

**The Buddhist Institute at Phnom Penh, the International Council of Women, and the Rome Institute for Educational Cinematography: Intersections of Internationalism and Imperialism, 1931-34**

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In February 1933 Luciano de Feo, director of the League of Nations International Institute for Educational Cinematography (IIEC) at Rome, wrote to Suzanne Karpelès, director of the Buddhist Institute and of the Royal Library in Phnom-Penh, enquiring about educational film in the French protectorate of Cambodia.<sup>1</sup> de Feo's request related to a survey that the IIEC was conducting about 'problems raised by the cinema in connection with different mentalities and cultures'.<sup>2</sup> de Feo had appointed Karpelès as an IIEC correspondent when she acted as recording secretary at the 1931 conference on educational cinematography that Laura Dreyfus Barney, a wealthy American living in Paris, convened at the IIEC on behalf of the International Council of Women (ICW). In her reply to de Feo, Karpelès criticised the majority of educational films on a colonial subject available in Cambodia. These, she said, made too many concessions to the tastes of a European public by introducing a sentimental note that was never demonstrated by the people where the scene was set. As for films in cinema studios, she complained, these gave a sad impression of Western civilisation. She also outlined the cinematographic projections she

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<sup>1</sup> Gleaned from Suzanne Karpelès' reply to Lucien de Feo, 30 June, 1933. Dreyfus-Barney's translated extracts are used wherever possible. Other English translations are mine. French sources denote the ICW as CIF. The ICW file of correspondence between Karpelès and Dreyfus-Barney includes copies of Karpelès letters to de Feo, colonial officials and French administrators.

<sup>2</sup> *The International Congress of Educational and Instructional Cinematography, Rome* (Rome: IIEC, 1934), 32.

organised at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Phnom-Penh and across Laos via the mobile educational film shows she had instigated following the 1931 ICW conference.<sup>3</sup>

In this article I use the interactions between Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney and de Feo to respond to Sluga and Clavin's call for studies that restore the historical relevance of internationalism to the modern history of nationalism and imperialism and that reincorporate the national and imperial into the domain of the international.<sup>4</sup> I explore the intersection of aspects of imperialism and internationalism in discussion of cinematography at the League of Nations (hereafter League), at the ICW, and as they played out in the imperial, national and local flows within which I situate Karpelès' work around educational cinematography. I focus on the years from 1931, when Karpelès attended the ICW cinematograph conference, to 1934, when Dreyfus-Barney fed Karpelès' ideas about educational film into the IIEC's congress. I set the scene with brief pen portraits of Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney and de Feo, the organisational location of the IIEC, the socio-political context in which educational cinematograph operated at the League, and the historiographical and conceptual underpinning of the analysis. The second section draws on sources from the League's digital and Geneva archives and from ICW records deposited in the Amazone archive, Brussels. It looks at *rapprochement* (the establishment or resumption of harmonious relations) of nations within internationalism as this became articulated at both the League and the ICW with notions about mentalities within imperialism. The third section draws on correspondence in the ICW archive between Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney and de Feo to trace the intersection of *rapprochement* and mentalities in Karpelès' promotion of educational cinematography from her base in Phnom-Penh, and the final section touches on Dreyfus-Barney's interpolation of Karpelès' ideas on educational film into the IIEC's 1934 Rome

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<sup>3</sup> Karpelès to de Feo, 30 June 1933.

<sup>4</sup> Glenda Sluga & Patricia Clavin, "Rethinking the History of Internationalism," in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, ed. Glenda Sluga & Patricia Clavin, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3-16, here 13..

Congress. The conclusion argues that various elements around the cinematic at the League the ICW and from Phnom-Penh illustrate articulations of internationalism in the domains of nationalism and imperialism as well as articulations of the national and imperial in the domain of the international.

### **Situating Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney, de Feo and the IIEC**

Karpelès (1890-1969) was born in Paris into a wealthy Hungarian-Jewish family but grew up in the French Indies. She was the first woman to graduate from the *École orientales* of the *École haute études pratique* in Paris, where she studied Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Nepalese and Tibetan religion. She was a founder member of the Association of the Friends of the East at the *Musée Guimet* in Paris, which aimed to spread knowledge of Oriental civilisations. She was the first female member of the prestigious *École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)*, established in Saigon in 1901 to eclipse the knowledge projects of the British and Dutch empires in Southeast Asia. She was posted to Indochina (1922), with an appointment to Phnom-Penh (1925). Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin cast Karpelès as a facilitator of the male engagement that would link the EFEO's activities in India and Indochina.<sup>5</sup> But Edwards and Ha highlight Karpelès' role in the revitalisation of Buddhism in Cambodia and portray her as potentially the only woman to have attained her status within the Indochina administration as founding director of the Royal Library (1925-41) and of the Buddhist Institute (1930-41), and as chief publications officer for the *École Supérieure de Pāli* (1925-41).<sup>6</sup> Karpelès also engaged with national and international

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<sup>5</sup> Catherine Clémentin-Ojha & Pierre-Yves Manguin, *A Century in Asia: The History of the École Française D'extrême-Orient, 1898-2006* (Paris: Editions Didier Millet, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> For Karpelès see Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p.36 and chapters 8 and 9; idem, "Making a Religion of the Nation and Its Language: The French Protectorate and the Dhammakay, 1890-1945," in *History, Buddhism and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*, ed. John Amos Marston & Elizabeth Guthrie (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 63-85; Marie-Paula Ha,

women's organisations. She was a member of the French Federation of University Women, the French National Council of Women (CNFF), and in 1936 she served as honorary general secretary of the ICW, the umbrella organisation that federated national councils of women.<sup>7</sup> She was ejected from Vichy Cambodia in 1941 as a result of her Jewishness, her gender, and her internationalist identifications.

Dreyfus-Barney (1879-1974) lived for much of her life in Paris. She spent extended periods around 1900 in Akka (Acre) on the Haifa Bay, where she learned about the Bahà'ì faith and became fluent in Persian. With her French husband she acted as an important Bahà'ì emissary in Palestine, Persia, Russian Turkistan, Egypt, Turkey, China, Indochina, Burma, Korea, India, and the United States. The Bahà'ì faith supported feminist and anti-racist views and Dreyfus-Barney engaged actively with social issues through the League and philanthropic organisations. From 1927 these included the Association of the Friends of the East at the Musée Guimet, and after the death of her husband (in 1928) of the French Committee on Intellectual Co-operation. Like Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney belonged to the CNFF and the ICW. From 1925 she convened the ICW cinematography sub-committee (renamed the cinematograph and broadcasting committee in 1930), and was vice convenor and then convenor of the ICW peace and arbitration committee. She acted as ICW liaison officer with the League's International

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"Engendering French Colonial History: The Case of Indochina," *Historical reflections/Réflexions historiques* (1999): 95-125; for an obituary of Karpelès see Jean Filliozat, "Notice Nécrologique: Suzanne Karpelès," *Bulletin d'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 56 (1969): 1-3; for the Musée Guimet, see Janet R. Horne, "In Pursuit of Greater France: Visions of Empire among Musée Social Reformers, 1894-1931," in *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism*, ed. Julia Clancy-Smith & Frances Gouda (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 21-42.

<sup>7</sup> ICW, *President's Memorandum Regarding the Council Meeting of the International Council of Women. Held at Dubrovnik (Yougoslavia) September 28th to October 1936*, 26.

Institute of International Co-operation (IIIC) (from 1925) and with the IIEC (from 1930) and would continue her liaison role for the ICW with the United Nations after World War 11. Among her other commitments she was treasurer of the International Committee of Education through Cinematograph and Radio, is credited with the idea of the League's Liaison Committee of Major International Associations, of which she was a member, and she was the only woman on the League's Sub-committee of Experts to make the League of Nations known and to develop the Spirit of International Co-operation.<sup>8</sup> At the Estates General of Feminism (EGF) meeting, which the CNFF organised in Paris in May 1931 around the theme of women's activities in the colonies to mark the colonial exhibition at Vincennes, both Dreyfus-Barney and Karpelès commented on

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<sup>8</sup> For Dreyfus-Barney and the Bahà'ì faith see Mona Khademi, "Laura Dreyfus-Barney and Abdu'l-Bahá's Visit to the West," in *Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity*, ed. Negar Mottahedeh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 15-38; idem, "A Glimpse into the Life of Laura Dreyfus-Barney," *Lights of Irfan* 10 (2009): 71-106; for Dreyfus-Barney's family background see Jean Kling, *Alice Pike Barney: Her Life and Art* (New York: Smithsonian Institution, 1994); for Dreyfus-Barney's work for the ICW, see Laura Dreyfus-Barney, *Women in a Changing World: The Dynamic Story of the International Council of Women since 1888* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) and Elaine, Gubin & Leen van Molle, *Women Changing the World: A History of the International Council of Women, 1888-1988* (Brussels: Éditions Racine, 2005); further biographical detail for Dreyfus-Barney comes from CIF, "Notes biographique sure les orators de la réunion publique à l'Institut de Cooperation Intellectuelle 4 Juillet 1934," 43-4; Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, "President's Memorandum Regarding the Eighth Quinquennial Council Meeting, with the List of Resolutions Adopted," in ICW, *Report on the Quinquennial Meeting, Vienna, 1930* (Cromer: ICW, 1930), 39-83, here 47; for confirmation of Dreyfus-Barney's role in the establishment of the League's Liaison Committee of International Organisations, see Dreyfus-Barney to Marie Butts, 13 March 1934 [C5.1.6380] (Butts papers, International Bureau of Education archive, Geneva); for Dreyfus-Barney's membership of Friends of the Musée Guimeè see "Membres Nouveau depuis October 1927," *Revue des arts asiatiques* 4, no.4 (1927): 26.

cinematography and Karpelès spoke on a range of matters related to French colonialism.<sup>9</sup> In October 1931 they were together at the IIEC in Rome, where de Feo opened the ICW cinematograph conference.

The IIEC was founded in Rome in 1928 by Benito Mussolini's government under mandate from the League. Its remit covered technical questions of film production, regulation, and exhibition, and the documentation, information, circulation and preservation of film. Its empirical studies were disseminated via its journal, *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*, which also printed papers from IIEC symposia and conferences, the largest of which was the IIEC's 1934 congress.<sup>10</sup> The IIEC reported to the League's International Committee of Intellectual Co-operation (ICIC) founded in 1922 to further the League's liberal internationalist vision of a global order in which peaceful relations between nations post World War 1 were to be fostered through international law and collective security.<sup>11</sup> Dreyfus-Barney noted that the aim of intellectual co-operation was 'to free the mind from prejudice, hostility and ignorance, and to fortify it through co-operation and wider knowledge of human

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<sup>9</sup> Régine Goutalier, 'Les États généraux du féminisme à l'Exposition coloniale 30-31 Mai 1931', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 36, no. 2 (1989): 266-86, here 279-80.

<sup>10</sup> Christel Taillibert, *L'Institut international du cinématographe éducatif, Regards sur le rôle du cinéma éducatif dans la politique internationale du fascisme italien* (Paris: Harmattan, 1999); Zoe Druick, "The International Educational Cinematograph Institute, Reactionary Modernism and the Formation of Film Studies," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16 (2007): 80-9; Richard Maltby, "The Cinema and the League of Nations," in *'Film Europe' and 'Film America': Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920-1939*, ed. Andrew Higson & Richard Maltby (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 82-116; Benjamin G. Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order for European Culture* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Michael Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism: The Interwar Movement for Peace in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2012), 2.

relationships'. Its organisation, she continued, tried 'not only to abolish antagonistic feeling, but also to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding by safeguarding the school, the book the press, the radio, the cinematograph and all public platforms from pernicious influences working against Peace'.<sup>12</sup> Her comment highlights the positive and negative poles that framed *rapprochement* as it threaded through intellectual co-operation and educational cinematography at the League.

Scholars have variously described educational cinematography as instructional, useful, or cultural film.<sup>13</sup> de Feo argued that the purpose of educational cinematography was to develop 'spirit and character' and the reflective capacity of spectators through 'objective and scientific information'.<sup>14</sup> This stress on objectivity was a key facet in the ICIC's liberal internationalist

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<sup>12</sup> Laura Dreyfus-Barney, "Peace through Intellectual Co-operation," *World Peace: A Supplement To the International Council of Women Bulletin*, 1933, 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Eckhardt Fuchs, Anne Bruch & Michael Annegarn-Gläß, "Introduction: Educational Films: A Historical Review of Media Innovation in Schools," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 8, no.1 (2016): 1-13; for the three categories of educational cinema (instruction, educational and scholastic) under the French 1917 Educational Film Report where the category educational was defined as more rigorous treatment of subject matter, see Peter J Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 140; for educational film as cultural learning see Angelo van Gorp, "'Springing from a Sense of Wonder': Classroom Film and Cultural Learning in the 1930s," *Paedagogica Historica* (2017): 1-15; for educational film in the USA see Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron & Dan Streible, eds. *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); for 'useful' film see Charles R. Acland & Haidee Wasson, *Useful Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> "Fifth Session of the Rome Institute's Executive Committee, 1932," cited in Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary*, 251. This definition was selectively applied, see Joyce Goodman, "'Shaping the Mentality of Races and Especially of Young People": The League of Nations and Educational Cinematography" in

views of ‘disinterested’ knowledge, in which aspects of difference and of universality were held together through the notion of film as a universal form that also pointed to a multiverse of peoples.<sup>15</sup> As a universal yet multiversal medium, cinematography was to foster *rapprochement* between peoples and nations by working to eliminate inaccurate portrayals of nations and peoples that (in a negative sense) could lead to misunderstandings, undermine cooperation and friendly relations, and harm the cause of peace. In a positive sense, cinematography was to foster a spirit of international understanding through accurate portrayals of nations and peoples that would bring them into closer harmony and support the League’s work for peace. These negative and positive understandings of *rapprochement* framed much discussion of cinematography’s potential contribution to world peace.

The Italian submission to the League for a mandate to establish the IIEC used the Italian para-state agency LUCE (*L’Unione Cinematografica Educativa*) (where de Feo had previously served as director) as a precedent in the experimental use of ‘moving pictures for the intellectual development of the nation’.<sup>16</sup> LUCE embodied Mussolini’s belief that cinema was his

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*League of Nations: Histories, Legacies and Impact*, ed. Joy Damousi & Patricia O’Brien (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, in preparation).

<sup>15</sup> Jo-Anne Pemberton, *Global Metaphors: Modernity and the Quest for One World* (Sterling VA: Pluto, 2001), 23-4, 113; Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary*, 174; Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn’s Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), chapter 8.

<sup>16</sup> Taillibert, *L’institut International du Cinématographe Éducatif*, Druick, “The International Educational Cinematograph Institute”; Maltby, “The Cinema and the League of Nations”; Guido Convents, “Resisting the Lure of the Modern World: Catholics, International Politics and the Establishment of the International Catholic Office for Cinema (1918-1928),” in *Moralizing Cinema: Film, Catholicism, and Power*, eds. Daniel Biltereyst & Daniella T. Gennari (London: Routledge, 2014), 19-34; Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order*; for the IIEC’s closure, see Hilla Wehberg, “Fate of an International Film Institute,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1938): 483-85; for educational film in Italy post World War 2 see Anne Bruch, “Meglio Di Ieri: Educational

strongest weapon for fascist propaganda. Despite de Feo's declarations of the IIEC's neutrality on all issues of importance, Italy used the IIEC to promote fascism on the international scene by deploying what Geyer and Paulmann term the 'mechanics of internationalism'. In addition using its location in a structure of international and national organisations around cinematography, the the IIEC deployed the mechanics of internationalism by connecting internationalism and nationalism, linking international movements with processes of internationalisation, and by engaging in processes of inclusion and exclusion through which internationalism continuously redefined the boundaries between social entities, groups of nations, or states. As Martin illustrates, Italy, like Germany (which left the League in 1933) blended propaganda with the mechanics of internationalism within a vision of fascist-driven global governance and a nationalist vision of European culture that hierarchically ordered peoples within specific geographical space in ways antithetical to the liberal internationalist spirit. de feo would sever links with the IIEC in 1935 when, as the new director of Italy's new Photo-cinema division for Italian Africa, he filmed Mussolini's incursion into Abyssinia,<sup>17</sup> an invasion that would contribute to Italy's withdrawal from the League in 1937.

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Films, National Identity, and Citizenship in Italy from 1948 to 1968," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 8, no. 1 (2016): 78-90.

<sup>17</sup> Martin H Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, "Introduction: the Mechanics of Internationalism, " in *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War*, ed. Martin H Geyer and Johannes Paulmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-27; Martin, *The Nazi-Fascist New Order*, 73 and chapter 2; 73; see also Madeleine Herren, "Fascist Internationalism," in *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History*, eds Sluga and Clavin, 191-212, here 191-2; for educational film and German colonialism see Michael Annegarn-Gläß, "The German Colonies in Die Weltgeschichte Als Kolonialgeschichte. The Use of Filmic Techniques in Colonial Revisionism in the 1920s," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 8, no. 1 (2016): 14-29.

de Feo's query to Karpelès also illustrates what Pedersen terms the internationalisation of empire: the process by which certain political issues and functions (and particularly the work of legitimation) were displaced from the national or imperial and into the international realm.<sup>18</sup> The IIEC survey complemented national investigations into the impact of film on colonial audiences that had been conducted in India, and by Australia, Japan, France and Germany, including by women's organisations. Burns notes the investigation of the National Council of Women into 'the influence of the cinema on the Burmese masses' and the study commissioned by the Federated Women's Organisation of Rhodesia that concluded that cinema would damage 'primitives' unless it was strictly censored.<sup>19</sup> This scholarship portrays women as public moralists protecting native peoples from incitement to crime or immorality through film censorship. Other scholars cast women as public moralists seeking to educate white settler consumers to campaign for 'better films'.<sup>20</sup> A more recent turn in scholarship points to 1920s and 1930s commentary on film and race by women film producers, directors, artists and critics; while a further body of scholarship informed by feminist and post colonialist theory highlights the work of women producers and directors in relation to orientalist cinematic representations.<sup>21</sup> With some notable

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4;

<sup>19</sup> James Burns, *Cinema and Society in the British Empire, 1895-1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 56, 82.

<sup>20</sup> Both Joy Damousi, *Colonial Voices: A Cultural History of English in Australia, 1840-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and Jill Julius Matthews, *Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (Strawberry Hills, Australia: Currency Press, 2005) take a wider view than Australia alone.

<sup>21</sup> Antonia Lant & Ingrid Periz, eds. *Red Velvet Seat: Women's Writings on the First Fifty Years of Cinema*, (London: Verso, 2006) includes writing by Dreyfus-Barney and women who attended the 1931 ICW cinematography conference; for feminist approaches that consider orientalism see Sandy Flitterman-Lewis,

exceptions, much discussion of ‘useful’, documentary, or educational film tends to overlook women’s contribution, however, as does much analysis of film congresses and cinematic developments at the League.<sup>22</sup>

I interpolate the interactions of Karpelès, Dreyfus Barney and de Feo into scholarship on cinematography, internationalism and empire by drawing on what Burbank and Cooper term ‘repertoires of imperial power’: the different strategies empires chose as they incorporated diverse peoples into the polity while sustaining and making distinctions among them. For Burbank and Cooper, imperial repertoires were no bag of tricks dipped into at random, nor a preset formula for rule. Rather as empires emerged and competed, repertoires of imperial power constituted the flexible range of ruling strategies that were imaginable and feasible in specific historical situations. They were marked by what leaders could imagine and what they could carry off, and were shaped by past practices as well as constrained by context. Burbank and Cooper argue that framing imperial repertoires as flexible, constrained by geography and history but open to innovation, overcomes false dichotomies of continuity or change, contingency or determinism. They suggest that scholars look at how empires had to provide people - at home, overseas and in between - with a sense of place within an unequal but incorporative polity which did not always produce assimilation, conformity or even resigned acceptance.<sup>23</sup>

To situate the cinematic within imperial repertoires I draw on Hay’s argument that the distribution of films facilitated and over time transformed (in connection with other networks)

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To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema (New York: Columbia University Press), 1996 and Tami Williams, *Germaine Dulac: A Cinema of Sensations* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

<sup>22</sup> An exception to the literature cited in footnote 13 is Maltby, “The Cinema and the League of Nations”.

<sup>23</sup> Jane Burbank & Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 3, 16.

the relationship between a territory and the arrangement of a population (the socio-spatial relations of a society). The distribution of film does so, argues Hay through the gradual arrangement (agreement/configuration) and interdependence (not unified or unifying) of a variety of assemblages that organise and govern through particular sites and social spaces.<sup>24</sup> Hay's argument resonates with DeLanda's point that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plug into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different.<sup>25</sup> A focus on assemblage points to the process of arranging, organising and fitting together that can be fluid and contingent as well as tenacious. What is important is the relation between the elements, how the relation functions and what the relation can do as it creates territories that are more than just spaces but have a stake and a claim and are always being made and unmade.<sup>26</sup> From this perspective, cinematic assemblages play off and into nation and empire (as terms and formations) as power is administered through and relies upon multiple assemblages that separately but interdependently facilitate its circulation.<sup>27</sup> What is important about this confluence and combination of elements is what is made possible and what is in play in a given instance.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> James Hay, "Placing Cinema, Fascism and the Nation in a Diagram of Italian Modernity," in *Re-Viewing Fascism: Italian Cinema, 1922-1943*, ed. Jacqueline Reich & Piero Garofalo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 105-37.

<sup>25</sup> Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 10.

<sup>26</sup> J Macgregor Wise, "Assemblage," in *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, ed. Charles J Stivale (London: Routledge, 2014), 91-102, here 91.

<sup>27</sup> Hay, "Placing Cinema, Fascism and the Nation", 106.

<sup>28</sup> Noah W Sobe, "Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education," in *Rethinking the History of Education: Transnational Perspectives on Its Questions, Methods, and Knowledge*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 93-107.

In what follows I look at two elements in the assemblage of internationalism and imperialism as they intersected around the cinematic (outside the film frame) at the League, the ICW and in Karpelès work from Phomh-Penh: the notion of *rapprochement* and the notion of mentalities as applied to native peoples. I begin with a brief exploration of this intersection at the ICW and the League.

### **Cinematography, *rapprochement* and mentalities at the ICW and the Rome Institute**

At both the ICW and the League discussion of cinematography surfaced within a protectionist agenda that situated women activists as scrutinising reformers in the moral panics that linked film with incitement to immorality and crime.<sup>29</sup> During the 1920s, reports from the ICW's national councils to its Standing Committee on Education focussed on activities to 'safeguard' cinema by agitating for the appointment of state censorship boards that included women members, and for the supervision of titles, printed matter, advertisements and posters, alongside films. When the ICW Sub-Committee on Cinematography was established in 1925 it continued to channel aspects of cinema reform through ICW committees concerned with education, peace, hygiene, press, and arts and letters. But Dreyfus-Barney's inclusion of a selection of resolutions passed at the Motion Picture Congress of 1926 (organised in Paris at the IICC), illustrates a broadening of the sub-committee's remit as its work became mapped more closely around international co-operation. While retaining a focus on hygienic and safe conditions in cinemas and the 'moral point of view' that continued to exercise women, the 1926 ICW resolution drew on the negative pole of *rapprochement* to ask the ICW's national councils to interest authors, producers, publishers and individuals engaged in artistic and industrial aspects of film production to avoid 'scenarios likely to arouse a spirit of animosity between nations and

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<sup>29</sup> The term scrutinising reformers comes from Lant & Periz, *Red Velvet Seat*, 6.

tending to perpetuate the idea of war' and to avoid 'presenting foreign nations or races in a degrading light on the screen'.<sup>30</sup>

At the 1931 ICW cinematograph congress the importance of cinema to the *rapprochement* of peoples was expressed in terms of both the positive and negative poles through which cinematograph was to aid the harmonious relations of nations. The Hungarian Countess Apponyi drew on the positive pole of *rapprochement* in her view that film made it possible to remain in one's place but 'see all parts of the world, from the arctic regions to the tropics'. This panorama enabled the spectator to 'become acquainted with the people of all lands, their ways of life and their peculiarities, habits and customs which approximate to his [sic] own point of view' as well as 'those which seem different'. For Apponyi, geographic, ethnographic and historical films held the potential to remove prejudice because they enabled 'the solidarity of the whole of humanity at all times [to be] clearly apparent'. From 1928, Apponyi was substitute delegate from Hungary to the League Assembly and from 1930 president of the League's committee on Social and General Questions, as well as president of the Alliance of Women's Associations in Hungary, Hungarian representative to the ICW, and president of the Hungarian Association of Female Teachers. Her view of cinematography built on the configuration of objectivity as transparent that underpinned both the League's social investigation and the ICIC's dual embrace of difference and of universality. Her argument that a lack of a 'sense of human

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<sup>30</sup> "Resolutions and Recommendations Adopted by Standing Committees Bearing on their Schemes of Work and Approved by the Executive when Receiving their Reports," in ICW, *Annual Report 1920-22*, ed. Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair (Aberdeen: Rosemount Press, nd), 290-4, here 293; Laura Dreyfus-Barney, "Rapport du Sous-Comité du Cinématographe," in ICW, *Biennial Report 1925-7*, ed. Elsie Zimmern (London, nd), 394-402, here 395; "Presidents Memorandum Regarding the Business Transacted by the ICW Executive Held at Geneva," in ICW, *Annual Report 1925-7*, 21-36, here 31; Laura Dreyfus-Barney, "Cinema Sub-Committee," *Bulletin of the International Council of Women* 7, no. 9 (1929): 7.

interdependence' led to 'the great disasters of war and revolution' linked cinematography to the negative pole of *rapprochement*.<sup>31</sup>

Elsa Matz, an active member of the professional organisation of women teachers in Pomerania, and headteacher of the Westend School for Girls in Charlottenburg (from 1929), drew on both positive and negative poles of *rapprochement* to argue that cinematograph was to be used as an instrument of peace and not to excite discord between nations. Matz, who also served as DVP (German People's Party) Reichstadt deputy from 1920, also commented on cinematography at the League in 1928 as an expert member of the League's Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People. As a member of the German censorship board, she favoured an international agreement to harmonise the principles and method of censorship and at the ICW conference she insisted that no state could 'allow its dignity and its national honour to be prejudiced by a film projected abroad or allow wrong ideas to be nourished by films shown to other nations'.<sup>32</sup> Her statement linked with rhetoric which

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<sup>31</sup> Countess Apponyi, "The Cinema, Instrument of General Culture and Human Solidarity," *IREC* 3 no. 12 (1931): 1138-39; for Apponyi, whose paper was read in absentia, see Susan Zimmerman & Claudia Papp, "Apponyi, Countess, Mrs Count Albert Apponyi, Born Countess Clotilde, Klotild Dietrichsetein-Mensdorff-Pouilly (1867-1842)," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca De Haan, Krassimira Daskalova & Anna Loutfi (Budapest: CEUP, 2006), 25-29.

<sup>32</sup> Elsa Matz, "Film Censorship," *IREC* 3 no.12 (1931): 1113-1122, here 1115, see also League Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People, Child Welfare Committee, "Minutes of the Fourth Session Held at Geneva From Monday March 19, to Saturday, March 24th, 1928" (IV.SOCIAL 1928.IV.16), 16; Matz (1881-1959) studied German philology, philosophy and history at the universities of Kiel and Berlin, graduating PhD. See Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany* (London: Berg, 2004), 37; for Matz and women's organisations, see Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill: University

circulated more widely than what was at stake in cinematographic portrayals was the dignity and prestige of white nations, an argument that bolstered colonial relations.<sup>33</sup>

In the context of calls for self-determination from rising nationalist movements during the 1930s, a growing stress on fear and disorder framed input to the 1931 ICW conference from Chinese delegate Kyuin San Kao and Persian delegate Fatimeh Arfa. Both pointed to the educative possibilities of film but they also stressed film's potential for incitement to disorder. Kao, an alumna of Michigan University with an MA from Columbia University, whose career included posts at the Higher Normal School for Women in Peking and the National Central University, Nanking, underscored Matz's argument about misrepresentation in film. While Matz focussed on the dignity and prestige of white nations, Kao's focus was native populations. She argued that the foreign producers who turned out films in China and in other countries of the Far East were in the habit of choosing the 'least edifying scenes of popular life with a view to their later revival on the screen'. This, she said, gave spectators in Europe and America 'a false and distorted idea of the life and customs in those countries'. In asking the League and the ICW to work for peace she drew on the negative pole of *rapprochement* to argue that eliminating 'bad elements' from film was necessary because 'peoples of the Orient' had 'a different mentality from European peoples' and a more 'developed' imagination.<sup>34</sup> In

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of North Carolina Press, 2003); for Matz and education, see Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany* (London: Berghahn Books, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> For this wider circulation, see Burns, *Cinema and Society*, 125.

<sup>34</sup> "International Council of Women Conference on Cinematography and Broadcasting", *Bulletin of the International Council of Women* 10, no.4 (1931): 1-4, here 3; ICW, Conference du Cinématographe et de la Radiodiffusion, "Procès-verbal de la 4e séance ouverte le 7 October à 14h 30 sous la présidence de Mme Dreyfus-Barney, présidente' (1931)", 7, typescript; San Kao became Supervisor of Education for the Shanghai Municipality and Head of the Commission of Textbooks for the Ministry of Education, see, "Kyuin-San Kao," *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review* 49 (1942): 22. I am currently tracing whether Fatimeh Arfa, was related to Hassan Arfa, born to an Anglo-Russian mother and an Iranian

urging the elimination of filmic misrepresentation, Kao blended ideas around the *rapprochement* of peoples with notions of mentalities that were increasingly deployed within imperialism.

The deployment of mentalities in relation to the cinematic also emerged in debate at the IIEC. Here it aligned with a focus on the negative pole of *rapprochement* in ways redolent of 1930s imperial repertoires that stressed legitimations of difference. In 1932, IIEC French delegate, art historian and Sorbonne professor, Henri Focillon protested against the term ‘backward races’ as an unacceptable way in which to describe those living under European colonial mandate.<sup>35</sup> In 1933 the IIEC’s governing body noted that the cinematograph had been invented and exploited in Western countries but films intended for Western audiences were now being shown in countries ‘inhabited by peoples of very different mentality’, where the influence could be ‘pernicious.’<sup>36</sup> In the same year, the IIEC governing body requested the League Council to ask the League’s Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) to consider ‘the adjustment of cinematographic production to the needs and mentalities of different peoples’. This, the IIEC governing body noted, ‘was deserving of attention of those anxious to prevent the cinematograph having a pernicious influence, whereas its judicious utilisation might on the contrary, have beneficial results in developing the

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father, who lived in Paris with his mother from 1900 when his parents divorced and who was appointed Military Attaché in London in 1931, see Hassan Arfa’, *Under Five Shahs* (London: John Murray, 1964).

<sup>35</sup> League, Institut du Cinématographe Éducatif: Conseil Administration, “Cinquième session, tenue à Rome le 26 octobre 1932 à 10 heures” [ICE.C.A./5e Session/P.V.2.2.], quoted in Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> League, International Co-operation Organisation, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, “Work of the Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the Institute. Report by the Italian Representative” [C.47.1833.X11] Geneva, 24 January 1933, 2.

native culture of the different people'.<sup>37</sup> This linkage between mentalities and cinematography was repeated at the PMC when Lord Lugard, chair of the PMC and architect of the British notion of indirect rule, questioned the French representative about the Report on Cameroons and Togoland under French Mandate. He noted that the PMC was interesting itself in the question of film 'in view of the difference in mentalities and cultures'.<sup>38</sup>

The framing of the IIEC cinematograph survey resonated with this deployment of mentalities. It was a civilizational justification for empire that incorporated difference and obfuscated notions of racial inferiority by dividing peoples hierarchically within claims of imperial protection and benevolence. It aligned with the British notion of indirect rule as a 'moral duty' incumbent on colonial rulers who were to develop 'backward' areas while offering protection to indigenous inhabitants, which it was argued, was beneficial in raising both European living standards and native civilization. It meshed with 1930s French colonialism which viewed native peoples as different from the French and saw the future of colonialism dependent on taking these differences into account in order to encourage colonised peoples to be productive associates without seeking to adopt a French model or French citizenship; and it was compatible with ways Mussolini's government portrayed Italian colonialism as respectful and beneficial by drawing on a rhetoric of reclamation infused with notions of spiritual and cultural renewal alongside clinical metaphors associated with combatting degeneracy and decline. The IIEC survey constituted a mechanism of internationalism by circulating the notion of mentalities

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<sup>37</sup> League, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, "Report to the Council on the Fifth Session of the Governing Body of the Institute Held at Rome on October 26th and 27th 1932" [C.33.M.12.1933.XII] Geneva, 18th January 1933, 4.

<sup>38</sup> League, Permanent Mandates Commission, "Minutes of the Twenty-Fourth Session Held at Geneva from October 23rd to November 4th 1933, Including the Report of the Commission to the Council" [C.619.M.202.1933.V1] Geneva 4 November 1933, 135.

in an internationalised arena where it resonated with these imperial legitimations, all of which built on notions of difference to frame the provision and purpose of education and cinematography for native peoples as allowing each ethnic group to evolve within its own mentality<sup>39</sup>

In the following section I explore how *rapprochement* and the ‘mentalities of native peoples’ were assembled in the imperial, national and local flows within which I situate Karpelès work.

### **Cinematography, *rapprochement* and mentalities: Indochina and Greater France**

Karpelès plugs into French associative thinking but in ways nuanced by gender. At the CNFF’s EGF meeting she had expressed regret that Cambodians were favouring colonial schools over pagoda schools as a path for their children to public roles. Here, she noted that the education service was working to redress this situation by reviving the older form of education, which she considered better adapted to ‘native mentalities’, whether for girls or boys. But Karpelès also worked to open secondary schooling for girls at Hanoi and Phnom-Penh and then higher education for women.<sup>40</sup> She adopted a preservationist strand which formed an element in French associationist legitimations of empire that built on the rhetoric of protection by depicting Cambodian temples like Angkor Watt as having been retrieved from obscurity and

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Kallaway and Rebecca Swartz, “Introduction,” in *Empire and Education in Africa: The Shaping of a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Kallaway & Swartz (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 1-28; Alison J.M. Levine, *Framing the Nation: Documentary Film in Interwar France* (London: Continuum, 2010), 87; Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933-40* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 40; Elsie Rockwell, “Tracing Assimilation and Adaptation through School Exercise Books from *Afrique Occidentale Française* in the Early Twentieth Century,” in *Empire and Education in Africa*, ed. Kallaway & Swartz, 235-70.

<sup>40</sup> Goutalier, ‘Les États généraux du féminisme’, 279-80. Le Groupe Histoire et Perspectives, *Soixante-quinze ans d'histoire de l'affidivus de Paris, 1920-1995* (Paris: Association Française des Femmes Diplômées des Universités, 1997). Thanks to Rebecca Rogers for sourcing my copy.

restored through French intervention.<sup>41</sup> In similar vein, Karpèles stressed the collaboration of the EFEO and the court of Cambodia over the regeneration of an ‘authentic’ Khmer culture, which she saw in danger of fading away. As the founding director of the Royal Library and of the Buddhist Institute, and as chief publications officer for the École Supérieure de Pāli, her educational role fell within one of the pillars of the French civilising mission seen as ideally suited to the humanitarian interventions of colonial women in empire. Yet, she also ran against the grain of French colonialist discourses that saw the core mission of French colonial woman as setting up home to provide a model for the racial and cultural preservation of ‘authentic’ Frenchness. Some of Karpèles’ examples at the EGF referenced individual indigenous women with whose work she was acquainted, which contrasted with more usual representations of indigenous women as an undifferentiated group; and by the time she was evicted from from Vichy Cambodia she had embraced Buddhism.<sup>42</sup>

From her base in Phnom-Penh, Karpèles wrote to de Feo and also to the governor general of Indochina that the ‘films of the first order’ that she now regularly projected in Phnom-Penh and in villages across Indochina had been facilitated by Dreyfus-Barney and the CNFF.<sup>43</sup> At the 1931 ICW cinematograph conference Karpèles heard Miss Tommasi, professor at the Umberto 1 School in Rome and a member of the Italian National Council of Women, talk about the travelling cinemas used in France, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria and Russia for social propaganda and for teaching about agriculture and hygiene. Tommasi noted

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<sup>41</sup> Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Suzanne Karpèles, “Renaissance in Cambodia,” *Journal of the American Association of University Women*, January (1933): 71-74, here 71; Edwards, *Cambodge*, chapter 8, especially 187; Le Groupe Historie et Perspectives, *D’histoire De L’affidu*; Marie-Paula Ha, “French Women and the Empire,” in *France and “Indochina”: Cultural Representations*, ed. Kathryn Robson & Jennifer Yee (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 15-20, here 17; Goutalier, ‘Les États généraux du féminisme’, 283.

<sup>43</sup> Karpèles to Governor General of Indochina, 23 August 1932.

that these traveling cinemas were ‘the only means of stimulating spiritually and amusing healthily those illiterate and ignorant populations of remote countrysides’. Tommasi also talked about the need for film libraries in order to co-ordinate the supply and demand of educational films.<sup>44</sup> When Karpelès wrote to Dreyfus-Barney to enquire about the Belgium projector (KINESCOPE), she informed her that the governor general had agreed that she would receive films each quarter.<sup>45</sup>

In building her film library Karpelès’ plugged into networks around cinematography that had been established in Indochina by Albert Sarraut (governor general 1911-14, 1917-19). Sarraut saw film as an arm of education and stressed the importance of showing France to the colonies and the colonies to France. Under Sarraut, public film screenings in the protectorate showed films designed to inform local populations about French history, the French nation, and the broad goals of France’s civilising mission; and film footage was collected to promote French Indochina to France. After 1918 this developed into the Service photo-cinématographique de l’Indochine, which became the Société Indochina-Films and produced films on Indochina for distribution in France as well as distributing propaganda films in towns and villages across Indochina. Indochina was also the first place within the French colonial system to have an Agence économique, a bureau of the Ministry of Colonies responsible for promoting Indochina in France, which also became involved in film distribution. The films to which Karpelès referred may have been issued from the in-house service set up in 1927, which collected and lent films on the colony as well as producing documentaries for export to the Agence économique in Paris.<sup>46</sup>

The mobile film apparatus about which Karpelès wrote to Dreyfus-Barney was carried by the Institute of Buddhist Studies’ book buses. From 1930 these buses facilitated the circulation of texts printed in Khmer and engravings in national style. They were among a number of Karpelès’ projects that Edwards

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<sup>44</sup> A. Tommasi, “Projectors, Films and Film Libraries,” *IREC* 3, no. 12 (1921): 1080-88, here 1084-5.

<sup>45</sup> Karpelès to Dreyfus-Barney, 9 September 1932.

<sup>46</sup> Levine, *Framing the Nation*, 64ff; Bloom, *French Colonial Documentary*, 52.

argues were significant for framing national space through the dynamic intersection of a European and indigenous worldview constructed through the twin category of Cambodia as a nation and Buddhism as a national religion but became caught in cross currents amongst groupings of Buddhist monks. Edwards unpacks how in the printed word contesting visions of time were embedded as technologies in language, inscription and dissemination. As Edwards notes, while linear black and white imaging was not unknown in the region it was likely that most indigenous Cambodians had to learn to see in black and white. Karpelès' educational cinematography initiative overlay motion onto visual technologies of black and white. New visual technologies around motion were also coupled with the creation of new secular public arenas and expectations about new modes of behaviour.<sup>47</sup>

At a time of local unrest, Karpelès' educational film activities also played into the fabrication of the French fiction that saw Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam as one territory - Indochina - and shifted what had originally been seen as Indo-China (between India and China), to form what Norindr calls a new physiognomic political geography of the region.<sup>48</sup> In her response to de Feo Karpelès noted that her remarks about the Cambodians applied equally to Laos. Elsewhere she referred to Cambodia and Laos as 'two countries with the same culture, the same confession and a common historical past' which had been ignored', and noted that the Institute of Buddhist Studies had 'forged a new spiritual and intellectual bond between them'.<sup>49</sup> Educational films projected in Cochin-China (the Mekong Delta region around Saigon) fed into Karpelès' aim to forge anew the link between the ethnic Khmer population across Cochin-China, Cambodia and Laos. In a narrative in which conquest became pacification, she located France as the

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<sup>47</sup> Edwards *Cambodge*, 7, 20, 151. idem, "Making a Religion", 66, 75, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Cooper, *France in Indochina*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Karpelès, "Renaissance", 74.

humanitarian protector and the Ammanites (living in Central Vietnam around Hué) as colonisers who aimed to ‘detach [‘authentic’ Cambodians] from their Buddhist doctrines and despoil them of their lands’.<sup>50</sup>

In responding to de Feo about educational cinematography Karpelès also illustrates the promotion of *La Grande France* (Greater France). This configuration worked to make disparate cultures and societies appear to be diverse, yet unified and vital parts of French national identity.<sup>51</sup> In writing to the governor general about cinematography Karpelès portrayed film shows as a valuable auxiliary ‘to the radiation of our influence and for bringing together the two countries’. She noted that after hearing her account of France and viewing the films, France appeared very far away to the spectators but the inhabitants did not. Despite the difference in costume, she wrote, they realised that the French peasant experienced the same feelings for his land as the Cambodian for his rice field and ‘they see him till his wheat field with as much zeal and commitment’.<sup>52</sup>

A letter Karpelès wrote to Dreyfus-Barney illustrates that films chosen for their relevance (‘adapted’) to local conditions could open spaces of agency that flattened national prestige. But Karpelès deployed an infantilising description of spectatorship that differentiated Cambodian spectators from models of spectator behaviour expected in ‘Western’ cinemas. She described how the militiamen, their families their friends, the priest and many ‘yellow sages’ spent a ‘delightful evening’:

They were more than 600, chuckling with joy, crying, clapping hands, when ‘The Landscapes of France’ and ‘A School of Agriculture’ were explained to them. When

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 73, 74.

<sup>51</sup> Levine, *Framing the Nation*, 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> Karpelès to Governor General of Indochina, 23 August 1932.

they saw oxen and gigantic horses and that fields are ploughed as a rice field, there was a frenzy. But what a surprise to see the French work the land like them!<sup>53</sup>

The titles of the 80 films that Karpelès listed in her response to de Feo illustrate both the preservationist and progressivist strands of French colonialism to which Alison Levine alerts.<sup>54</sup> In Karpelès list of films this preservationist articulation of associationism was illustrated through films showing ruins, celebrations and rites - the ruins of Prkhan, and Angkor, celebrations at Angkor, the crowning of King Sisowathmonivong, films of Sisowathmonivong's funeral pyre, as well as funeral processions and pyres of monks. Along with depictions of colonial buildings and of France's governing role captured in films of visits of governor generals, the progressivist developmental role of France was much in evidence through films on railways, public buildings and public works in Cambodia. Her list of health and hygiene films of the type shown in rural France included Jean Benoit-Lévy's film *Le bon et le mauvais laitier* (The Good and the Bad Dairyman) also shown to French rural audiences.<sup>55</sup>

Karpelès remained concerned about the detrimental effect of commercial cinema in Indochina, where more working commercial cinemas operated than in any other region of 'overseas France'.<sup>56</sup> In 1933 she wrote to the governor general and to the secretary of the French Academy of Colonial Sciences (where she had been a correspondent since 1929) about the censorship operating from Hanoi in which women were not included. The result, she complained, was that the cinema neither raised the prestige of France, nor gave a true

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<sup>53</sup> Karpelès to Dreyfus-Barney, 18 August 1932.

<sup>54</sup> Levine, *Framing the Nation*, 8-9.

<sup>55</sup> Karpelès to de Feo, 30 June, 1933.

<sup>56</sup> Levine, *Framing the Nation*, 95.

impression of the French nation that would foster the respect and admiration of Asiatic people.<sup>57</sup> She described French films as lamentable, focussed on vulgarity, drink, degradation and the superficiality of women. By 1930 Phomn Penh had a Western and several Chinese run cinemas<sup>58</sup> and Karpelès wrote to the governor general that she had also seen a Chinese sound film that had represented the Sino-Japanese war as a victory for Chinese troops.<sup>59</sup> She sent Dreyfus-Barney indictments of French films which she described as ill-chosen for the colonies;<sup>60</sup> and just before the 1934 IIEC cinematography congress she sent her a hasty note in which she was scathing about Tarzan, which she had just seen.<sup>61</sup>

### **Internationalism and Imperialism**

Karpelès was not able to attend the 1934 IIEC congress in person but Dreyfus-Barney fed her views on educational cinematography into congress proceedings. At de Feo's request and to aid his preparations for the section of the congress entitled, 'the influence of the cinema on the various mentalities of the peoples', Dreyfus-Barney spent several weeks in Rome prior to the congress studying the survey reports coming into the IIEC from the the Near and the Far East.<sup>62</sup> In her congress presentations she used excerpts from Karpelès letters to make a case for the importance of cinematography. She noted the 'different effects which the cinema can have on peoples of different races living in different latitudes', which she thought 'required the greatest care in the choice of films exported in order to prevent the distribution of bad pictures' because

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<sup>57</sup> Karpelès to the Secretary of the Academy of Colonial Sciences, Paris, 8 August 1933.

<sup>58</sup> *A 1930's Guide to Saigon, Phnom Penh, and Angkor* (Saigon: Maison Portal, 1930).

<sup>59</sup> Karpelès to Governor General of Indochina, 17 August 1932.

<sup>60</sup> Karpelès to Dreyfus-Barney, 21 January 1934.

<sup>61</sup> Karpelès to Dreyfus-Barney, 7 March 1934.

<sup>62</sup> *International Congress of Cinematography, Rome 19-25 April 1934*, 12; Dreyfus-Barney to Karpelès 11 October 1933.

of their potential to have a 'prejudicial effect on natives'. She pointed to Karpelès' personal experience with cinematography, which she argued should form the basis of film policy to be followed in such countries; and she highlighted the 'voluminous and interesting documentation' that the IIEC had gathered from more than 200 replies to its inquiry among peoples of the Near and Far East. The inquiry, she noted, 'would allow a better understanding of the influence of the motion picture on peoples of different races and cultures'.<sup>63</sup>

Mussolini opened the IIEC's 1934 cinematography congress by stating that film was 'important in shaping the mentalities of races and of young people'.<sup>64</sup> His rhetoric on mentalities plugged into an assemblage of fascist thinking, which by 1933 was built around Italy's pretensions vis-à-vis the Muslim world in the Middle East<sup>65</sup> and resonated with the fascist hierarchical ordering of peoples that located peoples within specific geographical space. But the League operated as an internationalised arena oriented towards the maintenance of world peace and its internationalist orientation threaded through de Feo's summary of the importance the 1934 congress imputed to 'the problems raised by the diffusion of films among peoples of different mentalities and cultures'. He associated this importance with delegates' concern about film's potential to 'create misunderstandings between a country's people and another's'. To bring together *rapprochement* and mentalities de Feo argued that what was needed was a 'benevolent objectivity' which was to be achieved through films that dealt with daily life and through 'conscientious and bold studies of national customs, artistically conceived'. Such films, he thought, were 'calculated to convince of the essentially uniform sentiments which animate or agitate people in the most varied

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<sup>63</sup> Laura Dreyfus-Barney, "Cinema and Peace (Summary Report of [sic] the Cinema and Broadcasting Commission of the International Women's Council," *IREC* 6, no. 4 (1934): 253-56, here 254-6.

<sup>64</sup> Laura Dreyfus-Barney, "Cinematography. Report Submitted by Mme Dreyfus-Barney to the International Congress of Educational Cinematography Rome (May 17th, 1934)", typescript.

<sup>65</sup> Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East*, 27-29.

environments' and would 'give us the mentality of people who have travelled far and wide, stayed in various countries and formed connections and friendships with people in these countries'.<sup>66</sup>

The final 1934 IIEC congress resolution wove together *rapprochement* and mentalities. In 'recognis[ing] the importance of the problems raised by the diffusion of films among peoples of different mentalities and cultures', the resolution played into the dividing practices of imperialism. It displayed associative, preservationist and adaptive legitimations in arguing that cinematography was not to propagate 'wrong appreciations of the characteristics of different civilisations but was to promote 'the development of the culture, and the conservation of the traditions of the people's concerned'. To foster *rapprochement*, cinematography was to 'favour intellectual exchanges between the various peoples and further their mutual understanding'.<sup>67</sup> In the assemblage of *rapprochement* and mentalities that threaded through intellectual co-operation and imperialism, such aspirations could be variously assembled as technologies of power in different imperial locations to inform colonial strategy and practice on the ground.

## Conclusion

Focussing on the interactions of Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney and de Feo around the cinematic illustrates how notions of *rapprochement* and mentalities were variously arranged, organised and fitted together at the ICW, the IIEC and from Phnom-Pehn. Plugged into different assemblages via mechanics of internationalism and the internationalisation of empire, varied interactions came into play across liberal internationalism, fascist internationalism and the

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<sup>66</sup> *International Congress of Cinematography* (brochure), 7; League of Nations Intellectual Co-operation Organisation, International Educational Cinematographic Institute, "Report by the Director of the Institute, 10 July 1934" (C.I.C.I./358), 4.

<sup>67</sup> *International Congress of Educational and Instructional Cinematography* (Rome: IIEC, 1934), 32.

dividing practices that constituted repertoires of imperial power. They did so in ways that demonstrate an interdependence that was not necessarily unified or unifying.

While de Feo would turn his back on the liberal internationalism of the League in 1935, the internationalised arena of the 1934 IIEC conference inflected how he assembled *rapprochement* and mentalities in his summary of delegates' concern about film's potential to 'create misunderstandings between a country's people and another's'. In noting films that were 'calculated to convince of the essentially uniform sentiments which animate or agitate people in the most varied environments', de Feo drew on a universality that aligned with forms of liberal internationalism and was in tension with the hierarchies and localism of fascist internationalism with which Mussolini's invocation of mentalities resonated. Like Apponyi, de Feo plugged into liberal internationalism in aligning film with travel as an element to form the mentality of people through connections and friendships. But his use of the term 'benevolent objectivity' to bridge *rapprochement* and mentalities speaks to a tension that nuanced the objectivity of 'scientific information' on which liberal internationalist views of cinematography drew.

Karpelès, too, assembled *rapprochement* and mentalities in complex ways. In invoking the negative pole of *rapprochement* to argue that poor regulation of censorship in Hanoi undermined the prestige of France, she differentiated white and native populations in ways similar to Matz. Karpelès' comments that educational film illustrated the radiation of French influence and brought together Indochina and France, illustrate how *rapprochement* could operate as a dividing practice within French associationist repertoires of imperialism when allied with descriptions that differentiated Cambodian and Western spectatorship. Films that invoked French preservationist and protectionist rhetoric also played into the creation of Indochina as a new physiognomic political geography of the region. But Karpelès' stance was assembled within her wider engagements in Indochina and France that situate her more ambiguously through a knowledge of individuals developed through the on-the-ground collaborations that were in evidence at the EGF.

In assembling *rapprochement* and mentalities, Dreyfus-Barney illustrates shifts in respect of internationalism. In introducing the selection of resolutions passed at the Motion Picture Congress of 1926 into the work of the ICW, Dreyfus-Barney invoked the notion of ‘races living in different latitudes’ as well as notions of cultures and mentalities. Here, like Kao and Arfa at the ICW conference, she noted the need to avoid ‘presenting foreign nations or races in a degrading light on the screen’. By the 1934 congress, when she had spent time working through the more than 200 replies to de Feo’s cinematic inquiry among peoples of the Near and Far East, her statement includes the effect of the motion picture *on* peoples of different races and cultures, about which, she noted, the inquiry would provide a better understanding.

Analysing and contextualising the interactions of Karpelès, Dreyfus-Barney and de Feo suggests that incorporating agentic women into historical accounts has the potential to enrich current understandings of how educational cinematography, internationalism and imperialism entangled through mechanisms of internationalism and the internationalism of empire. Unpacking the confluences and combinations of various elements assembled around the cinematic at the League, the ICW, and from Phomn-Penh begins to illustrate some of the elements that came into play in the articulations and disarticulations of internationalism in the domains of nationalism and imperialism. These confluences and combinations also begin to illustrate some of the articulations and disarticulations of the national and imperial that were made possible in the domain of the international.