

## Who we are

CPAGH, funded by TORCH, is the first interdisciplinary network of its kind at Oxford, fostering collaborative thinking about colonial ports and global history, and bringing together a diversity of researchers in terms of their cultural backgrounds, career stages and institutional disciplines. The Founding Members' wide-ranging specialisms extend from the Niger Delta, neo-colonialism in New Orleans and Odessa to Ottoman and Indian manufacturing centres, and East Asian ports. They all share a keen interest in postcolonial theory and decolonial praxis, and the ways these interventions can materially enrich epistemologies of global history. In creating a shared enterprise that transcends different concepts and methodologies, CPAGH aims to facilitate new knowledge exchange across disciplinary canons, crucially advocating global history as an interdisciplinary practice, and formulating a global research ethics around local perspectives and narratives.

Julia Binter (Social Anthropology)  
Olivia Durand (History)  
Dr Yvonne Liao (Musicology)  
Dr Katharina Oke (History)  
Min-Erh Wang (Musicology)  
Dr Hatice Yıldız (History)

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Humanities  
University of Oxford**

## **SENSING COLONIAL PORTS AND GLOBAL HISTORY: AGENCY, AFFECT, TEMPORALITY**

**2–3 May 2019**

**St Luke's Chapel, Radcliffe Observatory  
Quarter**



THE OXFORD RESEARCH CENTRE IN THE HUMANITIES

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Colonial Ports and Global History (CPAGH) Network in Oxford welcomes you to its interdisciplinary two-day conference, Sensing Colonial Ports and Global History. The aim of this conference is to cross-examine three key concepts – agency, affect and temporality – that are increasingly central to anthropological, historical, musicological and sociological thought about colonial port cities. In doing so, it also explores anew the implications of the ‘colonial port city’ for global history, both in and beyond the academy.

Within this framework, the conference will centre around three main concerns. The first relates to issues of agency and power, notably the ways in which actors and institutions interacted with different connections and connectors, as well as with disruptions and disruptors. On the one hand, we seek to further the critical study of colonial power and power relations between port cities. Taking into consideration the five ‘scapes’ Arjun Appadurai (1990) has identified for narrating patterns of globalisation, we also seek explorations of the ways in which colonial power demonstrated itself in different port cities. On the other hand, we seek, too, to move beyond the study of colonial ports as a tool to explain connections, and to examine port cities in their own right, thereby highlighting hitherto understudied voices, and uncovering new perspectives on connections and disruptions. In other words, we seek to explore how people in port cities variously experienced, navigated, negotiated as well as expressed in local vocabularies what

‘global’ connections and the ‘colonial port city’ were and meant in their everyday lives.

Second, the conference will highlight the role of senses in researching colonial histories. Taking our cue from *Hearing History* (Smith 2004), what does it mean to not only tune but also sense into an extended, yet uneven geography of colonial ports? The interconnectedness of these global hubs can detract from their significance as nodes shaped locally, and translocally, by an extensive range of affective registers. Their distinct performativities, listening practices and multi-sensory environments, for example – coupled with the various ways in which such registers are (not) documented, experienced and/or contested – raise intriguing questions about the role of the senses both within and across the colonial ports, and their implications for rethinking the so-called globality of the colonial ports. Furthermore, how might these ports – when ‘sensed’ as nodal cultures – more broadly inform the re/writing of global history with their particular affective registers?

Last but not least, we hope to bridge between new research on time, temporality and global history. The weight of historical inquiry on time has fallen heavily on Western Europe, where imperial expansion and advanced production and communication technologies revolutionised time-keeping practices and temporal habits. As the movement to regulate time across nations, empires and hemispheres grew stronger, it came into conflict with maritime as well as local regional temporalities that had been associated with the community, religion, environment, seasonal cycles and the sea regimes. Situated at the crossroads between local cultures and the

increasingly regulated temporal regimes applied to trade and governance, port cities represent spaces that can facilitate and reveal tensions in the global transformation of time. How did the emerging rhythms of work and civic life in port cities come into contact with the existing ideas and practices of time? How was time negotiated between the increasing pressure of standardisation, and the environmentally and socially-embedded temporal traditions? To what extent did multiple understandings of time create a virtual spatio-temporal dissociation between port cities and their hinterland? Participants are encouraged to explore these questions, as well as connections and exchanges between temporal cultures that emerged in various port cities in the era of European imperialism.

We are delighted to have two distinguished keynote speakers: Leila Fawaz, Issam M. Fares Chair of Lebanese & Eastern Mediterranean Studies at Tufts University, whose broad expertise encompasses migration, trade and war in the modern Middle East; and Benjamin Walton, Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Cambridge, whose rich expertise extends from touring opera troupes beyond Europe to the globalisation of opera in and beyond the nineteenth century.

## THE WORLD CAFÉ WORKSHOP

This Workshop invites conference attendees to actively engage with the key frameworks, themes and approaches that have emerged from the conference. Through its rotational format, the World Café cultivates a unique participatory dynamic, enabling the attendees to rigorously and democratically explore possible future directions, challenges and prospects for the interdisciplinary study of Colonial Ports and Global History, in and beyond the academy.

The featured speaker/s at each table will be introduced by a CPAGH moderator. The speaker/s will then give a short talk to kick off the discussion. The participants, who will be rotating periodically across the tables in small groups, will contribute further to the discussion with observations, comments and additional questions arising from the short talk. When the rotations are complete, there will be a general discussion facilitated by CPAGH Team Members, bringing together all the various contributions from the Workshop.

# PROGRAMME

## 2 MAY (THURSDAY)

### **8:45–9:00 Registration and Arrival**

### **9:00–9:20 Welcome Remarks**

Julia Binter and Yvonne Liao (University of Oxford)

### **9:20–11:20 World Café Workshop**

Chair: Julia Binter (University of Oxford)

Featured presenters and topics:

Michael Leadbetter, Phacharaphorn Phanomvan, and Michael Yeo (University of Oxford)

*What are port cities, and how should they be studied?*

Moderator: Hatice Yıldız

David Martínez-Robles (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

*Rethinking colonial agency: The case of treaty ports*

Moderators: Yvonne Liao and Min-Erh Wang

Ana Cristina Mendes

(University of Lisbon)

*Touring Mare Nostrum: The ethics of researching colonial port cities and sea travels in the Mediterranean*

Moderator: Olivia Durand

Aaron Jaffer (National Maritime Museum)

*Redressing silences in the archive*

Moderator: Katharina Oke

### **11:20–11:50 Coffee Break**

### **11:50–13:20 Panel 1**

Consuming Colonial Ports: Consumption of Goods and Questions of Agency

Chair: Olivia Durand (University of Oxford)

Elizabeth Schmidt (University of California, Santa Barbara)

*'Sundry Sorts of Merchants Goods': Consuming the Empire in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia*

Mikko Toivanen (European University Institute)

*Babel in the streets, Berlioz at the club: Mapping Class and Culture in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Singapore and Batavia through Soundscapes*

Emma Bond (University of St Andrews)

*Playing with the Sugar Histories of Greenock*

### **13:20–14:00 Lunch**

### **14:05–15:35 Panel 2**

Timing Colonial Ports: Global Time and Local Temporalities

Chair: Hatice Yıldız (University of Oxford)

David Irving (ICREA & Institució Milà i Fontanals–CSIC, Barcelona)

*Temporality, Aesthetics, and Musical Novelty in Early Modern Colonial Port Cities*

Nancy Cushing (University of Newcastle, Australia)

*The Time Ball and the Time Gun: Marking Time in a Colonial Port City*

Jessica Fernández de Lara Harada (University of Cambridge)

*Summer Grass, Traces of the Brave Ones' Dream: Harada Hatsu on the recollection of a sense of a timeless Japan in Chiapas, Mexico*

**15:35–15:50 Coffee Break**

**15:50–16:50 Keynote: Leila Fawaz (Tufts University)**

Chair: Hatice Yıldız

*Reflecting on the port cities of the Levant during the Late Ottoman Period*

18:00– Conference Dinner at Pierre Victoire for presenters and keynote speakers

**3 MAY (FRIDAY)**

**8:15–8:30 Arrival**

**8:30–10:00 Panel 3**

Experiencing Colonial Ports: Forming Global Bodies  
Chair: Katharina Oke (King's College London)

Debbie Onuoha (Humboldt University of Berlin)

*Lagos, Lagos: Navigating Personal Histories between Two Port Cities on Film*

Manikarnika Dutta (Wellcome Unit, University of Oxford)

*'Portals of Death': European Seamen in the Colonial Port Cities of Calcutta and Bombay*

Katherine Roscoe (University of Liverpool)

*Embodied Experience and Unfree Labour in Port Cities: Convict Workers in Sydney and Gibraltar*

**10:00–10:20 Coffee Break**

**10:20–11:50 Panel 4**

Sensing Colonial Ports: Affective Registers  
Chair: Min-Erh Wang (University of Oxford)

Aatreyee Ghosh (Leiden University)

*Looking from the Verandah: Interrogating the Border-Spaces of Port Towns Canton and Batavia through the Historical Fiction of Amitav Ghosh and David Mitchell*

Alexander Petrov (Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences)

*The Development of Colonial Ports in Russian America*

Nagihan Haliloğlu (Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul)

*Sensing and Resisting the Colonial Port in Istanbul in Leonard Woolf and Halide Edib's Writing*

**12:00–13:00 Keynote: Benjamin Walton (University of Cambridge)**

Chair: Yvonne Liao

*Port Opera*

**13:00–13:10 Closing Remarks**

Facilitator: Olivia Durand

## PAPER ABSTRACTS

**'Sundry Sorts of Merchants Goods': Consuming the Empire in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia**

*Elizabeth Schmidt, University of California, Santa Barbara*

This project seeks to answer one question: What was the cultural significance of consuming imperial goods in a British Atlantic port city? Using a merchant's account book, retail advertisements in a Philadelphia newspaper, contemporary published cookbooks, and personal recipe collections, I seek to understand the cultural value that food items held in the late-eighteenth century. While an account book alone only gives us data on price fluctuation and frequency of purchase, combining this with the marketing of food in newspapers and corresponding recipes indicates how value was assigned to consumables. The account book includes records of household accounts from 1748–1770 and I have sampled retail advertisements from *The Pennsylvania Gazette* from these same years. Since advertisements often included the provenance of a good, they offer hints as to how retailers framed imperial products as rare, expensive, necessities, etc.; in other words, how they were shaping demand and influencing the way that value was assigned to specific food goods. In this paper I consider how certain goods would have blurred the line between 'everyday' and specialty', perhaps indicating the ways that consuming goods produced in the British Empire would have been framed as particularly significant. While many historians have written about the impact of imperial goods on metropolitan British identity, what Troy Bickham has called 'eating the empire', the picture of imperial consumption in the

empire itself has been less clear. The same kinds of imperial goods were being consumed in Philadelphia as in London, and would have been just as foreign to residents of both places. I intend to confront the role that food played in developing, maintaining, and undermining what it meant to be 'British' in a global environment like Atlantic Philadelphia, which included Britons but also Germans, Swedes, Africans, and others.

### **Babel in the streets, Berlioz at the Club: Mapping Class and Culture in mid nineteenth-century Singapore and Batavia Through Soundscapes**

*Mikko Toivanen (European University Institute)*

In my paper I propose to examine, from a connective and trans-imperial perspective, the representation of soundscapes in colonial travel writers' accounts of mid-nineteenth-century (approximately 1840–1870) Singapore and Batavia, two major and closely linked colonial port cities and regional hubs of the British and Dutch empires, respectively. The soundscapes that regularly captured European authors' attention range from the elaborate and musical, such as Javanese gamelan performances or arias from Italian operas, to the everyday and mundane, like the hubbub of the harbour or the intonations of specific languages. I argue that depictions of sound were used to convey a variety of – sometimes conflicting – messages, which I will discuss along three thematic axes having to do with culture, class and time. As regards culture, on a surface level, the frequent references to the Babel-like mixing of languages draw attention to the cosmopolitan, globally connected nature of these cities; on the other hand, travellers' harsh judgments of indigenous styles of music hint at cultural incommensurability

and the locally specific anxieties of colonial society. Class divisions and their geographies find emotionally loaded representation in sound, as in the irritation inspired by the cries of porters accosting well-to-do travellers fresh off the boat, or in the decidedly genteel comforts of the performances of travelling opera troupes arranged at exclusive clubs.

Moreover, sounds serve to rhythm not only the narratives of the books but also the daily lives of the cities described: the working days of the merchants and labourers marked by the hustle and bustle of the commercial sectors; the hot afternoons wrapped in the silence of the residential areas; and the evenings enlivened by the tunes of a military band on the esplanade. In all these various ways, aspiring travel authors writing for a popular audience employed sound on the soundless page, making use of the affective resonance of direct sensory experience over dry factual descriptions to delineate the connections and boundaries within and between these two imperial entrepôts as well as the conventions and transgressions of the life lived in them.

### **Playing with the Sugar Histories of Greenock**

*Emma Bond (University of St Andrews)*

Dubbed 'Sugaropolis' in the nineteenth century, this small town on the West Coast of Scotland was once a global hub for sugar refining, which led to it forming a diverse, transnational community that stretched far beyond its principal trade with the West Indian colonies. In this paper, I will make a case for considering Greenock as a 'colonial' port, and share my ongoing research into methodologies for re-creating the various vernacular elements of its sensory, sugary history.

In particular, I want to respond to two, interlinked elements in the Call for Papers. Firstly, through drawing attention to understudied voices and local vocabularies, I will show how participatory and co-design methodologies can be employed to re-evolve sensory histories. In our practice this has been achieved through recreating traditional local recipes recalled through oral history gathering with community volunteers. But we are also working to understand which methods might allow us to hear and smell the sounds and odours of Greenock's sugar industry that once hung heavy on the town and that still linger today in local memories.

To illustrate this, in the second part of my paper I will explore how we can use new models and design methods to 'play' with Greenock's sugary past. I will share findings from a recent, highly experimental game jam held as part of our project activity, where participants have been encouraged to explore the sugar history of Greenock through each of the five senses. I will pay particular attention to use of edible games and board games (cf Sandercock) and sandbox set-ups that allow players to use sugar as a tactile map to navigate and explore gameplay. Our design aim is to explore and challenge the texture of sugar through an immersive experience that will shed new light on what life felt, tasted and sounded like in Greenock's global past.

### **Temporality, Aesthetics, and Musical Novelty in Early Modern Colonial Port Cities**

*David Irving (ICREA & Institució Milà i Fontanals-CSIC, Barcelona)*

The arrival of a ship after often-perilous journeys and its unloading of passengers and wares at early modern colonial ports heralded levels of anticipation, excitement, or disappointment for local musicians, in an aesthetic world that was regularly stimulated by injections of music novelty. Archival traces of this traffic and its artistic aftermath exhibit desire for long-distance musical synchronicity, highlighting the relative sense of temporality in the reception and generation of aesthetic frameworks across seaborne imperial ecumenes. The recreation of European music in colonial milieux underscored the aesthetic desire for cultural reproduction or familiarity in a host environment that could periodically appear hostile in its social or environmental dimensions. Yet colonial music cultures generally demonstrated – on the surface level, at least – a degree of dependence with the European metropolis, in so far as they sought to replicate the arts of Europe. Political authority and cultural identity were reinforced by the ongoing reproduction of European social and religious musical institutions, in the often-overlapping categories of music for entertainment, music for civic ceremony, and music for religious observance. A comparative temporality in music thus became a concern in colonial port cities, and music performance was seen by officials and visitors as an index of local prosperity (that is, a colony's emulation of Europe and its capacity to enrich Europe) in social, economic, and cultural terms. That the aspiration of colonial settler societies for synchronisation with Europe and, in turn, the identification of Europe as a source of 'modernity', projected the 'denial of coevalness' (Johannes Fabian's term) onto surrounding indigenous populations is widely recognised. However, settler (and plural) societies were, to varying degrees, also the subjects of comparable forms of critique, both reflexively and externally. Thus while European travel writing



often viewed encounters with non-European musics as experiences of ‘travelling back in time’, through a developmentalist paradigm, the settler-colonialist desire for musical novelty from Europe mirrored urban–provincial relationships within Europe itself: colonial cultures simultaneously acknowledged and resisted a sense of deferral, in forms of cultural production that privileged waves of European standards. The cosmopolitanism of port cities also meant that the diversity of imported musics could elide national styles, contributing to a monolithic aesthetic concept of ‘European music’, in comparison to radical Others. Drawing on case studies from Kolkata (Calcutta), Manila, and Rio de Janeiro, this paper critiques relational links between global trade, temporality, and novelty in early modern thinking about music aesthetics.

### **The Time Ball and the Time Gun: Marking Time in a Colonial Port City**

*Nancy Cushing (University of Newcastle, Australia)*

Nineteenth-century seaports were tied to one another by threads of commerce and culture drawn more or less tightly by the movement of ocean going ships. With safe navigation reliant on accurate time keeping, when in port, ships’ masters were as much in need of the correct time as they were of cargoes, fresh water, food and fuel. In 1829, time was made more visible to seafarers by the introduction of a time ball at the Royal Navy’s Portsmouth dockyards. Dropped daily at exactly 1 pm, time balls provided navigators with a visual signal of the precise time which they could rely upon to reset and rate their chronometers. The time ball was at once a highly sophisticated mechanism,

supported by state of the art technologies, and a very simple one requiring no special knowledge to read it, in the way that children had to be taught to tell time using a clock. The invention was taken up by other ports and dockyards in the United Kingdom, and then in Europe, the United States and throughout the British Empire. While time balls captured the orientation of Victorian era progress to the visual, they were often provided with an aural accompaniment, most commonly the firing of a gun. These practices carried on older traditions of expressing the time through sound. This paper will draw upon official and popular sources to make a close study of the visual and aural depiction of time in one of the Empire’s busiest coal ports of the late nineteenth century, Newcastle, Australia. It will explore the limitations perceived by both city dwellers and mariners when vision was separated from sound in the public marking of time.

### **Summer Grass, Traces of the Brave Ones' Dream: Harada Hatsu on the recollection of a sense of a timeless Japan in Chiapas, Mexico**

*Jessica Fernández de Lara Harada (University of Cambridge)*

These lines of poetry were written by Harada Hatsu, a Japanese immigrant woman who lived in Mexico from 1909 to 1917, at the time of Japan’s Meiji Restoration and the Mexican Revolution. She married Dr. Ohta Renji, member of the ‘Enomoto Colony’, the first group of 34 Japanese immigrants who arrived in 1897 at the port of San Benito, on the Pacific coast of the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. This colony was named after Viscount Enomoto Takeaki, a loyalist of the Tokugawa Shogunate, who fought against the Meiji Government on the

advice of Jules Brunet, a French military correspondent who participated in the interventionist war with Mexico in 1862–1864. Brunet had encouraged Enomoto to turn to Mexico as a utopian land that could be used by the Tokugawa given that the Ezo Republic in Hokkaido had been taken by the Meiji Government.

Enomoto ascended to the new governing elites and became one of the main promoters of trade and emigration overseas. In 1888, he was offered 67 hectares of land by the Mexican government, which was interested in populating its allegedly deserted lands with desirable immigrants. Enomoto hired 28 contract laborers and 6 free Japanese men to cultivate coffee in Chiapas. Dr. Ohta, a free migrant, had studied agriculture at Miyagi School, and at age 22 migrated to Mexico.

Mrs. Harada, born 1887, studied at the Tsuruoka School, worked as a nurse at the Japanese Red Cross during the Russian-Japanese war, and married in 1905. Her husband died at age 42, when she was 29, and she went back to Japan with their four children. In 1965 she wrote the lines quoted above, and in 1971, at age 84, she wrote memoirs of her time in Mexico. In 1977, at age 90, she died. Her second son Ohta Ikuro translated her memories into Spanish in 1993. In this presentation, I want to explore Harada's memoirs alongside oral histories of descendants of Japanese immigrants (Nikkei) in Chiapas to shed light on the ways in which Asian migrants have managed to incorporate in post-colonial spaces dominated by European self-conceptions of the nation state and national identity. The port of San Benito became a transpacific node for the assemblage of different meanings of race, belonging and affective

(dis)associations between the mainland and the host port land that remain relevant today.

### ***Lagos, Lagos: Navigating Personal Histories between Two Port Cities on Film***

*Debbie Onuoha (Humboldt University of Berlin)*

Across the Atlantic from each other, two coastal cities share the same name: Lagos. Over 600 years, the voices of voyagers who have journeyed between them, testify to uneven histories of movement between Lagos /'lɛɪɡɒs/ and Lagos ['lɑːyʊʃ], Nigeria and Portugal, Africa and Europe.

*Lagos, Lagos* is a short, experimental, documentary, travelogue (30') set between the homonymous cities of 'Lagos' in Portugal and Nigeria. Together with images shot from the waters between either city, seven interlaced accounts of transatlantic voyages between Europe and Africa, from the fifteenth century to date, constitute the mosaic of this film essay: a meditation on the bygone era of 'exploration' and the realities of such oceanic crossings today.

Drawing examples from the process of researching and making this film project, this paper examines how colonial port cities and stories of those who have passed through them over the centuries, may serve as portals into exploring wider world history. Showing clips from the ongoing film project, I will explore how personal narratives may be used to provide insight into key moments such as the so-called age of exploration, the slave trade era, colonisation, and even the present waves of transatlantic migrations. Lastly, as a visual anthropologist, I will

explore the possibilities and particularities that cinema affords for telling these personal and historical stories, using not only text but also through the combinations of sound, image, editing etc.

### **'Portals of Death': European Seamen in the Colonial Port Cities of Calcutta and Bombay**

*Manikarnika Dutta (Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of Oxford)*

Port cities play an important role in trade and commerce and as sites of social and cultural exchanges. Apart from their strategic and military significance, they are critically important transnational spaces for circulation of people and products. As places of international and interpersonal contact, port cities function as both transit points for the movement of goods, labour and capital, and nodal centres for the reception and transmission of culture, knowledge and information. From an economic perspective, the social, political, and cultural identity of port cities is determined by the relationship between the port, its hinterland (or lack of it), and any external economic space it serves. Before the twentieth century, the traffic of people in port cities was often difficult to regulate, which resulted in the spread of disease across coastal areas and shipping routes across to distant shores. Port cities were thus hubs of dispersion of infectious diseases, most notably cholera and plague in the nineteenth century, acting as 'gateways of disease' and 'portals of death'. In addition, port cities had been infamous as the sites of disreputable activities, involving especially seamen. Michel Foucault evocatively described them as places of 'desertion, smuggling, contagion', 'crossroads for dangerous mixtures', and

'meeting-place for forbidden circulations'. The nature of seamen's daily life on board ships or in port cities played a crucial role in their health and wellbeing. Britain increasingly felt the need to regulate port towns in the nineteenth century as its position in the world significantly changed from being a leading commercial power to the largest empire. This paper examines the maritime hygiene and moral regulations that the British Empire implemented upon European seamen travelling to two colonial port cities, Calcutta and Bombay, in the nineteenth century. The seamen had the reputation of being rootless, often violent, promiscuous, and dipsomaniac, and vulnerable to communicable diseases. Their conduct on board ships and especially on shore often jeopardised the Indian colonial state's image of racial superiority and commercial activities. This paper primarily engages with how the colonial state and Christian missionaries sought to preserve the health of European seamen in colonial Calcutta, and what do the measures they undertook tell us about colonial medicine and colonialism at large. It argues that a study of the control and surveillance over maritime health and moral wellbeing can help develop a new conceptual framework for understanding seamen as agents of intra imperial encounters, the emergence of tropical naval medicine as a specialism, and the transformation of the theories of nosology, aetiology and disease zones.

### **Embodied Experience and Unfree Labour in Port Cities: Convict workers in Sydney and Gibraltar**

*Katherine Roscoe (University of Liverpool)*

Unfree labourers have been recognised as global actors, and port cities have been analysed as global spaces.

Bustling wharves teemed with products from across the seas, along with an equally cosmopolitan population of traders, sailors and dockhands. Yet, there has been little recognition of convicts' role in building and manning dockyard infrastructures, with a focus instead on waged naval employees (Davies et al, 2000; Day & Lunn, 1999). When scholars have discussed convict dockyard labour, the focus has been on a single site (Hollis Hallet, 1999 on Bermuda), or on maritime work as part of a wider public works programme (Pieris, 2009 on Singapore). This paper is a comparative study of convict labour in maritime industries in two British imperial port cities: Sydney and Gibraltar. It centres convicts within the histories of these port cities to understand how geographies of confinement intersected with practices of global connection.

The study of convicts draws out the 'uneven' geographies and divergent experiences of convicted men, compared to free labourers, who helped to build and man dockyards in the mid-nineteenth century. This was a pivotal time period, as steam-power revolutionised oceanic travel and British imperial authorities looked for alternative forms of unfree labour after the abolition of slavery. In this paper I read historical official documentation 'against the grain' to understand the embodied and affective experience of hard labour as punishment (Benjamin, 1940; Stoler, 2002). It considers: (1) the physical toll of hard labour on convicts' bodies, including their dietary rations and the effort required to complete daily quotas; (2) how carceral timetabling and discipline coexisted and came into conflict with rhythms of the dockyard; and (3)

how wider social stigma about 'convicted felons' shaped prisoners' social worlds and their relationships with free workmen on the dockyard. The paper combines the personal – considering the emotional and physical impact of hard labour as a form of penal sentence – with the global – examining how convicts' combined efforts shaped the cosmopolitan cultures and global connections that shaped port cities. In doing so, it sheds light on the 'invisible' work of marginalised unfree people who helped foster globalisation in the modern age.

### **Looking from the Verandah: Interrogating the border-spaces of port towns Canton and Batavia through the historical fiction of Amitav Ghosh and David Mitchell**

*Aatreyee Ghosh (Leiden University)*

Borders and bordering spaces have always been a matter of intrigue as well as politics in South Asia, one that is amply mirrored in the fiction about and written in South Asia. However, in the recent decades, moving away from the oft-used Manichean extremes of the native and the outsider/coloniser, fiction from and about South Asia has been vested in probing into the verandahs of existence in the historical narratives of the colonial experience in the region. Verandah is a typically Asian concept (specifically Indian), a liminal space between the confines of the domestic space and the vast horizons of the outdoors, a space that provides the two opposing worlds of the insider and the outsider to mingle and create a narrative that is both distinct and continuously in a state of flux. The port towns in Asia which would be generally the first point of contact between the Europeans and the Asians acted as such verandah

spaces, creating narratives which were fundamentally 'glocal'. These towns have been one of the enduring realities of the colonial trade expanses in Asia and yet have been forced into footnotes in the official historical narratives as well as the popular understanding about the colonies.

This paper would examine the nature of these verandah-spaces through the historical fiction of Amitav Ghosh and David Mitchell. Taking into account Ghosh's *The Ibis Trilogy* (the British and Indians in Canton) and Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob Zoet* (the VOC in Dejima and Batavia), it will delve into the nature of these spaces as points of both cultural exchange and separation. Reading ports as affective registers of unique cultural practices, this paper will introspect about how the individual positioning of the authors also affect the representation of these registers. Simultaneously, it will also probe into the question of individual agency versus the national/racial restrictions that these spaces represented. Finally, this paper will also try and establish how these narratives become important points of study not only as alternate formats of historical study but also look into models of globalism, that can question the narrow concepts of nationalistic identity and identify new modes of knowledge production in relation to contemporary social and political identity discussions in South Asia.

## **The Development of Colonial Ports in Russian America**

*Alexander Petrov (Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences)*

The paper investigates the development of the colonial ports of Sitka, Kodiak, Fort Ross and Okhotsk in the territories along the North Pacific and Pacific that belonged to the Russian Empire (Russian Far East, Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, part of California). The paper is based on numerous interviews with local natives in Alaska, California and the Russian Far East. It represents data from scholarly publications, mass media, archival documents and other resources from the USA, Russia, Spain, France, Estonia, Italy and other countries.

The Far Eastern Russian port of Okhotsk was founded as an outpost and frontier port but flourished during the time of early Alaskan exploration in the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century. All the merchants' and government's expeditions set sail from this port. It was the gate to the overseas colonies. In the nineteenth century, fur cargoes from this port moved to Chinese seaports which conducted the famous tea trade. After the sale of Alaska, its role was dramatically diminished.

In Alaska, two colonial ports were the most famous: Kodiak grew from being centred around Pavlovskaya Harbour to being the capital of Colonial Alaska. The capital was moved to Sitka which was then a more hostile area because of the relations with the natives for various reasons. The report studied these reasons in detail.

In California, Fort Ross was the farthest distant colonial port from Russia, up until the Russians sold it to the private American citizen J. Sutter. The paper provides the reasons for this sale.

The pivotal question that the paper addresses is, 'What are the common features among all the ports, and what makes them different?' The answer to this question helps us to understand the situation in the Asia-Pacific region and the relations between nations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The paper also presents various native groups' opinions on the colonial ports for different historical periods.

### **Sensing and Resisting the Colonial Port in Istanbul in Leonard Woolf and Halide Edib's Writing**

*Nagihan Haliloğlu (Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul)*

This is a polemical paper about how a city may be perceived in different registers, and how 'the colonial port city' becomes a spectre that haunts port cities that are not colonial in a strict sense. Istanbul will serve as an example of how occupied cities are sensed as colonial cities, particularly when the occupier, in this case Britain, has a colonial past. I will look at texts that test out Istanbul's status as a colonial port city:

Leonard Woolf's *The Future of Constantinople*, and Halide Edib's *Shirt of Flame* and *The Turkish Ordeal*. While Woolf sets out a plan for Istanbul to become a free port, modelled on his experiences of Ceylon as a colonial port city, the local author and activist Halide Edib pushes against this, all the while aware of the colonial resonances that a British occupation brings. *The Future of Constantinople* is set out as an anti-war tract: Woolf

pits internationalism against cosmopolitanism, arguing for an international body to rule Istanbul. According to Woolf, Constantinople is the stage where internationalism should at last beat imperialism, through the exclusion of Turks from the Bosphorus, and physically locating them elsewhere. His is a capitalist reading, indeed, a sensing the Bosphorus where the city itself is obliterated, and becomes the strait that should facilitate the transportation of goods; a supposedly anti-imperial vision of the future founded on the exclusion of local subjectivities, reiterating a colonial grammar. According to Woolf, Constantinople should be the city that should cease to live and breathe and be stripped down to its economic activity, so that all other European cities should live in peace – a vision of the colonial city. This approach is not lost on Halide Edib who reads the behaviour of the occupying allies as colonial officers in her memoir *The Turkish Ordeal* and her novel *Shirt of Flame*. I argue that Halide Edib, by invoking the spectre of a colonial port city, uses her writing as a call to arms to prevent Woolf's vision for Istanbul from becoming reality.

## KEYNOTES

### Reflecting on the port cities of the Levant during the Late Ottoman Period

*Leila Fawaz (Tufts University)*

In the nineteenth century, port cities in the Levant underwent substantial economic and political change in the face of evolving Ottoman and Western influence. Local populations migrated to these cities in large numbers, seeking safety and prosperity. Levantine ports became a medley of merchants and traders, refugees, port citizens, local rulers, and Westerners. When they arrived, incoming refugees bore certain facets of their identities, such as their religion, while leaving behind others, such as the social structures of the towns from which they had come in search of new prospects. They took advantage of particular opportunities to integrate into their new environments, especially through the marketplace. In the decades to follow, they continued to assimilate through commerce and culture. In many ways, however, the cosmopolitan influences of the ports' populations failed to change pre-existing political grievances and the social dynamics of local migrant groups, and in several cases aggravated them. Into the twentieth century, what once served as an advantage for Levantine cities – their diverse populations – became a source of tension, especially after World War I, when alliances between superpowers and certain local groups evolved into a relationship of occupiers and occupied.

**Leila Fawaz** is the Issam M. Fares Professor of Lebanese and Eastern Mediterranean Studies and the founding director of the Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies at Tufts University. Dr. Fawaz was named a Chevalier in the French National Order of the Legion of Honor in 2012. She has served as president of the Harvard Board of Overseers in 2011, president of the American University of Beirut Alumni Association of North America, and president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America. She continues to serve on several governing boards at Harvard, as well as on committees for the American Historical Association, Carnegie, and the Comité Scientifique de la Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme at the Université d'Aix-Marseille in France. Dr. Fawaz was named a Carnegie Scholar from 2008 to 2010, and she has held editorial board positions with the *American Historical Review*, *IJMES*, and *British Middle East Studies Association Review*. Among her publications are *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Harvard University Press, 2014); *An Occasion for War* (University of California Press, 1994); and *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Harvard University Press). Dr. Fawaz received a Ph.D. in History from Harvard University. She continues her research on the experiences of individuals during World War I in the Middle East.

## Port Opera

*Benjamin Walton (University of Cambridge)*

The centrality of the colonial port city to the movement of opera beyond Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century is clear enough, driven by the circulation of people, newspapers and commodities along often well-established maritime routes. But how is this broad story nuanced or challenged by paying attention to these locations specifically as ports? Or put another way, to what extent is the history of operatic globalization in this period a history of ‘port opera’? My attempt to answer these questions will explore a variety of different locations and approaches, but is driven by a central contention: that opera’s dominant ideological role as a vessel for the transmission of European civilizational values served both at the time and since to conceal the sometimes disruptive realities of operatic performance within the theatrical spaces of the port city environment. In pursuit of some of these realities, I attend to the place of opera within the wider urban soundscape, the unstable role of opera as foreign import within certain colonial contexts, and the potential for particular operas to be transformed by their local environments. I further suggest that the era of port opera was relatively shortlived, to be replaced by an operatic industry whose drive towards standardization remains evident to this day.

**Benjamin Walton** is University Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Jesus College. A former editor of *Cambridge Opera Journal*, his current research focuses on operatic performance outside Europe in the nineteenth century, and on the material history of opera. He has produced numerous works on the cultural and social history of nineteenth-century opera, including *Rossini in Restoration Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), and *The Invention of Beethoven and Rossini* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), co-edited with Nicholas Mathew. His recent work includes essays on operatic globalization, on staging technologies at the Palais Garnier in Paris, and on operatic canon formation in nineteenth-century Argentina and Uruguay. He is also co-editor of two collections of essays due out this year: *Nineteenth-Century Opera and the Scientific Imagination*, and *Gioachino Rossini 1868-2018: La musica e il mondo*. He is currently writing a book on the first opera troupe to circumnavigate the globe, during the 1820s and 1830s.