a magnificent spot in Indonesia, full of rich exotic flora. The garden of Buitenzorg<sup>17</sup> is decked with “*the captivating blooms of flowers; alleys formed by gigantic plants; woods that represent whole virgin forests; lakes, whose surface is covered with water lilies in bloom that scatter their white and yellow blossoms, gently encircled by wide, pale-green leaves*” (The Botanical garden in Buitenzorg - Java isle 1914, 7). An absolutely “*charming spectacle for the eye*” - this is how the advertisement describes the film *Le Jardin botanique de Buitenzorg, île de Java*. However, its screening in Bulgaria did not precede that in France. It was not by accident that the Oriental branch of *Pathé Frères* presented the colourful and exotic flora of Java: in October 1896, the first cinematograph was shown there<sup>18</sup>, well advertised in Dutch newspapers as well. And in general, being a colony, Indonesia was quite attractive for the European world. Communication in the sphere of cinema between Europe and this part of Southeastern Asia became more active over the years (Ruppin 2017). Hence, in turn, the Javanese may possibly have seen documentaries from the Balkan region, including Bulgaria.

The film *Le Jardin botanique de Buitenzorg, île de Java* was hardly the first presentation of Indonesian views on the Bulgarian screen, but was the only one with an extant annotation. The detailed text, published in *Pathé Week*, is certainly a rare find, because it is much more than a commercial announcement. In Bulgaria at that time, this was the first cinematographic document depicting the island of Java that we find in the printed and specialized press.

This is also true of the following publication in *Pathé Week*, which takes us to a no less picturesque and interesting region: India. Designated as *nature and cinematographic illustration*, the film transports us to the capital of the province of Bengal Agra, with a clear emphasis that this is part of British India. According to the description, the city “*was once the flourishing capital of the Mongolian Empire* (meaning Mogul: they obviously did not see the difference! - author's note - A. M.). *Today, the city is full of ruins and curious monuments: the old fort of Dagra; the tomb of Abker; the diamond mosque, etc. In Agra we can justly be astonished by the 'Taj-Mahal'* (Taj Mahal - author's note - A. M.), *nestled within the greenery that serves as its wreath, a wonder of Indian art. This tomb is entirely built of marble*” (Agra - the

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<sup>17</sup> The Dutch designation for the present-day regency (*kabupaten*) Bogor, in the region of Cibinong, West Java, Indonesia.

<sup>18</sup> The first screenings were held in European-style theatre halls or clubs. The interested viewers were mainly Europeans and people of the local Javanese and Chinese elite. The Chinese inhabiting the island, being an enterprising people and natural-born traders, quickly decided to organize large-scale open-air projections. According to research data from the 1990s, the year was a little later - 1900. The Dutch created the first production company in 1905 (Said 1992, 99).

capital of province Bengal, British India 1914, 12) (Fig. 2). The Bulgarian annotation is almost identical with the one we find in the catalogue *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Our movie magazine only omitted the last sentence of the description of the film - which is quite a picturesque detail: “*The magnificent tomb is reflected in the water of the pools as well as in the [river] Dzhemna<sup>19</sup> [as are] its snow-white minarets and domes*” (Agra, chef-lieu de la province de Bengale). Agra was shown to the Bulgarian viewer more than a month before the film premiered in France.

In one of the magazine’s news articles, we find a visual mosaic (a sort of news feature). There are texts on ten European countries - Germany, France, Spain, Switzerland, etc. Among these brief news items, there is information about India as well. Here is the announcement: “**Bombay** (*Pathé Journal’s* bold - author’s note - A. M.). *The Viceroy of India, Lord Harding, attends the sanctification of the new dock*” (*Pathé Journal* No. 269a 1914, 8).

The French cinematographers were certainly excited about events in this British colony. Much more interesting, however, is another ethnographic material that acquaints the viewer with elements of the religious culture of India - specifically, Brahmin rituals. “*In this film, we will find a faithful reflection of the religious rites in India: washing of hands and feet in the holy waters of the river Ganges before the morning prayer; the call to prayer from the minarets; religious service for the divinity Rama; all confessional particularities of this divine philosophy, which has inspired Leconte de Lisle, and which teaches that the world is an illusion, a dream, an enchantment, and that all is negation...*” (Brahmin customs and traditions 1914, 14). The *actualité* arrived in Bulgaria approximately three weeks after it was screened in France.

Cultural history viewed through cinema was often presented in a national perspective. In the present article, however, the cultural history of Bulgaria is discussed in terms of dialogue between film cultures, which is a hitherto unresearched, specific aspect of film studies in our country. The transnational elements of early cinema were the points of intersection of the vectors Asia-Europe-Balkans-Bulgaria. Of course, their appearance was linked to the development of the colonies, political contamination, distribution, and the film market.

Asia is a space of active dialogue between the autochthonous elements and the elements of Pan-Asiatic culture; not least, between Western elements. During the first half of the 20th century, the historical and geographic context was varied and constantly changing in its parameters. The visualization of Asia through cinema presented everyday, anthropological, and ethnographic practices as well as autochthonous narratives (which, for their part, tended to jump across borders within the immeasurable vastness of Asia). In some instances, through the impact of films, they became an enduring depository of imagined identities.

In its early stage, cinematography was inspired by different themes: the great empires, multiculturalism, identity, the nation, ethnic and cultural minorities, integration, otherness, the power dynamics between East and West, the native and the foreign in the context of cinema. Cinematography, however, is a very general concept that is not limited solely to films. Seen from a historical

perspective, cinema is much more interesting when studied through its meta-discourses: advertisements, movie magazines, critical reviews, announcements, publications, the film market, dissemination, international contacts. Moreover, the connections between these are certainly intriguing for research relevant to Bulgaria.

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### **Archival sources from the Bulgarian cinema magazine *Pathé Week* (1914) and filmography**

**Agra - the capital of the province of Bengal, British India 1914:** Агра (Столицата на провинция Бенгал. Английска Индия). - Седмица Патé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 13 февруари 1914, 9, 12. (Agra (Stolitsata na provintsia Bengal. Angliyska India). - Sedmitsa Pathé, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 13 fevruari 1914, 9, 12.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Agra chef-lieu de la province de Bengale*. Made by the Oriental Film branch - Pathé Frères. Collection Pathé - February 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6337. Premiere in France in Omnia Pathé theatre, Paris on 25 March 1914. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly program No. 9 of 15 February 1914. Documentary short culture film, black-and-white plus colour, silent. Length, according to the French archive, total 115 m, of which 84 are in colour. According to the Bulgarian archival source, the length is 120 m. No additional information on authorship.

**Brahmin customs and traditions 1914:** Брахамински нрави и обичаи. - Седмица Патé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 17 май 1914, 22, 14. (Brahaminski nravi i obichai. - Sedmitsa Pathé, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 17 may 1914, 22, 14.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Mœurs et coutumes brahmaniques*. Made by Pathé freres. Collection Pathé - April 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6551. Premiere in France in Eden cinema theatre, Marseille between 12-18 June 1914. Announced in *Ciné-Journal* n°297, 2 May 1914. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly program No. 22 from 21 May 1914. Documentary short culture film, black and white, silent. Length according to the French archive: 125 m. According to the Bulgarian archival source, the length is 135 m. No additional information on authorship.

**How to travel in Japan 1914:** Как пътува човек в Япония. - Седмица Патé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 20 март 1914, 14, 15. (Kak patuva chovek v Yaponiya. - Sedmitsa Paté, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 20 mart 1914, 14, 15.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Comment on voyage au Japon*. Made by the Japanese Film branch - Pathé Frères. Collection Pathé - February 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6478. Announced in *Ciné-Journal* n°292, 28 March 1914. Without exact data on the screen premiere in France, which was probably in the first week of April 1914. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly program No. 14 from 22 March 1914; Documentary short culture film, black-and-white, silent. Length, according to the French archive, 150 m. According to the Bulgarian archival source, the length is 155 m. No additional information on authorship.

**Old Samarkand and its ancient temples - across Russian Turkestan 1914:** Старият Самарканд и неговите древни храмове (из руски Туркестан). - Седмица Патé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 28 юни 1914, 28, 6. (Stariyat Samar-kand i negovite drevni hramove (iz ruski Turkestan). - Sedmitsa Pathé, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 28 yuni 1914, 28, 6.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Le Vieux Samarkand et ses temples antiques*. Made by the Le Film Russe branch - Pathé Frères. Collection Pathé - June 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6631. Announced in *Ciné-Journal* n°304, 20 June 1914. Premiere in France in Kinérama Pathé theatre, Paris, 3-9 July 1914. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly programme No. 28 from 2 July 1914. Documentary short culture film, black-and-white, silent. Length, according to the French archive, 115 m. According to the Bulgarian archival source, the length is 135 m. No additional information on authorship.

**Pathé Journal No. 269a 1914:** Памé журнал № 269а. - Седмица Памé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 21 юни 1914, 27, 8. (Pathé zhurnal No. 269a. - Sedmitsa Paté, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 21 yuni 1914, 27, 8.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Actualité cinéma*. Without any additional data in Pathé Archive Catalogie. Announcement in Bulgaria - 27 June 1914. Documentary short newsreel, black-and-white, silent, with 10 cinematographic objects, one of them is from Bombay.

**The Botanical garden in Buitenzorg - Java isle 1914:** Ботаническата градина в Блуензорк (остров Ява). - Седмица Памé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 21 юни 1914, 27, 7. (Botanicheskata gradina v Byutenzork (ostrov Yava). - Sedmitsa Pathé, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 21 yuni 1914, 27, 7.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Le Jardin botanique de Buitenzorg, île de Java*. Made by the Oriental Film branch - Pathé Frères. Collection Pathé - May 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6600. Announced in *Ciné-Journal* n°302, 6 June 1914. No exact data (time and place) indicated for the screen premiere in France. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly program No. 28 from 25 June 1914. Documentary short culture film, black-and-white, silent. Length, according to the French archive, 110 m. In the Bulgarian archival source, the length is not mentioned. No additional information on authorship.

**The Japanese artists/craftsman 1914:** Японските артисти/майстори. - Седмица Памé, Кинематографическа илюстрация, 12 юли 1914, 29, 7. (Yaponskite artisti/ maystori. - Sedmitsa Pathé, Kinematograficheska ilyustratsiya, 12 yuli 1914, 29, 7.)

**Filmography:** The original French title is *Les Artisans japonais*. Made by the Japanese Film branch - Pathé Freres. Collection Pathé - June 1914, *La Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé*. Catalogue No. 6643. Announced in *Ciné-Journal* n°305, 26 June 1914. Without exact data (time and place) for the screen premiere in France. The announcement in Bulgaria is in weekly program No. 29 from 22-28 July 1914. Documentary short culture film, black-and-white, silent. Length, according to the French archive, 145 m. According to the Bulgarian archival source, the length is 166 m. No additional information on authorship.

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