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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF DOCUMENTARY FILM

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada jahon hujjatli filmining kelib chiqishi va shakllanish jarayoni haqida so‘z boradi. Hujjatli filmning ilk namoyandalari va ularning kinoshunoslikka qo’shgan hissasi e’tirof etiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: hujjatli film, operator, kadr, visual san’at, John Grierson.

Abstract: This article discusses the origins and developing process of world documentary cinema. It acknowledges the early pioneers of documentary film and their contributions to the field of film studies.

Keywords: Documentary film, cinematographer, frame, visual art, John Grierson.

A **documentary film** is a major form of **audiovisual art**. Unlike feature films, it relies solely on **real-life facts and events**. This type of cinematography can convey any **emotion or catharsis** that a fictional film may present, but based on actual events happening or that have happened in reality.

The initial step in the development of documentary cinema began directly with the **invention of the film camera by the Lumière brothers** in France in **1895**. The short video clips first captured on this camera—such as *Workers Leaving the Factory* or *Feeding the Baby*—align with the features of what we now describe as “documentary film.” The **documentary nature** of these films is reflected in their reliance on **natural realism and accuracy**. While the Lumière brothers were establishing their film industry and winning the hearts of audiences in Paris, **Charles and Émile Pathé** launched their own film company, *Pathé-Frères*, in **Great Britain**. In **1908**, they began showcasing **newsreels**, transforming *Pathé-Frères* into one of the **largest film companies in the world**.

Pathé-Frères newsreels were **short films** that reported real events and news stories from around the world. According to the “History of Cinema” section in the *Britannica* international encyclopedia, *Pathé* began opening **foreign trade agencies**, which soon evolved into full production studios: *Hispano Film* (1906), *Pathé-Rouss* in Moscow (1907), *Film d'Arte Italiano* (1909), *Pathé-Britannia* in London (1909), and *Pathé-America* (1910)[1]. These studios played a significant role in the **early development of documentary film** as we define it today. The *Pathé* newsreels, like the Lumière films, **informed the public through images alone**, without a narrator’s voice. These films were also shown in **designated venues and cinemas** for audiences.

[1] “History of film 1830-1910” Robert Sklar, David A. Cook Britannica eksikloperdiaysidagi maqola https://www.britannica.com/art/history-of-film/Melies-and-Porter#ref507938

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The true **creative spirit of documentary cinema** first emerged during the **1920s** with **Dziga Vertov** and his team, particularly during the revolutionary period. Dziga Vertov, a young poet and film editor, was involved in producing **educational newsreels** that played a vital role in the struggles of the Russian Revolution.

Vertov established the **"Kino-Pravda"** (*Film-Truth*) movement, which laid the **ideological foundation for documentary film**. *Kino-Pravda* was a series of newsreels that presented real events vividly and without alteration. They were produced between **1922 and 1925** by the Soviet studio **Goskino**. Vertov showcased his unique style to the world through his silent experimental film **"Kino-Eye"** (*Cine-Eye*). One of the innovative techniques he first introduced in *Kino-Eye*—and later developed further in *Man with a Movie Camera*—was the **composition of sequences according to the laws of poetry**. Instead of editing scenes in strict chronological order, he **interwove episodes** according to musical rhythm and his own visual concepts[2]. *Kino-Eye* is regarded as the **first poetic-style documentary film**. Vertov's fundamental principle in the world of documentary cinema was to **portray reality without distortion**, without taking sides, and without promoting a specific ideology. His film *Man with a Movie Camera* reflected the joy of continuously experimenting with the camera's ability to film, edit, and re-edit street life. **The contribution of the film *Man with a Movie Camera* to world cinema is invaluable.** It demonstrated the possibility of filming with **free movement**, the **absence of ideological constraints** for the filmmaker, and revealed to the audience the **true artistic value of documentary cinema**. In this regard, film scholar and critic **Kirill Goryechok**, in his academic article *"Dziga Vertov and Walt Whitman: Poetic Imagery in Documentaries,"* analyzes Vertov's work as follows: "In his early manifestos, the director developed the idea of combining **organic and mechanical evolution**. Technology allows humans to make the next evolutionary leap; it extends their senses: the movie camera sees what is beyond the human eye. Thus, cinema is tasked with expanding the viewer's consciousness and their perspective of the surrounding world."

Additionally, theorist and film scholar **M. Bleiman** notes the following about Dziga Vertov's creative work[3]: "Although Vertov rejected the art of staging, he strived to create a new form of art based on **real-life facts**. There was indeed a contradiction here. In particular, in *Kino-Eye* and *Man with a Movie Camera*, he attempted to discover **new structures for cinematic expression**, and perhaps even unintentionally touched on certain principles of **visual poetics**. He constructed the imagery of these films based on the **laws of lyricism**, choosing material not according to a

2 Свилова. Дзига Вертов в воспоминаниях современников. — Москва, 1976 / с. 60

[3] К. Горячок. "Дзига Вертов и Уолт Уитмен: поэтический образ в документальном кино" ilmiy maqola UDK 18; 7.01; 791.43; 791.45 https://doi.org/10.32603/2412-8562-2022-8-1-51-63 b.55

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narrative sequence, but **associatively**, affirming unity through the repetition of **poetic imagery and rhythm**."[4]

Although **Dziga Vertov** laid the foundation of documentary filmmaking, the term **"documentary film"** was officially recognized by global filmmakers only after it was first used by **Scottish director John Grierson** in his review of **Robert Flaherty's film *Moana***. **John Grierson** is considered the **founder of British and Canadian documentary cinema**. It was he who coined the term *"documentary film"* in **1926**, and from that point on, documentary became recognized as a distinct genre in the world of cinema. In his 1932 essay titled **"First Principles of Documentary"**, Grierson presented the following ideas: "…It is necessary to use cinema's ability to observe life as a new form of art; *real* actors and *real* settings can interpret the modern world more effectively than their fictional counterparts. Material drawn from *real life* may be more impactful than artificially created scenes."

With this perspective, **John Grierson** partially aligns with **Dziga Vertov's ideological stance** on documentary filmmaking. Grierson defined a documentary as the **"creative treatment of actuality".** This, in turn, implies that **staging and reconstruction** can be legitimate elements of documentary cinema. Such ideas have led to **philosophical debates** among later generations of documentary filmmakers. This topic is examined in detail in **Chapter 3, Section 1** of the dissertation.

The concept of **creatively reworking reality** is, without a doubt, a perfect description of **Robert Flaherty's** work in Western cinematography. As the founder of the **American school of documentary film**, Flaherty is also one of the earliest filmmakers in the documentary world. His film *Nanook of the North* (1922) is recognized as the **first full-length documentary film**.

Although it should be noted that there were longer documentary films before this, one of them—*In the Army* (1900), a British training film—was made solely for military personnel to demonstrate protocol. Another, *The Anniversary of the Revolution* (1918) by Dziga Vertov, was compiled entirely from archival materials.

Unlike Vertov, Flaherty used **narrative and artistic editing techniques** to arrange his shots, scenes, and landscapes. While *Nanook of the North* may at first seem like an excellent example of **Cinéma Vérité**, many scenes were **reconstructed or staged** for the sake of the film's dramatic structure. The film attracted large audiences both in the United States and internationally, grossing **$251,000 worldwide**—a substantial success at the time. *Nanook* became so famous that news of the protagonist's death was published in newspapers and

[4] Е. И. Вертова-Свилова, А. Л. Виноградова. Дзига Вертов в воспоминаниях современников / Общая редакция доктора искусствоведения И. Я. Вайсфельда. – Москва : «Искусство», 1976. — 280 с., ил.(Мастера кино в воспоминаниях современников).

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magazines even in faraway places like **Tokyo** and **Singapore**. This marked the **first major global achievement** of the documentary film as a cinematic genre[5]

The period when newsreels became most widespread among the public was the **1930s**. This was directly linked to the introduction of **sound recording technology** into the film industry. It enabled the addition of **voice-over commentary** by a narrator to the footage of real events. It is important to note that **television had not yet been invented** during this period. Therefore, for people to receive news in an **audiovisual format**, newsreels were the only available medium.

The remarkable works of **Dziga Vertov, Robert Flaherty, and John Grierson** have been studied extensively by numerous film scholars. Among the most notable are **L. M. Roshal** [6], **S. Ushakina**[7], **J. Hicks**[8], **Annette Michelson**[9], **John MacKay**[10], **Top Dominik**[11], **F. H. Flaherty**[12], **W. T. Murphy**[13], **Paul Rotha**[14], **Karzan Kardozi**, and **John Grierson**[15] himself. Although documentary cinema has evolved rapidly through various eras and movements, enhancing its essence and significance to this day, it has been noted that the sincere faces of ordinary people captured in the film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* have remained in the memory of early audiences for many years.

Regarding the film *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, Russian filmmaker **Andrei Tarkovsky**, in a lecture by **Vadim Skuratovsky** dedicated to the *115th anniversary of cinema*,

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[5] Christopher, Robert J. Robert and Frances Flaherty: a documentary life, 1883-1922. / 1968

[6] Рошаль Л. М. Дзига Вертов. 1982. – 264 с.

[7] С. Ушакина. Дзига Вертов: Киновещь/ Формальный метод: Антология русского модернизма. с. 11 – 180. – ISBN 978-5-7525-2996-2.

[8] J. Hicks. Dziga Vertov: defining documentary film – London, New York: I.B. Tauris, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. – 94 p.

[9] Anette Michaelson. Kino-eye: Writings of Dziga Vertov. University of California Press. 1984. – 406 p.

[10] John Mackay. Dziga Vertov: Life and work. 2018. – 468 p.

[11] PHD dissertation Topp Dominic. The Representation of Politics: The Films of Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group, 1967-1972. 2015.

[12] F. H. Flaherty. The Odyssey of a Film-Maker : Robert Flaherty's Story. 1984. 61p.

[13] W. T. Murphy. Robert Flaherty: A guide to references and resources (A Reference publication in film). – G. K. Hall, 1978. 171p.

[14] Paul Rotha, Jay Ruby. Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography. – University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984. 359p.

[15] John Grierson. Documentary news letter. vol 5 – 1944. 170p

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remarked: "It was only after many years that I truly realized the greatness of the Lumière brothers' early films. Their greatness lies in their simplicity, sincerity, and uniqueness. Look—the train arrives at an ordinary station, and from it, people get off without paying any attention to the camera, then disperse across the town of Perron. The Lumière films will forever remain in humanity's aesthetic, social, and cultural history—they are, in a word, invaluable treasures."Tarkovsky described the first shots filmed by the Lumière brothers as **"masterpieces[16]."**

In addition to the pioneering figures of documentary film such as Dziga Vertov, Robert Flaherty, and John Grierson, it is also important to highlight the fundamental research conducted in the global field of documentary cinema by film scholars like **J. Sadoul and A. Bazin** from France, **B. Balázs** from Hungary, Russian theorists **L. N. Djulay, G. S. Prozhiko, and S. V. Droboshenko**, and German sociologist **Siegfried Kracauer**. These scholars not only comprehensively covered the historical evolution and artistic diversity of documentary film, but also analyzed the spiritual and philosophical significance of individual films. Their works explore the impact of visual and verbal narrative on human consciousness.

World documentary cinema has gone through many stages in terms of its genres, forms, and structures. Among these are Dziga Vertov's *Kino-Pravda* movement, the *Direct Cinema* stream developed by American and Canadian documentarians, and the *Cinéma Vérité* movement that emerged from protests by French documentary filmmakers. The features emphasized by John Grierson and Bill Nichols's analysis of documentary modes have come to define today's standards in this field.

These theoretical foundations of documentary cinema undergo various transformations during the creative process. Naturally, such transformations cannot occur without creative experimentation in film production. In this regard, the contributions of prominent global documentary filmmakers—such as Andrei Nekrasov, Jean Rouch, Chris Marker, Frederick Wiseman, Robert Drew, David Maysles, Joshua Oppenheimer, Werner Herzog, Wang Bing, and Marcel Lozinski—are considered invaluable.

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2. Svilova. Dziga Vertov in the Memories of His Contemporaries. — Moscow, 1976 / p. 60

[16] I.K. nomidagi Kiev Milliy teatr, kino va televidenie universiteti professori ma'ruzalari. Karpenko-Kari, san'atshunoslik fanlari doktori, Ukraina Badiiy akademiyasining akademigi Vadim Skuratovskiy 2010 yil 1 sentyabrda Kievda, Olimlar uyida "Polit.ua ommaviy ma'ruzalari" loyihasi doirasida o'qidi.

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