

## **Abstract**

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### **Popular Photography, Aesthetics and the Islamic Interdiction of Images on the East African Coast**

Since the introduction of photography by commercial studio photographers and the colonial state in Kenya, the medium has been intensively debated and contested among Muslims on the East African coast. With the up-coming of reformist Islam in the 1980s, the "Islamic interdiction of images" and notions of (female) purity have been strongly reinforced and extended to include also visual media such as photography and video. In opposition to the West, pious Muslims have de-authorized certain kinds of pictures advocating a visual regime that attempts to withdraw, in particular women from visibility in the public domain.

Against this background, I will discuss the photo collages of the late Omar Said Bakor from Lamu (Northern Kenya) as examples of the complicated processes of localization, aesthetization and hybridization of the media of photography. I will explore Bakor's "aesthetic tactics" to reconcile photographic portraits with local cultural and religious values, especially the Islamic prohibition of figurative representations that mediated the ways through which photography has been transformed and accepted.