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SALT FOR SVANETIA (SOL SVANETII). 1930. Directed by Mikhail Kalatozov. Screenplay by Mikhail Kalatozov from an idea by Sergei Tretyakov. Photography by Mikhail Kalatozov and Sh. Gegelashvili. 54 minutes. (Silent, 18 fps, English intertitles). Rental: \$45.

Long unavailable, this film is one of the most disturbing and visually breathtaking documentaries in the history of the genre. In recording the adverse conditions of life in Svanetia, an isolated mountain valley ringed by the Caucasus range, the film provides an interesting parallel to Luis Bunuel's LAND WITHOUT BREAD (1932), which concerns the hardships faced by the people of the Las Hurdas region of Spain.

As the title implies, the basic problem faced by Svanetia is its lack of local salt deposits and its need to import the life-supporting substance from surrounding communities. But due to the climate and snow conditions, the isolated inhabitants of Svanetia can cross the mountain pass to bring back salt only during a short period of the year.

The film documents the horrifying results of this deprivation: a cow drinking human urine, a dog licking the salt from the placental fluid of a new-born baby, the religious/superstitious rites that are practiced in hopes of alleviating the misery. The end of the film didactically champions the constructions of a Soviet-built road, issued in the 5-Year Plan, that will end Svanetia's geographical and cultural isolation.

Note: Attached are the English translations of the Russian intertitles for the film. They will be edited into the print at the time of the film's release by the Department of Film.