

# REVIEWS

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Thomas Turino. **Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe.** Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Pp. x + 401, black and white photographs, index, discography, bibliography. \$22.00 paper.

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Thomas Turino does good things with this book, which is based on multiple fieldwork trips to Zimbabwe throughout the 1990s. He makes a significant contribution to the growing body of theory surrounding globalized musics, but does not easily fall into over-theorizing. He discusses tensions and dynamics between “traditional” and “popular” cultural practices without pitting them against each other. And he parses the concept of “national” without reliance on tired arguments or simplistic pronouncement.

In the course of the book, Turino provides a history of urban popular musics in Zimbabwe, specifically Harare. Enmeshed within this history there is also a detailed study on the interwoven trajectories of political, social, and cultural change Zimbabwe experienced prior to and during its extended war for independence (mid 1960s–1980). The combination of historical contextualizing and ethnographic analysis emphasizes that phenomena such as “nationalism” and “national culture” are simultaneously driving forces in peoples’ lives and conceptual constructs often consciously developed to further the gains of a few at the expense of many. However, as Turino points out on multiple occasions, the notions of “gains” and “expenses” are relative and must be evaluated within broader historical frameworks. That is, there are often many goals (sometimes conflicting, sometimes not) embedded in an apparently seamless past; to ascribe primacy to one is often to mistell the story.

But Turino tells many stories in the pages of this book, often relying on the words of musicians, government officials, and citizens to illustrate the environments within which Zimbabwean popular musics grew. He describes the various cultural and ethnic identities that existed prior to a nationalist/independence movement and then traces how aspiring political leaders homogenized these into a national Zimbabwean identity. He notes the ways in which nonpolitical “traditional” songs and musical styles became heavily politicized during the chimurenga war. And he discusses the appearance of Zimbabwean musics such as chimurenga and jit on the world music stage in the 1980s, focusing on the reemergence of “national” identity as a marketing tool. In writing this complex history, Turino develops a discussion of contemporary popular musics in Zimbabwe that hinges on overlapping and interwoven historical forces and movements of peoples, sounds, and ideas. His analysis takes into account multiple streams of influence and “origin” rather than simply positioning local versus global or indigenous versus imported. In building the core argument of his book, Turino offers an analytically penetrating, yet subtle, concept: cosmopolitanism. He defines cosmopolitanism as “localized nodes of production for widespread phenomena” (257), and it is important to note that it refers not just to artistic undertakings such as music. Cosmopolitanism is just as prevalent in the political or economic spheres of life, and as Turino sets out to illustrate, these spheres are not easily separated from the cultural or artistic when it comes to issues of national identity.

The organization of the book is roughly chronological, and at each stage of Zimbabwean popular music history Turino constructs a vibrant picture of performance practices, sounds, and styles for the reader. An accompanying compact disc would have been wonderful; however, given the difficulty of obtaining reproduction rights for many of the recordings Turino references, this is probably an unattainable wish. Music or no music, the book is engaging, insightful, and makes a strong contribution to current scholarship on popular musics and culture on the African continent and beyond.