Marrying Global History with South Asian History: Potential and Limits of Global Microhistory in a Regional Inflection[1]

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ABSTRACTS

Der vorliegende Beitrag rekonstruiert zunächst die Genese grenzüberschreitender, „transnationaler" und „globaler" Geschichtsschreibung zu Südasien. Auf dieser Grundlage postuliert er einen spezifischen globalhistorischen Ansatz, welcher die in den *area studies* übliche dichte regional- und kulturspezifische Kontextualisierung nicht zugunsten einer möglichst umfassenden Makroperspektive opfert. Der zur Diskussion gestellte Ansatz erkennt vielmehr den Wert von Mikroperspektiven an und empfiehlt die fokussierte Analyse von einzelnen Akteuren, Organisationen oder Institutionen in ihren vielfältigen Verflechtungen als eine gangbare Methode, um regional grundierte Globalgeschichte zu schreiben. Anders als bei rein mikrohistorischen Zugriffen ist jedoch die multiskalare Erweiterung auf andere relevante Interaktionsräume ebenso unerlässlich. Je nach Themenstellung wird daher das Ausleuchten von regionalen, nationalen, imperialen oder globalen Kontexten erforderlich. Es ist insbesondere ihre Fähigkeit zum „Auszoomen", die den größten Erkenntnisgewinn dieser globalen Mikrogeschichte verspricht. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen eines solchen Ansatzes werden abschließend mit einem Beispiel aus der aktuellen Forschung des Autors zu Dorfentwicklungsprogrammen des amerikanischen YMCA im Indien der Zwischenkriegszeit illustriert.

After revisiting transnationally oriented historiography from within a regional South Asian ambit, this article makes a plea for a very specific take on global-history writing that promises to appeal especially to historians who have learned to value dense regional/cultural contextu-

1 I would like to thank Carolyn Kerchof, Bernhard Schär, Elena Valdameri, Michael Brunner, and Joanna Simonow for reading earlier versions of this article and providing valuable suggestions for its improvement.

alisation through a training in "area studies". The approach proposed here acknowledges the validity of micro-approaches in that it advocates the use of the focused analysis of individuals, organisations or institutions and an exploration of their multifarious entanglements and interactions. Yet, while the contextualisation in micro-spatial units is pivotal, a simultaneous awareness of broader contexts and connections as well as a consciousness of the existence and significance of wider analytical frames of analysis – such as the regional, the national or imperial and, of course, the global is equally important. In fact, it is precisely the ability to "zoom out," to capture the influence of translocal factors on local processes that makes the proposed variety of "global micro-history" work. Potential and limits of the proposed approach are eventually illustrated with an example taken from the author's work on village development programmes launched by the American YMCA in South Asia in the interwar period.

1. The Concept of Global History

After the earlier boom in North America, global history's moment of arrival in the Asian and European academe seems to have finally come, bringing with it the establishment of a growing number of chairs and professional associations, as well as the launch of new journals, book series and other publication vehicles. What is more, after the pioneering phase of the late 1990s and early 2000s, when global historical studies remained relatively rare oddities in the wider field of history, the past decade, in particular, has yielded quite a number of attempts to define and systematize the new historiographical paradigm.[2] Indeed, we have meanwhile even been provided with "manuals," spelling out in concrete detail how to practice global history.[3] However, just like in any other emerging sub-field of historical inquiry, there is still little unanimity among the proponents of global history about the overarching purpose, exact boundaries, suitable topics, and appropriate methods. Quite the opposite: the spectrum of what is understood, labelled or marketed as global history continues to be extremely vast and contested. The loosely defined umbrella is accommodating hugely different research agendas, such as the world-system-theory-inspired analysis of the macro-economic and technological "divergences" between Asia and Europe,[4] as well as micro-historical probings into the effects of inter-

2 See, for example, S. Beckert and D. Sachsenmaier (eds.), Global History Globally: Research and Practice around the World, London 2018; S. Conrad, What is Global History?, Princeton 2016; J. Belich, J. Darwin, and M. Frenz (eds.), The Prospect of Global History, Oxford 2016; L. Testot, Histoire globale: un autre regard sur le monde, Paris 2015; A. Iriye, Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present and Future, Houndmills 2013; P. K. Crossley, What is Global History?, Cambridge, UK 2008; S. Conrad, A. Eckert, and U. Freitag, (eds.), Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen, Frankfurt a. M. 2007; C. Douki and P. Minard, Histoire globale, histoires connectées: un changement d'échelle historiographique?, in: Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine 54 (2007) 4, pp. 7–21.

3 R.M. Berg (ed.), Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century, Oxford 2013; L. Hunt, Writing History in the Global Era, New York 2014; R. Wenzelhuemer, Globalgeschichte schreiben: Eine Einführung in 6 Episoden, Konstanz 2017.

4 P. Vries, State, Economy and the Great Divergence. Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s, London 2015; P. Parthasarathi, Why Europe Became Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850, Cambridge ,

cultural encounters in a relatively small geographical space, or the lives of individual "border-crossing cosmopolitans".[5] While I do not quite share the editors' assessment that there is a pressing need for sharply defining the contours of what global history is and what it is not, I would nonetheless like to use this article to make a plea for a very specific take on global-history writing that should be appealing especially to historians who have learned to value "thick description" and dense regional / cultural contextualisation through a training in "area studies". The approach proposed in this essay on global history writing from within a regional South Asian ambit has much in common with the above-mentioned micro-approach in that it advocates the use of the focused analysis of individuals, organisations, or institutions and an exploration of their multifarious entanglements and interactions. Yet, while the contextualisation in micro-spatial units is pivotal, a simultaneous awareness of broader contexts and connections as well as a consciousness of the existence and significance of wider analytical frames of analysis – such as the regional, the national or imperial and, of course the global is equally important. In fact, it is precisely the ability to "zoom out," to capture the influence of translocal factors on local processes, that makes the proposed variety of "global micro-history" work.[6] I would argue that the projected method has the potential to credibly counter some fundamental criticism that has recently been levelled against global history.[7] For one, some critics have castigated global historians for ostensibly privileging a focus on macro-processes and abstract structural changes at the expense of the lived realities, thoughts, and experiences of historical actors. At the same time, several scholars have argued that there is a harmonising tendency in much of global history writing. According to their view, the champions of the global history paradigm are constructing a teleological narrative by unduly celebrating mobility, connectivity, and cosmopolitanism during past

UK 2011; K. Pomeranz, Writing about Divergences in Global History: Some Implications for Scale, Methods, Aims and Categories, in: Berg (ed.), Writing the History, pp. 117–128.

5 M. Gamsa, Biography and (Global) Microhistory, in: New Global Studies 11 (2017) 3, pp. 232–241. For influential examples of the "global biographical" approach see, for instance, J.P. Ghobrial, The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory, in: Past & Present 222 (2014) 1, pp. 51–93; L. Colley, The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History, New York 2007; N. Zemon-Davis, Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds, London 2006.

6 The term "global micro-history" was coined by Antonio Andrade in a 2010 publication: A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory, in: Journal of World History 21 (2010) 4, pp. 573–591. Whereas Andrade's quasi-literary take on global micro-history has rightly come under attack as little convincing, currently a growing number of scholars attempt to develop the method into a sharper instrument in the historian's toolbox. Cf., for instance, R. Bertrand and G. Calafat, La microhistoire globale: affaire(s) à suivre, in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 73 (2018) 1, pp. 1–18; Gamsa, Biography; H. Medick, Turning Global? Microhistory in Extension, in: Historische Anthropologie 24 (2016) 2, pp. 241–252; P. Kupper and B. Schär, Moderne Gegenwelten. Ein mikrohistorischer Beitrag zur europäischen Globalgeschichte, in: C. Dejung and M. Lengwiler (eds.), Ränder der Moderne. Neue Perspektiven auf die Europäische Geschichte (1850–1950), Köln 2016, pp. 93–114; G. Levi, Microhistoria e Historia Global, in: Historia Crítica 69 (2018), pp. 21–35; A. Epple, Globale Mikrogeschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte der Relationen, in: E. Hiebl and E. Langthaler (eds.), Im Kleinen das Große suchen. Mikrogeschichte in Theorie und Praxis, Innsbruck 2012, pp. 37–47.

7 For an exhaustive engagement with the critics of global history see also R. Drayton and D. Motadel, Discussion: The Futures of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 13 (2018) 1, pp. 1–21; S. Conrad, Globalgeschichte: eine Einführung, München 2013, pp. 87–111.

centuries as harbingers of today's planetary integration. The suggested micro-historical approach allows for a refutation of such gross oversimplification and demonstrates that global history does not necessarily ignore the life-worlds of historical actors, nor is it about producing a smooth pre-history of globalization through an uncritical fetishization of "connections," "flows," and "entanglements." An analysis of intercultural encounters or other long-distance contacts that loses sight of asymmetrical power relations (or even outright violence), tensions, or tendencies to drift is simply bad history, whether it poses as global or not.

Before I attempt to illustrate the potential of this critical global micro-history with an example from my current research project on the history of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in India, let us first have a closer look at the role South Asia has played thus far for global history and locate the place of global history in the historiography on South Asia.

2. Postcolonial Theory, Global History, and South Asia

Some time ago, Chicago-based historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed a vast readership in his classic *Provincialising Europe* to the "asymmetric ignorance" prevailing in the humanities and especially among historians.[8] While it was perfectly acceptable for a historian teaching in Europe or North America, thus the argument ran, to be utterly ignorant of Chinese, African, or Latin American history, a historian based in those regions would be unequivocally disqualified if he admitted that he had no clue about the history of "Western Civilisation." Fairly obviously, this state of affairs is a result of what can be called the "imperial dividend": an epistemic hierarchy privileging historiography in and on western countries, regardless of the fact whether they were once colonising or not.[9] The prevalence of a Eurocentric perspective and an imperial mind-set in the formative phase of history as an academic discipline during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has also left its mark in countries that were either minor colonial players or unsuspected of having pursued an imperialist agenda at all, such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, or Switzerland. Even among such "colonial outsiders" the self-identification with a "dynamic" West that has purportedly shaped the course of modern history more or less single-handedly and left its imprint on a "Third World" perceived as inert and passive has been ubiquitous for decades.[10]

Arguably, not only the slow advance of global history, but also the impact of postcolonial studies in the western academe during the past three decades has begun to remedy

8 D. Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, Princeton 2000, p. 28.

9 P. Purtschert, Switzerland and "Colonialism without Colonies": Reflections on the Status of Colonial Out-Siders, in: Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies 26 (2016) 2, pp. 286–302.

10 J. M. Blaut, The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History, New York 1993. For a recent example of the longevity of this trope, see N. Ferguson, Civilization: The West and the Rest, London 2011.

these unfortunate "birth defects" of academic history-writing.[11] The fact that concepts and theories developed by scholars and intellectuals hailing from the allegedly stagnant Global South are increasingly studied by "mainstream" historians and occasionally even applied in works on North America or Europe, has put non-western regions on the historiographical map in unprecedented ways.[12] Besides, even though many advocates of global history might not yet place sufficient emphasis on producing a polycentric historiography, as Stephan Scheuzger convincingly argues in his contribution to this issue, the widened spatial framework used in global and transnational history in itself has been conducive to a greater awareness of the Global South by western scholars. In other words, unlike some critics who perceive global history as a particularly perfidious variety of nineteenth and early twentieth century imperial history especially designed for our times, I do believe that it has a tremendous emancipatory and inclusivist potential. It possesses this potential precisely because it allows for the inclusion of "perspectives from marginal and 'outside' locations,"[13] thus reminding a Western audience that both the shaping of history itself as well as its interpretation are not Western monopolies.

At first sight, this potential seems to become most obvious if one looks at the region I will focus on in the remainder of this article, namely South Asia. It certainly cannot be denied that the Indian subcontinent provides a most pertinent example for the growing global presence, visibility, and impact of what has been dubbed "Southern Theory."[14] Scholars born in South Asia associated with "subaltern" and / or "postcolonial studies", such as the above mentioned Dipesh Chakrabarty, as well as Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, or Gayatri Spivak, have meanwhile broken into the phalanx of the great white men (and, only occasionally, women) that previously had monopolised epistemic authority in the humanities and social sciences in the West. Today, many European, North American, and Australian historians, even if working in conventional paradigms, would probably be familiar with their names. However, not only the fact that most of the prominent representatives of this group have long taken up chairs in Western elite universities begs the question as to what extent they actually represent their region of origin. Is the scholarship produced by these academics indeed grounded in a specific regional experience, or is it rather the expression of an unattached, deterritorialised postcolonial universalism? To put it differently, how South Asian is the strand of "Southern Theory" they stand for? Interestingly enough, there are quite a few critics in South Asia itself who have been accusing the successful "subalterns in the academy" of elitism, claiming that they have completely lost touch with their home societies.[15] In tandem with the distrust towards

11 Conrad, What is Global History?, p. 3.

12 Cf., for example, G. Sengupta, Elites, Subalterns, and American Identities: A Case Study of African American Benevolence, in: American Historical Review 109 (2004), pp. 1104–1139; J. Marriott, The Other Empire: Metropolis, India and Progress in the Colonial Imagination, Manchester 2003.

13 G. Balachandran, History after the Global Turn: Perspectives from Rim and Region, in: History Australia 14 (2017), pp. 6–12.

14 R. Connell, Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science, Cambridge, MA 2007; cf. especially pp. 165–191.

15 V. Lal, The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India, Delhi 2005, pp. 186–230. A similar point is

a south Asian historiography that has gone global, history-writing on a world scale as such has also come under attack. As early as 2003, Vinay Lal, one of the most outspoken detractors of the global turn, pointed to the "vastly different conditions" under which research is conducted and produced in the North and in the South and warned that: "to compel [South Asia] to enter the stream of world history whose teleological center is the Euro-American world, would be the clearest sign of a resurgent colonialism."[16] Vinay Lal and other Indian Intellectuals propose instead "vernacular" rather than global histories, that partly also defy the idea of linear progressive time foundational for modern "scientific" historiography.[17] Related criticism also came from non-South Asian professors of South Asian history. While generally appreciative of the potential of Global History, British historian and South Asianist David Washbrook, for example, has pointed to the problems to address "relations of power and exploitation" in a constellation where the quest to overcome Eurocentric positions leads to an emphasis of entanglements and non-western agency. As a result, global historians might "no longer be able to lay not only "the glory" but also "the blame" for projects of world domination onto Europe and Europeans alone, since the category itself begins to dissolve."[18]

Next to this not unproblematic ubiquity of theory-oriented scholarship from the subcontinent, a second reason why "area historians" working on other regions who want to integrate their field into global history debates often envy South Asianists is that one of the world's leading advocates of global history, the late C. A. Bayly, began his career as a historian of India, and examples from the subcontinent hence figure prominently in his writings. In addition to this privileged exposure in canonical works such as Bayly's widely read *Birth of the Modern World*,[19] scholars have pointed to the fact that – and here we can perceive another imperial dividend – the historiography on South Asia is easily accessible for the generalist historian with global propensities, as it happens to be written overwhelmingly in English. For this reason alone, it is argued, the relationship between South Asian and global history appears to be a match made in heaven. But does this assumption withstand critical interrogation? Although the body of high-quality historiography on South Asia produced in vernacular languages is admittedly fairly small (though certainly not completely negligible),[20] this is not true for the sources. It has rightly been pointed out that, even when dealing with the subcontinent's colonial history, a concen-

made in A. Mukherjee, Challenges to the Social Sciences in the 21st Century: Some Perspectives from the South, in: Economic and Political Weekly 48 (2013) 37, pp. 31–37.

16 V. Lal, Provincializing the West: World History from the Perspective of Indian History, in: B. Stuchtey and E. Fuchs (eds.), Writing World History, 1800–2000, Oxford 2003, pp. 270–289, at p. 289. A similar point, that presented western concepts of time and, by extension, western forms of history writing as hegemonic and repressive had been made earlier by A. Nandy, History's Forgotten Doubles, in: History and Theory 34 (1996) 2, pp. 44–66.

17 Cf. also P. Banerjee, Histories of History in South Asia, in: P. Duara, V. Murthy, and A. Sartori (eds.), A Companion to Global Historical Thought, Chichester 2014, pp. 293–307.

18 D. A. Washbrook, Problems of Global History, in: Berg, Writing the History, pp. 21–31, at p. 27.

19 C. A. Bayly, The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons, Malden, MA 2004.

20 Especially Bengali historians have a strong affinity to their mother tongue and cultivated history writing in their own language. Even some prominent members of the subaltern studies group (such as Gautam Bhadra or Partha Chatterjee) would occasionally write pieces in Bangla.

tration on sources in European languages alone would, for many topics, provide only a blurry picture.[21]

In sum then, the apparent affinity between global and South Asian history is more fragile than it seems, and it becomes outright problematic when we look back at the historical trajectories of historiography concerned with the Indian subcontinent. I argue that a number of diverse and otherwise often conflictual historiographical traditions share one commonality: they stress the uniqueness and incommensurability of South Asia and its past, rather than its embeddedness in broader global structures or processes.

An emphasis on South Asia's specificity and otherness clearly marked the earliest serious engagement with South Asian pasts by Western scholars in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Representatives of the first generation of "imperial" British historians like Robert Orme, Mark Wilks, James Mill, Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Miers Elliott, and others were particularly keen to highlight the fundamental difference between Europe and South Asia.[22] The underlying logic of this quest for difference is plain to see: India's alleged "backwardness," "superstition," and "despotism" provided a useful foil to Britain's claims about itself. This foil could be instrumentalised to legitimate British expansion in the region and portray the English East India Company's military conquest and economic exploitation after 1757 as a benevolent enterprise of moral and material "upliftment." British "administrator historians" working with the same juxtaposition of Indian inertia and lack of development with the West's modernising impulse carried this narrative well into the twentieth century. The work of historians such as Vincent Smith (1848–1920), Philip Mason (1906–1999), or Percival Spear (1901–1982) – all of whom served for decades in the Indian Civil Service[23] – have been in print uninterruptedly until this day, though mainly written in the first half of the century. Their imperially inclined perspective on South Asian history continued to crucially shape the view of the region's past in western academia for decades after the age of decolonization had begun. If there was an emphasis of translocal entanglements and connections in this kind of historical narrative at all, it was on the "providential" relationship between the subcontinental population and Britain while rendering other simultaneously existing connections invisible.[24] Thus, according to Mason, it was Britain who sent the men "who by the middle of the nineteenth century had brought peace to the country instead of anarchy, had mapped the fields and made lists of everyman's rights had made a beginning of the task of building roads, bridges and railways of harnessing the rivers to irrigation."[25]

21 M. Pernau, Global History – Wegbereiter für einen neuen Kolonialismus?, in: Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists, 17 December 2004, https://www.connections.clio-online.net/article/id/artikel-572 (accessed 25 January 2018).

22 M. Mann, Sinnvolle Geschichte: Historische Repräsentationen im neuzeitlichen Südasien, Heidelberg 2009, pp. 34–61; R.S. Mantena, The Origins of Modern Historiography in India: Antiquarianism and Philology, 1780–1880, New York 2012, pp. 35–45.

23 H. Tinker, Philip Mason Obituary: Last Witness to the Raj, in: The Guardian, 3 February 1999.

24 I. Chatterjee, Connected Histories and the Dream of Decolonial History, in: South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 41 (2018) 1, pp. 69–86.

25 P. Mason, The Men Who Ruled India, New York 1985, pp. xii f.

Perhaps the only remarkable aspect of this dubious historical assessment is the fact that it could be written in 1985, four decades after the end of colonial rule.

Various pre-colonial traditions of history writing existed in South Asia, most of which were barely affected by interventions by Western historians until the last third of the nineteenth century. However, when western educated Indian intellectuals developed a "cult of scientific history" from the 1880s onwards, a new nationalist historiography slowly began to take shape.[26] For decades, its agenda was largely defined by the felt need to respond to the challenging imperialist tropes. If western historians exploited the subcontinent's past to demonstrate its allegedly "semi-civilized" status, its technological retardation and the resulting lack of capability for self-rule, the master-narrative of imperial history simply needed to be inverted.[27] The first nationalist historians in the subcontinent became obsessed with unearthing the glories and splendour of South Asia's past. In an attempt to counter the imperial ascriptions of civilizational deficiency and moral-cum political immaturity, pioneering academic historians in English but also in Bangla, Hindi, Marathi, and other regional languages combed sources and literature to recover instances of scientific excellence, social equality, political skill and military prowess. Some of the less sophisticated products of this intellectual labour resorted to a crude kind of nativism and projected modern phenomena such as parliamentary democracy or airplanes and submarines into a distant Aryan past.[28] But even the majority of the more serious academic historians continued to be fixated on constructing a national past that was useful for the independent nation state they hoped to establish rather sooner than later. This explains that for most professional historians in the subcontinent "world history" was a parallel universe rather than something they would engage with on a regular basis. The historiography they produced was, as Partha Chatterjee has pertinently observed, "suffused by the spirit of nationalism and modernist reform and thus inextricably entangled in the ideological web of the national, regional and sectarian politics of South Asia."[29] In other words: in a constellation where the nation, its imperial "others," and occasionally also its discontents reigned supreme, there was not much space for engaging with the wider world. In the rare cases where other regions outside South Asia featured prominently in the histories thus written, the inclusion often also occurred in the service of nationalism. Thus, Kalidas Nag, R.C. Majumdar,[30] and others propagated a variety of

26 D. Chakrabarty, The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar & his Empire of Truth, Chicago 2015, pp. 39–44.

27 S.B. Upadhyay, Historiography in the Modern World: Western and Indian Perspectives, New Delhi 2016, pp. 152–161.

28 See, for instance, H. Fischer-Tiné, Inventing a National Past: The Case of Ramdev's Bharatvarsh ka Itihas (1910–14), in: A. Copley (ed.), Hinduism in Public and Private. Reform, Hindutva, Gender and Sampraday, New Delhi 2003, pp. 110–139; D. Arnold, A Time for Science: Past and Present in the Reconstruction of Hindu Science, 1860–1920, in: D. Ali (ed.), Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia, New Delhi 1999, pp. 156–177.

29 P. Chatterjee, Introduction: History and the Present, in: P. Chatterjee and A. Ghosh (eds.), History and the Present, Delhi 2002, pp. 1–23, at p. 2.

30 K. Nag, Greater India: A Study of Indian Internationalism (= Greater India Society Bulletin, No. 1), Calcutta 1926; R.C. Majumdar, Ancient Indian Colonies in the East, Dacca 1927; A.N. Sastri, South Indian Influence in the Far East, Calcutta 1949.

a pan-Asianist discourses that declared large parts of Asia to be "Greater India" due to a gradual cultural permeation and actual colonization projects conducted by South Asians in Central, South-East and East Asia over centuries.[31]

This relative self-centredness of South Asian historians continued largely unchallenged in the postcolonial period. In Nehruvian India (1947–1964), the discipline of history provided an effective glue to bind the heterogeneous nation together in its difficult formative phase.[32] Jawaharlal Nehru, a gifted amateur historian himself, had set the tone with his *Discovery of India* (1946), a popular attempt to reconstruct the "biography" of the Indian nation.[33] Professional scholars of history continued along similar lines, eager to produce a "rational account of the progress and unity of India from time immemorial."[34] After Independence, their task was facilitated through the generous state subsidies that could now be pumped into the production of history textbooks for schools and colleges and historiographical mega-projects such as the publication of the multi-authored eleven volumes of *The History and Culture of the Indian People* (1952–1974).[35]

When Marxism (in the 1960s and 1970s) and post-colonialism (in the 1980s and 1990s) reached the peak of their impact on the Indian historiography on South Asia, this affected the existing obsession with the nation or, for that matter, the sub-national community as the preferred unit of analysis only tangentially. To be sure, the question debated by Indian historians working in a Marxist paradigm – whether historical concepts developed to explain phenomena in Europe, such as "Feudalism," "Class," or "Renaissance," were universally applicable or in need of being discarded or at least modified for a South Asian context,[36] – involved a certain degree of transregional comparison and manifested a more conscious engagement with broader historiographical trends. However, this did

31 M. Gottlob, Historical Thinking in South Asia: A Handbook of Sources from Colonial Times to the Present, New Delhi 2006, p. 130; Mann, Sinnvolle Geschichte, pp. 128–130.

32 M. Gottlob, History and Politics in Post-Colonial India, New Delhi 2011, pp. 9–11.

33 J. Nehru, The Discovery of India, Calcutta 1946.

34 Mantena, Origins of Modern Historiography, p. 1.

35 R.C. Majumdar et al. (eds.), The History and Culture of the Indian People, 11 Vols., Bombay 195–1974. Although the focus in this survey is on Indian history, a brief glance at other South Asian countries is instructive at this point, as it confirms the existence of a similar pattern throughout the region. Predictably enough, the first generation of academic historians in Pakistan was equally fixated on the "discovery" of the pre-history of their young nation. In spite of the obvious fact that the history of the Muslim and Non-Muslim populations of pre-colonial and colonial India were overlapping to a considerable degree, they had to face the challenge of creating a distinctive trajectory of "Muslim history" in South Asia that would culminate in the creation of Pakistan in 1947. the formation of an equally exclusivist communitarian approach to history-writing could also be observed in Ceylon/Sri Lanka, where, starting in the interwar years, influential Sinhala historians were at pains to accentuate the differences between "Aryan" Singhalese and Dravidian Tamils. Cf. A. Jalal, Conjuring Pakistan: History as Official Imagining, International Journal of Middle East Studies 27 (1995) 1, pp. 73–89; Mann, Sinnvolle Geschichte, pp. 173–178.

36 See, for instance, R.S. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Calcutta 1965; H. Mukhia, Was there Feudalism in Indian History?, in: Journal of Peasant Studies 8 (1981) 3, pp. 273–310; S. Sarkar, On the Indian Renaissance, Calcutta 1979; I. Habib, Classifying Precolonial India, in: T.J. Byres and H. Mukhia (eds.), Feudalism and Non-European Societies, London 1985, pp. 44–53; I. Habib, Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception, New Delhi 1995.

not mean that the topics of historical studies became significantly more open to leave the established national framework behind.[37]

When the wave of Subaltern Studies eventually swept over South Asian history departments on the subcontinent and in the rest of the world during the last two decades of the twentieth century, its "history-from-below" approach eroded several received historiographical certainties. However, the belief that the nation crucially mattered for the historian was not among them. Indeed, as Ranajit Guha, the *spiritus rector* of the Subalternists famously phrased it, the *raison d'être* of their project was the alleged "failure of the Indian nation to come into its own."[38] In their subsequent attempt to "acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny," the uncanny other of the rebellious subject was either the "colonial elitism" of the British Raj or the "Bourgeois-nationalist elitism" of paternalist politicians dominating the Indian National Congress and later the politics of independent India. If the spatial scope of reference did change at all as a result of subalternist revisionism, it was not from the national to the transnational or global but rather to the local. Many contributors to the twelve volumes of Subaltern Studies published between 1982 and 2005 zoomed in on very specific regional and local constellations in order to capture voices of marginal communities such as "tribal" communities or religious fringe groups.[39] Even if one does not subscribe to the scathing critique of the subalternists' alleged "romantic orientalism," as articulated by Vivek Chibber,[40] it is certainly no exaggeration to say that this powerful trend with its focus on densely contextualised micro-studies, too, was not particularly conducive to facilitating the adoption of world or global history.[41]

With these caveats in mind, let us now look at some of the branches of historiography that have dealt with South Asia in wider global or transnational frameworks. For constraints of space, I will limit myself to the discussion of three examples from subfields that have proven to be particularly prolific in this respect, namely Indian Ocean history, the history of South Asian migration and the history of diasporic nationalism.

37 An exception are some economic historians of India whose work will be discussed in the next section.

38 R. Guha, On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India, in: Idem (ed.), Subaltern Studies I, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi 1982, pp. 1–8, at p. 7.

39 See, for example, D. Arnold, Rebellious Hillmen, the Rudem Rampa Risings 1839–1924, in: Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies I, pp. 88–142; D. Hardiman, Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat: The Devi Movement 1922–23, in: R. Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies III, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi 1984, pp. 196–230; S. Sarkar, The Kalki Avatar of Bikrampur: A Village Scandal in Early 20th Century Bengal, in: R. Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies VI, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi 1989, pp. 1–53; T. Sarkar, Jitu Sandal's Movement in Malda, 1924–1932: A Study in Tribal Protest, in: R. Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies IV, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi 1985, pp. 136–164.

40 V. Chibber, Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital, New York 2013.

41 That being said, the fact that, from the 1990s on, a handful of isolated contributions dealing with themes from African or Middle Eastern contexts were included in the Subaltern Studies series, seems to suggest that there was a growing awareness of this limitation. Cf., for instance, T. Ranger, Power, Power Religion and Community: The Matobo Case, in: P. Chatterjee and G. Pandey (eds.), Subaltern Studies VII, Writings on South Asian History and Society, New Delhi 1992, pp. 221–246.

3. South Asian History Beyond the Subcontinent

In spite of the tendencies sketched out above, there have been a few unorthodox practitioners of history who were working with – or at least advocating – a relocation of South Asia's past in broader contexts. Interestingly, until well into the postcolonial period, these tended to be amateur rather than professional academic historians. The historical writings of Bengali economist and sociologist Benoy Kumar Sarkar (1887–1948) provide a powerful example. Sarkar, an ardent nationalist who spent over a decade in exile in Japan, the USA, and various European countries in the 1910s and 1920s to escape political persecution,[42] advocated a campaign against what he called "*orientalisme* in science," namely the representation of Asian societies and countries as defective and fundamentally different from "Euro-American" ones.[43] Part of his counterstrategy consisted of the development of a political science and historiography free from cultural essentialist assumptions, and that worked with global comparisons.[44] In an early manifesto for a new "science of history" published on the eve of World War I, Sarkar overtly deplored the focus on individual nation states and their politics and the "absence of [a] synthetic comprehensive treatment" of the various world regions in historiography.[45] What was required for historians, in his view, instead of such a narrow chauvinistic optic was "to minutely study the array of world forces that has been the result of mutual intercourse of the various peoples in social, economic, intellectual and political matters."[46]

Over the next few decades characterised by nationalist mobilisation, Sarkar's bold and unorthodox universalist vision of history (that was partly indebted to the Pan-Asianist currents mentioned above)[47] did not find too many followers in South Asia. If there is one work that could perhaps be singled out as being in some ways indebted to the Bengali polymath's broad universal approach and the focus on transregional comparisons and interactions it would be K.M. Panikkar's successful but rather controversial work on *Asia and Western Dominance*, published in the early 1950s.[48] Though he had read history at Oxford during WW I, Panikkar, too, was not a professional historian *stricto sensu*. For

42 For recent scholarly engagements with Benoy Kumar Sarkar see S. Sen, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Restoring the Nation to the World, New Delhi 2015; M. Goswami, Provincializing Sociology: The Case of a Premature Postcolonial Sociologist, in: Postcolonial Sociology 24 (2013), pp. 145–175; R.E. Frykenberg, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, 1887–1949, Political *Rishi* of Twentieth-Century Bengal, in: G. Berkemer et al. (eds.), Explorations in the History of South Asia: Essays in Honour of Dietmar Rothermund, New Delhi 2001, pp.197–217.

43 C. Six, Challenging the Grammar of Difference: Benoy Kumar Sarkar, Global Mobility and Anti-Imperialism around the First World War, in: European Review of History 25 (2018) 3–4, pp. 431–449; H. Fischer-Tiné, "Deep Occidentalism"? – Europa und der Westen in der Wahrnehmung hinduistischer Intellektueller und Reformer (ca. 1890–1930), in: Journal of Modern European History 4 (2006) 2, pp. 171–203, at p. 199 f.

44 Cf., for instance, B.K. Sarkar, The Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus: A Study in Comparative Politics, Leipzig 1922; Idem, The Futurism of Young Asia, in: International Journal of Ethics 28 (1918), pp. 221–241.

45 B.K. Sarkar, The Science of History and the Hope of Mankind, London 1912, p. 10 f.

46 Ibid., p. 21.

47 C. Stolte and H. Fischer-Tiné, Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940), in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 54 (2012) 1, pp. 1–28.

48 K.M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History, London 1953.

the better part of his life, he earned his money as a newspaper editor or diplomat. For a long time forgotten, Panikkar's book has been rediscovered in the early 2000s and celebrated in some circles for providing "a rounded non-Western account of Asia's encounter with the West."[49] Like Sarkar three decades before him, Panikkar used a *longue durée* and comparative approach to argue that the period of western dominance during the age of European Expansion was merely a brief episode in world history that would be followed by an age of Asian hegemony.

Panikkar could also be cited as a forerunner of the first of the three "global currents" in South Asian historiography that I will discuss in the following section. Quite obviously, not all varieties of global or transnational history engage with the universal or transcontinental. For the study of many historical problems macro-regions, lend themselves as useful spatial units of analysis as they transcend the narrow focus on a given nation or locality and at the same time avoid the confusing complexity of a global frame of reference. In the wake of Fernand Braudel's highly influential account of the Mediterranean Sea,[50] oceans or "seascapes" have become popular organizing principles to create such macro regions.[51] One of Panikkar's early works on India as a naval power also deserves to be mentioned in this connection since it anticipated a macro-regional approach that would flourish from the 1990s.[52] For historians concerned with South Asia, it was the Indian Ocean that has become the focal point of this new concern with Oceanic history.[53] Perhaps not surprisingly, economic historians working on the activities of Arab, Indian and early European merchants and trading companies in the region were the first to take a particularly keen interest in the emerging "new thalassology."[54] The most influential early contributions to this burgeoning field were Kirti N. Chaudhuri's monographs on the Indian Ocean region. Chaudhuri, who had won fame with his studies on the early history of the English East India Company,[55] showed the potential of macro-regional history to overcome Eurocentric perspectives. His first Indian Ocean book took the arrival of Islam in the region as starting point for the transformative processes he was

49 D. Lal, Asia and Western Dominance: Retrospect and Prospect, in: Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy 8 (2003) 3, pp. 283–299.

50 F. Braudel, La méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II, Paris 1949.

51 For useful surveys of this trend see M. Pearson, Oceanic History, in: P. Duara, V. Murthy, and A. Sartori (eds.), A Companion to Global Historical Thought, Chichester 2014, pp. 337–350; K. Wigen (ed.), AHR Forum Oceans of History, in: American Historical Review 111 (2006), pp. 717–780.

52 K.M. Panikkar, India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Seapower on Indian History, London 1945.

53 An excellent summary of Indian Ocean research in general is provided by S. Sivasundaram, The Indian Ocean, in: D. Armitage, A. Bashford, and S. Sivasundaram (eds.), Oceanic Histories, Cambridge, UK 2018, pp. 31–61. For pioneering collective efforts see also: S. C. A. Halikowski Smith (ed.), Reinterpreting Indian Ocean Worlds: Essays in Honour of Kirti N. Chaudhuri, Newcastle 2011; A. Jamal and S. Moorthy (eds.), Indian Ocean Studies: Cultural, Social and Political Perspectives, London 2010; J.-G. Deutsch and B. Reinwald (eds.), Space on the Move. Transformations of the Indian Ocean Seascape in the 19th and 20th Century, Berlin 2002.

54 M. Vink, Indian Ocean Studies and the "New Thalassology", in: Journal of Global History, 2 (2007) 1, pp. 41–62.

55 K. N. Chaudhuri, The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600–1640, London 1965; Idem, The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660–1760, Cambridge, UK 1978.

interested in and not, as usually was the case, the arrival of Vasco da Gama.[56] His second book, with its programmatic title *Asia before Europe,* was even more visibly indebted to the methods pioneered by Braudel and other historians of the French *Annales* school in that it paid close attention to the role structural givens of the region, such as topography and climate, played for economic relations, agricultural practices, and cultural uniformities and differences.[57] This first wave of Indian Ocean studies had a clear bias towards maritime trade and related activities of European actors in the region.[58] However, before long, oceanic history was branching out into different fields. Perhaps the most noteworthy development in this context is the creation of the concept of "connected history" by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who started his career as a historian of the Indian Ocean. His mastery of South Asian, Islamic and Iberian history (and a dozen or so related languages) allowed him to reconstruct the large-scale "reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia," making visible interactions and connections between Asia and Europe that had hitherto gone unnoticed.[59] His unusual language skills and formidable erudition permitted him to come up on the Portuguese and Spanish varieties of imperialism from a truly global perspective and even recruit some early modern Asian writers for the ancestral halls of global history.[60] Even a fairly conventional topic, such as the one addressed in his recent account on European conceptions of India before the Age of Empire,[61] benefits from Subrahmanyam's exceptional multiregional and transcultural competences and his wilful disregard of "boundaries defined for us retrospectively by nation-states and Area Studies." [62]

While Subrahmanyam's writings have illuminated the fragile threads connecting the countries and regions bordering the Indian Ocean with one another (and other parts of the globe) during the early modern period, another author stands out when it comes to taking the *histoire totale* of the Indian Ocean region into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sugata Bose's sophisticated yet highly readable *A Hundred Horizons* skilfully combines economic, political, and cultural history to paint a compelling portrait

56 K. N. Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750, Cambridge, UK 1985.

57 K. N. Chaudhuri, Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750, Cambridge, UK 1990.

58 See, for instance, S. Chandra (ed.), The Indian Ocean: Explorations in History Commerce and Politics, New Delhi 1987; A. Das Gupta, The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800, Collected Essays of A. Das Gupta, New Delhi 2001; A. Das Gupta and M. N. Pearson, India and the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800, Calcutta 1987; K. McPherson, The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea, New York 1993; O. Prakash, The Dutch East India Company and the Economy of Bengal (1630–1720), Princeton 1985; S. Subrahmanyam, Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal 1500–1700, Delhi 1990.

59 S. Subrahmanyam, Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia, Modern Asian Studies 31 (1997) 3, pp. 735–62. See also Idem, Aux origines de l'histoire globale, Paris 2014.

60 S. Subrahmanyam, Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500–1640, in: American Historical Review 112 (2007), pp. 1359–1385; Idem, On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century, in: Representations 91 (2005) 1, pp. 26–57.

61 S. Subrahmanyam, Europe's India: Words, Peoples, Empires, 1500–1800, Cambridge, MA 2017.

62 Subrahmanyam, Connected Histories, p. 759. While he has pioneered border-defying history-writing, it should not go unmentioned, that Subrahmanyam has also become critical towards some forms of global history. Cf., for instance, his interview in the Nouvelle Observateur: https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/idees/20180528.OBS7286/l-histoire-globale-expliquee-a-ceux-qui-n-y-ont-rien-compris.html (accessed 29 July 2018).

of the macro-region and its multifarious global entanglements during the "age of global empire."[63] What is particularly noteworthy is Bose's inclusion not only of the predictable elite perspectives (such as his account of the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore's extended Asian tour in the 1920s), but also non-elite voices. His analysis of the censored letters written by South Asian soldiers serving in the Mesopotamian campaign during the Great War serves as a powerful reminder that the Indian Ocean was a site of intensive "subaltern mobility" for centuries.[64] Bose's emphasis on political and cultural aspects has meanwhile inspired a fascinating body of contemporary scholarship, some of which is successfully transcending the imperial lens, focusing instead on various dimensions of the "South-South Relations" between South Asia, Africa, and South East Asia.[65]

Mobility is at the core of the second sub-field of South Asian history that has boomed in connection with the bourgeoning of global and transnational perspectives, namely, migration and diaspora studies. To be sure, some aspects of migration history had been addressed by historians of South Asia long before the influence of the new paradigm was being felt. Above all, the history of South Asian "Coolies" under the imperial indenture system (1834–1917) had been a topic for social and labour historians as well as social and cultural anthropologists with historical leanings in the 1970s and 1980s.[66] From the late 1990s, a new wave of sophisticated studies on labour circulation and the formation of global South Asian diasporas added new layers of complexity to this current of research.[67] Instead of seeing Indian indentured labourers as a homogeneous group, differences of ethnicity, language, religion and, most importantly, gender were now put under scrutiny.[68] The new "Coolie history" not only placed an emphasis on the agency of South Asian labourers and contractors rather than portraying them as mere victims of imperial exploiters, it also operated with two favourite tools of global historians by ex-

63 S. Bose, A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire, Cambridge, MA 2006.

64 Ibid., pp. 126–135. Another aspect of non-elite mobility in the Indian Ocean region, namely slave trading and human trafficking, has recently been covered in M. Mann, Sahibs, Sklaven und Soldaten: Geschichte des Menschenhandels rund um den Indischen Ozean, Darmstadt 2015.

65 A. Sheriff and E. Ho (eds.), The Indian Ocean: Oceanic Connections and the Creation of New Societies, London 2014; G. Desai, Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India, and the Afrasian Imagination, New York 2013; I. Hofmeyr and M. Williams (eds.), South Africa and India: Shaping the Global South, Johannesburg 2011; M.R. Frost, In Search of Cosmopolitan Discourse: A Historical Journey across the Indian Ocean from Singapore to South Africa, 1870–1920, in: P. Gupta, I. Hofmeyr, and M. Pear (eds.), Eyes across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean, Pretoria 2010, pp. 75–108; P.M. Larson, Ocean of Letters: Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora, Cambridge, UK 2009; I. Hofmeyr, The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South – Literary and Cultural Perspectives, in: Social Dynamics 33 (2007) pp. 3–32; T. Metcalf, Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860–1920, New Delhi 2007.

66 See, most notably, B.V. Lal, Girmityas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians, Canberra 1984; M. Tayal, Indian Indentured Labor in Natal, 1890–1911, in: Indian Economic and Social History Review 14 (1977) 4, pp. 519–547; H. Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour abroad, Oxford 1974; P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834–1900, Delhi 1970.

67 The most influential work was C. Markovits, J. Pouchepadass, and S. Subrahmanyam (eds.), Society and Circulation: Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750–1950, London 2006.

68 M. Carter, Servants, Sirdars and Settlers: Indians in Mauritius, 1834–1874, Delhi 1995; Idem, Lakshmi's Legacy: The Testimonies of Indian Women in 19th Century Mauritius, Moka 1994; S. Jain and R. Reddock (eds.), Women Plantation Workers, Oxford 1998.

ploring connections and providing comparisons with other systems of indenture. Thus, Sunil Amrith placed the phenomenon of Indian indenture in broader Indian Ocean and global contexts in some of his widely circulated works.[69] The same can be said about Clare Anderson, whose persuasive studies on the complex trajectories of subcontinental convicts, criminals, and deviants displayed an increasingly global frame of reference over the years.[70] Simultaneously, the strong focus of unfree or semi-free labour migration was complemented by the thorough historical analysis of other forms of South Asian mobility and their multifaceted legacies. A broad spectrum of social groups has by now come under scrutiny. Historians have examined, *inter alia*, the experience of early South Asian upper class travellers and settlers in Europe,[71] explored the ambiguous role of South Asian seamen serving on British ships,[72] and reconstructed the global networks of Indian merchants.[73] Predictably enough, this focus on "India abroad" and "Global South Asians"[74] privileges some interactions above others. Next to the obvious interest in South Asians' migrations to the old imperial metropole Britain, the increasing economic and political importance of the South Asian diaspora in North America during the past three decades has triggered a strong interest in the historical trajectories of sub-continentals in the USA and Canada.[75] The ever-growing body of literature on this topic includes studies on the effects of American and Canadian immigration laws for the first wave of

69 S.S. Amrith, Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants, Cambridge, MA 2013; Idem, Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia, Cambridge, UK 2011; Idem, Indians Overseas? Governing Tamil Migration to Malaya 1870–1941, in: Past and Present 208 (2010) 1, pp. 231–261.

70 C. Anderson, Convicts in the Indian Ocean: Transportation from South Asia to Mauritius, 1815–53, Houndmills 2000; Idem, Subaltern Lives, Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, Cambridge, UK 2012; Idem, Transnational Histories of Penal Transportation: Punishment, Labour and Governance in the British Imperial World, 1788–1939, in: Australian Historical Studies 47 (2016) 3, pp. 381–397.

71 E. Boehmer, Indian Arrivals 1870–1915: Networks of British Empire, Oxford 2015; M.H. Fisher, Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travelers and Settlers in Britain, 1600–1857, Delhi 2004; S. Lahiri, Indian Mobilities in the West, 1900–1947: Gender, Performance, Embodiment, Basingstoke 2010; R. Visram, Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain, 1600–1947, London 2002; A.M. Wainwright, The Better Class of Indians: Social Rank, Imperial Identity, and South Asians in Britain, 1858–1914, Manchester 2008.

72 R. Ahuja, Mobility and Containment: The Voyages of South Asian Seamen, c. 1900–1960, in: R.P. Behal and M. van der Linden (eds.), Coolies, Capital and Colonialism: Studies in Indian Labour History, Cambridge, UK 2006, pp. 111–141; G. Balachandran, Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c. 1870–1945, Delhi 2012; A. Jaffer, Lascars and Indian Ocean Seafaring, 1780–1860: Shipboard Life, Unrest and Mutiny, Woodbridge 2015.

73 C. Dobbin, Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities: Conjoint Communities in the Making of the World Economy, 1570–1940, Richmond 1996; M.A. Falzon, Cosmopolitan Connections. The Sindhi Diaspora, 1860–2000, Leiden 2004; P. Machado, Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850, Cambridge, UK 2014; C. Markovits, The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama, Cambridge 2000; G. Vahed, Passengers, Partnerships, and Promissory Notes: Gujarati Traders in Colonial Natal, 1870–1920, in: The International Journal of African Historical Studies 38 (2005) 3, pp. 449–479.

74 J. Brown, Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora, Cambridge, UK 2006; S. Shukla, India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England, Princeton, NJ 2003.

75 S. Bhatia, American Karma: Race, Culture and Identity in the Indian Diaspora, New York 2007. For helpful surveys of existing literature, see S. Shukla, South Asian Migration to the United States, in: J. Chatterji and D. Washbrook (eds.), Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora, Abingdon 2013, pp. 166–179; and the theme issue on South Asians in Canada of the journal South Asian Diasporas 5 (2013) 1. An interesting cross-section of recent research is offered by V. Bald et al. (eds.), The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of U.S. Power, New York 2013.

immigrants,[76] the detailed reconstruction of local diaspora formation,[77] as well as explorations of the hybrid youth culture cultivated by contemporary South Asian diasporas.[78] Some of the most interesting contributions to this body of research have focused less on migration or circulation as such, but rather on the manifold effects it had on the culture and religion of both within the migrating group as well as on the "host society." Using a truly global framework, Nile Green follows South Asian Muslims in his magisterial study *Terrains of Exchange*, to various destinations such as the United States, Russian Empire, and Japan and analyses the various interactions and contestations of religious reformers with representatives of local religious groups.[79] Cultural exchanges in various settings that were triggered by Indian migrants are also explored in Babli Sinha's edited volume on *South Asian Transnationalisms*.[80] Sinha's own work in this context is situated in one of the most fertile offshoots of South Asian diaspora studies, the transnational history of Indian Cinema.[81] Other scholars have meanwhile provided similar border-crossing perspectives on India's literary, culinary, dance, and musical cultures.[82]

Indian Ocean and diaspora studies aside, at least half a dozen of major subfields of South Asian history could be named that have been influenced by the global turn during the past two decades, with the history of science and medicine,[83] the history of

76 R.L. Almy, "More Hateful because of its Hypocrisy": Indians, Britain and Canadian Law in the *Komagata* Maru Incident of 1914, in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 46 (2018) 2, pp. 304–322; A.G. Roy and A.K. Sahoo, The Journey of the Komagata Maru: National, Transnational, Diasporic, South Asian Diaspora 8 (2016) 2, pp. 85–97.

77 V. Bald, Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America, Cambridge, MA 2013; A. Mohammad-Arif, Salaam America: South Asian Muslims in New York, London 2006.

78 S. Maira, Desis in the House, Indian American Youth Culture in New York City, Philadelphia 2002.

79 N. Green, Terrains of Exchange. Religious Economies of Global Islam, London 2014.

80 B. Sinha (ed.), South Asian Transnationalisms: Cultural Exchange in the Twentieth Century, New Delhi 2012.

81 B. Sinha, Cinema, Transnationalism, and Colonial India: Entertaining the Raj, Abingdon 2013. Cf. also R.B. Mehta and R.V. Pandharipande, Bollywood and Globalization: Indian Popular Cinema, Nation, and Diaspora, London 2011; S. Gopal and S. Moorti (eds.), Planet Bollywood: The Transnational Travels of Hindi Song-and-Dance Sequences, Minneapolis 2008; A.P. Kavoori and A. Punathambekar (eds.), Global Bollywood, New Delhi 2008.

82 Cf., for example, P. Saha, Singing Bengal into a Nation: Tagore the Colonial Cosmopolitan?, in: Journal of Modern Literature 36 (2013) 2, pp. 1–24; N. Bhattacharjya, A Productive Distance from the Nation: Uday Shankar and the Defining of Indian Modern Dance, in: South Asian History and Culture 2 (2011) 4, pp. 482– 501; E. Buettner, "Going for an Indian": South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain, in: The Journal of Modern History 89 (2008) 4, pp. 865–901; F. Bakrania, Bhangra and Asian Underground: South Asian Music and the Politics of Belonging in Britain, Durham, NC 2013; B. G. Shope, American Popular Music in Britain's Raj, Rochester 2015.

83 For extensive references, see K. Raj, Thinking Without the Scientific Revolution: Global Interactions and the Construction of Knowledge, in: Journal of Early Modern History 21 (2017), pp. 445–458; J. Phalkey, Introduction: Focus Science and Modern India, in: Isis 104 (2013) 2, pp. 330–336; H. Fischer-Tiné, "Pidgin-Knowledge": Wissen und Kolonialismus, Zürich 2013; M.S. Dodson, Translating Science, Translating Empire: The Power of Language in Colonial North India, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 47 (2005) 4, pp. 809–835.

commodities,[84] and the history of ideas and concepts[85] being prime, but by no means the only, examples. However, I choose to close this brief survey with a discussion of a less fashionable current of research in order to demonstrate that the new "global consciousness" of historians is beginning to affect even the most established fields of historical inquiry such as political history and especially the study of South Asian nationalisms.
In this case, too, the new trend did not emerge in a historiographical vacuum and some forerunners that have fallen into oblivion deserve to be mentioned. As discussed above, the majority of historians of postcolonial South Asia inspired by Marxism continued to work on conventional topics in a spatial framework defined by national or imperial boundaries. However, a small body of literature produced in the 1970s and 1980s anticipated the current focus on "cosmopolitan lives" and "global biographies". Cross-border interactions and internationalism were reconstructed (and celebrated) by a small community of historians working on radical Indian nationalists in exile in the 1910s to 1930s, with particular emphasis being placed on the "revolutionary" contacts they established on a global scale. The majority of the scholars involved in the reconstruction of these leftist anticolonial networks came from South Asia,[86] but the topic appealed to historians in the Eastern Bloc as well. Thus, the most comprehensive and rigorous study of diasporic Indian revolutionaries was undertaken by the GDR historian Horst Krüger.[87] Unsurprisingly, this body of literature was soon forgotten after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[88] It was only in the wake of the global turn and under the impact of the growing interest in the two fields I have sketched out above – namely oceanic history and the history of migration and diaspora – that the phenomenon received renewed attention. Next

84 Cf., for instance, J. Sharma, British Science, Chinese Skill and Assam Tea, in: Indian Economic and Social History Review 43 (2006) 4, pp. 429–455; P. Chatterjee, A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation, Durham 2001; G. Riello and T. Roy (eds.), How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850, Leiden 2009; P. Kumar, Indigo Plantations and Science in Colonial India, Cambridge, UK 2012; A. Pryor, Indian Pale Ale: An Icon of Empire, in: J. Curry-Machado (ed.), Global Histories, Imperial Commodities, Local Interactions, Houndmills 2013, pp. 38–57.

85 K. Karttunen, Sabhā, Samāj, Society: Some Linguistic Considerations, in: H. Schulz Forberg (ed.), A Global Conceptual History of Asia, London 2014, pp. 75–90; K.K. Manjapra, Transnational Approaches to Global History: A View from the Study of German-Indian Entanglement, in: German History 32 (2014) 2, pp. 274–293; J. Bakhle, Putting Global Intellectual History in its Place, in: S. Moyn and A. Sartori (eds.), Global Intellectual History, New York 2013, pp. 228–253; P. Chatterjee, Terrorism: State Sovereignty and Militant Politics in India, in: C. Gluck and A. L. Tsing (eds.), Words in Motion: Toward a Global Lexicon, Durham 2009, pp. 240–262; A. Sartori, Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital, Chicago 2008.

86 See, for example, L.P. Mathur, Indian Revolutionary Movement in the United States of America, New Delhi 1970; A.C. Bose, Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1922. In the Background of International Developments, Patna 1971; S.S. Josh, Hindustan Gadar Party. A Short History, 2 vols, New Delhi 1978; T.R. Sareen, Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905–1921), New Delhi 1979; Although published more recently, the biography of Virendranath Chattopadhyaya also belongs to this category, as it was researched in the 1970s: N.K. Barooah, Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe, New Delhi 2004.

87 H. Krüger, Anfänge sozialistischen Denkens in Indien. Der Beginn der Rezeption sozialistischer Ideen in Indien vor 1914, Berlin 1985; Idem, Indische Nationalisten und Weltproletariat. Der nationale Befreiungskampf in Indien und die internationale Arbeiterbewegung vor 1914, Berlin 1984.

88 In the case of Horst Krüger, the two final volumes of his planned tetralogy on the world history of the Indian freedom struggle could eventually not be published because the topic of socialist internationalism – and Marxist historiography at large – had suddenly gone out of fashion owing to the breakdown of the GDR regime.

to the obvious inspiration provided by Benedict Anderson's *Under Three Flags*,[89] Sugata Bose's 2006 chapter on "expatriate patriots" in the Indian Ocean had demonstrated the huge potential of a historical study of "long-distance nationalism."[90] In subsequent years, more and more historians of South Asia became dissatisfied with the narrow territorialisation that characterised the dominant version of the Indian independence saga. They particularly criticised that the substantial contributions of diasporic political activists tended to be downplayed or completely ignored in conventional histories.[91] From 2010 onwards, dozens of articles and books on the phenomenon of South Asian long-distance nationalism and the activities of peripatetic revolutionaries and border-defying anti-colonial activists cropped up and immediately impacted the understanding of Indian nationalism. The approaches varied, though. Some scholars – mostly those with a penchant for global intellectual history –, chose the form of a full-fledged biography or a biographical article to give this neglected chapter of South Asian history maximum visibility.[92] Others tried to foreground the network-building activities be it with western socialists or anarchists,[93] with Britain's enemies during the Great War,[94] or with fellow anti-colonial nationalists from other countries.[95] The novel transnational perspective on Indian anticolonial nationalism also pushed the boundaries of the field in new directions. Thus, the interaction of Egyptian anti-colonialists or early African-American civil rights campaigners with Indian nationalists of various colours had never before been analysed in any depth.[96] Equally promising is the close analysis of urban micro-spaces that

89 B. Anderson, Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination, London 2005.

90 Bose, Hundred Horizons, pp. 148–192; for the concept of "long-distance nationalism", see N. Glick-Schiller, Long-Distance Nationalism, in: N. Glick-Schiller et al. (eds.), Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World, New York 2005, pp. 70–80.

91 M. Goswami, Colonial Internationalisms and Imaginary Futures, in: American Historical Review 117 (2012) 5, pp. 1461–1485.

92 M. Framke, Shopping Ideologies for Independent India? Taraknath Das's Engagement with Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, in: Itinerario 40 (2016) 1, pp. 55–81; Sen, Benoy Kumar Sarkar; H. Fischer-Tiné, Shyamji Krishnavarma: Sanskrit, Sociology and Anti-Imperialism New Delhi 2014; V. Chaturvedi, A Revolutionary's Biography: The Case of V D Savarkar, in: Postcolonial Studies 16 (2013) 2, pp. 124–139; B. Zachariah, A Long, Strange Trip: The Lives in Exile of Har Dayal, in: South Asian History and Culture 4 (2013) 4, pp. 574–592; P. Bose, Transnational Resistance and Fictive Truths: Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Agnes Smedley and the Indian National Movement, in: South Asian History and Culture 2 (2011) 4, pp. 502–521; K.K. Manjapra, M. N. Roy: Marxism and Colonial Cosmopolitanism, New Delhi 2010.

93 I.H. Alonso, M.N. Roy and the Mexican Revolution: How a Militant Indian Nationalist Became an International Communist, in: South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 40 (2017) 3, pp. 517–530; A. Raza, F. Roy, and B. Zachariah (eds.), The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views 1917–1939, New Delhi 2015; M. Ramnath, Decolonizing Anarchism. An Anti-Authoritarian History of India's Liberation Struggle, Oakland, CA 2011.

94 M. Ramnath, Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire, Berkeley 2011; K.K. Manjapra, The Illusions of Encounter: Muslim "Minds" and Hindu Revolutionaries in First World War Germany and After, in: Journal of Global History 1 (2006) 2, pp. 363–382.

95 D. Brückenhaus, Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945, Oxford 2017; M. Silvestri, Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory, New York 2009; K.P. Grant, The Transcolonial World of Hunger Strikes and Political Fasts, c. 1909– 1935, in: D. Ghosh and D. Kennedy (eds.), Decentering Empire: Britain, India, and the Transcolonial World, New Delhi 2006, pp. 243–269.

96 N.-A-l. Khan, Egyptian Indian Nationalist Collaboration and the British Empire, New York 2011; N. Slate, Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India, Cambridge, MA 2012; B. Sin-

served as communication hubs and sites of encounter for the South Asian revolutionary diaspora and the colourful cast of their local and global allies.[97]

After sketching out various specific fields in which the global turn has proved fertile for historians of South Asia, let me now zoom in on my current research project in order to substantiate my claim that the combination of micro- and transnational perspectives can generate insights that would be otherwise improbable to arrive at. My example will summarize some points that I have recently made in a much more detailed manner elsewhere.[98]

4. Global Microhistory at Work: "Rural Reconstruction" from Southern Travancore to Southern Arizona

In a nutshell, my current project, tentatively entitled *Muscling in on Asia: Colonial Difference, American "Softpower," and the YMCA in India, Burma and Ceylon*, attempts to reconstruct the history of an influential international non-governmental organization from a regional perspective. Conventional approaches would probably tell the story of the Y's activities in South Asia by starting at the headquarters in New York and then examining examples of its work on the subcontinent, possibly comparing it with Y activities in other places. In order to avoid such a bird's eye institutional history approach, I thought it more appropriate to commence my narrative in South Asia and follow my actors (or objects or ideas, as the case may be) to other regions only when they move. I expect that this unusual angle will yield fruitful insights both for the history of the region concerned – South and Southeast Asia – as well as contribute to a better understanding of broader "global issues," such as the history of development and the history of the Cold War.

The North American YMCA branch launched its foreign programme in the late 1880s and over the subsequent half-century, the "Y" became an influential global player.[99] Second only to China, South Asia, and particularly India played the most prominent roles

ha, Dissensus, Education and Lala Lajpat Rai's Encounter with W.E.B. DuBois, in: South Asian History and Culture 6 (2015) 4, pp. 463–476.

97 N. Owen, The Soft Heart of the British Empire: Indian Radicals in Edwardian London, in: Past and Present 220 (2013), pp.143–184; D. Brundage, Lala Lajpat Rai, Indian Nationalism, and the Irish Revolution: The View from New York, 1914–1920, in: E. Dal Lago, R. Healy, and G. Barry (eds.), 1916 in Global Context: An Anti-Imperial Moment, London 2017, pp. 62–75; H. Fischer-Tiné, The Other Side of Internationalism: Switzerland as a Hub of Militant Anti-Colonialism, c. 1910–1920, in: Idem and P. Purtschert (eds.), Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins, Houndmills 2015, pp. 221–258; H.C. Aspengren, Indian Revolutionaries Abroad: Revisiting their Silent Moments, in: Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History 15 (2014) 3, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/562294; D. McGetchin, Asian Anti-Imperialism and Leftist Antagonism in Weimar Germany, in: D. McGetchin, J. Miang Cho, and E. Kurlander (eds.), Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Abingdon 2013, pp. 129–138.

98 For the following, see H. Fischer-Tiné, The YMCA and Low-Modernist Rural Development in South Asia (c. 1922–1957), in: Past and Present 240 (2018), pp. 194–234.

99 H. Fischer-Tiné, S. Huebner, and I. Tyrrell (eds.), Spreading Protestant Modernity: Global Perspectives on the Social Work of the YMCA and YWCA, c. 1890–1970, Honolulu 2020.

in the YMCA's Foreign Work scheme. Initially, the desire to "evangelize the world in this generation"[100] and gain as many Asian converts as possible, had been the main motivation for the (mostly US and Canadian) YMCA "secretaries" serving on the Indian subcontinent. However, the oft- used phrase "mission field" to refer to the subcontinent is potentially misleading. From the 1910s onwards, the YMCA in South Asia became increasingly active in a variety of undertakings that would normally be seen as secular rather than religious. Instantaneously, conversions were no longer declared to be the primary goal of its engagement. Among the most important non-religious areas in which the Y managed to carve out a niche for itself were: the propagation of sports and physical culture, the dissemination of "science" and other forms of "useful knowledge" (partly achieved through the innovative use of modern mass media such as film, magic lantern slides or gramophone records), the provision of humanitarian aid and caregiving services during armed conflicts or after natural catastrophes and the designing and implementation of "sustainable" rural development schemes. In my forthcoming book, I will devote an entire chapter to each of these activities. For our present purpose, however, it will suffice to focus exclusively on what was called "rural reconstruction" in the parlance of the time.

It would be difficult to argue that the historical analysis of village uplift programmes in colonial South Asia is something earthshakingly original. Quite the reverse: a good deal of research on this topic has been produced since the 1970s. Still, due to the entrenched units of analysis, the bulk of the existing studies focuses on two sets of actors, namely the colonial state as the seemingly natural "driver of modernization" in the region and its various nationalist opponents.[101] The adoption of a global, or at least transnational, perspective, by contrast, renders visible that there existed a middle ground occupied by historical actors that do not fit in the neat narrative of "colonial challenge and nationalist response." Just like in interwar China,[102] the Indian YMCA played a crucial role in developing and implementing agricultural reform programmes that mostly went in tandem with campaigns designed to spread basic knowledge of personal and social hygiene to the rural population. The most promising method to explore the role of this largely US-sponsored Christian INGO in South Asia, as well as to reconstruct its manifold ramifications, seemed to be a focus on the Y's most prominent "rural reconstruction" expert, the American agronomist and YMCA secretary Duane Spencer Hatch (1888–1963).

One entanglement that becomes immediately visible through this biographical focus is the pivotal role the colonial state and the culture of imperialism played for Christian

100 J.R. Mott, The Evangelization of the World in this Generation, New York 1901.

101 For an up-to-date collection of essays with useful references see D. Kumar and B. Raha (eds.), Tilling the Land: Agricultural Knowledge and Practices in Colonial India, Delhi 2016; cf. also C. Dewey, Anglo-Indian Attitudes: Mind of the Indian Civil Service, London 1993, pp. 61–101; D. Kumar, Tagore's Pedagogy and Rural Reconstruction, in: M. Mann (ed.), Shantiniketan-Hellerau: New Education in the Pedagogic Provinces of India and Germany, Heidelberg 2015, pp. 309–330 and S.S. Jodhka, Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar, in: Economic and Political Weekly 32 (2002), pp. 3343–3352.

102 C. Liu, Peasants and Revolution in Rural China: Rural Political Change in the North China Plain and the Yangzi Delta, London 2007; C.W. Hayford, To the People: James Yen and Village China, New York 1990.

missionaries like Hatch. This might come as a surprise, because Hatch, as well as many other "liberal" US missionaries, ostentatiously presented themselves as an American alternative to colonial modernity, denying any form of "colonial complicity." A closer look at Spencer Hatch's career (which was far from exceptional in this respect) reveals that this rhetoric could be at odds with actual practice, and the Y secretaries' relationships with imperial state authorities and ideologies could be quite intense. Immediately after finishing his studies at Cornell and before launching his agricultural demonstration center in South India, Duane Spencer Hatch volunteered for the YMCA's "army work" during the First World War. For two and a half years he helped boost the morale of British and colonial regiments stationed on India's North-Western frontier and in Mesopotamia through entertainment and caregiving work. It was during this time that he acquired a great admiration for the British Empire and also developed attitudes towards the indigenous population that, combining benevolence with high-handedness and cultural arrogance, would have been worthy of a British *Sahib*.[103] The quasi-imperial mind-set acquired during his early years, and the deep emotional and epistemic enmeshment with the colonisers' racialist thought, language, and knowledge, would have a tangible impact on his agricultural experiments.

The YMCA's most important agricultural and social laboratory was established in 1924 near the small village of Martandam in the Princely State of Travancore, in today's state of Tamil Nadu in Southern India. Although the set-up could tempt one to interpret the project as the unilateral imposition of Western expert-knowledge on a non-western rural population, a micro-study of the Martandam Rural Demonstration Centre (MRDC) study makes immediately clear that various South Asian actors co-shaped the would-be "light-house village" it from its very inception.[104] Spencer Hatch's self-perception as the undisputable authority on agriculture and "rural reconstruction" was challenged from various sides. For one, K. T. Paul, the first Indian General Secretary of the South Asian YMCA branch and an expert in agriculture himself, used his superior position to impose some decisions on Hatch that left clear traces in the MRDC programme.[105] Next, the New York born agronomist needed to cooperate closely not only with British colonial authorities but also with local rulers such as the Maharajah of Travancore and other members of India's aristocracy in order to secure much-needed financial and logistic support for the project.[106] Although this is mostly rather difficult to pinpoint, given the nature of the available sources, the scattered evidence clearly indicates that Hatch's Ivy League expertise on agriculture, husbandry and marketing of farming products did not always work in the local context and he constantly needed to supplement it with a series of multidirectional borrowings. Part of these borrowings can only be grasped by zoom-

103 H. Fischer-Tiné, "Unparalleled Opportunities": The Indian Y.M.C.A.'s Army Work Schemes for Imperial Troops during the Great War (1914–1920), in: Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 47 (2019) 1, pp. 100–137.

104 A. Kanakaraj, The Light Houses of Rural Reconstruction: The History of the Y.M.C.A's Integrated Rural Development in South India, New Delhi 2000.

105 H.A. Popley and K. T. Paul: Christian Leader, Calcutta 1938, p. 75.

106 University of Arizona, Tucson Special Collections, MS 1482 Duane Spencer Hatch Collection, Box 2, Folder 9/2.

ing out of the MRDC (and the wider YMCA) microcosm. Thus, from the late 1920s onwards, Hatch repeatedly undertook study tours to countries all over the world. One of these journeys led him to Germany and Denmark in 1927, where he spent several weeks studying "Cooperatives, the Folk Schools, and the ways of rural life."[107] Other destinations included the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where he witnessed "a demonstration made for the whole community at one of the most run-down Negro homes."[108] His Asian destinations included the Philippines, where he studied the home gardening projects directed by the US Colonial Educational Department, and China, where he examined experiments in co-operative egg production and marketing. In 1937 he was invited to attend the "Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene," organised by the League of Nation's Health Organisation (LHNO) and held over two weeks in Bandung in August 1937. The conference focus was on agricultural extension work, nutrition, and the training of rural workers, and Spencer Hatch already counted as an internationally renowned expert in these emerging fields.[109] Particularly the "low-modernist" grassroots approach Hatch had implemented in the MRDC fit perfectly with the LNHO's new paradigm, which emphasized "an awareness of the contextual and the vernacular."[110]

After the conference, Spencer Hatch visited various cooperatives and "the world's most famous nutrition laboratory in Batavia" to learn more about the preparation of soya bean foods. He continued this study tour by visiting Australia, and two French possessions in the South Pacific, Tahiti, and Nouvelle Calédonie, (where he scrutinized the agricultural reform programmes of the French colonial administration) as well as a number of other places.[111] This growing international exposure and transcontinental networking further catalysed the popularity of the YMCA's rural reconstruction methods back in South Asia. The quasi-official recognition was particularly helpful in attracting third party funding for the Martandam Centre from various sides. Thus, from 1936 onwards, the MRDC was in receipt of an annual grant by John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s Davison Fund, and thus helped pave the way for the Rockefeller Foundation's massive intervention in agricultural development programmes in India after independence.[112]

While it is only through a widening of the lens that we can comprehend the composite character of agricultural knowledge (and financial support) that converged in the

107 D.S. Hatch, Beyond the Ends of the Road: Legs for knowledge, unpublished typescript, n. d. [c. 1962], University of Arizona, Tucson, Special Collections, Spencer Hatch Collection, Box 3; p. 192; D.S. Hatch, Up from Poverty in Rural India, Bombay 1932, p. 33; N. Sackley, "Village Models", Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War, in: Diplomatic History 37 (2013) 4, p. 762.

108 Hatch, Beyond the Ends of the Road, p. 127.

109 Report of the Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene, Geneva 1937, pp. 23 f.

110 L. Murard, Designs within Disorder: International Conferences on Rural Health Care and the Art of the Local, in: S. Gross Solomon, L. Murard, and P. Zylberman (eds.), Shifting Boundaries of Public Health: Europe in the Twentieth Century, Rochester, NY 2008, p. 152.

111 Hatch, Beyond the Ends of the Roads, pp. 270–276.

112 Rockefeller Archive Center, Davison Fund Records, IV 3 B 5.2, Series ii, Box 21, fo. 167, Martandam Rural Center, 20 December, 1935.

YMCA's "lighthouse village" in Travancore and retrace its various sources, it is imperative not to neglect the local context. In an interview with an American journalist, Hatch admitted that it was not merely international experts and researchers, but ordinary Indian peasants who added their sometimes superior practical knowledge to the MRDC programme and thus significantly contributed to the success of the YMCA's experiment in rural reconstruction.[113] K.T. Paul's interference; inputs from the local peasantry, the colonial state, and Indian elites, as well as Hatch's global borrowings of agricultural, sociological, and anthropological knowledge are all signs that the "sustainable rural development" scheme developed at the MRDC was a heavily "pidginized" rather than strictly American programme, making the "aid" Hatch and his fellow workers provided only partially "foreign." Accordingly, rural development knowledge synthesised by Hatch and his fellow-workers did not only flow from Martandam to international organisations and from there to development programmes world-wide,[114] it was also transferred directly within South Asia. From the late 1920s onwards, Hatch worked as consultant for the British colonial administration[115] and more than a decade before independence, the rulers of several Indian states copied the MRDC.[116] After 1947, finally, graduates of the MRDC Agricultural Training College who had studied under Hatch rose to prominent positions in the Nehruvian administration. Some of them participated in the planning of large-scale community development schemes of the 1950s.[117]

Spencer Hatch emphasized that the "rural reconstruction" template he had worked out in Martandam would "work in every country,"[118] and, indeed, after he left India in 1941, his career took a truly global turn. It is certainly not an exaggeration to claim that Duane Spencer Hatch became one of the first internationally recognized experts on village development. In the 1940s, he established a rural demonstration centre along the lines of the MRDC in Mexico.[119] He afterwards taught for several years at the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Costa Rica, which was sponsored by the Pan-American Union. Simultaneously he was nominated as a founding secretary of the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) when it came into existence in Quebec City in October 1945. Eventually, Hatch went on a long mission for the UNESCO in

113 J. Beatty, Americans All Over, New York 1940, pp. 308 f.

114 UATSHC, Box 3, fo. 14/3, Photographs, Albums Delhi State (1) 1950–1952; UATSHC, Box 3, fo. 6/3, Written Works, Reports, Programms and Memorandums, 1952–1954, File Arab States Fundamental Education Centre, Sirs-el-Layyan, Menoufia, Egypt: Programme of Training for the Period between Dec 1952 and October 1954; D.S. Hatch, What are we up to in Minneriya?, in: Free World 1 (1951) 3, pp. 28–31.

115 E.G. Hatch, Travancore: A Guide Book for the Visitor, London 1939, p. 186.

116 Martandam Practical Training School in Rural Reconstruction, Accomplishment Bulletin: News from old Boys and Girls and what they have done, (April 1940), KFYA, IWI, Box 13, fo. India, Printed Matters, 1939–1967; D. S. Hatch, Toward Freedom from Want: From India to Mexico, London 1949, pp. 268-280. Cf. also B. Wallach, Losing Asia: Modernization and the Culture of Development, Baltimore 1996, p. 135.

117 S. Sinha, Lineages of the Developmentalist State: Transnationality and Village India, 1900–1965, in: Comparative Studies in Society and History 50 (2018) 1, pp. 57–90.

118 D.S. Hatch, My Job is Village Reconstruction, in: The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin xcviii (1944), p. 8.

119 Anonymous, Y Field Activities in Mexico, in: Mexican-American Review (1952), pp. 40 and 90; E.G. Hatch, In Mexico: Part IV of the Duane Spencer Hatch Story, in: The Quill and Scroll lxix (1963) 4, pp. 11–17.

Ceylon during the 1950s. By that time, he could boast that his methods were so "tried and true" that they had been applied "over India, in Ceylon, in Burma in China, in Egypt, in Mexico, in Latin America, in the Mid-East [sic!] and in Indonesia."[120] Ironically, Hatch's final assignment brought him back to the United States, where he spent the last years of his life on a reservation for Native Americans near Tucson, Arizona, applying the knowledge gathered in Southern India to promote rural community development schemes among a different type of "Indians": members of the Mojave, Navajo, and Hopi tribes.[121]

What, then, does our example tell us about the potential, but also about the risks and shortcomings connected with the global microhistorical approach sketched out above? First, it has become apparent that the widening of the lens and the overcoming of the entrenched fixation on the imperial and national framework was a necessary precondition for paying attention to an important set of actors that might otherwise have fallen through the grid of historical analysis. There can hardly be a doubt that the US-sponsored rural reconstruction efforts of the Indian YMCA did have a significant impact in the region itself. The focus on one specific actor and the institution he set up in South India has allowed for a very thick description of the phenomenon under study. The micro-perspective alone, however would not have allowed for some of the more fascinating insights summarized above. It required a more flexible *jeux d'échelles* to get there.[122] Thus, for instance, the occasional zooming out to follow Spencer Hatch through his various journeys and career stages has shown the contours of a much wider web of interactions and entanglement. What we have seen, was *in nuce* the emerging "transnational development regime," unbound by national or imperial borders that would fully flourish later during the Cold War.[123] The insight that there was a "prehistory" of US-led agricultural development schemes in South Asia is not only important in that it adds to our knowledge about rural development in the region. The choice to reconstruct the trajectory of YMCA rural reconstruction initiatives "from marginal and 'outside' locations" and only later follow the circulation of the YMCA's development knowledge template has allowed to correct the received wisdom in development studies, according to which such programmes came into being after President Truman's famous Point Four speech.[124] However, not only the local and the global perspective have helped to make sense of the Spencer Hatch narrative. The reconstruction of the American agronomist's early "imperial" career during the Great War has also produced momentous insights. The

120 D. S. Hatch, Typescript, Early Times at the Martandam Project, (n. d. [c.1960]), UATSHC, Box 2, folder 13, p. 9.

121 E. Gilchrist-Hatch, Working with… Conclusion: Ceylon and the Colorado River Indian Tribes, in: The Quill and Scroll lxvii (1964) 2, pp. 26–29.

122 The concept of the jeux d'échelles ("playing with the scales") has been introduced shortly before the global turn by the French historian Jacques Revel. J. Revel, Jeux d'échelles: la micro-analyse à l'expérience, Paris 1996.

123 Sinha, Lineages of the Developmentalist State.

124 D. Ekbladh, The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order, Princeton 2010, p. 2. See also N. Cullather, The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia, Cambridge, MA 2010; A. Gupta, Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India, Durham, NC 1998.

question, as to why so many benevolent development projects take on an authoritarian character,[125] is much easier to answer if one takes into account the continuities and discursive entanglements with colonialism. Finally, on an empirical level, the focus on an American protagonist (and a partly US-financed organisation) has opened up a body of extremely rich new source materials that are normally beyond a South Asianist's sight. Thus, next to the more obvious archives in New Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore, London, and Birmingham, I have visited repositories in Geneva, Minneapolis, New York, New Haven, Springfield, MA, Tucson, AZ, and a number of other places that had hitherto never been on my research itinerary. In the process, I have discovered a wealth of largely untapped material that appears to be of relevance for historians working on South Asia far beyond the narrow focus of my current project.

Is the dynamic "global-micro take" on regional history the new *chemin royale* for historians of South Asia and, for that matter, other area specialists? Should we all become global historians, as C. A. Bayly once famously posited? I am somewhat a reluctant to draw such a conclusion. I would rather side with Indian historian Gopalan Balachandran, who has recently reminded us that no level or locus of historical analysis can credibly claim to subsume all others, or render them redundant.[126] For one, there are certainly historical problems that can be meaningfully addressed by resorting to the more conventional spatial scales of analysis. Indeed, we ought to be careful not to fall into the teleological trap and fish for global connections exclusively. Let me provide just one example. Inspired by the results of my own research, I recently advised one of my PhD students, who is working on the microhistory of an influential institution of higher education in late colonial India (the Sikh community's Khalsa College in Amritsar), to look for global influences in the institution's sports curriculum. Since the College's curriculum was designed during the 1920s an1930s, at a time, when Danish Gymnastic instructors, Japanese Jiu-Jitsu teachers, Prussian body builders and – last, but certainly not least – American physical directors working for the Indian YMCA, exerted an undeniable influence in other parts of India,[127] I expected to find clear marks of this influence in the Amritsar College. However, it turned out that, in this case, global influences – though discernible – were far less significant than we had thought, and a conventional emphasis on the imperial connection proved to be much more rewarding.[128]

Furthermore, interesting as our case study may have been, some thorny issues remain. The interaction between Western Y "secretaries" and Indian villagers could mostly be

125 Cf. also J.C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Attempts to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, New Haven, CN 1998.

126 G. Balachandran, Claiming Histories Beyond Nations: Situating Global History, in: Indian Economic & Social History Review 49 (2012) 2, pp. 247–272.

127 H. Fischer-Tiné, "Fitness for Modernity"? – The American Y.M.C.A. and Physical Education Schemes in Late-Colonial South Asia (c. 1910–1940), in: Modern Asian Studies 53 (2019) 2, pp. 512–559; C.A. Watt, Cultural Exchange, Appropriation and Physical Culture: Strongman Eugen Sandow in Colonial India, 1904–1905, in: International Journal of the History of Sport 33 (2016) 16, pp. 1921–1942.

128 M. Brunner, Physical Education and Sport in the Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1914–1947, in: South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 41 (2018) 1, pp. 33–50.

reconstructed from the biased YMCA sources and ego documents produced by Spencer Hatch and some of his contemporaries only. Most of the peasants affected by the Y's rural experiment would have been illiterate. Even if this was not the case, written sources would be available in two South Indian languages I am not familiar with, namely Malayalam and Tamil. Depending on the research question and the wider project context, this neglect of sources in local languages can be truly problematic. Especially in light of the "inclusivist and emancipatory potential" of global history that I propagated above, such concerns must be taken seriously. Otherwise, the representation of "indigenous voices" will remain restricted to elite figures, such as K.T. Paul or the Maharaja of Travancore, who wrote in English. Closely connected to the issue of elitism is another problem that deserves attention. To be sure, the use of unexploited source material collected on three continents has produced novel insights, but it has also required a degree of mobility and financial resources that is beyond reach for most historians of South Asia employed in an Indian Pakistani or Bangladeshi institution. It is not least for this reason that many subcontinental colleagues remain rather reserved when it comes to the prospects of global history in "their" region.

Finally, one could pose the question of whether a global history deserving the name must not pay greater attention to various contexts, rather than simply pointing to the existence of connections and reconstructing transcontinental itineraries. What traces, for instance, did Spencer Hatch and the development knowledge he propagated leave in Mexico or in China? Here we seem to have reached the limits of global microhistory – in order to answer such questions convincingly, it would require a polyglot research collective rather than a single historian of South Asia.