

The aim of the project is to propose a new perspective on the connected cultural histories of South Asia and Europe through the lens of identifying competing patterns of patronage, performance and circulation in literary production in the times of change leading to the gradual emergence of new cultural order of the British Colonial Empire as produced by multiple and various actors in India. The project shall feed on the previous scholarship as well as explore archives extant in Europe and India in order to trace and map patterns of decline and emergence in networks of cultural circulation of texts, artefacts and ideas within and across the regions of influence of major political powers between 1674 and 1857. This gross perspective shall be enriched by the more localized three case studies of local and regional culture-and-power orders that variously transformed themselves showing their adaptive potential to take part in the processes including different gradient of resilience, continuity and change involving original ways towards modernity.

The method shall combine and integrate approaches proper for text-critical, archive-historical and performance studies to highlight the complex nature of new cultural order emerging at variously defined contact zones between actors representing different epistemic cultures that fed on different and often antagonistic concepts of social order and intellectual production. The asymmetric and uneven distribution of contact-and-encounter zones across the Indian subcontinent shall be identified against the background of the clash and cross-fertilization between socio-linguistic and literary cultural orders of the declining Mughal empire, the rise and fall of the Maratha confederacy, the changing policies of the East India Company, the Missionaries and the resilient forms Southern kingdoms. All of them developed their specific patterns of patronage in face of the uneven and promising power of the coming order of print. The latter came with its ready-made cultural economy that needed gross reformulation and accommodation in the process of huge changes that transformed all actors making visible the mutually engaged patrons, courtly communities and guilds of poets and scholars, new consumers, the old and new merchants, the preachers and the converts, the colonizers and the colonized who happened to switch their roles in creating spaces of new identity for themselves as well as for their distant sources of authority and power in the metropolis while spanning bridges of communication over more and more complex networks of communication that circulated texts, people and ideas. The ambition of the project lies in constructing a platform for juxtaposing different visions of cultural production which can help articulate the multiple modalities of power-knowledge relationship that made itself visible in the vast space of Indian Subcontinent during the turbulent period of gross civilizational reconfigurations that saw not only the coming of modernity to Asia but the rise of modern Euro-Asiatic world that established networks of circulating cultural matter in mutually influential flows in both directions. The reconstruction of the connected histories of different patterns of literary patronage that had to regionally redefine themselves in face of the coming of the new economy of print shall highlight the different and original modalities of cultural production that influenced the Indian career of print in the ways that produced regional print histories and print cultures making possible parallel forms of modernity.