



# **Pastimes and Politics: Culture, Community, and Identity in Post-Abolition Urban Zanzibar, 1890-1945 (Eastern African Studies)**

*Laura Fair*

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The first decades of the twentieth century were years of dramatic change in Zanzibar, a time when the social, economic, and political lives of island residents were in incredible flux, framed by the abolition of slavery, the introduction of colonialism, and a tide of urban migration. *Pastimes and Politics* explores the era from the perspective of the urban poor, highlighting the numerous and varied ways that recently freed slaves and other immigrants to town struggled to improve their individual and collective lives and to create a sense of community within this new environment. In this study Laura Fair explores a range of cultural and social practices that gave expression to slaves' ideas of emancipation, as well as how such ideas and practices were gendered.

*Pastimes and Politics* examines the ways in which various cultural practices, including taarab music, dress, football, ethnicity, and sexuality, changed during the early twentieth century in relation to islanders' changing social and political identities. Professor Fair argues that cultural changes were not merely reflections of social and political transformations. Rather, leisure and popular culture were critical practices through which the colonized and former slaves transformed themselves and the society in which they lived.

Methodologically innovative and clearly written, *Pastimes and Politics* is accessible to specialists and general readers alike. It is a book that should find wide use in courses on African history, urbanization, popular culture, gender studies, or emancipation.

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