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Journal Article**Author(s):**

Fischer-Tiné, Harald

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THE YMCA AND LOW-MODERNIST RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH ASIA, c.1922–1957*

I

SITUATING THE MICRO IN THE MACRO

This article explores the activities of the globally active and North America-dominated Young Men's Christian Association (better known as YMCA, or simply the Y) as an influential agent promoting rural reconstruction schemes on the Indian sub-continent from the 1920s to the 1950s. Its main purpose is to demonstrate that during the inter-war years religiously inclined civil-society actors from the United States played a crucial role in shaping the norms, practices and epistemes that would characterize later secular development schemes in the region. On a more general level, it aims to shed some light on the emergence of a new 'gospel of rural reconstruction'.¹ It argues that a body of knowledge and practices, developed in South Asia by mingling American scientific agricultural expertise and a Protestant missionary impulse to uplift the subcontinental villager with various strands of colonial, local and global knowledge. This knowledge enjoyed a worldwide circulation from the late 1930s onwards and arguably shaped the emerging transnational development regime that would flourish during the early Cold War era.

Historical research has addressed American rural development programmes in Asia typically as powerful political weapons for the 'establishment of American global hegemony' during the decades

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¹ Duane Spencer Hatch, typewritten report (Trivandrum, 25 Apr. 1933), University of Arizona, Tucson, Special Collections, Spencer Hatch Collection (henceforth UATSHC), box 3, 6.

characterized by an all-pervasive East–West antagonism.² Most of the available studies emphasize the role of various academically trained US ‘development experts’ in spreading agricultural ‘high modernism’ to the third world, together with the impact of wealthy non-state donors such as the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, which are often represented as quasi-auxiliaries of the US State Department.³ Historians of agricultural uplift programmes on the Indian subcontinent have usually only rather superficially contextualized the post-World War II phenomenon of American village development aid, mostly within the history of earlier schemes in the region either by the colonial state or by Indian nationalists such as Mohandas K. Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, who carried out much publicized village experiments.⁴ An important group of actors and their ideological agenda has thus been completely edited out of the prehistory of development programmes. Revealingly, while it is taken for granted that the rural experiments of Indian activists like Gandhi or Tagore were impregnated by their individual religio-cultural world views, the question about the extent to which religious tenets and agendas might have shaped the seemingly secular village uplift schemes of western and especially American ‘experts’ is rarely asked. Nicole Sackley has recently pointed to the ‘transnational roots’ of rural reconstruction programmes in the first three decades of the twentieth century and acknowledged that ‘Anglo-American protestant missionaries’ indeed played a role in the development of such schemes.⁵ However, with very few exceptions, existing

² David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, 2010), 2. See also Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); and Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham, NC and London, 1998), 52–62.

³ Inderjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York, 2012); and Robert Arno and Nadine Pinede, ‘Revisiting the “Big Three” Foundations’, *Critical Sociology*, xxxiii, 3 (2007). On ‘high modernism’ as an exclusive and inherently authoritarian form of development, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven, 1998).

⁴ See, for instance, Cullather, *Hungry World*, 84.

⁵ Nicole Sackley, ‘The Village as Cold War Site: Experts, Development, and the History of Rural Reconstruction’, *Journal of Global History*, vi, 3 (2011); and Nicole Sackley, ‘Village Models: Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War’, *Diplomatic History*, xxxvii, 4 (2013), 755–6. An illuminating perspective on the League of Nations as another key site for the emergence of a transnational epistemic community of development experts in the

(cont. on p. 195)

research still focuses strongly on secular experts coming to South Asia from the mid 1940s onwards,⁶ and hardly helps us understand how these earlier transnational flows and American Protestant influences moulded the way in which knowledge about the Indian peasant, village, or rural economy came to be conceptualized in the decades that preceded the age of development.

Inspired by the few exceptions to this dominant narrative,⁷ this study singles out the Indian YMCA as one of the most conspicuous actors in the field of agricultural reform. The period surveyed begins in the early 1920s, when the first rural reconstruction programmes under American guidance were launched and ends in the 1950s, when India, Ceylon and Burma were independent and the age of development was in full swing. The discussion focuses strongly on the activities of Duane Spencer Hatch (1888–1963), arguably the single most important expert on rural reconstruction connected with the Y. The Cornell-trained agronomist, celebrated as ‘India’s double-your-income-man’,⁸ worked for various international and national institutions and achieved worldwide influence in the

(n. 5 cont.)

inter-war years is provided by Margherita Zanasi, ‘Exporting Development: The League of Nations and Republican China’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xlix, 1 (2007).

⁶ See, most recently, Immerwahr’s book, which refers to the pre-independence pioneers of rural reconstruction in a single endnote: Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2015), 210, endnote 26. Albert Mayer’s Etawah Pilot Project (see n. 10 below), by contrast, has recently received a great deal of scholarly attention: see Sackley, ‘Village Models’; Cullather, *Hungry World*, 77–94; Corinna R. Unger, *Entwicklungspfade in Indien: Eine internationale Geschichte, 1947–1980* (Göttingen, 2015), 47–74; Jack Loveridge, ‘Between Hunger and Growth: Pursuing Rural Development in Partition’s Aftermath, 1947–1957’, *Contemporary South Asia*, xxv, 1 (2017).

⁷ Rajsekhar Basu, ‘Missionaries as Agricultural Pioneers: Protestant Missionaries and Agricultural Improvement in Twentieth-Century India’, in Deepak Kumar and Bipasha Raha (eds.), *Tilling the Land: Agricultural Knowledge and Practices in Colonial India* (Delhi, 2016); Subir Sinha, ‘Lineages of the Developmentalist State: Transnationality and Village India, 1900–1965’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, l, 1 (2008); and Nandini Chatterjee, *The Making of Indian Secularism: Empire, Law and Christianity, 1830–1960* (Basingstoke and New York, 2011), ch. 5. The importance of the YMCA for rural development programmes is also briefly alluded to in Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History* (New Delhi, 2005), 113–14.

⁸ Under this title, popular *Reader’s Digest* author Jerome Beatty included a portrait of Hatch in his book on great American expats: Jerome Beatty, *Americans All Over* (New York, 1940), 302–13.

1940s and 1950s. The Rural Demonstration Centre that he opened in 1924 in the south Indian village of Martandam⁹ (henceforth MRDC) inspired later architects of community development, both Indian and foreign,¹⁰ and its influence soon radiated all over Asia and beyond. A brief sketch of Hatch's subsequent global career as a village development expert provides a perfect lens to explore how knowledge about rural populations and economies, originally generated in colonial South Asia, circulated on a global scale.

Based on my case study, I intend to make a number of wider historiographical arguments. The first is rather predictable and relates to a noticeable lacuna in South Asian history: While the crucial contribution of the YMCA to secular agricultural and social reform projects in other parts of Asia has been analysed at length by historians,¹¹ scholars have hitherto discussed the Christian lay organization's role in the Indian subcontinent only rather uncritically in a few in-house publications.¹² In addition to filling this gap, an in-depth study of the Association's rural work in South Asia can help overcome the fixation on colonialism (and particularly the colonial state), as well as anti-colonial nationalism, that still structures much of the historiography on early twentieth-century modernization and development schemes in the region. It sheds light, instead,

⁹ In post-1950s maps and literature the name of the village is mostly given (linguistically more correctly) as Marthandam. In order to avoid confusion, however, I will use the older version Martandam that is used in the majority of my sources throughout.

¹⁰ Albert Mayer *et al.*, *Pilot Project, India: The Story of Rural Development at Etawah, Uttar Pradesh* (Berkeley, 1958), 34; and B. Rambhai, *The Silent Revolution* (Delhi, 1959), 12–13.

¹¹ See, for instance, Albert L. Park, *Building a Heaven on Earth: Religion, Activism, and Protest in Japanese-Occupied Korea* (Honolulu, 2015), 120–30; and Chang Liu, *Peasants and Revolution in Rural China: Rural Political Change in the North China Plain and the Yangzi Delta* (London and New York, 2007), 137–40; Jon Thares Davidann, *A World of Crisis and Progress: The American YMCA in Japan, 1890–1930* (Bethlehem, 1998); and Charles W. Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (New York, 1990).

¹² The only book-length study that exists on the Y's rural regeneration experiments in South Asia is the rather descriptive 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). Besides this, the major in-house histories of the Indian YMCA devote short chapters to its 'rural work'. See, for example, M. D. David, *YMCA and the Making of Modern India: A Centenary History* (New Delhi, 1992), 309–22; and J. H. Dunderdale, *The YMCA in India: 100 Years of Service with Youth* (New Delhi, n.d. [1963]), 113–24.

on how international civil-society organizations contributed to such endeavours and highlights the crucial significance of American actors in this context during the late colonial period. Thirdly, historians of US development and foreign aid initiatives tend to concentrate their attention almost exclusively on the period between the late 1940s and the 1980s. Their selective focus on post-World War II phenomena downplays or completely omits essential aspects of the prehistory of the age of development from their narratives.¹³ Most importantly, the fact that 'progressive' and 'secular' village uplift schemes involving US experts were intricately enmeshed not only with colonial ideologies and designs,¹⁴ but also with Christian missionary agendas is obfuscated by the acceptance of the Cold War and decolonization as 'natural' caesurae, validating the primary emphasis on wider geopolitical contexts and large-scale government-driven aid programmes after President Truman's famous Point IV speech of 1949.¹⁵ A detailed micro-study of the YMCA's early rural work in inter-war India, by contrast, reminds us of the importance of local contexts, while rendering these entanglements visible.

Finally, from a more abstract history-of-knowledge perspective, focusing on the actual processes of production, transmission and implementation of scientific knowledge about South Asian (and by

¹³ A similar point has most recently been made by Amalia Ribi Forclaz, 'Agriculture, American Expertise, and the Quest for Global Data: Leon Estabrook and the First World Agricultural Census of 1930', *Journal of Global History*, xi, 1 (2016).

¹⁴ On the importance of the idiom and practice of development in late colonialism in the British and French empires, see Frederick Cooper, 'Development, Modernization, and the Social Sciences in the Era of Decolonization: The Examples of British and French Africa', in Miguel Banderia Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto (eds.), *The Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (Basingstoke and New York, 2015); Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950* (Chicago and London, 2011), 115–68; Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH, 2007); Joseph Hodge, 'Colonial Experts, Developmental and Environmental Doctrines and the Legacies of Late British Colonialism,' in Christina Folke Ax et al. (eds.), *Cultivating the Colonies: Colonial States and Their Environmental Legacies* (Athens, OH, 2011); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, 1997), 212–45.

¹⁵ See, for example, the otherwise excellent studies by Corinna Unger: Unger, *Entwicklungspfade in Indien*; and Corinna R. Unger, 'Towards Global Equilibrium: American Foundations and Indian Modernization, 1950s to 1970s', *Journal of Global History*, vi, 1 (2011).

extension, third world) peasants, villages and rural economies can correct widespread misconceptions about US rural development expertise exported to the global south. The early America-sponsored village uplift schemes studied here, at least, cannot be productively understood as direct precursors of later 'high-modernist' development aid schemes or large-scale 'techno-politics' propelled by 'the Great American Mission'.¹⁶ First, they were designed for small communities and were ostentatiously 'low modernist' in their approach and can thus rather be seen as predecessors of later sustainable development schemes.¹⁷ Second, they were not simply transferred ready-made from US universities, laboratories or government offices to South Asian hinterlands.¹⁸ Rather, they emerged in complex negotiations and exchanges involving not only colonial administrators, South Asian enlightened princes and nationalist elites, but also the local subaltern target population. Additionally, they became significantly enriched through eclectic borrowings from disparate sources of learning and experience available worldwide. The resulting 'pidgin-knowledge'¹⁹ was not only applied on the spot but also re-exported to the wider world. In other words, notions of rural development produced under very specific conditions in a tiny south Indian village came to be seen as being universally valid. Pioneers such as Spencer Hatch disseminated this scientific template of rural reconstruction to the nascent 'epistemic community'²⁰ of western as well as non-western agricultural development professionals, convinced that it could be applied 'even to the most isolated parts of the world'.²¹ All of this suggests that the inter-war years indeed need to be

¹⁶ Ekbladh, *Great American Mission*. The concept of techno-politics is defined in Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, 2002), 41–2.

¹⁷ One of the rare existing studies of a similar 'grass-roots movement of community development, practical education, and moral reawakening' is Aaron D. Purcell, 'Collaboration and the Small Community: Arthur Morgan and the Mitraniketana Project in Kerala', *The Historian*, lxxv, 3 (2003).

¹⁸ A similar argument has been brought forward by Nicole Sackley; see Sackley, 'Village Models'.

¹⁹ Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Pidgin-Knowledge: Wissen und Kolonialismus* (Zürich and Berlin, 2013).

²⁰ On epistemic communities, see Peter M. Haas (ed.), *Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). For an analysis of development experts as an 'epistemic community', see Hans Dieter Evers, Markus Kaiser, and Christine Müller, 'Knowledge in Development: Epistemic Machineries in a Global Context', *International Social Science Journal*, lx, 195 (2009).

acknowledged as ‘a germination period of development . . . theory and practice’,²² as it was during *this* era that rural reconstruction experts learned to think globally and borrow from multiple sources prior to and independent of the Cold War constellation.²³ As I shall argue, this was not least because some of them — including our protagonist Spencer Hatch — were rooted in a Christian association aptly portrayed as one of the first INGOs: the YMCA.²⁴ In order to situate Hatch’s rural experiment in its specific context, it is helpful to reconstruct briefly the trajectories of the Y on the Indian subcontinent and have a glimpse of competing village development schemes.

The YMCA was an international organization very much shaped by its Anglo-American branches. Even though Geneva was chosen as the site for the headquarters of the Universal Union of YMCAs in 1878, Britain, its country of origin and, even more so, North America remained the most important strongholds of the Christian lay movement. South Asia’s first branch was founded in Calcutta as early as 1857 but the movement grew slowly in the region in the following years, hampered by the British YMCA members who were at pains to exclude ‘natives’ from their ranks.²⁵ The spread of the Y movement in the subcontinent gained new momentum only in the 1890s under the energetic leadership of young American missionaries. These new Y-secretaries were mostly graduates from Ivy League universities inspired by the massive evangelical revivalist movement in North America that culminated in the establishment of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) in Northfield, Mass. in 1886.²⁶ Only three years after Northfield,

²¹ Duane Spencer Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads: Legs for Knowledge’, unpubd MS, n.d. [c.1962], UATSHC, box 3, 2.

²² Cyrus Schayegh, ‘The Interwar Germination of Development and Modernization Theory and Practice: Politics, Institution Building, and Knowledge Production between the Rockefeller Foundation and the American University of Beirut’, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, xli, 4 (2015), 649. See also Zanasi, ‘Exporting Development’.

²³ Corinna Unger, on the contrary, posits that the Cold War can be seen as a watershed that accelerated globalization processes and enabled a new global consciousness among rural development experts: Unger, ‘Towards Global Equilibrium’, 125–6.

²⁴ Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (London, 2013), 35–6.

²⁵ *Young Men of India* (YMCA India magazine, henceforth *YMI*), 3 Apr. 1923, 18.

²⁶ Emily S. Rosenberg, *Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 68.

the YMCA of the United States and Canada commenced its 'foreign work' scheme, placing a special emphasis on Asian countries during the next thirty years.²⁷ The new leaders of the Indian Y completely restructured the organization from 1890 onwards, claiming to afford 'its privileges alike to all young men without distinction of race, rank and religion'.²⁸ The YMCA eventually reached the pinnacle of its influence in India during the mid 1920s, precisely at the time when Hatch launched the MRDC. Only five years later, financial problems following the Great Depression led to the gradual decline of American presence in South Asia. Throughout the period surveyed here, however, the American national Association's impact in India remained palpable.

Village development was originally not part of the Y's activities in South Asia. It was only during the First World War, when many South Asians reached positions of influence in the Association, that Y-secretaries, who had initially targeted the English-educated urban youth, started a more intense engagement with the less privileged segments of the population in rural areas. Their newly devised rural reconstruction schemes became a prominent part of the YMCA's 'peace programme'²⁹ in the 1920s. This shift certainly reflected the growing importance of the 'social gospel' back in the US,³⁰ but it was also prompted by local circumstances. The mass conversions of peasants in southern India from the lowly Dalit (or 'untouchable') segments of Hindu society had fundamentally changed the organization's constituency, and the Y-leadership had to react

²⁷ C. Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (New York, 1951), 331–3. Although formally under the umbrella of the World Alliance in Geneva, the North American Association in actual practice operated largely independently in South Asia during in the period under discussion, not least because it had vast funds of its own at its disposal.

²⁸ Cited in Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, International Work: India (hereafter KFYA, IWI), box 89, E. C. Worman, 'A Brief History of the Young Men's Christian Association in India, Burma and Ceylon 1854–1907', unpubd MS, n.d., 12.

²⁹ *Peace Programme of the YMCA Simla-Delhi and the Indian National Council* (Delhi, 1921), 3–6.

³⁰ On the 'social gospel' in the United States generally, see Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York, 2017); and Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Baltimore, 1991); on the transformation of the Y, see Mayer N. Zald and Patricia Denton, 'From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, viii, 2 (1963).

by offering programmes suitable for this new membership.³¹ Their new rural work schemes also benefited tremendously from the general scramble for rural development that had begun in the last decade of the nineteenth century and intensified during the 1910s.

Serious attempts by the colonial rulers at improving Indian agriculture had commenced in the wake of a large-scale enquiry conducted by a governmental committee whose highly critical report was published in 1892.³² Most importantly, they led to the inauguration of the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute in Pusa, Bihar a decade later,³³ and the setting up of a comprehensive Royal Commission on Agriculture in the 1920s.³⁴ Scientific agricultural research and training was also seen as the best remedy against the perceived rural decay and poverty by the American Presbyterian Mission who established an Agricultural Institute in Allahabad in 1912 under the aegis of the US-trained Welsh agronomist Sam Higginbottom.³⁵ A more grass-roots oriented approach was introduced after the Great War by Frank L. Brayne, a colonial official working for the Punjab administration, who conducted an ambitious village uplift programme in Gurgaon near the capital Delhi from 1920 to 1927.³⁶ Almost simultaneously, the renowned Bengali poet and intellectual Tagore started his village reform project in Sriniketan with the help of the (equally US-trained) British agronomist Leonhard Elmhirst,³⁷ while M. K. Gandhi and other Indian

³¹ Chatterjee, *Making of Indian Secularism*, 137–8.

³² John Augustus Voelcker, *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture* (London, 1893).

³³ Deepak Kumar, 'Science in Agriculture: A Study in Victorian India', in Kumar and Raha (eds.), *Tilling the Land*, see esp. 29–36. For the aims and methods of the Pusa institute, see also *Prospectus of the Agricultural Research Institute and College, Pusa* (Calcutta, 1909).

³⁴ *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India Report* (Bombay, 1928).

³⁵ Basu, 'Missionaries as Agricultural Pioneers', 105–9; Chatterjee, *Making of Indian Secularism*, 147–50; and Sam Higginbottom, *Farmer: An Autobiography* (New York 1949), 114–68.

³⁶ Frank L. Brayne, *The Remaking of Village India*, 2nd edn (London, 1929); and Frank L. Brayne, *Better Villages* (London, 1937). See also Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London and Rio Grande, 1993), 61–101.

³⁷ Bipasha Raha, 'Transformation of Agricultural Practices: An Indigenous Experiment in Colonial Bengal', in Kumar and Raha (eds.), *Tilling the Land*, 122–44; Deepak Kumar, 'Tagore's Pedagogy and Rural Reconstruction', in Michael Mann (ed.), *Shantiniketan-Hellerau: New Education in the Pedagogic Provinces of India and Germany* (Heidelberg, 2015), 309–30; Prem Chand Lal, *Reconstruction and*

(cont. on p. 202)

National Congress leaders likewise developed their own rural uplift schemes during the inter-war years.³⁸ It is thus no exaggeration to state that by the 1920s, ‘rural reconstruction’ was a ubiquitous buzzword and village development had become a prime site for contests between various groups claiming moral and political authority in India.³⁹ What, then, was the specific voice of the YMCA in this polyphonic concert?

II

A MAN WITH A MISSION: DUANE SPENCER HATCH AND THE ‘MARTANDAM RURAL DEMONSTRATION CENTRE’

Ironically, Duane Spencer Hatch, the man who came to personify the neutral American alternative to both nationalist village uplift schemes and official colonial agricultural reform programmes, first came to India on a quasi-imperial mission. Hatch was born in a modest farmers’ family near Greenwich, NY, in 1888. Between 1909 and 1915, he studied agriculture, rural sociology and economics at Cornell University and subsequently acquired practical experience in a local rural extension programme.⁴⁰ He became active in the YMCA in college and volunteered to support the British war effort.⁴¹ During the next two and a half years, he threw himself into the usual Y army on India’s turbulent North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and later with the British expeditionary forces in Mesopotamia.⁴² His autobiography and

(n. 37 cont.)

Education in Rural India: In the Light of the Programme Carried on at Sriniketan the Institute of Rural Reconstruction Founded by Rabindranath Tagore (London, 1932); and Leonard K. Elmhirst, *Poet and Plowman* (Calcutta, 1975).

³⁸ Surinder S. Jodhka, ‘Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, xxxvii, 32 (2002).

³⁹ See, for instance, S. G. Beri and G. B. Jathar, ‘Some Aspects of Rural Reconstruction in India’, *Indian Journal of Economics*, viii (1927–8); G. Rudrappa, *The Work of Rural Reconstruction in the Mysore State and British India: Further Reflections and Thoughts* (Bangalore, 1935).

⁴⁰ KFYA, Biographical Files, box 73, ‘Biographical Data. Duane Spencer Hatch’, *The Troy Record*, 27 Sep 1934, and ‘Notes on Spencer Hatch’, n.d.

⁴¹ Duane Spencer Hatch, ‘Working with D. Spencer “Chick” Hatch, Part I—India: Along the Afghan Frontier’, *The Quill and Scroll*, lxviii, 4 (1962), 15.

⁴² For details on the YMCA’s ‘army work’ during the First World War and Spencer Hatch’s involvement therein, see Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘“Unparalleled Opportunities”: The Indian YMCA’s Army Work Schemes for Imperial Troops During the Great War (1914–1920)’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, (forthcoming, 2018).

diaries leave no doubt that he largely identified with the British imperial project and was particularly impressed with soldierly life and the military prowess of the British forces in Asia.⁴³

Although he occasionally condemned the ‘ridiculous race prejudice’ in the imperial army,⁴⁴ Hatch himself was not entirely free of chauvinism. In early 1917, for instance, he wrote in his diary after a fire alarm in his camp that such an emergency revealed ‘great difference in cultures: the Englishmen working frantically but quietly, and the natives yelling excitedly . . . like crazy men’.⁴⁵ Such anecdotal evidence suggests an almost natural identification of North American YMCA secretaries with fellow ‘whites’ in a colonial setting often initially experienced as hostile. The shared culture between ‘Europeans and allied races’, as the Colonial Census termed it,⁴⁶ was also responsible for a largely sympathetic attitude among most North American members of the YMCA towards the British imperial project. As indicated above, this partially changed during the inter-war period, but the emotional enmeshment that resulted from the status of Americans as an allied race was difficult to overcome. Not only did Americans benefit from the ‘racial dividends’ of whiteness,⁴⁷ as I already observed elsewhere,⁴⁸ there was also a kind of epistemic enmeshment as US YMCA secretaries relied mostly on British colonial knowledge of South Asia in order to make sense of the country and its inhabitants.⁴⁹ After some time, secretaries such as Hatch would interact with South Asians too, thus getting access to alternative sources of information. Nevertheless, the initial imperial socialization seems to have been a formative influence, which might explain why Hatch

⁴³ Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads’, 67 and 79.

⁴⁴ Hatch, ‘Working with D. Spencer “Chick” Hatch, Part I’, 13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14–15 and 18.

⁴⁶ *Census of India, 1921*, Pt II, Tables (Calcutta, 1923), 340. See also R. B. Bhagat, ‘Role of Census in Racial and Ethnic Construction’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, xxxviii, 8 (2003).

⁴⁷ Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘The Making of a “Ruling Race”: Defining and Defending Whiteness in Colonial India’, in Manfred Berg and Simon Wendt (eds.), *Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (New York and Oxford, 2011).

⁴⁸ Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Fitness for Modernity? — The American YMCA and Physical Education Schemes in Late Colonial South Asia (c.1890–1940)’, *Modern Asian Studies* (forthcoming, 2018).

⁴⁹ Once again, Hatch’s diary is revealing in this context. He notes, for example, that he prepared to serve at the Afghan frontier by reading Winston Churchill’s account on warfare in that region: Hatch, ‘Working with D. Spencer “Chick” Hatch, Part I’, 20.

continued to reproduce orientalist stereotypes without any critical reflection even after spending two and a half decades of his life in South Asia.⁵⁰

Spencer Hatch fell ill during his long, exhausting stint in Mesopotamia and was repatriated to the United States in 1919. He used his two years of convalescence to obtain another degree in 'public philanthropy' at Yale and married Emily Gilchrist, a graduate of Syracuse University and an energetic actor-playwright he knew from his days at Cornell.⁵¹ Over the next four decades, Emily would also become his partner in planning and implementing new schemes in rural development with global impact.

On their arrival in South Asia in 1921, the newly-weds were assigned to serve the Association in the southern Indian state of Travancore by K. T. Paul, the first non-American General Secretary of the Indian YMCA.⁵² Hatch's professional background in agriculture caught Paul's eye because of the latter's personal interest in rural reform and he convinced the Hatches that a conspicuous Rural Demonstration Centre would be most useful in the region. Hatch, influenced by his training at Cornell, which is famous as a pioneering institution in agricultural extension schemes in the USA,⁵³ wanted to launch a similar programme in Travancore, in 'a real rural [center]'.⁵⁴ Martandam, a small village halfway between the cities of Trivandrum and Nagercoil, fitted the bill perfectly.⁵⁵ K. T. Paul had already named the new programme in Martandam 'Rural Reconstruction' in a speech he gave at Coimbatore.⁵⁶ Hatch

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Part I'.

⁵¹ Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Part II — The Troops in Mesopotamia', *The Quill and Scroll*, lxix, 1 (1963), 27; and Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Part III — India: The First 18 Years', *The Quill and Scroll*, lxix, 3 (1963), 13.

⁵² Travancore is largely but not completely identical to today's state of Kerala. During the realignment of Indian states according to linguistic criteria, Travancore was united with the former princely state of Cochin to form the Malayalam speaking state of Kerala. Martandam, on the other hand, was part of the Kanyakumari district where Tamil was the predominant language and that was therefore incorporated into the State of Tamil Nadu in 1956.

⁵³ Alfred Charles True, *A History of Agricultural Education in the United States, 1785–1925* (Washington, 1929), 276–7; and Roy V. Scott, *The Reluctant Farmer: The Rise of Agricultural Extension to 1914* (Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1970), 245–8.

⁵⁴ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 149.

⁵⁵ Duane Spencer Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India* (Bombay, 1932), 61–2.

⁵⁶ H. A. Popley, *K. T. Paul: Christian Leader* (Calcutta, 1938), 70.

initially resisted this because of Paul's nationalistic reputation and his own sympathy for the colonial rulers, fearing that 'it had in it a bit of political sting against the British'.⁵⁷ Paul nonetheless insisted and the name was adopted, though it appears to have led to the souring of relations between Hatch and Paul.⁵⁸ However, Hatch curried favour with both, the colonial rulers⁵⁹ and also the rulers of Travancore. The resulting close relationships paid dividends in the form of practical financial support to the YMCA and especially to the rural experiment in Martandam.⁶⁰

These details remind us of the very complex set of relationships that characterized the Martandam experiment. Not only had Indian agency grown palpably in the Association since the Great War to the extent that K. T. Paul ultimately decided the location and name of the project, but also Hatch and his fellow workers were dependent on the goodwill of the aristocracy ruling Travancore, which was, in turn, unobtrusively controlled by the British. There is no evidence, however, that Hatch viewed this co-operation as particularly problematic. His minimal to non-existent criticism of imperial autocratic rule and Travancore's aristocracy appears at odds with the rural reconstruction programme's professed goal of preparing the local population for democracy.⁶¹ This tension is at least partly resolved when one considers that for him democracy in India was a long-term goal rather than something immediate. Thus, in October 1941, at a time when many other American spokesmen of the YMCA in India openly sided with the national movement, Hatch still wanted to relegate the country to the proverbial waiting room of history,⁶² 'until we have a much more orderly and sane world'.⁶³

In the MRDC, in the meantime, the new programme came into existence after an initial evaluation of the local villagers'

⁵⁷ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 149.

⁵⁸ Popley, *K. T. Paul*, 75.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Duane Spencer Hatch, 'My Job is Village Reconstruction', *Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin*, xcvi (1944), 8.

⁶⁰ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 150.

⁶¹ Duane Spencer Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want: From India to Mexico* (Bombay, 1949), 35.

⁶² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000), 9.

⁶³ *Cornell Daily Sun*, 21 Oct. 1941, 7.

requirements. Spencer Hatch recollects how the ‘Spiritual, Mental, Physical, Social and Economic needs’ that were identified came to be symbolically represented by a five-sided triangle developed by his ‘ingenious’ wife Emily, who simply added two more sides (social and economic) to the well-established YMCA signature triangle (see Plate 1).⁶⁴ In contrast to his exclusive reliance on British sources during his army work, both Hatch and his wife followed the missionary practice of acquiring local knowledge once they were in Travancore. By the time their training programme for rural leaders started in 1926 they were even able to teach in both Malayalam and Tamil, the languages mostly spoken in the immediate vicinity of Martandam.⁶⁵ That the Hatches’ interest in the regional culture was not merely strategic is highly probable, at least in the case of Emily Gilchriest Hatch, who was fascinated by south Indian music and dance.⁶⁶ Spencer Hatch, too, engaged quite intensely with his new environment, and received his Ph.D. in agricultural studies from Cornell in 1928 with a thesis based entirely on his fieldwork in Martandam.⁶⁷ The role of local South Asian know-how alongside scientific data-gathering and the tapping of global, colonial and other missionary sources in this process of knowledge formation is evident from his memoirs, where he describes the initial challenge of making sense of his new environment and starting the project, emphasizing that he had to ‘learn from many people: natives and foreigners long in the country’.⁶⁸ Towards the end of his career, when he had already become part of the emerging international expert establishment, Hatch reminded his future colleagues that it was pivotal for the success of village development programmes to integrate local knowledge into one’s own repertoire:

The teacher friend should not disregard or insult the local culture . . . Instead of going to a village with the attitude that all is wrong there, one

⁶⁴ Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads’, 157.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 214. This investment in local knowledge differentiates the Hatches significantly from a later generation of more detached and technocratic rural development experts, including Albert Mayer, the architect of the famous Etawah Pilot Project in northern India. Sackley, ‘Village Models’, 762; and see n. 10 above.

⁶⁶ Emily Gilchriest Hatch, ‘The Kathakali: The Indigenous Drama of Malabar’ (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis, 1934).

⁶⁷ Duane Spencer Hatch, ‘Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India’ (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis, 1928).

⁶⁸ Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads’, 153.



1. Symbolizing the shift to the 'social gospel': the Martandam 'Five-sided Triangle'.

should and can find practices that are very good. He should praise these, should recognize that there is much for the outsider to learn here; that there can be a sincere pooling of knowledge. There should be a cross fertilization [sic!] of ancient wisdom with the new.⁶⁹

This appreciation of local expertise seems rather vague and general, and hard evidence of the envisaged 'cross-fertilization' is difficult to find. However, at least one example can be reconstructed from the sources. In 1939, Hatch told *Reader's Digest* reporter Jerome Beatty that 'even though you have

⁶⁹ Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Too Big to Measure', unpubd book MS, n. d. [1955], UATSHC, box 3, 9.

agricultural degrees from big colleges, there are things that an ignorant Indian farmer can tell you', and confessed that he had had to abandon part of his Cornellian principles of animal husbandry and instead adopt 'the Indian way'.⁷⁰ In the concrete instance mentioned to Beatty, Hatch referred to the practices ensuring the continuous milk production of cows that had lost their calves.⁷¹

In spite of such occasional nods toward indigenous agricultural knowledge, however, a clear hierarchy is discernible in his collaboration with Indian fellow-workers, and Hatch had a tendency to 'blow his own horn' as he himself phrased it.⁷² K. T. Paul, the architect of the Y's first rural work scheme in the 1910s and General Secretary of the Indian Y until 1930, is only very rarely mentioned in Hatch's correspondence and publications. This is particularly noteworthy because an early plan sketched out by Paul in 1914 already contained many of the MRDC's key features and signature methods that Hatch would later claim as his own innovations.⁷³ This suggests that Hatch also borrowed a lot from his Indian superior who, after all, came from a family of experienced Tamil farmers.⁷⁴ Likewise, Hatch's copious writings rarely acknowledge the Indian rural secretaries Manuel and Jesudas, who had pioneered rural reconstruction initiatives in Travancore a few years previously and were doing the bulk of the actual everyday work in the MRDC. It is also revealing that 70 per cent of the 5,000 dollars sent annually from New York to sustain the MRDC were spent on Hatch's salary, whereas most of his Indian assistants, 'fired by his leadership, work[ed] part time for nothing'.⁷⁵ Such asymmetries even pervade visual representations of the relationship between the American expert and his South Asian co-workers: a photograph showing Hatch in discussion with Indian 'rural leaders', one of whom is ostentatiously placed at the head of the table as if to illustrate the egalitarian character of the exchange, has nonetheless a benevolent colonial flavour (see Plate 2).

⁷⁰ Beatty, *Americans All Over*, 308–9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Annual Report of 1924', KFYA, IWI, box 10, 'Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1919–1924', 15 June 1925, 1.

⁷³ Popley, *K. T. Paul*, 60–2.

⁷⁴ *YMI*, xlv, 8 (1932), 426.

⁷⁵ Beatty, *Americans All Over*, 305.



2. Providing 'intimate, expert counsel': Hatch and some of his Indian fellow workers during a working session in Martandam (1927).

It perfectly illustrates the guiding principle of the entire Martandam project that was, Hatch declared, to provide 'self-help with intimate, expert counsel'.⁷⁶

When justifying the need for expert counsel and outside leadership, too, the American agronomist repeats colonial and Indian elite stereotypes about the alleged passivity and ignorance of 'village folk'.⁷⁷ His diagnosis of the problems and defects of the village society, agriculture, and rural economy in Martandam and India in general is similar: livestock and poultry, he maintains, were 'generally poorly kept [and] unproductive' while cultivation methods could only be described as 'exceedingly primitive'. As a logical result, the food supply was 'insufficient' and the 'very evident lack of play life' in rural areas had a similarly deplorable effect on the rustic population's physical constitution.⁷⁸ To make things worse, certain 'religious customs and uneconomic traditions definitely accentuate[d] the distress of the country and retarded its rise out of poverty',⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, xii and 6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁸ Hatch, 'Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India', 306.

⁷⁹ Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 4.

and a whole array of ‘superstitions’ allegedly provided ‘powerful checks to the introduction of new, scientific, and more productive methods . . . in the Indian rural village’.⁸⁰ It is astonishing, how closely the assessment of the American YMCA secretary mirrors both the ‘discourse of deficiency’ deployed by the British imperial administrators attempting to ‘improve’ the Indian countryside from the late eighteenth century as well as the Euro-American paternalism characteristic of post-World War II development initiatives.⁸¹

However, though the diagnosis was similar, the suggested therapy was different. To remedy the situation and overcome ‘uneconomic traditions’ that he held responsible for the villagers’ ‘indisposition to effort’,⁸² Hatch advocated the demonstration method pioneered by the ‘schoolmaster of American agriculture’, Seaman A. Knapp, who introduced advanced cultivation methods in ‘backward’ southern states in the early 1900s.⁸³ Once again, Hatch assumes that rural India had ‘many features similar’ to the American south and that what worked for African American sharecroppers in Tennessee or Alabama would work equally well for Tamil or Malayali villagers;⁸⁴ the presumed analogy is also visible in the title of Hatch’s first monograph, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, an obvious allusion to Tuskegee founder Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery*.⁸⁵

Hatch’s self-help scheme was predicated on the ideas that the new Centre was not an ‘impressive show place’ but a modest, simple, and inexpensive experiment station, and that the

⁸⁰ Hatch, ‘Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India’, 277.

⁸¹ David Arnold, ‘Agriculture and “Improvement” in Early Colonial India: A Pre-History of Development’, *Journal of Agrarian Change*, v, 4 (2005), 508–11; and Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, 1995), 8.

⁸² Hatch, ‘Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India’, 269 and 271.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 388–95; and Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 33–4. On Knapp’s discovery of the agricultural demonstration technique, see Joseph Cannon Bailey, *Seaman A. Knapp, Schoolmaster of American Agriculture* (Columbia University Studies in the History of American Agriculture, x, New York, 1945); on its spread to Asia, see Bret Wallach, *Losing Asia: Modernization and the Culture of Development* (Baltimore, 1996), ch. 7.

⁸⁴ Hatch, ‘Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India’, 396–8; and Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 35. In the bibliography to his first book, Hatch lists several titles relating to ‘extension work among negroes’, Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 58.

⁸⁵ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York, 1901). That Washington’s work was followed particularly closely in India is mentioned in Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), 32–4, 99–100 and 120–4.

YMCA's 'expert counsel' involved a 'maximum of living and doing and a minimum of verbal preaching'.⁸⁶ This approach stands in stark contrast to the later 'authoritarian high modernism' projects described by James C. Scott⁸⁷ and might be termed 'low modernism', a label applied to similar strategies that developed almost simultaneously in the US during the New Deal years.⁸⁸ The plea for simplicity also included the lifestyle of the village workers themselves. In Hatch's words, rural reconstruction in India needed 'workers . . . rich in the things they can do without'; he cited Gandhi as an exemplary pioneer of simple life in this context in a rare reference to contemporary politics.⁸⁹ Like the Mahatma, Hatch was convinced that simplicity would save scarce resources and diminish the gap between the 'rural leader' on the one hand and the village population on the other. Acceptance by the peasants was crucial because rural reconstruction also included improving the 'spiritual and moral quality of the people', which, in turn, was regarded as a prerequisite for 'successful democracy'.⁹⁰ Of course, mutual trust was vital for effectively disseminating these salient messages.

The YMCA workers in Martandam designed variegated strategies of improvement to tackle its most pressing economic needs. A method that eventually became the core of the 'green revolution'-type of US development aid consisted of replacing inferior Indian varieties of seeds and livestock with new ones.⁹¹ In fact, Hatch's 'discourse of deficiency' also targeted the local

⁸⁶ Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 70; and Duane Spencer Hatch, *Rural Reconstruction and Evangelism or Evangelism and Christian Service: From an Address Delivered at a Special Session of Tambaram World Conference etc.* (Nagercoil, 1940), 19.

⁸⁷ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

⁸⁸ Jess Gilbert, 'Low Modernism and the Agrarian new Deal: A Different Kind of State', in Jane Adams (ed.), *Fighting for the Farm: Rural America Transformed* (Philadelphia, 2003), 129–46; and Jess Gilbert, *Planning Democracy: Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal* (New Haven and London, 2015).

⁸⁹ Duane Spencer Hatch, *Further Upward in Rural India* (Bombay, 1938), 31–3. The respect was, at least partly mutual, as the Mahatma sent a telegram in 1940 congratulating Hatch on the celebration of a 'national honey week' held at Martandam, 'National Honey Week: Mr. Gandhi Sends Message', KFYA, IWI, box 51, 'General, 1940', 22 Apr 1940.

⁹⁰ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 35. To make this last point, Hatch quoted from a speech by the Republican US president Herbert Hoover.

⁹¹ On the Green revolution in India see Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments*; and B. H. Farmer, 'Perspectives on the Green Revolution in South Asia', *Modern Asian Studies*, xx, 1 (1986).

fauna. For instance, he declared that India needed 'larger and more able bees' and acquired 'six hives of his best Italian' from an old Catholic priest in Lombardy during a long and adventurous journey.⁹² He also tried to breed single-combed White Leghorn chickens, an attempt he described in noticeably colour-coded terms. The white hens imported from New Jersey,⁹³ he maintained, produced 'twice as many eggs and twice as large ones' compared to the local 'mongrels'.⁹⁴ Hatch calculated precisely how the 'pure White Leghorn blood' could turn 'the tiny brown jungle fowl white': a 'progeny of seven-eighths, or practically pure White Leghorns' would be produced in less than three years by passing surplus cocks from family to family.⁹⁵ He was not averse to using mild forms of coercion, 'insisting that the family kill all its jungle cocks' to achieve his ambitious purity target.⁹⁶ Similarly, goats were 'upgraded' through cross-breeding and the 'tiny cows of the one tea cup of milk a day output' were replaced by 'bigger, stronger . . . cattle, with the expected increase in milk'.⁹⁷ 'Special fast-growing fodder grasses like the Sudan, the Napier, the Guinea' were also imported into the area to feed the cattle.⁹⁸ Importantly, close co-operation with the government and other missionary institutions such as the Government Agricultural Farm and the Allahabad Agricultural Institute made all these innovations possible.⁹⁹

Besides the agricultural output, the Centre also experimented with various village industries (or 'subsidiary cottage vocations',¹⁰⁰ as Hatch called them) that were practised in the MRDC, such as weaving, dyeing, carpentry and basket-making. The YMCA's

⁹² Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 192–3.

⁹³ Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Early Times at the Martandam Project', MS, n. d. [c.1960], UATSHC, box 2, 13.

⁹⁴ Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 71–2; and Duane Spencer Hatch, 'The YMCA in South Travancore, 1923', KFYA, IWI, box 47, 'India 1920–28', 4.

⁹⁵ Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Part III', 15; and Hatch, 'YMCA in South Travancore', 4.

⁹⁶ Beatty, *Americans All Over*, 308–9. Ironically, the White Leghorn population was so quickly decimated by local birds of prey, that Hatch gave orders to repaint them in brown to provide camouflage.

⁹⁷ L. A. Hogg, *Hope for the Villager: Youth to the Rescue in South India* (Bombay, 1931), 5; and Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Part III', 15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Hatch, 'YMCA in South Travancore', 4.

¹⁰⁰ Hatch, 'Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India', 359–88.

dense web of contacts helped sell the products and establish durable trade relations. Eggs, cashew nuts, honey, palmyra sugar, and the output from the cottage industries were produced and distributed by post all over India by newly founded co-operatives.¹⁰¹ Like other emerging village development experts active in South Asia in the inter-war period, irrespective of political agenda and ideological background,¹⁰² Spencer Hatch deemed 'the co-operative method' a crucial 'matter of education' and a potential panacea for all kinds of rural defects.¹⁰³ A particularly important aspect of the co-operative activities organized from Martandam was the establishment of micro-credit societies in forty surrounding villages, calculated to alleviate the villagers' 'crushing load' of debt with local moneylenders.¹⁰⁴ The co-operatives linked the economic betterment measures with more far-reaching attempts to improve Indian society through the YMCA's 'socialization programme'. Hatch and his helpmates believed that they had to 'tackle India's fundamental problem, her divisions into religious and social castes . . . which do not love and respect each other'. Hatch developed the so-called 'intercommunity-committee plan'¹⁰⁵ to actively break up existing social conventions and barriers, making it a point that all the major religious, social and caste groups were represented in each project committee in the village.¹⁰⁶ Further, the efficacy of inter-communal alliances was demonstrated by holding the committee meetings publicly in front of Martandam's newly established village library, which soon became the gravitational centre for various modernizing activities. Inter-religious services that were staged at the same conspicuous site fulfilled a similar function. Last but not least, Boy Scout and Girl Guide activities formed part of the

¹⁰¹ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 81–7; and Kanakaraj, *Light Houses of Rural Reconstruction*, 123–6.

¹⁰² Unger, *Entwicklungspfade in Indien*, 33. For a typical argument presenting co-operatives as instruments not only of material but also of moral improvement see S. Manuel, 'How Country Work Operates in India', *Association Men*, Dec. 1921, 118–19.

¹⁰³ Hatch, 'Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India', 448.

¹⁰⁴ Hogg, *Hope for the Villager*, 6; and Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 38–9. The 'parasitic moneylender' was an established figure in colonial discourses on the Indian village; see, for instance, Zachariah, *Developing India*, 123–5.

¹⁰⁵ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 157.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

‘socialization’ scheme, and were likewise practised in public and open to people from all castes and creeds.¹⁰⁷

A combined strategy was also developed to improve the physical condition of the rural Indian population. On one hand, conveying fundamental precepts of hygiene and basic facts of health and nutrition through an ‘intensive educational programme to teach the people how to live cleanly’ was considered an efficient measure.¹⁰⁸ Clean living meant the construction of latrines and the introduction of an entire ‘new sanitary system’.¹⁰⁹ However, in another striking analogy with contemporaneous Gandhian campaigns,¹¹⁰ this also included ‘temperance teaching’. A special temperance survey conducted in 1924–5 formed the basis for a targeted anti-alcohol crusade in thirty neighbouring villages.¹¹¹ Finally, the third pillar of the ‘physical uplift’ programme comprised healthy recreational activities, for which two volleyball fields were constructed and badminton, tennis and swimming tournaments were organized near the village library, which apparently drew local youth.¹¹²

How could the YMCA convey its message to the (predominantly illiterate) local population? Many observers regarded Hatch’s method of reaching out to a village audience by means of educational plays as a most potent and yet culturally sensitive strategy of dissemination.¹¹³ Emily Gilchrist Hatch’s manifold talents were critical for the creation of these dramatic performances, which Spencer Hatch considered to be ‘the most effective way of teaching’ rural populations. The method had been applied successfully among various agricultural communities in

¹⁰⁷ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Hatch, *Rural Reconstruction and Evangelism*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ F. L. W. Richardson, ‘Thirty Years of Rural Reconstruction’, *Applied Anthropology*, ii, 3 (1943), 51. For details of the sanitation scheme see Hatch, *Further Upward in Rural India*, 116–23.

¹¹⁰ Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Eradicating the “Scourge of Drink” and the “Unpardonable Sin of Illegitimate Sexual Enjoyment”’: M. K. Gandhi as Anti-Vice Crusader’, *Interdisziplinäre Zeitschrift für Südasiensforschung*, ii, 1 (2017); and David M. Fahey and Padma Manian, ‘Poverty and Purification: The Politics of Gandhi’s Campaign for Prohibition’, *The Historian*, lxvii, 3 (2005).

¹¹¹ *Twelfth National Convention of Young Men’s Christian Associations of India, Burma and Ceylon and Report of National Council, 1924–26* (Calcutta, 1927), 81.

¹¹² Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads’, 230–1. See also Duane Spencer Hatch, ‘Annual Report of 1924’, KFYA, IWI, box 10, ‘Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1919–1924’, 15 June 1925, 3.

¹¹³ Gary R. Hess, ‘American Agricultural Missionaries and Efforts at Economic Improvement in India’, *Agricultural History*, xlii, 1 (1968), 31.

the United States,¹¹⁴ and had already been tested by the first generation of Indian rural secretaries in the 1910s,¹¹⁵ demonstrating that dramas attracted large crowds from all religious and social backgrounds. Further, Hatch believed that ‘the dramatic tendency [wa]s inherent in the Indian nature’.¹¹⁶ Emily Hatch thus wrote more than a dozen little educational plays, some of which were even published and enjoyed a wide circulation.¹¹⁷ The anti-alcohol drama *Out of the Pot into the World*, for instance, was translated not only into nine different Indian languages but also into Mandarin.¹¹⁸ The collection *Little Plays*, written in the 1920s and published in the early 1930s, was used for ‘reconstruction teaching’ in the Philippines even after World War II.¹¹⁹ These plays were, without exception, extremely simple and didactic.¹²⁰ Their sole purpose was to convey a particular message or inculcate a specific value regarded as crucial for the YMCA’s broader rural reconstruction project. *Cock a Doodle Doo*, for instance, demonstrated the superiority of White Leghorn chickens to encourage the villagers to become part of one of the Y’s poultry co-operatives. *The Durbar of King Cereal* uses motifs from Indian epics to instruct the south Indian village population, whose diet was predominantly rice-based, about the nutritional advantages of ‘northern grains’ such as wheat, corn or buckwheat.¹²¹ *Draughts* was a temperance play

¹¹⁴ C. H. Schopmeyer, *Extension Projects in Rural Community Organization* (Washington, DC, 1927).

¹¹⁵ K. T. Paul was also an ardent advocate of the drama as a perfect medium to educate (illiterate) adults. See K. T. Paul, ‘Adult Education in Regard to Rural Reconstruction’, *YMI*, xlii, 6 (1930), 426–7.

¹¹⁶ Hatch, ‘Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India’, 494.

¹¹⁷ Emily Gilchrist Hatch, *Little Plays* (Madras, 1932); and Emily Gilchrist Hatch, *Out of the Pot into the World: A Temperance Play* (Howrah, 1926).

¹¹⁸ Hatch, ‘Early Times at the Martandam Project’, 21.

¹¹⁹ Hatch, ‘Beyond the Ends of the Roads’, 222.

¹²⁰ Hatch, ‘YMCA in South Travancore’, 2.

¹²¹ This agenda was once more shared with the colonial administration as the inter-war period was a time of imperial experiments to improve the diet of the Indian population and thus combat the newly discovered ‘malnutrition’; *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India Report*, 493–7. See also David Arnold, ‘The “Discovery” of Malnutrition and Diet in Colonial India’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, xxxi, 1 (1994); Michael Worboys, ‘The Discovery of Colonial Malnutrition Between the Wars’, in D. Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester 1988); and Sunil S. Amrith, ‘Food and Welfare in India, c.1900–1950’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1, 4 (2008), 1016–21.

contrasting ‘Toddy men’ with ‘Watermen’, celebrating ‘good clear cold water’ as an infinitely better alternative to the local palm wine.¹²²

A particularly powerful example of the discursive strategies used to persuade villagers to change their lifestyle is provided by the drama *The Trial*, which deserves a brief analysis (see Plate 3). This play was written in support of the YMCA’s proposed physical improvement programme, to inculcate healthy dietary habits and stimulate physical exercise. To get its message across, the mini-drama invoked images of the colonial legal and police apparatus that must have been familiar to most people in the audience. Emily filmed portions of a performance for the documentary *The Martandam Story* in 1937, to present the YMCA’s rural work in southern India to donors back home,¹²³ offering a rare opportunity to analyse the performative elements of the staging in addition to the text. The setting is the courtroom of ‘Healthland’, at the hearing of six offenders dressed as simple villagers. They are accused of having violated the fundamental laws of health, such as ‘the Law of Fresh Air, the Law of Cleanliness, the Law of Exercise’ etc.¹²⁴ The judge — fittingly played by a fair-skinned student from North India who acts as arrogantly as he possibly can — wears western clothes and displays the full paraphernalia of an imperial magistrate. The guards are clad in the familiar khaki uniforms worn by the colonial police.

The commentary in the documentary is provided by Spencer Hatch himself, who explains that the court scene is well understood even by uneducated peasants in this remote village since ‘litigation ha[d] become a popular indoor sport in India’.¹²⁵ That the repressive machinery and authoritarian rhetoric of the colonial state were apparently key devices in convincing villagers

¹²² Gilchrist Hatch, *Little Plays*, 33–88. It ought to be stressed that temperance was a core element of the Y’s general programme and not limited to rural populations. American YMCA secretaries were also crucially involved in urban anti-alcohol campaigns. See Nikhil Menon, ‘Battling the Bottle: Experiments in Regulating Drink in Late Colonial Madras’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, lii, 1 (2015), 44 and 47.

¹²³ ‘Extra Martandam Footage’ (DVD), UATSHC, box 9, 1.

¹²⁴ Gilchrist Hatch, *Little Plays*, 50.

¹²⁵ ‘Extra Martandam Footage’ (DVD), UATSHC, box 9, 1.



3. A performance of *The Trial* in 1939.

to change their bodily practices is suggested by this short excerpt from a dialogue between the judge and offender ‘No. 4’, accused of overeating and lack of exercise:

Judge: Do you play tennis or Badminton?

No. 4.: No sir. It is too much running about. It makes one perspire.

Judge: That’s good for you. Why don’t you like it?

No. 4.: It is so uncomfortable to perspire.

Judge: You lazy glutton, what do you think your stomach is? A steamroller? What are the pores of your body for?

No. 4.: I didn’t know I had any. [. . .]

Judge: Your punishment is severe because you don’t have any sense at all. (*knocks on the table Heralds appear*) You shall be put in jail, fed frugal meals, quite the proper amount of frugal nourishing food, but a mere fraction of what you have been eating. Then you will undergo a system of physical exercises in the morning and be made to play tennis in the evening. When I consider you are again fit for society I will let you go.

No. 4. (very crestfallen): Very well, your Honor.¹²⁶

It does not seem too far-fetched an interpretation to read such examples as evidence of the fact that the colonial setting in which the rural reform programme took shape (and possibly also the ‘imperial past’ of its main architect) exerted a tangible influence on the scheme itself. Despite all the rhetoric about a participatory, inclusivist, and culturally sensitive approach, clear traces of a

¹²⁶ Emily Gilchrist Hatch, *Little Plays*, 2nd edn (Trivandrum, 1938), 19–20.

benevolent but strongly normative and moralizing paternalism remain, an attitude not altogether dissimilar from the one displayed by colonialist and nationalist advocates of rural reconstruction. In fact, the Hatches' perception of the villagers overlapped a great deal with that of high-handed imperial pioneers of rural reform such as Frank Brayne, who was appalled by the peasants' ignorance and apathy.¹²⁷ It was also not dissimilar to that of nationalist reformers such as Gandhi, as the Mahatma often reiterated that he was viscerally repelled by rustic drinking habits and standards of hygiene and famously denounced Indian villages as 'muck-heaps'.¹²⁸

However, it was not only the shared 'language of physical cleanliness, rational productivity and disinterested social service'¹²⁹ that united these superficially different currents. Another pivotal aspect consisted in their all-encompassing holistic approach. Rural reconstruction, Spencer Hatch wrote, could only succeed 'when it attack[ed] all sides of a villager's life simultaneously'.¹³⁰ Most importantly, as we have seen, it had to include the fundamental goal of effecting 'a change in the psychology of the peasant, and in his social and personal habits'.¹³¹

To what extent the villagers concerned were indeed impressed by spectacles such as *The Trial* is, of course, difficult to establish. This thorny question raises the general issues of success and failure of the Y project. To what extent could Hatch and his fellow-workers indeed achieve a hegemonic position in the MRDC and the surrounding villages? On the basis of the existing sources, it is not possible adequately to reconstruct the perspective of those at the receiving end of the Y's rural uplift scheme. However, even in the usually very euphemistic YMCA sources there are indications that the rural populace of Martandam and its vicinity occasionally evaded or resisted the

¹²⁷ Brayne, *Better Villages*, 140–1; see also F. L. Brayne, 'The Indian Village', *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, xix, 4 (1932).

¹²⁸ M. K. Gandhi, 'Village Insanitation', in V. B. Kher (ed.), *M. K. Gandhi: Social Service, Work and Reform* (Ahmedabad, 1976), 94. See also Claude Markovits, *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi: The Life and After Life of the Mahatma* (Delhi, 2003), 120.

¹²⁹ Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, *British Christians, Indian Nationalists and the Raj* (Delhi, 1991), 135.

¹³⁰ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 156. Identical phrases had already occurred in Hatch's first book that was based on his Cornell Ph.D. thesis, Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 9–10.

¹³¹ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 5.

YMCA's educational efforts. Thus, the volleyball matches between different villages or communities, instead of turning the villagers into 'good sports' (and democrats) by inculcating a sense of fair play and respect for constituted authority, often led to quarrels, punch-ups, and even court cases. Moreover, from the account of Jerome Beatty, an American journalist who spent a week with Hatch in Travancore in 1939, it becomes apparent that even after a decade of fieldwork, Hatch's authority as an agricultural expert continued to be quite fragile among the local population. After the entire population of Italian bees imported to replace their allegedly inferior Indian cousins had perished within a few months, '[i]t was a crisis. Hatch's prestige began to fall. Perhaps, the natives decided, his ideas about chickens and goats and sugar weren't so good, either'.¹³² The position of the foreign expert and his 'scientific knowledge', it seems, was always precarious: there was no wholesale conversion to the new methods and the trust and respect of the locals needed to be constantly legitimized and defended.

Even if the actual impact on the ground was thus probably far more modest than Spencer Hatch's sometimes rather self-laudatory reports imply, it is thought-provoking that a thorough and comprehensive transformation of the village population remained the explicit objective of the YMCA's rural programme. Ultimately, the Martandam scheme perfectly illustrates the problems connected to the self-help approach that later became part of the template of small-scale community development programmes worldwide. The concept of self-help, of course, has a long prehistory in social and pedagogical reform schemes.¹³³ As Hubertus Büschel has argued, the developmentalist self-help programmes that gradually evolved after World War I basically consist of the 'subtle entanglement of putative voluntarism on the one hand and [demand for] total surrender on the other'.¹³⁴ It was part of the dilemma the pioneers of village development were facing that they put moral pressure on the target populations of

¹³² Beatty, *Americans All Over*, 306.

¹³³ For an excellent overview of the *longue durée* history of that concept, see Hubertus Büschel, *Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe: Deutsche Entwicklungsarbeit in Afrika 1960–1975* (Frankfurt, 2014), 51–181.

¹³⁴ Hubertus Büschel, 'Eine Brücke am Mount Meru: Zur Globalgeschichte von Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe und Gewalt in Tanganjika', in Hubertus Büschel and Daniel Speich (eds.), *Entwicklungswelten: Globalgeschichte der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit* (Frankfurt, 2009), 180.

such endeavours, and cemented the structural asymmetries between ‘experts’ and ‘backward village folk’ that stood in tension with their egalitarian rhetoric.¹³⁵

The Hatches’ intense social interaction with educated Indians seems to have followed a similar transformative logic. Emulating the western — or indeed, the Protestant American — way of life was considered to be the only means of improvement. In 1925, Spencer Hatch reported to the YMCA headquarters in New York that he was very pleased that the ‘natives’ in Trivandrum had started copying the ways of westerners living in their midst and that ‘every Tom, Dick and Harry’ wanted to become a YMCA secretary:¹³⁶ ‘Especially among the Hindus we find them trying to make their houses like ours in ways such as copying our furniture and butting in plants, flowers and pictures to take away their former barrenness’.¹³⁷

The move from ‘barrenness’ towards ‘a more abundant life’¹³⁸ definitely had a socio-economic dimension that made it compatible with later Cold War development programmes designed to save Asian peasants from the pernicious influences of Communist propaganda. However, as Kevin Lowe has recently noted, this concept also had strong religious overtones and was deeply rooted in early twentieth-century US Christian agrarianism.¹³⁹ The goal of converting the local population that had first brought American Y-secretaries to South Asia had by no means disappeared, even though the emphasis was now at least outwardly on ‘conversions to modernity’,¹⁴⁰ rather than on the formal acceptance of Protestant Christianity and on material rather than spiritual uplift. Hatch was convinced that the manifold social contacts, sport and scouting activities, and the ‘socializing programme’ he had developed would help increase the Indians’ ‘respect for Christ and Christianity’, so that one distant day they ‘actually may fully

¹³⁵ Büschel, *Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe*, 179–81.

¹³⁶ Hatch, ‘Annual Report of 1924’, 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* To some extent, Hatch’s excitement about the Indian tendency to imitate American ways seems to foreshadow the agenda of the American Peace Corps founded under John F. Kennedy in the early 1960s. See Fritz Fischer, *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s* (Washington DC, 1998).

¹³⁸ ‘Address by Spencer D. Hatch’, n.d. [1944], UATSHC, box 2, fos. 8, 18.

¹³⁹ See Kevin M. Lowe, *Baptized with the Soil: Christian Agrarians and the Crusade for Rural America* (Oxford and New York, 2016), 16–17.

¹⁴⁰ Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (London and New York, 1996), 1–21.

accept Christ'.¹⁴¹ The most powerful aspect of the entire village uplift scheme — and here Hatch was in line with other Christian pioneers of rural reconstruction such as Sam Higginbottom¹⁴² — was its emphasis on 'action', as a 'hundred years of the word of mouth alone w[ould] neither evangelize India nor fill the hungry mouths of India'.¹⁴³ To critics, who suspected that the original religious goals of the YMCA's foreign mission might be diluted through an increasing emphasis on social and economic improvement, he replied that rural reconstruction was the most spiritual method of presenting the Gospel in a country such as India where 'direct proselytism' could not work and a programme had to be 'for the whole people and by the whole people'.¹⁴⁴

Hatch's position reflected a deeper shift in the strategy of the YMCA in South Asia. The Association's leadership had recognized by the mid 1920s that aggressive proselytism and doctrinal purity were doomed to failure at the height of anti-colonial nationalism and anti-western sentiment. Hence, the subtle distinction between proselytization (that is making converts) and evangelization (that is inducing people to accept and practise Christian values) was officially introduced at an international YMCA meeting held in Mysore in 1937.¹⁴⁵ The ground for such a move had been prepared by the influential American Christian crusader and agrarian expert Kenyon L. Butterfield, who had met Hatch in 1930.¹⁴⁶ In a number of publications, Butterfield described the task of softly 'permeating' the life of the rural masses in Asia and elsewhere through practical reconstruction work as key for Christian missionaries in the decades to come.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, even after becoming a prominent agent of rural development and social engineering, the Indian

¹⁴¹ Hatch, 'Annual Report of 1924', 3.

¹⁴² Sam Higginbottom, *The Gospel and the Plow, or, The Old Gospel and Modern Farming in Ancient India* (London, 1921).

¹⁴³ Hatch, *Rural Reconstruction and Evangelism*, 9 and 4.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 and 11.

¹⁴⁵ Basil Joseph Mathews, *Flaming Milestone: Being an Interpretation and the Official Report of the Twenty-first World's Conference of the World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.s held in January 1937, in Mysore, South India* (Geneva, 1938), 141–7.

¹⁴⁶ KFYA, IWI, box 10, 'India 1929–1934', digest of journal by the agricultural expert Kenyon L. Butterfield.

¹⁴⁷ Kenyon L. Butterfield, *The Christian Enterprise among Rural People* (Nashville, 1932), 67. See also Kenyon L. Butterfield, *The Christian Mission in Rural India; Report and Recommendations by Kenyon L. Butterfield, Counsellor on Rural Work, International Missionary Council, with a Foreword by Dr. John R. Mott* (New York, 1930).

YMCA remained a faith-based organization.¹⁴⁸ It is therefore not surprising that even observers with no particular sympathy for Hatch's 'evangelizing' agenda described the transformative power of his work in quasi-religious terms. Louise Ouwkerk, an Anglo-Dutch professor of economics teaching in Trivandrum in the 1930s,¹⁴⁹ noted that Spencer Hatch was successful in his mind-changing mission as he had managed to evoke 'enthusiasm' and a strong 'desire to improve'¹⁵⁰ in the local peasants. Similarly, Jerome Beatty observed that — in contrast to the 'disgusting, cringing and dirty people' untouched by Hatch's work — the villagers living near the MRDC were 'a different breed . . . Their chins are up, their clothes may be rags, but they are clean rags, there are flowering vines over their huts and proudly they lead you to see their children exhibit the English they have learned in YMCA night schools'.¹⁵¹

Most of the Centre's activities discussed thus far have been of an educational character in an indirect sense. However, educational courses for training voluntary as well as professional full-time 'rural leaders' offered by the YMCA secretaries at Martandam became one of their most influential and long-lasting activities. A broad variety of short-term courses such as weekend study groups, educational camps, and summer schools for the village workers were available, as well as Sunday schools and exhibitions for villagers.¹⁵² The Martandam Training College in Rural Reconstruction, set up in 1926, was the most important institution in this context. It offered six-week and four-month courses in agriculture and village development,

¹⁴⁸ In development literature, there is an ongoing debate about the role of 'FBO's. A detailed engagement with this controversy is beyond the scope of this paper. See Ben Jones and Marie Juul Petersen, 'Instrumental, Narrow, Normative? Reviewing Recent Work on Religion and Development,' *Third World Quarterly*, xxxii, 7 (2011); and Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (eds.), *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular* (Basingstoke, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ For biographical details on Ouwkerk see the introduction to her posthumously published book: Louise Ouwkerk, *No Elephants for the Maharaja: Social and Political Change in the Princely State of Travancore, 1921–1947* (New Delhi, 1994).

¹⁵⁰ Miss (*sic*) Ouwkerk, 'The Lessons of Marthandam', in M. S. Randhawa (ed.), *Developing Village India: Studies in Village Problems*, revised edn (Bombay, 1951), 39.

¹⁵¹ Beatty, *Americans All Over*, 310.

¹⁵² See, for instance, Duane Spencer Hatch, 'Summer School, Travancore and Cochin', *YMI*, xxxviii, 6 (1926), 429–30; Duane Spencer Hatch, 'The First Travancore Poultry Exhibition', *YMI*, xxxix, 2 (1927), 68–9; Hatch, 'Poverty and Self-Help in Rural India', 493–506; and Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 77–80 and 136–44.

in which a 'hands-on approach' and 'a maximum of practice and a minimum of theory' were emphasized, in line with Hatch's personal views on rural development.¹⁵³

By the early 1930s, Martandam was known in Europe, America, China, and Korea and the MRDC and its Training College were 'claiming the attention of leading experts in rural reconstruction', inducing 'Government agencies, educational organizations, and missions and service groups . . . to send men and women there for training'.¹⁵⁴ By the end of the decade, more than a thousand students from South Asia, but also from faraway places such as China, the Dutch East Indies and Egypt, had undergone training in the 'seven Dollar University' to become professional village workers.¹⁵⁵ Many alumni would go on to occupy influential positions in various missionary or government schools and in rural training institutions.¹⁵⁶ D. R. D. Souri, a graduate from the class of 1933, worked in the Government Rural Reconstruction Centre in the Princely State of Baroda that had been established by the local administration at Hatch's urging; C. K. Velayudan and A. W. Kannangara, both of the class of 1937, held leading positions in government-run agricultural centres in Cochin and Ceylon respectively.¹⁵⁷ In a 1944 speech at a conference in Washington, DC, Hatch dwelt on the career of one 'Hussein Ali Orphy', a former student from Egypt who had become a leading rural development expert for the Egyptian government, to illustrate the universal success of his methods.¹⁵⁸ Thus it is safe to argue

¹⁵³ Emily Gilchrist Hatch, *Mar-Tan-Dam: Not on the Map?*, World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations Archive, Geneva, box 2/2, 'Rural Work', n.d. [1933], 8–9.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1. See also T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, 4 vols. (Trivandrum, 1940), iii, 75–9.

¹⁵⁵ Emily Gilchrist Hatch, *Travancore: A Guide Book for the Visitor* (London, 1939), 186. The College was called 'seven Dollar University' because the construction of the two sheds in which classes were held had cost not more than 20 rupees (around seven dollars). 'Extra Martandam Footage' (DVD), UATSHC, box 9, 1.

¹⁵⁶ 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, 'Printed Material, 1939–1967'.

¹⁵⁷ Martandam Practical Training School in Rural Reconstruction, 'Accomplishment Bulletin', 2 and 4.

¹⁵⁸ 'Address by Spencer D. Hatch', n.d. [1944], UATSHC, box 2, fos. 8, 18–19. This legacy appears to have lasted several years, as Hatch's books continued on reading lists for rural experts training in Egypt in the mid 1950s; 'Written Works, Reports, Programmes 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', UATSHC, box 3, fo. 6/3. For the background of rural reconstruction schemes in Egypt see Mitchell,

(cont. on p. 224)

that village workers trained at Martandam's Practical Training School fulfilled important roles as experts or 'go-betweens' from the late 1940s onwards, when large-scale rural development programmes were initiated by state governments or as a part of UNESCO or Foreign Aid programmes.¹⁵⁹

The excellent reputation and popularity of the Training College was further increased by the astonishing success of Hatch's books. The highly respected Oxford University Press brought out all three of his major publications, and his first book, *Up from Poverty in Rural India* (1932), even contained a foreword by Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India (1931–6). Four editions of this work were released by 1938, a remarkable achievement for a semi-academic publication on as specialized a topic. It was even translated into several Asian languages including Gujarati, Malayalam, Sindhi and Chinese.¹⁶⁰ Its sequel *Further Upward in Rural India* (1938), though slightly less successful commercially, was equally well received by critics.¹⁶¹ By the 1940s, Hatch's books as well as his practical work became the subject of articles in scientific journals in the United States.¹⁶² The knowledge template created in the MRDC thus circulated widely among the emerging epistemic community of village workers and development experts.

III

FROM SOUTHERN TRAVANCORE TO SOUTHERN ARIZONA: THE GLOBAL CIRCULATION OF LOW-MODERNIST DEVELOPMENT KNOWLEDGE

The colonial as well as the missionary elements of the YMCA's rural reconstruction project in southern India became more

(n. 158 cont.)

Rule of Experts; and Omnia S. El Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford, 2007), 113–44.

¹⁵⁹ The most obvious example is provided by V. T. Krishnamachari (1881–1964). Though not a student of the Martandam College, he was initiated by Hatch into the art of rural reconstruction during the 1930s in Baroda. Later on Krishnamachari became 'Nehru's right hand man on the all-important Planning Commission'; Wallach, *Losing Asia*, 135.

¹⁶⁰ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 284.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, the book review by J. L. Hypes, 'Further Upward in Rural India, by D. Spencer Hatch', *American Sociological Review*, iv, 1 (1939), 132–3, where Hatch's programme was praised particularly for 'exemplifying democracy and a form of cooperation that includes both public and private agencies'.

¹⁶² Richards, 'Thirty Years of Rural Reconstruction'.

difficult to detect once the expert knowledge produced by Spencer and Emily Hatch started flowing beyond the specific context of its production. As mentioned earlier, the development knowledge generated in the MRDC in the 1920s and 1930s was shaped by local systems of governance, but also borrowed from a variety of other sources. Subir Sinha has persuasively argued that Hatch's writings must be understood as important contributions to an emerging transnational development regime, unbound by national or imperial borders.¹⁶³ Throughout his career, Hatch undertook study tours to countries all over the world in a quest to complement his knowledge on rural reconstruction. One of these tours led him to Germany and Denmark in 1927, where he spent several weeks studying 'Cooperatives, the Folk Schools, and the ways of rural life'.¹⁶⁴ 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', which obviously inspired the title of his book *Up from Poverty*. 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.¹⁶⁵

By the mid 1930s, Hatch had acquired an international reputation as an expert in rural development in 'tropical' countries that brought him increasing official attention. Having taken the 'lead in the particular field of service called rural reconstruction' by the late 1930s,¹⁶⁶ his MRDC received the accolades of imperial agriculturalists.¹⁶⁷ It was even honoured by official visits from the Viceroy of India and the Chief Minister of the Government of Ceylon and both were full of praise for what they saw.¹⁶⁸ In 1936, the Government of Ceylon called the American village development expert to help quell a rural malaria epidemic and give a lecture on rural

¹⁶³ Sinha, 'Lineages of the Developmentalist State', 66–71.

¹⁶⁴ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 192; Hatch, *Up from Poverty in Rural India*, 33; and Sackley, 'Village Models', 762.

¹⁶⁵ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 36–7.

¹⁶⁶ Gilchrist Hatch, *Travancore*, 186.

¹⁶⁷ C. F. Strickland, *Rural Welfare in India* (London, 1936), 40.

¹⁶⁸ Ouwerkerk, *No Elephants*, 175; and Rockefeller Archive Center, Davison Fund Records, IV 3 B 5.2, series ii, box 21, fo. 164, letter by Frank Slack to F. S. Harmon, 12 Nov., 1936. I am grateful to Stefan Hübner for making me aware of this source.

reconstruction to the Ceylonese State Council.¹⁶⁹ While in Ceylon, Hatch received an invitation from a preparatory committee established by the League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) to share his Martandam experiences.¹⁷⁰ In the wake of 'globalizing' debates on health issues, the LNHO committee had visited India and other Asian countries in 1936 to prepare for a conference in the Dutch East Indies on rural health, and were delighted to hear that 'rural reconstruction' was the topic of the day.¹⁷¹ The eventual Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene, held over two weeks in Bandung in August 1937, is regarded by historians as a milestone for the creation of health and development regimes that 'linked the local and the global, and Europe to Asia'.¹⁷² The conference focus on extension work, nutrition, and the training of rural workers meant that Spencer Hatch counted as an internationally renowned expert.¹⁷³ The grass-roots approach he had implemented in the MRDC fitted perfectly with the LNHO's new paradigm, which emphasized 'an awareness of the contextual and the vernacular'.¹⁷⁴

Hatch subsequently visited various co-operatives 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, Tahiti and Nouvelle

¹⁶⁹ Hatch, *Further Upward in Rural India*, 166–9. Sir Don Baron Jayatileka, the Ceylonese Chief Minister, later even spent a few days in Martandam to get a first-hand impression of the Y's rural work. See Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 280–1.

¹⁷⁰ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 257.

¹⁷¹ Iris Borowy, *Coming to Terms with World Health: The League of Nations Health Organization 1921–1946* (Frankfurt, 2009), 349.

¹⁷² Sunil S. Amrith and Patricia Clavin, 'Feeding the World: Connecting Europe and Asia, 1930–1945', in Matthew Hilton and Rana Mitter (eds.), *Transnationalism and Contemporary Global History* (Past and Present Supplement no. 8, Oxford, 2013), 250; Socrates Litsios, 'Revisiting Bandoeng', *Social Medicine*, viii, 3 (2014); and Theodore M. Brown and Elizabeth Fee, 'The Bandoeng Conference of 1937: A Milestone in Health and Development', *American Journal of Public Health*, xcvi, 1 (2008), 42–3; Sunil S. Amrith, 'The Internationalization of Health in South East Asia', in Tim Harper and Sunil S. Amrith (eds.), *Histories of Health in Southeast Asia: Perspectives on the Long Twentieth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2014), 171–4.

¹⁷³ *Report of the Intergovernmental Conference of Far-Eastern Countries on Rural Hygiene, held at Bandoeng (Java), August 3rd to 13th, 1937* (Geneva, 1937), 23–4.

¹⁷⁴ Lion Murard, 'Designs within Disorder: International Conferences on Rural Health Care and the Art of the Local, 1931–39', in Susan Gross Solomon, Lion Murard and Patrick Zylberman (eds.), *Shifting Boundaries of Public Health: Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Rochester, NY, 2008), 152.

Calédonie (where he scrutinized the agricultural reform programmes of the French colonial administration) as well as a number of other places in the South Sea.¹⁷⁵ This growing international exposure further catalysed the popularity of the YMCA's rural reconstruction methods back in South Asia. The colonial government that had supported Hatch's Rural Demonstration Centre almost from its inception now further intensified its involvement. Next to the provision of financial aid, free lumber and the provision of bulls, cocks and other animals from government breeding farms, 'able officers from Government Departments' were now regularly sent to the 'Seven-Dollar University' to teach courses on sanitation, agriculture, economics, physics and other subjects.¹⁷⁶ This quasi-official recognition was also helpful in attracting third-party funding: from 1936 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 Foundations's massive intervention in agricultural development programmes in India after independence.¹⁷⁷ Roughly at the same time, the Association was contacted by the government of Madras province as well as several of the largest Indian princely states to establish rural centres in Hyderabad, Mysore, Pudokottai, Baroda and other places. These projects materialized, with Spencer Hatch playing a crucial part in starting each of the new institutions.¹⁷⁸ By 1940, when he left, an entire network of institutions modelled on the MRDC existed in India.¹⁷⁹ The 'Martandam Larger Team', too, had gone global, as the foreign alumni returned to their respective home regions to convey 'the knowledge of the more abundant life to their fellowmen'.¹⁸⁰

Word about Hatch had spread to Washington a few years earlier. Upon arriving on furlough in 1941, he was sent to Mexico on an official five-year rural reconstruction mission. The US government followed a 'good neighbour' policy in Mexico at the time, and the Rockefeller foundation famously

¹⁷⁵ Hatch, 'Beyond the Ends of the Roads', 270–6.

¹⁷⁶ Hatch, 'Early Times at the Martandam Project', 17.

¹⁷⁷ Rockefeller Archive Center, Davison Fund Records, IV 3 B 5.2, series ii, box 21, fo. 167, 'Martandam Rural Center', 20 Dec. 1935.

¹⁷⁸ Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 268–80.

¹⁷⁹ 'Address by Spencer D. Hatch', n. d. [1944], UATSHC, box 2, fo. 8, 18.

¹⁸⁰ Hatch, 'My Job is Village Reconstruction', 8.

planted the seeds of a 'green revolution' there.¹⁸¹ Hatch established a Rural Demonstration Centre in a remote valley near Tepoztlan along lines very similar to the Martandam programme.¹⁸² Indeed, Hatch noted explicitly that the Martandam template was applicable on a global scale, and would 'work in every country'.¹⁸³ An article in *The Reader's Digest* likewise speculated in 1945 that Hatch's 'one man rural reconstruction program . . . could be a model for raising the living standards of depressed peoples everywhere'.¹⁸⁴

The deployment of another mass medium furthered the popularity of Hatch's low-modernist approach. The YMCA had previously used MRDC film footage for educational purposes and to satisfy its donors.¹⁸⁵ Now Hatch's village uplift programme in Mexico was filmed professionally for an MGM documentary, in a style that foreshadowed later Cold War propaganda. *Give us the Earth* (see Plate 4) featured Hatch as protagonist and captures the spirit of benevolent paternalism that had informed his earlier work in South Asia.

The Cold War made rural rehabilitation programmes an important political weapon for Washington and the spotlight now turned on American do-gooders in an unprecedented manner while enormous funding opportunities opened up for them. This new constellation gave the final stages of Hatch's career a definitive global twist. When the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) came into existence in

¹⁸¹ Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments*, 53–4. For a more detailed discussion, see also Cullather, *Hungry World*, 43–71; Jonathan Harwood, 'Peasant Friendly Plant Breeding and the Early Years of the Green Revolution in Mexico', *Agricultural History*, lxxxiii, 3 (2009); and Raj Patel, 'The Long Green Revolution', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, xl, 1 (2013), 5–10.

¹⁸² For details of the YMCA's rural reconstruction activities in Mexico see Hatch, *Toward Freedom from Want*, 285–96; Anon., 'Y Field Activities in Mexico', *Mexican-American Review* (1952), 40 and 90; and Emily Gilchrist Hatch, 'In Mexico: Part IV of the Duane Spencer Hatch Story', *The Quill and Scroll*, lxix, 4 (1963), 11–17.

¹⁸³ Hatch, 'My Job is Village Reconstruction', 8.

¹⁸⁴ J. P. McEvoy, 'Hatch Helps Those who Help Themselves', *The Reader's Digest*, xlvii (1945), 45–8.

¹⁸⁵ That the American Y also played a pioneering role in the use of the new medium for 'pastoral exhibitions' of various kinds is evident from Ronald Walter Greene, 'Pastoral Exhibitions: The YMCA Motion Picture Bureau and the Transition to 16 mm, 1928–39', in Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson (eds.), *Useful Cinema* (Durham, NC, 2011), 205–29.



4. Promotional poster for the MGM 'Theater of Life' documentary *Give us the Earth*, starring Spencer D. Hatch (1947).

Quebec City in October 1945,¹⁸⁶ the YMCA's 'Old India Hand' was a pioneering member of the new body, serving as Secretary of the FAO's Education and Extension Panel (see Plate 5).¹⁸⁷

After the pioneering phase of the Mexico experiment ended, the Hatches received offers from various quarters.¹⁸⁸ Their specialized knowledge was especially attractive to the Inter-American Institute

¹⁸⁶ On the founding of the FAO, see Ruth Jachertz, "'Keep Food out of Politics': The UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 1945–1965", in Marc Frey, Sönke Kunkel and Corinna R. Unger (eds.), *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990* (Basingstoke, 2014), 75–100; Amy L. S. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965* (Kent, OH, 2006), 78–81; and Sergio Marchisio and Antonietta Di Blase, *The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)* (Dordrecht, 1991), 9–15.

¹⁸⁷ KFYA, Biographical Files, box 73, 'Biographical Data. Hatch, Duane Spencer', undated MS.

¹⁸⁸ Gilchrist Hatch, 'In Mexico', 17.

of Agricultural Sciences, which was sponsored by the Pan-American Union and set up in Costa Rica in 1944.¹⁸⁹ Hatch worked in Costa Rica for almost four years at the institute until 1950, teaching a course on 'Methods of Extension'.¹⁹⁰ Spencer and Emily briefly visited the MRDC again in the early 1950s as part of a third and final South Asian Mission on behalf of UNESCO and the Government of India, during which he had extensive discussions with Prime Minister Nehru and his cabinet.¹⁹¹ He subsequently co-ordinated a large-scale project in Ceylon for UNESCO from 1951 to 1957.¹⁹² Shortly after the end of his mission in Ceylon, Hatch celebrated the global proliferation of the 'Pillars of Policy' established in Martandam. They were so 'tried and true', he boasted, that they had meanwhile 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'.¹⁹³ As the Cold War peaked, the Hatches' work became a part of the US State Department's anti-Communist propaganda. Spencer Hatch featured on the cover of the magazine *Free World* in 1951, distributed freely in American Cultural Centers all over South and South-East Asia (see Plate 6).¹⁹⁴ The former YMCA secretary now symbolized the American promise of a 'more abundant life' — this time stripped of all spiritual connotations — in a capitalist world system under 'mild American suzerainty'.¹⁹⁵

Hatch's final assignment brought him back to the 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 community development schemes among a different type of 'Indians': members of the Mojave, Navajo and Hopi tribes.¹⁹⁶ Especially in light of the fact that quite a few American development experts, who would later

¹⁸⁹ L. S. Rowe, 'Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences', *The Scientific Monthly*, lvi, 2 (1943).

¹⁹⁰ *Annual Report of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences for the Year 1950* (Turrialba, 1951), 135.

¹⁹¹ 'Photographs, Albums Delhi State (1) 1950–1952', UATSHC, box 3, fo. 14/3.

¹⁹² Emily G. Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Conclusion: Ceylon and the Colorado River Indian Tribes', *The Quill and Scroll*, lxxvii, 2 (1964), 24.

¹⁹³ Hatch, 'Early Times at the Martandam Project', 9.

¹⁹⁴ See also Duane Spencer Hatch, 'What are we up to in Minneriya?', *Free World*, i, 3 (1951), 28–31.

¹⁹⁵ Frank Ninkovich, *The Global Republic: America's Inadvertent Rise to World Power* (Chicago and London, 2014), 173.

¹⁹⁶ Hatch, 'Working with D. Spencer "Chick" Hatch, Conclusion', 26–9.



5. Spencer Hatch (third from the left in the front row) at the first FAO conference in Quebec (1945).

serve in ex-colonies in Asia and Africa during the 1950s and 1960s, had started their career with the US Bureau of Indian Affairs, it seems rather ironic that Spencer Hatch did it the other way around: the YMCA's leading development expert came back to apply the knowledge he had mostly gathered in colonial India to America's very own natives.

IV

CONCLUSION

In a widely circulated article, Fred Cooper argued forcefully that to write convincing histories of development, historians needed to abandon 'abstractions . . . generalizations' and 'metacritique', and instead analyse concrete historical instances.¹⁹⁷ This case study has attempted precisely this. By adopting a biographical

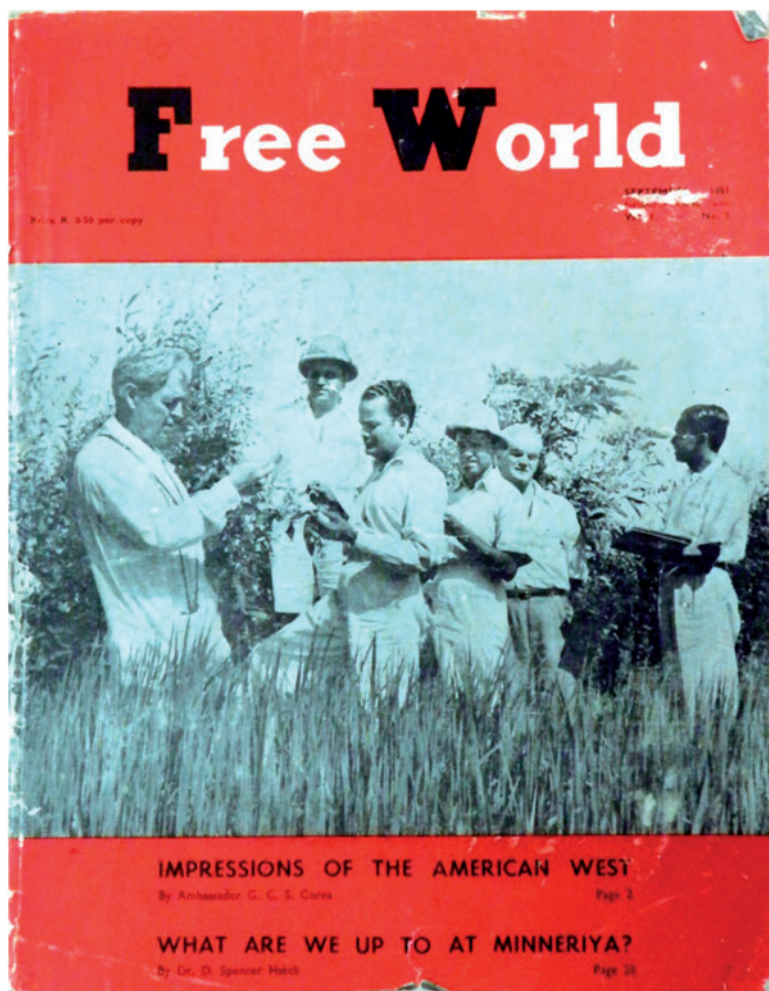
¹⁹⁷ Frederick Cooper, 'Writing the History of Development', *Journal of Modern European History*, viii, 1 (2010), 7.

lens and providing a detailed discussion of the career of an early American pioneer of village development schemes in southern India, it has embraced a rather narrow perspective. Nonetheless, this micro-(hi)story is clearly significant for the grand narratives of the history of development. Most importantly, it underscores that the foreign-aid initiatives and the transnational development regime of the 1950s did not emerge in a vacuum, but rather had a pre-history in the inter-war period that decisively shaped their methods and agendas. While the continuities between colonial administrative experts and Cold War development initiatives have been discussed at length by other scholars, an analysis of Duane Spencer Hatch's long and illustrious career highlights the neglected role of extra-imperial civil-society actors connected to a global Christian lay movement.

Exploring Hatch's life has yielded some important insights. In spite of his association with the American YMCA, an organization at pains to stress its inclusive and non-imperial character in most of its Asian and African projects, Hatch was a hinge figure of sorts, shaped by the imperial culture he was exposed to for more than three decades. His earnest attempt to acquire linguistic skills, adapt a simple local lifestyle and tap indigenous knowledge systems links him to earlier generations of Christian missionaries. However, the deep emotional and epistemic enmeshment with imperial racialist thought, language and knowledge is also apparent. As shown, Hatch's (and the YMCA's) project of transforming 'native' peasants' hearts and minds even included mild forms of coercion and intimidation through references to the repressive apparatus of the colonial state which demonstrates that low-modernist projects, too, could be fairly authoritarian. Simultaneously, the inextricable links to the Christian Association's evangelizing agenda remained pivotal for the village workers, even though 'collecting scalps', that is open proselytism, was rarely emphasized as a primary goal in public from the 1920s onwards.¹⁹⁸

That said, it would be misleading to represent the Y's rural work in South Asia as an all-powerful American neo-imperial or missionary machine of repression. The Hatch case study also makes clear that various South Asian actors co-shaped it from its very inception, and that evasion and subversion of the Protestant pedagogic project continued to exist. Indian YMCA

¹⁹⁸ Chatterjee, *Making of Indian Secularism*, 151.



6. Cold War hero? — Spencer Hatch with American and Ceylonese village workers on the front page of the US propaganda magazine *Free World* (1951).

secretaries, Tranvancore's aristocracy, political leaders connected with the Indian national movement, and even ordinary peasants who added their sometimes superior practical knowledge to the MRDC programme also contributed to the

Martandam experiment in a variety of ways. Taken together with Hatch's global borrowings of agricultural, sociological, and anthropological knowledge, the MRDC was a heavily pidginized rather than a strictly American programme, making the aid Hatch and his fellow workers provided only partially foreign.

Spencer Hatch's global career as an influential member of the international epistemic community of rural development experts underscores that his expertise was influential, circulating as it did through various channels and in various directions from the late 1930s. A detailed and authoritative assessment of the impact of post-World War II development discourses and programmes would certainly require further research, but some interesting observations can already be made on the limited basis of this case study. Thus, alumni from the YMCA Rural Training College in Martandam and the various institutions he helped establish were part of post-colonial community development schemes in the Indian subcontinent and post-colonial administrations in India, Ceylon, Burma, and even Egypt. Simultaneously, new supra-national institutions founded by the League of Nations and later the United Nations provided important platforms facilitating the spread of his low-modernist approach across the globe. Hatch's postings in various Asian and Latin American countries during the 1940s and 1950s, widely publicized by US Cold War propaganda, further added to the worldwide circulation of the Y's gospel of rural reconstruction among a transnational expert community in the making. It would no doubt be a rewarding task to revisit the history of early Cold War village development schemes on a global scale in order to scrutinize where precisely the legacies of Hatch's pidginized rural reconstruction knowledge can be detected, how influential this current was, and how long it survived.

*Eidgenössische Technische
Hochschule (ETH) Zürich*

Harald Fischer-Tiné