

‘Mukoma govai minda’: Reading Simon Chimbetu’s Compositions on the Land Issue in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Ordinary Zimbabweans have remained the subalterns in terms of land ownership. A number are still suffering from the consequences of displacement, exploitation, land conflicts, and redistribution. This qualitative study examines the portrayal of problems associated with the land issue in Simon Chimbetu’s Dendera music. The article is a textual content analysis of six purposively selected popular songs by Chimbetu related to the land question, to elucidate how they speak for marginalized landless Zimbabweans in the postcolony. Analysis is informed by subaltern studies which study the interplay of dominance and subordination to uncover the histories of groups that were largely shunted to the margins in the “binary relationship” between the subaltern and the ruling classes. I argue that Chimbetu is the voice of the voiceless peasantry who have not benefited from the industrial capitalist system and cannot buy productive land but wait in vain to get it allocated to them.