



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.

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Plunder for Profit

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

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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

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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.

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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

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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.