



Plunder for Profit

Exploring over a century of Zimbabwe's colonial and postcolonial history, Elijah Doro investigates the murky and noxious history of that powerful crop: tobacco. In a compelling narrative that debunks previous histories glorifying tobacco farming, Doro reveals the indelible marks that tobacco left on landscapes, communities and people. Demonstrating that the history of tobacco farming is inseparable from that of colonial encounter, Doro outlines how tobacco became an institutionalised culture of production, which was linked to state power and natural ecosystems and driven by a pernicious heritage of unbridled plunder. With the destruction of landscapes, the negative impacts of the export trade and the growing tobacco epidemic in Zimbabwe, tobacco farming has a long and varied legacy in southern Africa and across the world. Connecting the local to the global, and the environmental to the social, this book illuminates our understandings of environmental history, colonialism and sustainability.

ELIJAH DORO is a research fellow at the University of Agder and an environmental historian with an interest in southern Africa. His research on agrarian and environmental histories is inspired by his personal experiences growing up in Zimbabwe's tobacco-farming countryside and participating in the tobacco production economy.

African Studies Series

The African Studies series, founded in 1968, is a prestigious series of monographs, general surveys, and textbooks on Africa covering history, political science, anthropology, economics, and ecological and environmental issues. The series seeks to publish work by senior scholars as well as the best new research.

Editorial Board:

David Anderson, *The University of Warwick*

Carolyn Brown, *Rutgers University, New Jersey*

Christopher Clapham, *University of Cambridge*

Richard L. Roberts, *Stanford University, California*

Leonardo A. Villalón, *University of Florida*

Other titles in the series are listed at the back of the book.

Plunder for Profit

A Socio-environmental History of Tobacco
Farming in Southern Rhodesia and
Zimbabwe

ELIJAH DORO
University of Stellenbosch



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009098397

DOI: 10.1017/9781009093071

© Elijah Doro 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Doro, Elijah, author.

Title: Plunder for profit : a socio-environmental history of tobacco farming in Southern
 Rhodesia and Zimbabwe / Elijah Doro, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Description: New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, [2023] | Series: ASS African
 studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022040985 (print) | LCCN 2022040986 (ebook) | ISBN
 9781009098397 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009096256 (paperback) | ISBN
 9781009093071 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Tobacco industry—Zimbabwe. | Tobacco farms—Zimbabwe.

Classification: LCC HD9147.Z552 D67 2023 (print) | LCC HD9147.Z552 (ebook) |
 DDC 338.1/7371096891—dc23/eng/20221221

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022040985>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022040986>

ISBN 978-1-009-09839-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

To the memory of my late father, Keniard Doro, a tobacco farmer from rural Muzarabani who taught me how to dream, and to my mother, Dorothy Simbi, who gave me hope when it rained on me while working in the tobacco fields.

*Tobacco is without doubt one of the most destructive plants
on the planet even before it hits the lungs.*

Standard Schaeffer, *Counterpunch Magazine*, 2007

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv
<i>Note on Currency, Units and Weight</i>	xvi
Introduction	1
1 Global Perspectives and Local Narratives: A Socio-environmental History of Pioneer Tobacco Farming in Southern Rhodesia, 1893–1945	34
2 The Post-War Tobacco Boom and the Development of Conservationism in Southern Rhodesia, 1947–1960	90
3 A Silenced Spring? Exploring Africa’s ‘Rachel Carson Moment’: A Socio-environmental History of the Pesticides in Tobacco Production in Southern Rhodesia, 1945–1980	123
4 Beyond Agency: The African Peasantry, the State and Tobacco in Southern Rhodesia, 1900–1980	165
5 ‘The Threat of Soil Erosion Is Far More Permanent Than the Threat of Sanctions’: The Unilateral Declaration of Independence, War, and Ecological Change in Tobacco-Farming Landscapes in Southern Rhodesia, 1960–1980	198

viii	<i>Contents</i>
6 Tobacco-Control Discourses and the Tobacco Industry in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1953–2020	225
Conclusion	264
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	273
<i>Index</i>	304

Figures

1.1 The author standing in his tobacco field during harvesting in 2016	page 33
1.1 Map of Southern Rhodesia showing the tobacco belt	35
1.2 Clearing of virgin land on a tobacco farm in Marandellas in 1912	47
2.1 Tobacco production in Southern Rhodesia (lbs), 1942–1948	97
2.2 Southern Rhodesia tobacco destinations, 1948	98
2.3 Map showing distribution of farms with tobacco as the principal crop in Southern Rhodesia, 1949–1950	100
2.4 Map showing distribution and concentration of tobacco farms in Southern Rhodesia, 1949–1950	101
2.5 Gross output of European agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1954–1961	120
4.1 Cigarettes’ adverts in Southern Rhodesia portraying class and style	175
4.2 Inyoka tobacco production and trade in Southern Rhodesia, 1906–1938	176
4.3 Crop production in African areas of Southern Rhodesia, 1948–1958 (in thousands of bags)	178
4.4 African production of Turkish tobacco in Southern Rhodesia, 1951–1958	179
4.5 A Purchase Area farmer and his wife standing with his tobacco bales in 1974	189
5.1 An advert in a farmers’ magazine encouraging the use of coal and a coal steam curing barn that was popular on most tobacco farms in Southern Rhodesia in the 1970s	222
6.1 Cigarette consumption per capita in Zimbabwe, 1980–2015	240

x	<i>List of Figures</i>
6.2	A barren landscape deforested by tobacco farming and a silted dam 254
6.3	Siltation and eutrophication of a dam due to erosion from adjacent tobacco fields 255
6.4	A common wood fuel curing furnace used by small-scale tobacco farmers 256
6.5	Tobacco field of a small-scale farmer in Centenary district 257
6.6	Map of the Centenary district showing forestry cover and vegetation in 2000 257
6.7	Map of the Centenary district showing forestry cover and vegetation in 2019 258
6.8	Children tending to tobacco curing and managing a furnace 261
6.9	A poorly lit and aerated tobacco-grading shed 262

Tables

1.1 Southern Rhodesia tobacco exports, 1925–1929	<i>page 52</i>
1.2 Labour requirements in agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1940–1949	57
2.1 Tobacco cost of production in Southern Rhodesia, 1947–1950	107
3.1 Pesticide contamination of Burley tobacco grown in African areas, 1974	156
3.2 Pesticide contamination of Burley tobacco grown in African areas, 1975	156
5.1 Adoption of conservation by tobacco farmers in the ICAs in Southern Rhodesia, 1975–1976	216
6.1 Flue-cured tobacco production statistics in Zimbabwe, 2000–2019	249

Acknowledgements

Growing up in rural Muzarabani and Mount Darwin within the white commercial farming areas of Mutwa Estates and in the communal lands of Chawarura and later in Mukwengure resettlement areas in Zimbabwe nothing shaped our entire lives more significantly than the tobacco crop and tobacco farming. Our existence revolved around the routines of tobacco farming and the many rituals of tobacco culture from the nursery to the auction floors. The crop defined us and had such an overwhelmingly preponderant stranglehold on our consciousness, identity, material being, perceptions and worldviews. Tobacco was the source of life, the giver of meaning, the supplier of a living, the source of sustenance, the gateway to the good life and luxuries. It was more than a crop, but a whole social, cultural system around which our lives orbited. In more than one way, we were all inextricably connected to the tobacco crop and the tobacco production cult so much so that it can be said tobacco produced us. The crop had its own agency that enmeshed with our own lives changing not only our bodies and communities but also our physical landscapes: rivers, forests, birds and other species. This book is distilled from these experiences and the imperative to frame co-constituted histories about crops and their agency in changing landscapes, humans and political economy.

I would want to thank my academic mentor Professor Sandra Swart under whose guidance and mentorship I was able to bring together the ideas in this book. I would also want to appreciate the emotional support I received from my mother Dorothy Simbi, the retired tobacco farmer; my wife Alima; my son Farai; and the rest of the family. Special mention also goes to my friends – Tapiwa Madimu, for exhorting me to continue this path, Godfrey Hove, Wesley Mwatwara, Ushehweu Kufakurinani and Together Kaseke; to my History Friday Morning colleagues – Innocent Dande, Bryan Kauma, Lloyd Maphosa, Yustina Komba, Mia Uys, Lyle Lennox, Este Kotze, Tinashe Takuva and the late and the dearly missed Muhammad Maakato, who passed away

Acknowledgements

xiii

while finishing his own research; and to my social network of friends who lifted my spirits when the going got tough – Trevor Chikowore, Admire Phiri, Tafadzwa Chiyangwa and Levi Bumhira. Many thanks to the individuals who agreed to be interviewed and participated in this research in Mazowe, Mount Darwin and Muzarabani districts. I must also express gratitude to Sibanengi Ncube for showing me around and driving me during research and fieldwork. The staff at the National Archives of Zimbabwe gave me the best assistance as did the staff at the Tobacco Research Board. Special thanks also to the Parliament of Zimbabwe and my peers there, particularly Ruvimbo Matinhari, Betty Munowenyu, Angela Gutu and Martin Mugova.

Abbreviations

AAA	Agricultural Adjustment Act
ACS	American Cancer Society
Agritex	Agricultural Extension
BAT	British American Tobacco
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
Conex	Department of Conservation and Extension
DDT	dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FCTC	Framework Convention for Tobacco Control
FDT	Farmers Development Trust
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICA	Intensive Conservation Area
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITGA	International Tobacco Growers Association
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
NPA	Native Purchase Areas
NRB	Natural Resources Board
RF	Rhodesian Front
RNFU	Rhodesia National Farmers Union
ROTA	Rhodesian Oriental Tobacco Association
RTA	Rhodesia Tobacco Association
STP	Sustainable Tobacco Program
TIMB	Tobacco Industries and Marketing Board
TIRC	Tobacco Industries Research Council
TMB	Tobacco Marketing Board
TRB	Tobacco Research Board
TTL	Tribal Trust Lands

List of Abbreviations

xv

TTLDCOR	Tribal Trust Lands Development Cooperation
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
WHO	World Health Organization
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZTA	Zimbabwe Tobacco Association

Note on Currency, Units and Weight

For the measurement of weight, the imperial system is used in much of the book as this was the common method during the colonial period. The unit for measuring weight used is lbs, and 1 lb is the equivalent of 0.454 kilograms in the metric system. For currency, £, s, d represents Rhodesian pounds, shillings and pennies, respectively. R\$ represents Rhodesian dollars, which is the currency that came into use in March 1970 based on the 1967 Decimilisation Act. It was used until 1980 when the Zimbabwean dollar was introduced.