Connections in Global History

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ABSTRACTS

Die Globalgeschichtsforschung ist kürzlich in eine Phase der Konsolidierung eingetreten, die es notwendig macht, kritisch über die wissenschaftlichen Ziele, die zentralen Fragestellungen und das methodische Instrumentarium des Feldes nachzudenken. In diesem Zusammenhang versucht der Artikel das für die Globalgeschichte zentrale Konzept globaler Verbindungen neu auszuleuchten. Er schlägt vor, den analytischen Fokus auf vier bisher oft übergangene Aspekte globaler Verbindungen zu legen: ihre Rolle als Mediatoren, ihr Auftreten im Plural, ihre Unterschwelligkeit sowie ihre Beziehung zu anderen Verbindungen und Nicht-Verbindungen.

The academic field of global history has recently started to enter into a phase of consolidation that necessitates us to rethink the scientific aims of the field, the questions it tackles as well as the instruments that it has at its disposal. In this regard, the article seeks to reconceptualize the notion of global connections that is so central to the field. It suggests to analytically focus on four aspects of global connections that have often been neglected: their role as mediators, their existence in the plural, their subtlety as well as their relation to other connections or disconnections.

1. The Perspective of Global History

For many years, research and teaching in global history has gone through a veritable boom. The field's focus on global connections and comparisons (to peruse the subtitle of Christopher Bayly's *The Birth of the Modern World*) brought a much-needed extension of its frame of reference to history writing. This broadening of our historiographical perspective was overdue and appealed especially (but not exclusively) to a younger generation of historians. For many, global history and its many related fields promised an escape from the interpretative straightjacket of national history. The new research field immediately proved to be innovative and incredibly productive. Global history attracted

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more and more scholars and started to inscribe itself deeply into the analytical ensemble of historiography. However, in these boom years, the conceptual foundations of the field remained remarkably thin. Maybe unsurprisingly. Global history and its many neighbouring strands of scholarship for a long time defined themselves in relation to what they wanted to overcome. German historian Sebastian Conrad points out that global history seeks to address "two 'birth defects' of the modern social sciences and humanities"[1]: eurocentrism and internalism. By the latter he mainly means a narrow focus on the nation state as the main frame of reference. These are noble and worthwhile pursuits. Regarding the conceptual foundations of the field, however, the mainly work *ex negativo*. This means that the conceptual framework of global history has mostly been discussed in terms of what needs to be overcome, extended or revised, while notions about the theoretical and methodological groundwork of the field often remained very broad, even vague at times. Such broadness is not without its benefits. It significantly contributes to the scholarly attractiveness of global history and opened up many unexpected paths of enquiry. At the same time, however, it makes it difficult to operationalise a Global History perspective, to be clear about the field's scientific interest as well as about its relation and interface to other strands of historical research.

Recently, global history has started to enter into a phase of consolidation. It has become clear to the historical profession that global history is not yet another academic fashion. The approach has come to stay and will make a lasting impact on historiography as a whole. Accordingly, debates about the scientific aims of the field, about the questions it tackles and the instruments it has at its disposal are slowly gaining more momentum. At the same time, scholars have started to rethink the contributions global history can make to historical research as such as well as to the evaluation of current societal challenges. That is to say that recently more and more global historians are beginning to re-evaluate the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the field and seek to build sustainable conceptual foundations for its further development.

Despite their common engagement with the concept of global history, their contributions cover vastly different grounds as already a glance on the relevant publications of the last few years reveals. Sebastian Conrad asks what global history is by examining where it comes from and what it is supposed to achieve.[2] In a volume originating from the opening conference of the Oxford Centre for Global History, the editors seek to provide examples of how the goals of global history can be pursued and which methodologies could serve in this regard.[3] In a contribution of my own, I have set myself a similar task and try to connect the theory and practice of global history in six different case studies.[4] Martin Dusinberre muses about whether it can or should be a goal of global historical writing to give a voice to those overheard in the past and by other strands of historiography.[5] Sven

1 S. Conrad, What is Global History?, Princeton 2016, p. 3.
2 Ibid.
3 J. Belich et al., The Prospect of Global History, Oxford 2016.
4 R. Wenzlhuemer, Globalgeschichte schreiben. Eine Einführung in 6 Episoden, Konstanz 2017.
5 M. Dusinberre, Japan, Global History, and the Great Silence, in: History Workshop Journal 83 (2017) 1, pp. 130-150.

Beckert's and Dominic Sachsenmaier's recent volume *Global History, Globally* traces the commonalities and differences in global historical practice around the globe.[6] Jeremy Adelman, on the other hand, doubted the suitability of global history to engage with the questions of a re-nationalising world and provoked a lively discussion in the field.[7] A recent response to Adelman's critique by Richard Drayton and David Motadel can be found in the *Journal of Global History*.[8] These are only a few examples that testify to a renewed interest in the conceptual foundations of global history. As diverse as they are in their tasks and outlooks, one common feature of all these considerations – sometimes raised explicitly, sometime touched upon implicitly – is the question whether global history has a concrete object of study or whether it is rather a complementary perspective on the human past.

Sebastian Conrad prominently claims that in his understanding global history has a specific research object. The extent to which global history can be applied as a perspective depends, as Conrad says, on the structural conditions of global integration; that is, it depends on whether global connections have durably established themselves structurally.[9] According to Conrad, nuanced treatments of global connections only become possible when global-history-as-perspective and as research object are combined. While Conrad holds this to be the most promising path for research in global history to take and claims that the most nuanced studies in recent years have followed this approach,[10] I argue that applying global history as a perspective on the human past – a perspective that specifically looks at the significance of global connections in a particular research context – renders it a much sharper analytical tool.

Of course, identifying and describing global connections does not explain anything in itself. Like all historical phenomena, they must be carefully contextualised, and their historical significance must be analysed and weighed with consideration. The question is how best to make sense of global connections' impact and how to grasp their particular qualities. The principal goal of global history ought to be to show how global connections emerge from human activity, and how they in turn affect people's thoughts, feelings and choices, which can occur within or without structurally stable conditions. Therefore, such conditions are better thought of as part of a multifaceted context in which the interactions between human actors and global connections should be situated. The intellectual energy and attendant analytical focus in global history should be directed at the interface between human activity and global connections. Accordingly, some of the fields most important questions are: what makes global and transregional connections historically relevant phenomena in the first place? What separates them from local and

6 S. Beckert and D. Sachsenmaier (eds.), Global History, Globally: Research and Practice around the World, London 2018.

7 J. Adelman, What is Global History Now?, in: Aeon, 2 March 2017, https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment (accessed 1 June 2018).

8 R. Drayton and D. Motadel, Discussion: The Futures of Global History, in: Journal of Global History 13 (2018) 1, p. 121.

9 Conrad, What is Global History?, pp. 11–12 and pp. 67–72.

10 Ibid., p. 10.

regional connections that serve the formative elements of all human communities? To what extent do global connections operate differently? What are their special qualities that justify talking about global history as a distinct perspective in the first place?
These questions might seem self-evident, but they are far from it. Indeed, when taken seriously, they are particularly difficult to interpret and to answer, but tackling them also promises important benefits for research in global history. Focusing on the quality of the connections themselves produces a conceptual abstraction that touches the core of what global history seeks to understand about the world. This abstraction should guide research in global history. It secures the field's conceptual independence and allows it to make a contribution to the discipline of history that goes beyond a mere world historical synthesis or a recapitulation of other fields' research questions, like those of, say, postcolonial or area studies.
Concentrating thus on global connections in no way constricts the perspective of global history, nor does it undermine the status of integration processes as objects. On the contrary, it allows the well-trained gaze of global history to pan very different areas without losing touch with the basic *explanandum*. How and why do people in very different locations and contexts create global and transregional connections? And how do these connections, in turn, affect people? These seemingly simple questions seek to fathom the broader historical significance of global connections. Of course, we might find that in many cases transfer and exchange may have been of little consequence, but such a result must be possible in any reasonable assessment. The point is to situate global connections in a constellation of many factors, even if this means that their role will sometimes be negligible.

2. A Little Theory of Connections

Connection, of course, is hardly a new or unfamiliar term in global history. On the contrary, it is one of the most commonly used terms in the field, which has contributed to it becoming a sort of terminological panacea. In order to make the term more than just an arbitrary label, it must be analytically sharpened. What are global connections, and how can they be grasped theoretically and methodologically? What distinguishes global connections from other kinds of connection? What makes such connections historically relevant? Finally, what do they contribute to global history's research programme? Different conceptions of how to conduct research in global history suggest different answers to these questions. Engaging with these answers will help to frame the notion of connection used here.
Connections are the basic units of analysis in global history. They are the building blocks of all forms of contact, exchange and network, and questions relating to the development of such connections as well as their meaning for historical actors are, accordingly, of great

interest. They are the key elements of influential concepts, like transfer,[11] connected or entangled history,[12] and contact zones.[13] Hardly any study in global history can make do without the concept of connections. However, the very centrality of connections hints at a fundamental problem of global history: all forms of human thought and activity are embedded in complex patterns of connections and exchange patterns. All forms of social organisation are based on this fact. Interpersonal connections and interactions are the basis of all forms of socialisation. In consequence, all humanities and social sciences are always and automatically concerned with the relevance of such connections, and history is no exception. The upshot for global history is that its approach does not complement existing modes with a focus on connections, but with its attention to transregional, global connections. The key question is, therefore, what distinguishes such global exchange processes and the attendant border crossings from other kinds of connection in theoretical terms. Why and how must interactions over long distances and across borders be viewed and investigated differently? How do their effects on the thoughts and actions of the respective actors differ conceptually from the basic connection patterns that prevail in any community? Reflecting on these questions forces us to analytically sharpen our conventional concept of connections and to examine the effects of factors like spatial distance, national borders and cultural differences, to name but a few.

Global connections have hardly been explicitly conceptualised in global history and, as a result, there has been little deliberate engagement with the problem sketched above. Even though the term *connection* is ubiquitous in the global history research, it is almost always used descriptively, which makes it difficult to tackle these important questions. This conceptual gap is most probably a result of how we tend to view connections, especially in relation to the following points:

First, an analytically useful concept of connections has to allow for their role as historical phenomena in their own right with their own spatial and temporal facets. Mostly, connections are generally conceptualised from their ending points, which is to say that most research focuses on actors, locations and objects that are (or are being) connected and maintain exchange relations with each other. These entities change and mutually influence each other by means of the transregional connections they maintain. Such approaches reduce connections to little more than intermediaries, in the sense of actor-network theory. There is contact at the termini, but otherwise they operate as practically invisible transmission media. While connections can thus help to reconfigure relations

11 See M. Espagne and M. Werner (eds.), Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe–XIXe siècles), Paris 1988.

12 See S. Randeria, Geteilte Geschichte und verwobene Moderne, in: J. Rüsen, H. Leitgeb and N. Jegelka (eds.), Zukunftsentwürfe. Ideen für eine Kultur der Veränderung, Frankfurt a.M. 1999, pp. 87–95; S. Subrahmanyam, Connected Histories. Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia, in: Modern Asian Studies 31 (1997) 3, pp. 735–762; S. Randeria and S. Conrad, Geteilte Geschichten. Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt, in: S. Randeria and S. Conrad (eds.), Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, pp. 9–49; A. Epple, O. Kaltmeier, and U. Lindner (eds.), Entangled Histories. Reflecting on Concepts of Coloniality and Postcoloniality, Leipzig 2011, pp. 7–104.

13 On the concept of contact zones, see M. L. Pratt, Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation, London 1992.

between the connected entities and alter the meanings of those entities, the connections themselves are assumed to be incapable of creating new meanings.[14] Research in global history, with its interest in the effectiveness of connections, must not settle for this view of connections as practically inert intermediaries, but instead view them as mediators, to stay in the terminology of actor-network theory. Bruno Latour summarises the function of mediators as follows: "Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry".[15] That is, mediators meaningfully shape the relations between the connected entities. From the perspective of global history, this applies to all kinds of global and transregional connection. Such connections do not bring their termini into direct, unadulterated contact; rather, they interpose themselves as mediators, significantly affecting the mode of contact and, finally, the connected entities as well. Viewing connections – global and transregional connections in the case of global history – as mediators entails recalibrating the analytical focus of inquiries in global history. Connections have to be considered simultaneously with the connected entities and the reciprocal relations between them.[16]

Second, connections should always be considered in the plural. Habitually, we tend to think of connections in binary terms, as either on or off, as existent or non-existent. Especially in the early years of global history, studies in many cases have simply sought evidence of a connection between objects whose connectedness had so far gone unnoticed, showing that there have been global connections in the most unexpected places. As important as such groundwork certainly is, discovering new global connections and identifying a certain subject matter as globally connected does not do justice to the complexity of historical circumstances. A one-or-zero binary does not help to understand how global connections impact on people. Analytically, we should rather conceive of connections as existing in the plural and affecting each other. Relations between particular actors and their communities are always based on assemblages of different kinds of connections. In a global context, such assemblages have to traverse great distances, including a wide variety of borders and obstacles, which affects some kinds of connection in the assemblage more than others. Some are more effective over short distances. Some cross borders with ease, while others do not. In contrast to more local settings, the interplay among the individual connections changes in a global context. The composition of these assemblages varies not only from one situation to another, it also distinguishes global processes of exchange from local ones. One could say that global and local connections differ in terms of the interplay of the various connections and non-connections in such an assemblage, depending, of course, on the historical context in question. Therefore, in order to be analytically more exact, we should not so much ask how global connections

14 See, for example, B. Latour, Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory, Oxford 2005, p. 39.
15 Ibid.
16 M. Dusinberre and R. Wenzlhuemer, Editorial – Being in Transit. Ships and Global Incompatibilities, in: Journal of Global History 11 (2016) 2, pp. 155–162.

affected historical actors but rather how the shifting relations between different forms of connection in a larger assemblage did.

Third, in this plurality of connections we have a certain tendency to focus on particular forms of connection while we overlook the historical significance of others. The global movements of goods and/or people have traditionally (and rightly) received scholarly attention in this regard. Trade and migration have long been recognized as producing global connections of great historical significance. Information and knowledge often moved globally together with goods and/or people or – with what I have elsewhere called the dematerialization of information flows[17] – detached from them. Colleagues from fields such as the history of knowledge or (global) intellectual history[18] have started to look at the particulars and the significance of such global information movements. In often painstaking work they have shown how certain ideas have moved throughout the world, from culture to culture, from society to society, and how in this process they mixed with other concepts, became adapted and transformed. Mostly, however, studies in this field concentrate on what we could call "big" ideas and their intellectual context, e.g. human rights[19], nationalism[20] or even modernity as such.[21] These and many other concepts of similar meaning have been traced around the world and examined as to their historical significance – and rightly so. The underlying assumption is that many people all over the globe – either individually or in groups – built their thoughts and actions in relation to such ideas. Studying the global movements and transformation of idea, thus, helps to understand the historical actors. However, what has often been overlooked in this concentration on globally mobile goods, people and ideas are other, more subtle forms of connection that might have similar explanatory potential when it comes to understanding the actors. These include people's images of the world, of other regions, different cultures or distant things or persons. Sometimes these images are grounded in experience, sometimes they are based on second-hand accounts and hearsay, at other times they are nothing but fiction. In any case, they are part of the basis on which a person feels, thinks and acts. People also have desires trimmed at other parts of the world. They might hope for a better life elsewhere. They might long for someone or something in the distance. Or they might (and often did) feel homesick and long to return home. Similarly, fears and insecurities, anxiousness and discomfort can be directed at the world. All these belong to a different form of global connection, an immaterial, emotional form that is just as historically powerful as connections created by physically moving goods / people or epistemologically moving intellectual concepts. Such connections are just as

17 R. Wenzlhuemer, Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World. The Telegraph and Globalization, Cambridge, UK 2012.

18 For a critical evaluation of the young field of global intellectual history see S. Moyn and A. Sartori (eds.), Global Intellectual History, New York City 2015.

19 S. Moyn, The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History, Cambridge, MA 2010.

20 M. Göbel, Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism, Cambridge, UK 2015.

21 C.A. Bayly, Birth of the Modern World, Malden, MA 2004.

much part of a person's lifeworld as the experience of migration, the consumption of exotic goods or the discussion of foreign political notions can be. They form part of the basis on which people develop their feelings, thoughts and actions. We need to consider these subtle global connections as well if we want to satisfactorily understand and explain how people acted or did not act in the past.[22]

And, coming back to the second point, we should particularly consider them in relation to other connections. Here is a simple example that illustrates this and at the same time will lead us to the fourth and final point. Think about someone who longs to be somewhere else far away (no matter whether home or away) but cannot go there due to, say, financial or political issues. The relation between these two forms of connection with the world – a) the wish to be somewhere else vs. b) the impossibility to actually go there – can be very powerful and inspire people to act in a particular way. Of course, what people make of it can be vastly different. Frustration can grow from the conflicting relation, while other people might be able to creatively resolve the situation. In any case, however, it is the relation between the different connections in an assemblage that holds the most explanatory potential.

Let us stay with this simple example for one more thought. On closer inspection, the impossibility to go somewhere is a negative connection, a disconnection. Global disconnections also need to be considered as parts of larger assemblages. They point at the impossibility to interact with other parts of the world in a particular way. Such impossibilities, of course, are ubiquitous. There are theoretically endless ways in which people *cannot* interact with the world. Therefore, it is analytically pointless to think of all these impossibilities as global disconnections. They become disconnections only when they become part of an assemblage, when they enter into a meaningful relation with other global connections – as, for instance, in the example above. This is the moment when the disconnection becomes historically meaningful. Let me use the history of global communication and transport, on which I have worked for some time, to further illustrate this point. In the middle of the nineteenth century, British merchants and investors have applauded the prospect of a regular steamship route to Australia because in their eyes this would make the flow of commercial information from the antipodes more regular and their investments in the region more calculable and less risky.[23] We know how in the early twentieth century, British telegraphers on remote Pacific islands struggled to make sense of their confusing relation which the rest of the world. Thanks to their "working the wires" they had first-hand access to the news of the world. Should they ever have a broken tooth, however, it could take weeks until they could receive medical treatment in the middle of the Pacific.[24] Even the character of the telegraph as a communication technology is the product of connections and disconnections. Some information – everything

22 Of course, the research field of the history of emotions has in the last decades started to acknowledge the historical significance of feelings such as desire, fear etc. But as of now it has rarely concentrated on their role in global entanglements.

23 Wenzlhuemer, Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World, pp. 85–86.

24 Wenzlhuemer, Globalgeschichte schreiben, pp. 92–108.

that could be compressed into a few dots and dashes – travelled fast and easily along the wires. Other information – more complex background or everything that could not be encoded with the help of the Latin alphabet – was not suitable for telegraphic transmission. In all these cases, the disconnection is part of a larger bundle of connections, part of an assemblage. And it becomes a disconnection only when it enters into relation with other connections. That a telegraph cannot transmit complex background only becomes relevant when it can transmit to-the-point messages. That it takes weeks for a British doctor to reach a remote Pacific island only matters when there is someone there who needs his help. That commercial information from Australia was for a long time sparsely and irregularly available in Europe only matters when someone has already directed his or her commercial interest there. This means: just as we need to extend our focus to include more subtle forms of global connections (see point 3) we also have to take global disconnections seriously and consider them as parts of bigger connective bundles where, analytically speaking, they only become disconnections in the first place.

To summarize my main points so far: I see global history as a particular perspective on the past that is interested in the ways in which people created global connections and in how they were in turn affected by them. It is important to note that these connections are not global history's objects of study in the same way in which Conrad, for instance, argues for processes of global integration to be the field's main objects. Rather, the study of global connections is a conduit, a particular way of analysis. Global connections should primarily serve as the *explanans* and not so much as the *explanandum* (although the former might often lead via the latter). I argue that such an analytical focus necessitates us to understand connections as mediators instead of intermediaries; to examine them in the plural, as parts of a bigger bundle or assemblage of connections that develop their meanings only in relation to each other; to include in our evaluation of connections more subtle and intangible forms of relating to the world; and to also consider the role of global disconnections. Such an approach to global history is close to the historical actors. It seeks to understand how and why they were embedded in different forms of global connections, what this meant for them, how it troubled or excited them and so on. The actors serve as interfaces in at least two ways. In them, connections and disconnections, the global and the local, intersect and interact. At the same time, the actors can serve as a bridge between global history and more established forms of historiography that focus more on the national, the regional or the local. Thinking global history as a perspective that can potentially be trimmed on any subject and seeks to highlight the meaning of global connections for people in the past does not overwrite but extend and complement other approaches. In doing so, it broadens our understanding of history.

3. Example: Willoughby Wallace Hooper

So far, I have not more than hinted at a few brief research examples that can serve to illustrate some of my points above. In the following, I will introduce a historical case study in some more detail and will try to develop it in a way that makes the uses of a perspec-

tive on global connections more tangible. On 21 January 1886, the venerable *Times of London* published an extensive report about the current situation in Upper Burma, the northern part of today's Myanmar. The British had annexed the region in the year before in the course of the Third Anglo-Burmese War and ever since then saw themselves confronted with fierce local resistance. The British government criminalized the insurgents as *dacoits* (bandits) and thought it justified to move hard against any form of resistance. Executions were a common occurrence in Upper Burma in these days. This was a well-known and mostly unquestioned fact back in Britain. It was accepted by the British public as a necessary evil that an imperial power such as Britain had to cope with. And so the article in the *Times* reported rather matter-of-factly about ongoing executions of prisoners in Burma. Towards its end, however, the text also offered a more critical remark. It referred to a certain Reverend Colbeck who at the time was a missionary of the Church of England in Mandalay and who had criticized the professional conduct of the local Provost-Marshall (the chief of the military police) and protested against his treatment of prisoners. Colbeck claimed that the Provost-Marshall had threatened imprisoned locals with immediate execution should they not testify against others. For the reverend, such a practice was shameful for "our name, nation, and religion". And the missionary also pointed to other questionable practices taking place at the execution of prisoners:

> *The ghastly scenes which constantly recur in executions carried out by the Provost-Marshal constitute grave public scandals. The Provost-Marshal, who is an ardent amateur photographer, is desirous of securing views of the persons executed at the precise moment when they are struck by the bullets. To secure this result, after the order, 'Ready,' 'Present,' have been given to the firing-party, the Provost-Marshal fixes his camera on the prisoners, who at times are kept waiting for some minutes in that position. The officer commanding the firing party is then directed by the Provost-Marshal to give order to fire at the moment when he exposes his plate.*
>
> *So far no satisfactory negative has been obtained, and the experiments are likely to be continued. These proceedings take place before a crowd of mixed nationalities, and cannot fail to have a demoralizing effect on both soldiers and spectators.*[25]

Colbeck's protest and the report in the *Times* caused a stir in British government circles. High-ranking politicians started to worry whether this could become a fully-fledged colonial scandal with the potential to influence public opinion about the relentless campaign of the British troops in Burma. Only four days after the publication of the article, Lord Randolph Churchill, the then Secretary of State for India, had to answer questions about these incidents in the House of Commons.[26] In a flurry of telegrams between London, Calcutta, Rangoon and Mandalay, the government and the India Office tried to establish whether there was any substance to Colbeck's accusations and, if so, to contain

25 Anon., Burmah, in: The Times, 21 January 1886, p. 5.

26 Hansard. vol. 302 cc314-7. "House of Commons Debate", 25 January 1886.

the political damage.[27] In this context, the issue about pressing prisoners into testimonies soon faded into the background of the enquiry and the practice of photographing executions moved into the fore. This can partly be explained by the larger ethical questions revolving around the issue. Photography was still a relatively young medium. The possible moral implications of its practice had not been fully discussed yet. Was it okay to photograph people during an execution who could not effectively object? Was it okay to let these people suffer even more for artistic or documentary purposes, e.g. when an execution took longer than necessary due to the needs of the photographer? However, besides these more general issues, another question became more and more apparent between the lines of the telegrams and the parliamentary debate. Should certain things be documented photographically at all and what would it mean if the photograph of an execution in Burma found its way back to Britain? How would such a photo – especially one of the precise moment in which the bullet entered human flesh – affect the public by bringing the fate of the delinquents emotionally much closer to the otherwise distant European observer? These concerns were not made explicit in the debate, but they clearly reverberate between the lines.

The photographing Provost-Marshall went be the name of Willoughby Wallace Hooper (1837–1912). At the age of sixteen, Hooper became a writer at the East India House in London. Five years later in 1858, he went to India to join the 7th Madras Cavalry. An ardent and gifted photographer, Hooper brought his camera with him to India. His talent was recognized by his superiors and in 1862 he was granted leave from his military duties in order to photographically contribute to *The People of India*, an ethnographic project endorsed by the Viceroy of India, Lord Canning.[28] In eight volumes published between 1868 and 1875, *The People of India* sought to provide a survey of the native population of India in altogether 468 annotated photographs. Hooper also photographically accompanied the viceroy during his travels in India. Around 1870 he ventured into commercial photography and, for instance, published a photographic series on tiger shooting, while at the same time staying in the military and moving up in the hierarchy. Hooper became widely known for his photographs of Indians suffering during the Great Famine that hit British India and particularly the region around the Madras Presidency between 1876 and 1878. It has been estimated that the disastrous famine caused more than five million deaths in British India.[29] The colonial government provided only insufficient relief as, among others, William Robert Cornish (1828–1896) repeatedly pointed out. During the famine, Cornish was the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras and constantly argued for more generous relief measures from the side of the government. In one of his statements, he wished for someone to photograph the starving population in order to

27 House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. C. 4690. Burmah, No. 2 (1886). Telegraphic Correspondence Relating to Military Executions and Dacoity in Burmah, 1886, p. 7.

28 K. Howe, Hooper, Colonel Willoughby Wallace (1837–1912), in: J. Hannavy (ed.), Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, vol. 1, New York 2008, pp. 713–714, at p. 713.

29 D. Fieldhouse, For Richer, for Poorer?, in: P.J. Marshall, The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire, Cambridge, UK 1996, pp. 108–146.

make their suffering more visible for the British public. He wrote: "Children of all ages [are] in such a condition of emaciation that nothing but a photographic picture could convey an adequate representation of their state."[30] Hooper took just such photographs, which as a matter of fact were successfully used in the famine relief campaigns back in Britain.[31] However, neither did Hooper act in any official capacity nor – so it seems – did he care much for a humanitarian cause. Already many contemporaries criticised him for aestheticizing the suffering, for turning the starvers into photographic objects and, above all, for not offering help himself while being so close to those affected.[32] Later, Hooper transferred to Burma and participated in the Third Anglo-Burmese War. Again, he carried his photographic equipment with him and made countless photographs of the campaign. In this context, the incidents that he was later accused of by Colbeck and others took place.

Between 22 January and 1 March 1886, the government tried to establish the exact facts of Hooper's alleged misconduct, to do some damage control and to prepare a formal court of inquiry into the matter.[33] Hooper himself never denied that he had taken pictures of executions, but claimed that he had done so only at two occasions and emphasized that, in his opinion, the delinquents had not even realized him doing so.[34] Eventually, the court of inquiry held at Mandalay on 19 March 1886 came to the opinion that "[t]he conduct of Colonel Hooper […] has deservedly met with public condemnation. It reflects discredit on the army to which he belongs, and is damaging to the character of the British Administration in India." Nevertheless, taking into account that Cooper "had already suffered severely from the consequences of his actions", he got away with nothing but a public reprimand and a temporary reduction of his pay.[35] His further career did not suffer much from this. In 1887, he published the photographic volume *Burmah. A series of one hundred photographs*.[36] The photos of the executions were not included in the volume.

Willoughby Wallace Hooper's photographic journey through South Asia is telling in many ways. It says something about the nature of British colonialism when it points to the relentlessness of the campaign in Burma or to the reluctance to provide adequate relief during the Great Famine. It reveals the colonial gaze[37] captured in Hooper's photographs of these starving in Madras, of the tiger shootings or – of course – of the Burma

30 C. Twomey, Framing Atrocity: Photography and Humanitarianism, in: History of Photography 36 (2012) 3, pp. 255–264, at p. 259.

31 Ibid.

32 K. Howe, Hooper, in: J. Hannavy (ed.), Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography, p. 713.

33 House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. C. 4690. Burmah, No. 2 (1886). Telegraphic Correspondence Relating to Military Executions and Dacoity in Burmah, 1886, p. 7.

34 Anon., Burmah, in: The Times, 4 March 1886, p. 5.

35 Anon., The Charges Against Colonel Hooper, in: The Times, 8 September 1886, p 3.

36 W.W. Hooper, Burmah. A Series of One Hundred Photographs, illustrating Incidents connected with the British Expeditionary Force to that Country, from the Embarkation at Madras, 1st Nov., 1885, to the Capture of King Theebaw, with many views of Mandalay and Surrounding Country, Native Life and Industries, London 1887.

37 Pratt, Imperial Eyes.

campaign. It highlights the contemporary ambiguousness of the new medium of photography oscillating between social documentary and mere voyeurism. And it serves well to illustrate my above points on global connections. How the episodes around Hooper's work as a photographer in South Asia unfolded has been shaped significantly by their embeddedness in different forms of global – in this particular case mostly colonial – connections. Let me briefly point to some of them and bring them into correspondence with my above claims.

First, photography and telegraphy played a central role in the episodes – the latter mainly in the Burma case. Both provided technologically supported connections and, thus, shaped their mediating potential. Telegrams were unrivalled in their speed of communication, but they were very limited as to their possible contents. In the late nineteenth century, the use in itself of telegrams in colonial administration bespoke the priority of the matter communicated. As a medium the telegraph conveyed a meta-message of urgency, while it was far less able to transmit (or establish) the more extensive background of an instance. The global connection facilitated by the telegraph acts as a mediator that changes the meaning of the communication. In this way, the nature of the connection has a formative impact on that which is connected. The same goes for photography. In the late nineteenth century, photos could not easily travel over the wires. In a global context, they moved materially and this means much slower than telegraphic information. Hooper's photographs of the Great Famine took much longer to reach Europe than a telegram and they took very different paths. The sense of urgency that they evoked in many of their viewers was not a consequence of speed of movement but of the intimacy and closeness that they could create between the contents and an otherwise distant audience. The global connection that they provided felt closer than it actually was. William Robert Cornish's thoughts testify to that. Again, the connection is a mediator.

Photography, telegraphy and the relation between the two technologies of communication also hint at what I have called the plurality of connections. The many telegrams between Europe and South Asia after Hooper's conduct at executions had become public also aimed at doing some damage control if possible. The British government sought to establish whether there were any execution photographs in the first place and, if so, to contain their movement to Europe. In short, it tried to control one global connection with the help of another.[38] That is just one particularly obvious example of how global connections exist in parallel and in relation to each other.

Third, as has already become apparent, the Hooper case also points to the wide variety of entanglements involved. At first glance, the nature of the connections supporting the different scenarios seems rather standard. On a colonial backdrop, we have globally moving people such as Hooper, a British missionary or all kinds of British colonial administrators; we have things that travel such as photographic equipment or famine

38 More on telegraphs as an instrument of control can be found here: R. Wenzlhuemer, The Telegraph and the Control of Material Movements: A Micro-Study about the Detachment of Communication from Transport, in: Technology and Culture 58 (2017) 3, pp. 625–649.

relief rations; and, of course, we have information that circulates the globe, for instance in photographic or telegraphic form. Beneath this well-researched ensemble, however, other more subtle forms of connections linger. The British government's anxiety about the situation in Burma and how it could impact on public opinion is one example. As is British public opinion itself – real or perceived – about the Burma campaign. Here we can clearly see the power of connections based on desires and emotions, on certain notions about right and wrong. Maybe this becomes most tangible in Hooper's photographs themselves when Cornish hints at the emotional connection they can provide in the case of the famine or when the government fears that the execution photos could alter public opinion. These forms of global connections might be more difficult to detect than moving people, goods or ideas, and yet they can be very powerful when it comes to the thoughts, feelings and actions of those connected.

Finally, the disconnections. Many of the global connections in the episode gain their meaning through their relation to disconnections, i.e. the active absence of a connection. In the Burma example, the better part of the British public initially cared little about the ruthlessness of the British campaign. The government sought to contain the flow of information (and especially of the photographs) from Burma to Britain. Direct communication between London and Mandalay was not possible. Intermediaries at Calcutta and Rangoon had to come in. In Hooper's book about Burma the photos were missing. During the famine, British relief operations were marginal as was British public interest in the suffering of the local people. In general and as demonstrated above already, media like photography or telegraphy could transport some forms of information but not others. They provided connections and disconnections alike and their nature as mediators draws on this.

4. Conclusions: The Global and the Regional

In this article, I have claimed that we should think of global history as a particular perspective on the past, a perspective trimmed at the role of global connections in history. I have emphasized that such connections should not be conceived as global history's main research objects but should rather serve as its central analytical tools. If we want to understand how historical actors created global entanglements and how these actors were in turn affected by them, a refined and operationalized understanding of global connections is key in this regard. Here, I have tried to illustrate this with the help of a few exemplary points distilled from a random case study about a late nineteenth-century British colonialist and photographer and his exploits in South Asia. Many other contexts could have served the same purpose. As a perspective, global history has no research object as such. It can be applied on any historical issue, any problem that needs explanation. Sure, in many cases, this might not lead to insightful results. Not every subject will reveal new aspects when looked at from a different perspective. This is perfectly normal. At the same time, however, global history becomes complementary. It easily connects

and communicates with other – maybe more regionally or nationally informed – approaches to the past.

Understanding global history as a perspective builds a bridge between research fields and disciplines, for instance between the regionally specialised area studies and Europe-focused mainstream of historical research. This, in the final lines of my argument, leads me to the overarching topic of the present special issue: the relationship between historiographical work and expertise on specific – and usually extra-European – areas and global history as a research field. There is an ongoing debate about how the two research contexts relate to each other, whether areas studies expertise is a prerequisite for good global history research and other such issues.[39] As insightful and justified this debate certainly is, understanding global history as a perspective entails that analytically speaking there is no special relationship between area studies scholarship and global history. The practice of global history does not *automatically* necessitate special knowledge in a particular (preferable extra-European) world region, be it South Asia, Latin America, Russia or Africa. As any other approach, it simply necessitates us to know what we are talking about, to understand the context of that which is connected (the ends of the connection) just as we understand the functioning of the connection itself. This can be pretty complex but it does not automatically rely on area studies expertise. In practice, a particular research context (or part of it) will often be deeply rooted in an extra-European region. Then, if we want to understand the role of global connections in such a context, historians will need language skills and other expert knowledge about the region in question. In short, in such cases historians will need areas studies expertise in order to know what they are talking about. But this is not an automatism and it does not mark a privileged relationship between global history and area studies. In other cases, the connections in question will remain within a culture, within a language framework, but might transgress other forms of borders and boundaries. Understood as a perspective, global history can be trimmed on all sorts of subjects and problems. In some cases, historians will need area studies expertise to meaningfully engage with their case studies, in others they might not. While in the practice of global history, the likeliness that a particular study will need (or at least benefit from) additional language skills and other regional expertise is certainly high, this does not constitute any special relationship from an analytical vantage point.

From another more practical viewpoint, however, there is a special relationship between extra-European history and global history. Area studies experts are often working on countries or regions with a direct or indirect colonial past (or other forms of relations with Europe that left a decisive local imprint). Hence, the examination of global con-

39 See, for instance, B. Schäbler (ed.), Area Studies und die Welt: Weltregionen und neue Globalgeschichte, Wien 2007; B. Schäbler, Zum Verhältnis von Regionalgeschichte (Area History) und Globalgeschichte (Global History) am Beispiel der Osteuropäischen Geschichte, in: M. Aust and J. Obertreis (eds.), Osteuropäische Geschichte und Globalgeschichte, Stuttgart 2014, pp. 307–317; B. Schäbler: Weltgeschichte, Globalgeschichte, Area Histories: Eine Stellungnahme, in: Erwägen Wissen Ethik 22 (2011) 3, pp. 425–429; M. Pernau and H. Jordheim, Global History Meets Area Studies. Ein Werkstattbericht, in: H-Soz-Kult, 14 November 2017, http://www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4229 (accessed 1 June 2018).

nections played an important role in area studies research very early on and many area studies scholars were global historians *avant la lettre*. That most influential scholars in the field hailed (and still hail) from a North American or European cultural or at least educational background is another factor in this regard. At least on the meta-level of academic self-reflection they were automatically concerned with global connections at work.

Other early impulses to global historical research came from a rather Eurocentric style of colonial and imperial history based particularly at history departments in former colonising countries. While the urge to de-centre history and overcome Eurocentric narratives about the past was usually much less developed in these institutions, they were also concerned with studying global connections (without making it explicit) and also made worthwhile contributions to the field, particularly as regards the role of European colonizers as makers and breakers of global connections. Ideologically, scholars in this field often had little in common with their area studies colleagues. Still, both parties made valuable contributions to the study of global connections before anyone would speak of a field called global history.

Understanding global history as a particular perspective on the past, as a perspective that asks about the historical role of global connections, entails that, analytically speaking, there is no special relationship between the areas studies and global history. For many reasons, regional specialists (and here we should probably include historians of Europe as specialists in just another area) working on a colonial or postcolonial context certainly had a better eye for the significance of global connections and started to systematically examine their meaning earlier than others. For this, they deserve much credit. But it does not constitute privileged access to the field of global history.