



The very first film screening took place in Paris, at Boulevard of Capucines. This event enlightened the world about the creation of a new kind of art. The device named Cinématographe - invented by Lumière brothers included film projector and a recorder. It documented the reality experienced by the brothers. Since 1902, unlike to Lumiere brothers, French director George Melies created a new, magical world in films, using various special-effects and even magic tricks. In 1903-1905 American director Edwin S. Porter created several genres: cinema chronicles, adventure and comedies, using previous European experience. This was the time when the American entertainment film industry was born.

On November 16, 1896, the first film screening took place in Tbilisi. In the beginning of the first decade of the 1900s, Georgian photographer David Digmelashvili, also known as Digmelov, brought “Laterna Magica” from Moscow to Tbilisi with his son Alexander, and used it to organise screenings. "Laterna Magica", which means "magic lantern", was a projector, invented in the 17th century, which could display slides, color images. Soon Digmelashvils bought the Cinématographe as well – a device by Lumière brothers. Cameraman Alexander Digmelov traveled to the regions of Georgia under the pseudonym of John Morris and arranged the first film screenings there. Soviet director Ivan Perestiani writes in his memoirs: "Cameraman Alexander Digmelov managed to develop, print, dry and edit film in a small laboratory resembling a playground, in the back of the big screen of the Apollo cinema." It is considered, that Digmelov created many film chronicles and documentary sketches, which unfortunately are not preserved.

In 1904, in Tbilisi at the Golovin avenue, nowadays known as the Rustaveli avenue, first cinema in the country – „Iluzioni” was opened. since 1907 there has been started building cinemas all over the country. Other than Tbilisi film screenings started in Kutaisi, Batumi and several movie theatres “Radium”, “Apolo”, “Lira” has been launched. At this time, the branches of French film companies are very popular in Georgia. Films are being shot in Georgia since 1908. A writer and a playwright Shalva Dadiani wrote the screenplay for the

film "Berikaoba-Keenoba", a fiction-documentary made by Alexander Tsutsunava, which has not been preserved today.

In 1900s the first Georgian director – Vasil Amashukeli appears to the public along with Aleksander Digmelov. Educated in Moscow, he initially worked as a film mechanic and mastered the skills of filmmaking at the Russian branch of a French film company Gaumont. In 1909 Vasil Amashukeli filmed documentary sketches in Baku and Kutaisi: “Working of a Caspian printing house,” “walking on the Seashore,” “Chamomile Festival,” “Working on the oil wells,” “Excursion to the Ruins of the Bagrati Temple”. From 1910 he worked as a film mechanic at the Radium movie theatre in Kutaisi.

In 1912 Vasil Amashkeli shoots the first Georgian full-length documentary "Akaki's Journey to Racha Lechkhumi". The film depicts the journey of a Georgian writer and poet from July 21th to August 2nd in the mountains of Georgia. The film is the starting point of the history of Georgian cinema. It is also a fact worth mentioning, the world filmography of 1912 doesn't include a full-length documentary about a public figure, writer or poet, a specific individual. Unfortunately, the first version of the film is not preserved.

“Akaki's Journey to Racha-Lechkhumi” is more than a documentary with a simple plot, or a chronicle, which was the main trend of the world cinema back in the 1910s. People of Imereti turned the birthday of the Georgian poet into a real public holiday.

Amashukeli presented the stories played by real people in his film, with sincere and real emotions; this is the film that preserved a specific time to us: the existence of people, traditions and customs in the mountainous part of Georgia. That is why this film is special with an ethnographic point of view as well.

“Akaki's Journey” was filmed in the mountains and during the shootings I have been dragging the camera with my own shoulders. I was the director, the cameraman and the crew member as well”- this is how the author of the film recalls the hard and exhausting process of shooting. He filmed everything that was happening in front of the camera.

Vasil Amashukeli recalls how the villagers welcomed Akaki with a special public shows and decorated tables prepared for him. The poet himself greatly enjoyed the Georgian dance “Ferkhuli” in the village of Barakoni. It is well-known that he addressed Vasil Amashueli with the words: “do not spare your knowledge or film, if this dance is filmed, it will be a very good asset”. Despite

of the exhausting trip on the damaged roads on the carriage and despite of the excitement from the celebration of his 72 birthday, Akaki did not seem tired at all. This is the film that preserved his image to the generations.

On August 31, 1912 “People’s newspaper” reported, that Vasil Amashukeli, who had filmed the journey of Akaki on the cinematographic tape, arrived in Tbilisi.

The first screening of the film took place on September 21, 1912 at the cinema Radium, in Kutaisi. The long lines of people in the hall never degreed for 15 days in a row; there were four screening sessions a day at “Radium”. After Kutaisi, "Akaki's Journey to Racha Lechkhumi" was screened in other cities of Georgia as well. The film brought a great recognition to its director Vasil Amashukeli.

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