In the late Ottoman Empire, the Red Sea port of Jeddah was marked by a particularly multicultural and transient population due to its function as a commercial entrepot and terminus for the Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage. In addition, it served as a main market in the Red Sea slave trade, even after this trade had been prohibited. This lecture will investigate how labour, both free and unfree, was organised in a port city characterised by a high degree of mobility and migration. What are the available sources, and what can we say about the economic and social organisation of labour, notably in the fields of work in the port and construction? What can we learn about labour disputes in the past, and about the ways in which local and translocal actors intervened in such confrontations?

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