

# **Governing Religious Minorities in Port Spaces:**

## **East African Cosmopolitanism in Historical Perspective**

Taking as a case in point port spaces in East Africa, my project aims to contribute to scholarly studies that examine the migration and governance of religious minorities to port and city spaces. On a broader empirical level, the aim of the study is to explore how religious minorities who settled in cities and port spaces has been governed by political formations that operate with different ways of organizing cosmopolitan urban spaces. In particular, I wish to explore how migrants have been governed in East African port and city spaces. I would like to do so by adopting a broad historical perspective that would enable us to shed light on current processes. More specifically, in the East African context, I would like to explore how minorities were governed in the port of Lamu, Mombassa, Berbera, Moqadishu, Zeyla and the city of Harar by the Ottoman, Egyptian and Omani empires. As the Ottoman, Egyptian and Omani empires were gradually replaced by the French and British starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we would also like to explore how the French and British colonial powers governed the presence of religious minorities. As the aim of the current project is to understand current global dynamics using historical lenses, the project also aims to document how religious minorities are treated within port and urban spaces that came to be incorporated within the post-colonial state of the region.

At the theoretical level, my project relates to discussions in the social sciences that concern the movement of people and the emergence of the cosmopolitan subject in port spaces. In recent studies, a number of attempts have been made to conceptualize the flow of people that occurred within port spaces. This conceptualization is particularly true of the East African port spaces through which the migrants have traditionally travelled. In newly emerging studies, these port spaces have been considered as cosmopolitan areas that are inhabited by people who exist as global citizens. In particular, recent scholarship has attempted to understand how the flow of people and commodities has led to the emergence of a cosmopolitan identity. A number of studies have also evaluated the networks that are found within the cosmopolitan port spaces. Acknowledging the important theoretical contribution made by these studies, this research tries to problematize our conceptualization of cosmopolitanism and therefore to advance the above contributions.