

Bekim Sele
University of Prishtina
[bekim.sele@uni-pr.edu]

Durim Kryziu
University of Prishtina
[durim.kryeziu@uni-pr.edu]

Documentary Films Produced by Kosovafilm (1975–2003)

Abstract: *The origins of cinematography in Kosovo are marked by the establishment of “Kosovafilm” in 1969. Operating independently and in co-production with various film studios from the former Yugoslavia, Kosovafilm produced a range of artistic, documentary, and cartoon films. This film production house was the only cinematic entity that, during a certain period, represented Albanian culture in Kosovo, both within its borders and beyond. Over the course of its activity, it produced and distributed numerous films across various genres, some of which garnered significant recognition in the former Yugoslavia and were awarded prizes at various international festivals. Among its productions, Kosovafilm also produced several documentary films that effectively captured aspects of the social, spiritual, cultural, and historical life of Albanians in Kosovo. Both in terms of content and direction, the filmmakers of these films sought to present to a broad audience a variety of themes, addressing and crafting them with great skill and passion, down to the finest details. This paper aims to highlight the significance of these documentary films, which served as a cornerstone of creativity during that period and contributed to the development of Kosovar cinematography. Even today, the work of the “Kosovafilm” production house continues to serve as a source of inspiration for many generations, scholars, and contemporary artists.*

Keywords: *Kosovafilm; documentary; culture; film; art.*

Introduction

Film art in Kosovo began later than in the rest of the Balkans. Here, cinematography developed at a slow pace. In February 1969, “Kosovafilm” was founded in Kosovo as the only institution in the country dedicated to the production and distribution of artistic, documentary, short, and cartoon films. From its founding to the present, according to our research, no scholarly study has been written about the history of artistic film in Kosovo, particularly documentary films. Overall, “Kosovafilm” has made a valuable contribution to the growth and

advancement of cinematography during this period. Cinematography in Kosovo is directly tied to this production house, which independently produced and filmed works. During certain periods of its activity, it also collaborated with other film houses from the former Yugoslavia.

Various papers and studies have contributed to shedding light on cinematographic activity in Kosovo, especially in recent years, providing an important foundation for further scholarly research. However, this paper aims to offer an additional perspective and contribution through a historical and analytical overview of Kosovafilm's activity, with particular focus on documentary films as part of a broader cultural and social context in Kosovar society at the time.

This study focuses on a specific period in the activity of this production house, namely the production of documentary films by "Kosovafilm" between 1975 and 2003. It also analyzes and discusses the themes of these films in relation to the circumstances of the time, with particular emphasis on two documentary films regarded as especially significant. Furthermore, the paper examines key social factors that contributed to the success of these films in reaching both domestic and international audiences. By examining this artistic output, the research aims to present a well-structured, unbiased, and accurate model of professional study, based primarily on primary and secondary sources. It seeks to portray the activities of that time in the most concise and impartial manner, fully grounded in rigorous scholarly methodology.

In light of the above, we believe this paper will serve not only scholars of the seventh art but also society as a whole. Furthermore, it will contribute to a broader recognition and inclusion of this activity within the history of world cinematography.

A brief historical overview – the founding of "Kosovafilm"

Kosovo, a state in Southeastern Europe in the Western Balkans region, was for many decades part of the former Yugoslavia, initially as an autonomous province within the Socialist Republic of Serbia. During this period, Kosovo experienced political and cultural restrictions, but also moments of institutional affirmation. Its population is predominantly Albanian, with a broad ethnic and cultural identity. One of the most successful cultural institutions of Albanians in Kosovo and the former Yugoslavia was "Kosovafilm".

"Kosovafilm", a state-owned film production house, began its operations in 1969 in the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo, in

what was known as Yugoslavia. In the same year, on February 24, during the eleventh session of the Educational and Cultural Chamber, the Education Council of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo approved the draft decision for the establishment of an enterprise for the production, sale, and dubbing of films. During the meeting, it was *inter alia* stated that “*this enterprise would be involved in filming, the sale of both domestic and foreign films, and the dubbing of films, as this decision was also made by the Provincial Chamber, justifying the need for a film enterprise in the Province*” (F.G, 1969, p. 10). After the establishment of the film enterprise “Kosova-film” in Prishtina, the acting director, Abdurrahman Shala, stated in an interview with the daily newspaper of the time, “*All formalities have been completed. I have registered the enterprise, and soon the first payment will be deposited into the account. The enterprise is called ‘Kosova-film’. The first step will be to announce a competition for the screenplay*” (Rilindja, 1969, p. 12).

After the enterprise was established, it was located in the premises of the Provincial Cultural and Propaganda Center in Prishtina. This decision of the Provincial Assembly marked the beginning of organized activity in the field of film art in Kosovo.

During its operation, this film production house produced and co-produced over 35 artistic, documentary, and cartoon films. With these films, “Kosovafilm” represented the country at various local and international festivals. This institution also collaborated closely with the Radio Television of Prishtina (RTP), with which it produced several visual co-productions. In the distribution sector, it imported more than 200 artistic films, primarily from the West, as well as some hit shows from the United States, which were shown in the former Yugoslavia (Mehmetaj, 2020, p. 7-76).

It is important to emphasize that the political developments before and during the 1990s had a direct impact on cultural life, cutting the ribbon of celluloid in Kosovo. Specifically, since 1988, no films were produced in 35mm format, although several television films were made.

It is known that before the 1990s, Kosovo had limited autonomy within the Republic of Serbia. Cultural policies were centralized and controlled by communist ideology, heavily influenced by the Soviet Union. In 1948, the split between the Soviet Union and Stalinist Yugoslavia marked the first major break within the then-communist bloc, more than a decade before the conflict between the Soviet Union and China (Schmitt, 2021, p. 337). Albanian culture was often marginalized

and censored, and relations between cultural institutions in Kosovo and those in Albania were limited.

In the 1970s, a form of cultural, educational, and scientific cooperation between Yugoslavia and Albania was being reestablished, mainly in the fields of literature, theater, music, and various scientific disciplines. However, such cooperation remained absent in the field of cinematography. In that historical context, “Kosovafilm” not only failed to find a path or opportunity to co-produce any films with Albania in the spirit of cultural and artistic reciprocity, but even the films it had already produced, bearing its own logo, were not given the chance to be screened before Albanian audiences until after the fall of communism in the early 1990s. Paradoxically, however, a considerable number of Albanian films produced by Kinostudio “Shqipëria e Re” during the 1960s and 1970s were shown in cinemas in Prishtina and other cities across Kosovo. In March 1971, the “Week of Albanian Film” was organized in Prishtina, during which six feature films and six documentaries were screened. This was the first event of its kind, offering a broad overview of cinematography through works that, in a way, presented a glimpse into Albanian cinema, its productions and the main concerns of its key figures (Shita, 1971, p. 10). This lack of mutual cooperation, however, did not result from the artists themselves, but rather as a result of the dominance of an isolating political climate and the refusal of any form of collaboration with Albania and vice versa. Although on the part of Kosovo, within the framework of a platform for dialogue and cultural rapprochement with Albania, institutional cooperation between “Kosovafilm” and Kinostudio “Shqipëria e Re” was envisioned and planned for the realization of documentary and feature film projects (ASAK, 1979), this never materialized in practice. The only symbolic event marking this period was the official visit of a delegation from Kinostudio “Shqipëria e Re” to Kosovo and their meeting with counterparts at “Kosovafilm”. Despite mutual enthusiasm, the visit did not result in any new developments. No concrete cooperation in the field of film production was brought to life in the following years. Figuratively speaking, cultural cooperation with communist Albania was a challenge in itself.

The political and cultural situation was now entering a new phase. In the 1990s, the policies of Slobodan Milošević (Serbian president from 1989–1997; president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997–2000) reduced Kosovo’s autonomy and led to the Kosovo War of 1998–1999 between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, led by Serbia,

which controlled Kosovo within Yugoslavia. After these developments, “*the Kosovo Liberation Army was formed whose existence was used as a pretext for the Serbian campaign to destroy Kosovo’s villages during the summer of 1998. Subsequently, Western governments’ efforts to mediate an agreement, focused on the restoration of Kosovo’s autonomy, proved unsuccessful*” (Malcolm, 2019, p. 21). The refusal of Belgrade to accept any political solution forced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to intervene in the Kosovo War, compelling Serbia to withdraw all military forces from Kosovo. After several years of international negotiations, “*by early 2008, it became clear that due to the rigid stances of both sides, achieving results was unlikely. As a result, several Western states increased their support for Kosovo to unilaterally declare its independence, which happened on February 17, 2008*” (Schmitt, 2012, p. 291).

During these political and cultural developments, “Kosovafilm” did not produce or co-produce any feature films until 2003, when the first two documentary films, “*Doket dhe zakonet e shqiptarëve në Mal të Zi*” (Customs and Traditions of Albanians in Montenegro) and “*Na ishte dikur Kosovafilm-i*” (Once Upon a Time There Was Kosovafilm) were shot.

Documentary films

It is essential to understand that cinematography continues to be a tool for communication, information, and propaganda through its audiovisual language and grammar. From the early steps of cinematography, art theorists completely rejected the idea that it would exist alongside other arts, as it did not have its own expressive tools but borrowed them from other arts (Fon, 2014, p. 14). Over time, cinema managed to become one of the most widespread arts of our time. It continues to play an important role in artistic life and to have a significant impact on large masses of people (Uçi, 2008, p. 417). As in various countries of the former Yugoslavia, in Kosovo as well, the treatment of different themes related to the events of that time managed to create an impact on the development and orientation of public opinion. Rightfully, Béla Balázs defends the well-known and widely accepted thesis when he states that “*cinematic art exerts a greater influence on the spirit of the masses than any other form of art. He argues that we must recognize the laws and possibilities of cinematic art in order to control and discipline the spiritual influence it exerts, as this type of art is unprecedented in the history of human civilization*” (Balázs, 2008, p. 27). Thus, art

teaches people to see with feeling; it is itself a kind of language and holds great possibilities within. Artistic creativity represents, in a way, a structure built in harmony with the melody that lives within it (Adler, 2009, p. 191). In short, cinema is both a language and an idealistic phenomenon (Bazin, 2012, p. 18-19).

When it comes to documentary films, we can easily say that this genre, among other things, involves content that is largely or almost exclusively based on objective reality and the recording of real events and real people. Marko Babac, a well-known film scholar, writes that *“unlike artistic fiction, the documentarian does not deal with the invention of events and characters. He expresses himself through the specific selection and arrangement of his discoveries from life. Viewers are very interested in using the screen and motion pictures to establish a connection with other people”* (Babac, 2000, p. 330). They are consistently drawn to themes and events that address both the near and distant past. The past, grounded in historical facts, holds deep personal significance for them, and they seek to engage with these events from the inside, as well as see historical figures up close (Babac, 2000, p. 330).

A historical event for the seventh art itself was the establishment of the only film house, “Kosova-film”. With the establishment of this production house and later the distribution of films, opportunities and conditions were created for Kosovar cinematography to enter a phase of consolidating its own forces. Activities began to expand further with the independent filming of ambitious projects by Kosovar filmmakers, addressing autochthonous themes. In addition to the *“artistic genre of feature-length films, a solid number of documentary and short films were produced, which stood out in various festivals and events, both for their unique directorial approach and for addressing themes that had previously been unexplored”* (Mehmetaj, 1981, p. 13).

It should be noted that the filming and production of documentary films remained rather modest throughout Kosova-film’s activity. At the time, there was a clear need for the Provincial Community of Culture to be more generous in funding documentary film, and for the relevant institutions to take a more active role in fostering this genre, not as a matter of trend, but as a response to the needs of the time. “Usually, when the question is raised – why are there not more feature-length or short documentary films – the answer is immediate: there is no funding, and therefore, no films. Yet it is well known that one of the primary goals of documentary film is the authentic recording of various phe-

nomena, some of which are disappearing, while they should be preserved as evidence of a particular time” (Mehmetaj, 1984, p. 10). On the other hand, Kosovo, perhaps more than any other region, was teeming with themes that remained unrecorded and underrepresented on the cinema screen.

Despite all the challenges and circumstances that “Kosovafilm” faced during this time, its activity nonetheless continued. Within “Kosovafilm”, films of various documentary genres have been produced. The film **“Bukë e kryp e zemër”** (Bread, Salt, and a good Heart) in 35mm (color), directed by Besim Sahatçiu, was produced in 1975 by “Kosovafilm” in co-production with the film house “Filmske Novosti” from Belgrade. Two years later, in 1977, another documentary film, **“Brigadat kosovare”** (Kosovar Brigades), was produced by director Ekrem Kryeziu. In the same year, the film **“Shota”**, directed by Muharrem Qena (Mehmetaj, 2020, p. 72), was filmed, with Ismail Peshku as the organizer and Afrim Spahiu as the cinematographer. Another film, **“Pikë e gurë”**, produced in 1979, was filmed by Rudolf Sopi, with Ekrem Kryeziu as the director. The director of the documentary **“Kur pranvera vonohet”** (When Spring Comes Late) from 1979 was Isa Qosja. The film deals with the time and the realization of a long, ambitious artistic film, which carries the same title, **“Kur pranvera vonohet”**” (ASHAK, 2011, p. 587).

The film **“Loja e rufaive”** (The Game of the Rufa'i), produced in 1979 and directed by Azem Shkreli and Gani Bobi, was filmed by Shukri Kaçaniku, Afrim Spahiu, and Murat Zeka, with editing by Skënder Cakolli. This documentary explores the ritual of the Rufa'i Sufi order, focusing on their mystical and oriental dance performed during their sacred night (Mehmetaj, 2020, p. 73). The film **“Dita e mërgimtarëve”** (Migrants Day), directed by Ekrem Kryeziu, was produced in 1980 (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 32).

Another film produced in 1980 by the film house “Kosovafilm” was **“Tepriçat”** (The Surplus), with Ekrem Kryeziu serving as both the screenwriter and director. This documentary received a Special Diploma for Direction at the Documentary and Short Film Festival in Belgrade in 1981 (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 32). The film **“Ngjyrat e dheut”** (Colors of the Soil) was made in 1983, directed by Fahri Hysaj (ASAK, 2011, p. 587). It is an engaging and vibrant recording that explores the working environment of an artist (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 32).

After twelve years, the film **“Doket dhe zakonet e shqiptarëve në Mal të Zi”** (Customs and Traditions of Albanians in Montenegro)

was produced, directed by Emin Halili, in 2003. “*The film offers a compelling depiction of a fading Albanian world, as traditional customs and ways of life slowly give way to modernity. Meanwhile, large-scale emigrations have contributed to the near extinction of the population in this Albanian region, leaving only the elderly behind*” (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 33).

Among the films produced by the film production house “Kosovafilm” are the documentaries “117” and “Dikur ishte Kosovafilmi” (Once Upon a Time There Was Kosovafilm), both of which will be discussed in the following sections as separate chapters. We consider these two films to be of particular importance to art enthusiasts and the wider public due to both their content and directorial treatment. The first film, in addition to its artistic value, offers a broader portrayal of traditional culture in Kosovo, while the second presents a concise history of the cinematography developed by “Kosovafilm” itself.

The Documentary Film “117”

The documentary film “117” was made by director Besim Sahatçiu in 1978. The cinematographer was Afrim Spahiu, the producer was Adil Begolli, the editor was Mentor Kaçi, the voice was provided by Sahit Sahiti, and the organizer was Ismail Peshku. The film was shot in 35mm color, showcasing a vibrant palette of colors that primarily highlighted the traditional costumes of the village of Nivakaz in Gjakova. It depicts the traditional lifestyle of an Albanian family living in a single stone tower. All family members live together in unity, emphasizing the great harmony they share among themselves. The scholar Kopi Kyçyku writes that the exemplary: “*harmony and sincere respect for the head of the family – who represented, so to speak, a tribe, a community, a traditional society in miniature – found its embodiment and concreteness in the serious and meticulous implementation of all his orders and instructions*” (Kyçyku, 2024). This documentary film is one of the most attractive and interesting productions ever filmed in Kosovo. On the Public Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK), in the program “Voyage” titled The Cinematography of Besim Sahatçiu, aired on 29.10.2023, journalist and director Korab Lecaj, among other points, emphasized that; “*this is one of the best Albanian documentary films ever made, from his perspective, particularly highlighting its unique approach – being filmed solely with a camera, without a narrator*” (RTK, 2023). In this documentary, the family is portrayed as an institution where each member is engaged in their own tasks, knows exactly

what they are responsible for, what their obligations are, and what they must contribute to the small family community over a twenty-four-hour period. Film critic Gani Mehmetaj notes that the director follows this family over a period of time, capturing them in various tasks and activities (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 31).

Through this film, director Sahatçiu managed to document many relics and “old ways” of living in the 1970s, a lifestyle that quickly disappeared with the industrialization and economic development of the time. In a way, this film represents the preservation of the spirit of a nation, serving as evidence of the cultural, family, and historical values of Albanian society in Kosovo. In an interview conducted by journalist S. Haliti for the daily newspaper “Rilindja”, when asked about the idea behind filming “117”, director Sahatçiu responded: “*I visited many families in different parts of Kosovo, but the most characteristic among them was the the Nivakazi family of 117 members from the village of the same name near Gjakova, where they had preserved the most authentic traits of both the people and the local environment*” (Haliti, 1978, p. 12). It is precisely this authenticity that the director highlights that makes the film an ethnographic one, presenting in detail the way of life of that time. The documentary was presented at the XXVth anniversary of the Yugoslav Documentary and Short Film Festival and won the “Grand Prix” award. The film was well received, with journalist S. Haliti writing: “*The festival audience warmly received this film, greeting it with frantic applause. According to general impressions, it was truly the most successful film of the evening’s program*” (Haliti, 1978, p. 22). The film’s screening was a success, earning the “Golden Plaque” at the Documentary and Short Film Festival in Belgrade in 1978 (Mehmetaj, 2010, p. 32).

The documentary adopts a unique approach, as it lacks a narrator and traditional interviews that provide direct, concrete information. Instead, the film’s content is created through the atmosphere of various shots that follow one another, driven by the actions and events that unfold. Each scene tells a story that reveals something new, beginning with cinematic shots such as wide views of a picturesque village, featuring stone towers, large walls, and stunning landscapes, all conveying the sense of a place preserved from the outside world.

Through the low-angle perspective, we are introduced to the central character of the narrative, both as the bearer of the story and the head of the household. The climbing of stairs from this perspective conveys the meaning of the difficulties and struggles he carries as he enters

the house. One of the few moments where text is used occurs when the head of the family addresses the camera, struggling to recall the last names of family members. Afrim Spahiu, the director of photography and a witness to the event, highlights in the program “Voyage” that: *“at the thirty-eight-minute mark, when the head of the family introduces the final members, he, standing behind the large camera, zoomed in as the head of the family struggled to remember their names. This shot, which captured Haziri’s best moment, inspired him deeply, making him realize that this family and their story are truly exceptional - possessing something that no one else in the world had”* (RTK, 2023). The following film shots mainly consist of various details, such as working in the yard, preparing firewood, preparing animal food, lighting the oven for cooking, fetching water, collecting milk, creating costumes, baking bread, and weaving materials. Additionally, we see details of people, such as children and primarily women performing household tasks, which together portray the dynamics and everyday routines of their lives. Each shot introduces something new, building upon the previous ones and including all age groups—from young children to adults and the elderly. Special focus is given to the daily household tasks, particularly the care of children, which is mainly carried out by women, while outdoor tasks, such as fieldwork and other physical labor, are assigned to men. Occasionally, there are also shots of domestic animals and birds, living in harmony with the family members. As night falls, a wide shot reveals the tower, followed by close-ups of the children eating. A panoramic shot then unveils three tables set only for the children, creating a beautiful scene of all of them gathered together. Director of photography Afrim Spahiu explains how, during the filming, they took time to familiarize the family with the process by doing some rehearsals before the shoot. Initially, the children were intimidated by the large camera, but they soon approached and turned it into a game. For one meal, there were three tables set for the children, three for the women, and three for the men and the elders. A great deal of organizational work was done to ensure that the family enjoyed the experience, which is clearly evident in the scenes. The detail of the cat eating alongside the children conveys a sense of humanity, continuing into the next room, where Haziri, the head of the family, divides the bread into equal portions (RTK, 2023). In the close-ups of the men’s faces, we observe the wrinkles that tell the story of the suffering and struggles they have endured. Later in the evening, an intimate close-up of the head of the fam-

ily's face, as he converses with the men of the house during a "meeting", shows them making plans for the upcoming days and dividing the tasks. All the men, focused and captured in close shots, receive instructions for their upcoming duties.

The next scene appears on the small TV in the house, and then, as the camera moves, a wide shot reveals several family members watching attentively as information about computers is discussed.

In the same angle as at the beginning of the film, the children, lined up, descend the stairs, coming towards the camera. This recursive shot takes on an entirely different meaning, portraying the children as "heroes" or the future of the household. The director uses this moment to convey the message that the children must be oriented towards education and a brighter future. The shots of the children walking to school in various locations, facing different risks, along with the accompanying music, create a dramatic effect filled with hope. In the final shot, the window of the tower is seen in the foreground, while in the background, the children walk towards school, leaving behind the tower – the place from which they came out – for their purposes.

The film was shown at the International Documentary and Short Film Festival "Dokufest" (Fondacioni Lumbardhi, 2024), in a special screening, followed by a seven-day workshop of the Experimental Ensemble of Lumëbardhi. Led by Ilir Bajri, the musicians composed and produced a live soundtrack for the documentary, filling the experience with emotions through audio. The 22 members of the Ensemble were positioned on stage beneath the screen, where the visual part was displayed, while the live music performance was carried out in real-time. *"This was a true treat for eyes and ears while immersing in a small piece of Kosovo's history"* (Dokufest, 2024).

The documentary film "Dikur ishte Kosovafilmi"

The last documentary film produced by this film house, **"Dikur ishte Kosovafilmi"** (Once Upon a Time There Was Kosovafilm), directed by Isa Qosja, was made in 2003. *"The film offers a retrospective of "Kosovafilm", a once-successful institution that experienced both highs and lows. It produced some of the most notable films in Albanian cinema in Kosovo, but also faced a period of inactivity due to a lack of financial resources and insufficient state support"* (Mehmetaj, 2020, p. 75).

The documentary begins with actor Faruk Begolli, who talks about the early development of cinematography in Kosovo (Qosja,

2003). It then continues with director Besim Sahatçiu, who explains how the first documentary film, “117”, was made about a large family in a village in Kosovo. Filmed with great enthusiasm, Sahatçiu directed the project as part of Kosova-film. *The film was shot over four days using a complete set of borrowed equipment, according to director Sahatçiu* (Qosja, 2003). The next interview features Ekrem Kryeziu, who talks about his film “Kur pranvera vonohet” and its artistic values. Producer Ismail Peshku, in the interview, shares insights into the premises of the film house, where Kosovafilm’s films were supported and produced. Film editor Agron Vula reflects on the opportunities the film house provided him when he was first entrusted with editing the feature film “Lepuri me pesë këmbë” (The Five-Legged Rabbit) while still a student. Ismail Imeri, the director of this film, describes how a project as significant as “Lepuri me pesë këmbë” was entrusted to a student who had yet to complete his film studies. The trust placed in those studying various aspects of cinematography enabled the film house to begin producing films by Kosovo-based authors. As director Imeri notes, this film was awarded the Golden Arena for music at the Pula Film Festival. In the early 1980s, a different constellation of film scholars returned from various academies in the former Yugoslavia, as director Agim Sopi recalls (Qosja, 2003). Azem Shkreli, the director of Kosova-film at the time, invited them to discuss and debate the idea of establishing cinematography in Kosovo. This initiative laid the foundation for the country’s cinematic development. The 1980s generation also included cinematographer (director of photography) Mendu Nushi, who was entrusted with working on several film projects of that time. His first major project as a cinematographer for a feature film was in “Njeriu prej dheu” (Man of Soil), directed by Agim Sopi. After its premiere, the film was shown for only two days before its screening was banned. It was later reinstated with one condition – it had to be re-edited and several scenes had to be reshot. These changes, as Nushi explains in the documentary, were ordered by the regime of the time (Qosja, 2003). Director Isa Qosja, in an interview, explains that: “*in the 1980s, “Kosovafilm”, under the direction of Azem Shkreli, established a principle whereby new filmmakers, trained in various European countries, were engaged by Kosova-film*” (Qosja, 2003).. In 1983, Qosja joined the film house for the project titled “Ura” (The Bridge), which marked a new starting point for the style and language of film in Kosovo. Meanwhile, “Kosovafilm” received the script for “Njeriu prej dheu”, which was considered a very serious project. As a result, the funds initially allocated for

the film “Ura” were redirected to this script, while the remaining part of the funds was used for the film “Proka”, also directed by Isa Qosja. Eqrem Basha, the screenwriter of the film “Proka”, recounts a conversation he had with Anton Pashku about the short story of the same title by Filip Papajani, which provided a sufficient foundation for creating the film. In 1985, the film “Proka” was shot, marking the beginning of Kosovo’s cinematic journey, represented by “Kosova-film”. Through this film and its artistic values, it was demonstrated not only to the public in Kosovo but also internationally that our filmmakers had the potential to develop true cinema – a potential that was forcefully suppressed by the regime in the 1990s (Qosja, 2003). Emin Halili, another young film professional, was entrusted with the next project, “Pikniku” (The Picnic) in 1985, which was later featured in the Pula Film Festival. With the release of “Proka”, collaboration with broader figures from the former Yugoslavia came to an end, paving the way for local filmmakers to independently produce films and projects without external support. This was exemplified by the subsequent film, “Rojet e Mjegullës” (The Keepers of the Fog), which was made in 1987, after which the curtain on Kosovar cinema fell due to violent repression. The production of Kosovar films was interrupted, and we were all left in the corners of this city, in a state of despair under the oppressive atmosphere of the time – a period that was foreshadowed in “Rojet e Mjegullës” (Qosja, 2003). This film was awarded for its music at the Yugoslav Film Festival, receiving the Golden Arena at Pula. Following the festival, the film faced criticism from several journalists and filmmakers of the time, who identified unacceptable political implications and connotations in its content. Although nominated for many awards, it won only one. It was invited to several festivals, but was ultimately denied participation, as stated by the cinematographer of the film, Mendu Nushi (Qosja, 2003). The film house also had a distribution department, where numerous films found success, with the local film “Rojet e Mjegullës” standing out as the most-watched. Bedri Hysa, a writer of the time, stated in this documentary that it was a great misfortune that “Kosovafilm” had ceased to operate due to a lack of financial resources, and emphasized the need to revive this institution and bastion of our art in Kosovo.

This documentary provides a general overview of the entire body of work of this film house, revealing, step by step, the processes and challenges it encountered throughout its existence. Not only does the film highlight a segment of the history of Kosovar cinema, but it also

documents the entire creative journey of those who were part of “Kosovafilm”. The film passionately conveys the ideals of various Kosovar filmmakers, who, despite numerous challenges, managed to contribute, albeit modestly, to the growth of cinema. The film concludes with a series of documentary photographs that capture and testify to the complete development of “Kosovafilm”.

Conclusion

Considering that the language of motion pictures in film, television, and video allows people to understand the past as a valuable record of times gone by, we can confidently say that the documentary films of “Kosovafilm” have successfully demonstrated this by documenting the social, spiritual, cultural, and historical life of Albanians in Kosovo and beyond. Furthermore, these films contributed to the emancipation of society by bringing a variety of themes to the screen, which the creators of these films explored with great passion and dedication, down to the finest details.

It is important to emphasize that this paper has dedicated a significant portion to the two documentary films, “117” by director Besim Sahatçiu and “Dikur ishte Kosovafilmi” by director Isa Qosja. These films were thoroughly analyzed and examined, considering the sensitivity of the themes and the significance they hold in the way they are treated. The film “117” showcases significant aspects of our Albanian traditions, customs, and culture, with particular focus on the concept of family as an institution that has influenced our social development. The second film, directed by Qosja, also presents a valuable historical contribution, encompassing personalities and other accompanying elements that were part of the contribution to and development of Kosovar cinematography.

Considering the time in which they were made, we can confidently say that all of these documentary films played a significant role in preserving and documenting cultural and social values, thus becoming an archive in itself, not only for scholars of cinematography but also for other fields of study.

Bibliography

- Adler, A. (2009).** *Shkenca e të jetuarit*. Fan Noli. Tiranë.
- Agjencia Shtetore e Arkivave të Kosovë (ASHAK). (1979)** “*Platforma e bisedimeve të Sekretariatit Krahinorë të Arsimit, Shkencës dhe Kulturës, me Ministrin*

e Arsimit e të Kulturës të RPS të Shqipërisë”, Sekretariati Krahinorë i Arsimit, Shkencës dhe Kulturës. 11 Nowember 1979. Prishtinë.

ASHAK. (2011). *Kosova – Vështrim monografik*. Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosovës. Prishtinë.

Babac, M. (2000). *Jezik montaže pokretnih slika*. Clio. Beograd / Novi Sad.

Balazs, B. (2008). *Filmkultura*. Albin. Tiranë.

Bazin, A. (2012). *Ç’është kinemaja?* Zenit. Tiranë.

Dokufest. (2024). “117 Resounded” a true treat for the eyes and ears. Online <https://dokufest.com/en/festival/2023/dokustories/117-resounded-a-true-treat-for-the-eyes-and-ears>. International Documentary and Short Film Festival.

F.G. (1969). *Nga seanca e njëmbëdhjetë e dhomës arsimore – kulturore. U suprimua shkolla e lartë teknike në Prishtinë*. Rilindja, 25 February 1969. Prishtinë.

Fon, I. (2014). *Regjia filmike dhe skenari filmik*. albPAPER. Tiranë.

Fondacioni Lumbardhi (2024). *117 resounded: Ansambli eksperimental i lumbardhit*. [Video] YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntEANIYnOUw>

Haliti, S. (1978). *Fillimi nuk premtonte shumë*. Rilindja. 19 March 1978. Prishtinë.

Haliti, S. (1978). *Të jesh i qartë për të gjithë*. Rilindja. 1 April 1978. Prishtinë.

Kyçyku, K. (2024). *Besim Sahatçiu, pionieri i regjisurës së mirëfilltë shqiptare në Kosovë*. Online <https://kkkycku.blogspot.com/2010/10/kopi-kyckyku-essen-non-vidare.html>

Malcolm, N. (2019). *Kosova: Një histori e shkurtër*. KOHA. Prishtinë.

Mehmetaj, G. (1981). *Nga veprimtaria e KosovaFilmit. Rrugë e mbarë drejt konsolidimit*. Rilindja. 10 April 1981. Prishtinë.

Mehmetaj, G. (1984). *Ku e kemi filmin dokumentar*. Rilindja. 16 March 1984. Prishtinë.

Mehmetaj, G. (2010). *Sharmi i Filmit (Kosovafilm në 40 pamje)*. Kosovafilm. Prishtinë.

Mehmetaj, G. (2020). *Katalogu i filmave artistikë dhe dokumentarë*. Kosovafilm. Prishtinë.

Qosja, I. (Director). (2003). *Dikur ishte Kosovafilmi* [Documentary film]. Kosovafilm. Prishtinë.

Radio Televizioni i Kosovës (RTK). (2023). *Voyage*. Kinematografia e Besim Sahatçiu. [Video] YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqlmPKAwSek>

Rilindja. (1969). *Edhe zyrtarisht — “Kosova-Film”*. Rilindja. 14 March 1978. Prishtinë.

Schmitt, O. J. (2012). *Kosova – Histori e shkurtër e një treve qendrore ballkanike*. KOHA. Prishtinë.

Schmitt, O. J. (2021). *Ballkani në shekullin XX. Një histori post-imperiale*. Botime, Artini. Prishtinë.

Shita, Vehap. (1971). *Rruga e Kinematografisë Shqiptare*. Rilindja. 21 March 1971. Prishtinë.

Uçi, A. (2008). *Estetika metateorike mbi artin (Vol. 1)*. Kristalina KH. Tiranë.