

Indonesia calling, preserving Indonesia's collective memory through a documentary film

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ABSTRACT

Documentary film is the founding genre of the cinema. The original imperative of that genre was to record existing human, social, physical and natural reality. Documentary film is thus, always was, and ever will be, intrinsically related to issues of realism and realistic representation. This study aims to show that a documentary film plays role in the preservation of collective memory and in the enhancement of a national sense of unity in a global community. A documentary film of Joris Ivens's Indonesia Calling (1946) was chosen, since this film tells about heroic movement of Indonesian people defending the independence of Republic of Indonesia in foreign country namely Australia. In addition, this film records and represents the close relation between Indonesia and Australia in revolution era. This is preliminary study using qualitative approach, based on library research. The study concludes that a documentary film, with its ability to capture, to storage and to visualize a representation of past-real event, can preserve collective memory of a nation in longer term. Other aspects regarded aspects of its film also discussed.

Keywords: Knowledge Preservation; Collective Memory; Documentary Film; Knowledge Management; Indonesian History

INTRODUCTION

Documentary film is the founding genre of the cinema and, just like still photography before it, the original imperative of that genre was to record existing human, social, physical and natural reality. Documentary film is thus, always was, and ever will be, intrinsically related to issues of realism and realistic representation, and this affiliation has certainly influenced the development of the medium up to the present day (Aitken, 2013). It begins in the last years of the nineteenth century (1895) with the first films ever projected soon after Lumiere brothers made their films for the first period. Since then, humans and events can be seen living and happening through a presentation of visualization. It can be a trip to exotic lands and lifestyles, as was *Nanook of the North* (1922). It can be a visual poem, such as Joris Ivens's *Rain* (1929) which is a story about a rainy day, set to a piece of classical music, in which the storm echoes the structure of the music (Aufderheide, 2007). Also it can be an artful piece of propaganda, such as Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946) – a story about the struggle of Indonesian Seamen in Australia to defend Independence of Republic of Indonesia and to prevent the re-

colonization of Republic of Indonesia by refusing to work on Dutch-chartered ships bound for archipelago.

Individuals who ever made documentary films can be regarded as historiographer since they recreate and reconstruct the history. By this understanding, a documentary film is regarded as historiography. Documentary films thus create sites for remembering, by rewriting history through representations in visualization. As (Young, 1988) puts it, 'what is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered and how its events are remembered depends in turn on the texts now giving them form'. These various texts, which include monuments, literature, diaries and films, are diverse and incomparable commemoration practices as they are positioned differently in the public domain and also in (popular) culture (Leeuw, 2007).

A documentary film tells a story about real life, but it is not a real life nor even a window onto real life. It is portrait of real life, using real life as its raw material, constructed by actors and technicians, and directed by a director to decide about what story to be reconstructed and to whom it will be delivered (Aufderheide, 2007). Among the purposes of documentary film is to preserve memories of the past from given communities or social groups as identified by Aitken (2013). Included in these kinds of memory is collective memory of a nation.

This study aims to show that a documentary film plays role in the preservation of collective memory and in the enhancement of a national sense of unity in a global community. For this purpose, a documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946) was chosen, since this film tells about heroic movement of Indonesian people defending the independence of Republic of Indonesia in foreign country namely Australia. In addition, this film records and represents the close relation between Indonesia and Australia. By exploring this film, it gives us a deeper understanding that Indonesia has a same right with other countries as an independent country and cannot be directed by foreign states.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief concept of collective memory: Collective memory is a term that is widely used, yet poorly understood in contemporary academic discourse. It has been part of this discourse at least since the 1920s, when the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs published his seminal works. In *Memory from A to Z*, Yadin Dudai (2002, p. 51) remarked that "The term 'collective memory' actually refers to three entities: a body of knowledge, an attribute, and a process". The body of knowledge is a feature of the culture of the individuals who share some similarity, and individuals may participate in various different groups (with different collective memories) defined by generation, countries of origin, locale (e.g., Texans), and so on. The attribute is "the distinctive holistic image of the past in the group" (e.g., World War II veterans in the US who are referred to as "the greatest generation" by some). The process is the continual evolution of understanding between the individual and the group, as individuals may influence and change the collective memory of the group, and the group can change the individual's understanding and consciousness of being a member of the group (for more

on this topic, see Reese & Fivush, 2008 this issue). These three entities capture some (but not all) of the various senses of collective memory used by scholars in different academic disciplines (Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008).

Although portions of the collective memory can be encoded in individual brains, as a whole, both the formation and the retention of this type of memory is an emergent property of the group (*reduction). Collective memory is a primitive of human societies. Together with other ingredients of culture, it permits non-genetic information to transcend the limited lifespan of individuals (Dudai, 2002).

Regardless of the approaches and premises that are being regarded in memory studies, they are generally rooted to an idea developed by Maurice Halbwachs in *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire* written in 1925. He was the first sociologist to use the term “collective memory” and his work was considered as the foundational framework for the study of societal remembrance. Halbwachs suggested that all individual memory was constructed within social structures and institutions. He claimed that only through a group context that includes families, organizations, and nation-states, understanding individual private memory can be grasped. Halbwachs argued that the only individual memories that are not constructed through the group context are images from dreams. Individuals organize and understand events and concepts within a social context, thus they then remember them in a way that “rationally” orders and organizes them through that same social construction. Every collective memory, as stated by Halbwachs (1925), depends upon specific groups that are canned by space and time; the group constructs the memory and the individuals do the work of remembering.

According to what has been reflected by (Halbwachs, 1925) that remembering is a process done by constructing some other external factors that requires aids to retrieve and recall the memory. These aids are sometimes organic (such as smell or sound), and at other times, they are social. Accordingly, memories are set in both temporal and spatial frameworks, while the images of collective memory focus on particular people, events, and spatial reference points (Hoteit, 2015).

Around the end of the 20th century, studies of the collective memory were extended and a new related concept came to life. This was referred to as the site of memory. Pierre Nora writes about the site of memory in his 1984 book *Les Lieux de Mémoire*. According to Nora, a “*lieu de mémoire*” or site of memory is a distinguished entity – concrete or abstract – that has changed, either due to people’s voluntary will or due to time, into a symbol embodying the cultural heritage of a given society. Furthermore, site of memory is a cultural reserve of the memory that has been accumulated and saved because of its historical, spiritual or symbolic relevance. Such sites of memory can include geographical places or historical figures, forms of art, architecture, monuments, symbols, documentary film, etc (Hoteit, 2015).

Documentary films thus proves to be sites of memory or “*lieu de mémoire*”, by rewriting history through representations in visualization. As Young (1988: 1) puts it, 'what is remembered of the Holocaust depends on how it is remembered and how its events are remembered depends in turn on the texts now giving them form'. These various texts, which include monuments, literature, diaries and films, are diverse and incomparable

commemoration practices as they are positioned differently in the public domain and also in (popular) culture (Leeuw, 2007).

Preservation of Collective Memory through Documentary Film: The encoding and stability of collective memory are of extreme importance to issues of national and international policy, social policy, economy, war, and peace. Sectarian and national myths are still major powers on the national and international arenas. But not only there. Collective memory has a role in selecting and constructing our attitude toward nature and science as well (Eder, 1996). In this sense, collective memory needs to be preserved so it can be passed to next generation of given social group (society, community, organization, nation).

As Dudai (2002) states that collective memory is kind of knowledge that is regarded as one of three entities a term “collective memory” refers to, its preservation activity uses the same way as knowledge preservation process. The process of knowledge preservation involves three basic stages (or processes) of knowledge management: selection, storage, and actualization. These phases, known as the three main stages of knowledge/collective memory preservation (Agrifoglio, 2015).

First stage is selection that concerns the identification of knowledge/collective memory that may be useful in the future and therefore should be captured and protected. One cannot preserve all the information available to them. Among all facts and events they witness, they should select only those that are worth preserving. The guiding rule should be to preserve only information that will be usable for a third party in the future. The second stage of knowledge/collective memory preservation is storage. This stage enables individuals to save the captured knowledge/collective memory base in a suitable form. After selecting the knowledge that is worth protecting, they must effectively store it. There are three forms of storage of organization knowledge/collective memory: individual, collective and electronic. The third stage, the last stage of knowledge preservation is the actualization of previously stored knowledge (Agrifoglio, 2015).

Behind The Scene of a Documentary Film of Indonesia Calling: Joris Ivens was Holland filmmaker, and was commissioned to film the Dutch liberation of Indonesia from Japanese rule and to establish a colonial film production service. The Netherlands East Indies had been conquered and occupied by the Japanese during World War II, but, as the war was ending, the Dutch sought to re-take their colonial possession. However, having endured colonisation and war-time occupation, the Indonesians were unwilling to see their islands return to Dutch control. The American bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic weapons ended the war in the Pacific. The Japanese surrender unleashed the struggle for independence in Indonesia. In the ensuing chaos, British armed forces moved into areas around Batavia, Java, to secure post-war Indonesia on behalf of The Netherlands. Skirmishes between the British troops, Dutch units and armed Indonesian youth escalated. Indonesian Independence was declared on 17 August 1945, scuppering The Netherlands' hopes of a peaceful resumption of colonial rule (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

Following his acceptance of the position, Ivens had flown to Australia to assemble a film crew and to await the Dutch re-conquest of its occupied colony. Once the film unit was established, Ivens planned to make a five-part film about Indonesia's liberation. Refused entry to Indonesia because of adverse security reports, Ivens could not make any film of its 'liberation' on behalf of Dutch colonialism. Under an order from General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Pacific, Ivens was banned from all war zones. Prior to this ban, Ivens had arranged for the American Army and Hollywood film companies to ship war footage and film equipment to Australia for the film unit's use. American and Dutch security sabotaged Ivens' plans by reassigning the footage and equipment to a Dutch freighter which sailed to Batavia in the first days of the boycott (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

Stranded in Sydney, unable and eventually unwilling to make films for the Dutch government in exile, Ivens witnessed on Sydney's waterfront the repercussions of the Indonesian independence movement. The turmoil of World War II had left many Indonesian seamen marooned in Australian ports. With the war at an end, these seamen tried to prevent the re-colonisation of Indonesia by refusing to work on Dutch-chartered ships bound for the archipelago. Many Indonesian soldiers mutinied by walking off Dutch troopships in Sydney, demanding their freedom, and independence for Indonesia (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

It was not only the presence of Indonesian seamen that made Indonesian independence an immediate and electric issue in Australia. In the exigencies of World War II, the Australian government provided The Netherlands East Indies government in exile with its own extraterritoriality over military camps, barracks, administrative offices, hostels, airfields and workshops in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Fremantle. In 1943, the Dutch reestablished a prison camp near Casino, New South Wales, for Indonesian political prisoners transported from Tanah Merah Digul, west New Guinea. When the war ended, the 300 Indonesian prisoners held at Casino demanded to be repatriated to Indonesia. Indonesian guards serving at the Casino prison echoed this demand and they too were incarcerated. A food strike staged at the Casino prison led to one prisoner being killed and another wounded by Dutch guards (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

Australian Trade Unions launched a campaign in support of Indonesian independence, imposing black bans on Dutch-controlled ships bound for the Indonesian islands. The ACTU and thirty trade unions led by the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Australian Seamen's Union enforced and supported the bans. The bans ensured that Dutch-chartered ships would not be loaded or manned, and halted temporarily the Dutch attempt to regain Indonesia by force (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

Indonesian seamen and Australian trade unions were joined in their boycott by Australian-based Chinese, Malay and Indian seamen, who also refused to crew Dutch-controlled ships. Knowing little about what was happening inside Indonesia because of Dutch military censorship, Ivens was deeply moved by the solidarity of the struggle for Indonesian independence in Australia. He felt betrayed by Dutch officialdom and its subsequent actions in Indonesia. Ivens believed that the Indonesian liberation struggle was to be supported unconditionally. His position as a colonial film commissioner had become untenable. Between late September 1945 and November 1945, Ivens retained

his official title even as his subversive film work advocated Indonesian independence (Cottle & Keys, 2009).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This is preliminary research using qualitative approach, based on library research. This approach is done by collating, analyzing and interpreting data to reach acceptable generalizations. This research was conducted by analyzing historical records and documents, reviewing of primary source (a documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946)) and secondary sources (supportive data such as books and studies, periodicals and newspapers) to make a critical evaluation of the materials in hand. In order to locate the primary source, digital library database and search engines were explored by inputting some particular keywords related to history of Republic of Indonesia and its collective memories. Whilst secondary sources of this research were located by exploring digital library databases, e-journals, and websites of different organizations. Comprehensive search was conducted by using various related keywords and utilize advance searching techniques. The collected literatures then were reviewed thoroughly.

RESULTS

Overview of documentary film of *Indonesia calling*

Indonesia Calling is a documentary film directed by Joris Ivens produced by The Waterfront Unions of Australia in 1946. Ivens was Holland filmmaker, and he was appointed as Film Commissioner of The Netherlands East Indies on 28 September 1944. This film was taken from September to October 1946 in Australia.

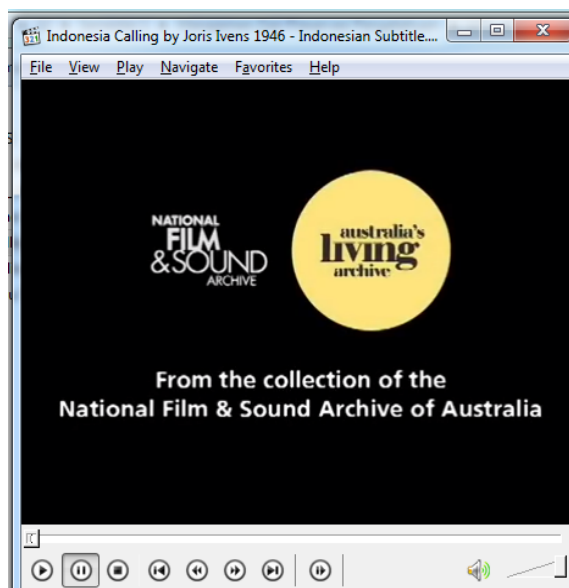


Figure 1: (History-Indonesia-Australia, 2017)

Only 21 minutes and 10 seconds long, the black-and-white 35mm film recreated the campaign to prevent Dutch-chartered vessels loaded with troops and military supplies from leaving Australian ports for Indonesia. This film is originally collection of National Film & Sound Archive of Australia.

Aboard were 1,400 Indonesians being repatriated to Surabaya, the sole Javanese port held by the Indonesian Republican forces. This footage became the opening sequence of *Indonesia Calling*. The Esperance Bay's leaving of Sydney was the only time the Dutch state equipment was used by Ivens.



Figure 2: (History-Indonesia-Australia, 2017)

An official of Australia government goes with them to guaranty that they will not end up at the Dutch-controlled port. Before they leave for Indonesia, their representative makes his speech to the public and he ends his speech by yelling a statement: "may Australia and Indonesia be united forever...Indonesia Merdeka". This shows that there is a close relation between these two countries.

Before displaying the activities of the boycott movement by Seamen against Dutch-chartered ships, the director showed the condition of the Indonesian people who had lived in Australia, the Australian people had known Indonesian people who lived there. Indonesian women learn about the types of Australia's vegetables names, and associate with Australian women in good social relationships. In addition, it was told that Indonesian soldiers had good relations with the Australian army because they together fought against the same enemy, which is Japan.

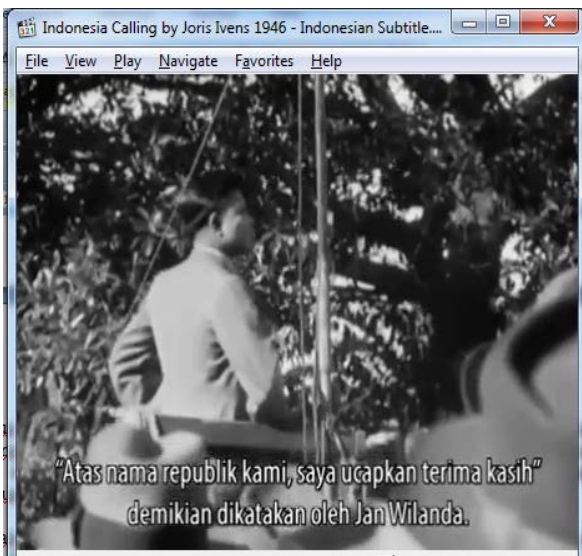


Figure 3: (History-Indonesia-Australia, 2017)

In the film, there was a man who became the spokesperson for the Indonesian people in an action carried out to oppose colonialism against the Indonesian people. The character was named in a film was Jan Walanda.

However, the existence of Indonesians in Australia at that time was not to get rid of the unitary country of Republic of Indonesia and forget about Indonesia, they were still homesick for their Indonesian homeland and for that they were still fighting for Indonesian independence from outside Indonesia.

After the boycott went as they planned, and was supported by other seamen from Australia, China, India and Malaysia, they then celebrated the success of the action by walking together around the harbor singing the first version of Indonesia Raja anthem (1928). The following is a fragment of the Indonesian Raja song that was sounded at the end film *Indonesia Calling*:

Indones', Indones',
Moelia, Moelia,
Tanahkoe, neg'rikoe jang koetjinta.
Indones', Indones',
Moelia, Moelia,
Hidoeplah Indonesia Raja.

Documentary film of *Indonesia calling* preserves Indonesia's collective memory

Audio-visual devices are believed to have tremendous power forming opinions mass and extend the memory of the nation's collective, including films that shows facts of life known as a term "documentary film".

The screening of the film released in 1946 seemed to be able to bring back the voices of Indonesia liberation struggle from seamen workers in Sydney port – Australia. The solidarity action was the form of a strike, which was shown by the scene of workers flocking out of his office he walked to the open space and just sat down. The strike included refusing refueling for Dutch-flagged vessels transporting weapons and ammunition to a new independent country, the Republic of Indonesia. However, the narrative of the film was faintly heard because of the quality of the old film.

The film was a representation of the fact that Indonesian nation stands, grows, and frees is inseparable from international community support. Struggle with taking up arms was accompanied by political and humanitarian struggles.

Documentary films are able to make history last longer, this means that the audio-visual media can preserve collective memories of the past facts that sometimes present the side or dimension that is forgotten by the community who memorize it. People commonly have a tendency to have short historical memories so that it does not rule out the possibility that this nation will sometimes forget the richness of history so diverse and so inspiring

So, it is important for anyone to perpetuate the nation's collective memory, one of which is by giving toponymy (scientific discussion about place names, origins, meanings, uses, and typologies). The perpetuation of the nation's collective memory can also be done through the establishment of museums, and monuments.

Then it can also be through the distribution of library collections with all forms, through archives, and through mass media. This of course includes documentary films. So, it cannot be denied that documentary film can extend memory nation's collective.

However, often "media views" are full of partiality and value become a tool for the authorities to show their dominance through hegemony.

Hegemony is a form of social group supremacy, in addition to other forms, namely domination as viewed by Antonio Gramsci, he was an Italian philosopher. The term domination is more about the use of physical power to show supremacy, hegemony is a form of supremacy of social groups that use intellectual and moral power carried out in accordance with the consensus. This method is done subtly and is at the ideological level to control and create general awareness, using a combination of coercion and voluntary (Cole, 2017).

So, this is where people must critically see every form of hegemony because sometimes writing, studies, and mass media become awareness control tools used by ruling groups. All the party hopes that Indonesian society will grow better because of the abundance of information that requires the community smarter sort and choose which ones are needed most.

Several aspects found within the research

In conducting this research, there are several things found that were behind the making of documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946), which can be presented as follows:

1. The making of this documentary film was not the first plan of Joris Ivens, because initially, Joris Ivens was asked by the Dutch official to make about Indonesian liberation struggle film in Indonesia from a colonial side, not outside Indonesia.
2. This documentary film was made as an act of solidarity for Indonesia liberation struggle. He felt that he had been betrayed by the Dutch government and its subsequent actions in Indonesia. Therefore he believes that the struggle for Indonesian independence must be supported unconditionally by all parties in accordance with the decision of the Pacific Charter.
3. The Communist Party Newspaper, The Tribune, described *Indonesia Calling* as "Australia's first labor film". It gives a feeling of being made by the working people.
4. After making this subversive film, Ivens was threatened with imprisonment and deportation Holland, but did not occur.

CONCLUSION

After conducting a study of the documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946) and its ability to preserve the collective memory of a nation, researcher found that it was in accordance with the theory explained by Agrifoglio (2015) that the process of knowledge / Collective Memory preservation involves three basic stages (or processes) of knowledge management : selection, storage, and actualization.

Filmmaker has identified and selected an event which later became the collective memory of a nation, this is the first step. Collective Memory is a historical, cultural and social asset for the nation. This is also found in the documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946), where the content contained in the film is the collective memory of the Indonesian people in an effort to defend Indonesia's independence that occurred abroad, or precisely in Australia. Besides that, there is a narrative that tells the good relations between the people of both countries.

The collective memory then was stored in a media that was used to store content from the documentary film, so that later the film can be screened again. Media used for storage may vary following the advances of information and communication technology (ICT).

As an audio-visual media, the screening of documentary film of Joris Ivens's *Indonesia Calling* (1946) can provide past experiences experienced by the Indonesian nation's fighters with present views by the nation's next generation. This is the third step, which is actualization or visualization of a film. So that the young generation can feel the atmosphere of the struggle carried out by Indonesian sea workers who work in Australia assisted by seamen from other countries to jointly conduct boycotts against Dutch-chartered ships not to carry ammunition and soldiers that could threaten the sustainability of independence of Indonesia that has just been achieved through a long struggle, which was 350 years.

Thus, documentary films with various forms and media can play a role in preservation of collective memories of certain social groups, including communities, organizations or a country. So that it will last long and can be passed on to the next generation as a foothold in moving towards mutual progress.

For the Indonesian government to promote and support the creation of documentary films on various topics about Indonesia for all groups and communities. This is solely to preserve Indonesian indigenous culture and its history so that it is not eroded by the brunt of the storm of globalization and the advancement of information and communication technology. In addition, information institutions, including libraries, archives and museums, should pay attention to their collections, especially those relating to shared or collective memories of important historical events for certain communities and generally for particular nation. Moreover, in order to be able to innovate their services, they may transform old collections that are still in offline containers, such as CDs, and cassettes into online media, so that the content can be viewed and enjoyed by the public broadly, so that shared or collective memories content can last longer because those memories will reside inside minds of all those who retrieve or watch them.

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