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Julia J. Noordegraaf, Elvira Pouw

The Moving Image, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring 2009, pp. 83-103 (Article)

Published by University of Minnesota Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mov.0.0037>



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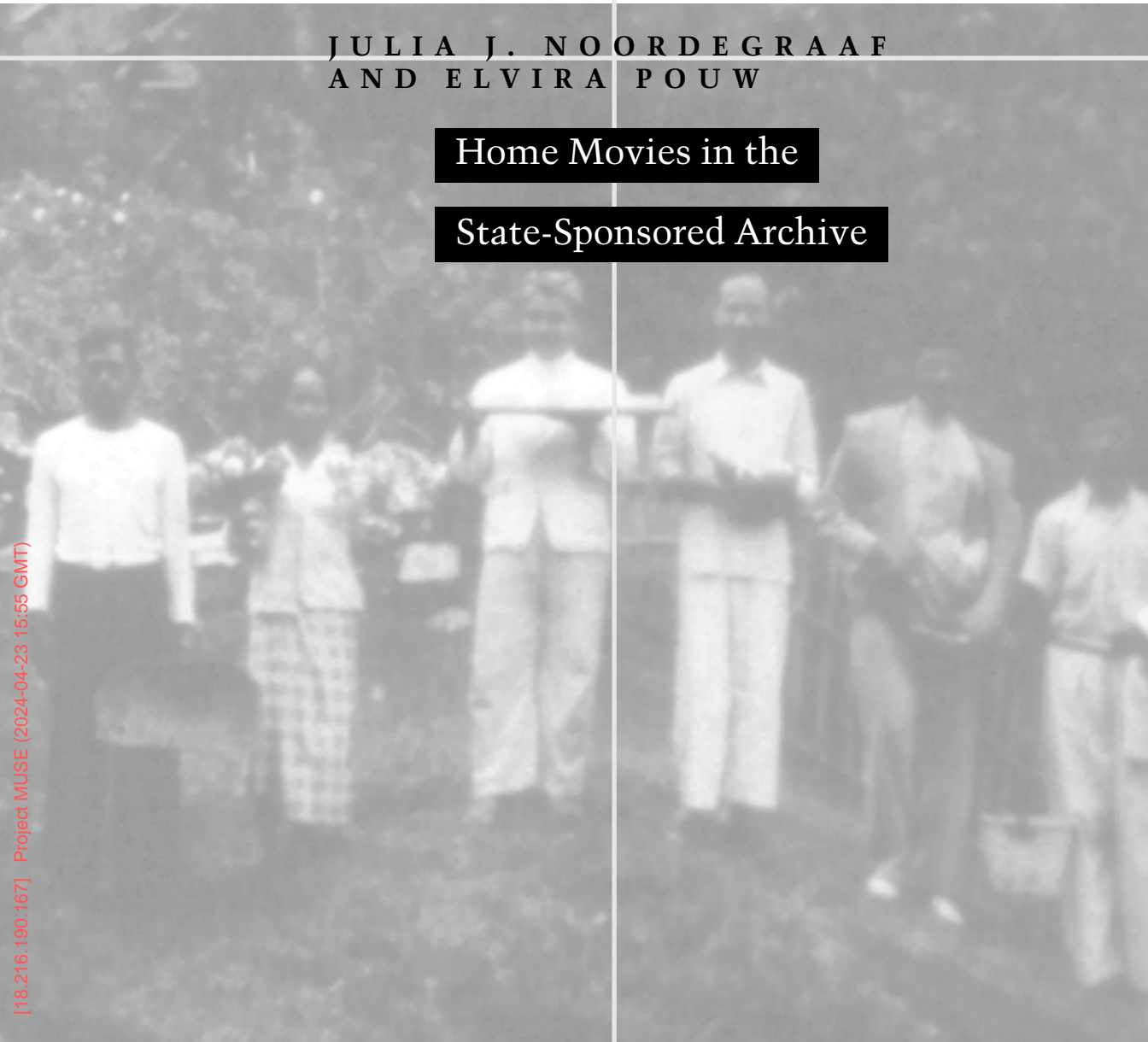
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# EXTENDED FAMILY FILMS

JULIA J. NOORDEGRAAF  
AND ELVIRA POW

Home Movies in the

State-Sponsored Archive



In 2002, the Nederlands Filmmuseum organized a program of screenings and lectures around its substantial collection of films from the Dutch East Indies, as Indonesia was called when it was under Dutch colonial rule (1800–1949). “Van de koloniën niets dan goeds” (All’s Well in the Colony) screened, over a period of two months, a mix of promotional, ethnographic, and amateur films, as well as works that presented the colonial material in a new compilation, such as Vincent Monnikendam’s *Mother Dao: The Turtle-like* (1995), a documentary composed entirely of footage from propaganda films, Fiona Tan’s film and video installations *Smoke Screen* (1997) and *Facing Forward* (1999), and Karel Doing’s reconstruction of his uncle’s war experiences in Indonesia, *Een ontdekkingsreis naar Tarakan* (A Voyage of Discovery to Tarakan, 2002).

Another part of the program was a compilation film produced by Filmmuseum staff members Nico de Klerk and Frank Roumen, called *Tabee* (So Long, 2002). Assembling footage shot between 1912 and 1942, it portrays a typical boat trip from the Netherlands to the Indonesian archipelago, visiting various cities along the way. The first part of the film presents a view of the passage from the perspective of a first-class passenger, with copious dinners, stops at various “exotic” places, such as Algiers and Port Said, and various forms of entertainment provided on board, from swimming and dancing to pillow fights and sack races. Upon the arrival of the boat in the Dutch East Indies, the film switches to a portrayal of life in the colony, with street scenes, tourist resorts, plantations, army barracks, and shots of politicians and the Japanese invasion, which marked the beginning of the end of the Dutch occupation. A voice-over explains the images and reads passages from eyewitness reports on the passage and life in the Dutch East Indies, including a travel account by the noted Dutch author Louis Couperus, who spent formative years in the capital city, Batavia (now Jakarta).

In *So Long*, professional productions seamlessly blend with footage shot by amateurs. For example, the scenes on board are taken from both professional and semiprofessional films and from private films shot by amateurs. Although the voice-over comments on the origin of some material—in particular the footage of the boat trips, taken from promotional films for the steamboat companies—the amateur footage is not identified as such.<sup>1</sup> While it is clear that the footage in *So Long* derives from different films (the credits list thirty-five titles) of varying quality, the amateur material does not stand out. In the new context of this museum film, the previously private material, documenting the life of the families traveling to and living in the Dutch East Indies, is used as historical source for a general picture of life in the former colony. Its status as valuable documentation is further underlined by the decision to preserve it and by its position within the Dutch East Indies collection of the Filmmuseum, which mainly comprises professional films.

How does the transition of these films from the private context of the family to the public context of the state-sponsored archive change the way they are valued and seen?

**Figure 1.** Portrait of Mr. H. J. A. Sanders and his wife, G. Sanders, taken at their house in Lebong Donok, Sumatra, Indonesia, April 26, 1932. Courtesy of the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam (60035480).

How does their inclusion in a national archive influence their status as “home movies” and our definition of what they document? To address these questions, we focus on one particular collection, that of the Sanders family.



Mr. H. J. A. Sanders (Figure 1) was the owner of a gold mine in Lebong Donok on the island of Sumatra from at least 1908 until June 1937. He was also a keen amateur filmer and photographer. His films, shot from 1931 to 1939, provide an interesting case for two reasons. First, they are representative of the amateur films produced in the Dutch East Indies during the 1920s and 30s, in that they document the highlights of the colonial life of the well-to-do who could afford the equipment to produce these films. At the same time, they stretch the boundaries of the genre, in that they do not limit themselves to the subjects stereotypically covered in family films, such as holidays, children, and scenes from domestic life.

As Nico de Klerk points out, the home movies from the Dutch East Indies often show a blurring of the distinction between private and public as we normally understand it.<sup>2</sup> Our analysis of the Sanders films confirms this observation. A close reading of two Sanders films shows how this material blurs the borders of the family and the line between private life and work. From the start, this material extends beyond the private realm of the family home. In that sense, the Sanders recordings, as the other amateur films from this particular social and historical setting where people created new “homes away from home,” illustrate the permeability between private and public life that was characteristic for life in any colony.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the inclusion of the Sanders material in a national film archive further extends its scope: it shares the space of the vaults with professional works and becomes part of a national heritage, situated in the public domain. As such, it becomes accessible to an undefined and potentially unlimited audience. Finally, we investigate the consequences of the ambiguous position of these films for analyzing amateur film in general. It is our assumption that the blurring of boundaries between public and private that occurs around the Sanders films extends beyond the home movies produced in the Dutch East Indies and other colonies where émigrés lived in relatively isolated circumstances. (The two hundred and forty-six thousand Europeans living among 61 million Asian/Pacific inhabitants of the islands in 1930 represented less than 0.5 percent of the population.)<sup>4</sup> How can we account for the fact that the contexts in which amateur film is produced, preserved, and reused frame the material in constantly shifting ways?

**Over the past two decades amateur films have been rediscovered as valuable social and historical sources. Scholars have attempted to define the genre and provide models for analyzing its style and content.<sup>5</sup> We contribute to this research by assessing the impact of public archiving and exhibition on the interpretation and valuation of amateur film—an underdeveloped dimension of the scholarship thus far.<sup>6</sup>**

Besides, existing studies of how the contexts of public archives and screenings influence the perception of moving image materials usually focus on professional media productions.<sup>7</sup> Since their displacement from the home to a public, state-sponsored archive entails a clear change in their meaning—from documents that serve individual families as reminders of commonly experienced events to films that come to represent wider historical developments—family films are particularly apt objects to investigate how new contexts influence the meaning of audiovisual heritage.

### THE SANDERS COLLECTION

The H. J. A. Sanders material consists of twenty-four films, running more than three hours. Of these, twenty are situated in the Dutch East Indies and four are holiday films shot elsewhere in Southeast Asia and Japan, as well as Hawaii and the continental United States.

**The collection records a range of subjects: the household, servants, holiday activities, and visits to friends. The collection also includes a few films that deal with Sanders' working life in the mining industry.**

In 1990, the Royal Tropical Institute/Tropical Museum and the Nederlands Film-museum were granted state aid for preservation of the Dutch East Indies film collection. This project comprised approximately three hundred titles, most donated in the 1960s. The majority of films date from 1912 to 1941 and were made by professional Dutch filmmakers living in the Indonesian archipelago. They cover a range of subjects, most of a documentary character. Among them are government, medical, missionary, instructional, industrial, and ethnological films by professional filmmakers such as Iep Ochse. Staff inventoried and viewed all of the items and evaluated the significance of their historical content. The uniqueness of each work helped determine which films were to be preserved.<sup>8</sup> Nearly all of them were.

More than ninety titles within the Dutch East Indies collection are described with the words *amateur*, *family*, or *private*.<sup>9</sup> Next to the Sanders collection are films by families named Boks, Kerbert, Van Schaik, Kwee, and others. The most important reason to preserve the amateur material is the fact that they, as de Klerk writes, “provide a counterpoint to the ‘official’ productions made in this former Dutch colony.”<sup>10</sup> The amateur images

portray things that official productions do not, such as the day-to-day affairs in a colonial household: how people lived, how they were dressed, what car they drove—the aspects that de Klerk describes as the “upholstery” of life. They also occasionally problematize existing ideas based on written sources, such as the view that the image of the child is central to representations of servants.<sup>11</sup>

Little is known about the specific contexts in which these films were produced and screened. In most cases, as with the Sanders films, it is even unknown when and how they ended up in the collections of the Royal Tropical Institute and the Filmmuseum, especially if the films are not donated by surviving family members nor accompanied by a paper archive. The fact that the Sanders collection made its way into the Filmmuseum with no background information makes it hard to date the films. The little we know about Mr. and Mrs. Sanders derives from their photo albums and the films themselves. As can be deduced from handwritten dates on the cans and from the title cards, the Sanders films are almost all compilations made out of material shot at different times and places. Sanders started to work for the Mining Company Redjang Lebong in 1908. The woman who appears in the films is his second wife, identified only by her first initial, G. They did not have children. The couple returned to the Netherlands in June 1937.<sup>12</sup> In 1938 and 1939 they took their trips to other parts of the Pacific Rim, where the final four films in the collection were shot.

Since our study concerns the films of a single family, we restrict ourselves to the genre of the family film, or home movie, terms that we use interchangeably. *Family* and *home* specify two characteristics of this genre: the central subjects are family members and the central location is a domestic household. In order to determine the extent to which the Sanders records are representative of the genre and at what point they diverge from it we first look at their content, form, and style.

Family films are characterized by a focus on an idealized image of the family, celebrating the highlights of family life, such as weddings, holidays, birthday parties, and the arrival of babies. Stylistically, they distinguish themselves from other types of amateur (and professional) films because of grainy or shaky images, problems with framing (heads are inadvertently chopped off), inadequate lighting, discontinuous editing, and subjects who are clearly aware of the camera (looking into the lens, waving, gesturing).<sup>13</sup>

The two artifacts we examine are titled *De Bedienden van de familie Sanders* (The Servants of the Sanders Family, ca. 1935) and *Mijnbouwbedrijf Redjang Lebong* (Mining Company Redjang Lebong, ca. 1933). The former shows the many Indonesian

servants who accompanied the married Dutch couple. (Given the area's complex demographics, the ethnicity and nationality of these employees and their families is impossible to determine. We can not even presume they are Sumatran, as their batik scarves and uniforms appear Javanese in origin.) Daily present in the house, the servants play a big role in most of the films and this reel is exemplary of that fact. In contrast, *Min-ing Company Redjang Lebong* has an industrial look, portraying the working of the factory and the public life of Mr. Sanders. This again manifests the permeability between private and public life palpable in this collection.

### AN EXTENDED FAMILY

*The Servants of the Sanders Family* is a 16mm, black-and-white film running nearly eight minutes (190 feet). It portrays the servants of Mr. and Mrs. Sanders, presenting them in what appear to be their daily duties. Following the intertitle "*De bedienden van de Familie Sanders zijn altijd ijverig*" ("The servants of the Sanders Family are always busy"), a cook, the gardener, the chauffeur, and several others pass through the frame (Figure 2). The sec-

ond portion portrays the wedding day of the household chef and his bride. After the actual ceremony we see Mr. Sanders standing next to the bride and groom (both

Figure 2. The servants of the Sanders family pose in front of the camera. Frame from *De Bedienden van de familie Sanders* (ca. 1935). Courtesy of the Nederlands Filmmuseum.







Figure 3. Mr. Sanders (right) poses with the groom (whom Sanders employed as a cook) and bride. Frame from *De Bedienden van de familie Sanders* (ca. 1935). Courtesy of the Nederlands Filmmuseum.

Figure 4. The Sanders “extended family.” Mr. and Mrs. Sanders surrounded by servants in front of their house in Lebong Donok, Sumatra, Indonesia, 1930s. Courtesy of the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam (60035586).



in Western garb), all three looking directly into the camera (Figure 3). Toward the end, the film seems to skip forward in time (at least nine months) as it portrays the married couple and their baby, together with another couple with children (perhaps another servant or a servant's family member), in what seems to be the chef's house. He and his wife are seen playing with and bathing the baby.

The style of the film is quite simple and characteristic for a family film. It lacks visual variety, composed almost completely in medium long shot. The camera follows the action before it by panning or tilting. Often the subjects simply stand in front of the camera as if they are posing for a photographic portrait (which they may have been). Both in content and style the photo albums greatly resemble the film collection. The shots including Mr. Sanders, filmed by others, are similar to the shots taken by Mr. Sanders himself although they are even more static (compare Figures 3 and 4).

## EXTENDING THE HOME

*Mining Company Redjang Lebong*, a longer black-and-white film running nearly half an hour (722 feet of 16mm), focuses on Mr. Sanders's factory, documenting aspects of his working life. The film is divided into three parts, each introduced by an intertitle describing a stage in the process of extracting the gold from the ore. In the first part we see the workers extracting the ore from the rocks, putting it into different buckets placed on rails, pushing the buckets toward a funnel, and bulking the ore into the funnel. We then see the ore falling into a train, which transports the ore to the factory, where the gold is extracted from it. In addition, we see women preparing food, people at the company hospital, and Sanders working in his office. The last two parts compile shots relating the factory to the Sanders house and its scenic surroundings, including a market, rice fields, and a waterfall. The content of *Mining Company Redjang Lebong* thus deviates from the other Sanders films with these public spaces shot outside of the private sphere of the family.

Stylistically, however, the film is dominated by the typical characteristics of the family film. There are several instances of incorrect framing and extensive use of panning. For example, one scene portrays two men working in the mine. The two men, filmed in a long shot, walk toward the camera when, after a few seconds, the camera suddenly tilts and focuses on the ore (Figure 5). The men seem to be of secondary importance to the presentation of the mine.



Figure 5. These frames from *Mining Company Redjang Lebong* (ca. 1933) illustrate a stylistic mark of the typical amateur film, as a sudden tilting of the camera inadvertently severs the heads of the two workers from their bodies. In the final shot the workers disappear altogether. Courtesy of the Nederlands Filmmuseum.

## EXTENDED FAMILY FILMS

The analysis of these two films from the Sanders collection shows that from the moment of production, the films were extending the boundaries between the private and public realms. They are extended in two ways. First, they extend the family beyond the intimate

circle of relatives. Since Mr. and Mrs. Sanders were alone, with their blood relatives living far away, the servants, friends, and colleagues in Leborg Donok came to substitute for their own family. Like most other Dutch colonials, Mr. and Mrs. Sanders were living in a rather closed community, in which the small group of Europeans stuck together. Weddings, birthdays, and other events endemic to family films were celebrated with the people who were part of the couple's life in the Indies. So the Sanders films do not portray the wedding of cousins but the wedding of the Sanders cook. Mr. Sanders even extended the role of the filmmaker to others, as in the shot with the newly married cook and his wife, with Mr. Sanders standing next to them (Figure 3). It is quite likely that in this case, as with the other shots in which Sanders appears, one of the servants operated the camera.<sup>14</sup> Sanders thus made his servants and friends parts of an extended family not based on bloodlines but on social interaction.

Second, the Sanders films are extended in that the industrial ones contain images shot outside the home. As demonstrated, the mining company film details the working of the factory, its machinery, and its laborers. However the same film also portrays the private life of Mr. and Mrs. Sanders, especially in the last ten minutes, during which we see activities around the Sanders house. It thus presents an extended overview of family life, portraying both the private and the professional life of the family. In that sense, the Sanders films can be described as *extended family films*.

## FROM THE PRIVATE HOME TO THE PUBLIC ARCHIVE

Besides the extension from private to public visible in the films themselves, the inclusion of the Sanders home movies in a state-owned collection has further widened their scope. Footage recorded for private viewing has acquired a collective, public status. The simple fact that the Filmmuseum deems these amateur works worthy of collecting raises them above the status of most amateur film collections, which remain in private hands or have been lost to posterity. Besides, the position of the Sanders films in the Dutch East Indies collection, which comprises a heterogeneous combination of genres, emphasizes their status as historical sources rather than personal documents with a unique, situated meaning.

The move of the Sanders films to the public archive has consequences on two levels. First, it changes the type of audience they address. Originally aimed at an audience of family and friends acquainted with the context in which the films were made, their move to the museum changes viewers into spectators who cannot participate in their original meaning and will see the films in a different light.<sup>15</sup> In 2000, the Sanders material, together with that of the Boks, Kerbert, and Sandberg families, was presented

at both the Cinema Ritrovato festival in Bologna, Italy, and the Visible Evidence conference for documentary scholars in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The Filmmuseum also screened them continuously during the two months of the 2002 Dutch East Indies program “All Is Well in the Colony.” On the one hand these screenings underline the amateur status of these films, offering an alternative view on colonial life. On the other, they present these films in a public forum, to an anonymous, undifferentiated audience and thus signal a clear break with the intimacy of the original exhibition context.

Second, the new home of the films changes the status and meaning of the images. Once seen as unique shots of individual people at specific places and moments in time, they now come to be seen as typical of wider historical situations and social phenomena. This starts at the moment of selection and preservation: the archivists’ viewing reports contain references to the “typicality” of scenes for the genre of home movies from the Dutch East Indies as a whole. The parting scene on a quay, for example, filmed in either Holland or the colony, is one de Klerk has identified as a standard feature of these films.<sup>16</sup> This transformation into the typical continues with the later screenings of the material, where the films come to represent a specific genre: home movies from Indonesia of the colonial era. Finally, in the new compilation films, unique fragments change into stock shots that refer to a more general social or historical situation. For example, the shots of a boat trip in *So Long* that once signified the excursion of the Boks family to the Indies, come to represent any colonial-era family’s passage.<sup>17</sup> So besides documenting the way the Sanderses defined themselves in relation to their environment, the films are now also seen as historical documents of life and work in the archipelago. Indeed, a Sanders home movie can even be read as documenting life in the colonized world of the early twentieth century. The context of their new home in the national museum thus further extends the films from the private to the public domain.

## REDEFINING AMATEUR FILM

How does the Sanders case complicate existing definitions of and approaches to amateur film? On the one hand, one could argue that these films are a special case, in that the observed permeability between the private and public domain is characteristic for situations where people live in isolated areas or enclaves. This is supported by de Klerk’s observation that the home movies made in urban areas in the Dutch East Indies do not show the same level of transgression between public and private life as the Sanders films do. “The size and location of the settlement,” he concludes, “may have contributed

to more locally determined solutions of how day-to-day interactions between employers and employees, between peers and non-peers, or between the European, Chinese, Indo-European, and indigenous populations were to be conducted.”<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the ambiguity between private and public and between amateur and professional is not unique to the Sanders films. Scholars have pointed out the hybridity of the genre of amateur film, that typical family films coexist alongside documentaries, fiction, animation, and other forms.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, amateur material is mixed with professional, as in the collection of the Van Schaik family. The private scenes from their holiday in Italy and their return from the Dutch East Indies are accompanied by footage from two professional 16mm films that Van Schaik purchased and intermixed with material he shot himself.<sup>20</sup> Then there are family films commissioned from professional filmmakers, such as *Ledeboer Family* (1926) by Willy Mullens (also held at the Nederlands Filmmuseum). Furthermore, many so-called amateur filmmakers operated in a semiprofessional or professional domain, charging fees for their screenings, or producing commissioned work for which they received payment.<sup>21</sup>

**Most importantly, then, the analysis of the Sanders films and their recontextualization in the public archive complicates the idea that amateur films belong to the private sphere while professional films belong to the public sphere.**

Most writers on amateur film have defined the genre in opposition to commercial production. In *Reel Families* (1995), Patricia Zimmermann summarizes the usual characterization of amateur media productions as marked by their “unintentionality, lack of deliberate formal and textural codes, circulation within the leisure and affective systems of participants, and social distance from commercial forms of media production.”<sup>22</sup> As such, she firmly situates the genre in the private sphere, conceptualized as the realm of family and personal life. This stands in opposition to the public sphere, the realm of economics and politics.

Zimmermann also points out the intricate relationship between the public sphere and the role of “experts,” those who control the knowledge to organize the complex industrial production process. She follows Jürgen Habermas’s argument that the rise of experts has precipitated the gradual destruction of the normative public sphere, whereby “technical rules replace equal access to participation in public discussion.” These experts become associated with professionalism, a system of rules insuring access to the economy for only a qualified and privileged few. This also applies to the field of film production: “Professional film’s ‘codes of expertise’—narrative paradigms,

capital-intensive production, division of labor, and market control—determine access to the market economy.” This domain is clearly off-limits for the amateur. “Because professionalism incorporates rational rules and the reproduction of known qualities,” she continues, “it operates within a more public domain. On the other hand, because amateurism structurally rejects these rational modes, it is marginalized within the private sphere of personal life, outside wage labor and economic relations, and operates almost exclusively as consumption.”<sup>23</sup>

As the above analysis of the Sanders films shows, this view of amateur film as limited to the private sphere no longer holds. Besides the already mentioned ambiguity between amateur and professional in many home movies, the public broadcast of amateur content on television and the Internet has increasingly blurred the boundary between private and public. Although the latter seems to be a recent phenomenon that is mostly related to the emergence of home video, we argue that it also changes our perspective on the position of amateur film.<sup>24</sup> First, as we have shown with our analysis of the Sanders films, amateur film never was entirely private. Second, the archival context in which the material is kept and reused further extends into the public domain.

## MEDIATED MEMORIES

In her book *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (2007), José van Dijck develops a conceptualization of family film that helps to explain the blurring of boundaries we find in the Sanders films. Van Dijck criticizes the conflation of home media with the private sphere and of mass media with the public realm. She argues that this distinction is conceptually flawed, since “it obscures the fact that people derive their autobiographical memories from both personal and collective media sources.” Moreover, she argues that this distinction does not account for the fact that individuals are themselves active contributors to the professional media that shape their individual identity. “If we accept a preliminary distinction between home and mass media, we not only fail to account for media shaping our sense of individuality *and* collectivity in conjunction, but we equally obscure how individuals actively contribute to the collective media that shape their individuality.” As she points out, this distinction is also no longer practical at a time when each type informs the other. For example, the television series *America’s Funniest Home Videos* (1990–present), by favoring specific types of movies, provides a model for the way people may stage their productions—much as amateur film competitions

and handbooks such as Kodak's *How to Make Good Movies* series did for amateur filmmakers.<sup>25</sup>

Van Dijck develops a theory of "mediated memory objects" (including family films) that accounts for the permeability of the public and private spheres. She argues that we capture our lived experiences in media in order to create an image of who we are, as individuals situated in time and in a network of relations with others. Van Dijck starts from the assumption that this process of identity formation is an essentially social activity, since we always articulate our individual identity in relation to the people that surround us. Consequently, she states that "Mediated memory objects and acts are crucial sites for negotiating the relationship between self and culture at large, between what counts as private and what as public, and how individuality relates to collectivity."<sup>26</sup>

Naturally, the later use of mediated memory objects may emphasize their collective dimension even further, as in the case of incorporating amateur films into a state-sponsored archive. "Beyond immediate family circles, the material inscriptions may become part of a larger project to share collective remembrance," van Dijck writes, "yet the intentions and control of the varying stages in production and reception should be regarded as part of the cultural confrontation between individual and collective." Therefore she emphasizes that the collective dimension of mediated memories does not commence once they are taken outside the family home, but is there from the start, embedded in the media technologies themselves—as discursive strategies that shape our use of the technology—as well as in the fact that individual producers or users shape their identity in relation to the people that surround them.<sup>27</sup>

## FRAMING FAMILY FILM

Upon their displacement to the public archive, family films acquire new meanings that contribute to the formation of collective memory. In *Mining the Home Movie* (2008), Zimmermann emphasizes the dynamic nature of the way home movies come to signify historically. They "need to be reconsidered as mobile constructs, activated in different ways through different historiographic and artistic strategies," she argues. "As they move from attics to archives, from private use to public reclamation, home movies transform into public memory, mobilizing history as something particular, local, specific." In this sense, the attribution of meaning to family films is an open and dynamic process, mediated by the various contexts through which the material travels. Zimmermann goes so far as to say "For home movies, signification is often not embedded inside the representation," that



“they require juxtaposition of other images and ideas so their embedded ideologies are denaturalized.”<sup>28</sup> Although this underlines the importance of studying the way contexts frame the meaning of family film, the question is to what extent the signification of home movies can be entirely independent from what the images show, and how the subjects are portrayed (style of filming, editing, titles, etc.). We argue that the textual elements of the film limit the interpretations available to viewers. Of course the films can be used to support a new discourse. Footage can change from specific, historically situated shots to stock shots with a rhetorical function. At the same time, one can “over-interpret” these images if projecting things onto them that do not really seem to be there. Ideologies are more often added than embedded.<sup>29</sup>

In her book *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002), Mieke Bal develops a conceptualization of *framing* that acknowledges the dynamic nature of attributing meaning to cultural objects while respecting their idiosyncrasies. Bal prefers the term *framing* over *context*, since the latter is static—a collection of data—whereas the former represents an activity, “performed by an agent who is responsible, accountable, for his or her acts.” The accountability of the agent is important since framing is inescapable. We simply cannot see objects outside of their frames: “the frame is the link between the work and the world.” Moreover, since framing is a verb, it points to process and thus involves time in interpretation and analysis, acknowledging that the meaning of the object is continually being redefined through different acts of framing.<sup>30</sup>

Although Bal states that framing predicates its object in time and space, she also shows how the process of framing is influenced by the textual and visual elements of the object itself. As an example, she discusses the exhibition “Moordwijken!/Lady Killers!” (1998–99), which she curated at the invitation of the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, on the occasion of the acquisition of Gerrit Pietersz Sweelinck’s painting *Judith Shows Holophernes’ Head to the People of Bethulia* (1605). She demonstrates how her reframing of the painting was incited by aspects of the work itself—such as the composition and the way the protagonists were portrayed (137–73).

Bal’s conception of framing is useful for our research in that it points to the fact that each exhibition or screening adds meaning to the films: “framing adds baggage to the staged image because it is *performed*. Framing, in fact, is a form of performance” (173). In that sense, the concept also alerts the analyst to the importance of the institution as a mediator between the private world from which the films originate and the public domain of collective memory: “To perform, in an activity of *mise-en-scène* that straddles the imaginary divide between private and public, and between individual and collective realms of being and living: this is the mission of cultural institutions like

museums.” Bal emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the acts of framing that are often kept implicit and then prevent viewers to actively take part in making sense of the work. One way of doing this is to use captions, that in museums “function like keys or shifters between visual and textual information, and between what the viewer is given and the curator has done” (155). The filmic equivalent, for example in compilation films, would be voice-over comments, titles (either appearing between shots or superimposed over them), or title and/or end credits. The inclusion of more such elements in *So Long*, for example, would have allowed viewers to reconstruct the reframing of the family films that were included in this compilation.

### STUDYING EXTENDED FAMILY FILMS

What, then, can the Sanders case teach us about analyzing amateur film in general? First, it shows that family films, though produced by individuals or a limited number of participants at specific places and times, cannot be confined to the private sphere of the home and the family. Van Dijck’s reconceptualization of amateur media productions as mediated memories acknowledges that they manifest both an individual and a social dimension, which from the start extend their scope beyond the private domain. With her conceptualization in mind, the analyst can study home movies for their transgressions between private and public, rather than emphasizing the circle of the family as the core of the film’s meaning. Besides, the extension of family films beyond the private home invites a rethinking of amateur films as a separate genre. As our analysis of the various framings of the Sanders material shows, in different contexts amateur images come to mean differently, to the extent that—as with the Boks material in *So Long*—they are not even recognizable as amateur in origin anymore.

**Rather than trying to define amateur content and style, then, it makes sense to combine a study of their formal features with an analysis of the way they have been framed.**

With its emphasis on both textual analysis and context analysis, our approach builds upon Roger Odin’s semio-pragmatic approach. Odin departs from the assumption that viewers base their interpretation of film texts on elements both inside and outside of the text. He asks what cognitive elements a viewer must employ to recognize the film as documentary, fiction, or amateur film. The aim of his method is to identify the formal elements that guide viewers in one or another direction.<sup>31</sup> Problematic for our case is that Odin’s method eventually is still based on thinking in genres. He distinguishes nine

different modes of address a film text can evoke. The fact that he relates amateur films, with their seemingly random and unscripted style, to the “private mode” means that he situates them within the private domain. As Martina Roepke points out, his approach assigns one specific function to the various films within one genre, thus obliterating the transitions, intersections, and transformations within one specific field of film practice.<sup>32</sup> In that sense his method does not account for films like those of Mr. Sanders that extend from the home movie to the documentary and from the private into the public domain.

In order to do justice to the fact that family films are both products of individual people, related to the private home, and have a scope that extends into the public domain, we propose to study them both as film texts and as objects that derive their meaning in relation to the contexts that frame them. As with the Sanders films, textual analysis is often the only way to provide some insight into the context of production. Besides, textual analysis has provided the visible evidence of the ambiguous position of these films between the private and public domain. However, in order to analyze their meaning, we also take into account the way home movies are being framed by deconstructing the elements of the specific setting in which we encounter them, such as the status and policies of the archive, the type of exhibition, the organizing institution, the information that is provided or lacking, and the relation of the films to other exhibited material. Bal’s conception of framing is useful in analyzing the interaction of film text and context as a dynamic, ongoing process that adds new meaning to the films at every new event.

## NOTES

An earlier version of this research was presented at the Orphan Film Symposium in New York, March 28, 2008. This article could not have been written without the help of Nico de Klerk at the Nederlands Filmmuseum, who was extremely generous in providing access to the films and sharing his knowledge. The text has greatly benefited from the comments of Dan Streible and the two anonymous readers. Thanks also to Suzan Crommelin, Dorette Schootemeijer, and Rixt Jonkman at the Nederlands Filmmuseum and to Steven Vink and Ingeborg Eggink at the Royal Tropical Institute/Tropical Museum for retrieving information and providing the images.

1. The credits list only “three short amateur films (1932).” The other amateur films used for this film are listed under their title and are thus not recognizable as being amateur in origin.
2. Nico de Klerk, “Viewing Report Sanders films,” personal papers, 1999.
3. See Nico de Klerk, “Home Away from Home: Private Films from the Dutch East Indies,” in *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, ed. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 148–62.

4. The 1930 census of the Dutch Indies categorized the 61 million inhabitants of Indonesia in four groups: "Natives," "Europeans," "Chinese," and "Other Asians." The category of "natives" was not specified further. Evert van Imhoff and Gijs Beets, "A Demographic History of the Indo-Dutch Population, 1930–2001," *Journal of Population Research* 21, no.1 (2004): 47–72.
5. For an extensive overview of primary and secondary sources on amateur film, see Margaret A. Compton, ed., "Small-gauge and Amateur Film Bibliography," *Film History* 15, no.2 (2003): 252–71. See also these more recent publications: Susan Aasman, *Ritueel van huiselijk geluk: een cultuurhistorische verkenning van de familiefilm* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 2004); Alexandra Schneider, *Die Stars sind wir: Heimkino als filmische Praxis* (Berlin: Schüren, 2004); Martina Roepke, *Privat-Vorstellung: Heimkino in Deutschland vor 1945* (Hildesheim, Ger.: Olms, 2007); and Ishizuka and Zimmermann, eds., *Mining the Home Movie*.
6. A notable exception is Janna Jones's essay "From Forgotten Film to a Film Archive: The Curious History of *From Stump to Ship*," *Film History* 15, no.2 (2003): 193–202, which discusses the reconstruction and exhibition of a 1930 amateur film from Maine in great detail.
7. See for example the contributions to the theme issue on programming and exhibition of *The Moving Image* 4, no.1 (Spring 2004), and Marijke de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).
8. Ine van Dooren and Paul Kusters, "Waar heimwee plaatsmaakt voor werkelijkheid . . ." *GBG-Nieuws* 33 (Summer 1995), 6.
9. Robert Muis, "In het voorbijgaan . . . amateurfilms uit Nederlands-Indië," *GBG-Nieuws* 33 (Summer 1995), 19.
10. Nico de Klerk, "The Netherlands Archive/Museum Institute," in *Mining the Home Movie*, 142–43.
11. De Klerk, "Home Away from Home," 151, 155.
12. The Royal Tropical Institute/Tropical Museum in Amsterdam holds a photograph that shows a young Mr. Sanders in Lebong Soelit, ca. 1908 (no. 60034542; Sanders is the fourth man from the top left), and another one showing Sanders with pith helmet at the mine shaft of the Mining Company Redjang Lebong, ca. 1905–15 (no. 60034548). Another photo (no. 60034550) shows him at the edge of a river, accompanied by a European woman, an Indonesian woman, and a young girl with blond hair. The catalog mentions only that this portrays "H. J. A. Sanders with vrouw [meaning either wife or woman], baboe [nanny] and a child at a rock in a river, Dutch East Indies." According to the collection's curators, this photo might be of Sanders with his first wife, their daughter, and the nanny. Both the first wife and daughter disappear from the photographic records; it is unclear what happened to them. These images, and others relating to Sanders and the mining company, can be accessed online, via <http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl>.
13. Bert Hogenkamp and Mieke Lauwers, "In Pursuit of Happiness? A Search for the Definition of Amateur Film," in *Jubilee Book: Essays on Amateur Film*, ed. Nancy Kapstein (Charleroi, Belgium: Association Européenne Inédits, 1997), 110. Naturally, this is generalization—there are always

exceptions to the rule. For example, the Dutch East Indies collection includes *Ledeboer Family* (1926), shot by a professional filmmaker, Willy Mullens. Although it contains some typical elements of the family film—scenes with family members gathered in the garden, posing for, looking into, and waving at the camera—the film is clearly shot by a professional (“professional” 35mm format, correct framing, minimal use of panning and tilting, stable image, smooth editing).

14. De Klerk, “Home Away from Home,” 155, notes that “if servants, as some films show . . . were entrusted with driving their employers’ cars, surely they would have been allowed to operate a much cheaper and less complicated machine.”

15. Ibid., 148–49. “It is in the conversations among family members that a home movie or series of home movies is made into a meaningful whole,” de Klerk says. “Once home movies have left their intended settings, original participants tend to become spectators.”

16. De Klerk, “Viewing Report Sanders films,” and Dorette Schootemeijer, “Bij de collectie van H.J.A. Sanders,” personal papers, 2005. On the parting scene, see de Klerk, “Home Away from Home,” 154.

17. On the way compilation films change the meaning of images, see Jay Leyda, *Films Beget Films* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964); William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993); and Michael Zryd, “Found Footage Film as Discursive Metahistory,” *The Moving Image* 3, no.2 (2003): 40–61.

18. De Klerk, “Home Away from Home,” 158.

19. See for example Hogenkamp and Lauwers, “In Pursuit of Happiness?,” 107–16.

20. De Klerk, “Home Away from Home,” 149.

21. As, for example, the three Dutch filmmakers Joop Goes, Gerrit Aalfs, and Anton Stoelwinder discussed in Lieuwe Wijma, “Amateur Aspects: A Triple Case Study” (master’s thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2007).

22. Patricia R. Zimmermann, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), x.

23. Ibid., 2–3.

24. On home video, see James M. Moran, *There’s No Place Like Home Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

25. José van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), 18–19. For an analysis of how handbooks, amateur film clubs, and competitions structured the discourse on how to make a home movie, see Zimmermann, *Reel Families*, 112–27, and Roepke, *Privat-Vorstellung*, 37–104. The Eastman Kodak Company first published its *How to Make Good Movies* handbooks in 1938 and continued until at least 1975, with variations on the title, such as *How to Make Good Home Movies* (1958, 1961) and *How to Make Good Sound Movies* (1973, 1975). While some moviemakers followed these guidelines, others broke the rules, as Devin Orgeron argues in “Mobile Home Movies: Travel and *le Politique des Amateurs*,” *The Moving Image* 6, no.2 (2006): 74–100.

26. Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, 21.

27. José van Dijck, "Mediated Memories: Personal Cultural Memory as Object of Cultural Analysis," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 18, no.2 (2004): 273–75.
28. Patricia R. Zimmermann, "Introduction: The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings," in *Mining the Home Movie*, 16–17.
29. For example, de Klerk argues that home movies made in the Dutch East Indies do not offer more than "records of everyday encounters between people of different backgrounds and positions"—in his view abstract notions like "colonialism" are not embedded in the films themselves. De Klerk, "Home Away from Home," 151, 160.
30. Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 135–40.
31. For a summary of his approach, see Roger Odin, "Reflections on the Family Home Movie as Document: A Semio-Pragmatic Approach," in *Mining the Home Movie*, 255–71.
32. Roepke, *Privat-Vorstellung*, 27.