A social, economic and environmental history of African small grains in Zimbabwe, from the pre-colonial past to the present.

by

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Declaration

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December 2021

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‘A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground, it is not because of the moon. Everyone can see it in their compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so.’

Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart.*[1]

[1] Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 166-167.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social, economic, and environmental history of African small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko – in what is today Zimbabwe. It traces their development over shifting social, economic, political, and ecological periods from the pre-colonial era (from c.1500) to around 2010, after the formation of the Government of National Unity. Joining an already robust historiography, this study contributes by focusing on crops previously ignored, thus by paying special attention to the development of the 'underbelly' of the country's agrarian economy. Relying on a wide selection of primary sources from the National Archives of Zimbabwe and oral testimonies by African farmers and families, government personnel and academics, this study shows how from the precolonial era to the present, small grains have been integral to everyday African life, significant in socio-economic, environmental, and political processes in several African societies over time. It shows how different communities varyingly appreciated, produced and consumed small grains. Notably, this study demonstrates how the history of small grains is not just a story of crop production and consumption but is a complex social and political history of how Africans have survived the 'slow violence' of climatic and economic change, as well as precipitous disasters such as droughts and famines. Moreover, it contends that small grains became politicised. Located within discourses of state-making, hegemony and agency, this thesis conceptualizes 'political grain' to illustrate how – while small grains were used as a tool to control the economic and political narratives in the country by various elites – it was equally an expression of 'weapons of the weak'. In this latter capacity, it was deployed by individuals to challenge some patriarchal and religious gatekeepers' attempts to keep their grip on social control. The thesis analyses the changes and continuities in small grain culinary patterns, observing how while most Africans were introduced to new food and ways of eating, for others, of their own volition, they adopted and adapted culinary ideas, while still using small grains. This thesis offers an analysis of the complex relationship between men and women, Africans and whites, peasants and elites, ordinary citizens and the state, society and the environment. Thus, it joins the growing, yet fragmented, agrarian historiography of African food histories and contributes towards a wider understanding of previously ignored African crops in Zimbabwe's history.

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Opsomming

Die tesis ondersoek die sosiale, ekonomiese en omgewingsgeskiedenis van die Afrika kleingraangewasse – sorghum, giers (millet) en rapoko – in die streek wat vandag as Zimbabwe bekend staan. Dit karteer hul ontwikkeling oor veranderende sosiale, ekonomiese, politieke en ekologiese periodes vanaf die pre-koloniale era (van c.1500) tot aan die einde van die Regering van Nasionale Eenheid in 2013. Die studie sluit aan by `n aktiewe bestaande historiografie, maar lewer `n nuwe bydrae deur te fokus op vroeër geïgnoreerde gewasse met `n spesiale fokus op die kwesbare deel van die land se agrariese/landbou ekonomie. Die tesis maak gebruik van `n wye seleksie van primêre bronne van die Nasionale Argief van Zimbabwe asook mondelinge getuienis van swart boere en families, regeringsamptenare en akademici. Met dit as basis toon die studie aan hoe kleingrane van die pre-koloniale era tot vandag `n integrale deel van swart Afrikane se daaglikse betaan was en `n belangrike rol in sosio-ekonomiese, omgewings en politieke prosesse in verskeie gemeenskappe oor tyd gespeel het. Die tesis toon aan hoe verskillende gemeenskappe op `n verskeidenheid maniere kleingrane waardeer, geproduseer en verbruik het. Die geskiedenis van kleingrane was nie net `n verhaal van gewasproduksie en verbruik nie. Dit was `n komplekse sosiale en politieke geskiedenis van hoe swart Afrikane die impak ("slow violence") van klimaats- en ekonomiese verandering sowel as rampe soos droogtes en hongersnood oorleef het. Die tesis kom tot die gevolgtrekkig dat kleingrane verpolitiseer is. Die tesis is geposisioneer binne die diskoerse van staatsbou, hegemonie en agentskap en doen die konsep van "politieke graan" aan die hand. Dit illustreer dat terwyl politieke elite groepe graan gebruik het om ekonomiese en politieke narratiewe in die land te dikteer dit terselfdertyd ook `n uitdrukking van "wapens van die weerloses" ("weapons of the weak") was. In dié hoedanigheid is dit deur individue gebruik om sommige patriargale en godsdienstige hekwagters wat hul greep op sosiale beheer wou behou, uit te daag. Die tesis analiseer die veranderinge en kontinuiteite in kleingraan eetpatrone. Hoewel meeste swart Afrikane aan nuwe voedselsoorte en eetpatrone blootgestel is, het ander uit vrye wil eetpatrone aanvaar en aangepas terwyl hul steeds kleingrane gebruik het. Die tesis bied `n analise van die komplekse verhouding tussen mans en vroue, swart Afrikane en witmense, kleinboere en elites, gewone burgers en die staat, die samelewing en omgewing. Dit sluit dus aan by die groeiende hoewel nog gefragmenteerde agrariese/landbou historiografie oor Afrika se voedselgeskiedenis en lewer `n bydrae tot `n breër begrip van voorheen verwaarloosde Afrika voedselsoorte in die geskiedenis van Zimbabwe.

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Dedications

To my dearest mother, the late Stephanie Hollington – I promised to make you proud one day!

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List of Abbreviations

AMA:	Agricultural Marketing Authority
BSAC:	British South Africa Company
CNC:	Chief Native commissioner
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTLRP:	Fast-Track Land Reform Programme
GMB:	Grain Marketing Board
MDC:	Movement for Democratic Change
NADA:	Native Affairs Department Annuals
NSCFN:	National Steering Committee on Food and Nutrition
RAJ:	Rhodesian Agricultural Journal
UDI:	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
WFP:	World Food Programme
WHO:	World Health Organization
ZANU PF:	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAPU:	Zimbabwe African People's Union

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Chapter One

'Lost crops of Africa'?[1]: Introduction, Literature Survey and Methodology.

> "…they have been feeding people for thousands of years, but most are being given no attention whatever today. We have called them the 'lost crops of Africa'."
>
> Board on Science and Technology for International Development National Research, 1996.[2]

Introduction

Small grains have always mattered to small farmers. But now they are receiving renewed attention from various sectors of society including agricultural experts, the business fraternity and academics from development studies, economics, sociology and, more recently, history. In Africa, the consumption of small grains over the *longue durée* was key to the adoption of agriculture and the subsequent shift from nomadic pastoralism to agrarian kingdoms. Yet to date this social, political and environmental history of African agriculture has remained unwritten. For the Americas and Asia, this story has been told, at least in part, and as this thesis will demonstrate, their trajectories were very different from those of Africa. Moreover, the history of large grains in Africa has been well researched, because that has been where the centre of historiographical attention has fallen so far. So, by looking at previously neglected small grains, this thesis offers a fresh look at African agriculture, from the bottom up and over a long period. It explores the social, political and economic dimensions of small grain farming, especially so-called 'peasant agriculture', in southern Africa, with a particular focus on Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), by looking at the small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko. It looks at the fluidity and complexity of change over time in African societies, from the precolonial past, through the era of white settler colonial capitalism from 1890 right up until the post-colonial state ending in 2010. It looks at periods of peace and conflict, periods of economic upsurge and depression, exploring the changing appreciation of the small grains by both African and white communities, and how this shaped their relations locally, regionally and internationally.

[1] Board on Science and Technology for International Development National Research Council, *Lost crops of Africa: Grains*, (Washington, D.C: National Academies Press, 1996), Preface.
[2] *Ibid*.

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Having been around since at least the sixteenth century[3], small grain farming in Zimbabwe persisted into the twenty-first century to become a reliable staple among African families across the country, as this thesis will contend. It will be shown that in the drier areas of the country, they remain a key resource.[4] From the pre-colonial period, among the African communities, small grains are said not only to have provided food but were also a medium for conducting economic activity, being used for barter exchange for other essential items. This thesis starts by explaining why small grains enjoyed both social and economic success in pre-colonial African societies from around the sixteenth century. The thesis then argues that at the time of the white settler incursion, African peasant production showed healthy surpluses and dominated the grain market in what became Southern Rhodesia from the pre-colonial period up to the early 1930s, as Chapter Three will explain. In fact, this success frustrated and challenged colonial attempts at establishing a white settler agricultural economy, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four.[5] It is prudent to highlight how, although in the early years of white settler arrival, small grains were consumed by both black and white communities[6], this thesis will focus primarily on the story of African production and consumption of these grains. It will explain how the arrival of colonial settlers, aimed at capitalist extraction, looked to alter the African food palate and economy with maize, tobacco and cotton production from the time of the British settler and missionaries from the latter half of the nineteenth century around the 1880s to the early twentieth century.

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[3] James C. McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's encounter with a New World Crop, 1500- 2000*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 23.

[4] Baxter Tavuyanago, Nicholas Mutami and Kudakwashe Mbenene, 'Traditional grain crops in pre-colonial Zimbabwe: A factor for food security and social cohesion and the Shona people', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa,* 12, 6, 2010, 1-8. The domestication of crop plants occurred differently across the world. In Zimbabwe, the Neolithic revolution which culminated in the adoption of agriculture by society is believed to have been a result of direct Mutapa-Portuguese interactions in the 1560s. However, ethnographic research by T. Tlou and A.C. Campbell suggests that the earlier Great Zimbabwe kingdom had small animals and small grains like millet and sorghum as a part of their diet by as early as the 1450s. At this point because of their nomadic nature, societies precipitated the spread of agriculture through spreading crops by local animals such as crows and baboons who absorbed the crops into their diet and scattered the seed faster and further beyond the reach of human settlement. See Marvin P. Miracle "The Introduction and Spread of Maize in Africa", *The Journal of African History. 6, 1, 1965. 39-55.*

[5] 'Peasants' and 'peasantry' are highly contested terms in the academy. The shifting discourses on peasantry will be explored later in this chapter with the aim of enriching an understanding to how African families relate to the development (or lack thereof) of small grains in southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. Peasants are predominantly rural people whose subsistence and livelihood hinges on their production and exploitation of agricultural crops and animal husbandry. J. S. Saul and R. Woods, 'African peasantries', in Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasants and peasant societies: selected readings*, (New York, 1987), 80.

[6] H. Weinmann, *Agricultural research and development in Southern African, 1890-1923*, (Salisbury, University of Rhodesia, 1972), 59-60. It must be noted too that white communities also cultivated small grains, however, much of their yields were for livestock fodder. Focus of this thesis will be on African relationship with small grains because as will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, the story of African agrarian history and small grains in particular remains untold.

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It further examines how white colonial capital and colonialism, and later post-colonial African governments impacted the development of small grains during different periods of time.[7] The study explores the interesting points of convergence and as well as the contradictions within colonial and post-colonial policies and attitudes towards African small grains production and consumption. For example, as the colonial state simultaneously sought to suppress peasant production and consumption of small grains by various means (as will be elaborated upon in Chapters Three and Four), impacting on peasant grain marketing and food policy, the same colonial state aimed to benefit from the peasant production of small grains. Peasant agriculture even contributed towards the farmers' ability to cover taxation and trades costs.[8] This thesis thus joins the existing historiographical conversation with sociologist Giovanni Arrighi on African proletarianization, looking at how colonial ideology aimed at turning the African into an 'economic man', as a producer and later as a consumer of commodities[9], and yet at the same time wanted to phase out the very same peasantry it defined and created. Accordingly, this study, by adopting the lens of the development of small grains, explores the progression of African families and white socio-political relations over different social, economic and political periods.

Indeed, this chapter and the thesis as a whole joins key historical conversations in exploring the development of small grains from around 1500 in the pre-colonial era until 2010 during the Government of National Unity (GNU) years in Zimbabwe. It chronologically analyses the interplay between social, economic, environmental and political dynamics that affected and shaped the trajectory and nature of small grains. The history of small grains is protean and complicated, and as this thesis will show, there were conflicting debates and interests with respect to African small grains – both in terms of food and agriculture – by both white and African communities. These debates were guided by the interlocutors' different socio-political and economic motives. This chapter eschews colonial triumphalist narratives that celebrated white-sanctioned commercial crops and underplayed the significance of the peasantry and small grains in African historiography.

[7] H.W. Fox, *Memorandum concerning the problems of development and policy*, (London, 1910), 4.
[8] Pius Nyambara, 'Colonial policy and peasant cotton agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1904-1953', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 33. 1, 2000, 81-111.
[9] Giovanni Arrighi, 'Labour supplies in historical perspective: a study of the proletarianization of the African peasantry in Rhodesia', *Journal of Development Studies*, 6, 3, 1970, 197-234.

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What are small grains?

There are ongoing debates over what qualifies as a 'small grain' and these exchanges are not made any simpler by the interlocking socio-economic and environmental fundamentals that characterize small grains. According to historian Esbern Friis-Hansen, defining small grains is highly problematic as it requires a deep inquiry in definitive themes such as seed composition as well as nutritional content and quantities, distinctions in production, harvesting, storage and preservation, susceptibility to pests and environmental vagaries, and marketing and transportation.[10] Within all these sectors, small grains distinctively differ from large-grain varieties such as maize and wheat in many different ways as will be discussed in this study. Naturally, the subject of small grains becomes highly contested because of how they are often compared with maize. According to the global organization, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), any grain crop with a small plant structure classifies as a small grain and these include wheat, rice, sorghum, millet, barley, oats and rye.[11] This is supported by agricultural scientist Harold Wilson, who adds that 'small grains' is a term used to distinguish the small-seeded crops such as wheat, oats, barley and flax from the larger grain varieties like maize.[12] This study is focused on the small grain varieties sorghum, millet and rapoko, as illustrated below in **Figure 1**,[13] primarily because these are both the commonly grown and consumed varieties by African families in Zimbabwe.

[10] Esbern Friis-Hansen, *Seeds for African peasants: Peasant needs and agricultural research – the case of Zimbabwe*, (Copenhagen: The Nordic Africa Institution, 1995), 37. Also see McCann, *Maize and Grace*, 23.

[11] FAO, "Strategies for developing the small grains food system" http://www.fao.org/wairdocs/x5001e/X5001e01.HTM. Accessed 18 May 2018.

[12] Harold K. Wilson, *Grain Crops*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 23.

[13] Images obtained collected from BSTIDNRC, *Lost crops of Africa,* and FAO website http://www.fao.org/africa-grain-crops. Accessed 12 October 2020.

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Sorghum Millet Rapoko

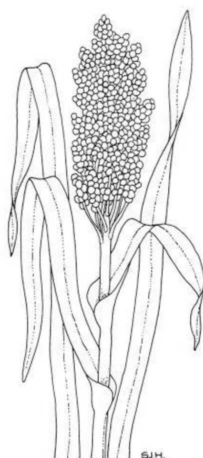

Figure 1. Pictures of small grains investigated in this thesis.[14]

Agronomist Richard W. Pohl, however, argues that while grasses and small grain varieties are superficially similar, they all have a distinctive taxonomy with individual marks of recognition.[15] Some agronomists prefer to classify small grains within the broader umbrella of cereal crops, while others such as scientists Thomas Lyttleton and Edward Montgomery writing in early 1907 are more inclined to the idea that cereals belong botanically to the large family of flowering plants called grasses or Poaceæ or Gramineæ.[16] This is because of their often similar descriptions and purposes.[17] As Chapter Two will reveal, there are some distinctions within the social uses of the grain varieties and these often account for their either intertwined or separate appreciation within social and religious spaces by different African families. Adding to this, Peter Shewry et al. further underline how both large and small grains offer essential phytochemical and dietary fibre components, with clear health benefits; however,

[14] Images obtained collected from BSTIDNRC, *Lost crops of Africa*, and FAO website http://www.fao.org/africa-grain-crops. Accessed 12 October 2020.
[15] Richard W. Pohl, *How to know the Grasses*, (Dubuque: WM. C. Brown Company, 1968), 1.
[16] Mark A. Carleton, *The small grains*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1920), 23.
[17] Thomas Lyttleton and Edward G. Montgomery, *Examining and grading grains,* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1907), 26.

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these grains differ in terms of the diseases that affect them.[18] Common grain diseases include dwarf bunt, black stem rust and powdery mildew.[19] As Chapter Three will show, in Southern Rhodesia, unlike with maize, African small-grain farmers seldom experienced the same magnitude of challenges with grains diseases as they did with their maize crops especially between 1910 and 1925 when small grain cultivation was more prominent than maize.

For social scientists, the contestation in identifying small grains fundamentally lies with the similarities and distinctions of social and cultural uses of small grains, grasses and large grains. For agro-scientists on the other hand, defining small grains is resolved by an analysis of the germination, reproduction, seed growth, output and contributions to human and animal lives by the crops. According to American botanist Mark Carleton, small grains are often spherical and vary greatly in size and shape, unlike grasses for instance.[20] Moreover, their size mostly determines the food output obtained from each individual crop; however, this has limited contributions towards their nutritional composition and value, as argued in Chapter Five.[21] Also, a major underlying characteristic distinguishing small grains varieties from other grain crops is their drought-resistance quality.[22] Agriculturally, they perform well in semi-arid to arid areas, maintaining sturdy growth within areas that receive less than 600 mm annual rainfall.[23] Small grains have a long life and, when kept dry, will remain dormant and resistant to various harmful influences for several years and still retain their vitality.[24] Moreover, small grain crops in comparison to maize have a short maturation period and can be grown all year round, with little adverse impact on the environment.[25] It is little wonder that, as will be explained more thoroughly in Chapters Four and Six, in the face of irregular climatic and environmental conditions, the adoption of small grain crops as a staple diet is currently championed as a solution for food insecurity in contemporary societies.

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[18] Peter Shewry and Nigel Halford, 'Cereal seed storage proteins: Structures, properties and the role in grain utilization', *Journal of Experimental Botany*, 53, 370, 2002, 947-958.

[19] Timothy D. Murray, David W. Parry and Nigel D. Cattlin, *A colour handbook of diseases of small grain: Cereal crops*, (London: Manson Publishing, 2009), 34.

[20] Carleton, *The Small grains*, 12.

[21] *Ibid*.

[22] *Ibid*. 82.

[23] FAO, "Strategies for developing the small grains food system" http://www.fao.org/wairdocs/x5001e/X5001e01.HTM. Accessed 18 May 2018.

[24] Carleton, *The Small grains*, 15.

[25] *Ibid*, 60-61. This is attributed to the existence of myriads of miniscule rootlets which absorb water and liquid food for the nourishment of the plant, while at the same time releasing organic matter contributing to soil pools of organic carbon, nitrogen and microbial biomass which is good for soil fertility. Also see Adonis Moreira, 'The role of mineral nutrition on root growth of crop plants', *Advances in Agronomy,* 2011.

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Nomenclature in the story of small grains

In Zimbabwe, small grains are sometimes often also referred to as 'traditional grains.' This tag has been ascribed largely for 'politically correct' reasons by different pockets within society to emphasize how small grains have a long and rich history – traditional – within African culture and ways of life. Here, however, the debate is more associated with the struggle to identify and differentiate between the small grain varieties linguistically. For the greater part of the colonial period, among the colonial authorities and white farmers, small grains were referred to using the offensive term 'kaffir corn'.[26] Added to this, according to the 1923 Rhodesia Agriculture Secretary Emory Alvord's testimony, settlers tended to use the African term *rapoko* as the umbrella term for peasant small grains.[27] This logic can be best understood within the colonial (mis)understanding of African culture, linguistics and pronunciations.[28] Colonial author H.M.G. Jackson validates this observation citing how in some cases it was not uncommon that the colonial administrators would either make reference to the same crop under a different name, as they switch from one language and region to the next. Others would combine different items (in this case, grains) into a singular term based on visual or behavioural similarity, influenced largely by their inability to correctly pronounce, dictate and ascribe the specific name given in that region.[29]

For Alvord, and many others within the Department of Agriculture in the 1920s, *rapoko* was the 'principal food crop of the natives of the high veld and is extensively used for beer making.'[30] As will be shown in the ensuing chapters, especially Chapter Three, small grain opaque beer drinking was indeed widespread across the country, yet not all opaques brewed were fermented from *rapoko*. Each region, as shown in **Map 1**, often tended to favour a certain variety of grain, influenced by either ecological or cultural reasons, as will be shown in this thesis. Moreover, using their local dominant languages or linguistic group, each region and society ascribed a name to the varieties of small grain they used. There are some more distinct names commonly used across different communities and cultures to refer to small grains. In 1962 a Commission of Inquiry on the state of grain in Southern Rhodesia helped settle the

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[26] This has been noted from various records including the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* that captured the agricultural activities operating across the colony.

[27] Emory D. Alvord, 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives', (*Native Affairs Department Annuals* (hereafter *NADA*), *1929*, 9-16 and 'African nomenclature', *NADA 1923*, 62. This belief can in part be explained in terms of the view that African grains were looked upon as inferior by whites and, among the small grain varieties, rapoko was also regarded as inferior.

[28] 'African nomenclature', *NADA,* 1923, 62-3.

[29] H.M.G. Jackson, 'Some reflections on the relation of law to social anthropology', *NADA,* 1927, 27-8.

[30] Alvord, 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives', *NADA,* 1929, 9-16.

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ambiguity over nomenclature,[31] and the conclusions, cautiously adopted by this study with verification from various oral sources, are illustrated in **Table 1** below.

Map 1: Distribution of grain cultivation in Zimbabwe.[32]

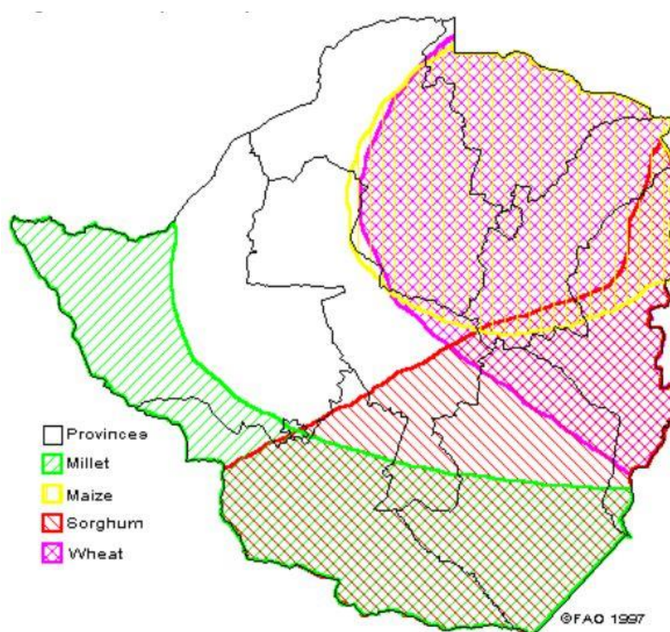

Table 1: Commonly used classification of small grains in Zimbabwe (adopted by this study)[33]

English	Ndebele	Shona	Scientific label
Sorghum	Amabele	Mhunga/munga	pennisetumtyphoideum
Pearl millet	Inyawuti/inyauti	Mapfunde	Pennisetum glaucum
Finger millet (rapoko)	Uphoko/upoko	Zviyo Rukweza rapoko	eleusinecoracana

While the above table indicates the major names commonly used, it must be noted that Zimbabwe society is diverse and different cultures have different spelling or labels given to these small grains. For instance, referring to rapoko, some Ndebele people say *upoko/uphoko*

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[31] NAZ, FG4 1962, 'Commission of inquiry into the maize and small grain industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia', 83, 1962, 39.
[32] USAid Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), *Zimbabwe Food Security Brief*, (Harare: 2014), 6.
[33] Table developed by author/researcher based on information obtained from oral interviews and secondary literature.

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and *inyauti* /*inyawuti* for millet – a purely linguistic change. Among the Manyika, rapoko is *zio* while among the Ndau the same rapoko crop is called *mungoza*.[34] An important aspect to understanding this varying terminology can be traced to the numerous migratory patterns during the precolonial era, settler encroachment and eventual colonialism, as well as the development of language and the impact of African culture on nomenclature. Moreover, this also speaks to the way that different communities perceive and articulate their appreciation of small grains, and this is elaborated through their different social positioning of the crop. Among different communities, different small-grain varieties were accorded different social, economic and political values, and this is reflected by the utility and symbolism that they displayed.

Historically, small grains played a key role in shaping African nutrition. This is discussed in Chapter Five that explores the subject of nutrition among African families. As with the term small grains, interpreting the notion of nutrition is not a simple task. It is understood differently in different societies. Varying aspects of African nutrition have been different and widely explored in historiography, appreciating the early efforts of missionaries who dedicated a great amount of work towards understanding African diseases and wellbeing from the late 1870s.[35] The chapter explores how this intersected with existing African ideas and terminologies surrounding eating and nutrition. Three key terms will frequently be used interchangeably in this thesis: nutrition, malnutrition and undernutrition.[36] By their scientific definition, these terms are by no means synonyms of each other, yet, by their nature and impact, they do well to reflect the changing state and nature of Africa nutrition over time and space.

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[34] Alvord, 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives', *NADA,* 1929, 9-16.

[35] South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), 'Anthropological and historical notes on the Bantu tribes of South Africa', in *Tuberculosis in South African Natives*, (Johannesburg: Historical Papers Research Archive, 2013), 26-37.

[36] According to historian Diana Wylie, nutrition is fluid and is part of food, lifestyles and social processes of acquiring and eating. Undernutrition is defined by medical doctor Michael Gelfand as the sustained underconsumption of adequate nutrients, especially proteins, leaving the body susceptible to diseases such as malnutrition. Wylie, Gelfand and David Sanders alike agree that malnutrition is a severe illness whose impact especially among young children can impair brain growth and retard functionality processes. The challenges of nutrition among most African countries centre on their economic inability to provide adequate meals with a balanced mixture of all the essential nutrients. See Diana Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 39 and 63, Michael Gelfand, *Diet and tradition in African culture*, (Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1971), 45-6 and David Sanders, The Origins of malnutrition in Zimbabwe', *Central African Journal of Medicine*, 28, 8, 1982, 186-191.

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The location and its people

Before 1980, when Zimbabwe gained political independence, the country was known as Southern Rhodesia. Geographically, it covers the stretch from the great Zambezi River in the north to the equally majestic Limpopo River in the south, running horizontally from the mountainous plains of the Chimanimani bordering Portuguese Mozambique to the far end crown of the Victoria Falls in the west.[37] This covers an estimated 390 757 km².[38] Zimbabwe is characterized by savannah climatic conditions and has five ecological regions as delineated by V. Vincent and R.G. Thomas.[39] As noted from the earlier **Map 1**, small grains are predominantly farmed in ecological regions III, IV and V and these are located mainly in the Matabeleland North and South and Midlands provinces of the country as shown in **Map 2**. These provinces are mostly inhabited by communities that speak Ndebele, Kalanga, Zezuru (Shona dialect in the Midlands), Ndau and Tonga.[40] Culturally, up to this day, save for a few small communities such as some Tonga, these are patriarchal communities practising various traditional religions, with a strong belief in the ancestors for their wellbeing. By and large, the Kalanga- and Shona-speaking communities' religion is influenced by the Mwali cult.[41] The advent of colonialism saw missionaries spread the gospel of Christianity throughout the colonial era and by the end of the first decade following independence in 1980, just over 51% of the nation's 10.5 million population practised Christianity, with 65% believing in both Christianity and traditional religion.[42] As this thesis will show, different aspects of religion play a key role in the shaping of small grains production, culinary patterns as well as African ideas towards health and nutrition in Zimbabwe. Because Zimbabwe stretches over vast tracts of land, covering different social, economic and religious practices, these patterns were varied often depending also on the physical environment of the particular area.

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[37] Karin Steen, 'Time to farm: A qualitative inquiry into the dynamics of the gender regime of land and labour rights in subsistence farming, an example from the Chiweshe communal area, Zimbabwe', *Lund Dissertations in Sustainability Science No. 2*, (Lund: Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies, 2011), 12.

[38] D.W. Gale, *Rhodesia 1890-1970*, *Eighty Years onwards*. (Bulawayo: D.A. Blumberg, 1979), 3.

[39] V. Vincent and R.G. Thomas *An Agro-Ecological Survey of Southern Rhodesia: Part I Agro-Ecological Survey. Salisbury*, (Salisbury: Government Printers, 1961).

[40] Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT), *Census 2012 National Report, Harare*, ZIMSTAT, 2012).

[41] Wallace Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), i. In African tradition, it is clear that the religious system of the Bantu peoples is generally the same, with perhaps the interpretations, representations and applications of beliefs, custom, so-called 'witchcraft' and taboos differing from place to place or from people to people. Also see Tabona Shoko, *Karanga indigenous religion in Zimbabwe: Health and wellbeing*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) and Thembani Dube, 'Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005', PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2015.

[42] Tarisai Mutangi, 'Religion, law and human rights in Zimbabwe', *African Human Rights Journal,* 8, 2, 2008, 526-545.

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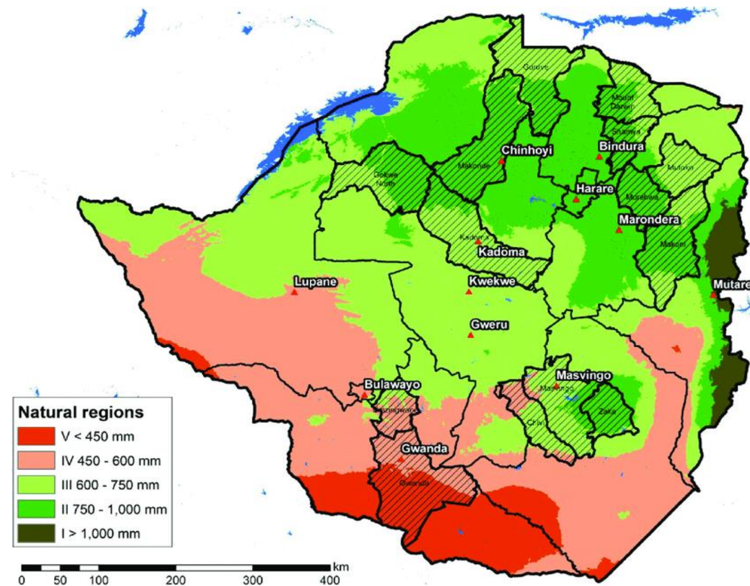
Map 2: Map of Zimbabwe showing ecological regions, provinces and major cities/towns.[43]



Literature survey and major themes

There is a rich body of both historical studies and literary accounts that cover the social, economic, environmental, and political history of Zimbabwe. Notably, as this chapter and thesis in general will show, historiography on Zimbabwe characteristically espouses colonial authorities' hegemony over African society and the marginalization of African society in various key aspects of life notably agriculture. This is visible through the skewed imbalance of historical accounts between black and white histories. Indeed, in Zimbabwe, historical literature is characteristic of a dearth of detailed primary records on African agriculture, of the magnitude of attention dedicated to settler and white production. Many early pioneer studies as well as later colonial and postcolonial historical accounts on the agrarian and social history of southern Africa primarily focused on the white settler communities and their interests, which were considered the pillars of Southern Rhodesian economy – maize, tobacco or beef production. By comparison, the 'underbelly' of the peasant economy and society: African society and small grains, in particular, received little historical attention – at least up until around the mid-1950s when the first scientific study on small grains soil and nutrition properties was carried out by the Matopos Research Station.[44] Yet, as Chapters Two and Three

[43] Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), *Zimbabwe Meteorological survey report 2005*, (Harare: Government Publishers, 2006), 35.
[44] P.A. Donovan, 'Results of crop research at the Matopos Research Station, 1955/6-1960/1', *Part 12*, (Matopos Research Station, 1962), 29.

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will demonstrate, from the precolonial era until the late 1920s, African producers dominated grain and agricultural production. Moreover, according to the various merchant and colonial records, small grains fared comparatively better than white settler-produced maize, with African peasant producers being the backbone of the economic development of the early colonial and post-colonial state.[45] Against this background, this thesis joins an extensive and ever-growing multidisciplinary conversation to primarily demonstrate how African agrarian histories, with special attention to African food patterns, offer a more rounded account for the shifting relationship between Africans themselves, with the state and white setters – and latter white communities in Zimbabwe. Guided by a wide range of both colonial and revisionist scholarship, this thesis revisits different key historiographical conversations within agrarian studies including debates on the advent and impact of settler colonialism, climate change and peasant responses and the development of culinary patterns over time. Using the intersection of small grains with social, economic, environmental, and political developments in Zimbabwe over time, this thesis draws on Rob Nixon's concept of 'slow violence'. Nixon contends that some changes within society occur 'gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.'[46] This thesis uses Nixon's idea in its re-evaluation of the relationship between African communities, the state, whites and the environment to trace how, overt and sometimes not some discernible, economic, social, climatic and political developments have shaped the development of African families and that of small grains in particular. By examining global and local agrarian literature, this chapter both reveals and fills these historiographical gaps within the literature on Zimbabwe. The examination of the precolonial and subsequent development of African social and kinship ties, settler arrival and colonial impact on African agricultural production and marketing, the development of African food, culinary patterns and nutrition as well as the politics of food (in)security will show how agrarian development was a combination of both setbacks and progress, individual agency and broader society.[47]

[45] Erik Green, 'Production systems in pre-colonial Africa', *The history of African development*, 2016, 1-13.
[46] Rob Nixon, *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 2.
[47] The objective of this literature review is to orientate the dissertation within existing historiography rather than to give an exhaustive account of that historiography.

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'Collecting food, cultivating people'[48]: African peasantry and African families.

This section revisits the topical debate of the African peasantry and how it has developed over time. This offers a better appreciation of the multiple factors that influence and shape the development of small grains. By showing the historiographical changes and continuities, this section will also help answer key questions such as the rise and nature of the peasantry, whether there is still such a thing as a 'peasantry' in Zimbabwe and how it differs from the commercial sector. Are the distinctions economic or do they also involve social factors? Ultimately, how have the peasantry shaped the development of both African agriculture and small grains in particular?

Historically, the term 'peasantry' has been widely contested by various scholars from different disciplines including Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and History. Indeed, as a subject of academic debate, the African peasantry continues to receive a fair amount of historical attention globally, regionally and locally. The term 'peasant' is also loaded with subjective connotations, and these along with other definitions have not been static, instead changing with time. For example, around the sixth century, the term 'peasant' was used to denote a rural inhabitant regardless of their involvement in agriculture.[49] Yet, by the thirteenth century, to the French and English alike, the term peasant became used to denote anyone who was viewed as 'rustic, ignorant, stupid or crass', while the Germans understood it to imply criminality or a brigand.[50] These meanings were both indicative and a reflection of a shifting tide of emerging 'economic elitism' that revised social hierarchies across different Western societies in the era.[51] In addition, it became indicative of extreme subordination with a 'ubiquitous elite practice of blaming peasants for a variety of economic and social ills.'[52] For Zimbabwe, Tawanda Chingozha and Dieter Von Fintel attest to how the early Southern Rhodesian government underlined this view of African families through the 1925 Morris Carter Commission, describing their livelihood as 'kaffir farming' based on 'wasteful methods,

[48] Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting food, cultivating people*: Subsistence and Society in Central Africa, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 56.

[49] Marc Edelman, 'What is a peasant? What are peasantries? *A briefing paper on issues of definition', Paper presentation for the Intergovernmental Working Group on United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People working in rural area, Geneva, 15-19 July 2013.*

[50] Jacques Le Goff and Edmund King, 'The Town as an Agent of Civilisation, C. 1200-c. 1500,' *The Fontana Economic History of Europe: The Middle Ages*, (ed). Carlo M. Cipolla (London: Collins/ Fontana, 1972), 71.

[51] The black death that that crept its way across Europe, decimating human and livestock populations contributed toward a rethinking on social interactions with economic margins being used a unit measure for social separation and 'safety'.

[52] Jim Hardy, "'Almost Idiotic Wretchedness': A Long History of Blaming Peasants," *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 36, 2. 2009, 325–344.

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slovenly and unnecessarily ineffective, and if continued will be ruinous to the future interests of Rhodesia'.[53] Such derogatory racist definitions formed a major part of the peasant narrative in the historical record up to around the late 1920s at the cusp of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, which welcomes minor shifts in the colonialists attitudes towards African farmers strides at improving land usage.[54]

J. S. Saul and R. Woods note how by the mid-nineteenth century the term 'peasantry' come to be commonly used by social scientists to describe and analyse types of rural societies whose subsistence is primarily derived from their labour in agriculture.[55] They point out that peasants are those 'whose ultimate security and subsistence lies in their having certain rights in the land and labour over the land.'[56] American Anthropologist Alfred Kroeber echoes this view, underscoring that peasants are 'definitely rural, yet live in relation to market towns…they form a class segment of a larger population'.[57] For Kroeber, the notion of the peasantry was relatively fixed and rigid. Offering a counter to this, Marxist Africanist historian Fredrick Cooper points out how, hardly before Africans could absorb these abrasive images of their cultivation practices by white commentators, they were being transformed into the proletariat.[58] Historian Ian Phimister showed that, as early as the second decade of the nineteenth century in Southern Rhodesia, African peasants formed a growing section of the (migrant) labour population and the expansion of the mining industry initially created favourable market opportunities for an emergence of an African peasantry in significant numbers. While some joined the labour market, many others moved in to supply the bourgeoning mines with food and other

[53] Tawanda Chingozha and Dieter von Fintel, 'Motivation, Risks and Class Effects of Land Policy in a Colony: Lessons from Southern Rhodesia', 2017, 187-199.

[54] A. C Jenning, Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia, *African Affairs*, XXXIV, CXXXVI, 1935, 296-312. By the mid-1920s, the colonial government was invested towards improving African land tenure systems through provision of extension services. However, inadvertently, this propelled the outputs of African farmers which further increased their competition to white grain farmers. Also see Eira Kramer, 'The early years: Extension services in peasant agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe, 1925-1929', *Zambezia*, XXIV, II, 1997, 159-198.

[55] J. S. Saul and R. Woods, "African peasantries", in ed. Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and peasant societies: selected readings*, (New York, 1987), 80 and Marc Edelman, 'What is a peasant? What are peasantries? A briefing paper on issues of definition', *Paper presentation for Intergovernmental Working Group on a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, Geneva, 15-19 July 2013*.

[56] *Ibid*. 4.

[57] Alfred Kroeber, *Anthropology*, (New York: Brace and Company, 1948), 284.

[58] Frederick Cooper, 'Review: Peasants, Capitalists, and Historians: A Review Article' *Journal of Southern African Studies, 7, 2,* 1981, 284-314.

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agricultural wares.[59] So outstanding is this contribution by Africans and accounts for the early episodes of African peasant prosperity as postulated in the seminal 1979 Colin Bundy thesis.[60]

The 'rise and fall' hypothesis by Bundy was ground-breaking.[61] Over the ensuing years, his study has generated a lot of debate over the nature of the African peasantry. He unsettled the question of the peasantry because he focused on external factors at the expense of African agency. However, revisiting conversations over gender, class, culture and economics, within livelihoods and African agriculture, in particular, historians including Meredith McKittrick[62], Gerald Mazarire[63] and Elizabeth Schmidt[64] are able to show how women constituted the backbone of African traditional agriculture in southern Africa and some, of their own volition, adopted an array of crops for both domestic and livelihood purposes. Historian John Iliffe adds how crop cultivation was a key part of peasant life, and activities such as *Shangwa* (dry planting) used to provide and look after African families, became strategies methods of averting ecological disasters.[65] Mazarire suggested, that while the landscape influenced settlement patterns, the inherent need to survive through access to water, arable land and pastures, shaped the nature of peasant economies.[66] This underlines the centrality of agriculture and small grain within the making of African social economy.

Revisiting the 1959 work of George Peter Murdock, *Africa: its people and their culture history*, historical archaeologist J.E.G. Sutton argues that the transformation of African 'cultural clusters' marked a turning point in the African peasantry.[67] The development of a peasant class consisted of more than neatly distinguishes farming communities away from their so-called 'primitive' hunter-gatherer existence.[68] This development was not simplistic, but a complex

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[59] Trevor Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980, An overview', *Handerson Seminar Paper*, 1987, 72, 7.
[60] Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African peasantry*, (London: James Curry, 1979).
[61] Bundy, *The Rise and Fall.*
[62] Meredith McKittrick, 'Reinventing the Family: Kinship, Marriage and Famine in Northern Namibia, 1948-54', *Social Science History*, 23, 3, 1997, 265-295.
[63] Gerald Mazarire, 'The politics of the womb': Women, politics and the environment in pre-colonial Chivi, southern Zimbabwe, c.1840-1900, *Zambezia*, XXX, I, 2003, 35-49.
[64] Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, traders and wives: Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*, (Harare: Baobab Books, 1996),
[65] John Iliffe, *Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990), 40.
[66] Mazarire, 'The politics of the womb', 41.
[67] J. E. G. Sutton, 'Irrigation and Soil-Conservation in African Agricultural History with a Reconsideration of the Inyanga Terracing (Zimbabwe) and Engaruka Irrigation Works (Tanzania)', *Journal of African History*, 25, 1, 1984, 25-41.
[68] *Ibid*.

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and systematic and shifting endeavour of capitalist hegemony. Consequently, emphasizing on the 'underdevelopment' of African society, sociologist Giovanni Arrighi asserts that white contact with Africans leads to a 'progressive decrease in the overall productivity of the African' peasantry'.[69] This is further supported by historians Phimister[70] and Eira Punt[71] who observe how during the early years of colonial rule between 1890-1914 and the 'inter-war period' from 1890 and 1959, respectively, and trace how African agricultural production suffered in the face of deliberate manoeuvres by the colonialists. Quoting the Chief Native Commissioner in 1925, Punt notes, 'we are often given to condemn the native method of agriculture … if trying to produce crops with the least element of risk or failure can be called indolence, then we are all equally guilty.'[72] This shows how the peasantry was not stagnant but changed over time. Moreover, it also illustrates how early settler agriculturalists also evinced similar agrarian flaws as those associated with 'peasants.' Thus, in southern Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, the peasantry was not limited to a social or economic type.

For social anthropologist, Karin Kapadia, social upheaval and economic changes over the twentieth century changed the nature of African peasants by ending many of the more egregious forms of labour that existed across Asia and Africa alike.[73] Influenced by colonial ideas towards African labour and agrarian practices, the shifting social and economic mindsets created less onerous yet very specific categories for peasants that distinguished themselves from the rest of society.[74] For anthropologist George Dalton, peasants were legally, politically, socially and economically inferior and this distinguished them from the category 'farmers'.[75] Unlike farmers, peasants were 'politically powerless.'[76] Farmers had greater control over the land they used to grow their crops. Yet, enriching the debate, historian Terence Ranger draws upon a wide range of oral and archival material championing the 'peasant option' stressing upon that the African peasant was a conscious being – consciously participating in social and

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[69] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Political economy of Rhodesia*, (The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1967), 67.
[70] Ian Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', *African Affairs, 1974*, 73.
[71] Eira Punt, 'The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the interwar years, *MA dissertation*, University of Natal, Durban, 1979, 111.
[72] Native Commissioner Report, 1925 cited in Punt, 'The development of African agriculture', 1.
[73] Karin Kapadia, 'Responsibility without rights: women workers in bonded labour in rural industry in South India', in Jos. E. Mooij, Deborah Fahy Bryceson and Cristobal Kay (eds), *Disappearing peasantries? Rural labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, (London: intermediate Technology Publications, 2000), 247-261.
[74] Edelman, 'What is a peasant?, 4.
[75] George Dalton, 'How Exactly Are Peasants 'Exploited'?', *Economic Anthropology*, 76, 3, 1974, 553-561.
[76] *Ibid*. 556.

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economic activities aimed at improving their social, economic and political conditions.[77] Political Scientist Kenneth Good would later show that in southern Africa, the peasant option was not static or singular. In fact, they are embryonic classes ranging differently in place and time.[78] Moreover, distinguishing between peasants in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe, he shows how 'inward and moral economy' approaches to unpacking the peasantry were wrong to assume African peasants were subsistence orientated, egalitarian or homogenous. In fact, as this thesis will also demonstrate, African families even within the same community, held varying appreciations of agriculture and small grains in particular. Providing a wide range of primary data on both white settler as well as African agricultural activity in Southern Rhodesia between 1924 and 1950, agriculturalist H. Weinmann[79] underscores what historians Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons later highlight that the peasants are a differentiated group where 'some peasant farmers are relatively better off and others relatively poor.'[80] This thesis extends to show these distinctions across crops, between small grains and maize, in particular, showing how African farmers differed from maize producers with respect to production, markets and consumption of their crop.

As historian Stephen Burgess rightly notes, African peasants played an integral role in colonial food policy during agricultural transformation.[81] For historian Victor Machingaidze, analysis production in various sectors including tobacco, maize and dairy says peasants are indeed flexible and diverse, and thus were able to respond differently over varying episodes of economic turbulence and market prosperity in the history of Zimbabwe.[82] Reinforcing this view, Saul and Woods delineate a distinction between African families pointing out that while peasants and rural people are not the same – it is a mistake to elide them. The former group, they conclude, are people whose ultimate security and subsistence lies in their having rights in land and labour and are involved in a wider economic system that includes the participation of

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[77] Terence Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe: A comparative study on southern Africa*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 23.

[78] Kenneth Good, 'The direction of agricultural development in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi', in Z.A. Konczacki *et al* (ed), *Studies in the Economic History of Southern Africa: Volume 1: The Front Line States*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 56.

[79] H. Weinmann, 'Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950', *University of Rhodesia series in Science*, 1975.

[80] Robin H. Palmer and Neil Parsons, *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 243.

[81] Stephen F. Burgess, 'Small holder voice and rural transformation: Zimbabwe and Kenya compared, *Comparative Politics*, 29, 2, 1997, 127-149.

[82] Victor E. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Responses', *The international Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 3, 1991, 557-588.

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non-peasants.[83] Accordingly, through selling their small grains especially during times of drought, some African families were able to elevate themselves out of the bracket of peasanthood through the accumulation of wealth and status, becoming part of the emerging African bourgeoisie.[84] Historian Trevor Ncube redefined the association of peasantry with the rural poor by their becoming master farmers who developed the nature and state of rural agriculture.[85] As early as 1900, African farmers were actively participating in the grain economy; however, owing to a combination of factors, by the 1930s their position had altered in line with the dictates of the governing colonial government. This resonates with what Cooper describes as being the partial nature of peasant involvement in the markets, namely their subordination to the state or to ruling elites.[86] As Ncube underlines, the nature of state-farmer relations shaped how production and trade of agricultural produce fared and developed over the colonial period.

Sociologist Henry Bernstein posits that the peasantry must be analysed in terms of their relationship with the state and capital.[87] Yet, as historian Gareth Austin[88] , as well as other economic historians Z.A. Konczacki and J.M. Konczacki,[89] observe, for most of Africa, peasant livelihoods have been much more influenced and shaped by 'patriarchal domesticity', whereby family members are each allocated distinguishable gendered duties whose outputs contribute towards the growth and wellbeing of the family, and society as a whole. Within this social complex, appreciation for work was not always acknowledged through wages but in terms of the appreciated social status within the family.[90] Economic historian Erik Green however adds how precolonial African society was not a static and controlled social unit but was equally characterized by commerce and trade, with stiff competition among African producers and traders[91] Green's work neatly debunks romanticized accounts of African

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[83] J. S. Saul and R. Woods, 'African peasantries', in (ed) Teodor Shanin, *Peasants and peasant societies: selected readings*, (New York, 1987), 81.

[84] Michael Owen, *The rise of an African Middle class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965*, (Indiana University Press, 2002).

[85] Trevor Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980, An overview', *Handerson Seminar Paper*, 1987, 72, 7.

[86] Frederick Cooper, 'Peasants, Capitalists, and Historians: A Review Article', *Journal of Southern African Studies, 7,* 2, 1981, 284-314, see 284-5.

[87] Henry Bernstein, 'Farewells to the peasantry', *Transformation,* 52, 2003, 1.

[88] Gareth Austin, *Labour, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956,* (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2009).

[89] Z.A. Konczacki and J.M. Konczacki, *An economic history of Tropical Africa, Vol 1: The Pre-Colonial Period,* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 32.

[90] Henry Bernstein, "Farewells to the peasantry", *Transformation 52, 2003.*

[91] Green, 'Production systems in pre-colonial Africa', 2-3.

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families as surviving primarily on social contracts characterized by sharing resources such as grain as a primary means of survival.[92] There existed a fluid economic and political relationship between African societies, the state (political power through chieftainships) and the economy, and African families who failed to navigate through the market were often entrenched in poverty.[93] These observations contribute towards understanding the coexistence of social capital and capitalism within an ever-changing and growing agrarian landscape.

Richard William Hodder described African farmers in Marandellas District (now Marondera) as peasant, second-class rural residents with low economic capital, which resulted from constrained livelihoods and social mobility because of their low agricultural output.[94] In what is an apt description of African farmers for most of the colonial and postcolonial periods, sociologist Theodor Shanin writes that a peasant is a small agricultural producer who, with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power.[95] This best describes – for this thesis – the evolving nature of small grain farmers in Zimbabwe. As shown in the discussion above, it is very difficult to settle on a generic definition for the peasantry that encompasses the vast sociocultural spectrum within which it has developed historically over time. This thesis concurs with Teodor Shanin's observations that 'peasants' are a heterogeneous group, with salient social and economic diversity that shapes and are equally shaped by their different communities and the associated politics.[96]

Contested spaces: African society and the development of 'whiteness'.

Although white British missionaries arrived in the region in the 1860s, it was not until 1894 that the territory was annexed through British victory over the Ndebele in the Anglo-Ndebele War.[97] Their arrival would later witness the dispossessing Africans of their lands and assuming control through the British South Africa Company (BSAC also referred to as the Company) by 1890. Widely documented are early Company ambitions of finding the elusive Second Rand mineral reef in Southern Rhodesia. Yet by 1906 it had become apparent that the dream of

[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] R. William Hodder, *White farmers in Rhodesia: A history of Marandellas district, 1890-1965*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), 72-78.
[95] Theodor Shanin, 'Peasantry as a Political Factor', in Theodor Shanin, (ed), *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Harmondsworth, 1971), 240.
[96] Shanin, *Peasant and Peasants societies,* 2.
[97] Lewis Henry Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934, (London: Chatto and Windus 1965), 45-47.

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Eldorado was not to be.[98] The colonial administration sought to realign their fortunes by turning the colony into a 'Little White Island'.[99] Notwithstanding, as is the case for African society, likewise, white settlers were not a homogenous group, holding varying economic interests in Southern Rhodesia over time.[100] Historian Maurice Rooney examines the varying legislative debates between Imperial Britain and the Company about establishing a colonial office in Southern Rhodesia.[101] Initially, the majority of the conservative members were against the idea of investments in governing foreign soils, but upon convincing from Cecil John Rhodes, selling the idea that the colony would pay for its own development, settler investments shifted towards creating an agricultural hub for white settlers.[102] Machingaidze,[103] Weinmann[104] and Paul Mosley[105] have also shown the differences in economic trajectory as they traced the development of settler capitalist agriculture, based primarily on tobacco, maize and dairy production. Importantly, despite varying investments, historian D. Clarke argues that white capitalist hegemony was achieved by the systematic pauperization of Africans, first through their 'depeasantization' stemming from land disenfranchisements and alienation, then proletarianization and labour exploitation of African labour.[106] Admire Mseba argues that with the dispossession of their lands by whites, Africans ceded their social and economic control. He underlines that for most African families, cultivating the land and agriculture was not just an occupation, but integral to spiritual, social and political aspects of their lives.[107] Similarly, my thesis shows that African contact with the Company settlers from 1890 onwards had a far-reaching impact on multiple spheres of the African economy. Moreover, this thesis aims to address the fault-lines that viewed both black and white communities in Southern Rhodesia as homogenous blocks, in respect to how they related towards native policy and capitalist

[98] Ian Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe*, (London: Longman, 1988), 32-36.
[99] John Parker, *Rhodesia: Little White Island*, (London, Pitman, 1972), 11.
[100] David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, landscapes and the problem of belonging*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 78-81.
[101] Maurice Rooney, 'European agriculture in the history of Rhodesia, 1890-1907', *MA dissertation*, University of South Africa, 1968), 60-1.
[102] *Ibid*.
[103] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture'.
[104] Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development*.
[105] Paul Mosley, 'Agricultural Development and Government Policy in Settler Economies: The Case of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900-60', *Economic History Review New Series*, 35, 3, 1982, 390-408.
[106] D. G. Clarke, 'The Economics of Underdevelopment in Rhodesia: An Essay on Selected Bibliography' Also see Giovanni Arrighi, 'Labor Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study in The Proletarianization of The African Peasantry of Rhodesia, *Journal of Development Studies*, 6, 3, 1970.
[107] Admire Mseba, 'Land, power and social relations in northeastern Zimbabwe from precolonial times to the 1950s', *PhD Thesis*, University of Iowa, 2015.

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development for instance. This gives further importance to Paul Mosley's recommendation on the importance of nuance when analysing the economic development of society over time.[108]

Of course, an essential part of African life centred on their interaction with white settlers and settler interests. As noted above, plans for transforming Southern Rhodesia into a 'white man's country' were primarily motivated by the economic gain to the Company and the prestige it accrued for the Crown at least up until around 1923.[109] These endeavours impacted in different ways on the development of African small grains. Historian Alois Mlambo has shown how using various incentives such as offering free or subsidized transport, lucrative land grants and agricultural capital loans of cash and seeds, the Company made strides in earnest towards increasing the population of European settlers acquiring land and investing in Southern Rhodesia, with an underlaying preference to those of 'British stock'.[110] Between 1891 and the referendum for Responsible Government in 1923 that rejected joining the Union of South Africa, the white population in Southern Rhodesia increased reaching a total of about 33 620 from an initial 1 500 a decade earlier.[111] Julie Bonello demonstrated how, despite being a precariously small population in comparison to the African population over the same period and colonial-era in general, white colonists remained determined to create a 'superior' white Rhodesian identity that safeguarded their social and economic privilege and control in the colony.[112]

An exclusive white state was to be based on the back of black labour in settler mines and estates[113] and as tenants on the land.[114] Strikingly, however, white settlers wanted to create a niche population composed of British 'stock', and Mlambo records complaints by some whites

[108] Paul Mosley, *The Settler Economies: Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1963,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 45.
[109] Ethel Tawse Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia*, (London, Hutchinson and Company, 1924), 159. In 1923, a referendum was held among white settlers in Southern Rhodesia, voting in favour for self-governance under what became known as the Responsible Government in Southern Rhodesia.
[110] Alois Mlambo, *White migration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to federation*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002), 67-72.
[111] Alois Mlambo, 'Building a white man's country: Aspects of white immigration into Rhodesia up to the WW2', *Zambezia*, XXV, 2, 1998, 123-146.
[112] Julie Bonello, 'The development of early settler identity in Southern Rhodesia', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 43, 2, 2010, 341-367.
[113] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Farmers, Miners and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1895-1961', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2017, 168-174.
[114] Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment', 226.

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as 'some are more white than others.'[115] While white people almost always rallied together in the face of competition from African farmers, they remained divided along ethnic, racial and cultural lines as especially seen in their attitude towards Africans and nutrition. In detailed and convincing accounts, historians Allison Shutt[116], Timothy Burke[117] and Godfrey Hove[118] show the complex nature of the intertwined relationship between black and white communities, and their abilities and struggles at coexistence. This created and peddled both racial and ethnic stereotypes against African families which looked down upon the African way of life and cultural practices. Shutt showed that to accommodate Africans, the colonial state inscribed within its Native Policy the need to teach and encourage the practice of domestic etiquette – how to keep clean, dress and talk properly, and importantly to eat well.[119] Similar to sentiments on whites not of British stock, Rhodesian white prejudices against African peasants bordered on aspects of hygiene and what they termed 'cultural baggage' undercutting their different cultural values, practices and practices. As Chapter Four will show, such cultural baggage included the consumption patterns of small grains.

Historian Enocent Msindo showed how similarly, between 1962 and 1970, the colonial state used the cinema to 'win the hearts and minds' of both Africans and whites towards advancing its belief in a superior Rhodesian identity.[120] Responses were varied and historian Carol Summers contends that some Africans saw an opportunity to become 'more respectable … or a better group of clean and well-dressed' members of society.[121] They boasted about their social and by extension economic mobility with their taking up posts as teachers, lawyers and artisans, forming the emerging African elites in the post-1950s era. Buttressing the efforts of various of different agricultural marketing boards such as the Cold Storage Company, Dairiboard and Grain Marketing Board, white communities were able to preserve their privileges through

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[115] Alois Mlambo, '"some are more white than others": Racial chauvinism as a factor in Rhodesian immigration policy, 1890 to 1963', *Zambezia*, XXVII, 2, 2000, 139-160. British whites wanted to maintain the purity of their race believing that other non-British white groups contaminated the population.

[116] Allison K. Shutt, *Manners make a nation: racial etiquette in Southern Rhodesia, 1910-1963*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015).

[117] Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

[118] Godfrey Hove, 'The state, farmers and dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c. 1980-1951', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2015.

[119] Shutt, *Manners make a nation,* 45-7.

[120] Enocent Msindo, 'Winning hearts and minds' Crisis and propaganda in colonial Zimbabwe, 1952-1970, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 3, 2009, 663-681.

[121] Carol Summers, 'Reviewed work: The rise of an African Middle class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965 by Michael West', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 1, 2003, 145-148. Also see Michael West, *The rise of an African Middle class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

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monopolies sustained by African efforts.[122] Machingaidze offers an alternative perspective by showing how some Africans were not always openly receptive towards these various 'agrarian changes from above' – responding to the Native Land Husbandry Act, for instance, by protests and market sabotages through withholding their prime crops.[123] Thus, within these varying responses, historian Rory Pilossof, situates the central concept of intertwined multiple voices that emerged within proximity to privilege by presenting a glaring paradox of being white in Zimbabwe.[124] He further enables this study to also delineate the varying shifts within society, for example, in nomenclature defining white settlers over time in Zimbabwe. Combining Pilossof's work with Angus Selby's 2006 thesis on commercial farmers,[125] they collectively show how the term 'white settler farmers' became less pronounced in academic analysis with the increase in of agricultural diversification from the 1950s onwards that incorporated African farmers into capitalist spheres of production. Selby shows how over the Federal decade from 1953-1963, the primary concern of government was advancing agricultural gains and development of the territory with notable shifts within the privilege of being whiteness. Chapter Five will show how, at the time of UDI in 1965, some whites' attitudes towards Africans had significantly changed for the better from the earlier colonial years. This thesis draws on, but also extends this conversation on black-white relations to engage with the concept of 'whiteness' to mean white colonial settler ideology, ideas and, in some cases, physical presence that was considered economically and socially superior. The development of 'whiteness' in Southern Rhodesia over the colonial period while primarily served the economic and political interests of the state and a select white communities, over time it too was able to see the social and economic elevation of some black families in the country. This thesis will show how over time African proximity to 'whiteness' had a differential impact on how Africans perceived small grains in different respects such as daily meals or for nutrition purposes. This had significant underpinnings on African agricultural and social development in Zimbabwe.

[122] Kay Muir-Leresche and Chiedza Muchopa, 'Agricultural Marketing', in Mandivamba Rukuni *et al*, *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution revisited*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2006), 299-319.

[123] Machingaidze, 'Agrarian change from above', 571.

[124] Rory Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012), 17-23. Pilossof states how, contrary to many assumptions, white communities did not always speak with one voice or represent the same capitalist ideology shared by the ruling authorities for instance. Also see David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, landscape and the problem of belonging*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[125] Angus Selby, 'Commercial farmers and the state: Interest group politics and land reform in Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University of Oxford, 2006.

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African subsistence and society in historical perspective

Several colonial and postcolonial studies have explored the nature and development of African social life. As Chapter Two will show, early studies including work by C. Bullock[126], O.D. Malcolm[127] and Richard Hall[128], among others, were carried out by early white merchant traders and missionaries – most of whom had little understanding of African life. As white author in Southern Rhodesia, Hugh Tracey indicated in 1934 that early white settlers and colonial authorities alike held several misconceptions regarding African culture and way of life.[129] Colonists described Africans as 'superstitious' whose sustenance and subsistence were defined by spiritual interventions.[130] However, this narrative was challenged from around 1956 by a cohort of historians including Michael Gelfand.[131] Chapter Two engages with the work of other revisionist scholars such as David Beach,[132] Innocent Pikirayi and Gilbert Pwiti[133], James McCann[134] and Hilda Kuper[135] to demonstrate how African societies and culture were (and are) dynamic and complex, composed of changing totems, myths and lineage rites and customs that have been constructed in line with various agricultural practices. Historian of identity and ethnicity, Thembani Dube, for example, notes that for the Kalanga, millet is more valued than *rapoko* and sorghum to the point of their being colloquially called the 'millet people' by the Ndebele.[136] For historian Joseph Mujere working on the Basotho community in colonial Zimbabwe, agriculture formed a part of the daily lives of the people, with families using cane and reeds from their harvests to make dresses and headgear often worn during traditional ceremonies.[137]

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[126] C. Bullock, *The Mashona: the indigenous native of southern Rhodesia*, (Cape Town, 1928).
[127] O.D. Malcom, *The British South Africa Company* (London, 1939), 12-17.
[128] Richard N. Hall, *Pre-historical Rhodesia*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 123.
[129] Hugh Tracey, 'What are mashawi spirits?', *NADA*, XII, 1934, 29-52.
[130] *Ibid*. 41.
[131] Michael Gelfand, *Medicine and magic of the Mashona,* (Cape Town: Juta and Company, 1956).
[132] David Beach, *The Shona and their neighbours*, (Oxford: Blackwell), 32-34.
[133] Innocent Pikirayi and Gilbert Pwiti, 'States, Traders, and Colonists: Historical Archaeology in Zimbabwe', *Historical Archaeology*, 33, 2, 1999, 73-89.
[134] McCann, *Maize and Grace*.
[135] Hilda Kuper, A. J. B. Hughes and J. van Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Routledge, 2017).
[136] Thembani Dube, 'Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005', *PhD Thesis,* University of Witwatersrand, 2015, 51. Also see 'Kalanga culture and the nature of resistance against the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 in colonial Zimbabwe', *Journal of Historical and Human Sciences for Southern Africa*, 81, 2018, 160-179. Adherence to the name 'millet people' was a subtle form of resistance towards shifting agriaucltral and culinary interests imposed on African communities by the colonial government.
[137] Joseph Mujere, *Land, migration and Belonging: A history of the Basotho in Southern Rhodesia*, c.1890-1960s, (James Currey, 2019), 65.

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Further elucidating the intertwined relationship between African society and their environment, Sara Berry states how in Zambia, although there was a gradual shift to *chitemene* cultivation characterized by more planting of more hybrid maize from the 1970s, casava and millet remained the secondary crops grown by locals for their environmental and multiple social and gendered benefits.[138] Similarly, for Zimbabwe, environmental historian Vimbai Kwashirai argued that the natural environment (and food crops) served several utilitarian roles as a 'granary, pharmacy, and source of energy' for food, medicines and so on.[139] For Shoko when discussing Karanga medicine, he states,[140] within these multiple uses of the environment emerged the complex ideas of nutrition and conservation in African culture. As Kwashirai, Shoko and Gelfand analysis shows, both African and whites were in agreement that the environment and agriculture shaped African patterns of health and nutrition, and that with so-called African culture, this relationship was deeply intertwined – shifting from time to time and person to person. Adding to this, Ranger shows that kinship networks formed an important institutional mechanism in the exploitation and utilization of the environment for agriculture, food, health and survival.[141] This underscores how African identity could be gleaned from its agrarian relationship and food eating patterns.

Building on the work of Igor Cusack who argues on the key role of food in nation-building, popular culture historian Pathisa Nyathi, who views food as a cultural experience, traces how food among different African communities in southern Africa is a cultural marker embedded within social activities and lifestyles of African families.[142] Relying largely on oral traditions and personal experience as a cultural commentator, he uses this background to produce nothing more than a record of the culinary diversity within different African cultures. And yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, the development of food and culinary patterns was intertwined with African's everyday social and cultural realities. In agreement with earlier cited work by Mazarire, McCann and Berry, this thesis conceptualizes the concept of 'political grain' to argue that different (African) food practices developed various idiosyncratic symbols, imagery and metaphors, representing the diversity of society and perceptions of small grains within

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[138] Sara Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 94-96.
[139] Vimbai Kwashirai, 'Environmental History of Africa', *World Environmental History*, 2017, 11.
[140] Tabona Shoko, Karanga indigenous religion in Zimbabwe: Health and wellbeing, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 43-6.
[141] Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo burning: The social history of a Southern African city, 1893-1960*, (James Currey, 2010), 67-70.
[142] Pathisa Nyathi, *Beyond Nutrition: Food as a Cultural Expression*, (Bulawayo: Amagugu, 2017).

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nutrition, economic, cultural and political issues. Major themes include among others, power, resistance, social emotion and so-called culture. Drawing parallels, similarities can be observed with anthropologist Joost Fontein's examination of rain within power discourses among the people of southern Zimbabwe, when critically underscores how rain – equally true for small grains (food) – has become a significant measure of contested political and social legitimacy.[143] Thus Chapters Two, Four and Six demonstrate how food has been used for social control and shaping political narratives within ambitions of accumulation and state-making by varying ruling elites. In most southern African societies, small grains have been accorded various symbolic and metaphoric meanings and Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu notes these to be used to symbolize wealth, prosperity, sexuality, peace, life and death, all depending on the context.[144] H.M. Nyamnjoh adds that, although the symbolic meaning is maintained over time, the social understanding may evolve generationally as a result of transmission distortions, generational interpretations and varying sense of relevance.[145] For example, Jan Vansina observes how during the pre-colonial era, it became a common interpretation among African communities that affluence and a good work ethic were reflected by having a granary filled with sorghum or millet.[146] This earned one the label of being 'wealthy'.[147]

However, in Zimbabwe, this interpretation significantly shifted with time, notably over two key economic and political episodes. Ncube[148] and Kenneth Vickery[149] alike observe how the enactment of the Maize Control Act in 1930 turned African small grains into a 'poor man's crop' by aggressively promoting settler maize in Southern and Northern Rhodesia respectively. By the 1940s, some colonialists were describing as 'unappetizing' and 'indigestible' small grains meals.[150] Politically, following the political massacres in the early 1980s of Ndebele-speaking locals in the Matabeleland and Midlands regions who were referred to as the '*chaff*

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[143] Joost Fontein, 'Rain, uncertainty and power in southern Zimbabwe', *Critical African Studies,* 8, 1, 47-74. Failure to rain and the outbreak of drought and famine was interpreted as a rejection of the governing leadership by the ancestor by some African communities.

[144] Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu, "Who Ruled by the Spear? Rethinking the Form of Governance in the Ndebele State." *African Studies Quarterly,* 10, Issues 2 & 3, 2008, 71-94.

[145] H.M. Nyamnjoh, 'Food, Memory and Transnational Gastronomic Culture amongst Cameroonian Migrants in Cape Town, South Africa', *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 41, 1, 2018, 25–40

[146] Jan Vansina, Finding Food and the history of precolonial equatorial Africa: A plea', *African economic History, 7, Contributions to a History of Agriculture and Fishing in Central Africa*, 1979, 9-20.

[147] *Ibid*.

[148] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 13.

[149] Kenneth P Vickery, 'Saving settler: Maize control in Northern Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, 2, 1985, 212-234.

[150] Meredith, *The past is another country*, 67. Also see Kuper et al, *The Shona and Ndebele*, 12-3.

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that needed to be washed away'.[151] Known as Gukurahundi, which loosely means the early rains which wash away the *chaff* from the grains before the spring rains, this entailed the slaughter of over 20 000 people by brutal Robert Mugabe-directed state militia.[152] An independent commission report mentions that these soldiers could easily locate the 'dissidents' homes by following the footpaths leading from their (small grain) fields.[153] Scholars such as Francis Machingura have unearthed evidence of how a similar strategy was infamously employed during the precolonial period by different warrior regiments, taunting smaller communities and raiding them by locating their camps through tracking their homesteads via their small-grain fields in the forest.[154] As Chapters Two and Six will show, food is at the centre of belligerent state-making, being used as a tool to track, coerce and enforce political popularity amid declining social favour for elites by the masses.

Tasting history: Small grains in African culinary history

Various scholars including Helen Zoe Veit have shown how food played a role in helping to shape modern society over the long twentieth century.[155] One of these is Renata Coetzee, whose *Fauna and Food from Africa* largely focuses on the food culture of different South African ethnic groups, drawing similarities across their culinary cultures.[156] She offers rich detail on the African kitchen, exploring the multiple and widespread nature of production, utility and eating practices related to small grains.[157] Yet a noticeable weakness is how this work pays little attention to how recipes differed across social strata, especially among the Nguni/Ndebele people, to who she dedicates a significant portion of the book. Evident through the different references to the small grain meal by the Ndebele and Nguni – the latter calling it *isijeza* or *uputhu*, while the former *isitshwala,* is that, although there are some shared culinary habits, these patterns are flexible as it the linguistic nature of the food pattern. This leads her to also

[151] Criminal Justice Addictions Professional (CCJP), *Report on the 1980's Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands*, 1997.
[152] *Ibid*, 9-11. Also see Centre for Innovation & Technology, *Gukurahundi genocide: 36 years later*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2b5iVGCDs0&t=34s. Accessed 21 January 2019.
[153] Criminal Justice Addictions Professional (CCJP), *Report on the 1980's Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands*, 1997.
[154] Francis Machingura, *The messianic feeding of the masses: An analysis of John 6 in the context of Messianic leadership in post-colonial Zimbabwe*, (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press 2012), 165-171. Also see Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu, 'Who Ruled by the Spear? Rethinking the Form of Governance in the Ndebele State.' *African Studies Quarterly*, 10, Issues 2 and 3, 2008, 71-94.
[155] Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).
[156] Renata Coetzee, *Funa – Food from Africa: Roots of traditional African food culture*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1982).
[157] *Ibid*. 12-27.

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overlook how socio-political and African religion and spiritual beliefs framed the nature of food production and eating patterns. As this thesis will argue, food is political. In stark contrast, historian James McCann, in *Stirring the pot*, explores the socio-political and environmental underpinnings of food production and eating in this detailed social history of culinary culture in North and West Africa.[158] This work follows his 2005 *Maize and grace* that explores Africa's encounter with maize, covering the development of mainly maize and other grains such as sorghum in Africa.[159] McCann incorporates the aspect of linguistics and folklore to show how eating patterns differed across societies and were appreciated and represented in varying ways. Building on the work of McCann, environmental historian Loren Galesi observes how, for Europe, the evolution of maize is the development of both 'cultural artefact and biological specimen' whose unique characteristics impacted on European ecosystems, and consequently cultures as well.[160] Developing from these analyses, this thesis examines such nuances in food history, to show that food is not only about political and social contestation but is also about individual tastes and preferences.

Adding to the above, Nyathi examined gendered trends in beef consumption among the Ndebele and saw how portions such as the hooves, heart and liver were consumed solely by men as heads of the household. This was a symbolic gesture of respect, adopted as the 'culture and tradition of the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe.'[161] Similarly, the practice was prevalent among Shona and Kalanga families, with the chicken back/spine (*iqolo lenkukhu*) being reserved for the household heads, and serving it to anyone else was considered a taboo and a show of disrespect to the household head.[162] Through the gendered social policing of consumption, some families were able to instil discipline and control. Theologian Tabona Shoko further adds how culinary taboos were used to justify periods of health, prosperity or suffering among the Karanga people. For these people, this thesis in Chapter Five will show, eating and food taboos were closely followed to obtain good health and nutrition.[163]

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[158] James McCann, *Stirring the pot: A history of African Cuisine*, (Hurst and Company, 2010).
[159] James McCann, *Maize and grace: Africa's encounter with a new world crop, 1500-2000*, (Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2005).
[160] Loren Galesi, 'Maize on the Move: The diffusion of a tropical cultivar across Europe', *Environmental History*, 2020, 1-27.
[161] Pathisa Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's cultural heritage*, (African Books Collective, 2005), 32.
[162] *Ibid*, 55.
[163] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga indigenous religion in Zimbabwe: Health and wellbeing*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 13-6.

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However, food and culinary patterns were not always through policing taboos or totemic rules. Hove observes how even through gestures of favour, for example, some African families with the Ndebele and Kalanga community, shared sour milk (*amasi*) to those in-laws they favoured.[164] Also, despite its abundance and the healthy appetite for milk among the young, the Ndebele fed their children fresh milk based on their levels of discipline, with naughty children not being served their favourite milk.[165] Offering a global lens of the fluidity of food and culinary ideas, Michael Di Giovine and Ronda Brulotte in *Edible identities* illustrate how different food customs have spread across different societies – countries and continents – over time and assumed new social significance while others have maintained their identity, for example, cayenne pepper continues to be a rich medicinal condiment globally.[166] Di Giovine and Brulotte further argue that food and eating practices and customs have been shaped syncretically from relationships of proximity; the term 'multicultural' has become a buzzword for post-colonial societies that seek to locate themselves within the growing global community amid globalization.[167] Collectively, these studies enrich the analysis of African proximity to 'whiteness' and how food influences are not linear or uniform, nor always bound to changes because of their fluidity across space.

Nazi hunger politics by Gesine Gerhard explores the darkest side of the politics of eating.[168] Under the Third Reich from 1933-1945 in Germany, existing food policy served as the rationale for war and was instrumental in moulding patriotism and racial ideology that justified the murder of millions of Jews. Critical to this thesis, is how the state through propaganda campaigns, encouraged the public to make 'delicious meals with the Ersatz food and be economical with bread', thereby systematically shifting towards depending solely on domestically produced food.[169] Moreover, through policies such as 'One Volk – One meal', Chancellor Adolf Hitler vowed that Germans would never again experience hunger, and encouraged more domestic agricultural production, food substitutes such as barring wheat or rye for feed animals. not only did these policies improve food security in their entirety, but they instilled a level of identity akin to the 'White Rhodesia' dreams envisaged in Zimbabwe by the

[164] Hove, 'The state, farmers and dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe', 48-52.
[165] *Ibid*. 54.
[166] Cristina Grasseni, 'Of cheese and ecomuseums: Food as cultural heritage in the northern Italian Alps', in Ronda L. Brulotte and Michael Di Di Giovine, *Edible identities: Food as cultural heritage*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 116-123.
[167] Brulotte and Giovine, *Edible identities*, 3.
[168] Gesine Gerhard, *Nazi hunger politics: A history of food in the Third Reich*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 24
[169] *Ibid.*

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colonialists over the colonial period. As the German government moved towards becoming less dependent on food imports and still achieving nutritional freedom, by 1943 the *Hungerplan* initiative had surpassed its target managing to reduce food imports by 66%.[170] In Chapter Six, this thesis will reflect on agricultural and food policies enacted in Zimbabwe over the 2000s decade, equally envisaged cultivating patriotism and improving food security, yet were embedded with the politics of hunger, state malfeasance, corruption and selfish economic interests that benefited a few political elites over the general population who grew deeper into hunger and poverty.

Charles Ludington and Matthew Booker extend the conversation on the complexities of food policy and production to include a focus on how commerce, gender and centrally climate change have differently shaped food production and eating patterns globally.[171] According to the World Food Programme and Food Agriculture Organization, both Africa and small grains cannot be excluded in conversations of climate change and global food policy.[172] Cited in *Food fights,* a scientific study by Doug Gurian-Sherman interrogates the role of genetic engineering in agriculture [173] while Justin Sheffield and Eric Wood expressively challenge that the adoption of small grains goes a long way towards restoring agriculture in more environmentally sustainable means. It mitigates the spread of 'manufactured toxins' into the earth which they argue is speeding up the scourge of drought through reducing soil fertility over many years.[174] Theoretically, these studies inform this thesis by demonstrating how the themes of gender, the environment and commerce interlock shaping the trends in agriculture and food systems across society. Also, learning from these works, this thesis opts to adopt a chronological and thematic approach in studying the development of small grains in Zimbabwe. Methodologically, as discussed later in this chapter, this will enable this study to have a better appreciation for both major and minor themes that shaped the development of African crops and food systems in Zimbabwe over time.

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[170] *Ibid*, 96.
[171] Charles Ludington and Matthew Booker, *Food Fights: How History Matters to Contemporary Food Debates* (Capel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019).
[172] World Food Programme (WFP), 'State of Food insecurity and vulnerability in southern Africa: Regional synthesis – November 2006', *National Vulnerability Assessment Committee Reports, April -June 2006*, (Gaborone: WFP, 2006), 3-4.
[173] Doug Gurian-Sherman, *High and Dry: Why Genetic Engineering Is Not Solving Agriculture's Drought Problem in a Thirsty World,* (Cambridge, Mass.: Union of Concerned Scientists, 2011).
[174] Justin Sheffield and Eric Wood, *Drought: Past problems and future scenarios*, (London: Earthscan, 2011), 140-143.

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Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, the 2016 work of Amanda Logan that is centred on the intersection of food, trade and ecology in Ghana over the twentieth century,[175] is important to this thesis as it challenges normative ideas that culture is static across African communities. Logan demonstrates that food patterns are constantly changing traditions, as societies are plagued by chronic challenges of food insecurity or political and economic upheavals and uncertainty. This engages with research on how the environment shapes food choices and production. However, Logan is silent on how culture and religion played a key role in controlling land tenure and therefore food. Moreover, crop diseases and market fluctuations were instrumental in shaping crop preferences. In this regard, Shutt underlines how in Marirangwe, when the state pointed to poor land tenure as the cause for hunger, the locals were swift in defence of their family values being connected to their farming methods.[176] This points to how there exists an intimate relationship between the way African families produce and consume their food with their religious and customary practices. These themes are recurring motifs within this thesis and offer perspectives for comparative analysis.

André Magnan's *When wheat was king* explores the dynamic grain industry, through the lens of wheat to show the interrelated relationship between eating patterns and commodity development.[177] The book shows the fluctuations within the wheat industry in Canada – a global producer, consumer and exporter of wheat in the twentieth century. It shows how geographical isolation and an inhospitable climate created logistical nightmares for producers and markets, and how these initial limitations coalesced into a unique set of institutions that contributed to the development of the gran sector through grain pooling, improving public quality control and collective marketing.[178] This book adds a vital perspective to analyse the situation in Zimbabwe's grain market. Did the development of a grain board in Zimbabwe (in 1931), as in Canada in 1935 (Canadian Wheat Board) work for the benefit of the majority peasant farmers, connecting prairie farmers to world markets, or did it serve the minority interests leading to the exploitation of local farmers and the decline of selected grains?

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[175] Amanda Logan, 'Why can't people feed themselves?' Archaeology as alternative archive of food security in Banda, Ghana', *American Anthropologist*, 118, 3, 2016, 508-524.
[176] Allison K Shutt, 'Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in Marirangwe purchase area, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947', *African Studies Review*, 43, 3, 2000, 59-80.
[177] André Magnan, *When wheat was King: The rise and fall of the Canadian-UK grain trade*, (Toronto: UBC Press, 2016).
[178] *Ibid*, 45.

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Chapters Four and Five will show how these grains have been differently integrated into African diets to enhance nutrition and fill the belly alike. However, their utility is not as food alone, and scholars such as historian Nathaniel Chimhete have in different ways shown how small grains have been popularly used for brewing traditional opaque beer.[179] This culture is cross-cutting and shared across most ethnic boundaries regionally, using different small grain varieties as well as brewing methods. Keith Steinkraus traces the roots of traditional opaque beer to ancient Egypt, long before any European settlers brought brewing techniques to Africa.[180] This fermented grain drink is typically a source of vital nutrients, but at the same time it has inscribed social hierarchies, based on a combination of political precedence, gender and generation, argues Paul Nugent.[181] Traditional beer was (and, indeed, is) enjoyed because of its cloudiness and yeasty flavour, with a sour lingering aftertaste.[182] According to Shoko, this bitterness was appropriated by the Karanga as a means to induct young children into the struggles of adulthood, under the repressive colonial regimes.[183] The story of opaque beer enriches social historiography on some of the different thinking influencing eating patterns, with attention to how diverse and robust of African knowledge institutions can be.[184] Furthermore different studies including Sean Hanretta's 1998 study,[185] show that opaque beer and food were predominantly prepared by women in the African setting, thus this thesis will too pay special attention to the role of women especially with economic shifts and different rising ideas cautious to regulate some African consumption of alcoholic brews in some urban spaces.

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[179] Nathaniel Chimhete, 'The African Alcohol Industry in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1945 to 1980', *MA Thesis*, University of Zimbabwe, 2004, 32-36. Also see Kudzai Taruza, 'Rufaro marketing in colonial Salisbury', *BA Honours Dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2013, 15-19.

[180] Keith Steinkraus, *Industrialization of Indigenous Fermented Foods, Revised and Expanded,* (CRC Press, 2004), 117.

[181] Paul Nugent, 'Alcohol in Africa', http://www.ascleiden.nl/content/webdossiers/alcohol-africa

[182] Africa Insight, '*Kenya: In the African beer brewing pot ferments an occasional crisis.*' *April 2010*. http://www.allafrica.com/. Accessed 29 January 2019.

[183] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga indigenous religion in Zimbabwe*, 43-6.

[184] Meredeth Turshen, *African Women: A political economy*, (New York: Palgrave, 2010)

[185] Sean Hanretta, 'Women, marginality and the Zulu state: Women's institutions and power in the early nineteenth century', *Journal of African History*, 39, 3, 1998, 389-415. Also see Jeff Guy, 'Women in labour: The birth of colonial Natal', Paper presentation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 29 April 2009.

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'A starving belly doesn't listen to explanations':[186] African nutrition in historical perspective.

Writing in 1933, British medical doctor Mr E.B Worthington noted how 'nutrition lies at the root of Africa's problems.'[187] A considerable volume of literature including work by agrarian studies specialist Peter F McLoughlin, observes how socio-economic challenges such as labour migration are a result of deteriorating family food supply that has adversely impacted family nutrition in Africa.[188] 'For improved health, natives must have better food' remarked British medical officials.[189] Since the 1930s, conversations on the role of food in health and nutrition discourse have grown significantly and are not mere expressions of hunger by communities, but some ideas have been validated by local medical and agrarian experts that appreciate the value of adequate and well-balanced diets in the maintenance of health. Notwithstanding, in Southern Rhodesia, until the 1960s, the concepts of eating, nutrition and agriculture remained independent, despite the growing literature that discussed them collectively – and continues to – largely because of their intertwined nature. Globally,[190] and, of course, among Africans too, agriculture plays a key role in the discussion of nutrition, and therefore is not reducible to only a trade or an occupation but is a mode of life.[191] Over many centuries, agricultural patterns not only shaped language, economics, politics and food production but also crafted the nature of African nutrition. Historians William Beinart and Luvuyo Wotshela using the example of the prickly pear in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, underline how the development of African crops helped construct and shape social etiquette, their spirituality, and this played a pivotal role in the development of ideas on edible and non-edible foods, amplifying the nutritious foods from those eaten for aesthetic factors. This impacted the political and economic hierarchy.[192] David Niemeijer describes African agriculture as social processes shaped and conditioned by

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[186] Todd H. Leedy, ''A Starving Belly Doesn't Listen to Explanations': Agricultural Evangelism in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900 to 1962', *Agricultural History*, 84, 4, 2010, 479-505.

[187] British Medical Journal, 'Food and nutrition of African Natives', *The British Medical Journal*, 1, 3936, 1936, 1224-1225.

[188] Peter F. McLoughlin, *African food production systems*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1970), 5.

[189] British Medical Journal, 'Food and nutrition', 1224.

[190] David J. Webster, 'The Political Economy of Food Production and Nutrition in Southern Africa in Historical Perspective', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24, 3, 1986, 447-463.

[191] C. K. Brian, 'Human food remains from the Iron age at Zimbabwe, *South African Journal of Science*, 70, 1974, 303-309.

[192] William Beinart and Luvuyo Wotshela, *Prickly pear: The social history of a plant in the Eastern Cape*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011), 135-142.

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ecological settings over time,[193] with African families using their physical environment to construct their everyday perceptions of African nutrition, as described by Shoko.[194]

J. O'Neil's 'Native huts and granaries' offers an insight into the African home, albeit through a settler social lens as it was written in 1910.[195] This breaks away the dominant economic narrative put forward by various writers including Murray Rooney and Victor Machingaidze, as stated earlier in the chapter. O'Neil shows how African agriculture introduced a wide variety of crops and food that complemented existing diets and boasted of their physical abilities.[196] Several Native Commissioners writing on Southern Rhodesia between 1913 and 1949 recorded within the *NADA* journal series covering the colonial epoch, reveal how – unlike the average European – the African confined himself to two meals a day, one in the morning and another at the end of the day in the evening. These are referred to as *kususuva* and *kurarira* respectively in the Shona dialect.[197] Recorded in the British Medical Journal, in 1936, is the concern by the colonial state over how and what Africans were eating. It notes that,

> 'it is obvious that a complete study of this type (scientific study) must be conducted. The chemical constituents of the native diet must be estimated by the biochemist. The physique and health of the natives must be described by a qualified medical officer…with specialized knowledge and training in food and nutrition.'[198]

G. M. Culwick says, for the colonialists, African eating patterns were seen as adversely impacting on African nutrition and productivity, contributing to the essential need for nutritional councils under state management to be established across the colonies.[199] Moreover, this thinking by the colonizers towards African eating patterns were derived from what they took as a reflection of African agriculture – which they considered as 'backwards'.[200] Yet, as

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[193] David Niemeijer, 'The dynamics of African agricultural history: Is it time for a new development paradigm?' *Development and Change,* 27, 1996, 87-100.

[194] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga indigenous religion in Zimbabwe: Health and wellbeing*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 43-6.

[195] J. O'Neil, 'Native huts and granaries', *Zambezi Missionary Records*, 1910, 106-113.

[196] *Ibid.* Also see Pamela Kittler, Kathryn Sucher and Marcia Nahikian – Nelms, *Food and culture,* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2012), 208-210.

[197] 'Native food and culinary methods', *NADA* 1933, 11, 101.

[198] British Medical Journal, 'Food and nutrition', 1224.

[199] G. M. Culwick, 'Nutrition work in British African colonies since 1939', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 14, 1, 1943, 24-26.

[200] Leslie Bessant and Elvis Muringai, 'Peasants, Businessmen, and Moral Economy in the Chiweshe Reserve, Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-1968', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 4, 1993, 551-592.

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Weinmann[201] and Ncube[202] rightly state, until the 1930s, there was a great deal of African crop production and trading on the formal market, that was not recorded by the colonialists. Chapter Three of this study corroborates this hypothesis, arguing that increasingly after the 1930 Maize Control Act, trading through informal markets became widespread among African farmers.

At the same time, it must be recorded that whites' understanding of the health and nutrition of Africans was not uniform, with one Native Commissioner observing that,

> Following native food and culinary methods may prove of some interest [as] native consuming some of the most indigestible substances with dubious relish and have wondered what his meal consisted of…however, on the whole, the native food appears to be extremely nourishing and well adapted to the needs of the African population.[203]

Building on the work of Murray Steele,[204] Chapters Four and Five will demonstrate the heterogeneous appreciation of African food and nutrition among most whites, and how this was often a contentious aspect of the formulation and implementation of native policy. Through redressing land usage and conservation within African spaces, historians Jennifer Elliot[205] and William Beinart[206] demonstrate how agricultural innovations had to be 'good and economical' while establishing a healthy and safe white haven through replacing African food, and more centrally grain, palate with white crop preferences. In different stages, as this thesis will show, African small grains were gradually replaced by a variety of white oriented foods in Southern Rhodesia over time as part of 'improving' African diets.

Historian Diana Wylie makes a rich contribution towards the historiography of nutrition in her seminal book, *Starving on a full stomach*.[207] Covering several themes, this work brings to attention the role of the state in shaping eating and nutrition in southern African and South Africa in particular. By showing African cuisine and eating 'before the land was lost', Wylie provides an essential preamble to understand how the formation of the Native Affairs Department in the early nineteenth century played a defining role in defining African hunger

[201] Weinmann, 'Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950'.
[202] Ncube, 'Grain production and marketing', 22.
[203] *Ibid*.
[204] Steele, 'The making of colonial policy', 231-34.
[205] Jennifer Elliot, 'Soil Erosion and Conservation in Zimbabwe: Political Economy and the Environment', *PhD Thesis,* University of Technology, 1989, 11.
[206] William Beinart, *The rise of conservation in South Africa: Settlers, livestock and the environment, 1770-1950*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 186.
[207] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*.

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and food practices – to suit the colonial project.[208] Not only does she show how white society expressed disdain for African religious and cultural ideas around food, but she also underlines the role of state paternalism in defining what was to be eaten. As did Culwick, Wylie shows the intertwined relation between hunger and poverty and the role of the state, and similarly, with this thesis, both studies observe how despite many cases of hunger even during periods of crop abundance, some African families often did not display their hunger within the characteristics of poverty but in terms of protest over control.[209] As Megan Vaughan also states, poor African families were not always languishing in hunger.[210] African nutrition was not only concerned with eating but also relied a great deal on their perceptions of the food they ate. P. Walsh shows how this led to a series of educational campaigns by the colonial state increasingly over the 1960s to educate Africans on agricultural practice and introduce them to wider and different culinary patterns suited to their incomes.[211] These studies underline the intersection between African nutrition and the changing perceptions and responses towards food and nutrition by Africans, the state and white communities, and this forms a key discussion within this thesis on how these relations impacted on the development of small grains over time and space.

Beating hunger: The politics of food security

In 2020 the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme named Zimbabwe as one of the world's sixteen hunger hotspots.[212] Already in Africa, about a quarter of the population suffers from starvation annually, while many more succumb to serious health risks and stunted growth as a direct result of inadequate nutrition. This crisis has generated significant historiographical attention, with different schools of thought aligning to explain the causes, nature and impacts of hunger globally, regionally and in Zimbabwe. Several studies including historian Bernard Kusena's 2019 PhD thesis[213] have explored the different dimensions of food insecurity and hunger from different perspectives. For Kusena, drought over the colonial and postcolonial exacerbated by agrarian policy that intermittently shifted

[208] *Ibid*. 56-58.
[209] *Ibid.* 121.
[210] Megan Vaughan, 'Famine analysis and family relations in 1949 in Nyasaland', *Past and Present*, 1985, 108, 177-205.
[211] P. Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', *The Central Journal of Medicine*, 28, 8, 1982, 196-197.
[212] WFP and FAO, FAO -*WFP early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots, October 2020*, (Rome, 2020), 6.
[213] Bernard Kusena, Rural food security in Mutare District, Zimbabwe, 1947-2010, *PhD Thesis*, Rhodes University, 2019, 70.

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between cash crops and food crops. Zimbabwe lacked a consistent food policy, and as Chapter Five will show this impacted African nutrition. Yet for Iliffe, ecological factors account as the major causes of the protracted droughts and hunger across Africa, arguing that over the colonial era, most African societies relied less on state relief programmes, with farmers saving grain from their previous harvests and exchanging through social benevolent contracts or trading with those in need.[214] Building from the work of Sen who questions, 'Who starves?', historian Megan Vaughan contributes a key school of thought singling out the concept of 'man-made' famines, saying 'hunger was beyond being a challenge of failing to exploit natural resources, to being about politics predicated on the division of the world into the ruling and the dominated'.[215] She does not contest ideas of the role of climate and ecology or policy inconsistency but underlines how hunger has been used to exploit power and control of African populations in different areas. Chapter Six of this dissertation agrees with Vaughan and argues that the increasingly despotic Robert Mugabe regime deliberately overlooked the development of small grains as a panacea to the food challenges as it would weaken their patronage-based politics. Moreover, standing on the shoulders of historian Muchaparara Musemwa, who uses the illustration of the water crisis in Bulawayo, this study explores how resources became the centre of the politicisation of crisis with the postcolonial Zimbabwe government not giving the crisis 'the urgency and due consideration' that it deserved because it did not serve its immediate political interests and goals.[216] By drawing such parallels – also between state's investments in maize and small grains – this thesis will be able to show how political interests were able to shape the trajectory of small grain production and consumption over time. moreover, it will show, the emergence of 'pollical grain' enables the topic of food (in)security to adopt political discourse.

The work of Keith Phiri et al.[217] and various chapters in the volume *Transforming agriculture in southern Africa,* edited by Richard Sikora, importantly show that African farmers have been able to mitigate hunger through employing different tactics. This despite top-down setbacks by the government such as poor policy implementation and financing support to local farmers, A striking method underscored by Mario Giampietro is the use of mixed seed varieties to cushion

[214] John Iliffe, 'Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960', *University of Zimbabwe History Department Seminar Paper 70*, 1987, 4-5.
[215] Vaughan, 'Famine analysis and family relations', 205.
[216] Muchapara Musemwa, ''Disciplining a dissident' city: Hydropolitics in the city of Bulawayo, Matabeleland in Zimbabwe, 1890-1994', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, 2006, 239-254.
[217] Keith Phiri *et al, '* Small grains 'resistance: making sense of Zimbabwean small holder farmer cropping choices and patterns within climate change context', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5, 2019, 1-13.

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families in case of failed crops. Machingaidze[218] and Ncube[219] draw attention to how African farmers increased their acreage to mitigate hunger and increase their incomes in response to the NLHA after 1951. Viewing the food-hunger nexus as a great 'agrarian paradox' – booming agriculture does not always equate to resolved hunger concerns – food, nutrition and agricultural specialist T.S. Jayne observes how for many African families in independent Zimbabwe, the option of extending their fields to increase their yields is not available.[220] Population increases reduced the communal land available for farming, coupled with stiff land right legislations that restricted ownership and tenure.[221] Paul Muchineripi points out how the impacts of strained land tenure on food production were poor quality crops and failed harvests, which exacerbated soaring food prices over the colonial and postcolonial periods.[222] This study through small grain will be able to reinforce the interrelatedness between food production systems and African responses highlighting how the quality and quantity of small grains responded inversely to the economic climate in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

As argued by this thesis, T.S. Jayne and Lawrence Rubey say increasingly over the twenty-first century, African farmers reverted to drought-tolerant small grains to fight against hunger.[223] However, for Pricilla Masanganise, the adoption of small grain by most farmers in southern Africa during the century was not primarily of their own volition, but as a mandate of various cultural and political principles on which African agrarian ecology was constructed in the wave of climate change.[224] Her conclusions thus illuminate economist Amartya Sen's remark that 'there is no such thing as an apolitical food problem'[225] This thesis accordingly explores the concept of 'political grain' to illustrate how in Zimbabwe food is not merely about hunger but is also political. As a social unit, culture and religion are used to preserve privilege, while within the economic and political realms, food has been used as a tool to accumulate wealth, while stratifying society into the 'haves' and 'have nots.' As this thesis will show, different

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[218] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture', 456.
[219] Ncube, 'Grain production and marketing', 22.
[220] T.S. Jayne *et al*, 'Zimbabwe's food insecurity paradox'; hunger amid potential, in Mandivamba Rukuni *et al, Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution revisited*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2006), 526.
[221] Henry Moyana, *The political economy of land in Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000), 37-42.
[222] Paul Muchineripi, *Feeding five thousand: The case of indigenous crops in Zimbabwe*, (London: African Research institute, 2008), 9.
[223] T.S. Jayne and Lawrence Rubey, 'Maize milling, market reform and urban food security: The case of Zimbabwe', *World Development*, 21, 6, 1993, 975-988.
[224] Priscilla Masanganise, Marketing agricultural commodities through the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019, library.fes.de/fulltext/bueros/simbabwe/01176.htm, Accessed 18 April 2019.
[225] Sen, 'The Food problem', 459.

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interests – some intertwined – invested African society and economy shaped the trajectory of small grain over time.

The literature survey above explored the historiographical conversations around African agrarian practices, food and social history. Developing within the thesis, this dialogue will continue to show how despite the silences in the literature on small grains, in different ways these grains played a vital role in nation formation, contributing pivotally towards commerce, social cohesion and political consciousness. Moreover, this gave an impetus to the need to revisit this story of African small grains. The thesis poses pertinent historiographical questions such as why have the contributions of African peasants and families, and smalls grains, in particular, been overshadowed for so long in agrarian and social historiography? What does this silence reflect and say not only of black-white relations but of the impact of small grains on the social ecology of southern Africa and Zimbabwe in particular? This thesis aims to explore the changing, asymmetrical but nevertheless entangled relationship between black and white communities over small grains while showing that, like maize, tobacco and cotton, small grains made a significant contribution toward pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial peasant societies and economies.

Theoretical points of departure and research questions

Existing literature on Zimbabwe's agrarian and grain history reveals that there is a notable gap on the subject of small grains. Indeed, the story of sorghum, millet and rapoko deserves to extend beyond the banality of the recurring remark, 'African families ate small grains.' The story of the physical, political and social landscapes is silent, while the contributions of African women within both commercial and communal agriculture and household development tends to be underplayed within the conversation of agrarian labour and consumption. To remedy this, the thesis draws upon conceptual ideas by historian Gary Blank on the African peasantry to underscore that Zimbabwean families experienced both prosperity and penury throughout the colonial period.[226] African agriculture over the colonial period developed against a predatory capitalist agricultural system hinged on romanticized narratives of white agriculture. Into the post-colonial era, colonial legacies continued to dominate amid an economy in freefall and a

[226] Gary Blank, Prosperity, penury and polarization: Disaggregating the peasantry in the historiography of colonial Zimbabwe', *African Journal of history and culture*, 7, 1, 2015, 1-7.

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regime primarily focused on state-making. Tapiwa Madimu,[227] Sam Moyo,[228] and William Beinart and Luvuyo Wotshela[229] have all pointed out the severe impacts of colonialism on African farming systems, so-called 'traditional and cultural' systems and food crop production and diets. In addition, historians of colonial Zimbabwe have shown how through labour exploitation, white settlers were able to create an oligarchy of minority elites, thereby polarizing the rest of African society, contributing to the underdevelopment of Africans and their crops in particular.

Centrally, this thesis also draws on the work of historian Elijah Doro[230], which theorizes what he calls 'crop hegemonies' – whereby economic preference is placed on particular crops, thereby overshadowing those crops perceived as being of lesser economic (and social) value. Doro, building from Machingaidze's 1980 doctoral dissertation[231] contends that tobacco was the main settler crop since 1906, while as far as food crops were concerned, maize was considered as 'Rhodesia's friend.' These studies provide a lens through which to revisit the relationship that existed between maize and small grains, being the two main grain staples consumed in the country. Leaning against the work of Doro emphasizing on crop (and food) hegemonies, this thesis will observe the key role of commodity boards such as the Grain Marketing Board (formerly Maize Control Board) within conversations on the (under)development of African farmers. Godfrey Hove and Sandra Swart[232] and Doro alike argue that African dairy and tobacco producers operating with the and Dairy Marketing Board (DMB) and Rhodesian Tobacco Association (RTA) from the 1930s and 1960s respectively had significant leverage in Southern Rhodesia, and this enabled them to secure lucrative markets for their produce. Challenging this, the thesis will show that for small grains, the presence of a commodity board – the Maize Control Board from 1930 and the Grain Marketing Board established in 1954 – adversely impacted on the development of peasant production. Admittedly though, as Chapter Three will show, this also ushered alternative avenues for the sporadic growth and communal development of small grains in an attempt to by African

[227] Madimu, 'Food imports, hunger', 132
[228] Sam Moyo and Walter Chambati, *Land and agrarian reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond white settler*, (Codesria: 2013).
[229] William Beinart and Luvuyo Wotshela, *Prickly pear: A social history of a plant in the Eastern Cape*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2012).
[230] Doro, 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco', 195.
[231] Machingaidze, 'The development of Settler capitalist agriculture', 131.
[232] Godfrey Hove and Sandra Swart, 'Dairying is a White Man's Industry': The Dairy Produce Act and the Segregation Debate in Colonial Zimbabwe, c.1920-1937', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 45, 5, 2019, 911-925.

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farmers meet government and personal financial expectations and demands. This perspective is detailed in Chapters Three and Six, where the major focus is on the role of the state towards improving African small grain production.

Another important theoretical point is grounded on what French philosopher Jean Francois Bayart describes as 'politics of the belly.'[233] Chapter Two and more profoundly Chapter Six develops the concept of 'career beneficiaries', showing how the rush to feed oneself and avoid starvation became a recurring motif within food discourses in Zimbabwe. As this thesis will forward, 'career beneficiaries' is whereby there is an overreliance on patronage links and food donations become a means of livelihood practised by African families. In agreement with this, this thesis will how this trend becomes prevalent especially during economic slumps and droughts when the government and various religious and philanthropic organizations distribute food aid, and by extension influence the social and political narrative. While earlier historians such as Robin Palmer argue that African production was agile and experienced transient booms during the early colonial years, this thesis will show how, to obtain money to pay off tax obligations, African families increasingly adopted the growing of maize at the expense of their traditional small grains. As Chapter Three will show, market demand for maize was not always good and was heavily dependent on external forces such as state regulation. Its failure often left (white settler during the colonial and Africa in the postcolonial) farmers economically ruined. At the same time, its market success buttressed by state support was a recipe for peasant success. In fact, the 'Master Farmer' title – an enviable award from the 1950s onwards – was given to those who displayed skill and understanding in growing commercial crops such as maize. Accordingly, moved by the need for survival and to feed their families, farmers often oscillated between crops. This thesis seeks to show how this shaped the expansion of African small grains over time.

Research design and methodology

Amid the growing literature on the agrarian and social history of Zimbabwe, there is a dearth of studies capturing the social, environmental and economic history of small grains. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach making use of a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This allows the study to draw upon primary archival material

[233] Jean Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, (London: Longman, 1993). A phrase that conceptualizes the necessities of survival through securing food, motivating different social and political decisions among African communities.

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such as minutes of meetings, correspondence reports, and memoranda by the government and other stakeholders. This primary material was mostly obtained from the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) in both Harare and Bulawayo. However, the material is scanty, disjointed and sometimes illegible. Statistical material for the early colonial period from around 1900 until 1918 was unavailable. However, despite being colonial mouthpieces representing white interests, the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* (*RAJ*) and *Native Affairs Department Annuals* (*NADA*) were handily in covering this material gap. As noted earlier, aspects of nomenclature used in these resources, for example, resounded the colonial prejudices against Africans. Also, apart from the nomenclature errors, the *RAJ* and *NADA* often failed to acknowledge that African production was in fact not piecemeal and low-level, but like any other subsistence farmers, black or white, African farmers only sold their surplus and also widely used informal markets to circumvent trade restrictions, resulting in the magnitude of their economic trade not always being adequately captured and recorded by colonial officials. As Chapter Three reenforces, much of the African small-grain trade was informal. Moreover, there are blatant misunderstandings of African ways of living, leading to false conclusions, such as this 1923 supposition: 'Africans sit all day and drink opaque beer.'[234] During dry seasons, agriculture was not possible and this was a time for families to rely on their harvests, thus their inactivity should not be misconstrued as indolence.

The National Museums and Monuments in Bulawayo and *The Chronicle* library and to a lesser extent *The Herald* and *Bantu Mirror* were key resources, providing a plethora of newspaper articles, government press records and municipality reports that covered the period between 1968 and 2010. This in a big way made up for the gaps in the archives. Also, it must be noted that the nature of the primary material available played a significant role in influencing the themes covered in this thesis. Like *RAJ* and *NADA*, these sources too have methodological challenges commonly associated with the colonial primary sources, namely the colonial state bias towards African families. Some colonial officials such as native commissioners were known to conceal information to construct politically desirable narratives, often without African voices. To remedy this, this dissertation engages with a wide array of secondary sources to nuance and unpack the realities omitted within the sources. The use of secondary material further allows the study to explore developments from a global perspective, not limiting its contribution to the developments within Zimbabwe.

[234] Agnes Sloan, 'The Black woman', *NADA,* 1923, 60-64.

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It would be remiss not to highlight how parts of this thesis were written during the novel Covid-19 global pandemic which culminated in global and countrywide lockdowns, restricting mobility and full access to public libraries and archives. Yet, thankfully to a wide pool of social connections, developed from kinship ties and previous studies and research projects namely my Master's work, I was able to obtain access to some public libraries, interviews and personal correspondences during the lockdown period. Most of this material was shared electronically via email, or WhatsApp and voice calls. Gratefully, no laws were faulted, and no participants were affected by the virus as a result of this study.

As will be observed throughout the thesis and Chapter Two in particular, within the story of small grains, is a strong undercurrent on the key role of social capital and networking. Indeed, even during the data collection, as earlier stated, these sentiments were widely experienced. For example, during a visit to *The Chronicle* library in 2018, a developed relationship with the librarian saw me obtaining the contact details of a former government official who was now a flourishing on small grain farmer in Kezi in the Matobo District. He became a key resource, assisting with linking the researcher to farmers and families that consume small grains. These micro-histories and testimonies in a great way remedied the challenge of disjointed or missing archival data. As will be observed, these oral accounts were able to cover a wider breadth capturing the different social and economic perspectives on small grains from across the country. Moreover, engaging with some of these oral sources pushed the research to stretch the boundaries of historical research, pressing the researcher to actively employ more interdisciplinary methods, for example, an ethnographic research strategy – staying and being a part of the local community in Binga and Mberengwa for close to four weeks in total – between October and December 2018. Although most of the individual experiences remain mostly undocumented in this thesis, they offer a deeper appreciation of the communities, peasant agriculture and eating patterns and customs, that shaped the understanding of how variously small grains are received by society, especially those within dry and politically volatile regions. Several interviews and informal correspondence were conducted in different villages and townships: Mberengwa, Matobo, Binga, Bulawayo and Gweru. As shown in **Map 1** earlier, and further corroborated within this thesis, these areas formed part of the major zones that enjoyed the cultivation and consumption of small grains.

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As Chapter Six will demonstrate, by 2000, grain and food discourses were highly political. This created a highly volatile environment for study. Historian Linda Gordon describes a researcher's life as 'unconsciously produced by the contingencies of history – the lucky escapes.'[235] Indeed, within this study, the author became an active part of future history and experience through merely residing in Zimbabwe from the late 1980s and throughout Zimbabwe's turbulent post-2000 economic and political slump. As mentioned earlier, the views shared within the dissertation do not necessarily reflect the personal experiences of the researcher. Also, as many of the discussed themes were familiar from the author's adolescent years, writing this thesis was a refreshing (and nostalgic) exercise in reflection on so many dynamics that at the time seemed 'just normal', yet in hindsight were far from it as argued in Chapter Six.

Going into the field to conduct oral interviews, I was armed with the knowledge of some of the challenges I was likely to face when conducting research that relates to agriculture and food among Zimbabwean communities.[236] As will be demonstrated, increasingly over the years from around 2004, the culture of 'career beneficiaries' developed in the face of persistent hunger and the politicization of food relief. In addressing this emerging habit, this study adopted a participatory qualitative approach to obtain more nourished and in-depth access to data from public sources. This involved assessments of the subjective attitudes, opinions, behaviours, insights and impressions of the local communities. Given the politically and economically volatile nature of the Zimbabwe community during the time of the study, I strategically made use of what Freeman Tilden refers to as 'Provocative Interpretation.'[237] This strategy demands that the researcher through their research questions provokes an analysis from their respondents. The main advantage of this method is that it reveals the ideological base of the respondent to use during the interpretation of presented facts. Furthermore, it assisted in self-revealing the levels of analysis of the respondent and whether the respondents have a clear understanding of the information they are sharing. The primary goal is aimed at awarding

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[235] Linda Gordon, 'History constructs a Historian', in James M. Banner and John R. Gillis (ed), *Becoming historians*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 79.

[236] During my MA dissertation research, I conducted research in the political volatile area of Matobo distrist in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland South Province. Some of the striking challenges experienced during this study, and equally applicable to this thesis alike, was ethnic conflicts, patriarchy and community expectations from visiting researchers. The latter is discovered and covered in Chapter Six under the conversation of 'career beneficiaries.

[237] Marie-Catherine de Marneffe *et al,* 'was it good? It was provocative.' Learning the meaning of scalar adjectives, *Paper presented at the 48th Annual meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 11-16 July 2010.

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agency to the respondents without shaping their perceptions and ideas on small grains. This study learned that such a strategy is particularly important when dealing with research that involves communities perceived as marginalized and victimized, that rely on government and/or donor funding for their livelihood. In such communities, a common trend noted is that of 'doctoring' responses by locals in a hope of personal gain, this even despite having been very clear on the nature of the study from the very beginning. One of the interview visits coincided with a maize distribution exercise and the researcher witnessed some locals presenting scripted responses that would in no way cast a shadow of disfavour upon them and jeopardize their getting maize. Some suspected that the researcher was tasked by the distributing authority to run a survey among the locals on their attitudes towards agriculture, grain and livelihoods in the district. To remedy this, the researcher improvised through being an observer and not engaging in active conversations, instead noting social behaviour and responses. These experiences are discussed and covered in Chapter Six of this thesis. This experience can make a worthy contribution towards historical research methodology by offering new ideas on how to research within new areas especially during times of political and social uncertainty.

It was unfortunate that some key stakeholders namely, the Grain Marketing Board and the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture were unwilling to share their records outside of what already existed in the public domain. The primary reasons cited by different officials I interacted with was their fear of victimization upon allowing public access to information that could make the government look unfavourably in the eyes of society and the international community, essentially within the prevailing political instability during the time of the study. This limitation did not have an adverse bearing on the thesis. If anything, this worked towards expounding the central argument of Chapter Six that states how state malfeasance, corruption and victimization became widespread within the grain and food sector. The occurrence of such operations enforces what this thesis theorizes as 'political grain', whereby grain (food and/or seeds) became inherently attached to the political discourses of the day. To develop these perspectives as well as address the dearth of access to data, the thesis makes use of a wide selection of multidisciplinary secondary literature. Apart from showing the gaps in historical studies on small grains, this literature help show the key themes within a study of this kind. Also, this literature in a great way gave context to some of the gaps within the primary material.

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Chapter layout

This study is made up of seven, thematically arranged chapters. It opens with the introductory chapter that explains the prevailing historiographical conversations on African society, agriculture and their relation to small grains. This opening chapter also provides the theoretical points of entry into this historical dialogue on peasant society as well as describes the research methods in which this study is grounded in. Chapter Two explores Zimbabwe's pre-colonial past. It goes back in time starting from around 1500 and extends into the early years after settler colonialism in 1905. This chapter adopts a historiographical approach to show how the conversation on small grains has been constructed over time by various scholars. It essentially brings to light how much of early studies and material on pre-colonial Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, is centrally the work of antiquarian historians. The chapter unpacks the major perspectives that were held by pre-colonial society towards small grains. This chapter is essential in that it offers a foundation for the later chapters and research to note the social, political and environmental changes over time.

Chapter Three examines the production and marketing of small grains over the colonial period from 1890-1980. Conceptually grounded within the seminal Bundy thesis, it traces 'the rise and fall' and rise again of African small-grain production. This chapter shows how small-grain farmers reacted towards white colonialism and how this impacted their patterns of production and lifestyles. This chapter shows that African farmers are economic beings and respond differently towards different policies that affect their livelihoods. It engages concepts of peasant agency and shows how agency is differently expressed by African families. In addition, this chapter shows the role of the colonial state within the development and underdevelopment of agriculture and African crops respectively over the colonial period.

Chapter Four opens with an analysis of African ideas towards food. This chapter examines the changing culinary history of African food consumption in Zimbabwe over the colonial and post-colonial periods. This chapter shows how maize became branded as 'Rhodesia's friend' and how that impacted African eating and culinary patterns over time. Engaging with the work of historian Psyche William- Forson, it shows how due to African economic and social proximity to white communities, culinary exchanges were made and influenced parts of African cooking and diets. New recipes were formed, while in some cases for many urban Africans for instance, the old cuisines remained as a point of social connection with 'home'. The chapter shows how while new ideas of eating and cooking were explored by many African

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families, others indeed continued to enjoy their small grains, and in some cases even incorporated them into these new culinary ideas. Centrally, the chapter traces the shifting social relations between black and white communities and argues that this social history can be robustly gleaned from its culinary tales.

Chapter Five extends the dialogue from Chapter Four, with a focus on African nutrition. By using different government policy documents, this chapter examines the changing perceptions and state of African nutrition from the 1950s to 2000 before the invasion of white commercial farms by the war veterans. This chapter combines the work of historian Diana Wylie and a former medical expert in Southern Rhodesia, Michael Gelfand, to show the different interpretations of African nutrition. For Gelfand, Africans' health and nutrition are a combination of spiritual beliefs and an intimacy with their physical environment. For this reason, eating small grains was more than a case of using the available food, but a means to a balanced diet and spiritual connection. Wylie shows how the colonial state often disregarded African hunger in this regard, prescribing what it viewed as healthy and nourishing diets for its workers. This chapter thus focuses on how state paternalism understood and shaped African nutrition. It also shows how African families reacted towards state initiatives to address the state of their eating and nutrition habits. It shows how the colonial state maintained its unsavoury outlook towards small grains and that this adversely impacted the state nutrition, but during periods of crisis, for instance, allowed African families to grow them and improve both their food security and nutrition. This chapter also engages with the challenge of nomenclature to show how nutrition, malnutrition and undernutrition are often wrongly interchangeably used and with what consequence on the state on human capital. The chapter bridges the colonial and postcolonial epochs, by showing how food and nutrition policy echoed continuity over change. By revisiting the 1980s, the chapter allows us to reflect on the colonial period and revisit the impact of colonial nutrition education and food policy. It provides a rich preamble for Chapter Six, which grapples with food security during the post-2000 era.

Chapter Six examines the persistent problem of food security in Zimbabwe's post-colonial history. This chapter opens with a revisiting of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme showing how, while other crops (mainly maize and wheat) suffered from the political disruptions of the land reform programme, small grains fared well and were a panacea to solve the food crisis. This chapter accentuates the role of the state in exacerbating the food crisis. Building on the work of Musemwa on 'disciplining the dissidents', this chapter argues that in

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Zimbabwe, between 2000 and 2010, food shortages and hunger were largely man-made aimed at gaining political mileage by various political elites. It further adds that, for a long as hunger prevailed, the Robert Mugabe ZANU PF government was able to control the political and social narrative in the country.

The closing chapter is the conclusion that highlights and connects the key arguments in the thesis. This chapter shows the changes over time in the social, environmental and political narratives of small grains from the pre-colonial past to the end of 2013. In addition to this, the chapter proposes new perspectives to address the conversation on small grains. As highlighted in the thesis, small grains have been key towards mitigating hunger during drought, and so Chapter Seven expands on how policymakers can improve the local and global discourses of small grain consumption, and more effectively integrate these crops into mainstream diets and not only to battle hunger but also as a response to looming climatic vagaries adversely impacting agrarian production.

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Chapter Two

'Against the grain'? A social and environmental history of small grains in pre-colonial and early colonial Zimbabwe, c.1500-1905.

> 'To seek information as to tribal, traditional or mythology in districts where there has been intercourse between native and white man, is practically futile. Native history and tradition die on contact with white people, for with such contact the independence and self-reliance of the native disappear, the native mind becoming engrossed with new conditions of life.'
>
> Richard N. Hall, 1909.[1]

> '…all we ask…since you are to write our story…write it well.'
>
> Anonymous African guide, c.1898.[2]

Introduction

The social history of small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko – in southern Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, is essentially a story of the entanglement of food, religion and power. Yet it remains unwritten. In comparison to the three pillars of colonial agrarian development – maize, tobacco and beef – small grains have not been afforded the historical attention they deserve. However, as this chapter will show, in southern Africa, as is the case globally, small grains have long been and continue to be an intrinsic part of people's lives. Moreover, while the economic and political histories of agriculture have received attention, the social history of food is often overlooked and remains somewhat a subject apart, considered in isolation rather than as an integrated part of historical study.[3] Examining the history of small grains from around 1500, when the earliest relevant records by different Portuguese merchants on African communities are available, this chapter traces the changing social and political narratives of these crops until the cusp of settler colonialism in 1890, to show how beyond being used for food for both animals and humans – black and white alike – small grains formed a key part in shaping the social, economic and political fabric of society in the pre-colonial era. Moreover, the chapter argues that small grains played a key role in the making of pre-colonial society's social, economic and political landscape. In addition, this to a very large extent moulded the nature of black-white relations over the colonial period and beyond through its legacies as

[1] Richard N. Hall, *Pre-historical Rhodesia*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 123.
[2] H. C. Thomson, *Rhodesia and its government*, (Harry Craufuird, 1898), 41.
[3] J. Super, "Food and History", *Journal of Social History*, 36, 1, 2002, 165-178.

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displayed by the varying socio-economic activities operated by varying African communities over time. Building on the work of sociologist André Magnan[4], who argues that expansion of the grain industry in Canada was attached to the growing social significance that this food crop had on social culture and status, similarly this chapter demonstrates how over time small grains influenced African beliefs and so-called 'traditional' values and systems. It also shows how this developed and changed over time during the pre-colonial era.

It is important to include the pre-colonial era in my analysis because for far too long, the main historical accounts have been on African societies during the colonial period. Historian Jan Vansina rightly points out that the study of the precolonial past had become 'distinctly unfashionable', with much attention being channelled towards the colonial era.[5] Reid has identified key drivers in the waning of precolonial history.[6] Methodology, historians lost faith in the veracity of 'oral traditions', which had been so embraced in the 1960s. Those historians using oral testimony began rather deploy 'oral history' than 'oral tradition'. They thus had to deal with living interlocutors. Moreover, the colonial archives – problematic, biased, one-sided and often racist as they are – offered a wealth of easy to get to and fairly easy to interpret primary sources – unlike the precolonial past. Moreover, as Reid points out, the optimism with which independent Africa was first greeted also faded, which 'bred disillusion with the nation-building projects launched with much fanfare a few years earlier, and of which research on the deeper African past had been such a key part. Instead, the focus shifted to colonial rule as perhaps possessing the clues to Africa's modern malaise, for something had surely gone 'wrong' in those supposedly vital years.'[7] Economic historian Gareth Austin underscores how up to the 1960s often described as the 'decade of independence' in Africa, historical literature by both white and black scholars had given much importance to institutions and their shaping of economic behaviour as opposed to studying the life histories of society.[8] With the underemphasis on local vernacular African languages within native policy over the colonial era, classifications in language and nomenclature that formed a key part of oral traditions (as

[4] André Magnan, *When wheat was king: the rise and fall of the Canada-UK grain trade*, (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 45-7.
[5] Jan Vansina quoted in Richard Reid, 'Past and presentism: The precolonial and the foreshortening of African history', *The Journal of African History*, 52, 2, 2011, 135-155. Also see Gareth Austin, 'Resources, techniques, and strategies south of the Sahara: revising the factor endowments perspective on Africa economic development, 1500–2000', *Economic History Review*, 61, 3, 2008, 587-624.
[6] Richard Reid, "Past and Presentism: The 'Precolonial' and the Foreshortening of African History", *The Journal of African History*, 52, 2, 2011, 135-155.
[7] *Ibid*. 137.
[8] Austin, 'Resources, techniques and strategies', 588.

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alluded to earlier and echoed in Chapter Three) can be taken to indicate an aim to maintain superiority over African discourse, in some cases arguing that there is insufficient information to document these pre-colonial histories.[9] This thesis tries to reconstruct some part of the pre-colonial past, to understand the place of grains in these shifting and complex societies.

Conceptually, this chapter engages with the concepts of identity and belonging as theorised by historians David Lee Schoenbrun[10] and Leroy Vail[11] on southern Africa and, on Zimbabwe by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger on the development of African culture[12] and Gerald Mazarire on the socio-economic development of African culture, identity and society.[13] Adding to this are the contributions by historians Thembani Dube[14], Enocent Msindo[15] and Joseph Mujere[16] in studies on the Kalanga, Ndebele and Basotho communities in the southern districts of Zimbabwe. Adopting their ideas that African societies are a product of a range of processes, through a historiographical conversation, this chapter will explore how small grains were utilised in everyday life and in cultural practices in pre-colonial society. By analysing various legacies that depict small grains both metaphorically (in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, poems, songs and jokes) and tangibly (through archaeological remains of buildings and customary ceremonies), this chapter traces how small grains were a central part of different African cultures and traditions, concomitantly, continuously intermingling and influencing other societies. This chapter will demonstrate how the dynamism, flexibility and malleable utility of small grains shaped and informed African identity and so-called 'traditional culture' over time. In so doing, it will show how the despite the shifting role of small grains (in many ways other than food) formed the foundations of African identity deployed through practices of social cohesion and religion, expressed in varying ways during different rituals during the pre-colonial period.

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[9] Timothy J. Riney, 'Pre-colonial Systems of Writing and Post-colonial Languages of publication, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 19, 1, 1998, 64-83.

[10] David Lee. Schoenbrun, *A Green Place, a Good Place: Agrarian Change, Gender and Social Identity in the Great Lakes Region to the 15th Century* (Oxford, 1998)

[11] Leroy Vail, *The creation of tribalism in Southern Africa,* (Berkley: Currey University of California Press, 1989).

[12] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The invention of tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, originally printed 1983).

[13] Gerald Mazarire, 'Reflections on Pre-Colonial Zimbabwe, c.850–1880s', in Brian Raftopoulos and Alois S. Mlambo (ed), *Becoming Zimbabwe. A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008,* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 1-38.

[14] Thembani Dube, 'Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005', *PhD Thesis,* Witwatersrand University, 2015.

[15] Enocent Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in Kalanga and Ndebele Societies, 1860-1990*, (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2012).

[16] Joseph Mujere, *Land, Migration and Belonging: A History of the Basotho in Southern Rhodesia c.1890-1960s*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2019).

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A social history of small grains allows us not only to address critical historiographical questions regarding African socio-agrarian history (such as when, why and how agriculture developed in southern Africa), but it also allows us to also explore what small grains meant to different societies. This chapter uses various trade and social accounts by early writers on pre-colonial society, mainly Portuguese and British merchants, as well as secondary literature and oral sources to trace the history of small grains over the pre-colonial era. The chapter is divided into eight sections, commencing with a brief conversation on small grains in food history. Herein themes including African agriculture, religion and culinary practices are addressed. Section two continues the historiographical conversation on the making of African pre-colonial society, showing how various writers viewed African society and what impact it had on small grains. Section three examines the historiographical conversations on the development of African families, placing emphasis on the contestations in representing African families by early colonial authors. The following sections explore various social representations of precolonial society, examining Africans as hunter-gatherers and emerging agriculturalists. They explore African identity, ownership and power and how this shaped and was also shaped by the development of small grains over the pre-colonial period. The final section focuses on some of the existing social myths, taboos and practices surrounding African food. This section underscores how small grains have been both unintentionally and systematically deployed by different religious and political elites to influence and police social behaviour, tradition and culture.

Lastly, this chapter will address only briefly the erroneous early view that African society was static and without a history because this has been already corrected by the last generation of revisionist historians.[17] Much more importantly, therefore, it will focus on showing how a relationship existed between African individuals, families and small grains and how this relationship assumed different social, religious and political meanings over time. This chapter argues that by the time of white colonization in 1890, small grains played a key role in the lives of pre-colonial African societies, and this influenced the trajectory of settler colonialism in Southern Rhodesia.

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[17] Randi Haaland, 'Porridge and Pot, Bread and Oven: Food Ways and Symbolism in Africa and the Near East from the Neolithic to the Present', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 17, 2, 2007, 165-182.

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'Collecting food, cultivating people'[18]: Precolonial society, food and history.

Food is a reflection of society.[19] African society and its food history in the pre-colonial past are complex – it would be an error to see the pre-colonial culinary scene as either static or homogenous. Small grain agrarian and culinary patterns have undergone numerous historic turns, and this has led to vastly different interpretations of their history by different historians over the years. Moreover, until the early 1990s, the history of indigenous African food practices were hardly investigated at all.[20] Early writers on Africa's – and Zimbabwe's in particular – pre-colonial era were trading merchants, while the post-colonial era witnessed the rise of social historians such as Pathisa Nyathi contributing significantly to pre-colonial historiography.[21] He adds to a rich and growing literature on the social history of African society by writers such as Marcia Wright et al, [22] Robert W. July,[23] Peter Mitchell et al. [24] and Jan Vansina.[25] These studies grapple with several themes in food history, including the development of tastes and culinary habits using indigenous crops, but food history is not their primary preoccupation. Their attention is focused on socio-political developments occurring within society, which shape and impact food systems.[26] Taking into account the work of historians such as Paul Freedman,[27] this chapter is able to trace how the significance of food extends beyond nourishing the body to being a subject of fascination and entertainment, for example, in various societies, where it was used during the pageantry of royal banquets in different periods.[28] Essentially, this shows the classism within the construction of food history, and this chapter will trace whether this was also the case in African society.

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[18] Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting food, cultivating people*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 119.
[19] Pathisa Nyathi, *Beyond Nutrition: Food as a Cultural Expression*, (Bulawayo: Amagugu, 2017).
[20] N. D. Vietmeyer, *Lost crops of Africa: Grains*, (Washington, D.C: National Academy Press, 1996), 1.
[21] Pathisa Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's cultural heritage*, (Bulawayo: Amabooks, 2005).
[22] Marcia Wright *et al*, '*The reluctant integration of Zimbabwe, 1852-1908*, (Fernand Braudel Center), Karin A. *Klieman, Bantu-Batwa history 'The Pygmies Were Our Compass': Bantu and Batwa in the History of West Central Africa. Early Times to c. 1900*, (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 2003).
[23] Robert W. July, *A history of the African people*, (Illinois: Waveland, 1998).
[24] Peter Mitchell, Anne Haour and John Hobart, *Researching Africa's past: New Contributions from British Archaeologists*, (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 2003).
[25] Jan Vansina, 'History in Novels and Memoirs: Alfons Vermeulen on Rural Congo (1899–1904)', *Journal: History in Africa*, 39, 2012, 123-142.
[26] Mitchell et al, *Researching Africa's past*, 6-11. They observe how African accounts of history are connected with their victorious history of prolonged and unbroken dynasties, never chanting of defeats or disruptions and slavery by their neighbours.
[27] Paul Freedman, *Food: The History of Taste*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007) and *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (Yale University Press, 2008).
[28] Tim Lambert, 'A brief history of food', http://www.localhistories.org/food.html, Accessed 20 January 2020.

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Historian James McCann observes how in Africa, 'cookery is a stage for a performance by the cook', while family, friends and neighbours play the key role of their audiences.[29] Notwithstanding this, development practitioners Wilfred Lunga and Charles Musarurwa remain very critical of how much early foundational studies on food in Africa tended to focus on Western cuisine and the development of white culture food crops and diets, thus failing to offer a solution to Africa's food security problems.[30] This gives the impression that academically speaking, the social history of African food is unimportant, hence overtly overshadowed in global food historiography.

Yet there exists a wealth of outstanding contemporary scholarly work on African society and food. The work of historian Elias Mandala neatly shows how African people in Malawi have, over different ecological and political periods, crafted an identity in their quest to obtain food. New markets were created, while important conversations with some women from the Lower Tchiri Valley reveal the heterogeneous nature of society.[31] Mandala observes how while the majority of the country struggled to obtain food during the 1995 famine, the reality was different, with these ladies not experiencing the 'crisis' by relying on traditional knowledge systems to source and preserve their food.[32] Stephen Burgess adds that through rural transformation, Kenya and Zimbabwe have been able to combat food scarcities, echoing the use of 'traditional' methods to deal with hunger.[33] Predominately focusing on North and West Africa, historian Karen Carr explores the interconnectedness of 'place, the environment and crops and animals' in the construction of food civilization in Africa.[34] Subtly accentuating how small grains form a part of human society, she observes how among the Chinese, the sign for 'millet' and 'mouth' are commonly placed together to construct the phrase 'good', while when combined with the sign for man, it means 'harvest' or 'year'.[35] This inclusion of small grains in the construction of everyday language underlines its clear significance not only within language development but also to the development of culture. Linguists Birgit Ricquier and

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[29] James McCann, *Stirring the pot: A history of African Cuisine*, (Bloomsbury: Hurst and Company, 2010), 3.
[30] Wilfred Lunga and Charles Musarurwa, 'Indigenous food security revival strategies at the village level: The gender factor implications', *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies*, 8, 2, 2016, 1-7.
[31] Elias C. Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860-2004*, (Portsmouth: NH, Hienemann, 2005, 57.
[32] *Ibid*. 57-8.
[33] Stephen Burgess, 'Small holder voice ad rural transformation: Zimbabwe and Kenya compared', *Comparative Politics*, 29, 2, 1997, 127-149.
[34] Karen E. Carr, 'African Food – History – Cooking and eating in early Africa', *Quatr.us Study Guides*, May 18, 2017. https://quatr.us/african-history/african-food-history.htm, Accessed on 19 January 2020
[35] Karen E. Carr, 'Where does millet come from? Sudan, China, Europe', https://quatr.us/china/millet-come-sudan-china-europe.htm, Accessed on 19 January 2020.

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Koen Bostoen provide a riveting contribution in their use of language and linguistics as a tool to uncover and construct a chronological history of food culture within the history of the early Bantu peoples in Africa.[36] The existence of some widespread terms for certain types of foods such as tubers, for instance, strongly points to how, notwithstanding being associated with a certain group of people and time in history, crops are fluid and ambulatory in nature. By observing the lexical developments that have occurred with the names of food and crops, Peter Mitchell et al. argue that it is possible to reconstruct the social history of a people, and equally deduce the nature of the environment they lived in.[37]

Michael Owen Jones draws on the literary symbolism of small grains to posit how the 'kernel structure of the grain plant' reflects much about the nature and role of grain within African society.[38] Using the visual image of a grain plant (as noted in **Figure 1**), Jones argues that like each separate seed roots, brought together by the plant stem, similarly, within society culture is diverse and dynamic, and distinguishes people within the same broader society. Yet, at the same time, because of how each seed connects to the same stem branch, this illustrates metaphorically how the different individuals too have points of connection and similarities within society.[39]

'Static gyrations':[40] Pre-colonial African society and small grains

In pre-colonial Zimbabwe, the development of some foods like *sadza* (a thick grain meal prepared from maize or small grains) was localized.[41] McCann argues that during the pre-colonial age, food cultures were formed widely and broadly across regions, and *sadza* for example developed as *ugali* in Eastern Africa or *tsenza* in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) before reaching the Shona in present-day Zimbabwe.[42] However, the impact of a change triggered in some cases by climatic and environmental shifts in one region inevitably spread,

[36] Birgit Ricquier and Koen Bostoen, 'Reviving food history through Linguistics: Culinary traditions in early Bantuphone communities', *Food and Language: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking 2009.*

[37] Birgit Ricquier and Koen Bostoen, 'Reviving food history through Linguistics: Culinary traditions in early Bantuphone communities' in Richard Hosking, ed, *Food and Language: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking 2009*, (Oxford: Oxford Symposium, 2010), 261.

[38] Michael Owen Jones, *Corn: A Global History*, (Reaktion Books, 2017), 37-9.

[39] Michael Owen Jones, 'Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies' (American Folklore Society Presidential Address, October 2005), *The Journal of American Folklore*, 120, 476, 2007, 129-177.

[40] D. P. Henige, *Oral Historiography*, (London, Longman, 1982), 21.

[41] McCann, *Stirring the pot*, 123-5.

[42] McCann, *Maize and grace*, 89-93.

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triggering a range of cultural developments across the whole continent. Different modifications to food and eating patterns depended largely not only on the type, frequency of consumption or duration residing within the landscape but also on the potential for perceiving environmental and climatic change and the adaptation strategies employed to survive.[43] Historian J. Desmond Clark reiterates this as a primary factor in the social disparities in the adoption of different crops and animals by Bantu societies in the pre-colonial period and beyond.[44] Most of the accounts of the pre-colonial era in Zimbabwe emerge from 1500 onwards, records by Portuguese merchants and later British missionaries and traders from about the 1850s. The Portuguese recorded their early encounters with the early kingdoms such as the Munhumutapa and Great Zimbabwe from the fifteenth century.[45] Likewise, British explorers, traders and soldiers wrote about the Ndebele and Shona empires which had by 1880 developed into the dominant powers in the region that was to become Southern Rhodesia.[46] Also outstanding within this literature are descriptions of a vibrant barter and trade system across societies whereby small grains along with gold, salt, beads and cloth were key units of trade. Some historians of African history such as Jollie Ethel Tawse[47] writing in the mid-1920s sided with Hugh Trevor-Roper's declaration that Africa does not have a recoverable pre-colonial past of its own, tracing African lives within the lens of white development, arguing that there are limitations on just what can be known about certain aspects in some periods, and some areas remain resolutely prehistoric or even ahistorical. As Trevor-Roper crudely put it, no true history just static 'gyrations'.[48] This was a fundamentally untrue account of African society. Indeed, some early colonialists developed a narrative that despite 'the first impression of a splendid physique…cranial capacity and weight of the brain, the Bantu fall behind the Europeans.'[49] Among some white explorers and communities, African society was seen almost as a primitive evolutionary step behind European societies, consuming the 'most indigestible' types of food,

[43] James McCann, *Maize and grace: Africa's encounter with a new world crop, 1500-2000*, (Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2005), 79.

[44] J. Desmond Clark, 'The spread of food production in sub-Saharan Africa', in *An Economic History of Tropical Africa- the precolonial period*, (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 3-4.

[45] M. Manyanga and S. Chirikure, *Archives, objects, places and landscapes: the multidisciplinary a decolonising imperative*, (Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group), 1

[46] Thomas N. Huffman, 'Maize Grindstones, Madikwe Pottery and Ochre Mining in Precolonial South Africa', *Southern African humanities*, 18, 2, 2006, 51–70. Also see Hilda Kuper, A. J. B. Hughes and J. van Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Routledge, 2017), viii.

[47] Jollie Ethel Tawse. The Real Rhodesia. (London, Hutchinson and Company, 1924).

[48] D. P. Henige, *Oral Historiography*, (London: Longman, 1982), 21.

[49] South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), 'Anthropological and historical notes on the Bantu tribes of South Africa', in *Tuberculosis in South African Natives*, (Johannesburg: Historical Papers Research Archive, 2013), 26-37.

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as noted in Chapter Four.[50] Studies like that by Theodore Bent published in 1895 concluded that pre-colonial culture was originally introduced from Asia in around 1400.[51] In the same manner, archaeologist Hall consistently presented the view that the Great Zimbabwe ruins and mines belonged to a foreign 'Semitic race' and could not have originated with the so-called Bantu unaided.[52] As late as the 1970s, white anthropologists including Adam Kuper and Pierre Van Leynseele supported this thinking, stating that Semite and Indian, and to some extent, northern Hamite influences played a leading part in moulding the physical features of the southeastern Bantu peoples in southern Africa.[53] According to historian Desmond J Clark, the chief development in food production in the higher rainfall regions of West Africa took place only after the introduction of American and Asian food plants, as well as upon embracing the introduction of metal-working, which provided for more efficient tools with which to make effective exploitation of the forests.[54] Yet historian David Schoenbrun writes,

> '… around 500 B.C. African Great Lakes communities responded to the environmental changes and engendered unique regional variants from their close contact with Bantu-speaking people, drawing upon this for their rich and diverse agricultural synthesis to support their population growth.'[55]

Buttressing Schoenbrun's remarks, agronomists Paul Vlek et al state that different communities deployed a variety of agricultural techniques to acquire food including streambank cultivation to counter changing climatic conditions and unsuitable landscapes, which shaped the type of crops that they cultivated.[56] Because small grains were tolerant of harsh terrains as compared to maize, their preference grew increasingly across several African cultivating societies from the sixteenth century onwards.[57]

There were exceptions. W.G. Neal and R. Hall's *The Ancient Ruins of Rhodesia* (1904) deviates from this normative narrative by white European authors on the precolonial period who insisted

[50] Derek Wilson, *A history of South and Central Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 83-85. Also see 'The native and his food', *NADA,* 1933, 67-71.
[51] Theodore T. Bent, *The ruined cities of Mashonaland*, (London: Longmans, 1895), 67.
[52] Hall, 'The Great Zimbabwe', 405-414.
[53] Adam Kuper and Pierre Van Leynseele, 'Social Anthropology and the 'Bantu Expansion', *Africa Journal of the International African Institute*, 48, 4, 1978, 335-352.
[54] Desmond J. Clark, 'The spread of food production', *An economic history of Tropical Africa – the precolonial period* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 4
[55] David L. Schoenbrun, 'We are what we eat: Ancient agriculture between the Great Lakes', *Journal of African History*, 34, 1993, 1-31. (1).
[56] Paul L.G. Vlek, Eugene R. Terry and Richard A. Sikora, 'Climate change and the threat to food production in southern Africa', in Richard A Sikora *et al* ed, *Transforming agriculture in southern Africa: Constraints, technologies, policies and processes*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 27-35.
[57] McCann, *Stirring the pot*, 123-5.

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that African society was primitive.[58] They offered a revised perspective that tried to settle 'the Rhodesian enigma' on the vastness and suitability of the Rhodesian soil for crop cultivation.[59] They argued that African families were creative and explorative using a bulk of their natural environment for their upkeep and survival.[60] However, at the same time, they faced setbacks from unpredictable climatic and environmental conditions. Neal and Hall observed how the oldest portions of the Acropolis and probably certain walls in the Valley of Ruins in the manner of their construction and the nature of the relics yielded on their original floors and plant vegetation around may safely be considered to represent the most ancient forms of architecture extant in Rhodesia.[61] Indeed, a century later, historian Thomas Huffman substantiates this when he notes how the first walls were no doubt built for defence; however, over time, the presence of these walls acquired new and equally important social purposes, acting as a protective shield to their crops, animals and humans alike from the changing social and environmental terrain.[62]

Historian Avital Livneh adds that for the Karanga, the difficulties of storing grains including millets and sorghum greatly constrained leaders' abilities to manage and control the ever-growing human and animal population.[63] This led to the stretching of their communities over wider area spaces. By the early nineteenth century, many African homesteads as depicted in **Figure 2**, were round mud and sticks-built structures with conical roofs thatched with grass. As also observed from the picture, food production was through grinding grain either using a wooden or rock mortar.[64] As this thesis will further demonstrate in Chapter Four, these tools were used to control the texture of the grain and this greatly shaped and improved the nature of African culinary and eating patterns.

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[58] R N Hall and W G Neal, *The ancient ruins of Rhodesia (Monomotapae imperium),* (London: Methuen, 1904), 156-7.
[59] *Ibid*.
[60] Hall, *Prehistoric Rhodesia*, 1-3.
[61] Richard N. Hall, 'The Great Zimbabwe and Other Ancient Ruins in Rhodesia', *The Geographical Journal*, 25, 4 April 1905, 405-414.
[62] Huffman, 'Zimbabwe: Southern Africa's first town', 9. Walls were constructed to enhance the authority of the rulers as well as cement allegiance to the fledging state.
[63] Avital Livneh, 'Precolonial polities in southern Zambezia and their political communications, *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1976, 16-17.
[64] Martin Hall and Rebecca Stefoff, *Great Zimbabwe*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19.

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Figure 2: Typical traditional Shona homes occupied from around the 1850s onwards.[65]

'Write our story…write it well.'[66]: Documenting African everyday life.

Much of Africa's pre-colonial agrarian history makes use of ahistorical abstract ideas like African communities were backwards, homogenous and without a tangible past[67] and thus continues to be an enigma, at first exacerbated by how early white writers aimed at maintaining control over African economies and technologies. At the point of white settler colonialism in Zimbabwe in 1890, colonial authorities used their influence in religion and trade to strengthen their hold over African communities practising indigenous customs.[68] In some cases, they sanctioned even communicating in their traditional languages or using their traditional communication systems.[69] By so doing, this system elbowed into the periphery of African development, African ways of communicating, producing and survival. However, in response, like this chapter, and indeed thesis illustrates, different African communities constructed various survival strategies such as alternative communication methods focused on the use of a multiplicity of often ambiguous proverbs, folklore, prose and song as a method of communicating among one another, and outstandingly, as a means towards speaking their

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[65] *Ibid*.
[66] H. C. Thomson, *Rhodesia and its government*, (Harry Craufuird, 1898), 41.
[67] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The invention of tradition*, 54-59.
[68] Gareth Austin, 'African Economic Development and Colonial Legacies', *International Development Policy Revue internationale de politique de développement,* 2010, 12. Also see Steele, 'The making of colonial policy', 231-34.
[69] Elsa Rogers, 'Proverbs and the African Oral tradition: An Examination of selected novels by Earl Lovelace', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 45, 1, 1999, 95-100.

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everyday overtly. Distinctively, these metaphorical expressions made common reference to everyday life experienced and understood by Africans. For example, in the Chivi area in Mashonaland, African body art reflected the nature of their cultivation activities in what traveller Theodore Bent describes as epitomizing a human 'breast and furrow pattern.' – meaning figurines painted on the women's bodies resembled the farrows akin to the fields which they cultivated.[70] Moreover, this body paint design that cut across their wombs symbolized African concepts of agricultural fertility.[71] Social anthropologists Hilda Kuper, A J. B. Hughes and J. van Velsen add that traditional literature is expressed in clan histories through folklore and proverbs with common use of everyday animals – the hare (*umvundla* or tsuro in Ndebele and Shona respectively) being the principal character among other important animals including the lion, zebra and baboon.[72] Anthropologist Ruth Finnegan adds that African proverbs are never alluded to in obvious terms, rather a concrete situation is provided in which the general point is presented.[73] Although they explore African creativity and wisdom, African stories are often presented as riddles, with the true meaning or actual facts not always accurate or obvious to the listener.[74] These methods provide a rich source on African history and share essential knowledge on the nature of indigenous pre-colonial communities.

At the same time, food author Renata Coetzee underlines how African culture is a complex entity that includes diverse ideas, knowledge, beliefs, art, morals and customs, not genetically inherited (of course) but acquired generationally in society.[75] In light of this, the social history of small grains enables us to sift through an array of cultural artefacts from different social and cultural legacies at different periods of time, unpacking the different and changing social norms that existed within the every day of African communities. This enriches our knowledge on the different social and cultural innovations within the pre-colonial economy, denoting their nature and impact on the human experience not only during the pre-colonial but also beyond. Classifications by white racist scholarship, between 1905 and 1940s, on the various forms and 'degrees of culture' of the peasant families, ignored the complexities of how African food

[70] Theodore Bent, *The ruined cities of Mashonaland: being a record of excavation and exploration in 1891*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), 46-7.
[71] Gerald Mazarire, 'The Politics of the Womb': Women, Politics and the environment in pre-colonial Chivi, Southern Zimbabwe, c.1840 to 1900', *Zambezia* XXX, I, 2003, 35-50.
[72] Hilda Kuper, A J. B, Hughes and J van Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 14.
[73] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 52.
[74] Finnegan, *Oral Literature*, 54.
[75] Renata Coetzee, *Funa and Food from Africa: Roots of traditional African food culture*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1982), 12.

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shaped African lifestyles – and vice versa. Yet, African culture varied both in form and complexity. Archaeologists such as Innocent Pikirayi, Gilbert Pwiti[76] and Peter R. Schmidt[77] have – using both archaeological and oral evidence – more accurately shown the diverse cultural typologies of pre-colonial society. In some cases of their work, they perhaps fall short in explaining the dynamics of economic and social change over time. This critical limitation is, however, addressed by African philologists such as Joseph Greenberg[78] and Malcolm Guthrie[79] who demonstrate the changes in the grammar and vocabulary of certain African groups, denoting the variances in language and concurrent culture found in different societies. These language changes allow for linguistic historians to estimate different time phases based on the language and icons of association ascribed. For example, among southern African communities, between 1700 and 1850, a tribute to the *Mambo* (king) was paid in the form of grain mainly small grains and pockets of maize, with tokens of cowries, skins and beads being recorded as mainly being used only during periods of drought and famine.[80] Such episodes became known as *gore renzara* (season of hunger) or *shura matongo* (a disease that destroys communities) and *gocha nhembe* (period of the burning skin/back/spine). Vlek et al, therefore, note how different cultural changes within food production resulted from the impact of climatic events that influenced the quantity and in some cases quality and distribution of food in society.[81]

The history of African society in the pre-colonial period has suffered tremendously owing, on the one hand, to scanty reliable sources, and on the other hand, to a misunderstanding of various cultural and economic behaviours practised by Africans among those who had taken on the task to document it. The first known European to have visited Great Zimbabwe was Karl Mauch, who in 1871 publicized the stone wonder to the Western world, resulting two decades later in antiquarian investigations by Bent, Hall and Neal in 1893, 1902 and 1905

[76] Innocent Pikirayi and Gilbert pwiti , 'States, Traders, and Colonists: Historical Archaeology in Zimbabwe', *Historical Archaeology*, 33, 2, 1999, 73-89.
[77] Peter R. Schmidt, *Historical archaeology: A structural approach in an African culture*, (Westport: Conn, 1978. 286-94.
[78] Joseph Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963).
[79] Malcolm Guthrie, *The classification of Bantu languages,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).
[80] Thomas Huffman, *Snakes and crocodiles: Power and symbolism in ancient Zimbabwe*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996), 54-7.
[81] Paul Vlek, Eugene Terry and Richard Sikora, 'Climate change and the threat to food production in southern Africa', in Richard A Sikora *et al* eds, *Transforming agriculture in southern Africa: Constraints, technologies, policies and processes*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 27-35.

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respectively.[82] The refusal to acknowledge agency in African pre-colonial societies by many scholars of archaeology up until the 1931 exploration by Gertrude Caton-Thompson at first fuelled the notion that African society existed without original ideas in the construction of their society and living environment.[83] Admittedly, this foundational literature was shaped by the limited investments at the time in studying the pre-colonial era. The Royal Geographical Society's Dr Petrie noted,

> 'in Rhodesia, we have the sites, but do not possess the means [for archaeological excavation]. Research in Rhodesia has always been by unassisted individual effort, and hence it has been spasmodic and without organized system.'[84]

More racist texts such as Duggan-Cronin's 1928 *The Bantu Tribes of South Africa* provided a political, anthropological and aesthetic history of pre-colonial societies constructing African subjects without agency or societal sophistication.[85]

However, in spite of this overwhelming underestimating of pre-colonial African societies in the early scholarship on Africa's pre-colonial past, even in 1907 David Randall-Maciver went on to admit to that he never 'inspected any of the gold mines and caves to further repudiate any suggestion of an intrusion of foreign influence in the discoveries and development of the ancient societies.'[86] This led Huffman to conclude in 1972 that 'the precise steps in the development of Great Zimbabwe will never be known, but a general outline can be postulated', which was based on studying the landscapes and rock art produced by the indigenous people over time.[87] Revisionist scholarship that was to grow from the 1970s onwards building from the efforts of historians and archaeologists such as David Beach had to rely a great deal on new discoveries from archaeological sites working closely with oral testimonies and scrutiny of prevailing African traditions to recount and fill in the gaps in the earlier conclusions of the pre-

[82] Innocent Pikirayi, 'Great Zimbabwe in Historical Archaeology: Reconceptualising Decline, abandonment and reoccupation of an Ancient Polity, A.D. 1450–1900', *Historical Archaeology*, 2013, 47, 1, 26–37.

[83] Joseph Chikumbirike, Marion K. Bamford and Amanda B. Esterhuysen, 'A study of archaeological charcoal from Great Zimbabwe', *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 71, 204,107-118. (107-8) Although David McIver was the first trained archaeologist to investigate the site 1906, he confirmed merely that it was indeed from the late mediaeval age. Gertrude Caton-Thompson in 1931 excavated the Maund Ruins, Hill Complex terraces and Conical Tower in the Great Enclosure, concurred with MacIver's 1906 dictum that the stone walls were indeed mediaeval, but further argued that the Great Zimbabwe was of African origin.

[84] Hall, 'The Great Zimbabwe', 405-7.

[85] Michael Godby, 'Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin's Photographs for The Bantu Tribes of South Africa (1928–1954): The Construction of an Ambiguous Idyll', *Paper presentation at African Studies Centre* at the University of Gainesville, Florida, in October 2009

[86] David Randall-Maciver, 'The Rhodesia Ruins: Their Probable Origin and Significance', *Royal Geographical Society Journal*, 1906, 336.

[87] ThomasN. Huffman, 'The rise and fall of Zimbabwe', *Journal of African History*, 13, 3, 353-366.

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colonial past.[88] The story of African society has thus been differently (and wrongly in some cases) because of methodological differences, which as noted in Chapter One, has contributed to nomenclature and language bastardizations that have misrepresented African realities.

Relying on historical linguistic data on agriculture and food collecting and preservation strategies, linguist Christopher Ehret uses the Cushitic, Sudanic and Bantu speaking societies in East Africa during the seventh to the eleventh century, to outline the processes of ethnic interaction, economic activity, social organization and religious systems and how these shaped early African agriculture and culinary systems.[89] In his analysis, Ehret reinforces the views of agronomist N. D. Vietmeyer that in Africa, not only is agriculture a heritage and cultural symbol, but contrary to many 'Merrie Africa' writers, the continent hosts more cereals grain crops than any other.[90] McCann reiterates this when he describes the widespread cultivation and consumption of maize and small grains across the continent from the early sixteenth century.[91] Environmental historian, Alfred W. Crosby in the 1972 *The Columbian Exchange*, proposed that the widespread transfer of crops and ideas was closely tied to accumulation and colonial conquest across the world.[92] As historian H.H.K. Bhila noted 'dhows introduced rice from Asia, and in the 1500s, the Portuguese colonists imported maize from the Americas'.[93] Indeed, food cultures were not static, but fluid and mobile.

Over time distinctions between grain varieties developed, influenced by various factors such as the environment and demand for food in relation to grain maturation intervals.[94] Historian T. D. Leedy thus observes how, historically, the innovation of agricultural convenience brought by the ploughs and mills, for instance, culminated in 'old grains' languishing in importance,

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[88] Innocent Pikirayi, 'David Beach, Shona history and the archaeology of Zimbabwe', *Zambezia*, XXVI, II, 1999, 135-144.

[89] Christopher Ehret, 'The East African interior', in M. el-Fasi, (ed), and I Hrbek, *African from the seventh to the eleventh century*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1988)

[90] Vietmeyer, *Lost crops',* 1. 'Merrie Africa' approach argues that precolonial African communities were stable linear communities that lived in constant harmony with their environment and nature, before suffering a series of tragedies such as depopulation, economic exploitation and ecological disasters including droughts and famine under colonial rule. See Gregory Maddox et al (ed), *Custodians of the land: ecology and culture in the history of Tanzania*, (London: James Curry, 1996), 2.

[91] McCann, *Maize and grace*.

[92] Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (Greenwood Publishing Group).

[93] H.H.K. Bhila, Trade and Politics in a Shona Kingdom: The Manyika and their African and *Portuguese Neighbours 1575-1900*, (Salisbury, Longman, 1982), 67-70.

[94] Bjørnstad, 'Wheat-.', 20-22. Less fast-growing varieties like sorghum could not keep pace with the increasing demand especially in light of the expansion of wheat across Europe.

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remaining principally as the foods of the poor and the rural areas.[95] From this separation of value brought about spatial cultural conceptions towards small grain cultivation and consumption.

For small grains, the pre-colonial period was a phase when they held significant social and economic capital, engrained –as it were – within processes of wealth accumulation and social interactions.[96] Tenson Muyambo suggests that the arrival of white settler colonizers by 1890 caused them to take on the 'stigma of being second-rate' crops consumed by the poor.[97] The reality was more complicated, as Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrates. Muyambo asserts that various spiritual and cultural myths held by some African communities such as the Kalanga arose surrounding the cultivation and consumption of small grains.[98] Some include how these indigenous grains are not as nutritious or high yielding in comparison to grains like maize. Other myths were more specific – such as how, among Shona people in the Manyika area, the cultivation of rapoko variety of small grain was a show of distress and conjured the wrath of the ancestors.[99] Its consumption could result in one being driven into exile. He argues that, especially after the 1890s, different 'superstitions' were linked to small grains because of their presence during the carrying out of these functions, like *umbuyiswa* (welcoming the spirit of the deceased back home).[100]

Hunters, gatherers and African homes

The adoption and subsequent cultivation of grain crops around the fifteenth century in southern African transformed the nature and form of pre-colonial societies. Apart from being a major supplement to a predominantly protein-based diet of fish, game and wild vegetables and fruits, the addition of cultivated small grains permitted society to become stationary and occupy more

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[95] T. D. Leedy, 'A starving belly does not listen to explanations: Agricultural evangelism in colonial Zimbabwe, 1900 to 1962', *Agricultural History Society*, 84, 4, 2010, 479-501.

[96] Tenson Muyambo, 'Indigenous Knowledge Systems: A Haven for Sustainable Economic Growth in Zimbabwe', *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 10, 3, 2017, 172-186.

[97] *Ibid*.

[98] *Ibid*.

[99] Among the Manyika in Zimunya south of Mutare, the consumption of *mhunga* (pearl millet) is strongly shunned upon ad historian Admire Mseba shares how on one occasion while travelling in the area, experienced car challenges in the mountainous plains. Locally the incident was explained as a chastisement on Mseba for having encroached into the area while having consumed pearl millet in the days leading to his visit. It was expressed to him how mhunga was a distasteful crop in the area resulting in the ancestors punishing him, with the only means of recourse being to rid his bowls and digestive system entirely of the grain or risk further hiccups. Among the Manyika, from pre-colonial times, rapoko, maize and sorghum were the preferred favourites while millet was associated with witchcraft of sorcery.

[100] Wallace. Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), 34.

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land widely and permanently.[101] With the occupation of more permanent spaces, the nature of pre-colonial survival was reconfigured in line with the introduction of new survival methods. This brought about a review of, among many other things, gender roles and economic and political status organized around the control of land, labour, wealth and identity. As this section will demonstrate, these changes had a far-reaching impact on the social and political bearings of pre-colonial societies, described by historian Jeff Guy as 'social laws of motion'.[102] Undoubtedly the development of small grains during the pre-colonial era had a political dimension, as this chapter seeks to contend.

Based on various rock art images of the pre-colonial era, historically, southern Africa's pre-colonial societies' agricultural production took place within the homestead or proximate environs.[103] This close proximity to the homestead contributed to the control and close monitoring of production during the agricultural season. English explorer and archaeologist, Theodore Bent declared this was convenient for 'black women…whose daily duty it is at this season of the year to act as scarecrows and save their crops from the birds.'[104] As demonstrated by various archaeological accounts on pre-colonial societies, this also permitted easier and swifter access to the fields by women and children, who made trips here more regularly for daily food provisions consumed by the family.[105] Economic historian Erik Green points out how footpaths to the fields underscore women's active roles in crop cultivation, literally forging new ways to access and produce food.[106] At the same time, different rock images display a prevalence of both hunting a variety of wild large and small animals (bushbucks, antelope, rabbit and buffalo) and cultivation of crops, namely millet and sorghum by the Shona people.[107] One recorded account details how shipwrecked sailors on the Limpopo coast in 1554 'stole a large basket of millet to sustain themselves.'[108] Convincingly, the simultaneous existence of both hunting and cultivating suggests that, although adopting new crops and becoming pastoralists, communities did not forsake their previous means of survival.

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[101] Clark, 'The spread of food', 3-4.
[102] Jeff Guy, 'Analysing pre-capitalistic societies in southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 1, 1987, 18-37.
[103] Theodore Bent, *The ruined cities of Mashonaland: being a record of excavation and exploration in 1891*, (London: Longmans, Green, 1892), 14-6.
[104] Bent, *The ruined cities,* 16.
[105] M.R. Tucker, and R. C. Baird, 'The Trelawney/Darwendale rock art survey', *Zimbabwe Pre-history*, 19, 26-58,
[106] Erik Green, 'Production systems in pre-colonial Africa', *The history of African development*, 2016, 1-13
[107] Tucker and Baird, 'The Trelawney', 27-34.
[108] Coetzee, *Funa and food from Africa*, 67.

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According to Clark, most of them continued to conduct their lives on a pattern of transhumance and grain cultivation as a surety measure to avert starvation, until the era of white settler encroachment from 1890.[109] At this point, historian Elizabeth Schmidt argues that gradually over time, domestic gender roles shifted against women, who lost their previously held strategic roles of being in charge of choosing crops for cultivation and producing food, to being producers under male dominion who controlled which crops to grow and in what quantities they should be sold.[110] Economic historian M. Gluckman adds that the adoption of cultivated crops reshaped individual and group land and property rights, with the fortunes of the conscientious women being more pronounced within society through more food and household tools at their disposal.[111] The desire for more arable land corresponded with the acquisition of domesticated animals, which also increased the demand for grazing pastures. Cultivated grains crops were thus not solely intended for human consumption, as some were reserved to feed the domesticated animals, playing an important role in both human and animal life. By the 1800s, along with minerals such as ivory, gold and iron, grain became a symbol and measure of wealth among pre-colonial societies.[112]

Shifting dynamics in Africa homes

However, precolonial society was not uniform. According to Hall, some families during the pre-colonial in Zimbabwe relied on family labour for producing the crops for subsistence.[113] Also, most of these pre-colonial communities including the Shona practised polygamy, with males occupying the top position of homestead head.[114] This not only was used to control the

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[109] Clark, 'The spread of food', 11.

[110] Elizabeth Schmidt, 'Farmers, Hunters, and Gold-Washers: A Re-evaluation of Women's Roles in Precolonial and Colonial Zimbabwe', *African Economic History*, 17, 1988, 45-80. Men believing themselves to be better traders and knowing the markets better, assumed the roles of controlling land tenure on which crops should be grown based on market demands they were exposed to increasingly after 1890 with colonization and proletarianization. Also see Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (ed) *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977).

[111] M. Gluckman, 'Land tenure: group and individual rights', *An economic history of tropical Africa-the pre-colonial period*, (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 56. During this era the major contentions were on the variations in the use of pasturage among the herders. For instance, among the Lozi people from the Upper Zambezi, they believed that all the land and its products belong to the nation through the king.

[112] Admire Mseba, 'Narratives, Rituals and Political Imaginations: The Social and Political World of the Vashona of North-Eastern Zimbabwe from the 16th to the 19th Centuries', *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 46, 3, 2020, 435-454.

[113] Richard Hall, *Pre-historic Rhodesia*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 37.

[114] Kuper *et al*, *The Shona*, 21, 91-2. This was usually the husband, however in cases where this male figure was absent due to a variety of factors such as death in some case, in the Ndebele, Thonga and MaKharanga societies, the eldest male sibling or eldest male child to the deceased or absentee would assume leadership of the home.

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collection and distribution of food, but with a division of labour, different family members made different contributions towards dietary diversity within the family as also discussed in Chapter Four. By mid-1800, Portuguese merchant reports note how the male head's duty was to supervise the women and children in the fields, while primarily focusing on chores that could boast the household social and economic status.[115] He himself seldom entered the field always overseeing production from afar, and among the Ndebele, some people believed that it was the man's duty to offer protection to his family, and he would not be able to do so in the event of an emergency or unforeseen attack on them if he too was burdened with fieldwork.[116] His main tool was a spear and an axe.[117] This setup, though flexible for a long period during the pre-colonial era, was not entirely uncomplex, undergoing significant shifts over the control of land tenure as well as crop and animal production and consumption, which directly altered the existing social roles and status. For example, Schmidt observes how from 1890 onwards, more and more women were involved in selling crops and this gave them significant economic standing within their society.[118] In some cases, this was much to the chagrin of their male counterparts who failed to accumulate equal fortunes. In *Lost crops*, Vietmeyer observes how the spread of small grains across Africa not only altered consumption patterns, but it also led to the redefining of means and modes of economic livelihood among pre-colonial societies, vividly exposing the social dichotomy that existed across gender and racial lines.[119]

Coetzee echoes that in various pre-colonial communities in southern Africa, food production and preparation were the responsibility of the women and wives in the traditional family.[120] Women were also the sole agriculturalist, having their own field for grain cultigens and a smaller garden for vegetables such as beans, cowpeas and pumpkins.[121] This autonomy enabled them to decide at their discretion how to feed their families. It must be noted how, what Shoko describes as 'motherly intuition' among the Karanga, was largely in fact various knowledge

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[115] Adrian Darter, *The pioneers of Mashonaland*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co, 1914), 74. Also important is consideration of African custom before contact with the modern legal system, which stipulated a woman was under perpetual tutelage and she never ceased to 'belong'. See *The Chronicle*, 'African Customs-7: Division of chores is well defined in African home', 14 July 1973 and 'African Customs-13: Tribal manners and how they differ', 25 August 1973.

[116] 'A brief outline of the political, economic, social and religious history of the Kalanga', *Henderson Seminar Paper*, 30, 1974, 8. Also see O.L. O'Neil, 'The habits and customs of the natives of the Mangwe district in southern Matabeleland', *ZMR*, IV, 47, 1910, 35-9.

[117] 'African customs- 13: Tribal manners and how they differ', *The Chronicle,* 25 August 1973.

[118] Schmidt, 'Farmers, Hunters, and Gold-Washers, 55.

[119] Vietmeyer, *Lost crops,* ii.

[120] Coetzee, *Funa and food*, 67.

[121] *Ibid*. 69.

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and information on how to ensure families remained well-fed, nutritious and healthy, passed on over generationally through family and community oral and observatory traditions.[122] Notably among the Shona, although certain property and land was considered sacred and controlled by the family head, each wife had her own allocation of land for agricultural duties, regardless of the number of wives a man had. Ironically, though, according to Shona law and culture, women are always considered and treated as minors, subject to the male head of the home.[123] Not until the late nineteenth century with the arrival of Christian missionaries and white settlers with increased agricultural and economic prospects did these rights change, with women no longer being in sole charge of how to dispose of or bequeath the proceeds of their fields.[124] It must be noted, however, that despite relying heavily on the labour of one's children in the field, women could not directly apportion them pieces of land, land distribution being the privilege of the head of the household in consultation with the traditional elders.[125] Instead, a woman would merely assign each child a section in the field to plough, with the proceeds communally consumed by the family and not the child alone.[126] However, in cases when a mother wanted to transfer land to her brother, for instance, she could do so unopposed, yet should she desire to use it as *lobola* for her own son, permission had to be obtained from the family spirit of her father's house. Thus, it is observed how, despite contributing to the cultivation of crops at a tender age, as the male child grew older, customary practices drew him away from the active cultivation of crops to hunting and mining duties instead.

But society was not homogenous. Records by some early Portuguese merchants reflect how the Munomutapa kingdom in the 1700s, was conferred an agricultural hoe as the royal insignia of this formidable empire in pre-colonial Zimbabwe.[127] This emblem highlighted how this society was well renowned for its cultivation of the land. The Ma-Karanga too were mainly agricultural and pastoral people, producing the bulk of the grain and cattle that were consumed in Rhodesia at the dawn of the twentieth century.[128] Portuguese trader E. Sousa says their 'chief care is pasturage and tillage', and in comparison to any other Bantu people, the 'Ma-Karnga had a deeply ingrained dislike, if not for religious objection, to work as miners preferring to be

[122] Shoko, *Karanga indeginous,* 56.
[123] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 21.
[124] *Ibid*., 27.
[125] Darter, *The pioneers of Mashonaland*, 76.
[126] *Ibid.*
[127] Hall, *Pre-historic Rhodesia*, 417.
[128] *Ibid*. 34.

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cultivators.'[129] Furthermore, Hall mentions that the 'native currency was cattle and iron hoes' used in daily economic and social transactions among the MaKaranga.[130] Moreover, several merchant records would later reveal how the Ma-Karanga were producing the bulk of the grain and cattle on the market into the formative years of the British South Africa Company (BSAC or Company) rule in Southern Rhodesia in 1900.[131] By 1800, across Africa agriculture played an enormous part in both the economic and social fabric of society, and was no longer considered as a chore carried out by women and children, but was a mode of life.[132] Society was changing.

Rock art and pre-colonial societies

Different rock paintings from this period illustrate the division of labour and chores across genders in these societies. They also reveal the uneven appreciation and perhaps distribution of the different grain varieties among different societies. For example, according to archaeologists M.R. Tucker and R. C. Baird, in the Trelawney and Darwendale region (includes northern parts of Zimbabwe covering the vast extent of the Mashonaland districts), sorghum was a more favoured grain variety compared to millet and rapoko.[133] Dube describes how the Kalanga of Bulilima-Mangwe in the southern areas were referred to as the 'millet people' for their extensive cultivation of the crop.[134] In all areas, the distribution of agricultural labour was dominated by female labour, as illustrated by **Figure 3** and **Figure 4,** which shows male figures carrying bows and arrows presumably for hunting animals, while the females are displayed carrying hoe-shaped tools and grain strips. Portuguese writer Dos Santos described African men as 'lovers of idleness, therefore often poor.'[135] Hall recalls how the Portuguese saw the Africans as 'so lazy, and given to an easy life that he will not exert himself unless he is constrained by the necessity for want of clothes.'[136] Other explorers of the time observed that indeed instead of mining pursuits, the Karanga opted to keep large stocks of cattle, sheep, goats

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[129] E. Sousa, 1, 23.

[130] Hall, *Pre-historic,* 35. Agricultural hoes were used as ordinary currency to the extent that the word used to refer to 'sell' was *shambadza,* which incorporates the word Karanga word for hoe, *badza*. Moreover, small hoes were exchanged as money, while at a social level, hoes were given to wives to encourage their productivity and also estimate their value.

[131] Trevor Ncube, 'Small grain production in Zimbabwe', *Henderson Papers*, 1980, 3.

[132] Stefan Dercon Douglas Gollin, 'Agriculture in African Development: A Review of Theories and Strategies', *Centre for the Study of African Economies Working Paper, WPS /2014T22,2014, 1-2.*

[133] Tucker and Baird, 'The Trelawney', 36-8.

[134] Dube, 'Shifting identities', 98.

[135] Dos Santos, *VII*, 222.

[136] Hall, *Pre-historic*, 45.

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and chickens, while 'cultivating millet… they are content with the proceeds of their fields.'[137] Historian Thembani Dube traces the calling of some of the Kalanga people 'the millet people' to this preference of millet cultivation over other pastoral and economic pursuits.[138] In 1897, J.W. Williams, the Native Commissioner for Gutu, described how the average African man was careful to choose industrious wives who did all the plantation work, enabling the men to 'roam about, converse with each other, fish, hunt and live merrily'.[139]

[137] *Ibid*. On the other hand, the persistence of this distain towards mining by the Mashona and Kalanga towards the 1890s was observed by Native Commissioner for Gutu J.H Williams as a result of the 'mismanagement at the mines, insufficient medical care, malnutrition, and bad housing.' In 1898 Selukwe in particular, held the bad reputation as the 'most unhealthy place for Natives to work…more than 10 of the Africans sent there either died at Selukwe itself or at their kraals, on their return, through diseases contracted while they were at the mine.' See F. J. Mashasha J H Williams, Native Commissioner of Gutu, 20.

[138] Thembani Dube, *A History of the Kalanga in Bulilima and Mangwe Districts: 1850-2008*, (VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010), 34-6.

[139] NAZ, F195/4, F. J. Mashasha J H Williams, Native Commissioner of Gutu.

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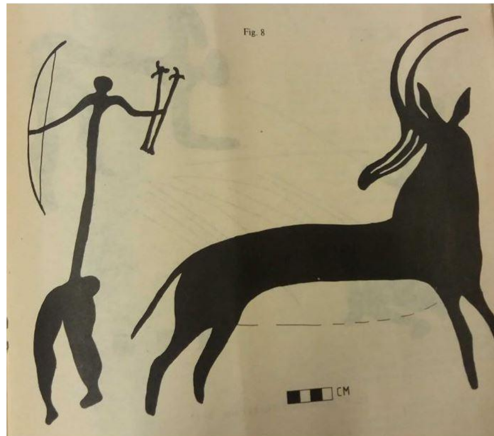

Figure 3: Rock painting signifying a hunting male.[140]

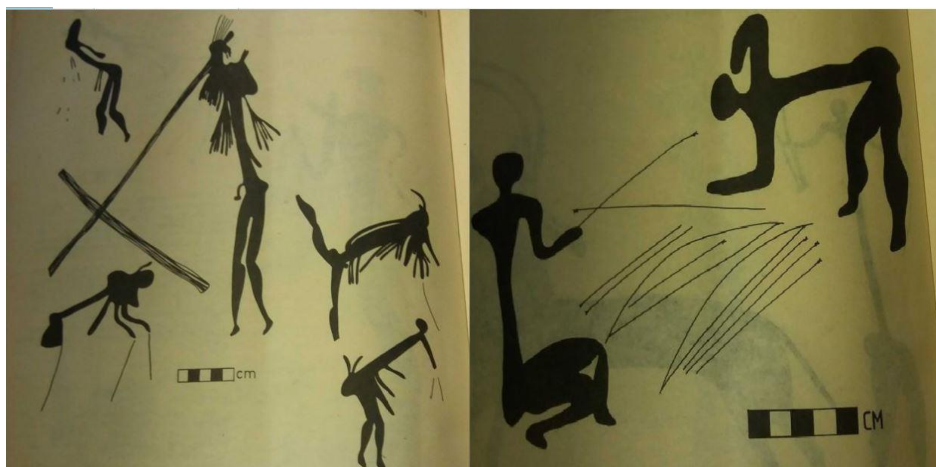

Figure 4: Rock painting of women in agriculture in southern Africa before 1850.[141]

‘Custodians of the land’[142]: Ownership, power and pre-colonial small-grains cultivation

The consumption of small grains in pre-colonial societies was not uniform. As will be elaborated on in Chapter Three on African culinary cultures, small grains were not consumed by all social levels of society. Similarly, within the family, meals were also eaten separately, with men being served first while the women and children only got to eat once the head has signalled his satisfaction.[143] Varieties and quantities of foods served during each meal varied based on one’s social and economic status within the home. Some meals were gendered and considered taboo, for example, pregnant women were not allowed to eat eggs,[144] while among the MaKalanga, millet from the early harvest was given to the male elders of the village before

[140] M.R. Tucker and R.C. Baird, ‘The Trelawney/Darwendale rock art survey’, *Zimbabwe prehistory*, 19, 26-58.
[141] *Ibid*.
[142] Gregory Maddox et al (ed), *Custodians of the land: ecology and culture in the history of Tanzania.*
[143] ‘African Customs-7: Division of chores is well defined in African home’*, The Chronicle*, *14 July 1973*.
[144] J.N. Mushonga and S. Appa Rao, ‘Traditional food crops in Zimbabwe: Sorghum’, *Zimbabwe Agricultural Journal*, 1986, 83, 3, 121-124.

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anyone else could partake of it.[145] Unlike with the Mashona, theologian W. Bozongwana says, in Ndebele society *inyauti* (millet) meals were specially preserved for those men who were deemed economically more affluent.[146] The rest of the men would consume sorghum or rapoko.[147] A similar scenario governed the preparation of fermented drinks, with society giving only those women who were believed to have a higher spiritual connection with the ancestors to concoct the drink. It was believed that the spiritual connection existed only among women born from royalty, and this discernment enabled one to adroitly blend the adequate portions of millet sorghum to satisfy their appetites.[148] Reflecting this, historians M. Manyanga and S. Chirikure argue that in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, small grains as both food and drink became a key ingredient in defining group social structure and was a mark of identity, denoting superiority and 'giftedness' among kinsmen.[149]

The control and ownership of small grains, as with other agricultural wares such as land and cattle in pre-colonial African society, was closely tied to various religious and ancestral beliefs. Reflecting on the Africans' tenacious adherence to traditional customs, one Portuguese Captain from Sena, Ferrao, remarked in 1760 how the prevailing cultivation and consumption patterns of small grains reflected the same negative dictum as was scripted by a fellow countryman on the subject many years prior. His inquiry with some local MaKaranga traders in Mashonaland revealed how 'our ancestors never did so…his people did not eat millet because they knew not what it was…they did not do so because their ancestors had not done so.'[150] Similar examples of longstanding beliefs enduring over time have been captured by various merchants, missionaries and settler records, and through repeated practise of these social and religious beliefs, they continue to exist even with scanty knowledge of their origins among the practising communities.[151] For example, explorer Thomson observed how the Mashona would break a fresh branch from a bush and throw it on the roadside outside their compound as a sign

[145] 'A brief outline of the political …', *Henderson Seminar Paper*, 30, 17.
[146] Wallace Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion and customs,* (Gweru: Mambo Press 1983), 11.
[147] *Ibid*. This they did in the privacy of their home for shame of public mockery. Their inabilities were widespread and could range from an incapacity to produce children to being weak in the field or with a bow during hunting.
[148] Agnes Sloan, 'The black woman', *NADA*, 1923, 62
[149] M. Manyanga and S. Chirikure, 'Archives, objects', 11. Spiritual 'giftedness' was a common marker that distinguished members of society, with those said to be possessing these gifts being viewed as special or sometimes even peculiar for their ties and links with the ancestors. Also see Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion and customs,* 23.
[150] Hall, *Prehistoric*, 127. This was the rationale provided for the prominence of sorghum over millet in the Mashonaland area.
[151] Ethel Tawse Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia*, (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1971), 56-67.

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and public invitation of an impending cultivation or harvesting mission within that home.[152] Any traveller passing through would recognize this call and reciprocate by also throwing a fresh branch of their own onto the pile.[153] Such gestures and ceremonies were centred on bringing families and communities together, where they could work together and feast together as well. African novelist Chinua Achebe appreciates this practice observing that,

> 'a man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes. When we gather together in the moonlit village ground, it is not because of the moon. Everyone can see it in their compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so'.[154]

Another widespread tradition was how before the commencement of the cultivation or harvesting season, it is customary for homage rituals to the 'gods' of the 'land' and 'sky' to be carried out by the selected elders.[155] Across most Bantu-dialect societies, rainmaking ceremonies were led by elderly post-menopausal women.[156] Yet among the Rozvi, it was believed that this role was to be assigned to a man conforming to the notion that a man is the political and religious head of the organization, thus is better suited to communicate the requests of the community to the gods.[157] Centrally, the different views stress the heterogeneity of African society, yet also underscored their intimacy and intersection between different African communities and their environment and what they developed to appreciate as culture in shaping their society. Bozongwana believes that the ancestors deliberately positioned women at the forefront of essential rites of passages and social ceremonies such as rain-making ceremonies and thanksgiving to broker a balance in power within society.[158] Yet, citing ancestral spirits' antagonistic sentiments

[152] Thomson, *Rhodesia…,* 63.

[153] *Ibid*. By so doing, one would be expressing their willingness to join hands with the other members in the community in the task that lay ahead. The act of working together as a community was believed to churn good fortunes to the agricultural endeavours of all those who participated. A refusal to participate in such gatherings resulted in a situation whereby one would be blacklisted by society and when placing such a similar request, it would receive very low traction from society. Neighbours would boycott fearing being entangled in any curse that the ancestors may have cast upon you. Ultimately this would culminate in a situation whereby, in comparison to fellow households' fields, one would perpetually have lesser harvests, and this would have a bearing on one's economic and social and political influence. Also see P. Nyathi*, Zimbabwe's Cultural Heritage, (Bulawayo: amaBooks Publishers, 2005), 45.*

[154] Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 166-167.

[155] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 33. Also see W. Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion*, 52. This will be elaborated in the following section of this chapter.

[156] Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion*, 52

[157] A. K. H. Weinrich, 'The role of ritual in the traditional political system', Rhodesian prehistory, 4, 1970, 6.

[158] Bozangwana, *Ndebele,* 39-40. Among both the Shona and Ndebele, political authority was primarily dominated the male chieftaincy, and extended generationally along patrilineal legacies. However, religiously, spirit mediums and divine powers who were a part of the advisory councils and were not limited to male figures. Moreover, these spiritual gifts and position were not transferable along hierarchal bloodline.

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towards social mixing with other ethnic groups, at several convenient moments, this social mixing was used as justification for the poor or failed harvests in the land. Ironically, at the same time, these same societies actively practised polygamous marriages, relying on exercising their suzerainty and integrating mostly women and children from defeated communities to work in their grain fields and further expand their population. As Chapter Four will show, the mobility and expansion of society contributed towards varying culinary ideas on how to cultivate, preserve and even consume small grains by different African families.

Indeed, beyond their role as cultivators of the grain, women developed a major role within the social and religious fabric of society. Mujere notes how in around 1790, in Masvingo province's Gutu district, one woman known as Mrumbi Karivana developed a reputation for her *Marumbi* rain cult as she displayed consistent rain-making powers.[159] The results of her work transformed not only political influence but also the general status of women in her region.[160] Likewise, during the *inxiwa* rain ceremony, women carried the onus of the community as they took centre stage through their elaborate performances in appeals not only for good rains but for a bumper harvest as well. Historian Terence Ranger observes how 'all the men had to go away when the dance was on…the dancers were young girls about twelve years old who wore a small apron only when they danced. The old women danced too. They danced to the music of drums and women clapped their hands, and whistles were not allowed'.[161] Perfect reverence was evinced during these ceremonies – with a social understanding that it was taboo to question the authenticity and plausibility of these various traditions. Any doubts to this effect were met with great disapproval and considered an act of insolence to the ancestors, a treasonous action punishable by banishment.[162] Such ceremonies elucidate the key role of small grains within African social behaviour and revered cultural practices.

Indeed, the spiritual realm played a strong part in African society, influencing their agrarian patterns – what to grow, when and how. For example, common among different

[159] Joseph. Mujere, 'The Marumbi Rain cult: Gender and the interface between rainmaking and the politics of water in Gutu', Paper presented at the 'The Power of Water: Landscape, Water and the State in Southern and Eastern Africa' Conference, CAS, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, 28-29 March 2007.
[160] Mujere, 'The Marumbi Rain cult, 6.
[161] Terence Ranger, *Voices from the rocks*, 20.
[162] C. Bullock, *Mashona laws and customs*, (Salisbury, 1913), 8.

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societies across southern African is the recognition of so-called 'sacred spaces' within the community. There is no doubt that some of these spaces exist solely to police social behaviour in favour of social and religious gatekeepers.[163] Among the Ndebele, for instance, swamp areas referred to as *inyutha* were demarcated as sacred spaces, with reverence towards them being displayed by not cultivating on them.[164] The Karanga displayed reverence to what they called *mowishawasha*.[165] Some sacred spaces, despite looking fertile, if cultivated upon, would not bear any harvests.[166] According to historian Pathisa Nyathi, such spaces signified the power of the African ancestors over the environment, its fertility and productivity and more centrally, their influence over human life.[167] He says that these different gestures of acknowledgement and veneration by the pre-colonial society of their customary beliefs was in itself enough to inspire positive reciprocation from the ancestors.[168] For Nyathi, this accounts for the unostentatious reference to environmental plagues during the pre-colonial period, in comparison to ensuing colonial epochs when various agrarian and labour policies instituted aggressively by various authorities altered African traditional beliefs.[169]

The cultivation of grain brought about the rise of a culture of ancestral appeasement expressed through various ceremonies such as rainmaking and first-fruits thanksgiving.[170] For most of these ceremonies, as Huffman states, their exact origins are undocumented and remain unclear; however, different ideas passed on generationally reflect that they developed a central part of

[163] Phillip Musoni, 'Contestation of 'the holy places in the Zimbabwean Religious Landscape': A study of the Johane Masowe Chishanu yeNyenyedzi Church's sacred places', HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 72, 1, 2016, 1-8.

[164] Bozongwana, *Customs*, 51. It is believed that swampy areas were haunted zones, carrying the tears of different tragedies associated with the area. Working in this space was tantamount to carrying these curses upon your shoulders. Babirwa people of Botswana similarly were averse towards swampy plains, finding them be the shelter of mostly evil spirits. See P. Nyathi, *The History and Culture of the Babirwa of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe*, (Bulawayo: Amagugu Publishers, 2014), 21.

[165] Hall, *Prehistoric Rhodesia*, 146. The *mowishawasha* literally refers a small sand hill. These were often surrounded by grass, whose height never surpassed the size of the hill, regardless the vast vegetation growth in other areas. This space was believed to be the burial places of chiefs of great importance but so old that merely the veneration of such places remains.

[166] F. Deborah et al, 'Conflict over sacred space: The case of Nazareth', *Cities*, 41, 1, 2014, 132–140.

[167] Interview with Pathisa Nyathi, 21 November 2018, Bulawayo.

[168] *Ibid*.

[169] *Ibid.*

[170] Kuper *et al*, *The Shona*…33 and 108, Rituals and beliefs varying social groups, for example rain making among the Ndebele is known as umtolo, *mukwerera* by the Shona while for the Tawara people near the Zambezi River the similar ceremony is referred to as *karuwa.* Also, *inxwala* is a revered first fruits ceremony celebrated annually by the Nguni and Ndebele people. Although these different rituals are aimed at either requesting or appeasing the ancestors, their all share the common idea of there being a superior (ancestral) power that controls the environment and holds a vital component in the development of any agrarian venture that the society endeavours to pursue. This gives ample significance on the essential need to consult with such gods. Also see Thomas Huffman, 'Ritual Space in the Zimbabwe Culture', *Journal of Archaeological, Ethnographic and Experimental Studies,* 6, 2014, 4-39.

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the lives of society. The prevailing social climate impacted these ceremonies. For instance, among the patriarchal Nguni people, the procedure of rain-making rituals was conducted by postmenopausal women and this created social contestations with how this gave prominence to women within society. Rainmaking ceremonies were particularly revered and accorded significant political and religious authority to women, which challenged the male-dominated status quo. By the 1850s, clashes for dominance among men and women became more widespread among the Shona communities in the north near the Zambezi where agriculture cemented itself as the mainstay of the pre-colonial economy and society.[171] Similarly, the legacies, ownership and custodianship of these rituals have created animosity among different social spaces over time. This is essentially because control over these facets would not only spread the influence of religious devotion but in the same measure reflect the vigour of the custodian clan name.[172] Among the Kalanga who occupied the Matobo area where the Njelele rain mountain is located, the Ncube (baboon) totems are traditionally believed to have been ordained by the ancestors and spirits of the mountain as custodians.[173] This has given special attention to the Ncube lineage, which in some cases, has upset political leaders who attempt to control the land tenure systems in rural areas for political points as noted in Chapter Six.

A legend passed down over many generations highlights how prospective heirs to the throne were gathered together in an isolated hut with each being given a grain of rapoko seed to hold in the palm of their hand with instruction not to open their palms.[174] They would stay overnight

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[171] Huffman, 'Ritual Space in the Zimbabwe Culture', 14-6.

[172] Among the Bantu-speaking people and believers in the Mwali cult for example, the Njelele mountain shrine holds monumental religious significance, especially as the temple were all rain-making ceremonies were conducted. Other shrines spread across the southern central Zimbabwean valley are used for other ceremonies such as attornment of evil spirits and pleas for worldly wealth. However, more centrally these different shrines and cult centres such as Dula and Zhilo were also established to spread and accommodate the influence of the *Mwali* sect far and wide such as attornment of evil spirits and pleas for worldly wealth. See Terence Ranger, 'Territorial Cults in the History of Central Africa', *Journal of African History*, 14, 4 (1973), 581-597.

[173] Interview with Nduna Gihane, Sankonjane Mtobo District, October 2019. It is believed that the Ncube clan were the rightful custodians of the mountain as symbolized by the presence of the mountains being home to the creature more comfortably as compared to other animals that were known within the Matobo hills. On one level, this culminated in a lot of discord over custodianship of the shrine among other clan totems whose spirit animals such as *inhlwathi* (rock python) equally resided in the mountain plains. On the other end, among the Ncube clan, misunderstandings surrounding the heir to the curatorship of the Njelele was rife. Many believed that this task should be held by a male yet given the crucial and peculiar position held by women in the various rituals held by the Njelele, the curatorship was open to either. The primary requirements were that the heir was prohibited from cutting their hair, and before assuming their post must embark on an isolated pilgrimage of self-actualization, living with a lion, leopard, baboon and snake in the Sihazabana cave at the foot of the Njelele shrine. During this period, they were to acquire the knowledge on the abilities of nature and the spirits to control and guarantee the prosperity of agriculture by the people. Also see 'Unpacking the mysteries of the Njelele shrine', https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/unpacking-the-mysteries-of-the-njelele-shrine-part-one/. Accessed 14 June 2018.

[174] Interview with Historian Pathisa Nyathi, Matobo November 2018.

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guarded by *amadoda sibili* (really strong men) to ensure that they do not tamper with the seeds. At daybreak they are called upon to present their hands to the village elders gathered from different communities and villages. The one found with a germinated seed assumes responsibility for the shrine.[175] Recounting how this practice has eroded over time, Nyathi alludes to the cumulative neglect of African tradition by most communities especially with the advent of white settler encroachment in the 1880s, reaching its climax with the subsequent settler colonialism.[176] In part, Nyathi argues that African societies realized that some of these traditions are not as effective anymore, acknowledging how blame is accorded to the African embracing of settlers. He argues that as pre-colonial societies looked towards the ancestors for a reprieve from their suffering at the hands of the white man during the First Chimurenga of 1896 and 1897, but lost faith in them when their intervention clearly failed. This uncertainty over ancestral power was already undergoing severe strains from spiritual rebuttals classifying African religion as 'demonic' by early white missionaries in the districts in the early 1870s.[177] Similar reservations were levelled by African peasants in Mberengwa and Gutu districts for abandoning cultivating millet cultivation in favour of maize around 1915 and 1937 respectively, citing how although for many the cultivation of maize was emblematic of prosperity, in so much as it was premised on their need for survival, the feeling of being forsaken by the ancestors who on many occasions failed to redeem them from the droughts plaguing the areas through providing adequate rain and soil fertility to their field as the motivation for their shifted grain preferences, from millets to maize.[178]

On the other hand, beliefs endured. Even now, as my fieldwork revealed, some elderly folk above the ages of 75 years still maintain the view that the unfortunate blight of ecological disasters (drought, locust, red-swamp worms and rinderpest invasions) that ravaged African communities came about because the aggrieved ancestral spirits felt insulted by peasants embracing and accommodating of 'the white man' and his various cash crops and production methods before the official settler political takeover.[179] In 1896 priests of the supreme deity

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[175] *Ibid.*
[176] *Ibid.*
[177] N.J Walker, 'The Matabele excursion', *Rhodesian prehistory*, 9, 1972, 3-4.
[178] Paul Chidara Muchineripi, "Feeding five thousand: The case for indigenous crops in Zimbabwe" *Africa Research Institute Policy Voices Series, 2008,* 8-9. Also, interview by Tinashe Takuva with Murambiwa family in Mberengwa 12 January 2020.
[179] Interview with Mr Mlambo Junior, Gutu Mpandawana Growth Point, September 2018. On 25 May 2021, (current president of Zimbabwe) Emerson Mnangagwa accompanied by other senior ZANU PF officials and supporters, amid a striking pandemic gathered to 'unveil' a statue for Mbuya Nehanda, which was believed to

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Mlimo bore witness to King Lobengula's deathbed instruction to his subjects to embrace and give loyalty to Cecil John Rhodes and the menacing Native Police. They later confessed how 'God had sent us the locusts and the pest as a punishment for admitting the white man to the country.'[180] A similar tale is shared of how in the Binga district in 1909, as the local vaTonga people followed Company teaching to replace their traditional cultivation of rapoko with maize and cotton, the invasion of their fields by marauding baboons became a recurring episode.[181] These anecdotes along with many others reinforce the dominant pre-colonial belief in the role and strength of African spirituality in governing the everyday lives of society. It amplifies the contestations over various legacies, their unwritten influence over the way society viewed, produced and consumed small grains. With agriculture and food being at the heart of these debates, inevitably small grains in many ways too formed a central part of the socio-economic and religious life of pre-colonial society. This underlines that indeed small grains are political and have shaped African agrarian ideas and culinary habits over time.

Customs, myths and taboos

Several scholars – Warren C. Waite and Harry Trelogan[182] – have emphasized the main value attached to small grains as only economic, yet this section seeks to demonstrate their significant role in the socio-religious and customary life of pre-colonial societies. It explores the different ways in which small grains have been represented in varying social legacies in the form of proverbs and folklore, for example. In addition, it seeks to reflect on how these anecdotal perceptions were constructed and how they reflect on and contribute to the development of African traditional values and beliefs over different periods of time. Engaging with these various myths, metaphors, icons and symbols involving small grains, it demonstrates the spatiality and diversity of relationships within society, unpacking the myriad of taboos, myths and traditions. The section argues that although widely cultivated across different social groups, access and consumption of small grains was neither uniform nor linear. If anything, it emphasizes that small grains had a range of differential meanings and impacts across pre-colonial societies.

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be a step towards appeasing the ancestors and appealing for their guidance towards ecoomic recovery in the country.

[180] Frank Clements and Edwards Harben, *Leaf of gold: the story of Rhodesian tobacco*, (London: Methuen and Co, 1962), 45.

[181] Interview with Nduna Siziba from Ndongamuzi Village, 2018

[182] Warren C. Waite and Harry Trelogan, *Agricultural market prices*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1951), 34.

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As has been already established, small grains in various ways played an important role in human and animal life. Moreover, by the mid-1800s in Zimbabwe small grains were a key medium of economic exchange and a unit of political and religious tribute among pre-colonial states.[183] Socially, the consumption of small grains is observed as connecting different peoples together during various religious, family and communal celebratory gatherings, amplifying its role as a tool and catalyst in strengthening social cohesion. Among the Shona and Ndebele alike, small grains are consumed as a tasty 'food and drink' concoction known as *maheu* or opaque beer (non-alcoholic and alcoholic respectively). This consumption is seldom practised alone, with cultural norms prescribing that one invites friends and kin to join in whenever partaking of this brew. This has thus endorsed the widespread use of the Shona idiom, '*hukama igasva hunozodwa nechikafu*' (relationships are only made whole and adequate with the consumption of food). Of particular interest is the nature of the occasions, and how conversations occur there as well as the knowledge exchanged. Food and health practitioner Catherine Perles thus asserts that eating 'gradually became a key element of group structure, a mark of identity and a symbolic means of expressing thought'.[184] Yet these meanings have been differently represented by different people and have developed with time.

According to Bozongwana, the Ndebele and Shona believe themselves to be affected by powerful spirits, fighting the enemy, sustaining life, providing riches and wealth, and avenging defaulters.[185] For many, dreams, omens, witchcraft, ancestral spirits, prayers, as well as taboos, were considered mediums of spiritual communication, and they accordingly became an integral part and parcel of everyday life. At the same time, small grains as either food, drink or gifts became recurring features in the practice of different spiritual rituals. The Ndebele for example, believe that the *umhlaba* (the earth) is a place of both great happiness and deep sorrows, and is surrounded by powerful spirits that control hardship, joy, pain and bountifulness.[186] Before colonialization in 1890, across different African villages, blacks would reach out to their ancestors through a series of parleys during different ceremonies and rituals with gifts of beer, pots, grain and agricultural ornaments such as axes.[187] Yet these spirits survived mainly on the

[183] Neil Parsons, 'The economic history of Khama's country in Botswana, 1844-1930', in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (ed) *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), 116-117.

[184] C. Perles, 'Feeding strategies in prehistoric times', in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food, A culinary history*, 29.

[185] Bozongwana, *Ndebele religion*, 1. Also see Huffman, 'Ritual Space in the Zimbabwe Culture', *Journal of Archaeological, Ethnographic and Experimental Studies,* 6, 2014, 4-39

[186] *Ibid*, 12-14.

[187] *Ibid*., 11-3. The Ndebele believe that powers to sustain life and distribute riches are held by the King who is a descendant of god. The giving of grain sacrifices was to acknowledge the omni-presence and potency to the

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grain sacrifices presented.[188] This echoes Nyathi's earlier assertion on the growing disconnection between African religious belief with the embracing of Christian missionaries around the 1850s and later white settler colonialization by 1890. Among the Karanga, similar spiritual powers are linked with the chief as *samusha* (head of the household) of the lineage, while among the Shona it was believed that the ancestors would speak through the Mambo (king), who was head of the lineage and greatest diviner of them all.[189]

During the *inxwala* celebrations, some Ndebele people in the pre-colonial era (and some even to this day) believed that through the provision of copious harvests, the ancestors were conveying a message of contentment with the prevailing social, religious and political order.[190] Agriculturalist with the Native Department, Emory D. Alvord in 1909 described Africans as 'essentially agriculturalists' who 'for generations, past lived almost entirely from products of soil tillage…. The economic structure of their social lies is closely linked up with the soil tillage and with the care of livestock to which they accord great religious value.'[191] Little surprise thus that such socio-religious ceremonies developed a focal political meaning in the society as they were taken as an endorsement of the status quo by the ancestral spirits.[192] White missionary Rev. Father Moreau from Chikuni Mission highlighted this sentiment saying, 'the native is a strong believer in his ancestors. He attributes everything to them.'[193]

Added to this, these ceremonies were known for their massive crowd-pulling abilities, as they were characterized by lavish feasts, heavy drinking and sex, which were taken as symbolic gestures of unity, reconciliation and solidarity. Leaders were also keen on hosting these ceremonies to gain political traction over their rivals. Notwithstanding, apart from the moral obligation to conduct and attend these ceremonies, different oral accounts relay how they grew immensely popular among the villagers, especially among the extremely excitable youngsters,

spirits within an area that holistically epitomised their social, economic and political being as a state. From the early Neolithic era, this was manifest in the domains of agriculture – that is in the cultivation of grain crops and rearing of cattle. See Pathisa Nyathi, *Zimbabwe's Cultural Heritage*, (Bulawayo: amaBooks Publishers, 2005), 45.

[188] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*, (Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 45-6.

[189] Hall, *Pre-historic Rhodesia*, 147. Among the Karanga, every year in the month of September when the new moon appears, the king ascends on a very high hill on the summit of which he performs grand obsequies seeking protection for the village from the ancestors.

[190] F.H. Child, AmaNdebele customs, *NADA*, X, 1932, 36-9.

[191] Emory D. Alvord, 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives': *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, VII, 1909, 9-16.

[192] Child, 'AmaNdebele', 37.

[193] 'The lightning doctor', *NADA,* 1924, 65-66.

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who took them as opportunities to explore otherwise forbidden social interactions and pleasures.[194]

While the adoption of agriculture from the sixteenth century saw the vast African population assume the role and label of being farmers by land ownership, occupation and reason to survive, not all families were able to exploit the land for survival by cultivation.[195] Others such as the Karanga were interested in trade and mining of minerals and ceramics.[196] In agreement with Mazarire, O'Neil notes how African agriculture was a reflection of several customs and rituals as much as it was concerned cultivation of crops.[197] Portuguese explorers describe pre-colonial behaviour as but a collection of precedents consisting of religious codes of decisions of the 'chief embodied in the recollection, personal and traditional ways of by-gone days.'[198] The MaShona strictly believe that an encounter with any animal is a message from the ancestors, and thus to be taken seriously.[199] Thomson chronicles how once upon seeing a snake during his journey, his African guides took a detour break for the worship of their ancestral spirits. The same applied when they encountered the bushbuck: 'today we feast!!' they said.[200] Moreover, as noted by Nyathi and Bozongwana, some Africans too held how from 'birth to death', they were haunted by the ghosts of their ancestors and if they are to survive, they must constantly ensure they abide within the strict dogma of their tradition.[201] As Chapter Four will further demonstrate, agriculture and food taboos were an effective measure to police society and maintain religious and patriarchal status quo among them.

The above is echoed through ceremonies such as rainmaking. As part of the *ukuphehla izulu* (rainmaking) ritual, a traditional beer crafted from *rukweza* (rapoko) in special traditional clay pots was prepared by selected elderly women days before the ceremony. Once the beer was ready, one pot was shared among the elders who tasted it to certify its worthiness for the ancestors. It was then taken to the mountains where the appeals for

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[194] Tales are shared on how these ceremonies would be feasts where young boys got their first taste of opaque or consummated with girls from other villages.

[195] 'Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: Prospects and challenges for the next decade', *OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2016-2025*, 62.

[196] Hall, *Pre-historical Rhodesia*, 122.

[197] O'Neil, 1910, 146. In 1910, although maize had developed to be the most popular crop in Southern Rhodesia, millets and sorghums remained best suited for the recurring low rainfalls and drought climate in the south. The Ndebele used *inyauti* and *upoko* to mitigate drought through trade, and principally through conducting several rainmaking rituals to beg for better agricultural prosperity. Also see Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 58-9.

[198] Hall, *Prehistoric Rhodesia*, 128.

[199] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 35-6.

[200] H. C. Thomson, *Rhodesia*, 63.

[201] Bozongwana, *Ndebele religion*, 5. Also see Hall *Prehistoric Rhodesia*, 146.

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rain were to be made.[202] President of the Chiefs Council in Zimbabwe, Chief Charumbira, emphasizes how special attention was paid to brewing this beer and conducting the ceremonies alike. He says,

> *Rukweza rwunoshandiswa runonyikwa mumvura inodonha mudenga saka madzimai anorutora voshandisa mvura yemugomo, vapedza rwonanikwa paruware rwozokuyiwa.*[203] (The water grain used to brew this beer is rainwater direct from the sky from the top of the mountain. The grain is later crushed and placed on a new mat, before the brewing begins.)

On the day of the actual ceremony, he continues, the villagers would wake up before dawn and without touching the gifts for the ancestors, which included the beer and grain, would escort the chosen mediums known as *inyusa* to the mountain. Maintaining a fair distance from the mountain, the villagers would set up camp and commerce various dances and prayers guided by their chiefs and village elders, while their representatives proceeded to the top of the mountain.[204] There are several intervals of dead silence as the villagers too prayed for rains. Once the *inyusa* descends from the mountain, the entire community joins in song and dance in eager anticipation of the showers of blessings.

Across southern Africa, traditional ceremonies share points of commonality. When brewing their beer, the Nguni believed that the ideal grain to use is *uphoko* (finger millet) and not *inyawuti* (pearl millet), despite the latter variety being more popularly grown in the Matobo region where the rainmaking ceremonies were conducted.[205] *Uphoko* was of superior quality, producing a more delectable flavour.[206] In cases where alternative grains were used, the rain gods responded through meagre rainfall or foiled harvests.[207] The same punishment applied when ceremonies were carried out incorrectly or by unbefitting mediums. Historian J. M. Schoffeleers asserts that 'sometimes requests are not met because of the prevalence of taboos like incest, desecration of sacred places and unsuitable people performing the rituals, among others.'[208] Also, when ceremonies were

[202] C. Bullock, *The Mashona and the Matabele*, (Cape town, 1950), 67-72.
[203] Shingirai Mutonho, 'A ritual that promoted social cohesion', https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/oldposts/a-ritual-that-promoted-social-cohesion/. Accessed 28 August 2019.
[204] *Ibid.*
[205] 'African customs- 13: Tribal manners and how they differ', *The Chronicle*, 25 August 1973.
[206] *Ibid.*
[207] *Ibid.*
[208] J. M. Schoffeleers (ed), *Guardians of the Land: essays on Central African territorial cults*, (Gweru, Mambo press, 1979), 13.

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well-conducted, requests are greeted with an immediate downpour.[209] Such rituals held societies together, as a failure to adhere to them was detrimental to the entire community as a whole.

In Insiza district in 1899, the Native Commissioner recounts how once two female sojourners claimed to be spirit messengers of the *Shoko mutupo* (Ncube totem), journeying from an unusual easterly direction, were ignored upon sharing the instruction for early cultivation of grain that season.[210] However, when a severe drought struck making the fields unbearably difficult to cultivate barely two moons after this incident, murmurs spread across the district questioning the powers of two 'female kibitzers.'[211] Within the short period from 1905 to 1906, large tracks of crops withered and livestock perished. In such situations, historian M.L. Daneel observes how chiefs often encouraged their headmen to collect finger millet from villagers in preparation for *bira* ceremonies to appease the spirit mediums who communicated on behalf of the people.[212] However, despite the frantic efforts made by the villagers to salvage their fast-putrefying livelihoods, lurking behind the shadows was a largely divided community, uncertain of the exact cause of their misfortune.[213] Again, this reinforces the intertwined relationship between agriculture, religious ideas and African lifestyles.

[209] Shingirai Mutonho, 'A ritual that promoted social cohesion', https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/oldposts/a-ritual-that-promoted-social-cohesion/. Accessed 28 August 2019.

[210] NAZ, Report of the Native Commissioner of Insiza on drought. 1902. *Shoko* is the Karanga equivalent for the Ncube totem, Ncube as earlier mentioned being custodians of the rainmaking shrine Njelele mountain. Scepticism over their authenticity was intensified. Firstly, the locals could not believe that the ancestors would send female messengers with such a critical message. More so, the direction from which they travelled from was not aligned to the direction known to led from the rain mountain, Njelele.

[211] NAZ, Report of the Native Commissioner of Insiza on drought. 1902. Reasons for a disbelief in the powers of the rain ancestry and their messengers by the Insiza people is particularly interesting especially since the Insiza district is closely located to the famous Njelele shrines, with the district being located along the route to the shrine from the north of the country.

[212] M.L. Daneel, 'Environmental Reform. A new venture of Zimbabwe's traditional custodians of the land', *Journal of legal pluralism*, 37-38, 1996, 347-376. Traditional opaque beer had to be overflowing while valued tokens of appreciation in the form of traditional grains, salt, animal hides and precious stones were presented to the chief on behalf of the ancestors. Even in postcolonial Zimbabwe, this tradition of hosting 'biras' has been appropriated by the Mugabe and later Mnangagwa regimes, in many cases to consolidate power through an overt use of propaganda and anti-opposition slurs during these ceremonial functions. Some notable modern day *biras* include those held during Heroes day commemorations in August annually.

[213] NAZ, Annual report of the Chief Native Commissioner of Matabeleland, Insiza 1905-7. Some villagers believed the arrival of the whites into their district, coupled with the receptiveness towards them displayed by their traditional leaders was the root cause of the ancestors' anger.

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According to theologian Tabona Shoko, African tradition strongly believes that, despite death, one's spirit remains invincible as a spirit guardian.[214] As an ancestor, one assumes the power to monitor and influence the daily activities of society.[215] Ancestors were said to be able to control agricultural production, thereby having a key role in society even posthumously. As such, the bodies of the dead were buried with the utmost respect and dignity, and after 40 days a ceremony known as *umbuyiswa* among the Ndebele is conducted. This is a symbolic welcoming of the spirit of the deceased back into the home, as an acknowledgement of their previous role in the family. Their graves are regularly adorned with pots of traditional beer made from the freshest traditional grains, a portion of grain and a few domestic utensils to make use of in the 'afterlife.'[216] Ancestors 'need not go hunger' Pathisa says.[217] Such treatment towards the departed went a long way in fighting against being befallen by *Ngozi* (avenging spirits), especially if the death occurred under unclear circumstances.[218] For instance, the ghost of Chief Chimombe from the Chimuka district in Manica, who died in 1902, is said to have haunted the village and home, leading to his grave in a small cave on the Mutare hill in Manicaland remaining unvisited for close to 75 years. It is said that he died mysteriously as his family was embroiled in a bitter wrangle over his inheritance.[219] However, it is critical to observe how the living esteemed the need to furnish the dead with tokens of food despite no real tangible evidence of it being consumed. Beer pots with sorghum brewed beer and a ladle carried by women are left at the graves to quench the thirst of the ancestors.[220] Some stories say that the baboons and other wild animals that would creep around the graves and eat the food were the departed reincarnated in animal form. Cosmas

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[214] Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe,* 67.
[215] V. Magezi and T. Myambo, 'Pastoral challenges and responses to fear of avenging spirits (*ngozi*) in Africa: A biblical evaluation and response –A case of the Shona people, *In die Skriflig*, 45, 1, 2011, 161-187. Ancestors have the power to influence healing, aggravation, unity and disunity among people.
[216] Bozongwana, *Ndebele religion*, 28-30.
[217] Interview with Pathisa Nyathi, Bulawayo, 11 November 2018.
[218] V. Magezi and T. Myambo, 'Pastoral challenges', 161-187.
[219] 'Grave visited after 75 years', *The Chronicle,* 22 April 1977. Traditionally it is considered a taboo to discuss inheritance before the death of a person. Also, contestations over the chieftainship rose as the colonial state announced its intention to cede power over the district to a new district officer and chief, with the latter being a former servant of Chief Chimombe but over the years was elevated and treated as a part of the family. Due to clerical misunderstanding the servant was accorded the chieftanship despite this being against standing customary laws on inheritance. And because of his incapacitation as a result of old age, Chief Chimombe was unable to resolve the matter before he passed on.
[220] 'Grave visited after 75 years', *The Chronicle*, 22 April 1977.

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Nyamutswa attributes these legends to how some animal totems were then attached to certain people and their family lines over time.[221]

Indeed, various societies have different regulations and restrictions regarding the consumption of small grains. Amongst most Shona-speaking communities, for instance, there are no restrictions against the consumption of the actual grain but prohibits by-products such as opaque beer among minors. In Binga in Matabeleland North near the Zambezi, young boys at a tender age are fed opaque beer to stimulate their bravery to make them formidable hunters and fishermen, vocations esteemed in that region. At the same time, as also observed in Chapter Five, young children were fed a herb called *vusika* (among the Shona), in their small grains porridge as an immune booster to improve their health and strength during the day's vocations. For the Ndebele, there are no notable restrictions on who may consume the grains; however, preferential treatment is given to the elderly to have their choice at selecting which portions of the grain they want to consume. A similar system is enshrined within production, with the head of the household having the final decision on which grain variety the family should grow and in what quantities. Among the Karanga, there seemed to be an overarching social preference for millet over rapoko and sorghum, but among the Tonga people of Binga, rapoko was the preferred crop, having greater economic preference among beer brewers and consumers, while sorghum to the same community is more useful among lactating mothers who relish the high nutritional value of the variety.

Using the illustration of milk, Hove states that *amasi* (sour milk) among the Matabele people was used to gauge social relations within society.[222] Prime portions of milk were given to favoured family members, while the bitter milk was shared mostly among those thought to be of lesser economic and social standing within the family.[223] Similarly, in the pre-colonial era, small grains reveal the interlocking relationships and conflicts between individuals and communities. Traditionally in African cultures, it is taboo to refuse food when offered or to deny a visitor food.[224] Hove observes how milk is exchanged between families as a reciprocal gesture of endearment and respect, yet when

[221] Cosmas Nyamutswa, *Our totems*, 3.
[222] G. Hove, 'The state, farmers and dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c. 1980-1951', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2015., 37-41
[223] *Ibid*.
[224] The former suggests that one is suspecting you of foul play and seeking to poison them. More is discussed in Chapter 3 on African culinary practices.

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a son-in-law refuses such gifts, it is not taken as an act of hostility but as a gesture of respect for any outstanding *lobola* dues.[225] The culture among precolonial societies was that as a prerequisite for marriage, one had to pay one's in-laws a bride price of cattle and grain.[226] At the same time, across Nguni communities, following giving birth to her first child, the lactating woman is given royal treatment, being fed 'the best and hearty meals' by her in-laws as appreciation for growing the family.[227] In cases when this child is a male, this tradition of serving the mother with good food never fades away, continuing whenever the families meet. In comparison to what other family members will be eating, mothers who have recently given birth receive royal treatment. In other polygamous communities including the Shona, these distinctions were revered for the status they accrued. These food customs practised by society play an integral part in cementing social ties and kinship, and this underlines sociologist C. Taylor's hypothesis that food and drink encourage social fluidity within society. At the same time, agriculture consultant Paul C. Muchineripi observes how traditionally it was considered taboo to exchange small grains for any form of financial gain with a fellow villager.[228] Despite this vivid reality, however, the non-commercial exchange of small grains continues to hold a strong symbolic value in African societies. This tradition became increasingly more unpopular with heightened economic woes with the rise in the grain trade after the settlers arrived in the 1880s rather than as a consequence of an environmental calamity. If anything, drought and famine cemented the strength of this culture as pre-colonial society would through various communal programmes such as '*isiphala seNkosi – Zunde raMambo*' collect grain during good agricultural seasons and redistributed it among the needy during times of scarcity.

Several myths have been used to serve as lessons among pre-colonial states. A story is shared of a spirit medium called *Kagubi*, a once-revered African cultivator in the 1820s. Many years later during an adolescent initiation ceremony in the mountains, one pompous man denigrated as a tenuous allegory the myth of the cultivating power of the

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[225] Hove, 'The state, farmers', 37-41.

[226] Kuper et al. *The Shona*, 98. This transfer was taken as a consensual agreement to fulling productive and reproductive obligations by the new couple. Moreover, their union was taken to harmonize social as well economic relations between the two families, and it was admirable for women to attract the eye of men whose herd and cultivation farms were sizable, despite their overt requirement for her labour in his fields. These marriages offered a more stable means to economic comfort.

[227] Gilbert Pwiti, 'Settlement and Subsistence of Prehistoric Farming Communities in the Mid-Zambezi Valley, Northern Zimbabwe', *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 51, 163, 1996, 3-6.

[228] Paul C. Muchineripi, *Agricultural transformation in Gutu*, 8.

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spirit *Kagubi*, describing it as a *bonga* (wild cat), an insult that reduced the medium to nothing more than an ordinary person.[229] It is said that following this incident, a dry spell attacked the land and ravaged crops within the district. A striking consequence of this incident was how, to the traditional African villager, this was understood as a triumph of local religious customs and beliefs that they were surrounded and lived with spirits in their midst, capable of destroying or restoring normalcy to the soil.[230] Whereas to others, it raised the question of the outlook of the ancestors towards their people. They believed that such acts of harshness reflect a failure of the African oracle to provide food and livelihood for its people forcing them to seek religious alternatives for survival. While interpreted differently across the diverse social and spiritual divide, it echoes the Manyanga-Chirikure hypothesis that African culture has been 'grossly misunderstood and unresolved' even by practising Africans themselves.[231] The role of small grains overtime was neither static nor fixed but integral in dynamic processes during which society used and understood them differently and shaped them to suit their circumstance.

Conclusion

The social history of small grains in Zimbabwe is complex and varies across different social groups. Through a historiographic discussion, this chapter demonstrated how small grains have been represented and appreciated differently across varying both African and white societies during the extensive pre-colonial past. For some, their role was limited to being a source of food for both humans and animals, while for others small grains were a gateway to connecting with their ancestry, holding central and significant purposes during ritual ceremonies. Herein, different rituals, ceremonies, folklore and icons reflected how deeply immersed in different spiritual beliefs and myths African peasants were. Moreover, the social history of small grain eloquently harmonizes the multiple interpretations and appreciation of food among society, neatly illustrating how food is a catalyst for social cohesion through gathering together different people to enjoy meals and drinks during happy and also not so pleasant moments. Such occasions also underscore the longevity of African knowledge as they present a platform for sharing generational counsel and tales. This chapter conveys an appreciation of the centrality

[229] *NADA* 1933, 101.
[230] By so doing they were reviving their potency in terms of control of the environment and African existence.
[231] Munyaradzi Manyanga and Shadreck Chirikure, "Archives, objects, places and landscapes: The multidisciplinary and decolonising imperative". They forward that it is more accurate to use vernacular words to describe concepts and associated roles than using English as use of the latter has over time misrepresented African culture. More so, it fails to wholly grapple the essences of the concepts and has contributed to distorted meanings.

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of small grains beyond their role in the peasant economy. It argues that small grains are an integral part of the African social everyday life through their manifestation in traditional customs and traditions it has helped shape over time in Zimbabwe. In addition, this chapter demonstrates how African families progressed over time in their diverse use of small grains for different social, economic and political reasons. This emphasizes that African culture was not only rich and fluid but was constantly developing over centuries in appreciation of the changing natural environment as well as frontier influences from other societies. This chapter sought in this way to explain and re-emphasise the significance of small grains to African social, cultural and religious sustenance throughout history.

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Chapter Three

'Small grains, small gains': African peasant small-grains production and marketing in Zimbabwe during the colonial period, c.1890s - 1970s.

> 'The native should be trained not so much as a competitor with the white man in the business life, but as a useful auxiliary to help in the progress of the country… It is not our intention to necessarily encourage greater production, but rather to reduce the area under cultivation and to encourage better methods on smaller lands in order that people may grow sufficient for their needs and more land may be available for grazing.'
>
> Herbert Taylor (Chief Native Commissioner), 1918.[1]

> '…we want good prices…we are planting in the proper way and it is too much work to do [sic]…then when we sell it …Europeans fetch bigger price than ours and it makes us go back.'
>
> African small grain farmers, 1925.[2]

Introduction

In 1923, commenting on the state of agricultural production and marketing in Southern Rhodesia, Director of Agriculture Dr Eric Nobbs remarked that,

> …until such production could be guaranteed it was useless to seek markets…now the farmer is awaiting only the buyer's assurance that he will purchase the crop when grown…Previously there was much uncertainty as to whether and how these crops could be produced, now very largely we know but are faced with the problem of how to sell them when produced.[3]

Although speaking with reference to white settler production of tobacco, these sentiments also describe the situation for African peasant small grain production. Indeed, in so far as peasant grain production and marketing were concerned, there was no formal 'organized marketing' system for African small grains until the early 1950s, with the establishing of the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). In comparison to issues on land and labour that have received considerable academic attention from historians, economists and agriculturalists, a history of peasant production and marketing of small grains during the colonial era remains unwritten.

[1] National Archives of Zimbabwe (hereafter NAZ), Chief Native Commissioner of Matabeleland Annual Report, 1918, 4.

[2] NAZ, ZBJ1/1/1, Native Production and Trade Commission Kamdeya, Member of Wedza Native Council.

[3] Report of the Director of Agriculture Dr Eric Nobbs quoted in Victor. Machingaidze, 'The development of Settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state: 1980-1939', *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1980, 131.

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Accordingly, the modest aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of some of the key dynamics within the nature of African small-grain production and marketing in southern Africa, with particular attention to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), from the time of white settler encroachment around 1890 to the end of colonial rule in 1980. Using a combination of colonial archival sources from the National Archives of Zimbabwe and secondary literature, the chapter revisits the agrarian history of the African peasantry and asserts that the story of African farmers in Zimbabwe can be gleaned from their methods during their production and marketing of small grains.

Globally, several scholars including J Groenewald have held that peasant production and marketing are intertwined, with a thin line separating the two.[4] It is essential to understand both, not only to trace the development of the peasant economy over time but also to gain a deeper appreciation of the shifting black-white and gender relations in Zimbabwe's agricultural sector during the colonial period. This chapter will show that the nature of African small-grains production and marketing over the colonial period was not static. This chapter traces the various shifts and examines how they shaped both African society and agriculture over the colonial period from 1890 to around the 1970s just before independence in Zimbabwe. As historian Ian Phimister has demonstrated, the formative years following white settler arrival from about 1890 were characterized by an emphasis on white capitalist production in cattle ranching, dairy and tobacco production.[5] Different colonial authorities – starting with the British South Africa Company (BSAC) – believed these sectors to be of greater commercial significance to the economy and society.[6] Yet little historical attention has been accorded to understanding the 'underbelly' of Zimbabwe's agrarian history. Throughout the colonial project, white settler agrarian interests were angled towards the development of cash crops such as tobacco, deciduous fruit and maize.[7] Accordingly, over the next century of colonial rule, the colonial state under the guise of 'conservation agriculture' and 'native development' instituted various land, agricultural and food policies such as Land Apportionment Act, Maize Control Act in 1931 and the Native Production and Markets Act in 1948. Yet these were subliminally

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[4] J A Groenewald, 'Agricultural and food policy', *Africa Insight*, 11, 2, 1981, 115.

[5] H. Weinmann, 'Agricultural Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1924', *Department of Agriculture Occasional Paper 4*, 1972, 45-50. Also see Maurice Granville Brook Rooney, 'European agriculture in the history of Rhodesia, 1890-1907', *MA dissertation*, University of South Africa, 1968, 60-1.

[6] NAZ, Small grain Federal Archive F 226 /1090/F 5, European Agricultural Report 1951, 32. These industries were producing about double in Southern Rhodesia as compared to other British colonies, Kenya, Malawi and Northern Rhodesia by the outbreak of the Great Depression.

[7] Ian Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital accumulation and class struggle,* (London: Longman, 1988), 21. Also see Weinmann, 'Agricultural research', 17, 42, 93, 141.

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aimed at propping up white settler agriculture while extricating African production from various lucrative markets.

This chapter will show that small grain farmers were not passive. Located along what political scientist James Scott describes as 'weapons of the weak', this chapter underlines the various methods employed by different African farmers across the country in response to the various repressive colonial policies and institutional mechanisms that stifled their small-grain production over time. African farmers evinced innovation and suppleness in responding in various ways to changing contexts and showed a strategic shrewdness bordering on deceitfulness through the adoption of a series of resistance and survival strategies; they were thus able to ensure bumper harvests and obtain a modest livelihood from their crops throughout these exasperating years. Moreover, the chapter seeks to challenge the 2015 assertion by historian Lindiwe Khumalo that the small-grain industry only thrived for as long as it served to mitigate shortfalls within white grain production in Southern Rhodesia. [8] Instead, this chapter will demonstrate by using various examples that small grains continued to develop to a large extent because of their social significance by Africans as well as being a dependable staple during periods of drought and economic strife.[9]

The chapter is made up of five sections arranged chronologically. Section one offers a historiographical basis for the conversation on Zimbabwe's agrarian history over time. This section economic landscape within which African society and small grains in part operated. This is followed by a section that examines the early years of settler colonialism showing how this 'free-market period' from 1890-1930 set the tone for the underdevelopment of not only small grains but African agriculture in its entirety. Section three explores marketing and production in the years after the passing of the Maize Control Act in 1930. Characterizing this as a period of 'organized chaos', this section explains the challenges of grain marketing and production under the draconic Maize Board. Section four describes the establishment of the Grain Marketing Board in 1954 and discusses the changes – if any – that come about with this new grain commodity board. The final section shows the rise of African producers with the small-grain market and reflects on the invaluable contribution of social capital towards

[8] Lindiwe. Khumalo, 'The development of the small grain industry in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1963', *BA Honours dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2015, 19-21.

[9] This growing reliance on small grains is further echoed in Chapter Six with attention to the period after 2000 characterized by a freefalling economy.

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countering the machinations of colonial rule up to 1980. Collectively, these sections illustrate the fluid yet complex and turbulent relationship between the African farmers and the colonial state over the long twentieth century. Moreover, they illustrate the fluctuating economic significance of small grains not only for the peasant economy but also their impact on broader agricultural developments in Zimbabwe. Some African farmers were able to counter and mitigate the impact of the force exerted by various colonial machinations and were able to survive into the 1970s, contradicting the suggestions of the demise of the peasantry widespread during this period. This story of small grains contributes to revitalizing the historiographical conversations on the 'rise' and 'fall' of the African peasantry and shows how indeed, small grains offered multiple opportunities for the development of African peasants despite the notable and widespread underdevelopment within African peasant agriculture throughout the colonial era.

'Africans on the land':[10] The historiography of African agriculture

This chapter joins the historiographical conversation concerning the African peasantry and explores Elijah Doro's notion of 'crop hegemonies' in southern African historiography.[11] The literature on Africa's agrarian history can be categorized in terms of economic, social and environmental concerns, as discussed in chapter one.[12] Within this copious literature lies the

[10] M. Yudelman, *Africans on the Land: Economic Problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern, Central and East Africa with Special Reference to Southern Rhodesia*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

[11] Elijah Doro, 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1893-2000', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2020. Doro coins the idea of 'crop hegemonies' building from the concept of 'three pillars' of economic develop – tobacco, maize and dairy in settler agrarian development. In Southern Rhodesia. This hypothesis postulates an overly importance of one crop over other crops in agrarian development by both colonial authorities and African peasant farmers. Dynamics that shape 'crop hegemonies' within southern Africa are concerned with profit margins emanating from crop production with attention towards of sales and labourers' wages over and above ideals of land conservation, labour welfare and sustainable agriculture. Other studies that have postulated a similar narrative and traced their impact include Robin Palmer, 'The agricultural history of Rhodesia' in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (eds), *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern African*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

[12] Much of foundational agrarian history of the African peasantry has focused on the economic and latter social and environmental development of African society. Work by M. Yudelman, Africans on the Land, Victor Machingaidze, 'Development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state', *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1980, Paul Mosley, *The settler economies: Studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Allison K. Shutt, ''We are the Best Poor Farmers': Purchase Area Farmers and Economic Differentiation in Southern Rhodesia, c.1925-1980', *PhD Thesis*, University of California, 1995 have grappled with economic aspects of agrarian history, while scholars such as Kudzai. Manungo, 'The role peasants played in the Zimbabwe war of liberation, with special emphasis on Chiweshe District, *D. Phil Thesis*, Ohio University, 1991 and Robin. Palmer and I Birch, *Zimbabwe: A land divided*, (Oxford: Oxfam, 1992) have echoed on the social dimensions of colonial agrarian development. Jennifer A. Elliot, 'Soil Erosion and Conservation in Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, Loughborough University of Technology, 1989, Simeon Maravanyika, 'Soil conservation and white agrarian environment in colonial Zimbabwe, 1908-1980, *PhD Thesis*, University of Pretoria, 2013, JoAnn. McGregor, 'Conservation, Control and Ecological Change: The

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contested debates on the underdevelopment of African agriculture,[13] and how African labour used not only to propel white settler agrarian economy but – according to economic historian Eric Green – the development of white capitalist agriculture in the twentieth century at the expense of material and economic investment in African farming.[14] Yet, admittedly, while much has been written about the peasant agrarian economy in Southern Rhodesia, historical work focused primarily on African peasant small grains is both scanty and fragmented. Moreover, up until now, by focusing on African participation in the perceived 'more economically lucrative' crop production – tobacco, maize, deciduous fruits and cotton – several historians of the colony have repeated white colonialist mindset towards African agriculture that was laden with racial stereotypes dismissive of African methods and economic contributions.[15] While revisionist literature emerging from the 1970s onwards did much to grapple with various themes concerning African peasant production, the history of African farmers remained largely written within the broader narratives of settler histories.[16] At the same time, studies that explored small grains largely focused on the hermeneutics of the grains – that is their shape, taste, caloric value and texture.[17] Little attention has been devoted to exploring their developing economic and social value within African and global communities. Yet in an ethnographic survey of the Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, social anthropologist Hilda Kuper et al. underscored how by 1910 sorghum and millet were the main crops consumed by both Africans and white settlers, providing both food and an economic livelihood.[18] Economic historian Trevor Ncube states how in the early years of white colonization, African

politics and ecology of colonial conservation in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe, *Environment and History*, 1, 3, 1995, 257-279 and recent work by Doro, 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1893-2000'; have dedicated attention towards environmental discourse within the agrarian history of Southern Rhodesia.

[13] Parsons, Palmer, Ian Phmister Victor Machingaidze, and Punt all discuss how white settlers instituted among other measures, like Marketing Boards, to curtail and control the presence and dominance of African producers in various agricultural sectors including tobacco, maize, wheat, cotton. Under the guise of quality control, African agriculture was poorly financed and excluded from most lucrative markets leading to its further reduction in productivity and the quality of crops.

[14] Eric Green, 'Indirect rule and colonial intervention: Chiefs and agrarian change in Nyasaland, c.1933 to the early 1950s, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 44, 2, 2011, 249-274.

[15] G. M. Odlum, *Agricultural and pastoral Rhodesia*, (London: British South Africa Company, 1909), LH Gann, *A history of Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) and ED Alvord, 'Agricultural life of the Rhodesian natives', *Native Department Annuals* (hereafter *NADA*), VII, 1929, 9-16.

[16] A great deal of agrarian literature on Southern Rhodesia focuses on settler production with the few works that integrate the African peasant into historiographical narratives generally paying special attention to their involvement within white settler cash crop production. See I. Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', *African Affairs*, 73, 291, 217-228.

[17] National Research Council, *Lost Crops of Africa: Grains*, (Washington: Board on Science and Technology for International Development National Academies Press, 1996), vi and J. S. Dube and D. J. Magava, 'Sorghum and millet as animal feeds in Zimbabwe', *Zimbabwe Agriculture Journal,* 84, No 1, 1987, 6-7.

[18] Hilda Kuper, A.J. B Hughes and J van Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia,* (London: Routledge, 2017), 57.

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producers dominated grain production and stresses the growing importance not only of African crops but of African labour as well.[19] Colonial responses to these dynamics were complex; historian K. P. Vickery thus connects this early market dominance by African producers with the various abrasive reactions from the budding white administration, for example, the institution of the diabolical Maize Control Act in the early 1930s.[20]

According to historian Eric Makombe, African participation in grain production was purely economic, with commodity prices and marketing limitations being an important determinant within peasant grain production.[21] Without a doubt, as this chapter shows, economic factors were key in influencing production and marketing. However, as historians William Beinart and Luvuyo Wotshela note, crops allowed society not only to survive but to also 'reinvent' themselves.[22] For example, the Kalanga people became known as the 'millet people'[23] for their pronounced utility of grains, shifting from early Portuguese writers that described them as surviving from mining for gold and other minerals.[24] This close economic relationship between Africans and the land triggered state paternalism in agrarian production, overruling peasant autonomy in crop production through the formation of the Native Affairs Department in the early 1920s, for example, to closely monitor African lifestyles.[25] Throughout the colonial period, different agricultural development programmes enabled people to earn money for subsistence and also meet tax obligations and mitigate social instability.[26] Thus, building on historian Colin Bundy's seminal 1979 *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*, which provides a vital theoretical framework to understand the changes within peasant development,[27] this chapter will also demonstrate how, with respect to small grains in Southern Rhodesia, small grains development was a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors including social,

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[19] Trevor. Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1986', *Henderson Seminar Paper No. 72*, 3

[20] Kenneth. P. Vickery, 'Saving settlers: Maize control in Northern Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11, 2, 1985, 216.

[21] Eric K. Makombe, Agricultural commodity pricing policy in Colonial Zimbabwe with particular reference to the settler maize industry, 1950-1980, *MA thesis*, University of Zimbabwe, 2005, 10.

[22] William Beinart and Luvuyo. Wotshela, *Prickly pear: The social history of a plant in the Eastern Cape*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2011), 5-7.

[23] Personal communication with Thembani Dube, historian on the Kalanga people of Zimbabwe, November 2019.

[24] Richard N Hall and W G Neal, *The ancient ruins of Rhodesia (Monomotapae imperium),* (London: Methuen, 1904), 156-7.

[25] Helen Tilley, *Africa as a living laboratory: Empire, development and the problem of scientific knowledge, 1870-1950*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 141. The work of these departments was to ascertain which crops and production methods the colonial state might effectively employ for the development of the colony.

[26] *Ibid*, 141-142.

[27] Colin Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 65-108.

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environmental and economic. Moreover, Fuller Masuku[28] and Leonard Bessant[29], describing the cases of Ntabazinduna and Chiweshe between 1923-1939 and 1940-1966 respectively, note that African farmers responded differently to fluctuating agricultural commodity prices based on their varying experiences with the changing labour and agrarian policies throughout the colonial era.[30] Some enterprising peasants forged new markets as a counter to the suppression of African competition on the more lucrative mainstream grain markets. For these peasants, Bessant says, the 1940s onwards saw them 'ensure they had enough food and money for their families…acquire cattle, trucks and other forms of wealth.'[31] In agreement with these studies, this chapter will demonstrate how African small grain farmers were not a homogenous group, while also illustrating that a multiplicity of factors supported their development throughout the twentieth century.

Work by A.K.H. Weinrich's on African farmers in 'Karangalanga' and Eira Punt on peasant production during the interwar period between 1890 and 1950, adequately grapple with this theme, yet notwithstanding their merits in underlining the exploitative nature of white-black relations, much of the focus continues to fall on Africans through the discussions of white production.[32] However, they note how despite segregationist policies, a mutual relationship characterized by the reliance of each other existed between African peasants and white production. Historian Eira Kramer rightly adds how the development of extension services in African peasant areas between 1925 and the early 1930s was launched to improve African yields, while at the same time also targeted at enabling Africans to cope with life on the reserves and reduce their competitive power in the field of white cash crop production.[33] African peasant

[28] Fuller Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve, with particular reference to the colonial period 1923 – 1939', *MA Dissertation*, University of Cape Town, 1989, 37-9

[29] L. L. Bessant, Coercive development: Peasant economy, politics and land in the Chiweshe Reserve, colonial Zimbabwe, 1940-1966', *PhD Thesis*, Yale University, 1987.

[30] Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna. The period between 1924 to 1939 witnessed a reshaping of labour and commodity dynamics owing to the shifting global economic climate. At the same time there was an influx in rural to urban migration by African labour triggering an increase for domestic grain consumption and this remodelled the dynamics within crop acreage within both African and setter areas. Also see Wesley Mwatwara, 'Running twice as fast while remaining in the same position': Settler wheat production in Southern Rhodesia, c. 1928–1965', *Historia*, 58, 1, 2013, 192-3.

[31] Bessant, 'Coercive development: Peasant economy', ii.

[32] A.K.H. Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia: Old and New Peasant Communities in Karangaland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975 and E. Punt, 'The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with articular reference to the interwar years', *MA Thesis*, University of Natal, Durban, 1979, 1-2. Also see W. Chambati and S. Moyo, *Land reform and the political economy of agricultural labour* (Harare: African Institute for Agrarian Studies, 2004).

[33] Eira Kramer, 'The early years: Extension services in peasant agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe, 1925-1929', *Zambezia*, XXIV, II, 1997, 159-198. It must be however noted how the developments to the colony by white settler colonialism were by and large incidental and thus must not be overstated especially in light of their

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struggles over time to retain and maintain control of their economic security were varied. Machingaidze is of the view that until the 1950s there was no land shortage as such, but African socio-economic interests were being sacrificed at the altar of white political and economic hegemony and this differentially shaped African cash crop production.[34] Moreover, historian Admire Mseba says African farmers were stratified according to their settlement locations and according to land regulations, some African farmers under the 'beneficial occupation clause' were permitted to retain their land so as long as they continuously occupied it and invested in farming.[35] Such dynamics prompted historians such as Terence Ranger to advance the notion of a 'peasant option' within the evolution of peasant consciousness as Africans reacted towards various repressive colonial policies aimed at protecting white agriculture.[36] Ranger further adds that over time peasant needs from colonial authority changed to more than just wanting ownership of land to a point that would allow them to create and accumulate their wealth.[37] Echoing historians Godfrey Hove, Wesley Mwatwara, Malcom Blackie and Takesure Taringana in the cases of dairy, beef, cotton and coffee industries respectively,[38] this chapter will demonstrate how by regulating peasant small grains production through the Maize Control Act and its subsequent amendments, for example, the colonial state was inadvertently stimulating peasant production through igniting innovation and the creation of alternative markets among peasants. Additionally, this chapter using the story of small grains aims to join this historiography conversation on 'peasant resistance' demonstrating how African peasant families in Zimbabwe expressed their agency and were capable of shaping their agrarian narratives.

Dickson A. Mungazi and L. Kay Walker criticise Emory Alvord's agricultural policy for its treatment of African peasants as an 'undifferentiated group', abrasive towards the state

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adverse impacts to the condition of the African peasant. Also see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, London and Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam 1973)

[34] Victor Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1991, 24, 3, 565.

[35] Admire Mseba, 'Law, expertise, and settler conflicts over land in early colonial Zimbabwe, 1890–1923', *Environment and Planning A*, 48, 4, 2016, 665–680.

[36] Terence Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe: A comparative study*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985), 284.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Godfrey Hove, 'The state, farmers and dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c. 1980-1951', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2015, Wesley. Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c. 1896-1980', *PhD thesis*, University of Stellenbosch, 2014), M. Blackie, 'Case Study: The Zimbabwe Cotton Marketing Board', *Department of Land Management Working Paper* 2/83, 1983 and T. Taringana, *Agrarian Capitalism and the Development of the Coffee Industry in Colonial Zimbabwe,* (Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2018).

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paternalistic improvements of the 1920s to the era of more cohesive technical development.[39] Weinmann notes how the 'gospel of the plough' and its subsequent adoption among African peasants in the opening decade of the twentieth century, for instance, was characterized by differences among peasant farmers as 'it was doubtful whether their (plough) use is really beneficial and not a curse to the native farmer.'[40] Machingaidze rightly exposes how contradictions within colonial land and agrarian policies relating to the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951 itself contributed to the myriad of responses from the African peasantry. Some Africans warmly embraced the 'agrarian change from above' targeting to participate in the more lucrative crops markets, while others responded by shunning colonial ideas on land tenure and crop choices to grow. Quoting Reverend P.J.M. Ndebele's December 1951 letter to the *Rhodesian Herald,* Machingaidze notes, 'the Government can rest assured that this Bill will meet with strong opposition from the African people throughout the country.'[41] However, by 1955 the Chief Native Commissioner reported how the NLHA was 'generally been received with satisfaction' by peasants.[42] This displays how peasant attitudes towards colonial machinations were not static but fluid and shifting in moments of détente. Adding to this historiography, this chapter contributes to understanding how the development of African small grains contributed towards the changing social and economic dynamics of peasant grain production and marketing in colonial Zimbabwe.

Small grains production and marketing in the formative years, c.1890- 1930

The early years of settler colonialism were particularly challenging for the British South Africa Company and later Responsible Government under Charles Coghlan. As noted earlier in Chapter One, white settlers faced stiff competition from African farmers who dominated grain production during this period. However, through the institution of various support measures for white settler farmers by the colonial state such as agricultural financing, this placed presented competition of African farmer agricultural economy.[43] At the same time, as will be noted later in this chapter, these challenges created opportunities for African farmers to display their creativity in an effort to survive from growing white settler competition. Concerning agrarian policy, production and marketing, these years were marred by confusion,

[39] Dickson.A. Mungazi and Kay L Walker, *Colonial Agriculture for Africans: Emory Alvord's policy in Zimbabwe*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 228.
[40] H. Weinmann, 'Agricultural research and development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950', *Series in Science*, 2, 1975), 202.
[41] Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above', 577.
[42] *Ibid*. 577-8.
[43] Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve, 67.

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contradictions and irony. Notably, for example, early colonial records depicted African cultivation, in contrast to European agriculture that 'does not greatly exceed 5 bags to the acre'[44] as 'kaffir agriculture', characterized by 'extravagant', 'wasteful', 'primitive' and 'destructive' tillage methods.[45] Yet, at the same time in so far as agricultural success was concerned, from as early as the mid-nineteenth century to about 1904, both white and African communities relied on African-produced small grains, contributing towards African peasants enjoying moments of success.[46] This boom was closely tied to the practised methods adopted by African producers who were concerned with maintaining harmony between the productivity of the land, soil conservation and achieving fertility from their crops.[47] They actively practised shifting cultivation, burning off branches each time a new piece of land was to be used for cultivation.[48] Historian Maurice Rooney underscores how, between 1890 and 1907, 'taking into consideration erratic rainfall and the nature of the soil in conjunction with the population and land ratios and people's needs…these methods went a long way in reducing soil erosion, and maintaining bumper harvests.'[49] Supporting this view, Chief Agriculturalist D.E. McLoughlin would later remark in 1944 how indeed African agriculture was a 'better system than the one adopted by the Europeans.'[50] Africans were practising mixed cropping where maize and millet were growing together with other crops like *nyemba*, while *rapoko* grains were often planted with cowpeas.[51] Also because different crops matured at different times, this ensured constant soil cover throughout the year, thus preventing soil erosion.[52] However, officials within the Department of Agriculture from 1902 onwards, extensively moved to 'promote the interests of white farmers' by prioritizing the development of cash crops such as tobacco, cotton and maize to 'further the progress of the agricultural industry in Rhodesia.'[53] Yet, like his fellow council member McLoughlin, the Director of the Farmers Co-op of

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[44] *The countryside*, October 1928, 45 in Machingaidze, 'The development', 438. This argument suggests that European agriculture was more conservative of the environment.

[45] Alvord, 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives', 9-16. Alvord pointed out how the yields from *natives* farming are deplorably low being only 2.2 bags per acre' [sic] and the population 'will provide about 3.2 bags per person yearly. It is estimated however that more than 300 000 bags of grain are sold annually by the natives.'

[46] Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 217.

[47] H.N. Hemans, *The log of a native commissioners: A record of work and sport in the Southern Rhodesia*, (London: H.F and G Witherby), 17. Added to this, in many parts of the country, religious ceremonies such as rainmaking rituals were too attributed for the bountiful agricultural harvests obtained by African farmers. See W. Bozongwana, *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), 34.

[48] Yudelman, *Africans on the land: Economic Problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern*, 157-8.

[49] Rooney, 'European agriculture in the history of Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1907', 71.

[50] NAZ, ZBJ1/1/1 Native Production and Trade Commission June 1944, Correspondence to Council by D. E. McLoughlin.

[51] Punt, 'The development of African', 12.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] Rooney, 'European agriculture in the history of Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1907', 61.

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Southern Rhodesia, L.T Tracey would later in 1944 express his high regard for African agriculture noting how 'it did stand the test of time.'[54]

Despite the introduction of maize to the Shona people by the Portuguese in about the sixteenth century, as discussed in Chapter Two, traditional small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko – continued to dominate domestic consumption into the early years of colonial rule until around 1907, as discussed in Chapter Four.[55] This was largely reinforced by the strong social significance that small grains held among the African people as noted in Chapter Two, being a major part of several traditional rites of passage, celebration ceremonies and communal gatherings commemorated by African societies. Added to this, small grains were much easier to grow in comparison to maize which often supports various extension services including irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides as noted later in this chapter.[56] Indeed, small grains are more resilient in varying climatic conditions, able to produce bountiful yields during seasons with low rainfall.[57] Also, amongst the Shona people in the Mashonaland region in Zimbabwe who widely consumed small grains, the socio-economic significance of small grains and food, in particular, was captured within several idioms within Shona culture. For example, '*kuita mushandira pamwe samajuru*' and '*ukama igaswa hunozodziwa nekudya*', which translated mean 'work together like ants building an anthill' and 'relationships are on their own never adequate, they are only made adequate when people share food'[58], which underscore how African cultivation of crops including small grains was a social cohesion project that brought people together during cultivation of the grain fields and during moments of consumption.[59] Social and economic relationships were made solid through the sharing of labour and harvesting of peasant small grains, they allowed Africans to collectively compete with budding white settler farmers. Added to this, the widespread consumption for small grains by African families offered ready markets for peasant produce.[60]

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[54] NAZ, ZBJ1/1/1 Notes on Native Production and Trade Commission presented to Council by LT. Tracey, June 1944.
[55] Kuper, Hughes and Velsen, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, 57.
[56] Kramer, 'The early years: Extension services in peasant agriculture', 162-5.
[57] 'African production – other grains', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 13, 1916.
[58] These idioms underscore the unity involved during crop production and consumption, wherein small grains form part of the main crops produced and consumed during these practices.
[59] Baxter Tavuyanago et al, 'Traditional grain crops in pre-colonial Zimbabwe: A factor for food security and social cohesion and the Shona people', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12, 6, 2010, 1-8.
[60] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 12.

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In addition, working in small groups, by September 1891 some Shona women were actively producing and selling a variety of products including both small grains and maize, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and groundnuts to the white settlers.[61] Describing these early trade relations, colonial author J. P. Fitzpatrick says the Shona were,

> …anxious to barter and quicker to trade and more eager for business than any native I have yet seen. So keen are they on business…quick to perceive an opening that they have broken up fresh ground and planted double crops this year in order to supply the rush of the white man.[62]

This acumen and eagerness in trading grain displayed by the Shona were both widespread and noticeable across the region as far as Manicaland and Matabeleland. Indeed, by 1895, Native Commissioner reports attributed the large small-grain quantities in these livestock and mining dominant regions to this trade.[63] Also, upon arrival in Makoni District in 1899, one white pioneer camper remarked that 'hundreds of acres that now lie fallow (as a result of the practised method of shifting cultivation) must have been under cultivation, as is proved by traces of rice and grain fields that can still be discerned in almost every valley.'[64] Little wonder that in October 1905 British agriculturalist and BSAC land settlement expert, C.D. Wise, acknowledged that the 'African agricultural sector was booming' and 'consisted of well-coordinated structure of planters, buyers, sellers and consumers.'[65] L.H. Gann adds how these images and ideas of a lush agricultural space advanced the prospect of crafting a 'White Rhodesia' agricultural colony based on settler cash crop production, despite 'however many setbacks their country might suffer' from peasant competition.[66] Strikingly, a major observation is how white settlers attitude towards African agriculture was not uniform, instead marred with areas of contradictions characterized by a changing appreciation towards the contributions of small grains to both the agrarian economy and African nutrition, food and eating patterns, as also discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

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[61] Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 219-220.
[62] J. P. Fitzpatrick, *Through Mashonaland with Pick and Pen* (1892), in A. P Cartwright ed (Johannesburg, 1973), 45.
[63] Ian R. Phimister, 'Peasant Production', 220.
[64] F.C. Selous, *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa,* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1965), 344.
[65] NAZ, Southern Rhodesia Agriculture, BSAC Directors Report and Accounts for Southern Rhodesia, 31 March 1907, 32. This assessment was based on the production of small grains and cattle industry and not the 'three pillars' of the agriculture economy.
[66] L. H. Gann, *A history of Southern Rhodesia: Early days to 1934*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 316.

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Various Company Council reports and correspondence among legislators reveal that, although sharing a similar desire for white agricultural hegemony especially following the foiled Eldorado dream, white settlers were not a homogenous group.[67] On one end, influential sections within the BSAC administration were nostalgic about the Anglo-Ndebele War/ 1st Chimurenga (1885-7) and were uncertain about the ideal strategy for dismantling the African peasant economy.[68] On the other hand, in early 1906, the Director of Agriculture Dr Eric Nobbs proclaimed that Rhodesia was essentially a stock country, and the conditions in the colony point strongly to meat as the 'principal ultimate product to be elaborated off our veld.'[69] While small grains maintained a favourable outlook among emerging settler ranchers largely for their role as livestock fodder, Nobbs criticised the production of maize as a key cash crop, maintaining that arable farming must rank below stock farming in importance, profitability and usefulness.[70] In a comparison of acreage, African small grains responded positively to the increasing interest in livestock production between 1906-11.[71] However, the Native Development Office would later that year express that 'it is not our (NDO) intention to necessarily encourage greater production (by Africans), but rather reduce the area under cultivation and encourage better methods on small lands in order that people may grow sufficient for their needs.'[72] Under the guise of conservation, this effectively saw the strict enforcement of a punitive land policy such as the 'Native Reserve' system, which became central in defining the development of African small-grain cultivation and distribution.

At the same time, African peasant small-grain production maintained its sturdy growth rate, capturing the market of grain consumed by the mines and towns, towering over European farming.[73] The market preference for African small grains by the mining sector after 1904 until the 1960s (as noted in Chapter Five), stemmed from the fact that, in comparison to white settler-produced maize, African small grains remained the cheaper option to purchase by the low-

[67] Weinmann, 'Agricultural research', 143-4.
[68] H.C. Thomson, *Rhodesia and its government*, (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1989), 62.
[69] NAZ, S1215/1202/1, Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1911, 9. This coincided with the appointment of Eric Nobbs to the position of Director of Agriculture. His appointment witnessed notable moves aimed at revolutionizing the functions of the department, through reorganizing and increasing the administrative efficiency as well as its scientific activities, installed towards improving white settler production systems.
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Weinmann, 'Agricultural research', 76, 58, 109. Livestock owned by European farmers in 1911 increased to 164167 from 11948 in 1900. This translated in a massive demand for small grains as fodder whose acreage was gradually increasing to at least five bags per acre from a previous 3 under the same area space.
[72] Report of the Director of Agriculture Dr Eric Nobbs quoted in V. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 442.
[73] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1986', 3.

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wage labourers.[74] According to grading patterns by the Maize Board (and later the Grain Marketing Board after 1954), settler-produced maize was labelled as being superior in quality to small grains and was fetching higher market prices aimed at enriching the white farmers, but this led to their lower uptake among African consumers.[75] The proliferation of the mining market consuming African produce triggered the Agriculture Department Director to lament in September 1905, '… as a resolve, it is sternly seen that there was no better time for organized agricultural marketing fairs and shows as now', to promote white settler agriculture as an alternative to African small grains across the colony.[76] In 1906, G.M. Odlum, an agricultural assistant in the Department of Agriculture, went on to describe maize as 'the Rhodesian farmers' friend'.[77] In February 1907 some white settlers from the Rhodesian Landowners and Farmer Association started to lobby for state intervention to facilitate their undisturbed participation in the grain market.[78] August the following year witnessed an agreement with the Secretary for Agriculture, Ross Townsend, leading to the signing of a document that came to be known as the Diet Ordinance of 1908.[79] Effectively, this agreement replaced African small grains with white settler maize as the main grain staple eaten in the colony, especially on the mining estates. While notably being the first bureaucratic step towards reshaping the African diet by the colonial authorities, it was ostensibly intended to ensure mine workers had a fair diet but also to ensure that maize farmers benefitted from the expanded market for their grain. This move had the far-reaching impact of too reconfiguring both small-grain production and the related market dynamics. Reinforcing the substitution of small grains, Attorney General Tredgold reiterated that 'kaffir farming' caused the market to 'flood with native grains' and

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[74] NAZ, F1075/103, GMB grains during UDI, 'Agricultural Economics report for the period ending August 1966', Secretary for Native Development. Also see J. A. T. Walters, 'New crops for Rhodesia. Report on the experimental work conducted during 1915-16', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 9, 626-639, 1911.

[75] Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve', 27-28. Grain was given different grades for example A1 and A1 for white produced maize, while small grains usually fell under the C1-C3 categories with the Maize Board (later GMB). Added to this, maize was gradually receiving considerable attention among settlers as both food and livestock feed, more so aimed at promoting white farmers produce and by extension unseating African small grain monopoly. Also see Neil Wright and T Takavarasha, 'The evolution of agricultural pricing policies in Zimbabwe: 1970s and 1980s', *Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Working Paper* AEE 4/89, May 1989, 1-34.

[76] 'The Agricultural Shows', *The Rhodesian Agricultural Journal,* 2, 1, 1905, 1. The Agriculture Department noted how the western districts could justly pride themselves on their grain, root crop and tobacco harvests, with an enthusiasm for fruit growing across the country.

[77] NAZ, GI/14, G.M Odlum, Agricultural and pastoral Rhodesia, 1906, 5.

[78] NAZ Oral /F1, Sir Patrick Fletcher Account No 94. During this period, the African mine workers were the greatest market for grain, prompted by their shift from their own food production with their concentration on wage employment on the mines leading to them relying on purchasing grain for their upkeep.

[79] Although it is documented by two historians that the Diet Ordinance was enacted in 1908, the exact stipulations of the Ordinance remain unavailable at the NAZ. Phimister remains the main source cited by Punt and myself on the subject. See Ian Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914, *African Affairs*, 73, 291, 1974, 217-228.

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was counterproductive to the efforts of developing a white agriculture sector of prime crops.[80] In 1910, Nobbs insisted that 'necessarily European maize must remain, whatever else may be grown, the main crop of the country.'[81]

However, these agrarian developments were met with varied responses from mining capital and workers alike. On one hand, it was appreciated that maize grain seeds were much bigger in structure and believed to be healthier over small portions, thus being more economical when compared with the previous *mhunga* (pearl millet) staple.[82] But, on the other extreme, mining capital was against an 'over-investment in African labour' through the purchase of a more costly staple like maize.[83] In the same vein, many African miners were opposed to the substitution of small grains with maize because of the meagre purchasing capacity of their wages.[84] Maize produced maize cost more. While for others, continued consumption and trading of small grains with fellow Africans from the reserves maintained a social and economic bond between the rural and mining communities.[85] Nonetheless, for a long while the Diet Ordinance reduced the market size for peasant small grains tremendously and by the same token, fuelled competition among the previously robust African producers for the remaining and new markets.

In totality, small grain production after 1908 declined in acreage from about 2 353 acres to about 1 153 acres in African areas between 1913 and 1919.[86] Accounting for low agricultural production in African reserves in both Mashonaland and Matabeleland, in 1920 E. D. Alvord said that 'on the most fertile soils, native crops are much lower than they should be because of poor tillage, planting in a mixture, too thick planting, lack of cultivation, overcrowding with weeds…Africans failure to use new agricultural methods result in under-sized, slender plants which produced small grain heads or none at all.'[87] As a result, the period from the 1920s onwards witnessed notable attention focused on African agriculture through the provision of

[80] *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal,* 52, 1947. Tredgold believed a free-flow of African farmers restricted the supply of labour and encouraged Africans to utilize land, which would be otherwise utilized and developed by white settlers. Additionally, this free flow contributed towards the absence of due control over the African farmers.

[81] NAZ 1095/01/S2, Report of the Director of Agriculture, Dr Nobbs, 1910, 4.

[82] Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development,* 19-20.

[83] R. Cherer- Smith, *The Story of Maize and the Farmers' Co-op Ltd*, (Salisbury, Farmers' Co-op Ltd, 1979), viii.

[84] Vickery, 'Saving settlers: Maize control in Northern Rhodesia', 216.

[85] NAZ, S1215/1202/1, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner and Director of Native Development, 1953.

[86] NAZ, S1215/1202/1, Abridged Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1913-1920.

[87] Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve', 21-22.

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various agricultural extension services within the African reserves.[88] The 1924 introduction of agricultural demonstrators within the *native reserves* was a complex process. Broadly, it was aimed at improving African cultivation, yet at the same time, it was implemented to curtail African production by reshaping constructing African agricultural ideas and practices to suit developing white settler demands and an appreciation for maize over small grains.[89] However, by the time it was realized that the two chosen pilot areas of Tjolotjo and Domboshawa were not suitable for white-style cash crop production, African farmers had used to their advantage the education they gained towards improving their subsistence agriculture.[90] An agricultural census report in 1939 recorded that a total of 105 agricultural demonstrators had been trained and were working with African farmers, and within a decade of their introduction, a significant rise in the quantity and quality of African grains including maize and small grains was noted.[91] Once again, African farmers reasserted themselves as formidable competition to setter farmers on the grain market.

Still, despite these unintended outcomes, rightly so, Alvord enthusiastically remarked that 'we have influenced 5% of the native population of the reserves in better methods of tillage.'[92] In spite of the notable improvements within African agriculture and crops since the inception of the demonstrators, African farmers' reactions towards the demonstrators were not uniform. According to Machingaidze, some African farmers viewed the concept of agricultural demonstrators to be yet another ploy 'to come and ascertain how valuable their land was so that it could be expropriated.'[93] As such, they were reluctant to adopt the suggested improved agricultural techniques, preferring to maintain their ostensibly 'lower yield'-producing methods. In addition, others further argued that despite producing quality crops, prices for their grain remained low, thus creating little motivation for investment in adopting new methods.[94] This was in addition to the disadvantaged location of the reserves far from the lucrative markets, which were thus burdened with transportation challenges. One farmer and member of the Wedza Native Council in Kamdeya bemoaned that 'we want good prices…we are planting

[88] Kramer, 'The early years: Extension services in peasant agriculture, 159-198.
[89] NAZ, Oral/PA 1, Eric Palmer Trestrail Account No. 12. This project was pioneered in 1911 but only took shape in Domboshava and Tsholotsho districts in 1924.
[90] P.H. Moyo, 'Native life in the reserves', *NADA*, 1927, 47-51.
[91] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler', 408.
[92] NAZ ZBJ1/1/1, Native Production and Trade Commission June 1944. Correspondence to Council by E.D. Alvord
[93] Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above', 565-7.
[94] Moyo, 'Native life in the reserves', 52.

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in the proper way and it is too much work to do [sic]…then when we sell it …Europeans fetch bigger price than ours and it makes us go back.'[95]

In August 1927 an exchange between the Director of Native Affairs and the Minister of Lands and Agriculture admitted to the threat of African agriculture to white agriculture prospects. From the very beginning of settler arrival, African small grains (unlike tobacco or maize) enjoyed a large domestic market and was a favoured crop for cultivation by African families and consumed by white communities too. Added to this, the Agriculture Officer reiterated in 1927, that, notwithstanding being largely informal, African farmers were 'self-organized' and displayed orderliness.[96] This organization sat uneasily with settler farmers who were looking to establish a monopoly over all forms of grain production, marketing and distribution, to increase profits rapidly.[97] Looking to enforce the earlier position pronounced by Dr Nobbs that 'maize must remain…the main crop of the country',[98] when lobbying for a maize levy in the mid-1920s, the Agriculture Department echoed how 'maize growing in Rhodesia is a basic industry…if the production of maize could be made profitable, mixed farming would be encouraged, dairying, pigs, and the feeding of the cattle could be carried on successfully.'[99] The latter years of the 1920s thus witnessed a strict promotion of maize over small grains by CD. Wise an agriculturalist in the Department of Agriculture.[100] However, despite this many white farmers remained challenged by labour shortages, producing lower yields when compared with the African peasants. Moreover, they over-relied on the mines and industries for their grain markets, which albeit being lucrative, often preferred cheaper grains sold by African farmers.[101] Vickery points out that notwithstanding the gradual replacement of maize over small grains as a local staple through various methods including legislation that restricted the cultivation of small grains in certain non-African areas, Africans responded differently to these shifts.[102] Notably, those who reacted positively to this shift were able in some instances such as in 1928-1929 harvests, to surpass the production levels of the white farmers.[103] For

[95] NAZ, ZBJ1/1/1, Native Production and Trade Commission Kamdeya, Member of Wedza Native Council, 1925.
[96] NAZ, European Activities in Southern Rhodesia, Report on European Farming in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland August 1927.
[97] *Ibid.* Also see Machingaidze, 'The development of settler', 409.
[98] NAZ, S 1829/11, Report of the Director of Agriculture, Dr Nobbs, 1910, 4.
[99] ''Maize levy', The case of the producer', *The Countryside*, July 1928, 18.
[100] Victor Machingaidze, Company Rule and agricultural development: The case of the BSA Company in Southern Rhodesia, 1908-1923, *University of Rhodesia, Henderson Seminar 43*, 1979, 3-4.
[101] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1986', 14-6.
[102] Vickery, 'Saving settlers', 218.
[103] Weinmann, 'Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950', 81.

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these producers, the 1920s were reminiscent of a widespread boom in grain production and consumption such that the local market was becoming too small to absorb local produce.[104]

This euphoria was short-lived, however, and was to deteriorate rapidly after 1930, largely in response to the global economic depression which led to the collapse of grain prices on the international market.[105] These shocks at the end of the 'roaring twenties' had sweeping ripple effects on domestic grain production that were to change black-white relations in the colony for many years to come. As commodity prices plummeted and threatened economic viability, Punt says the colonial state began to methodically neglect and undermine African grain crops, and in these difficult times, pinned the blame for the prevailing economic slump in grain prices on peasant farmers' destructive agriculture's methods that produced poor-quality grain.[106] On the other hand, the economic depression stimulated a rush for cheaper food alternatives in the wake of escalating food prices, which made African production more favourable in comparison to settler-produced crops which attracted much higher prices.[107] In addition, the economic recovery that followed the depression in the form of an industrial revolution ignited a great demand for all forms of crops, especially small grains, which did not require as much field attention and resources and yet could offer a viable substitute for maize and wheat which were heavily influenced by environmental conditions to harvest well.[108]

Consequently, Machingaidze rightly notes how in the post-depression era, the most profound impact on African small-grain production came from organized white maize farmers who petitioned for state paternalism through maize control in an effort to avert drowning in the face of economic depression.[109] White farmers called for government support of financing and control of grain marketing from the 1930s onwards.[110] Initially, the state intervened by pronouncing the Maize Control Act in 1931. This was an ad hoc step and meant to last only long enough to enable white maize growers to improve their production methods and to

[104] Ibid, 81.
[105] NAZ, Southern Rhodesia Agriculture, European Activities in Southern Rhodesia, Report on European Farming in Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland August 1927.
[106] Punt, 'The development of African agriculture', 37.
[107] C. Mbwanda and D.D. Rohrbach, 'Small grain markets in Zimbabwe: The food security implications of National market policy', in G. Madimu and H. Bernsten ed *Household and National Food security in Southern Africa,* (UZ/MSU Food Security Research in Southern Africa Project, 1989), 125-144.
[108] Punt, 'The development of African Agriculture', 39.
[109] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler', 410.
[110] *Ibid*.

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diversify their products and so avoid downfall.[111] But, because of a failure to satisfactorily improve yields as well as keep African grain producers at bay, in particular those who adopted poly-culture – cultivating both maize and small grains – the Maize Control Act became a permanent feature of the grain industry. As will be explored in the following section, it evolved through different political and economic epochs, giving an unfair advantage to white setter maize grain production over African grain production and marketing.

Organized chaos: Maize control and the (under)development of small grain markets, 1930 to 1940.

The enactment of the Maize Control Act brought about sweeping economic changes to the grain industry. Both socially and economically, not only was this most profound colonial initiative directed at the small-grain production and marketing by African farmers since settler arrival but the subsequent significant shifts in small-grain production and marketing marked an important watershed in the underdevelopment of African agriculture. The establishment of a Maize Board in 1931 exposed massive conflicts and contradictions within the colonial state's attitude towards African small-grain farmers. It had equally far-reaching consequences for small-grain production and marketing. As observed earlier, prior to this period there was no formal control over African grain production and marketing, and colonial state activity in the flow of seeds, implements and yields were limited. By 1930 the bulk of peasant produce marketing was firmly under the control of private traders.[112] The Act thus became the cornerstone not only for 'organizing' the grain sector but in an attempt at exerting white hegemony over African production. As illustrated in **Table 2** below, showing market trends between Southern and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), the impact of the Maize Control Act was closely similar, just varying in degrees of its magnitude in terms of production in individual communities.[113] Those largely adversely impacted, as Chapters Five and Six also argue, remained those African farmers who did not explore agrarian diversity – planting new and drought-resistant crops such as small grains Moreover, although the Act was in no part specifically targeted at small grains, but instead aimed at pruning African participation in maize production, because African farmers produced and sold small grains and maize alongside each other, the impact of the Act had the same effect. On the other hand, by regulating the market

[111] *Ibid*. The Maize Control Act established a Maize Board that controlled the flow of grain through instituting different grading systems and financing options that were skewed in favour of white farmers at the financial expense of African farmers.
[112] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 14.
[113] Report for Secretary of Native Affairs 1942, 8.

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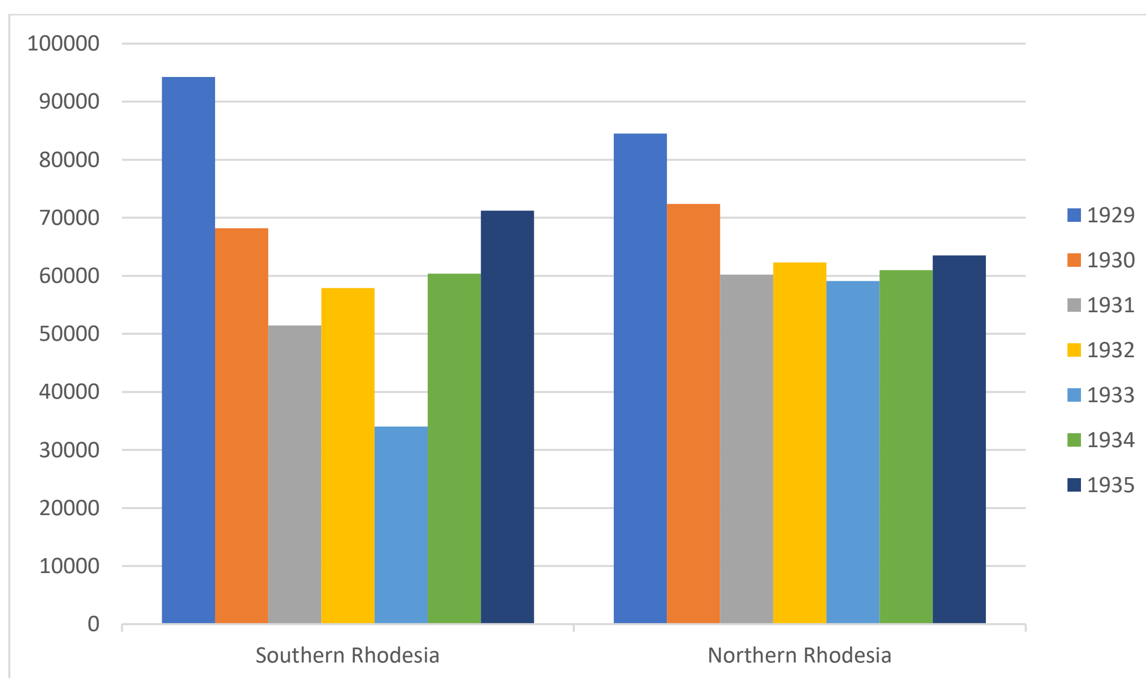
and the flow against African grain through the Maize Control Act, this inevitably too kick-started organized marketing for African produce. Ncube observes how the effort to distinguish between African and white settler grain produce brought about a sense of formality and organization with regards to the various channels of marketing.[114] For example, as the Maize Board pegged a different price for maize produced by white and African farmers, enterprising African peasants used these same gazetted prices for maize as a yardstick to apply to their small-grain crops on the informal market.[115] Punt thus critically argues that 'in the absence of maize control, Africans might have realized prices even lower than those guaranteed by the Board.'[116]

Table 2: Average number of bags of small grains produced by Africans in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, 1929-35.



Initially, this Act was supposed to operate for a period of only three years, allowing ample time for white farmers to reorganize their industry; however, due to their inability to meet the post-depression requirements for affordable grain, compared to African farmers' positive response to these calls, the Act remained in effect longer and became increasingly poignant towards African production in its entirety. The negative effects such as low grain prices cascaded to impact the entire agricultural and labour sector of the colony. Ncube describes the Act as a

[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Ibid*, 21-22.
[116] Punt, 'The development of African', 50.

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strategy of 'syphoning African surpluses' to bolster the white settler economy as it elbowed into the periphery, the robust small grains market.[117] Indeed, the Act strove to deprive African producers of access to the profitable commercial markets through its strict control over production, distribution and price channels. Neil Wright and Tobias Takavarasha note how the Maize Board established and maintained white monopoly control over all grain crops by specifying that only crops grown within so-called 'Zone A' areas could be marketed commercially.[118] Zone A areas included all commercial farms, mines and main urban areas away from the reserve areas designated for African communities.[119] Small grains were thus effectively excluded from the public markets as they were predominately grown in the African reserve areas.

With a rising demand for cheap African labour on white estates, yet fewer takers despite rising tax obligations among African communities, the 1934 revisions to the Maize Act were further extended to include the trade of African crops even in the African areas where these grains were grown. As expected, this significantly cut the size of the domestic market enjoyed by local producers.[120] Moreover, it discouraged the local production of small grains on a large scale. Historian Admire Mseba points out that until the 1930s Africans conscious of their environment continued to 'eagerly' grow *mhunga* in the 'small' and 'thickly populated' reserves in the Manicaland region.[121] Thus, in comparison to previous similar attempts at regulating Africa production and market access, such as the Diet Ordinance (1908) and Land Apportionment Act (1930), the Maize Act had proved to be implicitly more aggressive with regards to reducing African interest in small grain production. But in the early stages of enactment, the colonial state faced difficulties in enforcing these laws as they conflicted with the need to accommodate the large numbers of Africans whose economic livelihood depended on small-grain production and trade to meet their tax obligations effectively.[122] Little wonder then that when cries from African farmers over the unfair market practices which adversely affected their abilities to service tax dues became more insistent, the Native Commissioners swiftly moved in to temporarily restore 'normality' in the trade by allowing African peasants

[117] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 10.
[118] Wright and Takavarasha, 'The evolution of agricultural pricing policies in Zimbabwe, 1. There were three main zone types, A, B and C, with A being the lucrative areas while B and C were mainly African areas whose land value declined in both soil fertility and market value and ability to produce crops.
[119] *Ibid*, 1.
[120] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler agriculture', 503.
[121] Admire Mseba, 'Land, power and social relations in north-eastern Zimbabwe from precolonial times to the 1950s', *PhD Thesis*, University of Iowa, 2015, 255.
[122] *Ibid*, 254-5.

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to encroach into restricted areas and sell their grains.[123] In the same way, Africans conveniently used the state's knowledge of the skew grain trade during appeals for amnesty from paying taxes.[124] Learning from their foiled experiences with the Diet Ordinance, for greater benefits, the state-controlled Maize Board in the early 1930s effectively noted the need to work closely with mining capital which represented the major market for grain produce.[125] For a while, both stakeholders believed this Act would cripple African competition while swiftly easing the mounting labour crises for white capitalist production.[126] Bessant adds that for a while the pressure from the government was oblique, with white officials convinced that peasants would adopt intensive farming techniques to compensate for having the size of their fields reduced.[127] However, not all peasants responded in this way, instead, employing various alternatives to circumvent state orders. The state, therefore, moved to making use of more stringent measures such as fines and jail terms to force peasants to use intensive farming methods.[128]

However, stakeholder participation was not always unanimous among the different sections of colonial investments. Economist Christopher Barret rightly summarizes how institutions such as the Maize Board were caught in a quagmire when they failed to navigate through the existing social and cultural linkages between agriculture and society, thus struggling to maintain and control African producers, markets and the flow of commodities.[129] Unsurprisingly, Mandivamba Rukuni says that in so far as grain production was concerned, the Maize Control Act thus set an unhealthy precedent for state involvement in agricultural development spreading through the colonial into the post-colonial period.[130] What 'agricultural success' meant was transformed from being attributed to superior production and marketing methods by farmers to relying on government support through various assistance mechanisms such as subsidies through statutory instruments and debt clearance.[131] All these moves were able to cover up the Grain Board's shortcomings, at the same time pushing for African communities

[123] N.H. Hemans, *The log of a native commissioners: A record of work and sport in the Southern Rhodesia*, (London: H.F. and G Witherby), 21.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125]Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 19.
[126] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Farmers, Miners and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1895-1961', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2017, 116-121.
[127] Bessant, 'Coercive development', 11.
[128] *Ibid*, 11-2.
[129] C. Barret, 'Smallholder market participation: Concepts and evidence from eastern and southern Africa', *Food Policy,* 33, 2008*, 299-317*.
[130] Mandivamba Rukuni, 'The evolution of agricultural policy: 1890 to 1990', in Mandivamba Rukuni, P. Tawonezvi, C. K. Eicher, M. Munyuku-Hungwe and P. Matondi (eds), *Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution revisited*, (Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2006), 46.
[131] *Ibid.*

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to shoulder the financial burden through heavy taxation and low producer prices for their otherwise excellent crops.[132]

The period from 1930 to the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939 was a particularly difficult period for African small-grain producers. In 1934 Minister of Agriculture, C.S Jobling commented how 'the African needed very little assistance even though his status is that of a small producer.'[133] Corroborative sentiments had earlier been underlined by the Morris Carter Commission report in 1925 that 'by no means did African farmers present any major threat to white farmers with regards to production, chiefly because the two were aligned in separate spheres of commodity production.'[134] Collectively, these views negated how the introduction of various lucrative incentives such as the Land Bank loans to white farmers worked to stifle the development of African production and crops.[135] Moreover, this same report was used as justification towards instrumentally turning Africans into a source of labour in white farms after echoing the sentiment of Africans as 'agriculturalist [who] do not view the prospect of becoming miners with any enthusiasm…as their present occupation…pays better, and is a more pleasant life.'[136] Thus through proletarianization of the African peasant, the colonial state was able to dismantle the labour advantage African agricultural production held over white settler production, that of more hands within each household to assist in cultivation and harvesting.

With the consequential increased movement of African men towards wage labour on white estates, in spite of substantial small-grain production, with regards to its marketing and trade, peasants were not able to realise the full value of their crop. This was because of two main reasons that linked social and economic aspects of Rhodesian society. One reason is noted by historian Diana Jeater, who underlines how over the colonial period, the identities of African women were not primarily stated as farmers or traders, as these conferred statuses and meaning in women's lives.[137] Instead, they were identified as beer brewers, prostitutes and property owners. Accordingly, these labels restricted their ability to trade at the same level in the male-

[132] Wright and Takavarasha, 'The evolution of agricultural pricing', 112.
[133] NAZ ZBJ1/1/1, E.R. Jackling.
[134] NAZ ZBJ1/1/1, Commission of Inquiry into Southern Rhodesian Maize Industry Report, 1930.
[135] Machingaidze, 'Company rule and agricultural development', 6. The only avenue open for Africans to finance their agriculture prior to 1945 was through the sale of their cattle, labour or crops or through borrowing from lending agencies whose charges were often exorbitant.
[136] NAZ Oral /F1 Sir Patrick Fletcher Account No 94.
[137] Diana Jeater, 'African Women in Colonial Settler Towns in East and Southern Africa', *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia, African History*, (Oxford University Press, 2020), 13-14.

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dominated grain markets.[138] Also, exacerbated by the acute reduction in market space coupled with price restrictions on the value of their commodity, by the end of the 1930s more and more African farmers were opting for the less rewarding nearby markets, where important factors such as transport costs were consuming less of their already meagre profits.[139] The notable outcome was a significant reduction in incomes from peasant agriculture, and this decisively shaped the texture of grain production and trade as most peasant farmers were severely undercapitalized.[140]

By the mid-1930s the bulk of grain marketing across most British colonies including Northern Rhodesia, Kenya and Nyasaland, was firmly under the control of private traders, leaving only the mines directly in the hands of a few African farmers. Historians Neil Parsons and Robin Palmer note how this pattern seemed to correspond closely with classic patterns of exploitation followed by early merchants in Europe.[141] In Southern Rhodesia, European and Indian merchant traders were able to buy African grain cheaply because of the lack of organization and development on the grain markets. Moreover, they were able to utilize their access to transport to exploit the 'coexistence of local gluts and local famines' to push more grain sales.[142] At times when African farmers needed to trade their crop to service taxation obligations, for instance, one way of extracting maximum profit from Africans was offering to exchange their grain through alternative means than cash. Some traders even forced Africans to pay the cost of transporting their grain to the various markets, and this consumed a significant portion of their profits. In some cases, some farmers attempted to bypass these intermediary traders and trade with the mines directly, but this was a difficulty exacerbated by their remote location from the market and the uncertainty of good grain prices on these markets.[143]

Moreover, although after 1931 it became a principle that grain trade was a cash transaction, it was not uncommon for many buyers purchasing grain from peasants to take advantage of them by insisting on payment with 'cheap but overvalued goods and clothes' in exchange for grain.[144] With limited reinvestment, this contributed to the undercapitalization of African

[138] *Ibid*.
[139] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 21.
[140] NAZ, Maize Control 1934, Annual Report of the Maize Control Board, 1933/4.
[141] Ian Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia', in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, *The roots of rural poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), 225-267.
[142] *Ibid*.
[143] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 20.
[144] *Ibid*.

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agriculture and this impacted negatively on the quality of grains produced over time. Ncube observes how in the long term, as buyers became increasingly selective about grain quality, they began to decline to buy the very same grains whose reduced quality they had contributed to.[145] Interest in African-produced small grains dwindled, and in 1941 the Native Commissioner in the Mwenezi District noted how the market for small grains was shrinking, and 'in a good season *nyauti* (pearl millet) and in some cases kafir-corn has [sic] been very good but hard to buy because there is no market for it.'[146] This forced African farmers to further cut back on their production, expanding the underinvestment of their agriculture.[147] At the same time, Kuda Murwira et al. observe how in pursuit of the little space within the market, unequal trade exchange patterns became rampant and this further contributed to the economic stagnation of most farmers. despite the records of recurring successful small-grain harvests.[148] This stagnation is further reflected by the low and static numbers of African farmers who could purchase land in the *Native Purchase Areas* based on their economic prosperity within the communal areas by the end of the 1940s.[149]

Organized marketing? Conflicts, contradictions and consequences, 1940 to 1950s

In 1942, commenting on the state of African agriculture in settle colonies, Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, Agricultural Officer C. O. Oates expressed the view that 'there is little doubt that much African produced grain was of a quality at least equal to the European product… it is not easy to feel pleased with oneself when I tell natives that their grain is worth 50 cents less than European because it is a lower grade.'[150] Yet, despite the strides in producing good-quality crops, African farmers continued to be short-changed on the formal market. Reacting to the widespread constraints against them, to maintain their previous income levels from their crops, some small-grain farmers responded by increasing production acreage by tapping into land otherwise used to grow other crops such as groundnuts, beans and cowpeas concurrently with small grains.[151] While this adversely impacted African diets through reduced food varieties,

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[145] *Ibid*, 21.
[146] NAZ ZBJ1/1/1, W. H. Nicolle.
[147] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing', 21.
[148] Kudzai Murwira et al, *Beating hunger: The Chivi experience: A community-based approach to food security in Zimbabwe',* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 2000), 16-25.
[149] Godfrey D. Madimu and R. Bernstein, *Household and national food,* 23. They further argue that it was the desire of most communal farmers to resettle in the Purchase areas for better economic opportunities from their agriculture and also as a show of social prosperity. Lack of credit facilities too attributed towards the inability by peasants to increase their productivity.
[150] Ian Spencer, 'Settler dominance, agricultural production and the Second World War in Kenya', *Journal of African History,* 21, 1980, 497-514.
[151] 'Agricultural life of Rhodesian Natives', *NADA,* 1949. 52

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increased acreage of small grains prompted increased labour to cover the workload.[152] However, innovatively through concepts such as '*kushandira pamwe'* (cultivating as a community), the predominately women small-grain farmers were able to mitigate the burden of agricultural work through shared agricultural capital and labour with African farmers in the same vicinity.[153] At the same time, sons took over their father's equipment such as ploughs, and hoes, hoping to improve domestic livelihoods from cultivation in spite of the reduction in profitable harvests from their crops.[154] In the same vein, some families benefited from the presence of their extended families (in-laws), readily making use of them as labour in their fields. Through these different displays of social capital and cohesion, African families in the reserves managed to navigate their way through the difficulties caused by the migration of most men to the urban centres seeking wage labour.[155]

Added to this, other African producers crafted alternative channels to trade off their crops. Different Native Commissioner reports throughout the 1950s record how by the early 1940s, Indian merchants purporting to be grain planters were the most notable grain traders, buying from peasants for resale to nearby consumers such as the miners, mission schools and outlying government stations.[156] According to C. Mbwanda and D. D. Rohrbach, as the grip of the grain restrictions tightened before the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939, this was one of the more popular ways by which peasants underhandedly got their crops onto the formal market.[157] However, in so doing, this regrettably cut a portion of profits accruing to them and gradually over time, these Indian traders encroached into previously traditional African farmers' small-grain markets where, as intermediaries, they soon took over control and brokered the terms of the trade to their advantage.[158] Ncube states how, for as long as the colonial state maintained the view that 'Africans could not be put in the same category with the European', these intermediaries continued to leverage this embargo to trade African-produced small grains on their behalf.[159] The severe impact of this system was only revealed in the years 1960 to 1970 in the wake of a severe cold spell that culminated in a drought in Britain in 1966. According to grain trade records, overseas grain trade in sorghum and millet between Rhodesia and Britain

[152] *Ibid.*
[153] Bessant, 'Coercive development', 15.
[154] *Ibid*.
[155] *Ibid*.
[156] Native Commissioner reports for Somabula District, Gwayi and Sanyati for the years 1951, 1953 and 1954 respectively.
[157] Mbwanda and Rohrbach, 'Small grain markets in Zimbabwe', 136.
[158] *Ibid*.
[159] Hemans, 'The log of a native commissioners', 43.

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increased threefold between 1966 to the end of 1973.[160] Yet, according to agricultural trade records, white settlers were producing no more than 10% of the exported 10 484 bags of sorghum exported between 1969 and 1970.[161] More ironic was how, while peasant grains managed to permeate the overseas market, locally they remained snubbed by the domestic authorities who continuously poorly financed its development in favour of capitalist production. Furthermore, a chunk of the profits obtained from African small grains was being enjoyed by the middlemen traders, with little investment being returned for the development of the 'goose which laid the golden egg.'

On the domestic market, sorghum and millet were experiencing fluctuating prices among small groups of African farmers, white tradesmen, private millers and brewers. The early 1940s witnessed a growing demand for small grains to cater for food provisions for the war economy, but more essentially for traditional opaque beer demanded by the African population. The rising demand for small-grain brewed opaque beer fuelled the sturdy development of an informal traditional brewing sector aimed at quenching the insatiable thirst of not only Rhodesian servicemen serving in the British war effort,[162] but further increased its presence among the rural peasants and urban communities as well.[163] According to historian Nathaniel Chimhete, by the mid-1950s across Matabeleland small-grain stocks were regularly being directly purchased from small-scale African producers by independent black- and white-owned brewing companies who were enjoying brisk business during the war and post-World War 2 years.[164] Yet interestingly, an examination of a series of exchanges between the Grain Marketing Board (GMB – formerly Maize Board) executives and the Native Development Department between 1941 and 1956 on the logistics of including African small grains, in particular sorghum and millet, on the list of 'controlled crops' reveals how from the early 1940s emerging African breweries such as Ingwebu Breweries were developing to be the biggest buyers of African small grains from the Matabeleland North and South provinces.[165] Like

[160] *Agriculture Quarterly Journal,* 10, 1960-1976.
[161] Department of Agriculture, Report on European agriculture by Council, 1968-1971.
[162] Martin Meredith, *The past is another country: Rhodesia 1890-1979*, (Norfolk: Andre Deutsch, 1979), 89-91.
[163] Punt, 'The development of African agriculture', 145-7.
[164] Nathaniel Chimhete, 'The African Alcohol Industry in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1945 to 1980', *MA dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2004), 32-36. Also see Kudzai. Taruza, 'Rufaro marketing in colonial Salisbury', *BA Honours Dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2013, 15-19.
[165] Ncube, 'Peasant Production', 9. Different white colonial authorities remained indifferent towards the promotion of small grains especially for its associated so-called unhygienic and 'unfounded' cultural use. One minute records an official claming that 'this grain made men lazy…leading them to sleep' after consumption. Therefore, ot must not be publicly marketed by the Maize Board. Ingwebu Breweries and Chibuku were formed in 1946 and in the 1960s in Bulawayo and Zambia respectively. By 1970, they were Zimbabwe's top

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Heineken in Nigeria in the 1980s, the intervention of breweries as customers for local grain became a catalyst for the development of both the local grain sector and the beer industry.[166] Within a short space of two years, Ingwebu Breweries was able to expand its production units in Matabeleland to cover the Nkayi, Lupane and tin rich Kamativi areas.[167] Yet, in spite of the evident bankable prospects and wave of success exhibited by these breweries, the GMB, along with most white supremacist members of the Assembly in the colonial government, remained obdurate towards the marketing of African 'kaffir small grains.'[168] Reluctantly in 1956, African sorghum alone, albeit pegged at a very low market value, was included on the list of controlled African commodities, largely moved by a desire of the colonial state to maximize revenue from any agricultural venture carried out by African farmers.[169] Indeed, while the market for small grain opaque beer was seemingly profitable, on the whole, colonial authorities remained indifferent towards encouraging the commercialization of African drinking for associated reasons of austere hygiene concerns and hampering prostitution, gambling, alcoholism, crime and delinquency that were a threat to basic social and economic institutions.[170]

At the same time, small grains were frequently used for livestock and poultry feeds in sectors well invested in by European colonial capital, which also contributed to the shaping of grain policy.[171] Although by the mid-1950s some white farmers were growing small grains, different records indicate that much of the grain was being grown by African farmers. **Table 3** shows an abridged breakdown of this production. Noteworthy is how different grain varieties were not

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opaque beer brands. In 1967, the formal begun operating under what was known as the 'Durban system', establishing a monopoly over the production and selling of sorghum and millet beer in the municipal owned beer halls located in the townships in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia. To the colonial state, the high consumption of opaque beer among the African populations was viewed as a mixed blessing. While it provided an affordable means of entertainment, at the same time, these beerhalls consumed a lot of African productive time, which interfered with their efforts at gainfully earning economic subsistence and contributing towards economic development. On the other extreme, for the colonial regime, during on-going battles for political liberation that increasingly became popular in the 1970s, the presence of beer halls offered avenues to infiltrate into the African camps and decipher their plans against the regime. Chimhete argues also that the colonial state maintained their presence because they facilitated the spread 'poverty which crippled the war efforts of the Africans.' This added to how these hubs were developing to being hives of sexual immorality and spread sexually infectious diseases, which affected all and sundry. Also see Taruza, 'Rufaro marketing in colonial Salisbury'

[166] Akinyinka Akinyoade *et al*, *Sorghum value chain in Nigeria: A comparative study*, (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2020), 1.

[167] Chimhete, 'The African Alcohol Industry in Salisbury', 32-36.

[168] Khumalo, 'The development of the small grain industry in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1963', 17.

[169] *Ibid*, 19-21.

[170] Taruza, 'Rufaro marketing in colonial Salisbury', 38-39.

[171] Khumalo, 'The development of the small grain industry in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1963', 17. It must also be noted that in comparison to millet and rapoko, sorghum was viewed as having more economic and social utility and value among the majority of the ranching and poultry settler farmers, hence the move to only control sorghum.

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uniformly grown in the same regions. White farmers purchased *munga* and *rapoko* from the African peasants and used them for stock feeding.[172] These grains were both sold and bought against three standards, the first two being intended for malting purposes and the third for stock feeds, chiefly for poultry.[173] M*unga* was widely regarded as a grain that must be fed in limited quantities because of the belief that it was a fairly potent internal irritant.[174] As a result, it was the preferred stock feed for pigs and generated a prejudice against its use by Africans.

Table 3: Distribution of crop acreage in Mashonaland and Matabeleland, 1956.[175]

Region	Northern Mashonaland				Matabeleland			
Crops grown		Yields in bags				Yields in bags		
	Acres	Total	Average	Best	Acres	Total	Average	Best
Maize	2032	22860	11.3	33	1209	8365	6.9	22
Rapoko	978	6224	6.3	19	357	1347	3.7	11
Sorghum	33	193	5.8	12	644	3084	4.7	16
Millet	97	631	6.5	14	479	2213	4.6	17

The development of small grain markets from the 1960s

It is also particularly interesting how African farmers did little of their own volition to attract the attention of the brewery companies to their grain. Officer in the Native Development Fund G.B. Bedford observed how in 1958 in Sanyathi and Chirumanzu areas, agents from Southerton Marketing identified the growing gap in the Salisbury alcohol market and approached the local farmers 'with pockets full of money' offering cash to anyone who could trade their 'few bags of traditional grains.'[176] That year many farmers were left disappointed because their grains did not meet the basic granary and storage bag standards required for commercially trading their grain, thus being unable to obtain optimum prices from the agents. However, in succeeding years, many black farmers adapted, investing the cash they obtained from remittances from their relatives from the city and savings from crop sales throughout the year.

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[172] NAZ, Report of the Sec for Native Affairs, CNC and Director of Native Development, 1956, 'Commission of inquiry into the maize and small grain industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia, *83, 1962*, 39.

[173] NAZ, FG4 1962, "Commission of inquiry into the maize and small grain industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia, *Vol 83, 1962*, 39.

[174] S/ZIM 018, *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, *52*, 1955.

[175] NAZ, 1090/F5, Munga and kaffir corn, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, CNC and Director of Native Development, 1956.

[176] NAZ F 226/ 1090 A, Federal Grain Marketing Federal Archives, Memorandum from Native Production and Marketing Branch to Commercial Manager Grain Marketing Board. 17 July 1959.

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They were thus able to market an up-to-standard product and enjoy a favourable profit.[177] This euphoria was short-lived, however, with the enactment of a statutory instrument on grain bags in 1961, which stipulated the quality, style and type of bags farmers had to sell their grain in.[178] These new requirements made demands already beyond the already steep financial investment made by peasant small-grain farmers. Thus, despite favourable small-grain harvests over recurring seasons until the mid-1960s, many black farmers could not afford to invest much in purchasing these new bags and this resulted in a gradual decline in the amount of grain that they sold. However, this did not translate into a decline in African consumption of small-grain opaque beer, with its demand peaking towards the dawn of the 1970s.[179] Breweries either traded clandestinely with farmers for grains, offering much lower prices, while others reduced the quality of their beer as they experimented with mixtures with maize to account for small-grain shortfalls.

Influenced by ancillary trends on the opaque beer and livestock market, for instance, from the mid-1950s through to the 1970s prices for small grains bought by the GMB begun to pick up. These prices as illustrated in **Table 4** for small grains per lbs between 1953-1977 show a steady rise; nonetheless, this did not deter many farmers from still preferring to continue trading their grains on the informal market despite the often lower prices offered there.[180] This was because at an official level, as already noted, before 1956 the GMB still did not formally consider African small grains as a marketable crop, hence always pegged lower prices on them in comparison to other trading channels.[181] Consequently, this facilitated opportunities for devious workers within the GMB to conduct clandestine transactions with desperate peasant farmers offering to market their crops on their behalf.[182] At the same time, throughout the 1960s it became increasingly common for farmers to approach some employees and agents working with breweries, the GMB and millers with an offer to sell their grain in exchange for a 'small

[177] *Ibid*.
[178] *Ibid*, Report of marketing cost by Committee of Grain Marketing Board, 16 December 1963. This legislative piece was not implicitly directed at small grain but to grains in general. The new bags cost more and were made from synthetic fibres as opposed to tree barks fibres. Exchanges suggest that this move was inspired by desire to unseat the monopoly of supply of bark bags to Southern Rhodesia by The Mozambique Trading and Plantation Company.
[179] Chimhete, 'The African Alcohol Industry in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1945 to 1980', 46-50.
[180] NAZ Agriculture Economics and Markets Reports 1950-1980.
[181] 'Farmers lack confidence about the future', *The Chronicle*, 7 June 1980.
[182] NAZ, F226/1090/F4, Mhunga and Sorghum, Small Grains, 1961-1964, Report of the Grain Marketing Board presented to the Native Department.

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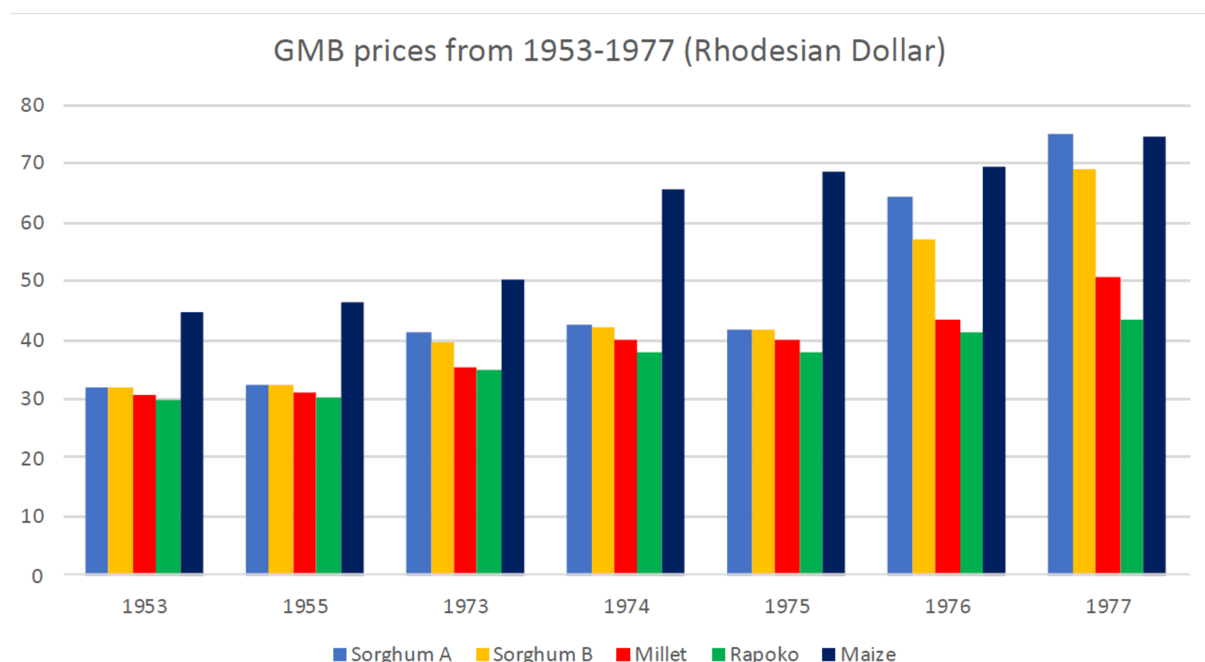
cut' referred to as *esincane*.[183] However, operations conducted in this way often left many African farmers being defrauded by unscrupulous traders and millers.[184] Others preferred to sell to breweries over grain millers because, unlike the millers, brewing companies paid for the grain they collected from farmers upon delivery.[185] This strategy was used – subtly – as a persuasive measure to facilitate and cement better relations, consistency in supply and quality of the grain from farmers.[186] With less effort in terms of marketing required by the farmers, this was a preferred network.

Table 4: GMB prices from 1953-1977 (Rhodesian Dollar)[187]



In Matabeleland, as the quality of small grains improved throughout the 1960s, their consumption beyond the domestic market too gradually increased.[188] Indeed, some peasants

[183] Interview with Nkosana Maphosa, Agricultural Marketing Authority Sales Manager, Harare, 12 November 2018.

[184] NAZ, FG4 1962, 'Commission of inquiry into the maize and small grain industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia. By the mid-1950, personnel from within the GMB was practicing insider trader, buying from the peasant farmers and then selling off the grain to breweries or being intermediaries in foreign exports of grains to countries such as the Union and Northern Rhodesia who needed small grains but did not extensively grow them themselves.

[185] Taruza, 'Rufaro marketing in colonial Salisbury', 29.

[186] *Ibid*. In cases of previous successful trading, more flexible contractual agreements with breweries were established. Farmers dues were paid within a shorter period of time as compared to the contracts entered into with grain millers.

[187] NAZ F226/1090/F4, Mhunga and Sorghum, Small Grains Agriculture Economics and Markets Reports 1950-1980.

[188] Ncube, 'Peasant Production', 29.

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who managed to take advantage of these sporadically emerging opportunities were able to improve on their personal wealth. However, despite these opportunities, Masuku says, the rate of personal growth among African families remained severely uneven especially against those who produced small grains on smaller pieces of land and women – prejudices concerning their participation in grain trade continued to be rife. However, to leverage for better market value for their small grains, small unit groups were established with the exercising of collective bargaining by the farmers to the traders. In the Mberengwa district, for example, this method increasingly became more reliant for negotiating prices as opposed to previous strategies such as hoping for favourable environmental conditions, which influenced the amount and quality of the grains produced, or that the distance from the market would offer a reprieve. At the same time, the continued white penetration and presence in the area with white maize swayed perceptions against small grains, negatively affecting prices on the local market.[189] However, although African farmers could not control the formal economy, through creating unified units with saleable figures, their ability to trade with the GMB on the formal economy gradually increased.

The early 1970s witnessed numerous complaints from African farmers, especially in Matabeleland North, over the delayed payments for their sorghum grain by the GMB.[190] The GMB, however, was quick to defend its position by citing how given the magnitude of the organization, it was not surprising nor unusual for their payments to stretch from one financial year into the next.[191] Makombe further observes that added to this, as a government subsidiary, the GMB was cluttered with administrative red tape which was a huge deterrent to the bulk of illiterate farmers.[192] Thus despite the episodes of comparatively higher market prices for African grain, many farmers who sought to sell off their grain surplus more quickly still opted for trade with breweries or informal markets instead.

The red-tape bottleneck was a recurring challenge faced not only by African farmers in the sale of their small grains but was equally overwhelmed with the need to satisfy the various key stakeholders involved in the agrarian and economic development of the colony. Annually, before the commencement of the agricultural season in October, the Department of Agriculture

[189] Wright and Takavarasha, 'The evolution', 6-8.
[190] 'Farming policy under review', *The Chronicle*, 25 June 1974.
[191] Makombe, 'Agricultural commodity pricing policy in Colonial Zimbabwe', 87.
[192] *Ibid.* It must be noted too that it was not uncommon that farmers did not have relevant identification particulars or paperwork to allow them to formal receive payments from the GMB.

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consulted with the GMB and black and white settler farmer representative groups on the prospects of the ensuing agricultural season.[193] These consultations unearthed a myriad of challenges for both the farmers and colonial administrators alike. For instance, economist Ephias Makaudze notes how a 1972 stakeholders meeting revealed how for many years prior, while farmers submitted their detailed schedules.[194] These schedules paid attention to projected costs of production, anticipated outputs and comfortable profit goals largely based on their historical analysis of overall economic and agricultural performance.[195] However, little consideration or anticipation of high margins of inflation was ever considered within projections that would manifest by the time of grains sales in July of the following year.[196] Moreover, as illustrated by **Figure 5** below of the dateline cycle for African small grains followed by farmers from the 1950s, following the controlling of African sorghum by the GMB, pricing consultation could stretch for over four months and would narrowly meet the stipulated 1 May deadline for the beginning of the buying season.[197] This flaw often resulted in outdated consumer prices being applied much to the disadvantage of the peasant farmers. Following bitter exchanges between the ministry and African farmer cooperatives, the pricing calendar shifted to July to accommodate farmers' interests.[198] However, despite this, for sorghum farmers, the challenge remained centred on how both deadlines still did not fall within its agricultural calendar, despite sorghum being ratooned and able to be harvested twice within a period of nine months. Many sorghum farmers who produced budgeting based on the GMB calendar were often left disgruntled, stuck with low prices pegged for their crops.[199] This was because the GMB prices were influenced based on the funds available within a revolving pool fund reserved for the purchase of grain from African farmers. Therefore, by the time of harvesting and small grain sales to the GMB, the bulk of these funds would have been used to purchase African-produced maize. This amply explains the low purchasing tag attached to small-grains funds from time to time.[200] Moreover, it influenced the decision by most farmers

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[193] Ephias. Makaudze, 'A supply forecasting model for Zimbabwe's corn sector: A time series and structural analysis', *MA thesis*, Texas A and M University, 1994, 34.
[194] *Ibid*.
[195] *Ibid.*
[196] *Ibid*.
[197] Compiled using information from various sources on grain production and marketing cycle including interviews with local farmers in Matobo, Nkayi and Mberengwa districts.
[198] Prices were calculated based on the existing reserves in the national silos plus calculations of previous year's demand. The Herald of September 1991 records how several farmers experienced recurring loses from their grain sales as the prices did not factor in year-on-year inflation and shift in patterns between and throughout the planting and harvesting periods.
[199] *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 1974, 'Economics and Markets Report January – June 1973',67.
[200] Ncube, 'Peasant production', 3.

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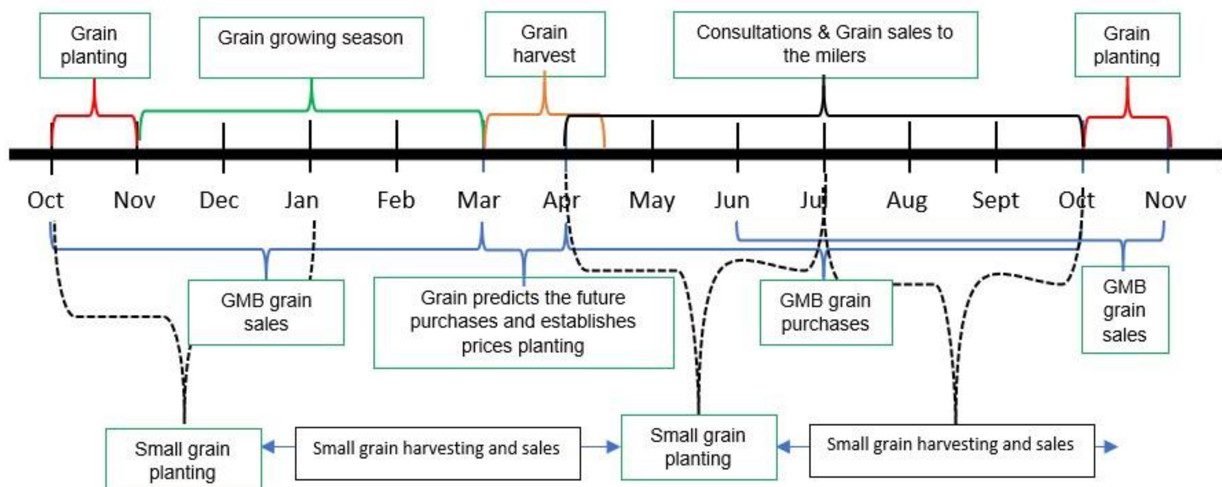
to independently source their own markets where they could negotiate better prices and terms.[201]

Figure 5: Dateline cycle for maize (grain) and small grains production and marketing[202]



To counter these low prices, it became common practice for peasants to reduce the capacity of their measuring instruments by making use of 'beaten out tins that level 37 lbs but weighing approximately 21 lbs' instead.[203] Although this difference may have seemed minuscule, the full financial impact of this strategy was noted when African farmers collectively traded larger volumes of grain, thereby pocketing hefty residual profits. Notably, this strategy encouraged increased farmer cooperation and contributed a strong argument for the creation of various farmer cooperatives among Africans during the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period. It was only through collectively harvesting and trading, that farmers could obtain large enough stocks to tamper with their weights, and the 1967 move by the GMB to stipulate that it would only trade with registered suppliers who were able to provide no less than 50 bags of 110 lbs of grain each inadvertently acted as a catalyst fuelling this practice. Moreover, this provided an opportunity for the sale of large quantities of African grain, a feat cumbersome to archive for communal farmers whose better trade years saw them fail to sell even up to 10 bags each a year.

[201] Ephia. Makaudze *et al*, 'A time-series analysis of Zimbabwe's corn sales to the Grain Marketing Board', *Development Southern Africa,* 15, 3, 1998, 413-414.
[202] **Figure 5** complied based on data presented from different records including Ephia. Makaudze et al, 'A time-series analysis of Zimbabwe's corn sales and records obtained from the Agricultural Marketing Authority in Harare.
[203] NAZ ZBJ1/1/1, Native Production and Trade Commission note by Commission.

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Small-grain diseases, pests and control

A factor that affected production and to a lesser extent marketing of grain crops is that of diseases and how they were controlled. Globally, there are several grain diseases such as rust leaf and weevil attacks that affect the production and storage of crops. Historically, the outbreaks of crop diseases in small grains were widely spaced and scarce. In 1958 the Matopos Research Station released a report certifying that locally used small-grain seeds were resilient and suited for cultivation with local soils.[204] This reduced the likelihood of soil infections while enhancing soil conservation. Unsurprisingly, credit was given to the Department for Native Affairs for their great role in the education of African farmers on pastoral pursuits.[205] The Department of Native Affairs instructed agricultural demonstrators to teach African farmers different cultivation methods including seasonal cropping of various crops to both ensure availability of food throughout the year as well as improve the variety of nutrients within the soil stemming from different crops.

In 1931 the colonial state had recorded its first challenge with grain diseases and according to the *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, over 800 bags of peasant *munga* were lost to granary weevils that attacked harvested grain.[206] Further research on the incident revealed that the intercropping of small grains with legumes such as beans and groundnuts as well as maize was likely what attracted the bugs, especially given how this peril was widespread among maize crops.[207] As a mitigation measure, the Department of Native Agriculture, also primarily concerned with the spreading of crop diseases over into settler estates, including the teaching of African farmers the use of various harvesting systems such a building concrete granaries increasingly from the early 1950s, as opposed to the porous and open-air structures as shown in **Figure 6:** Wooden granary used for storing small grains in Mberengwa that left grain susceptible to a wide range of vagaries such as being blown by the wind, easy access from wild animals and birds or falling onto the ground through the porous base of the granny.[208] Added to this, during rain and windstorms, harvested grain was often washed away. However, for some families, their experiences with indoor granaries were not without their new challenges. As shown in **Figure 7**, these storage facilities easily became havens for small domestic animals

[204] NAZ, FG4 1962, 'Commission of inquiry into the maize and small grain industry of Southern and Northern Rhodesia, 83, 1962, 39.
[205] 'Some thoughts on native development', *NADA*, 1952, 20-23.
[206] 'African agriculture- other grains', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal,* 1934, 1002-6.
[207] *Ibid*.
[208] 'Native education on pastoral activities', *NADA*, 1958, 34.

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such as chickens, which ate some of the grain but more distressingly were sometimes carriers of weevils and pests that caused more harm to the harvested crop. In the 1950s, as part of agricultural demonstrators' tasks was the education of Africans to construct granaries as depicted in **Figure 8** that were safe from the vagaries of animals and the weather. These instructions were interpreted into the local languages for effective learning.

Figure 6: Wooden granary used for storing small grains in Mberengwa[209]

Figure 7: Chicken perched in grain bowl on top of rapoko harvest.[210]

[209] Picture captured by researcher during research visit to Mberengwa, 18 November 2018.
[210] Picture captured by researcher during research visit to Binga, 28 October 2018.

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Figure 8: Pamphlet of instructions distributed to African families in the mid-1950s on how to build a granary.[211]

Perhaps the most prevalent of the diseases affecting African small grain crops were charcoal rot. Farmers in the Midlands regions in 1967 recorded the highest causalities during this outbreak, losing a significant portion of their crop in comparison to other regions, most of whom did not experience it.[212] This was a fungal disease predominately affecting sorghum towards the time of its harvesting. It caused the grain to dry up and produce an ashy grey texture. While it is a major concern, most farmers in Zimbabwe often harvested their crops before this disease could set in.[213] Also, throughout the planting season, farmers would constantly weed their fields, removing any pests that could be linked with causing diseases. Although indeed weeds and insects were not the primary producers of fungal diseases, for example, as noted in Chapter Two, among many African families, their agricultural practices displayed some elements of their spiritual and religious beliefs.[214] Consequently, crop infections were sometimes misunderstood as messages from the ancestors. Moreover, during the periods of disease outbreaks, the disparities between the small-grain varieties became more

[211] Picture captured by researcher from a pamphlet shared by a respondent, Khulu Maneja Hadebe during research visit in Tsholotsho, November 2018.

[212] 'African crop diseases', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 1964, 678- 679. Crops in the Midlands were hardest hit because of the fluctuating temperature in the region that brought about humidity that adversely affected the crop.

[213] *Ibid*.

[214] Shoko, 'Karanga indigenous religion, 67. Also see Emory Alvord, 'The great hunger', *NADA*, 1925, 33-42.

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vivid, and in a significant way shaped the social appreciation of certain grain varieties across different communities. The African understanding of grain diseases in a meaningful way shaped their attitudes towards which crops and in what quantities they should grow. Historian R Johnson observes how in the 1960s, the distribution of grain diseases influenced African farmers production and harvesting methods.[215] During periods of maize disease outbreak for example in 1969, the quantity of small grain crops was greater on the local markets.[216] This revived favour towards growing small grains among African farmers.

Conclusion

The relationship between African small-grain farmers, the state and the market was complex and fluid. It was marked by policy contradictions, which shaped its turbulent history. The early period from settler encroachment from 1890 to the 1920s witnessed African peasant prosperity in small grain production and trade supplying various emerging secondary industrial sectors. Within this period, grain values fluctuated owing to various factors including the desire to propel white settler cash crop production of maize, effectively forcing into the periphery the small grains as the preferred staple. The major highlight of this period, however, remained the absence of state intervention in grain agricultural development, with the state preferring to vest its priorities in the beef, dairy, tobacco and cotton sectors. By so doing, this created enclaves for dubious white traders to permeate and control the grain trade, adversely disadvantaging peasant producers at a time when their grains were enjoying favourable consumption on the domestic market.

White settler concerns during these formative years contributed towards the construction of seminal legislation, notably the Maize Control Act in 1930, which had a sweeping impact on the development of African grain production and marketing throughout the entire colonial era. African small-grain producers and traders responded differently towards these policy enactments. While some reacted by increasing their acreage to meet their financial needs, others resorted to underhand deals to realize the same. For some, these changes led to indignation and poverty, while for those Africans who managed to use their limited opportunities, it brought about prospects of wealth and facilitated their economic and social growth. Also, small grains reacted differently during various notable economic and

[215] Johnson, 'African agricultural development in Southern Rhodesia, 1945-1960', 212.
[216] *Ibid*, 214.

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environmental episodes; for example, in times of drought, the small-grain trade thrived as a solution to the ongoing troubles. Yet despite this, the colonial state remained adamant on the low economic value of small grains, and this contributed towards an expansion of the informal grain market, characterized by devious businesspeople who took advantage of the peasant farmers. This contributed to the overall underdevelopment and ‘small gains’ in peasant agriculture despite periods of notable expansion.

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Chapter Four

'Many of the dishes are no longer eaten by sophisticated Africans'[1]: A social history of small grains eating patterns in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1900 to the 1950s.

'Maize must remain, whatever else may be grown, the main crop of the country.'
Director of Agriculture, Dr Nobbs, 1910.[2]

'The workload on the rural African housewife is tremendous and yet she is the pivot of progress and much educational effort should be directed at her to improve the local home food production and nutrition.
Unnamed white citizen, 1982.[3]

Introduction

The words boomed out: '*Kana ukandibikira sadza ne broccoli, ndinoti aaah ndakaguta*' (if you cook for me *sadza* with broccoli, I will say I am not hungry).[4] Provoking loud cheers and laughter among the over 70 000 crowds composed of party supporters and national leaders during a ZANU PF rally in September 2017, this remark by then Zimbabwean president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, opens up an unresolved question concerning Zimbabwe's staple meal *sadza* – is there a right (and possibly wrong) way of eating *sadza*?[5] Is there a politically incorrect way – an 'unAfrican' way – of consuming it? If so, what is it and has it changed over time? Through the history of small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko – this chapter engages the existing historiography on African food and society, to show the key changes within food production and consumption practices in what is now Zimbabwe over the colonial period from around 1905 to the end of the 1950s.[6] With special attention to small grains culinary practices, this chapter shows the changes and continuities in the way Africans prepared and consumed small

[1] Diane Kayongo-Male and Philista Onyango, *The sociology of the African family*, (London: Longman, 1984), 34-6.
[2] NAZ 1095/01/S2, Report of the Director of Agriculture, Dr Nobbs, 1910, 4.
[3] L. Allaart, 'Education for nutrition', *The Central African Journal of Medicine* (hereafter *CAJM*), 28, 8, 1982.
[4] Speech by President Mugabe at Zanu PF presidential youth interface rally Midlands Gweru, 1 September 2017. https://youtu.be/wR1aPbQSwHk. Accessed 11 August 2020. The remarks found humour among the audience because in Zimbabwe, as this chapter will show, foods such as broccoli were (and still are) considered as elitist eaten by a select few, while also are not generally considered as relish for sadza. It is also worth noting that in a May 2013 interview on People of the South with Dali Tambo, the Mugabe family shared how Mugabe had weaned himself off a white maize diet for nutritional reasons, and his reference to sadza will be referring to that prepared from small grains.
[5] Sadza is a thick porridge prepared from maize meal or small grain flour.
[6] The history of small grains culinary patterns from the time of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence onwards will be covered in the discussion on nutrition and food security in Chapters Five and Six respectively.

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grains over varying socio-environmental and political periods. Building on the work of historian James McCann that examines the development of food in southern Africa[7], this chapter argues that small grains cooking and eating methods were protean in nature, shaped by African choices in response to rapidly shifting socio-political and economic conditions over time. Moreover, this chapter aims to move beyond the established conventional wisdom that the colonizers deliberately and aggressively changed the African food palette, to instead show that, while Africans were indeed sometimes compelled to adopt new ideas on what to eat, they also exercised choice and still managed to practise old culinary systems, creolise the old and the 'white' practices – or even innovate new ones.

At the same time, this chapter extends the boundaries of food history by showing how everyday cooking and eating were not just social processes, but also a complex systematic social and political contest of hegemony and power between black and white society. Many scientific scholars writing on food have often concentrated on a few aspects of food such as taste, colour and texture. But it is possible to tell a different story of African (or any) cuisine, which goes beyond this form of material interpretation. By observing small grain culinary changes over time, the chapter argues that the history of food in Zimbabwe is equally a tale of contested spaces, crop hegemonies and African agency. Different political and social elites have attempted to take control over food for various reasons. By engaging with primary sources including colonial archival administrative records as well as oral interviews, this chapter will demonstrate the contentious and complex nature of culinary practices in African society over time. The history of small grains shows the shifting perceptions in both black and white communities towards African culinary practices and illuminates small grain material and social impact: small grains impacted the development of not only African agriculture but on African ideas of status. To analyse these key dynamics, this chapter is made up of seven interlocking sections. It commences with a succinct global historiography covering African agriculture with particular attention to how it influenced and shaped African food and eating patterns. Sections two to four grapple with the early years of settler colonization, from 1905 to the 1930s, underlining how emergent crop hegemonies influenced ideas towards eating small grains in colonial Zimbabwe. The remaining three sections extend this conversation covering the period from the mid-1930s until the end of the 1950s, paying closer attention to the role of African

[7] James McCann, *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine,* (Africa in World History), (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009), 11.

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women within different themes: food preparation, social and cultural taboos, and colonial state policy. Taken together, these reconstruct not just a story of what and how African families ate but explores the rich history of the 'peasant options' within the colonial project wrought by shifting attitudes towards Africans and their food.

'Edible identities?': People, food and history

As a subject of academic interest, African food has generated a great deal of scholarly attention in various academic disciplines, including Economics, Agriculture and more recently History. But until the past three decades, the same could not be said for small grains. From a survey of the large and growing literature, including the extensive 2010 volume *The African Cookbook* by Jessica Harris, one would never know that small grains are even part of Africa's most consumed crops on the continent, let alone realize their historic and social significance in the lives of the African people.[8] Little wonder the Washington National Research Council's Noel Vietmeyer describes small grains as the 'lost crops of Africa'.[9] At the same time, the disciplinary diversity of studies on Africa's food history demonstrates that food practices have some almost universal traits, but also are idiographic, complex, nonlinear in the way they are adopted and constantly developing. Sociologists Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright argue that within each different society food commands a different meaning and significance, influenced by different economic, political factors and social status.[10] Universally, food is fundamental for human and animal survival, averting hunger and maintaining health[11], while for others food constitutes a form of cultural expression satisfying the emotional, ideological and physiological needs of society.[12]

Opening this conversation, Gerald Mazarire offers an Africanist perspective on the development of food practices in Africa saying that the different ideas about food were integrated into the everyday life of African people, espoused through their cosmology, myths

[8] Jessica Harris, *The African cookbook: Tastes of a continent*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010). Small grains feature less than 5 times in the entire 382 pages.

[9] National Research Council, *Lost Crops of Africa: Grains*, (Washington: Board on Science and Technology for International Development National Academies Press, 1996), vi.

[10] Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright, 'Constructing Culinary Knowledge', *Food, Culture and Society*, 2013, 16, 4, 669-689.

[11] Ruth K Oniang, Joseph M. Mutuku and Serah J. Malaba, 'Contemporary African food habits and their nutritional and health implications', *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 12, 3, 2003, 231-236.

[12] A. Cowley et al, *The Baumannville Community: A study of the first African family location in Durban*, (Durban: Institute for Social Research, 1955).

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and totems.[13] Similar observations are noted in the work of historians Meredith McKittrick[14] and Kathryn de Luna[15] who, using the illustration of different southern and central African communities, denote how geographical landscapes influenced the nature and development of food identities over time. For De Luna, 'farming, trade, political change were actually contingent on developments in hunting, fishing and foraging'[16], with McKittrick realizing concomitant changes in culture emerging from activities such as rainmaking ceremonies among the planting settlements. Introducing new experiences with small grains, this chapter seeks to extend on the views presented by Mazarire, De Luna and McKittrick on how African food patterns and so-called pathways were constructed, to examine the dynamics of Africans' culinary experience with the settlement of white settlers in Southern Rhodesia after 1890. How did this affect existing culinary patterns forged in response to the prevailing economic and political landscape?

Admittedly, there are a plethora of historical studies that have paid attention to the nature of different food and culinary customs for different human communities globally. For most parts of Africa, similar historical literature falls within conversations on the development of agriculture from the pre-colonial to present times. Notably, many of studies have tended to cover those foods perceived by the state and historians as being more commercially lucrative foods such as maize[17], cheese[18] and rice.[19] Unmistakably too, as noted in Chapter Three, much of Zimbabwe's agrarian and food history has been dedicated to what environmental historian Elijah Doro aptly defines as 'crop hegemonies' within agrarian history,[20] whereby attention to the development of certain crops such as maize or tobacco superseded that given to other crops.

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[13] Gerald Mazarire, 'The politics of the womb': Women, politics and the environment in pre-colonial Chivi, southern Zimbabwe, c.1840-1900, *Zambezia*, XXX, I, 2003, 35-49.

[14] Meredith McKittrick, Making rain, making maps: Competing geographies of water and power in 18th century southwestern Africa', *Journal of African History*, 58, 2, 2017, 187-212.

[15] Kathryn M. de Luna, *Collecting food, cultivating people*: *Subsistence and Society in Central Africa,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 119.

[16] *Ibid*, 121.

[17] James McCann, *Maize and grace: Africa's encounter with a new world crop, 1500-2000*, (Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2005).

[18] Christina Grasseni, 'Of Cheese and ecomuseums: Food as cultural heritage', in Ronda Brulotte and Michael A. Di Giovine, ed, *Edible identities: Food as cultural heritage*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 55-66.

[19] Judith Carney, *Black rice: the African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001), 164-66.

[20] Elijah Doro 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1893-2000', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2020. Dynamics of 'crop hegemonies' within southern Africa are concerned with numbers of profits emanating from crop production with attention towards of sales and labourers over and above ideals of conservation, labour welfare and sustainable agriculture.

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In Zimbabwe, maize,[21] tobacco[22], wheat,[23] dairy[24] and beef[25] from around 1910 were dominant sectors invested in by white settlers, and naturally, their development dominated agrarian historiography on the colonial period in Zimbabwe. The 'underbelly' of the agrarian economy remains a neglected topic, and Doro affirms how most studies on the agrarian development of Southern Rhodesia reveal the same pattern of colonial dominance and the marginalisation of African peasantries from their active participation.[26]

So in contrast to the historiographical silence on small grains (with the 'larger grains' wheat and maize garnering the attention), this chapter focuses on the shifting production and consumption of small grains, underscoring their centrality within African food history. Increasingly in recent years, interest in small grains is growing largely as a result of that which Rob Nixon describes as 'slow violence', stirring growing concerns over drought and food security globally and in Africa in particular.[27] Interdisciplinary scholarship including Kuda Murwira et al's 2000 book, *Beating hunger,* explores some peasant resilience and strategies to combat food insecurity, underlining the importance of small grains in the twenty-first century.[28] In addition, historians James McCann[29] and Jan Vansina[30] both point out that in Africa, before 1500 when maize arrived on the continent's western coast, sorghum and millet were not only the dominant food staple of numerous African communities but by enabling nutrition and food security, were also key facet in the making of the social and political hierarchies. Yet, despite this archaeological and linguistic research as found in anthropologist Jane Guyer's 1987 study

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[21] Victor Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1980.

[22] Sibanengi Ncube, Colonial Zimbabwe Tobacco Industry: Global, regional and local relations, 1949-1979, *PhD Thesis*, University of the Free State, 2018.

[23] Wesley Mwatwara, ''Running twice as fast while remaining in the same position': Settler wheat production in Southern Rhodesia, c.1928–1965', *Historia*, 58, 1, 2013, 191-214.

[24] Godfrey Hove, 'The State, Farmers and Dairy Farming in Colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1890-1951', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2015. 70-109.

[25] Ian R. Phimister, 'Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938, *The Journal of African History*, 19, 3, 1978, 391-414 and Nhamo Samasuwo, 'Food Production and War Supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2, 2003, 487-502.

[26] Doro, 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming', 13.

[27] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[28] Kuda Murwira et al, *Beating hunger: The Chivi experience*, (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 2000).

[29] McCann, *Stirring the pot*, 139. From around the sixteenth century, through trade, animals and migration, these small grains spread across the continent. In southern Africa, the development of grain cultivation was enabled by the favourable use of metal works as hoes around the sixteenth century. Also see J. Desmond Clark, 'The spread of food production in sub-Saharan Africa', in ZA Konczacki and JM Konczacki (ed) *An economic history of Tropical Africa*, (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 2 -12.

[30] Jan Vansina, *How societies are born: Governance in West Central Africa before 1600*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 69-71.

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on urban food in Africa[31], the mention of small grains is merely marginal especially in comparison to maize, plantains or cassava. There are a few exceptions: historians Avital Livneh[32] and Gerald Mazarire[33] who underline how small grains grew in importance and how they bolstered the pre-colonial economy of the Shona and Karanga people in Zimbabwe, as explained in Chapter Two. Extending over the colonial period, an ethnographic survey of the Shona and Ndebele by anthropologist Hilda Kuper et al further reiterates that by 1910 sorghum and millet were the main crops consumed by both African and white settlers in the early years of colonialization.[34] Historians Dawson Mujeri[35] and Thembani Dube[36] similarly show how Kalanga communities in Zimbabwe are still referred to as the 'millet people', based on their deep-rooted cultural, religious and economic reliance on this crop. Drawing inspiration from these earlier efforts, this chapter seeks to contribute to how changes in food patterns affected African society.

Ethnic identities connected to certain foods are, of course, not limited to Africa. Indeed, different food ethnic stereotypes have emerged from some foods and ways of eating practised by people.[37] For example, the pejorative terms 'kraut', 'spaghettis', 'hamburgers' and 'baguette-heads' have been coined for various German, Italian and French people respectively. Drawing parallels, this chapter demonstrates how social and cultural identities (mainly pejorative) that developed over time impacted Africans interests towards eating small grains, especially with the shifting economic fortunes of grain prices in favour of maize. Author Joe Kuboti alludes to how food has always been a fundamental tool in the process of controlling society, noting that through food and eating, social norms may be conveyed and equally

[31] Jane I. Guyer, *Feeding African Cities: Studies in Regional Social History*, (Indiana University Press, 1987).

[32] Avital Livneh, 'Precolonial polities in Southern Zambezia and their political communications', *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1976. Also see Richard N. Hall, *Pre-historical Rhodesia*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 123.

[33] Gerald Mazarire, 'Reflections on pre-colonial Zimbabwe, c.850-1880s', in Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 36-7. Along with gold, seeds and ivory, these were key items for tribute to religious and political leadership as well as units in trade with the Portuguese and other African societies across various trade routes. Also see David Beach, *The Shona and their neighbours*, (Oxford: Blackwell), 32-34 and Alexander Wilmot, *The Story of the Expansion of Southern Africa. Second ed*, (London: T.F. Unwin, 1895), 110-12.

[34] Hilda Kuper et al, *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Routledge, 1954 (originally) 2017), 57.

[35] Dawson Mujeri, 'A brief outline of the political, economic, social and religious history of the Kalanga', *Henderson Papers*, 30, 1974, 15-6.

[36] Thembani Dube, 'Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005', *PhD Thesis*, Witwatersrand University, 2015.

[37] Aitzpea Leizaola, 'Matching national stereotypes? Eating and drinking in the Basque borderland', *Anthropological Notebooks*, 12, 1, A. 2006, 79-94.

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violated.[38] Trevor Ncube indicates how following the Maize Control Act in 1930, small grains became seen as a 'poor man's crop.'[39] These impressions of African food were rooted within colonial caricatures of Africans.[40] Historian Murray Steele observes how, from the early 1920s, the British South African Company (BSAC) colonial officials tried creating Africans that would effectively serve the labour market in the budding white settler industries.[41] Allison Shutt[42] and Timothy Burke[43] added that colonial policy changed to appreciate the increased need for Africans to fit in with the developing 'White Rhodesia' image through racial etiquette, language, culture and food development by the 1930s. As Kate Merkel-Hess has shown with her study of a very different geographic but similar temporal context, by organizing villages in 1925, the Chinese government imposed the Dingxian reforms in food and agricultural to transform society as part of the New Life Movement[44] – not unlike the 'White Rhodesia' and African bourgeois aspirations in Southern Rhodesia.[45]

Owing to the mounting social and economic pressures that accompanied colonial African life, increasingly from the late 1930s onwards, the African plate (food) underwent a significant transformation, reflecting the strained markets for African agricultural produce and the meagre wages earned by African workers in various white estates. For historian Nancy Horn, these pressures contributed towards the shifts within the economic participation of women in the food market: decreasing their centrality within domestic food preparation, while resulting in the growth of mobile food markets to supplement the low wages in the households.[46] At the same time, this coupled with the rise of black women as domestic workers in black homes.[47] Relying primarily on oral narratives, historians Teresa Barnes and Everjoice Win in their 1992,

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[38] Joe Kobuthi, 'Food is power', https://africasacountry.com/2020/04/food-is-power, Accessed 3 January 2021.

[39] Trevor Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980, An overview', *Handerson Seminar Paper*, 72, 7.

[40] Martin Meredith, *The past is another country: Rhodesia 1890-1979*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1979), 67.

[41] Murray Steele, 'The foundations of native policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933', *PhD Thesis,* Simon Fraser University, 1972, 56-8.

[42] Allison K. Shutt, *Manners make a nation: racial etiquette in Southern Rhodesia, 1910-1963*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015).

[43] Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[44] Kate Merket-Hess, *The rural modern: Reconstructing the self and state in Republican China*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 80-82.

[45] Alois Mlambo (2002), *White migration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to federation*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications), p. 67-72.

[46] Nancy Horn, *Cultivating customers: Market women in Harare, Zimbabwe*, (Lynne Rienner Publications, 1994), 31-5.

[47] Teresa A. Barnes, *'We Women Worked So Hard: Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956*, (Portsmouth: NH Heinemann, 1999).

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To Live A Better Life, share the story of African women in the city of Harare up to the 1970s.[48] They show how women were forced into wage labour as domestic helpers, and these were some of the spaces where their culinary ideas were shaped and informed.

Anthropologist Jane Guyer adds how some of the precarious conditions under which some women across Africa lived shaped their definitions and descriptions of a 'decent meal' for their families[49] Historian Paul Mosley observes how, during moments of unfavourable harvests such as in the late 1960s in Salisbury (what is now Harare), when families could not rely on food assistance from the government, scores of African women did not shy away from feeding their families sacred and tabooed crops and animals.[50] For Tanzania under British rule, Deborah Fahy Bryceson says that the colonial state through various food policies such as regulated food aid programmes controlled not only the Africans diet and how much they ate, but institutionalized the dependence on the state by African families to feed them even during periods of good harvest such as between 1950 and 1963.[51] Historian Megan Vaughan reinforces how the prevalence of hunger and famine within an absence of proper food policies, crippled many Africans' capacity to provide food and were further constrained by so-called traditional institutions of patriarchy, gatekeeping and accumulation that controlled food production and distribution.[52] For Southern Rhodesia, agricultural policies such as the 'gospel of the plough' enacted by E.D. Alvord from 1919 (as head of the Agriculture Department) reduced peasant farmers' ability to feed themselves with their favoured small grains, instead of creating long-term consequences of dependency among the vast majority of African farmers.[53] Historian Diana Jeater thus rightly concludes that over much of the colonial period from 1890 to around the late 1950s, African life was shaped by the debates of white settler administrators, missionaries and white farmers and African 'proximity to Whiteness'.[54] Adding to this,

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[48] Teresa Barnes and Everjoice Win, *To Live A Better Life: An Oral History of Women in the City of Harare*, 1930-70, (Baobab Books, 1992)

[49] Jane Guyer, *Feeding African cities: Studies in regional social history*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11.

[50] Paul Mosley, 'The Development of Food Supplies to Salisbury (Harare)', in Guyer, *Feeding African*, 203.

[51] Deborah Fahy Bryceson, 'A Century of Food Supply in Dar Es Salaam', Guyer, *Feeding African,* 154-61.

[52] Megan Vaughan, *The story of an African famine Gender and famine in twentieth-century Malawi*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 103.

[53] Sam L.J. Page and Helán E. Page, 'Western hegemony over African agriculture in southern Rhodesia and its continuing threat to food security in independent Zimbabwe', *Agriculture and Human values*, 1991, 3-18.

[54] Jeater, *Law, Language, and Science the Invention*, 4-6. This chapter uses the concept of 'Whiteness' as theorized by historian Rory Pilossof's 2012 book, *The unbearable Whiteness of Being* – to mean white colonial settler ideology, ideas and, in some cases, physical presence that was considered economically and socially superior. 'Whiteness' served the interests of the (colonial) state and powerful settlers and, as this chapter shows, even for a few selected emerging African elites. Also see Linda Martin Alcoff, *The future of Whiteness*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 11.

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historian Linda Civitello says 'much of modern African cuisine is the colonial cuisine that Europeans forced on Africa in the nineteenth century.'[55] Building on this, this chapter will trace the changes and continuities within small grains cooking and eating patterns among African families paying attention to Africans exercising their agency in deciding what to eat.

The early years, 1900 to the 1930s

Early written knowledge on African food and eating patterns were recorded in the private and public memoirs of different several early Portuguese and British explorers and settlers in Southern Rhodesia during the pre-colonial period. Similarly, from around the late 1920s, colonial newspapers targeting Africans such as *The Bantu Mirror* increasingly included columns that displayed believed to be healthy nourishing cuisines and ideal recipes that Africans could explore as illustrated in **Figure 9**. These records also capture key details of African social activities that informed their culinary experiences as noted in Chapter Two.[56] These sporadic records of African culinary practices revealed the array of food varieties eaten by black societies, which included some varieties of root plants, wild shrubs, and small and big animals. Environmental historian Nancy Jacobs argues that in southern Africa new culinary ideas emerged during the first and second phases of the colonial ecological revolution that stretched between the 1820s and 1903 with the rush for cash crops over food crop production.[57] These emergent culinary ideas became increasingly more evident with agrarian and labour impositions brought about by the colonial project.[58] During the early years following settler arrival in Zimbabwe in 1890, African cultivators scarcely faced serious problems of congestion, overstocking or poor harvests.[59] As such, food shortages before colonialism were largely associated with religious beliefs that manifest through crop plagues and droughts.[60] Yet for some historians such as historian Terence Ranger, the advent of white settlers and subsequent adoption of Christianity by some Africans was blamed as the root of droughts and

[55] Civitello, *Cuisine and culture*. 18.
[56] Hall, *Pre-historical Rhodesia*, 123. Later studies by historians such as David Beach captured the social economy of the Shona, wherein the discussions were the transitioning from hunter-gatherer communities to more permanently located communities during the 1400s, taking up the cultivation of grain crops as a means of food accumulation and livelihood by early 1600.
[57] Nancy Jacobs, 'The colonial ecological revolution in South Africa: The case of Kuruman', in Stephen Dovers et al ed, *South Africa's environmental history: case and comparisons*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), 28-29. The first phase of the colonial revolution from the 1820s to 1884 witnessed changes in the relationship between humans and their environment. The latter became a commodity to be exchanged for cash. The second phase was geared towards satisfying white colonial commodity demands for cash crops.
[58] *Ibid*.
[59] Livneh, 'Precolonial polities', 23.
[60] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 94.

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food scarcities that emerged increasingly over the colonial period – at least in the popular understanding.[61] He referred to 'people no longer hav[ing] responses from the caves', these caves being the abode of the ancestors, the custodians of the land who controlled agriculture and offered their benevolence of food to the people of the Matopos.[62] Indeed, the arrival of white setters with different social and economic ideas reshaped much of African agrarian and, by extension, food dynamics. As captured in the previous chapters, the creation of African enclosures suppressed the 'traditional' economy, luring Africans into forms of wage labour that exposed them to an array of superfluous means for food production to suit the emerging coercive economic and political system.[63] Through various decisive agricultural experiments such as the Land Apportionment 1930, Maize Control 1931, Urban Areas Act 1947 and Native Land Husbandry Act 1951, African farmers abandoned – in some cases of their own volition – their old ways of farming and adopted new, scientific agricultural methods that in turn also changed the composition of the African plate and food they ate.[64]

THE BANTU MIRROR.

The Food We Eat No 4.

MEATS.

ROAST PORK.

Professor D. D. T. Jabavu., B. A. who has taken a prominent part in the discussion Native Bills in the Union. Prof. Jabavu is standing in the centre.

The Bantu Mirror Office, And Printing Works.

MSENGEZI DIVISION, HARTLEY DISTRICT.

Two dams have been recently completed on the Beri River in the Msengezi Division, of the Native Area to provide a supply of water for adjacent native landholders.

Earthdam about 20 feet in height, containing 10 million gallons.

DRIVE FOR VOLUNTEER NURSES.

Unbeaten.

A dairyman advertised "Milk from contented cows."

The butcher opposite retaliated with:

"Sausages from pigs that died happy."

Native Cookery.

The Darnley Island Natives have rather a queer method for cooking their food. A fire is lit in the cooking pit, which is a clay lined hole in the earth. The fish or bird is wrapped in leaves and then in a thick coating of clay. When the food is cooked the clay cracks and is scraped off, leaving the hot and tasty food in its wrapping of leaves.

And speaking of strange foods—do any of the Abantu eat snakes? I have been reading an article by a white woman who lived for a long time among the Australian Natives and she said that cooked snake tasted like chicken and its flesh was white. The snakes were skinned and cooked on hot coals.

Well, I—they may be delicious but I'm not anxious to taste them!

The Bantu Mirror Weekly.

Box 1052. Bulawayo.

Figure 9: Extracts from *The Bantu Mirror* showing different columns that advanced culinary ideas to Africans.[65]

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61 Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture, and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1999), .47-54.

62 Ibid. Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture, and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1999.

63 David Webster, 'The political economy of food production and nutrition in Southern Africa in historical perspective', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24, 3, 1986, 447-463.

64 Fuller Masuku, 'A Study of Agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna Reserve with particular reference to the colonial period, 1923 – 1939', *MA dissertation*, University of Cape Town, 1989, 1.

65 Extracts from *The Bantu Mirror* dated 25 April 1936.

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When the British South Africa Company (BSAC) administration appropriated the governance of the colony in 1890, maize was already widely grown and eaten by Africans. However, it was by no means the dominant crop eaten among African families.[66] Instead, sorghum, rapoko and millet were the main crops enjoyed by Africans.[67] However, driven by a 'White Rhodesia' dream from the early 1900s,[68] white settlers were prejudiced towards different aspects of African life, including their notions and practice of cleanliness, hygiene and food culture, with some bringing their own seeds to cultivate their own food in the colony.[69] In an interview in 1925, Sir Patrick Fletcher, then head of the Native Affairs Department, noted how during the nascent years of colonialism, some whites immigrants arrived from Britain and New Zealand with their food and seeds, unsure of what they would find in Southern Rhodesia.[70] At the same time, moved by an economic motive to lure more white immigrants, according to the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, between 1903 and 1918 the BSAC increasingly and widely distributed portions of seeds including maize, sorghum, tobacco and beans to white settlers as an incentive for their resettlement in Southern Rhodesia.[71] For food, Europeans favoured maize over the other grains produced by Africans because they found its white colour more aesthetically appealing.[72] Moreover, from around 1896, small-grain barter between the Europeans and African farmers was hampered by locust infestations that destroyed much of the Africans' fields.[73] According to historian Marvin Miracle, by 1910 white settlers were increasingly replacing local grain seeds with those they imported on their own, while others continued to rely on the maize seed issued to them by the Company until settler farming could 'stand on its

[66] Maurice Granville Brook Rooney, 'European agriculture of Rhodesia, 1890-1907', *MA dissertation*, University of South Africa, 1968, 114.
[67] *Ibid*.
[68] Alois Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002, 11.
[69] Esbern Friis Hansen, *Seeds for African peasants: Peasants needs and agricultural research – the case of Zimbabwe*, (Copenhagen: The Nordic Africa Institution, 1995, 55-57. while according to the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, between 1903 and 1905, the BSAC distributed over 120 lbs of maize, sorghum, tobacco and beans seed to white settlers as an incentive for resettlement in the burgeoning colony. See Rhodesian Agricultural Journal, 1, 1903-4 and 1906.
[70] NAZ, 301/1090, Oral /F1 Sir Patrick Fletcher Account No 94.
[71] *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 1903-1919. It must be noted that sorghum seed distributed was not for human consumption but mainly for livestock fodder for ranching and dairy, which were also earmarked as white pillar industries.
[72] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture, 326. Europeans were concerned how African hygiene and cleanliness of body, clothing and home does not inspire dignity and self-respect. Also see Burke, *Lifebouy Men, Lux Women*, 17-35 and Hove, 'The State', 70-109.
[73] Diana Jeater, *Law, Language, and Science the Invention of the 'Native Mind' in Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1930*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), 4.

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own feet'.[74] Yet despite these various efforts set up for settler grain production and consumption, during this early period grain cultivation was haphazard and tentative, and both whites and blacks remained reliant on African small grains for their food requirements.

But by early 1905 European maize was gaining favour among African mineworkers as a dietary option owing to its easier and cheaper commercial production, facilitated by the development of the railways in the colony.[75] Notwithstanding this, as explained in Chapter Three, in so far as grain production was concerned, up to around 1915 it was the indigenous African producers who met the food requirements for the mining men in the absence of a meaningful white agricultural sector.[76] This sat uneasily with those whites who espoused the interest of bolstering white-produced maize over African-produced small grains and maize combined. According to historian Steven Rubert, the early dominance enjoyed by peasant agriculture relied on the existing widespread African consumption for crops including small grains and tobacco, and this allowed these crops to fair favourable well on the market.[77] In addition, continued reliance on African grains and food styles would mean that African farmers were assuming equal economic importance as settler farmers within the colony.[78]

At this point, African small-grain consumption patterns could be attributed to two main factors. The first was its historic consumption by African families predating the settler arrival, which remained largely unchallenged even at the cusp of white settler colonialism, thereby stimulating its continued market presence.[79] The other factor was how, although early Company concern was with increasing the white settler population on the colony, they also aimed to make as much profit as possible from mining prospects for both the Company and its shareholders. An 1897 epidemiological survey (and decades later in 1968) jointly carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Mines Department Bulawayo District revealed how

[74] Marvin P. Miracle, 'The introduction and spread of maize in Africa', *Journal of African history*, 6, 1965, 39-55. By 1906, the Company was fast coming to the realisation of the foiled Eldorado dream, and opted to shift their investments towards creating an agricultural hub for white settlers based on the three pillars – tobacco, maize and dairy production. Various incentives such as free transport and lucrative starting agricultural capital loans were offered to European settlers who were buying land to settle in Southern Rhodesia. See Alois Mlambo, *White migration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to federation*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2002).

[75] Rooney, 'European agriculture of Rhodesia, 114.

[76] Ian Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia', *African Affairs*, 73, 291, 1974, 217-228.

[77] Steven Rubert, *A most Promising Weed: A History of Tobacco Farming and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890 to 1945*, (Athens: Ohio University Centre for International Studies, 1998), 23-31.

[78] NAZ, 301/1090, Oral /F1 Sir Patrick Fletcher Account No 94.

[79] See Chapter Three, section two.

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small grains in comparison to maize offered a more filling and healthier diet option better suited to meet the needs of the African labour force, as illustrated by **Figure 13** (in Chapter Five).[80] This report stirred conflicting business interests within white society, with small grains receiving favour from the cash cautious mining capital, while nascent white maize farmers wanted maize to dominate the food interests of the country.[81]

Maize: The Rhodesian farmers' friend?

By 1906, it had become apparent to the Company government that the Eldorado dream ship had sailed and there was no gold to be found, no 'second Reef'.[82] At the same time, as observed in Chapter Three, settler agricultural investments suffered by having to face continued stiff competition from African peasant farmers who were actively cultivating a variety of small-grain and legume crops including sorghum, millet, cowpeas and groundnuts for consumption.[83] Towards the end of 1903 a small collection of white maize farmers, following their peers in wheat, tobacco and dairy sectors, formed the Rhodesian Land Owners and Farmers Association primarily targeted at establishing a market niche of grain producers.[84] They aimed to use this association to enhance their bargaining power and collectively reel in state support in the form of agricultural financing and land grants.[85] Records from the Department of Agriculture for the period between 1900 and 1905 indicate a considerable expansion in maize production by both white and black farmers, with no significant drops in sorghum or rapoko.[86] In early April 1906, following what was considered improved maize harvests compared to the previous seasons with 450 out of 610 white farmers producing a total of 139 300 bags from a previous quota of 45 815 bags in 1904,[87] G.M. Odlum, an agricultural assistant in the Department of Agriculture described maize as 'the Rhodesian farmers' friend'.[88] This subtly echoed

[80] NAZ T/2/29/7/1 Annual report for the Mines Department, Bulawayo district for the year ending, 30 September 1897.
[81] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Farmers, Miners and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1895-1961', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2016, 34-36.
[82] Ian Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe*, (London: Longman, 1988), 32-36.
[83] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 57. As noted earlier in Chapter Three, some white farmers where against African consumption of small grains arguing that the grain reduced their metabolism making them lazier after consumption. As later shown Chapter Five, they (wrongly) argued that maize produced a different outcome.
[84] NAZ Lo1/2/04. Report of the secretary for agriculture for the year ended December 1903. The potency of this structure would emerge with the establishment of the Land Bank in the 1920s, where this union became a significant beneficiary of government grants and loans.
[85] *Ibid*.
[86] 'African crops in African areas', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 7, 1907, 1103-1109.
[87] H. Weinmann, 'Agricultural research and development in Southern Rhodesia', *Occasional Paper*, 4, 1972, 18.
[88] NAZ, GI/14, G.M Odlum, Agricultural and pastoral Rhodesia, 1906, 5.

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settlers intention to boost maize production and consumption over other grain varieties. According to Ian Phimister, this success in cultivation along with a fast-fading dream of gold fortunes, witnessed in the following year in February 1907, some white members of the Rhodesian Land Owners' and Farmers' Association lobbying for state intervention to facilitate their undisturbed participation on the grain market.[89] In 1908 an agreement with the Secretary for Agriculture, Ross Townsend, was reached with the signing of an agreement that came to be known as the Diet Ordinance of 1908.[90] This agreement was aimed at primarily prioritizing the maize through the formal replacement of African small grains with white settler maize as the main grain staple in the colony, especially on the mining estates.[91] During this period the African mineworkers were the greatest grain market, prompted by their shift from their food production to waged employment on the mines forced them to rely on purchasing grain for their upkeep. One of the key stipulations of the Diet Ordinance that shaped African consumption of small grains was disallowing the cultivation of small grains in what would be more clearly defined under the Maize Control Act in 1931 as Zone A and Zone B areas – these included white commercial and residential spaces as well as game and nature parks.[92] This was the first bureaucratic step towards intentionally reshaping the African diet and crop production in Southern Rhodesia. In 1910 the Director of Agriculture, E.A. Nobbs, asserted that 'necessarily maize must remain, whatever else may be grown, the main crop of the country.'[93]

While envisaging much from the legislation, in reality, this move failed to address key settler concerns, mainly that of curtailing African small-grain production and its consumption by workers on the mines.[94] The Diet Ordinance was poorly implemented, so small grains consumption continued to dominate among Africans. Moreover, as observed in Chapter Three, the ordinance instead triggered increased both small-grain and maize cultivation among African farmers up to the 1930s.[95] After all, historian H. Weinmann records how, until around the late 1920s, on both the mining estates and settler

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[89] Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment', 220-2.

[90] *Ibid*. Also see Eira Punt, 'The development of African agriculture', 74. Conversations on the development of Diet Ordinance can be traced back to the work of Phimister and Punt, with no other records available on this discussion.

[91] *Ibid*, 114-116.

[92] Ncube, 'Peasant Production and marketing', 10. It is within these spaces that Africa wage labour was confined, with Zone C, D and E being different variations of native reserves with low market activity.

[93] NAZ 1095/01/S2, Report of the Director of Agriculture, Dr Nobbs, 1910, 4.

[94] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 414-7.

[95] *Ibid*, 425.

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farms, African grain and especially small grains were fetching better market prices with whites and blacks than maize.[96] Admittedly though, in a very insignificant way, the Diet Ordinance of 1908 altered Africans' diet with more Africans shifting towards maize as a main staple in the dry rural areas, especially the Ntabazinduna reserve, for instance, during the 1920s, yet African families continued to grow and consume small grains largely because they fared much better in this region burdened with a scarcity of perennial rainfall.[97] On the other hand, mostly those Africans in closer proximity to 'Whiteness' as they were living and working on white settler estates were more affected by the grain replacement measures, owing to their contact with the implementing authorities.[98]

At the same time, white society was not unanimous in its response to the Diet Ordinance. In 1927 the Secretary for Agriculture, Charles Murray, expressed how, as far as his department was concerned,

> our agricultural officers would do well to make a careful study of native diet before they arrogantly assume that Europeans' are far superior to those of the African. Unfortunately, this is the assumption generally made and much that is valuable in native crop raising has probably been lost.[99]

Indeed, as argued in Chapter Five, among African families' small grains were providing more nutrients and were in increasing demand among the urban workers for both their social and energy value compared to white-produced maize, which was an undesirable 'hybridization of mixed grain' not suitable for export but also less nutritious in comparison to small grains.[100] Until the 1930s, African mines and railway workers remained the greatest market for small grains. Despite the shifts within the economic terrain, the Director of Native Development, Emory Alvord remained aware of how most Africans preferred cultivating their crops in what he described as the 'maize complex', underscoring how by the late 1920s, 'the native themselves know that maize is much easier and cheaper to grow

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[96] H. Weinmann, *Agricultural research and development in Southern African, 1890-1923*, (Salisbury, University of Rhodesia, 1972), 59-60.
[97] Masuku, 'A Study of Agricultural', 19.
[98] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980, 7.
[99] Weinmann, Agricultural research and development in Southern Africa, 59-60.
[100] *Ibid*, 22.

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than rapoko and larger returns are to be had from their labour.'[101] Yet for the multiplicity of social factors including its utility in brewing traditional opaque beer, small grains still enjoyed demand among Africans.[102] Moreover, according to historians Eira Kramer and Weinmann, African concerns over the poor quality of maize served at the mines stemmed largely from colonial state activity before 1930, which was on the whole characterized by limited seed improvements, poor infrastructure and research, and largely experimental work to ensure the promotion of settler maize production.[103] In stark contrast, African small grains enjoyed years of constant cultivation and satisfied African tastes for their deep savoury taste complemented their locally available relishes.[104]

African hunger, the state and small grains.

The severe drought that plagued Southern Rhodesia in 1922, whose impact was felt fully only in 1926, brought about far-reaching social consequences, which changed African ideas about food preparation.[105] The resultant food shortages in both African and European areas led the colonial state to carry out various measures to mitigate starvation, and this changed the domestic dynamics within the African home. For instance, dating as far back as the pre-colonial era, during periods of agricultural failure and drought African families relied and survived on their small-grain reserves stocked in their granaries.[106] Initiatives such as *isiphala senkosi* (chief's granary), first noted by British missionaries in the 1850s, were characterized by small grains collected and stored communally by the village head mainly as tokens of tribute and allegiance, but equally served to mitigate the impact of disasters and avert starvation in such situations.[107] Similarly, the colonial authorities' famine policy rested on two key principles: rebate of collected African revenue by the Native Commissioner from African households, and pushing African families into cheap wage labour to earn money enough for them to buy food and mitigate their situation.[108] The latter method pushed Africans into acclimatizing themselves

[101] Tapiwa Madimu, "Responsible Government and Miner-Farmer Relations in Southern Rhodesia, 1923–1945", *South African Historical Journal*, 68, 3, 2016, 366-389.
[102] *Ibid*.
[103] Eira Kramer, 'The early years: extension services in peasant agriculture in Colonial Zimbabwe', 1925-1929, *Zambezia*, XXIV, 2, 1997, 165 and Weinmann, Agricultural research and development, 49-51.
[104] 'Native food and culinary methods', *Native Affairs Department Annuals* (hereafter *NADA*), 11, 1933, 101.
[105] In the early years of the drought African families relied and survived on their grain stocks reserved in their granaries and through initiatives such as *isiphala senkosi* (chief's granary) where grain was stored communally to mitigate disaster and avert starvation in such situations. Kuda Murwira et al, *Beating hunger: The Chivi Experience*, (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 2000), 68.
[106] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 24-28
[107] *Ibid*.
[108] Joshua Chigodora, 'Famine and drought: The question of food security in Zimbabwe', *Drought Network News*, 1997, 40.

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to purchasing white-orientated meals made available by the colonialists that became a part of African everyday meals even after the drought had ended.[109] These actions reinforce the 1982 remarks by Thomas Sankara at the cusp of becoming president of Burkina Faso that, 'look at your plates when you eat. These are imported grains…that is imperialism.'[110]

The first method reinforced African ideas of the *Zunde raMambo*/*Isiphala seNkosi* social cohesion and contact system across both black and white society alike.[111] Introduced during the 1912 famine by the colonial state, this food handout scheme was not widely accepted among Africans and Native Commissioner Bazeley complained how people in the Masvingo district, for instance, 'refused absolutely to accept any advance of grain (maize) or meal either from private white individuals or from the government.'[112] This response from African families was mainly because most Africans preferred to survive the famine through using their traditional means best appreciated within the culture, which included their scavenging of wild fruits and foods or eating with neighbours.[113] Traditionally among some African communities such as the Shona, no one was allowed to starve when someone else in the community had surplus food and this strategy formed a pillar of African famine prevention and buttressed social cohesion.[114] Added to this, John Iliffe observes how, during the 1926 drought across parts of Matabeleland south, the colonial state distributed the unpopular yellow maize meal to African families as a measure to safeguard against hunger.[115] However, because this grain was often used as animal fodder by Africans, it became associated with suffering and poverty.[116]

However, by 1927, Africans' negative attitudes towards food handouts from the state had undergone a significant shift owing to increased colonial mechanisms such as public works payments in food rations of maize, corned beef, condensed milk, bread and small grains to African volunteers.[117] According to P. Mulvany and B. O'Riordans, foods such as maize grew in popularity among African rural homes during this phase of industrialization as families

[109] *Ibid*.
[110] Igor Cusack, 'African cuisines: recipes for nation building?' *Journal of African cultural Studies*, 13, 2, 2000, 207-225.
[111] Baxter Tavuyanago et al, 'Traditional grain crops in precolonial and colonial Zimbabwe: A factor for food security and social cohesion among the Shona', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12, 6, 2010, 5.
[112] Chigodora, 'Famine and drought', 40.
[113] John Iliffe, *Famine in Zimbabwe*, 1890-1960, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990), 45.
[114] Nombulelo Siqwana-Ndulo, 'Rural African family structure in the Transkei, South Africa', *PhD thesis*, University of California, 1993, 154-156. Also see 'Native food and culinary methods, *NADA*, 1933, 101.
[115] John Iliffe, *The African poor: A history*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 153-5.
[116] *Ibid*.
[117] Chigodora, 'Famine and drought', 40.

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gradually accepted donations as food relief from the settler government.[118] Here too, even after averting starvation, Africans actively maintained these culinary additions in their lives. Moreover, coupled with the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act and Maize Control Act later in the early 1930s, Africans were driven into a heavy dependence on white grain supplied by white farmers through the grain marketing boards because they could not produce enough to sustain themselves under the severe land and market restrictions.[119]

On the other hand, drought also ignited culinary creativity and resourcefulness among different African communities. Colonial reports of the 1920s express how African families incorporated a variety of new plants and roots such as *masekesa* (among the Shona) along with increased reliance on the more drought-resistant small-grain varieties such as rapoko – otherwise unpopular for its stronger bitter taste – to avert starvation.[120] Vaughan adds how the prevalence of such disasters ignited the widespread impositions of various food regulations which created 'governable subjects' of African farmers.[121] The colonial state was able to influence the nature of land tenure in their favour by encouraging Africans to adopt Western-style agrarian and by extension food and eating patterns to avoid succumbing to hunger and famine.[122] Iliffe records how in the cities, backyard crop cultivation by African families became increasingly more common in an effort to obtain food and maintain their traditional diets by the 1920s.[123] Vaughan further adds how, between 1939 and 1947, the cost of living for an urban African in southern African rose by 100%, unless they were able to produce their food.[124] This expensive lifestyle encouraged the continued cultivation and consumption of small grains by African families especially the poor households.[125]

At the same, over the period from 1905 and 1930, Rhodesian society witnessed the development of new African food markets and food outlets. In 1870 Shona women were

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[118] P. Mulvany and B. O'Riordans, 'Taking root…gaining ground: Diversity in food production for universal food security', *Paper presented to the Development Studies Association Conference*, ITDG, 1995, 4-6.
[119] *Ibid*.
[120] NAZ, G1/6/4/67, Annual Reports on Native Development 1926-32. Also see Report of the Native Commissioner of Insiza on drought, 1929.
[121] Megan Vaughan, *Curing their ills: Colonial power and African illness* (California: Stanford University Press, 1991), 202-3.
[122] NAZ, N3/11/7, Famine amongst Natives, Letter from Claud F. Radcliffe to Superintendent of Natives, Fort Victoria, 4th March 1922.
[123] Iliffe, *Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960,* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990), 160.
[124] Megan Vaughan, *The story of an African famine Gender and famine in twentieth-century Malawi*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 103.
[125] *Ibid*. 93-7.

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certainly active grain traders[126] and in different ways adapted to changing economic conditions. From the 1890s extending to around the 1940s pockets of female traders in the Mashonaland, region would camp on the outskirts of the mining centres with portions of cooked small-grain meals and opaque beer to sell to the miners who had neither access to nor the opportunity to produce these small-grain delicacies on their own.[127] This opportunity for women increased especially after the 1908 Diet Ordinance and even more so with the Maize Control Act in 1931, as will be discussed later in this chapter.[128] For women food traders, this 'paid better and is a more pleasant life.'[129] This displayed a conscious understanding of the changing food market. Moreover, from the 1930s onwards, as will be explained in the following section, as small-grain prices oscillated, a ready market for small grain as cooked meals and opaque beer among African mine workers and urban dwellers grew.[130] These workers, tired of foreign diets provided by the mines, preferred small-grain meals, and in many instances did not hesitate to pay much higher prices for them.[131] African food stalls were also a nostalgic space where men far from home could either reconnect or stay in touch with their roots.[132] Thus these market stalls not only served as conduits to scarce and forbidden African foods but were communication hubs bridging rural families with those labouring within settler compounds.[133]As taste evokes memories, these meals were significant perhaps because of the unique flavours of small-grain meals, cooked in ways the men remembered from their earlier lives.[134] It was the taste of 'home'.[135]

But both away and at home, African lives were changing. The colonial project was aimed at curtailing African labour, social and cultural practices to encourage adaptation to European standards to advance the settler endeavour of a white Rhodesia. The African kitchen, more than any other social aspect of the African home, underwent a drastic transformation.[136] However,

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[126] Schmidt, *Peasants, traders and wives*, 56.
[127] Ian Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914, *African Affairs*, 73, 291, 1974, 217-228.
[128] Trevor Ncube, 'Small grains marketing in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980', *Henderson Seminar Series*, 1980, 12-3.
[129] Phimister, 'Peasant Production', 218. This despite factoring the overall cost of producing the meal, transporting and security of the clandestine trade that saw these mobile stalls not operating as often as their demand would require.
[130] Jeater, 'African Women in Colonial Settler', 2.
[131] NAZ, F1071/11, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, General statistics on African production and native life, 1951.
[132] Williams-Forson, 'I haven't eaten' 69-87.
[133] Trevor Ncube, 'Small grains marketing' 12-3.
[134] *NADA*, 'Native food and culinary methods, 1933, 101-4.
[135] Cusack, 'African Cuisines, 207.

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these changes were not always imposed, nor undesirable. Sociologists Diane Kayongo-Male and Philista Onyango observe how in southern Africa, with among most African families shifting to wage labour, 'many of the dishes are [sic] no longer eaten by sophisticated Africans.'[137] Various African consumed newspaper increased articles that echoed new culinary recipes, with stunning 'propaganda' style headlines such as 'The Princess cooks!' in the 6 July 1935 *Bantu Mirror*, aimed at winning the hearts of Africans towards certain foods. For some Africans, the ability to access and eat such foods was quickly associated with their growing economic and social success and affluence. Many of the culinary changes were adopted by Africans rather than imposed on them: this was not a top-down imposition but a shared process of observation and adoption. For example, in the aftermath of the global economic depression of the early 1930s, and the concomitant domestic policies instituted to cushion settler communities in the colony from its impact, both economic and social interactions between African and settler communities became more commonplace and intimate. African home gardens in urban (and to a lesser degree rural) areas developed to include a wider variety of vegetables and spices that were readily used to enrich the colour, flavour and nutritional content of daily meals.[138] From the emerging social interactions, new ideas to improve their homes were embraced by African women, and in the ensuing years, they became much busier, balancing domestic work and taking up small jobs to complement their husbands' meagre wages food and improve food supplies for their families.[139] Usually voluntarily, but in some cases under compulsion, African families modified their eating habits in line with the sweeping social and economic changes occurring across the country.

'Feeding families': African women and the politics of eating small grains, the 1930s-1950s.

In 1933 a white settler farmer remarked that 'unlike the average European, the native confines himself to two meals a day, one in the morning and another in the late afternoon or early evening' known as *kususura* and *kurarira* in Shona respectively.[140] In the rural areas, most African families' meals were obtained in the fields where they spent most of their time carrying out different chores such as protecting the grain crops from birds/baboons or herding livestock and cultivating during the planting season. In the morning Africans usually cooked small grains

[137] Diane Kayongo-Male and Philista Onyango, *The sociology of the African family*, (London: Longman, 1984), 34.

[138] Renata Coetzee, *Funa and food: Roots of traditional African food culture*, (Durban: Butterworks, 1982), 21.

[139] *NADA*, 'Native food and culinary methods, 1933, 101-4

[140] 'Native food and culinary methods', *NADA*, 11, 1933, 101.

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as a thin porridge broth known as *ilambazi* or *bota* among the Ndebele and Shona respectively.[141] In reaching out to the urban-dwelling African communities, increasingly from the 1930s, some enterprising white companies started packaging African small grains into easy to prepare meals to control the growing of small grains in urban spaces as well as the traffic of workers crossing between their rural homes looking for these grains for their morning porridge.[142] Although commonly eaten by the entire family as the first meal of the day, *bota* was especially useful in feeding small children, whose teeth were not yet strong enough to chew and digest more solid foodstuffs.[143] Threshed small-grain porridge was the primary meal for children, and was often their only solid meal eaten throughout the day.[144] This routine emphasizes how this small-grain porridge was both a filling and nourishing meal, as most African children did not have another meal at home until the evening, instead of having one big meal in the morning and scavenging for wild fruit or eating maize cobs and sweet reed during the day, depending on the season.[145] To the older children, small-grain porridge was served while it was still hot from the fire as a way to teach them how to be attentive and careful when eating.[146] Moreover, as discussed in Chapter Five, African women preferred feeding small grains porridge to the sick or those too weak to swallow solid meals such as *sadza*, meat or vegetables, benefiting from its nourishing and medicinal attributes.[147]

For elders, this same porridge was eaten while hot, allowing them to savour its rich aroma. However, according to Native Commissioner Roger Howman, many of the elderly Africans preferred to eat small-grain meals when they were cold because, they felt it took longer to digest in their stomach, thus for the labouring African it allowed them not to be distracted by feelings of hunger, enabling them to focus more on their work.[148] However, during their

[141] *Ibid*.
[142] 'Hints to help housewives', *Bantu Mirror*, 7 September 1947.
[143] *Ibid*.
[144] Renata Coetzee, *Funa and food,* 21.
[145] Other sources would argue that the eating of two meals a day by African families was because these were able to sustain them over longer periods of times. Also see Elias C. Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860–2004*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2007), 55-6.
[146] E. Goodall, 'Rhodesian pots with moulded decorations', *NADA*, XXIII, 36-50. When one ate in haste, they were likely to burn themselves leading them to accidentally spill their bowl of porridge. This behaviour was shunned upon and reprimanded with a beating for wasting food. As such, children had to master the ability to know when it was the right time to eat their food. Other ideas suggest that this was penned simply to avoid the mischievous curiosity and fidgeting of children during mealtimes. This was particularly important to African mothers whose motherly abilities were constantly being socially evaluated by her cooking as well as the appearance and behaviour of her children.
[147] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe Health and Well-Being*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15-6.
[148] Roger Howman, 'The Native labourer and his food', *NADA*, 1942, 19, 1-19.

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proletarianization within the settler industries emerging in their proximity African families embraced the standardized number of meals eaten a day as three rather than the previous routine of two meals.[149] It must be highlighted how African eating twice a day had very little to do with a scarcity of food because as noted in earlier Chapter Three until the early 1930s they dominated food and small-grain production in Southern Rhodesia.[150] Added to this, they did not solely rely on grain as they cultivated pumpkins, sugar cane, maize, sweet potatoes and groundnuts, and these along with small-grain non-alcoholic brewed *maheu* were eaten throughout the day whenever one felt hungry. Also, during this period, new foods were adopted voluntarily such as wheat flour from the white farm estates by African workers were, and in this way, African women contributed in different ways to the array of tastes and textures of African meals.[151]

In 1937 the Chief Native Commissioner observed how while African women used small grains quite variously in the preparation of their porridge, distinctive across the various social groups was the fact that each recipe maintained a slightly thick texture.[152] To conceal its bitter taste, the Shona started adding sugar which they obtained through trading with the white traders.[153] On the other hand, the Kalanga opted to eat their porridge unsweetened, believing that the bitter taste was preparing the children's palate for the taste of opaque beer (whose taste was bitter too) which was to be their companion as they entered adulthood characterized by 'bitterness and hardships.'[154] Women would occasionally add small nuggets of pumpkin or *imbhambhayila* (sweet potato) to provide extra nutrients and make the meal more filling.[155] On many occasions, Kalanga mothers would stir into their children's porridge pot an exceptionally bitter shrub known as *munhundugwa,* (aloe), which was known to cleanse the bowels of the growing children and neutralize pain in their bodies.[156] Again in this way, through their culinary methods, African women were able not only to feed their families but also try to safeguard their health and wellbeing.

[149] Herbert Nassau Hemans, *The log of a Native Commissioner*, (Salisbury: Books of Rhodesia, 1971), 136-9.
[150] 'Native food and culinary methods', *NADA*, 11, 1933, 101.
[151] Hemans, *The log of a Native*, 136-9.
[152] A. Pendered, 'Kubika wawa (beer making)', *NADA*, IX, 1937, 30.
[153] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 37.
[154] Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion*, 15-6. These ideas of 'bitterness' were a reflection on the realities of the Karanga people during the colonial era. Their complaints ranged from land restrictions, unfavourable taxation and labour law, all which adversely impacted their lives in different ways.
[155] Hemans, *The log of a Native*, 138-9.
[156] Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion*, 93.

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In his 1937 annual report, the CNC recorded how dietary practices and food production remained the primary responsibility of African women in the reserves, despite a growing male interest and presence in rural grain production in response to the vibrant market prices for grain.[157] As discussed in Chapter Three, various new developments including the advent of the plough from 1910, increased taxation on Africans and a budding market for grain in the developing industries contributed to an influx of males as grain cultivators in response to the changes. Arguably, these new economic dynamics further attached women to domestic chores as men sought to gain full control not only over the crop types and quantities to be grown by women (decisions previously made by women at the subsistence level[158]) but also physically through their active participation in cultivation and harvesting (previously associated with female labour). In their decision making, women followed the seasonal flow of available food crops, creatively spacing their crop cultivation cycle to allow them to harvest fresh and matured grain all year round.[159] Accordingly, African women were able to alternate between different varieties of grains and vegetables, providing a variety of meals for their families.[160] During not so favourable seasons, African meals were monotonous and comprised of leftovers from previous meals and any scraps that could be salvaged from the fields.[161] During such periods of food scarcity when the native reserves eked out a living from poor harvests and lack of fresh produce, African women often exercised resourcefulness to avoid starvation. For instance, a 1938 report on African life in the Umguza native reserve noted how women were swift to create new meals by replacing the usual sweet potatoes and pumpkin with a small grain bread meal

[157] NAZ, SRG3/INT4/, Annual Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, 1937. Also see Schmidt, 'We women work', 101.

[158] Webster, 'The political economy', 459.

[159] Ncube, 'Small grains marketing' 17. Sorghum, millet and rapoko mature at different times and as shown in **Figure 5** in Chapter Three, and this allowed African families to have grain throughout the year.

[160] Popular relishes included a variety of small animals including *ishwa* (flying ants), locusts and *amacimbi* (mopane worms), pumpkins, milk, *umfushwa* (dried vegetables) and non-poisonous fungus such as mushrooms collected by the children as the conducted their daily chores of herding the livestock and protecting the fields from marauding animal such as baboons and birds. Kuper et al, *The Shona and Ndebele*, 59-60. Although it was not mandatory, children who failed to contribute towards the meal grew an unfavourable reputation within the family, often being described as 'lazy', while within their community they were looked upon as being 'worthless' because of their failure to contribute to the growth and development of the family.

[161] Hemans, *The log of a Native Commissioner*, 142-5. Of note is how among some communities such as the Tonga, the men and women did not eat together, with the latter preparing and serving the men food, only to sit down and eat once everyone else had eaten and expressed satisfaction with the meal. While without question this practice perpetuated the existence of the patriarchal status quo with the society, various interpretations with the locals revealed how by so doing, African women were able to display their selflessness towards their families. Mothers would without hesitation share her food in the event that any family member expressed that they were still hungry. However, during periods of acute food scarcity this norm was lightened and loosely adhered to. It must be also pointed how, regardless of gender, it was generally not uncommon across different southern African societies including the Venda for the cook to always be the last person to eat, after ensuing everyone was served. By extension this taught one the priceless skill of gauging their audience's appetite before cooking a meal. See NAZ 1095/F5, Report of the CNC for 1935.

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known as *amaqelebengwane,* made from mixing small grains, maize and flour, the latter often obtained from food packages distributed by the Native Commissioners to avert hunger.[162] Also at such times, small-grain *sadza* became the sole grain meal consumed, as it was able to produce better yields in arid dry regions.[163]

Applauding the improvements made by African women in their kitchens, one white settler lady in the Gutu district noted how from the early 1950s, the white settlers had greatly improved the food and eating habits of Africans through the introduction of a variety of new foods including rice, flour and spices.[164] In her account, the white settler reports how African women were progressively doing well towards providing meals with adequate nutritional value to keep their families alert and working throughout the day.[165] Some families were balancing new culinary methods and African foods as illustrated in **Figure 10**, of a typical painting of a young African child eating what looks like a 'brown' coloured meal (resembling a meal prepared from small grains) from a modern bowl, shows how by the mid-1950s, it was increasingly becoming common for Africans across the country to infuse both Western and African cuisines into their daily lives.

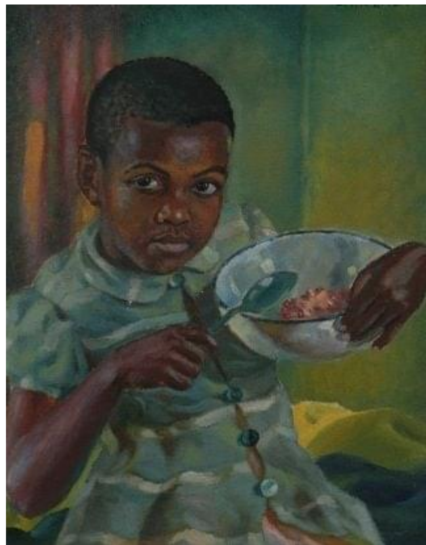

Figure 10: Portrait of young African girl exhibiting so-called European dress and eating habits in the mid-1960s.[166]

[162] 'Varieties of other grains and their use', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 38, 1938, 1109.
[163] 'Great deal of African culture lost', *The Chronicle*, 2 November 1954. Sadza is the generic name given to grain meals in Zimbabwe, with the variety of the meal being prefixed in the case of small grains for instance, *sadza remapfunde* to refer to sorghum *sadza* among the Shona or *isitswala samabele* for millet sadza among the Ndebele and Kalanga. During preparation, *sadza* consumes more grain as compared to porridge.
[164] NAZ S1860, Gutu 1926-1956, Gutu District agricultural records-Native relations, 1955.
[165] Gelfand, *Diet and tradition in African culture*, 45-6.
[166] Picture digitally shared by colleague in September 2020. Similar images are also available on Paul Hubbard, 'Bulawayo of Yesteryear Tour', https://hubbardstours.com/index.php/bulawayo-of-yesteryear-tour/. Although

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Good food and taboos

One of the food security safety nets that rural families enjoyed over their urban counterparts was the affordable availability and access to a wider variety of foods all year round. In 1938 the CNC report expressed how rural Africans were surrounded by a plethora of fauna and flora, which they domesticated and included into their diet. He added, 'these people are herdsmen and cultivators of the ground all year round by which means they subsist. They cultivate millet…of this millet, ground between two stones or in a wooden mortar, they make flour and of this, they make cakes, which they cook among embers….'[167] Meals were also eaten as a convivial gesture with guests and seen as a way of strengthening relations among closely related people in society.[168] Among the Kalanga prime portions of millet meal were served to one's in-laws to reflect the family's sentiments towards them,[169] while among the Shona, certain small-grain meals and selected relishes were favoured by men especially for their associated link with libido, potency and longevity.[170] Even among the Ndebele and Kalanga too, matters concerning potency were a centrepiece in dietary discourse, as it contributed towards the social and economic expansion of the family.[171] White explorer Charlie Finlason observed this in the 1890s in Mashonaland, claiming a large percentage of the African people ate small grains as aphrodisiacs.[172]

Notwithstanding, this idea, although scientifically unsubstantiated until the late 1950s in one study at the Matopos Agricultural Research station,[173] continued to be transmitted over generations within different communities, increasing the appreciation for small grains consumption over maize among Africans. Overlooked by most who ate small grains in a bid to boost their sexual stamina was the likelihood of a 'placebo effect'. As Chapter Five will show,

the painting is not explicit on what the girl is eating, judging from the colour of the food inside the plate – brown- one may assume that it was a small grains meal especially since these were popular around the time the picture depicts.

[167] NAZ 1095/F5, Report of the CNC for 1938, 12.

[168] Hove, 'The State', 51-2.

[169] Personal communication with Thembani Dube, researcher on the social history of the Kalanga people in Bulilimamangwe district, Zimbabwe, 12 November 2019. In cases where one did not have quality grain to share with visitors, they would quickly rush and request assistance from a nearby friend or neighbour, least giving poor quality grain be misconstrued as disapproval of the visitor's presence. This whole customary practice underscored the essence of small grains being a catalyst for social cohesion as discussed in Chapter Two.

[170] Shoko, *Kalanga Religion*, 48. Among the Kalanga, millet was associated with replenishment and boosting the immune system, thus in comparison with other small grains, was more preferred. P. A Stuart, 'My Matabeleland experience', *NADA*, XIX, 1942, 60-72.

[171] Kuper et al¸ *The Shona*, 58. Also see Livneh, 'Precolonial polities in Southern', 14-21.

[172] C. E. Finlason, *A nobody in Mashonaland*, (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1970), 69-1.

[173] P.A. Donovan, 'Results of crop research at the Matopos Research Station, 1955/6-1960/1', *Mimeograph- Part 12*, (Matopos Research Station, 1962), 29.

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the 1956 Matopos study did reveal the high nutritional and energy characteristics of small grains over maize but did not conclusively underline the buoyancy of small grains as favourably adopted by different African societies.[174] Yet with continued small-grain consumption, despite the evidently meagre financial capacity of most African families across the colony from the 1930s, several African homesteads seemed to continue a *gore-mwana* (child each year) fad with ease, being densely populated with an average of 8 children per household, as reviewed by the Native Commissioner in the Sanyati district in 1937.[175]

In as much as there was broadly shared uses of some key foods including small grains, the consumption patterns were not universal across cultures and social groups as some foods were considered as taboo or simply generally disliked.[176] For example, writing in 1948, a white writer named H.F. Child observed how Shona women would include *mbeva* (field mice) in their meals with delight, whereas the Ndebele were repulsed by this meat, in many instances going so far as to insult the Shona for its consumption.[177] At the same time, foods considered as totemic were excluded from diets; however, it was not uncommon for some women to challenge the ideas of inherited totems through the union of marriage, and in some instances have continued to include these 'forbidden' foods in their personal diets.[178] Arguably this represented an individual challenge to the prevailing patriarchal gatekeeping that customarily controlled African women. Of course, sometimes hunger and scarcity resulted in food taboos often being broken by African families.[179] Historian Pasikarai Tizirai says that during the 1930s and 1940s some Chilimanzi people during extreme cases of starvation alleviated their hunger

[174] *Ibid*.

[175] Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change, 78-9. In 1937 the Sanyati Native Commissioner alludes to how the 'native has many children' and this further reiterates the view of women's contribution to the African home as being child bearers to grow the family. As earlier observed by Kuper et al, among both the Shona and Ndebele, women accumulated social status by being able to produce progeny and provide food for them too.

[176] 'Dog meat is not part of nation's food culture', *The Chronicle*, 21 March 2017, https://www.chronicle.co.zw/dog-meat-is-not-part-of-nations-food-culture/. Accessed on 15 July 2019.

[177] H.F. Child, 'Etiquette and relationship terms', *NADA*, XXV, 1948, 18-21. A common adage among the Ndebele is to insult or express anger by likening one an unclean being eating even the filthy rodent. It must be noted how this speaks more on the turbulent and complex relations between the two ethnic groups beyond the facets of culinary preferences. Also, Ndebele lens of viewing *mbeva* must be understood with the nomenclature distinctions between 'mouse' and 'rat' where among the Ndebele are synonymously referred to as '*igundwane*' – whose living conditions are unhygienic thus a furore towards their consumption.

[178] 'Uplift in Bantu land or Mambuya at home', *NADA*, 1941, 37-9. In 1938, the Native court sat to discuss the case of a woman who was married into the Sibindi family, thus assuming the family rites including not eating the liver of any beast. However, she argued that in her home, Nkayi was the food she grew up eating had numerous ideas on how to prepare this meal. Foregoing its consumption would be a waste of her culinary expertise that maintained her marriage. The case was resolved with a fine on her part with instruction to adhere to the traditional custom of the family in which she has since wedded into.

[179] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*, 47. Wylie notes how the Zulu in 1861 consumed foods such as dog meat and shellfish to avert starvation, as their cattle and crops fared dismally.

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by what was known as '*shangwa*', whereby the people chewed sorghum reeds as they did with sugarcane.[180] Normally among different African farmers, these parts of the crops were burnt to make ash that acted as a crop fertilizer.[181]

But ideas change. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, not all communities viewed small grains in the same manner, and this periodically erupted into conflicts over their consumption. For instance, in 1939 among the Chilimanzi people in Mashonaland, CNC. Jackson witnessed the sacrificing of a family's entire harvest following what was believed to be a ritual cleansing by the community.[182] According to Jackson, for religious reasons, eating *rapoko* was a taboo among the Chilimanzi people, with its cultivation taken as being a bad omen for agriculture in the area.[183] Flouting of these customary laws was punishable by expulsion from the community.[184] However, this particular family survived eviction but had their entire harvested rapoko and fields burnt to ashes by an angry mob of local villagers.[185] In another similar incident in 1955, an African woman had to defend her eating of millet before Chief Chundu in the Hurungwe area where millet was considered to be a taboo.[186] This particular case revealed that hunger was not considered a plausible reason for breaking food customs. Substantiating this assertion, historian Admire Mseba draws parallels to a situation that he encountered in 2018 when he was advised to cleanse his bowels of the hearty millet meal prepared by his wife before entering into the Manicaland region.[187] Failure to do so would anger the local ancestors and bring bad luck to him. Sure enough, he narrates, during his journey through the mountainous plains of Inyanga, his vehicle suddenly experienced engine failure, which he immediately associated with the earlier caution about his meal, especially since he insists, he

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[180] Paskarai Tizirai, 'The story of the Chilimanzi people', *NADA*, XXVI, 1949, 36-38. Precolonial Shona communities practiced similar hunger mitigation strategies. See David Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe, 900-1850: An outline of Shona history*, (Gweru Mambo Press, 1980), 89-91.

[181] Beach, *The Shona*, 91.

[182] Tizirai, 'The story of the Chilimanzi people', 36-38.

[183] *Ibid*.

[184] Tizirai, 'The story', 36-38.

[185] *Ibid*. Interestingly, although rapoko, sorghum and millet have distinctive features, the villagers' attention towards this customary anomaly was when during a communal ceremony, they were served rapoko brewed opaque beer – which was stronger than sorghum or millet brewed opaque beers and intoxicated them faster and more severely. Upset by this, some perceiving it as the associated misfortunes of rapoko, a drunk raging mob of villagers attacked their homestead to destroy all signs of rapoko. NAZ, S/ZIM 018, Notes on African crimes, 1955.

[186] NAZ, S/ZIM 018, Notes on African crimes, 1955. The report notes how the accused pleaded with the dare (court) for forgiveness as she was compelled by hunger to resorting to cooking millet. She was fined 3 goats, instructed to burn the grain and brew traditional opaque beer for the elders as punishment. Strangely her husband was not obliged to assist her because of his three wives, the offense was only carried out by her. She was further reprimanded for not having spoken to the other wives for assistance.

[187] Personal Communication with Admire Mseba, 20 April 2019.

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had beforehand confirmed the good condition of the vehicle before embarking on his journey.[188] These different anecdotes serve to illustrate how even among Africans themselves, culinary experiences are not homogenous and religious ideas played a role.

'Ma-si-ye Phambili'[189]: Policing African food and African responses.

When cooked and ready for serving, small grains were a dark chocolate brown or ox-red in colour. White communities reacted differently upon seeing this African delicacy, and in the early 1940s one settler described this viscous small-grain *sadza* as 'unappetizing.'[190] Another white settler, concerned over the aesthetic appearance of the African plate as exemplified by **Figure 11:** Typical images of African small grain sadza meals eaten with a variety of traditional relishes. commented saying 'it seems to contain a considerable amount of oil…I dare say…Africans eat the most indigestible substances as their relish.'[191] In addition, a white midwife (to be assigned later by the Native Department to work on peasant culinary education in the Matabeleland north district) observed,

> when does one break through the vicious circle of low food production? …the workload of the rural African housewife is tremendous and yet she is the pivot of progress and much educational effort should be directed at her to improve the local home food production and nutrition.[192]

As conversations over both the appearance and nutritional value of African foods grew louder among colonial administrators and ordinary white settlements from the mid-1930s, this drew attention to the essential need to improve African diets, leading to the formalization of a Native Diet Policy by the Native Department by 1941 – primarily targeted towards educating African women in particular on culinary etiquette, to enable them to prepare nourishing and pleasant-looking meals.[193] The lessons taught to African women not only introduced them to a wider variety of ingredients and cooking methods used by white households but together with settler outreach through general dealer stores, increasingly over the 1940s, more and more urban and

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[188] *Ibid*.
[189] Preben Kaarsholm, 'Si Ye Pambili- Which way forward? Urban development, culture and politics in Bulawayo, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 2, 1995.
[190] Kuper et al, *The Shona*, 12.
[191] Martin Meredith, *The past is another country*, 67.
[192] L. Allaart, 'Education for nutrition', *CAJM*, 28, 8, 1982.
[193] Michael Gelfand, 'The African in transition', *CAJM,* 5, 9, 1959, 488.

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rural African homes were aspiring to white ideas of taste and styles.[194] Applauding these developments, one settler wrote in *The Rhodesian Herald* published 16 October 1943,

> The subject of native food and nutrition seems somewhere between common sense, agriculture and medicine. It is often considered a somewhat esoteric and confusing science and very little real attention up to now has been given to its advancement.[195]

For white Rhodesia, this striving to upgrade the cooking and eating practices of Africans were yielding good results. Yet, observations made by physician Michael Gelfand (who later in post-independence Zimbabwe also became Robert Mugabe's physician) on the same African small-grain diet for the period stretching from the mid-1940s attested to how African women did well to feed their families with small grains as these grains provided adequate nutritional value to keep the African alert and working throughout the day.[196] This indicated that African families were alert to the benefits of their traditional diets. Moreover, by adopting Western ideas of cooking and eating, African women and families showed how they were not passive towards what informed their consumption, instead were astute and eager to improve what they ate, as well as reflect on their upward social mobility as epitomised by the access to foods consumed by whites.

Figure 11: Typical images of African small grain *sadza* meals eaten with a variety of traditional relishes.[197]

[194] NAZ 1095/08, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, CNC and Director of Native Development, 1949. By 1956, in the Gwanda District alone, the NC observed that over 600 African women had formally received lessons in home-economics that specialized in cooking, child nutrition and domestic etiquette. Also see Report of the Sec for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner and the Director of Native Development 1956.
[195] L. Allaart, 'Education for nutrition', 176.
[196] Michael Gelfand, *Diet and tradition in African culture*, (Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1971), 45-6.
[197] Images captured by researcher during research visit in Mberengwa and Binga areas in December 2018.

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In 1942 the Godfrey Huggins administration aimed at mitigating the effects of food shortages at the height of World War 2 by setting up the Food Production Committee (FPC), whose primary purpose was to ensure food self-sufficiency among both whites and blacks during the war.[198] According to Machingaidze, during the war years between 1939 and 1945, several settler farmers capitalized on war demand and were exporting their maize at above market value.[199] At home, this cut down on food stocks for local consumption. To attract African participation in bolstering domestic food security, through the Grain Board, the Huggins administration for the first time in grain-growing history offered equal producer incentives and input subsidies to maize producers across the entire agricultural spectrum.[200] However, notably with regards to small-grain production and consumption, this policy inadvertently drew attention away from small grains that were enjoying a vibrant market from emerging local and regional traditional opaque breweries across the main grain-producing districts of the country, as discussed in Chapter Three. The wedge between Africans and small grains was expanded.

However, other women considered the colonial state's presence within the agricultural policy as meddling with African culinary practices, and this greatly impacted women's abilities to exercise their choice in cooking. This too differently shaped African perceptions of their culinary habits. In 1943 the Howman Commission Report on the economic and social conditions of Africans in urban areas characterized as 'a cause for concern' the culinary practices of Africans residing within various urban areas across the country.[201] The report wrongly criticized Africans as having an 'unclear strategy' for food production, tending to blindly follow seasonal food pattern flows to control their eating and dietary habits.[202] They felt African families were exposed to the vagaries of imminent starvation, this report would later in 1947 be used as reference and justification for the importation of a widely disapproved yellow maize meal for Africans from Argentina by the colonial state in the wake of a severe countrywide drought.[203] Moreover, different testimonies by colonial authorities and white settlers emphasized African small-grain culinary meals as 'monotonous and unhealthy' – consisting largely of carbohydrates and lacking in other nutrients such as vitamins and proteins

[198] Masenda, 'The Food Production Committee', 14-16.
[199] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 267-9.
[200] *Ibid*. 16. In the past such incentives as monetary and input loans were only offered to white farmers.
[201] E.D. Alvord, 'The progress of native agriculture in Southern Rhodesia', *New Rhodesia*, 15, 18-19.
[202] A. Masenda, 'The Food Production Committee and state food policy in colonial Zimbabwe during the 1940s', *MA dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 1987, 14.
[203] NAZ, F4021, Council Review: Importation of grain meal for drought in Matabeleland, 1948.

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for a balanced diet, as discussed in Chapter Five.[204] Concomitantly, settler farmers increasingly introduced more expensive foods such as deciduous fruit and different varieties of maize including Rhodesian Hickory King, Salisbury White and Eureka Field corn to Africans, insisting on their consumption for African nourishment.[205] These newly introduced foods looked to divert African attention and incomes in particular away from their favoured savoury small-grain meals and opaque alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks sold by enterprising women across areas with African populations.[206]

It is necessary to note how within the developing black-white relations during this time, some of the ideas on culinary practices shared to African women by colonial authorities were aimed at regulating not only the foods and crops eaten by Africans but also the flow of Africans increasingly occupying 'white' spaces.[207] With an envisaged consequence of self-preservation from 'African contamination' and poor hygiene habits, Schmidt says the colonialists' idea was to curb the spread of food diseases and poor hygiene through teaching Africans how to improve and enjoy their African foods.[208] This concern among the whites was drawn from their numerous encounters with Africans as labours in white industries.[209] Together with the 1943 Howman Commission report, this was a precursor for the crafting of the 1945 Urban Areas Code that delineated the spaces where African small grains and the associated opaque beer could be consumed by outlining restrictions on African urban agriculture, which was widespread across the townships to supplement domestic food reserves.

Moreover, as alluded to in Chapter Five, the assertions by Gelfand on small grains and African diet in general on many occasions left the colonial state conflicted because, on the one hand, these meals ensured workers were healthy and fit to work at a lower cost to both the settler employers and Africans.[210] Yet, on the other hand, in 1945 for instance, the white settler-dominated Rhodesia Farmers' Co-op was anxious that continued consumption of small grains by African families, especially wage labourers on the white commercial agricultural estates

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[204] R.M. Morris, *Report on Public Health for the year 1949*, (Salisbury: Rhodesia Printing and Publishing Company, 1950), 4-6 and Young Farmers Club pamphlet: Meals in a Shona home published 1969.

[205] WR. Carr, Notes on some Southern Rhodesian indigenous fruits with particular reference to their ascorbic acid content, Report to the Nutrition Council, Salisbury, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1957. Also see Weinmann, *Agricultural development*, 39.

[206] Baxter Tavuyanago et al, 'Traditional grain crops', 5-6.

[207] Masenda, 'The Food Production Committee, 15.

[208] Schmidt, *Peasants*, 66.

[209] *Ibid.*

[210] Odlum, *Agricultural*, 7.

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and mines, directed money to African production rather than the market for settler-produced maize.[211] They feared that this would not only stimulate the increased presence of African grains on the grain market but would also destabilize the 'quality' of grain produce in Southern Rhodesia.[212] Thus for white monopoly, there was a need to limit the ties between rural and urban African communities, whereby the former acted as conduits of food transfer into the urban commercial centres, adversely affecting African's reception and consumption of settler-produced maize.[213]

In Salisbury in 1947 the local Department of Agriculture office took to enforcing recommendations made twenty years before by the 1925 Land Commission prohibiting backyard garden vegetables, 'should they bring harm to the horticultural farmers stationed in the nearby plots on the outskirts of the city.'[214] The result was different penalties spread across different African communities. However, beyond the revenue for the state that this move brought about, it further limited the food choices, African families, earning meagre wages could purchase.[215] In turn, Africans responded by increasing their reliance on grain agriculture from the reserves to make up for these resultant shortfalls.[216] By the time of implementation of the Native Land Husbandry Act in 1951, both the living conditions and environment in the African reserves had significantly deteriorated, justifying colonial authorities' need to implement far sterner agricultural conservationism within African areas.[217]

The 1950s opened with sweeping changes within the African reserves, more notably the advent of both black and white agricultural demonstrators paid by the state to regulate land husbandry by teaching African farmers best practices of crop production to improve their diets.[218] By 1955 the training activities by the agricultural demonstrators had increased in the reserves reaching over 2 267 African homes in Belingwe with grain traders handling 106 691 bags of maize in 1955 and 200 761 bags the following year.[219] For Bikita, the NC's 1956 report stated that 'the

[211] Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing, 10.
[212] *Ibid*.
[213] Elizabeth Schmidt, 'Patriarchy, Capitalism and the colonial state in Zimbabwe', *Signs*, 16, 4, 732-756.
[214] 'European agriculture in Southern Rhodesia', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 1948, 1012-9.
[215] Terence Ranger, 'Growing from the roots: Reflections on peasant research in central and southern African', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 1, Special Issue of themes in Agrarian History and Society, 1978, 99-133.
[216] Ncube, 'Peasant production', 14.
[217] Machingaidze, 'Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 3, 1991, 557-588.
[218] Page and Page, 'Wester hegemony', 11.
[219] NAZ, F1095/6, 'Exports of kaffir corn and *munga* during 1955-56.'

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field staff have done very excellent work during the year. With a few exceptions, the work has been appreciated by the people. These results are reflected in the increase in the numbers of master farmers, crop yields and better eating'[220] Of this population, according to Neil Wright and Tobias Takavarasha, an overwhelming majority of the taught participants were women.[221] This equipped many African women with different ideas on mixed cropping, bush fallowing and pyro-culture, which spread their crops and improved agricultural yields, thus permitting them to collect more food seasonally.[222] While initially this was aimed towards improving their household diet, inadvertently these skills equally helped towards improving their crops and their commercial value and opportunities to gain income. Moreover, apart from the 'highly prized' intensive Master Farmer classes administered, ideas on crop diversification were disseminated by the state to black farmers, who were thus enabled to grow a wider variety of crops than they had been exposed to previously.[223] Added to this, they were awarded certification as shown by **Figure 12**, which became a gateway for many to leave the overcrowded native reserves and their associated problems behind. As certified African farmers, they were allowed to purchase land in the established Native Purchase areas – agricultural zones with better soil fertility, and more importantly, whose crops fetched higher prices on the grain market according to the Grain Marketing Board regulations.[224] Historians Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan add how the ability to purchase farms became a matter of prestige among able farmers.[225] Added to this, by the 1940s onwards, as illustrated by **Figure 9** of newspapers such as *The Bantu Mirror,* frequently included columns on how to improve culinary patterns highlighting a mixture of white oriented foods and meats with some of those favoured and afforded by Africans. By encouraging this emerging idea of an 'elite' African farmer, the colonial state was gradually elbowing into the periphery, traditional African agricultural and culinary customs. They were thereby creating a domestic market and resource for settler produce.

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[220] *Ibid*.
[221] Neil Wright and Tobas Takavarasha, 'The evolution of pricing policies in Zimbabwe: 1970s-1980', *Working paper AEE 4/89, Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1989), 21.
[222] Page and Page, 'Wester hegemony', 10-12.
[223] NAZ 1095/08, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, 1956.
[224] Ncube, 'Peasant production', 8.
[225] Henrietta Moore and Megan Vaughan, *Cutting down trees: Gender, nutrition and agricultural change in Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*, (Portsmouth, NH Heinemann, 1994), 145.

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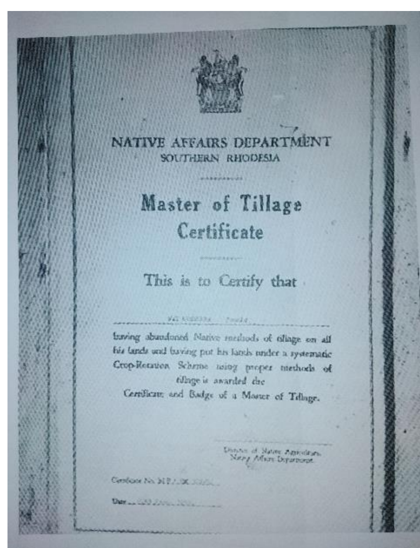

NATIVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Master of Tillage
Certificate

This is to Certify that

having abandoned Native methods of tillage on all his lands and having put his lands under a systematic Crop-Rotation Scheme using proper methods of tillage is awarded the
Certificate and Badge of a Master of Tillage.

Director of Native Agriculture,
Native Affairs Department

Certificate No.

Date

Figure 12: Certificate of Tillage awarded to African Master Farmers by the Native Affairs Department[226]

By 1955, aided by the slow (because of economic limitations imposed on most African women since the 1930s with their settling as reserve labour and not commercial labour) but the growing popularity of mechanized grinders, African food preparation became more efficient, in turn allowing women to explore different small grain textures with greater ease – smooth meal or more crunchy granules.[227] In 1958 one white settler commented how African kitchens were teeming with different flavours, with their meals were composed of a variety of vegetables aesthetically arranged for their eating pleasure.[228] Without a doubt, for those Africans who embraced the use of these innovations including tinned foods, this lightened the task of food preparation, allowing them more time for other chores and tasks.[229]

Yet at the same time, some Africans were reluctant to include some of these new foods and culinary ideas in their diets out of scepticism about 'the white man's food'.[230] For some, there were reservations about both the quality and quantity of food contained within these tinned

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[226] NAZ, 1090/F5, *Munga* and kaffir corn, small grains.
[227] H.S. Keigwin, 'Native development, *NADA*, 1956, 10-11. Although the traditional wooden pestle and rock grinding method continued to dominate, mechanized grinders were spread across several villages, offering a new form of agricultural enterprise for some African farmers who purchased these machines. Charging a small fee, they would offer milling services to African families, who would on occasion when a trading surplus was available, would opt for this option. See Steen, *A time to farm*, 45-51.
[228] NAZ, S482/781/39, Maize, Wheat, Grain etc, 1945-1960, Communication between the Department of Native Affairs and the Secretary for Health, 15 January 1959.
[229] Masenda, 'The Food Production Committee', 110.
[230] McCann, *Stirring the pot*, 64.

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packs, for instance.[231] In comparison to growing their grain and vegetables, these portions were viewed as being inadequate to feed an entire African family.[232] This prompted the need among African families to purchase more food, which was an added financial strain for most low-income African families. Added to this, food enthusiast and author Judy Desmond rightly notes how growing 'modernization' over the 1950s altered the social dialogue that formed an essential part of the African food preparation process.[233] She emphasises that during food preparation African mothers had long found the opportunity to pass on culinary knowledge to their children.[234] As recounted by an elder lady in Bulawayo, growing up she would watch as her mother prepared the meals – for example, learning how to hold and balance the cooking spoon against a boiling pot of *sadza*.[235] Another elder also from Bulawayo humorously shares how preparing especially the evening meal was a moment to bond with her daughters.[236] 'There is very little to teach…when I cook, I don't measure a thing…I just sprinkle and add stuff until I hear the spirit of my ancestors whisper "that's enough child"', she jests.[237] For different families, recipes and pre-prepared meals disrupted this connection, which had been important socially and in creating the intimate bonds within the family.

Conclusion

Located within the broader conversation of the development of African agriculture in Zimbabwe and African cuisine, this chapter examined the social food history of small grains among African families from the early years of white colonization around 1905 until the end of the 1950s in the aftermath of the Land Husbandry Act of 1951. The chapter traced the complex trajectory of small-grain culinary patterns noting how conscious – food and land policies and in some cases, incidental events –drought and famine – contributed to the varying cooking and eating methods by African families. Moreover, in so doing, it showed the changing nature of social relations among black families and their coexistence with white communities and the state over time. Using both primary and secondary sources, the chapter argued how

[231] Pathisa Nyathi, *Beyond Nutrition: Food as a Cultural Expression*, (Bulawayo: Amagugu, 2017), 37.
[232] Masenda, 'The Food Production Committee', 110-12.
[233] Judy Desmond, *Traditional cookery in Southern Africa*, (Cape Town: Books of Africa, 1963), 4-6.
[234] Desmond, *Traditional cookery in Southern Africa*, 4-6. African women used this opportunity to bond with their children, (usually the young girls while the boys often shadowed their fathers) while showing and instructing them on how cook a proper meal – how to cut the onions, tomatoes and vegetables for the relish and how to mould a pot of small grain sadza so that it did not become lumpy and inedible. Valuable lesson like how to measure quantities when cooking in the absence of standardised tools were also shared. Also see Coetzee, *Funa and food*, 34.
[235] Interview with Samukele Mayini, Tshabalala, Bulawayo, 10 December 2019.
[236] Interview with Thatshelwe Zondo, Luveve, Bulawayo, 9 December 2019.
[237] *Ibid*.

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African society, with a particular focus on women, exercised agency through controlling what and how they ate food, within a contested space that continuously aimed at propelling white settler agriculture, in particular, maize over small grains. Africans living in close proximity to 'Whiteness' adopted new culinary methods introduced by colonial settlers and polices, while in some instances others remained using their so-called 'traditional' ways of food preparation and eating. Not uncommon was also a combing of both – traditional methods and new settler ideas, to craft new culinary ideas that suited the prevailing social, economic and cultural realities of African families. By examining Africans' complex relationship with not only food but also the colonial state, this chapter showed that black and white ideas towards African food and culinary practices were not linear nor static and changed over time. Moreover, this mutable relationship impacted the development of not only small grains but of African ideas of food and status. Africans' responses to settler agricultural and culinary initiatives varied from their 'proximity to Whiteness' with some able to leverage this contact and improve on their economic and culinary diversity.

The chapter showed that black and white ideas about African food and culinary practices were not linear nor static but changed over time in response to changing circumstances. Moreover, this mutable relationship impacted the development not only of small grains but of African ideas of status. Africans responses to settler agricultural, cooking and eating practices varied according to their levels of interaction and proximity with white communities. This chapter showed how some were able with greater ease to leverage this contact and improve on their culinary diversity. At the same time, the chapter showed how this equally ushered in new economic prospects as chefs in the industry, for example, or gaining access to sell their grain and food in the more lucrative market spaces. This showed us that food is a dynamic construct and played multiple significant economic and social roles within African society. In reflecting that African food is a tool for social cohesion, this chapter sits comfortably within the growing historiography of global food history.

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Chapter Five

'Balanced meals for better nutrition' but 'Meat makes men cheeky'[1]: Small grains and the nature of African nutrition in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe from c.1950 to 2000.

> At the village primary school before independence, we did not just learn how to speak English, we were introduced to English food even though it was not there. …We sat there, on the dusty floor, listening and wondering what their food looked like. Our mouths salivated when Miss Rwodzi described a picnic basket full of ham and tomato sandwiches, tinned sardines, currant buns, biscuits, meat pies… I imagined myself fully educated one day, *ndafunda zvikuru* [well educated] …getting married and setting the table with forks and knives… I was going to serve everything straight out of Enid Blyton's books. There would be some ham, roast beef…
>
> Dr Sekai Nzenza, ZANU-PF politician, 2019[2]

> Why should the bachelors always be complaining about food when they get the same ration as the married men? Why should I give them meat? It is the one thing that makes them cheeky…when I asked my boys how they were the other day after they had finished their meal in the lands, they said they were dying of hunger!
>
> David Smith, Head of the Agriculture Department, 1967[3]

Introduction

Today, the world over, people are eating more, yet greater numbers are succumbing to nutrition-related ailments.[4] According to the World Health Organization, more than half of Africa's population is at risk of suffering from poor nutrition-related illnesses such as kwashiorkor and marasmus by the year 2030 as a result of poor food policies and inability to secure nutritious food affordably.[5] Globally and in Zimbabwe alike, the need for affordable and nutritious food has fast become an urgent issue for contemporary society.[6] In Zimbabwe, food security – as discussed in Chapter Six – is a pressing and highly contested political and

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[1] L. Allaart, 'Nutrition education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1981', 56-7. *Balanced meals for better nutrition* was the name of an educational film flighted in 1978 in Rhodesia to educate Africans on healthy eating.

[2] Sekai Nzenza, "Our disappearing traditional food", *The Herald*, 12 May 2014, https://www.herald.co.zw/our-disappearing-traditional-food/ Accessed 18 July 2019.

[3] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Southern Rhodesia Agriculture Department Annual Report for 1967.

[4] World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 'FAO -WFP early warning analysis of acute food insecurity hotspots', October 2020, (Rome, 2020), 6. Also see Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The hidden battle of the world food systems,* (Brooklyn: Melville Publishing, 2008), 1.

[5] United Nations Chronicle, 'Feeding the Hungry in Africa: Not All Is Lost', https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/feeding-hungry-africa-not-all-lost, 5 August 2020.

[6] T.S. Jayne *et al*, 'Zimbabwe's food insecurity paradox'; hunger amid potential, in Mandivamba Rukuni *et al*, *Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution revisited*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2006), 526.

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social issue, affecting the state of people's nutrition, health and wellbeing by impacting their physical and cognitive development.[7] At the same time, across Africa, contested ideas about food and nutrition have spurred various social and academic conversations across various disciplines including the agricultural sciences, Anthropology and more recently History. Indeed, African ideas of food and health have been historically embedded within a landscape of formality and informality characterized by generational, natural (environmental) as well as colonial ideas on how to understand and handle food and nutrition matters. The last decade alone has witnessed growing academic and scientific attention devoted to the nature of African food production and eating habits, with a special focus on their impact on African nutrition. Echoing what economist Dickson Vonke describes as the 'nutrition paradox' that describes the asymmetrical relationship between poverty, food consumption and nutrition levels,[8] recent studies on African nutrition have emphasized how African nutrition is a complex interplay of food and the protean social and political factors that shape and influence society in different ways. There is the coexistence of both increased and sometimes improved food consumption amid the declining nutrition status of African families. This chapter examines the development of African nutrition, tracing the role of the state and its impact on African food regimes within a changing economic, political and social milieu.

This chapter argues that the development of African nutrition in Zimbabwe is political. It will extend the earlier conversation on African food and eating patterns from Chapter Four, and examine how African small grains shaped African nutrition trends between two political watershed moments in the history of Zimbabwe, the period after the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 covering the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI – from November 1965) period from up to 2000, at the start of the crackdown of white settler commercial farms by so-called liberation war veterans in Zimbabwe. This chapter places a special focus on the changing political and social forces to show how these shaped Africans' relationship with small grains and influenced African nutrition patterns in Zimbabwe. It will show how despite the nutritional advantages of small grains over other crops and food such as maize, until the late 1960s, the colonial state was reluctant to encourage its consumption among African workers. By the late 1950s, Africans were the primary source for labour across various white settler agricultural and

[7] Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), Zimbabwe Nutritional Survey Report 2018, (Harare: Food and Nutrition Council (FNC), 2018), https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/reports/zimbabwe-2018-national-nutrition-survey-report. Accessed 12 September 2020.
[8] Dickson Vonke, 'The Paradox of Malnutrition in Developing Countries', *An International Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, 5, 2, 19, 2011, 40-48.

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industrial sectors. As such, for largely economic reasons, African nutrition and by extension food crops were a major cause of concern to the different political and economic authorities in the country. It is, therefore, necessary to show how different political regimes responded to issues of African nutrition and the way this impacted on the development of African small grains. This chapter will contend with historian Cynthia Brantley's assertions of the 'the science of nutrition' within British colonial policy towards African nutrition[9], to show that African eating and nutrition ideas triumphed within the mixed and contested spaces of white ideas about so-called 'African traditional' customs combined with economic ideas on what Africans should eat to improve their nutrition and health. This chapter will show how during the period between the 1950s and 2000, the development of small grains was immersed within the shifting discussions of race, politics and food within peasant society between blacks and agricultural and industrial capital.

By examining various government, private philanthropic organizations and African household initiatives and programmes concerning nutrition, this chapter draws upon what historian Diana Wylie poetically describes as Africans 'starving on a full stomach' to trace the impact of various efforts at improving African nutrition in Zimbabwe.[10] Building on Chapters Three and Four, which showed how small-grains production, marketing and eating patterns shaped African society, this chapter will demonstrate how the development of African agriculture and small grains in particular contributed towards African nutrition. It will show how from the early 1960s, African nutrition in Zimbabwe was situated within shifting socio-economic and political conversations on hegemony, whereby different ideas contributed towards addressing the nutritional needs of different social and economic classes. For most African families, rural and urban alike, small grains played a key role in shaping African nutrition.[11]

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[9] Cynthia Brantley, *Feeding families: African realities and British ideas of nutrition and development in early colonial African*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2002), According to Brantley, in British southern Africa, the colonial state developed African nutrition with the sole purpose to exploit African labour for British Imperial crown economic gain in the region. She further underlines that colonial policy paid no attention to African culture and social eating and food production habits, instead relied on white production to sustain African nutrition.

[10] Diana Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 3.

[11] Psyche Williams-Forson, 'Take the chicken out of the Box: Demystifying the sameness of African American culinary Heritage in the US, in Ronda L. Bruotte and Michael A. di Giovine, *Edible identities: Food as cultural heritage*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 93-107. William-Forson argues that for each individual, food holds its own social meaning as well as impacts society differently across space and time.

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The chapter is made up of nine chronological sections beginning with succinct historiography on major themes within conversations on African nutrition. This is followed by different sectional discussions that unpack the nature and development of African nutrition from the 1950s until 2000. Focusing on different themes, these sections show the complex and sometimes intertwined nature of black-white appreciation of small grains until 2000. The chapter uses a combination of primary archival sources and government policy documents from the National Archives of Zimbabwe and the Parliament of Zimbabwe, in addition to secondary evidence. The chapter argues that African nutrition as well as state nutrition policy was a reflection of the turbulent and negotiated relationship that existed between African society, (colonial) capital – mainly mining – and the state (both colonial and post-colonial). This relationship was characterized by changing ideas and attitudes among both blacks and whites towards diet, food and nutrition. This mutable relationship shaped the trajectory of small grains over the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Food, nutrition and history

It has become almost an academic cliché to state that the history of African nutrition is a neglected field. There is a growing body of historical literature – from different schools of thought – that has focused on the subject of African nutrition. Early historical literature such as Rodgers K Molefi, shows how early writers did not pay too much attention to the distinctions within African nutrition or eating patterns, instead primarily focused on whether the African 'people were capable of performing their duties well.'[12] Yet, as food author Renata Coetzee points out, food played an important role in shaping African nutrition and abilities to produce more for their communities.[13] Historiographically, the development of agriculture, food and nutrition coexist within the same space. Historian Todd Leedy points out, in the early 1920s both missionaries and the colonial authorities identified the need to develop African agriculture and food systems to improve their nutritional status.[14] Historian Eira Kramer shows how the development of extension services in African areas not only led to agricultural improvements[15] but culminated in an expansion of African participation in commercial agriculture by the end

[12] Rodgers K Molefi, *A medical history of Botswana*, (Gaborone: The Botswana Society, 1996), 1.
[13] Renata Coetzee, *Funa and food from Africa: Roots of traditional African food culture*, (Durban: Butterworths, 1982), 63.
[14] Todd H. Leedy, 'A Starving Belly Doesn't Listen to Explanations': Agricultural Evangelism in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1900 to 1962', *Agricultural History*, 84, 4, 2010, 479-505.
[15] Eira Kramer, 'The early years: The extension services in peasant agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe, 1925-1929, *Zambezia*, XXIV, II, 1997, 159-179.

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of the 1930s.[16] Fuller Masuku[17] and Eira Punt[18] stress how these agrarian developments were significant in drawing attention to African labour during the depression years and the post-war economic downturn periods. The historiography of African nutrition is indubitably embedded within peasant historiography, yet there still remains an essential need to distinguish 'nutrition' from 'food'. This chapter will demonstrate how although food is essential for nutrition, among some African societies the two are not mutually exclusive.

Different aspects that include the diversity of white and black ideas on African nutrition are covered by early British explorers, administrators and settler writers, including Roger Howman,[19] N. H. Wilson[20] and Michael Gelfand.[21] This conversation added new anthropological material and insights and is extended by post-colonial authors such as theologian Tabona Shoko,[22] historian Diana Wylie,[23] Audrey Richards[24] and Mohammad Torabi. [25] This copious literature traces the various ways in which African nutrition was a part of the social, economic, political and environmental trajectories of African society over the colonial and post-colonial period. Key themes that emerge in this literature include colonial and postcolonial labour policy that viewed Africans as cheap labour that needed to be aided for optimum productivity, and cultural conflicts, pitting so-called 'African tradition' against modern nutritional scientific and sometimes Western opinion studies.

Contributing to a different school of thought, nutrition expert Charlotte Biltekoff highlights that the prevalence of poverty among African families was a major contributor towards

[16] A.K.H. Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia: Old and New Peasant Communities in Karangaland,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975. Also see Punt, 'The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with articular reference to the interwar years', *MA Thesis*, University of Natal, Durban, 1979, 67.
[17] Fuller Masuku, 'A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve, with particular reference to the colonial period 1923 – 1939', *MA Dissertation*, University of Cape Town, 1989, 37-9.
[18] Punt, 'The development of African agriculture, 41-2.
[19] Roger Howman, 'The native labourer and his food', *NADA*, 1942, 34-43.
[20] 'The development of natives: agriculture, food and nutrition', *NADA*, 1923, 87-92.
[21] Michael Gelfand, *The Sick African: A clinical study*, (University of Michigan: Juta, 1944).
[22] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe Health and Well-Being*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)
[23] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*, 31.
[24] Audrey Richards, *Hunger and work in a savage tribe: A functional study of nutrition among southern Bantu*, (London: Routledge, 1932), iv.
[25] Mohammad Torabi, 'The Health Education Monograph: Recent Advances in Nutrition Education', *The Health Education Monograph Series*, 15, 3, 1997.

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unhealthy eating habits and fuelling poor nutrition.[26] Paul Mosley[27] and the economist Claude Lützelschwab[28] attribute the development of poverty within African societies over the colonial period to white (settler) economic interests imposing draconian conditions on the workforce in southern Africa, and Southern Rhodesia in particular. As noted in Chapters Two and Four, the prevalence of drought and underdevelopment in African agriculture as a result of both insufficient tools as well as poor crop preservation methods and repressed markets equally contributed towards low incomes and poor nutrition among African families. Anthropologist Kenneth Wilson adds, in his study on nutrition patterns among rural Zimbabweans, that satisfying the economic interests of white colonialists – which sometimes differed from African economic ambitions, was too a major obstacle towards promoting African nutrition by the Africans.[29]

As noted earlier in Chapter One, there were sometimes misunderstanding over nomenclature and interpretation of the notion of nutrition across various social divides, between African families, whites and the (colonial) state.[30] Nutrition, undernutrition, malnutrition focus on different aspects within discourses of health and eating and have historically been often incorrectly used interchangeably by different studies.[31] Wylie reiterates how these terms emphasize different aspects of the condition of African nutrition.[32] Yet at the same time, colonial impatience and frustrations towards ailing African families often witnessed these varying aspects of nutrition, malnutrition and undernutrition being grouped and it was not uncommon for misdiagnoses by health workers and society towards ailments incurred by some Africans.[33] These were too blamed on the patients.[34] Building on this, this chapter will show how from the 1960s onwards the subject of nutrition increasingly developed as a 'political

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[26] Charlotte Biltekoff, 'What does it mean to eat right: Nutrition Science, Society', in Charles Ludington and Matthew Booker (ed), *Food Fights: How History Matters to Contemporary Food Debates,* (Capel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 124-142.

[27] Paul Mosley, *The settler economies. Studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 135.

[28] Claude Lützelschwab, 'Colonial Settler Economies in Africa', unpublished paper presented at 15th International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, Finland, 21-25 August 2006, 14.

[29] Kenneth B. Wilson, 'Ecological dynamics and human welfare: A case study of population, health and nutrition in Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University College of London, 1990, 116.

[30] Christine Oppong, 'Demographic innovation and nutritional catastrophe: Change, lack of change and differences in Ghananian faily systems', in Goran Therborn (ed), *African families in global context, Research Report, 131*, (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2004), 49-78.

[31] David J. Webster, 'The Political Economy of Food Production and Nutrition in Southern Africa in Historical Perspective', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24, 3, 1986, 447-463.

[32] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*, 156-159.

[33] *Ibid*.

[34] *Ibid*. 181.

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statement' in whats is sometimes argued by scholars including Tendai Nciizah as the 'second colonial occupation'[35], and its concerns were sometimes misunderstood by both African families and the state alike. Contestations were observed whenever African mines clamour for more food from their employers, and similarly, when the state attempted to introduce health and nutrition assistants, African responses were indifferent.[36] It will demonstrate how for some Africans – even some white settlers too – nutrition was viewed as being a matter of eating certain foods with little regard towards the balance of nutrients therein.

Historian John Nott addresses the politics of nutrition within the British Empire, showing how African labour needed to coexist healthily with white labour capital.[37] The British deification of animal protein imposed changes on African diets and food economies.[38] As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, this had the notable social, economic and political outcome of undermining African food habits, while amplifying white (settler) ideology. At the same time changes in African nutrition were necessitated through the advancement of technology, agricultural, food and nutritional 're-education' to Africans increasingly from the early 1920s through agricultural demonstrators and public bioscope films and fairs.[39] Historian Cynthia Brantley acknowledges that by the 1950s British colonial nutritional mindset shifted towards being more pronounced in its focus on shaping African lifestyles while at the same time controlling to improve consumption and child mortality levels.[40] This entailed a drive to teach mainly women and children how to eat what they considered as healthy foods and also assisting with prenatal and postnatal care.[41] However, in Southern Rhodesia, as was the case in Nigeria in the 1940s, the success of these culinary and nutrition teaching initiatives equally depended on their popularity among the African families who attended lessons from the villages and townships.[42]

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[35] Tendai Nciizah, 'The contribution of small grain production to food security in drought prone areas. The case of Zvishavane (2000-2014), *MA dissertation*, Midlands State University, 2014, 43.
[36] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 56-7.
[37] John Nott, ''No one may starve in the British Empire': Kwashiorkor, Protein and the Politics of Nutrition Between Britain and Africa', *Social History of Medicine*, 2019, 1–24.
[38] Cynthia Brantley, *Feeding families*, 56-9.
[39] L. Allaart, 'Nutrition education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1981', *Central African Journal of Medicine* (CAJM), 56-61. Also see Enocent Msindo, ''Winning the hearts and minds': Crisis and propaganda in colonial Zimbabwe, 1962-1979', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 3, 2009, 663-681.
[40] Brantley, *Feeding families*, 23-4.
[41] *Ibid*.
[42] Lacey Sparks, 'Too Many Cooks Spoil the Soup', *Journal of World History*, 28, 3 /4, 2017, 5.

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Developing from this, literature in the new millennium has seen a surge in 'How to' guidelines – disseminating information on how families can improve their nutrition using affordable, colourful and organic foods.[43] Remarks by Global North nutritional scientists such as 'if it tastes good, it's good for you' helped peddle a commercial discourse for 'healthy eating' in the early twenty-first century.[44] However, within this growing commercial food advocacy, natural farm-grown organic African foods such as small grains became a trend from around the late 1990s, part of a movement for reducing obesity, hypertension and cholesterol among lower- to middle-class societies.[45] However, unsurprisingly, as Chapters Six will show, this global craze for what had formerly been described as mundane peasant foods and crops witnessed a culinary switch characterized by the affluent classes wanting more traditional foods to rejuvenate their health and nutrition. According to André Magnan, this not only increased the economic value of peasant crops – unfortunately sometimes beyond the reach of peasant producers,[46] but this commercialization also contributed towards the eroding of the rich social history associated with these crops, as discussed in Chapter Two.[47] But these accounts have also often overlooked the pertinent questions affecting (African) nutrition and the key social role of food and diet in the making of African society. After all, as social commentator Shankar Vedantam succinctly says, 'food builds the nation, eating makes the people.'[48]

Between 1982 and 1990, the *Central African Journal of Medicine*[49] published a series of qualitative and quantitative articles covering various aspects of health and nutrition in Zimbabwe for the colonial and early post-colonial stretch. These articles covered key matters including the education of Africans on nutrition,[50] nutrition and the undernutrition among children and adults – showing undernutrition was a primary outcome of hunger among different

[43] This form of literature has increasingly become popular as cosmopolitan magazines and internet blogs with an equal number of self-published materials being equally popular. Of note is that, in comparison to academic work, this literature has a wider and faster growing audience globally.

[44] Biltekoff, 'What does it mean to eat right', 124-142. Also see Ken Albala, *Eating right in the renaissance*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 82.

[45] W. Mupangwa, S. Walker and S.J. Twomlow, 'Start, end and dry spells of the growing season in semi-arid southern Zimbabwe', *Journal of Arid Environments*, 75, 11, 2011, 1097-1104.

[46] André Magnan, *When wheat was King: The rise and fall of the Canadian-UK grain trade*, (Toronto: UBC Press, 2016), 72.

[47] Joyce Chitja and Gabisile Mkhize, 'Engendering agricultural transformation', in Richard A. Sikora et al (ed) *Transforming agriculture in Southern Africa: Constraints, technologies and policies processes*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 224-5. Also see National Research Council, *Lost Crops of Africa: Grains,* (Washington: Board on Science and Technology for International Development National Academies Press, 1996), vi.

[48] Shankar Vedantam, 'Why Eating the Same Food Increases People's Trust and Cooperation', https://www.npr.org/2017/02/02/512998465/why-eating-the-same-food-increases-peoples-trust-and-cooperation. Accessed 4 May 2020.

[49] The *Central African Journal of Medicine* hereafter *CAJM*.

[50] L. Allaart, 'Nutrition education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1981', *CAJM*, 1982, 56-61.

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families,[51] whereas nutrition was a focus on the distribution of nutrients within African diets.[52] Other themes included the experiences of African and government personnel in nutrition education and outreach programming[53] and recommendations on how to improve African nutrition using the case studies of largely urban populations.[54] This was a significant historiographical turn in the conversation on African nutrition in that it offered more quantitative results thereby showing the great steps towards health and nutrition that had occurred over time, especially in comparison to the 1940s to early 1960s literature. The 1985 Waterston and Loewenson study shows that, contrary to conventional thinking, the rural areas are more susceptible to nutrition problems.[55] In urban areas, Africans tended to suffer the brunt of food shortages and an expensive cost of living thus adversely affecting their regular access to food, ability to maintain healthy diets.[56] Reiterating sentiments expressed in Chapter Four, the present study shows that rural areas have long relied on their locally available domesticated crops and wild ones alike to improve their nutrition. This chapter shows how different colonial labour, agrarian and food policies later redefined the nature of African eating practices impacted negatively on their nutrition.

Initially, in colonial Rhodesia, the development of African nutrition was dictated by British South Africa Company (BSAC) economics aimed at self-enrichment through capitalizing on African labour. Social anthropologists Hilda Kuper et al. underline how this was aided by religious institutions and missionaries that provided essential medical and food and nutrition services to Africans operating within and outside white settler capitalist environs.[57] Paying attention to the development of medical services to Africans, historian Glen Ncube underlines that state policy was not static.[58] In the early years of colonial dominion, stretching towards the 1940s, the amount of assistance provided by the colonial state to medical missions was piecemeal and incidental.[59] But by the 1950s, African health had become a recurring motif with

[51] R. Masanganise and AJR. Waterston, African undernutrition: study in Harare and Chitungwidza, *CAJM*, 29, 7, 1983, 138-141.
[52] Nott, ‘‘No one may starve in the British Empire’, 12.
[53] P. Walsh, ‘Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education’, *CAJM*, 28, 8, 1982, 196-197.
[54] A. J. Waterston and R. Loewenson, Recommendations for Action in urban undernutrition, *CAJM*, 1985, 141.
[55] *Ibid*. 137-145.
[56] *Ibid*.
[57] Glen Ncube, ‘The problem of health of the native’: colonial Rule and the rural African Healthcare question in Zimbabwe, 1890-1930s*, South African Historical Journal*, 64, 4, 2012, 807-826.
[58] *Ibid*.
[59] *Ibid*.

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discussions on Native policy and development.[60] As with the development of several other aspects of the African economy, this chapter demonstrates how the development of African nutrition was in many ways driven by white anxiety about African encroachment into so-called white settler spaces.[61] Environmental historians Wesley Mwatwara and Sandra Swart allude to how early veterinary services were extended to black areas based on settler fears about the uncontrolled mobility of African-owned animals encroaching into settler spaces.[62] Similarly, as earlier noted by Kramer, agricultural extension services were initiated in Native Reserves by Emory Alvord in the hope of curbing the spread of poor practices and improving African agriculture amid growing concerns over hunger and the declining quality of crops clandestinely making their way onto the market.[63] Against this backdrop of a contested space, scholars such as Tinashe Nyamunda argue that the 1960s ushered in new economic dynamics in the wake of economic and trade embargoes imposed on the Ian Smith regime by Britain,[64] which as this chapter argues, shaped African nutrition: when the economy sneezes, African nutrition catches a cold.

There is a historiographical conversation on African responses to the varying social, economic and political events that affected their everyday living. For example, during episodes of dire food shortages, Godfrey Tawedzera's 2010 PhD thesis unpacks the variety of overt and sometimes covert strategies championed by vulnerable poor and hungry communities.[65] A notable strategy was reverting to so-called traditional lifestyles, which included communal food sharing within the rural areas with schemes such as *Dura raMambo* (king's granary)[66],

[60] Clement Masakure, 'One of the most serious problems confronting us at present': nurses and government hospitals in Southern Rhodesia, 1930s -1950', *Historia*, 60, 2, 2015, 109-131.

[61] Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy men, Lux women: Commodification consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

[62] Wesley Mwatwara and Sandra Swart, 'Better breeds? The colonial state, Africans and cattle Quality Clause in Southern Rhodesia, 1912-1930', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42, 2, 2016, 333-350. Collectively they argue that the development of veterinary and vaccination services in African reserves was a result of white settler fears of animal mobility, encroaching from the native reserves into white areas with various contaminations.

[63] Eira Kramer, 'The early years: The extension services in peasant agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe, 1925-1929, *Zambezia*, XXIV, II, 1997, 159-179.

[64] Tinashe Nyamunda, ''More a Cause than a Country': Historiography, UDI ad the Crisis of decolonisation in Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42, 4, 2016, 1005-1019.

[65] Godfrey Tawedzera, 'Vulnerability and resilience in crisis: urban household food insecurity in Harare, Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University of Cape Town, 2010.

[66] *Ibid*, 82-4. As has been emphasized already in Chapter One and Four, this system was not always a based-on benevolence and community member played an active role for some of the assistance that was given to them for example assisting with field cultivation of harvesting and as reward given a portion of grain to eat with their family.

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multi-cropping and as historians Nedson Pophiwa[67] and Tinashe Takuva[68] each observe, increasingly relying on food donations from well-wishers and government handouts. In a similar vein, Wylie's 2001 *Starving on a full stomach*, grapples with how racial politics shaped the formation of food culture in apartheid, South Africa, underlining that factors such as famine and hunger created opportunities for 'superior' and 'inferior' complexities to grow within the ambit of African food history.[69] The outcome was that certain foods such as maize corn, wheat flour and beef assumed higher social and economic status over others – a core argument of this thesis in general – while other crop varieties attracted more traction for their supposedly better taste.[70] Understanding how maize gained preferential treatment over small grains among white settlers, the government and even some Africans contribute towards seeing how food systems were not always linear nor pragmatic in their creation of 'modern nutritional science' on which African workers survived and capitalism operated.[71] With a differential social impact on the development of small grains, this chapter echoes Obert Pimhidzai that by the dawn of the twenty-first century in Zimbabwe, African nutrition was largely defined along economic lines – stratifying the rich and the poor.[72]

From the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA), the 1950s to early 1960s

The history of African nutrition is a complex tale of the 'African everyday' embedded in a complex web of social and religious beliefs and economic necessities. Added to this was state paternalism amid ever-changing agrarian and labour needs in a modernizing state. The post-NLHA period was a continuation of an economic landscape that favoured minority white settlers, with the addition of more stringent land utilization rules for the African farmer.[73] This enabled the state not only to control African labour but by extension have a large influence on what Africans eat and the nature of African nutrition.[74] Noticeably, however, into the Federation decade from 1953-1963, the Federal government was largely reluctant about taking

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[67] Nedson Pophiwa, Healthy migrants or Health migrants? Accounting for the Health care utilization patterns of Zimbabwean migrants living in South Africa, *MA Dissertation*, Witwatersrand University, 2009, 63.

[68] Tinashe Takuva, 'The development of Christian Care Aid in Matabeleland region, 1967-1995', *MA dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2018, 34.

[69] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*, 105.

[70] William Beinart and Lovuyo Wotshela, *Prickly pear: A social history of a plant in the Eastern Cape*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2011).

[71] Wylie, *Starving on a full*, 34-36.

[72] Obert Pimhidzai, The fate of Zimbabwe's children: Insights from changes in nutrition outcomes, 1999-2006'. *A Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit Working Paper Number 67*. (Cape Town: SALDRU, 2011), 21.

[73] Victor E. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Responses', *The international Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 3, 1991, 557-588.

[74] J. A. Groenewald, 'Agricultural and food policy, *Africa insight*, 11, 2, 1981, 115-117.

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proactive steps towards addressing the state of African nutrition.[75] In fact, during this period, the nutrition of Africans was considered a territorial responsibility, administered by each separate colony.[76] Therefore, unlike with the development of agriculture and industry that received Federal attention, the Federal Reserve bank was in many instances reluctant to bankroll the improvement of African nutrition.[77] According to historian Ruth Weiss, African nutrition required a large outlay of capital and technical expertise, while offering few short-term returns on the investment.[78] The climate was not uniform across the Federation. In comparison to the other Federal partners – Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Zambia and Malawi respectively), the Southern Rhodesia government through the Southern Rhodesia Nutrition Council (SRNC) that was established in early 1950 were generally able to achieve substantial milestones towards improving African nutrition such as reduced reported incidences of poor nutrition among Africans.[79] Southern Rhodesia owed a great much to the support from the Godfrey Huggins administration, which was particularly concerned over the increasing interactions and probable pitfalls between blacks and whites in Southern Rhodesia than any other federal member.[80] Between 1956 and 1962, the Huggins administration was well invested financially as well as in human health and nutrition education and monitoring personnel in various industrial and agricultural works in Southern Rhodesia.[81]

While administrative red tape across the Federal administrations was a major shortcoming of the Federal era, another key limitation at improving African nutrition was the widespread tendency in some colonial quarters in Southern Rhodesia to regard nutrition simply as an individualised health problem.[82] Yet the influx of African farmers shifting from food crop production to cash crops in response to the NLHA and the growing regional and international demand for crops such as cotton, tobacco and maize showed the importance of agriculture in improving African health.[83] Thus by 1958 repeated recommendations by various Native

[75] Brantley, *Feeding families*, 99-103.
[76] *Ibid*.
[77] Michael Gelfand, 'The African in transition', *Central African Journal of Medicine,* 5, 9, 1959, 488.
[78] Ruth Weiss, *Zimbabwe and the new elite,* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 118-120.
[79]James Duminy, 'Scarcity, government, population: The problem of food in colonial Kenya, 1900-1952, *PhD Thesis*, University of Cape Town, 2018, 19-21.
[80] Catherine Janet Valentine, 'Settler Visions of Health: Health Care Provision in the Central African Federation, 1953-1963', *PhD Thesis*, Portland State University, 2017, 60.
[81] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 462.
[82] Richard Gray, *The two nations: Aspects of the development of race relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1960), 67-9.
[83] Michael John Drinkwater, 'The State and agrarian change in Zimbabwe's communal areas', *PhD Thesis*, University of East Anglia, 1988, 220.

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Administrators including WR Carr a senior officer in the SRNC was to place 'nutrition' under the wing of the Ministry of Agriculture with a special office for the task.[84] In this vein, under the Ministry of Agriculture, government agencies such as the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) became key stakeholders in the development of African nutrition. This had a different cross-cutting impact on African agriculture. As noted in Chapter Three, for example, African small grains (and sorghum in particular) were only accepted for formal marketing by the GMB in 1954, following growing white farmer interest in this crop in response to the growing demand for fodder locally and abroad.[85] Consequently, by early 1954 the GMB started marketing African small grains from previously restricted areas such as Zone B and C areas populated by African farmers to meet up this growing demand.[86] However, as shown by **Map 3**, (even by 1988) the distribution of grain depots remained largely uneven, concentrated across the Mashonaland region where most white farmers required these grains for much of the colonial period. As a result, Therefore, this meant, that Africans incurred more costs trying to trade their grain on the lucrative markets, obtaining smaller rewards from this trade.[87]

Admittedly, the African population in the Mashonaland region was on average higher than that in the drier arid Matabeleland and Midlands regions, and also concomitantly more involved in crop production, with the Midlands and Matabeleland regions primarily focusing on animal husbandry due to changeable climatic conditions,[88] which accounts for this depot distribution. Yet **Map 4** shows how historically, the Matabeleland region has been more vulnerable to drought with incidences of malnutrition, as recorded by the Global Nutrition Initiative in a joint food and nutrition longitudinal survey of Zimbabwe.[89] These areas are in constant need of assistance to feed themselves. However, from the 1930s onwards, most white maize farms were concentrated in the Mashonaland region and the construction of depots certainly benefitted these areas. This exacerbated the already unequal distribution of food and nutritional disparities across the country.[90] Although, food was constantly distributed and transported via rail and

[84] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 462

[85] NAZ, ZBJ1/1/1, Department of Agriculture, Report on European agriculture by Agricultural Development Council, for 1968-1971.

[86] Lindiwe. Khumalo, 'The development of the small grain industry in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1963', *BA Honours dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2015, 31.

[87] *Ibid*, 33.

[88] Lovemore Zinyama and Richard Whitlow, 'Changing Patterns of Population Distribution in Zimbabwe', *GeoJourna*l, 13, 4, 1986, 365-384.

[89] Complied using data collected from the Global Nutrition Initiative, 'Global Nutrition Report: Zimbabwe', http://www.globalnutritionreport.org/zimbabwe, Accessed 05 November 2020

[90] N. Amin, 'Maize production, distribution: policy and the problem of food security in Zimbabwe's communal areas', *DPP Working Paper Series*, 11, The Open University, Milton Keynes, 1988, 11.

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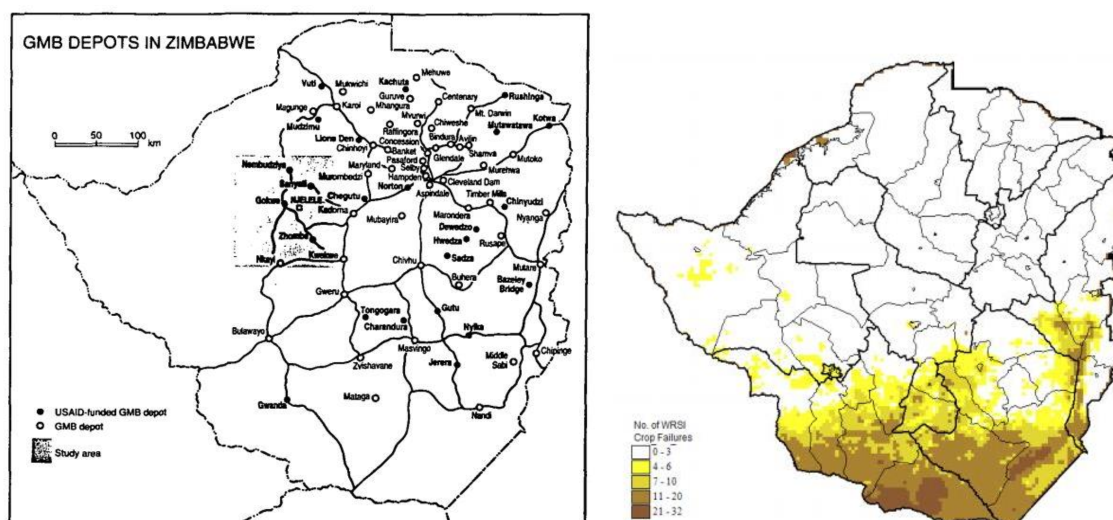
road across the country, as Chapter Six will show, this harmed the cost of grain in these receiving areas. Increasingly throughout the 1960s GMB depots remained concentrated in the Mashonaland region in response to the growing grain trade by both white and African farmers, benefitting both whites and some African farmers, mainly those certified as Master farmers.[91] However, by this time most African families in Matabeleland South and North were no longer suffering from grain shortages or poor nutrition to the dire extent shown by earlier statistical evidence by the government.[92] Instead, medical expert Michael Gelfand in his 1976 book, *Survival values of an African culture*, recorded how African families in the Matabeleland region that relied largely on small grains enjoyed better harvests during the post-World War Two years and had diets that were measurably more nutritious in comparison to those who relied on maize.[93] This and other early work such as *The sick African*[94] by Gelfand were received with mixed feelings from varying economic interests within the state as observed in the next section.

Map 3: Grain Marketing Board Depots distribution in Zimbabwe by 1988,[95]

Map 4: Abridged image on the distribution of drought-prone areas in Zimbabwe.[96]



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[91] Trevor Ncube, 'Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1986: An overview,' *Henderson Papers 72*, 29.

[92] Amin, 'Maize production', 13.

[93] Michael Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival values of an African culture*, (Gweru: Mambo Press), 1976, 67-73. Also, as mentioned in Chapter One and Six, the Matabeleland region was dry and hence concentrate largely on small grain production as compared to maize.

[94] Gelfand, *The Sick African.*

[95] Ned Breslin, 'USAid, the state and food insecurity in rural Zimbabwe, the case of Gokwe', *Witwatersrand University African Studies Institute Seminar Paper 333*, 1993, 4.

[96] Global Nutrition Initiative, 'Global Nutrition Report: Zimbabwe', http://www.globalnutritionreport.org/zimbabwe, Accessed 05 November 2020.

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Formalising Nutrition: State paternalism and the development of small grains

Concomitant dry spells, droughts and increasing poverty among Africans loudening the voices of citizen unrest both in the rural and urban areas. After the 1952 food riots in Salisbury for example, there was a stern need for the colonial state to revisit its policies towards feeding African families. The work of Gelfand in a great way influenced the government to re-examine the existing disproportional distribution of food among African populations by the early 1960s. It prompted tense conversations between chief personnel representing labour, the health sector and the agriculture departments within the Government Advisory Committee on the viability of African labour and commodity markets strained by food and nutritional deficiencies. In early 1962 the Government Advisory Committee recommended the formation of an inter-ministerial organization to undertake surveillance of all matters about nutrition.[97] Its main thrust was to co-ordinate ministerial findings, strategize recommendations and implement activities to cover the region of the Federation.[98] Noteworthy was the joint coordination towards addressing African nutrition by the three-member states, although they would disband the following year with the exit of Nyasaland in 1963.

In June 1962 the high-level office, the Nutritional Council of the Federation was formed with principal personnel from the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Economics, Commerce and Industries, Treasury, Education and Local government.[99] Noteworthy was the high number of African office workers, policy implementors and field officers working with African grassroots communities.[100] This was targeted at getting a wider African appreciation and participation in the development of nutrition policy. The primary idea was to create a council that moved away from the previous rhetoric of doing ‘nothing more than collecting information’ to being a proactive entity in the day-to-day monitoring of African nutrition not only in the workspaces but at their homes too. Within each territorial subcommittee, local authorities were engaged and in Southern Rhodesia, the Rhodesia National Farmers Union, youth organizations such as the Young Farmers Club, African Welfare Societies and local specialists in agricultural economics and nutrition were consulted and added to the local board.[101] In a significant way, as will be shown later in this chapter, this inclusion enabled colonial authorities to have a better

[97] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, ‘The development of the economic resources, 1962, 462.
[98] *Ibid*.
[99] *Ibid*, 465-7.
[100] *Ibid*.
[101] *Ibid*.

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appreciation of African perceptions towards food and nutrition. Among their multiple tasks, this board was primarily instructed to improve the state of nutrition not only of the country but the African population in particular, 'because they form an immeasurable part of the nation's economic plan.'[102] Other duties included:

a) Collecting nutrition information, examine the problems and effectiveness of existing bodies dealing with the subject.
b) Review legislation covering the nutritional aspects of health and agriculture;
c) Coordinate work of departments in the sphere of nutrition and peasant agriculture.
d) Foster intimate contact with the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and African families and peasants.
e) Establish sub-committees to deal with the scientific aspects of food production, technology, marketing and education in nutrition.
f) Establish a special centre to study nutrition and fundraise to provide these resources.

In terms of these guidelines, the state was in a strategic position not only to monitor the production and flow of food among African families but also to take up a grand opportunity to analyse and improve the nutritional state of their labour force and reservoir. Through this committee, as will be demonstrated as the chapter unfolds, the state was able to monitor the African diets in the workplace and by extension at a household level too. This not only enabled the colonial state to obtain a sturdier workforce but an African population with good nutrition too.

The taskforce's first quarterly review in September 1962 coincided with the 'hungry season' (the period before harvesting around March, often also when grain resources are significantly low and waiting upon new harvests), with aspects b and d above under close scrutiny for their role in informing the development of ancillary sectors within colonial agriculture and industries. Annually, as seen earlier in Chapter Three, by the time the cultivation season approaches (from around mid-October into November intensifying throughout December), African granaries would be nearing depletion.[103] This increased the risks of food insecurity and left many families with insufficient reserves vulnerable to hunger and exposed to poor nutrition. The GMB was thus a main source of grain to cover them through until the next harvest in April the following year.[104] However, unexpectedly and disappointingly in 1962, the Nutritional Council indicated that the GMB did not have adequate reserves to sufficiently cover

[102] *Ibid*.
[103] Ephias Makaudze, David A. Bessler and Stephen W. Fuller, 'A time series analysis of Zimbabwe's corn sales to the Grain Marketing Board, *Development Southern Africa*, 15, 3, 1998, 413-427.
[104] *Ibid*.

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the long span of the annual hungry season.[105] The primary factor for this was low trading with local farmers due to low grain prices offered by the state through the GMB.[106] There was an urgent need to improve grain sales to the GMB, which would mean increased trading with African farmers, even those from non-GMB grain trading areas – Zone C to E areas.[107] In theory, this offered reprieve to many African farmers growing various grains. However, grain production by black farmers was low, triggered by an earlier pronouncement of a comparatively high market price for cotton by the Cotton Company in July, leading to an increase of black farmers abandoning both small grain and maize for cotton cultivation.[108] In the short term, for a while African farmers were able to earn money to buy food during seasons of good market prices for their cotton; however, this was short-lived and in 1963 cotton prices fell as a result of over-production.[109] Coupled with low farmer dedication to food crop production, this hampered food supplies and concomitantly African nutrition.[110] Responding to this distress, some African traditional leaders called upon their communities to shun the 'white man's crop' – cotton – and revert to growing small grains to improve their nutrition and livelihoods.[111]

On 16 October 1962, the Nutritional Council gazetted two public proclamations that shaped African nutrition for the following few years. Firstly, it observed how in most areas where maize was being grown by Africans in Southern Rhodesia, sorghum and millet were equally viable.[112] Moreover, the Council noted how farmers were aware of the low commercial market demand for small grains, it cost more to produce a bag of small grains compared to maize.[113] Yet in most areas in the southwestern parts of the country, maize yields were low because of unpredictable weather conditions and this negatively affected African access to affordable

[105] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 462.
[106] *Ibid*.
[107] Eric K. Makombe, 'Agricultural commodity pricing policy in Colonial Zimbabwe with particular reference to the settler maize industry, 1950-1980', *MA thesis*, University of Zimbabwe, 2005, 10.
[108] Charles Mbwanda and David Rohrbach, 'Household national food security in Southern Africa', in Godfrey Madimu and Richard Bernsten (ed) *Household national Food security in southern Africa*, (Harare: Food research in Southern Africa), 125-144.
[109] Mark Nyandoro, Land and agrarian policy in colonial Zimbabwe: Re-ordering of African society and development in Sanyati, 1950-1966', *Historia*, 64, 1, 2019, 111-139.
[110] Simeon Maravanyika. 'Shun the White Man's Crop': Shangwe Grievances, Religious Leaders and Cotton Cultivation in North-Western Zimbabwe', *Local Subversions of Colonial Cultures*, (London: Palgrave, 2016), 187-209.
[111] *Ibid*.
[112] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 462.
[113] *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 'African grain production, 1963-6', 679-703.

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food.[114] The Nutritional Council, therefore, announced new prices for African grain, both small grains and maize marked up by 50 cents.[115] In essence, the council lobbied the GMB not to pay for local sorghum and maize at a price lower than the floor price of 335 cents and 295 cents per bag for Grade KR1 (best grade) maize and flour.[116] This was aimed at encouraging increased growing and consumption of local small grains by Africans, especially those in dry areas where maize was failing. Also, this reduced pressure by the GMB to source and supply maize grain across the country, especially in remote areas without accessible transport networks. Moreover, this policy was a positive step towards improving food security and nutrition among black families, apart from the incidental outcome of reducing pressure on white farmers who were by the early 1960s increasing investments in expert agriculture.[117] As observed by numerous letters sent to the *Bantu Mirror* and some Native Department meeting minutes, this renewed interaction between the GMB and African farmers was widely welcomed.

This policy was continued by the newly formed UDI colonial government under Ian Douglas Smith in November 1965. Following this controlling of sorghum prices by the GMB, small grains soared to their highest ever price for the decade in 1965, at 346 cents per bag.[118] African families with good crops who traded with the GMB, intermediaries and private millers alike enjoyed the good markets, which in turn improved their standard of living and diets.[119]

The other announcement more directly impacted nutrition. It spelt out the food and quantity portions to be served to African workers in government sector jobs, emphasizing calorie distribution based on the intensity of labour. Each worker, classified according to race and rank, was to be served two standard meals a day with an option of a third meal if they operated an extra shift.[120] In addition, each meal was to be composed of at least two main nutrient forms. Nutrient and food groups were selected and arranged to include main starches of grain and

[114] Anna Katharina Hildegard Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia: Old and New Peasant Communities in Karangaland*, (International African Institute, 1975), cited in Eira Punt, 'The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia', *MA dissertation*, University of Natal, 1979. 152.

[115] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 463. It must be remembered that grain (maize) prices for Africans were always lower than those sold by white farmers to the GMB. Refer to grain pricing in Chapter Three. Also see Makombe, 'Agricultural commodity pricing policy in Colonial Zimbabwe', 23-26.

[116] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1963-67, 345.

[117] Drinkwater, 'The State and agrarian change', 167.

[118] Production figures are illustrated in Table 31 in *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 1967, 324.

[119] Trevor Ncube, 'Small grain production and marketing in Zimbabwe', *Henderson Papers*, 21.

[120] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The development of the economic resources, 1962, 463-6.

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grain products, protein from milk and milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, and edible insects, fish, while vegetables and vegetable products, fruits, nuts and seeds provided vitamins and protein alike. Fats, oils, sugar and syrup, and beverages such as tea covered the other essential nutrients.[121]

For breakfast and supper, allocations were 6 oz, while lunch was more diverse with 12 oz being fed to the workers. **Table 5** below shows the food allocations under this ration provision.[122]

Table 5: Diet allocation for African workers in government sector employment[123]

Breakfast	Mealie-meal porridge Bread slices +jam Tea +Sugar+ milk
Lunch	Sadza, rice or samp + meat+ mealies+ tea (occasionally with milk)
Supper	Sadza + meat

This diet was aimed at providing a balance in African nutrition in the workplace, with the Council arguing that other foods such as fresh vegetables and legumes would be obtained from their homes.[124] In addition, the combination of African foods was aimed at addressing deficiencies, because as Gelfand observed, the African diet was 'balanced, nutritious, and not abundant in refined sugars and cholesterol as is the Western diet.[125] Yet, among Africans, they regarded their traditional foods and diet as rich in fibre, with those living on it rarely suffering from peptic ulcers, acute appendicitis, gallstones or even cancer of the large bowel.'[126] The Council also held that other foods such as beans, groundnuts and small grains that were grown on a subsistence (non-commercial) basis by African households would complement their diets.[127] Yet at the same time, even for the urban poor, the Council was sure not to overly encourage small-grains production in areas such as Bulawayo, because it posed an economic

[121] *Ibid*.
[122] *Report of the Advisory Committee,* 'The development of the economic resources, 1963-67, 345.
[123] *Ibid*.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125] Gelfand, *The Sick African*, 78-82.
[126] *Ibid*.
[127] Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia*, 79-83.

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threat to white settler maize production and markets in the city.[128] At the same time, white families in the city were stressing how various aspects including poor hygiene during harvesting and milling, and drunkenness associated with small-grain production, remained impediments to the transformation of the African into an ideal 'elite' citizen.[129]

Despite interventions by the Nutritional Council to improve African diets, historian Tapiwa Madimu states that white capital was reluctant to invest in the food needs of African labour.[130] Despite the publishing of a diet schedule, some white establishments did not adhere to it and most meals typically remained unbalanced comprising of different layers of the same nutrients – colloquially passed over as 'starch on starch' diets.[131] At their workstations, African workers mainly ate *sadza* with *indumba* (these could be either sugar beans, cowpeas, lentils) and occasionally with green vegetables and cabbage often sourced from white farmers located in the plots around the city.[132] Increasingly over the decade into the 1970s, these meal servings persisted.[133] In parallel with South Africa over the apartheid years, the Rhodesian government was similarly adopting what Wylie aptly describes as a policy of 'denial of state pauperism' towards African lives.[134] As shown in **Table 6**, between 1964 and 1966, this contributed to tremendous increases in cases of workers being hospitalized as a result of nutritional deficiencies, before dipping to a decline in 1967 with the reshuffling of the Nutrition Council, which adopted a more stringent approach towards addressing African nutrition, as discussed in the following section. Meanwhile, between 1964 and 1966, the number of reported incidences of workers slackening during their duties became widespread, possibly because of a combination of diet-induced lassitude and expressions of protest

[128] Busani Mpofu, 'No Place for 'Undesirables': The Urban Poor's Struggle for Survival in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 1960-2005', *PhD Thesis*, University of Edinburgh, 2010. 31-2.
[129] City of Bulawayo, Annual Reports of the Medical Officer for the years 1963, 9.
[130] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Farmers, miners and the state in colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1895-1961', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2017, 168-170.
[131] Abraham Mwadiwa *et al*, 'Traditional versus commercial food processing techniques- A comparative study based on chemical analysis of selected foods consumed in rural Zimbabwe', *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 2, 2, 2012, 1-16. Although the other starch in the statement often referred to a protein variety such as sugar beans, the primary argument was centred on the carb content of the food that held a similar effect as that carried out by starches.
[132] Mpofu, 'No Place for 'Undesirables'42. Also see Pathisa Nyathi, *African food*, (Bulawayo: Amagugu Publishers, 2020) 12.
[133] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 193.
[134] Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach*, 220.

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at the poor feeding routines.[135] Indeed, it was not uncommon for workers to pose displeasure through food protests especially when it adversely affected their physical wellbeing.

Table 6: Africans hospitalized because of malnutrition in a district in Harare.[136]

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
1963	8	5	2	4	5	3	10	10	12	3	6	4	72
1964	3	5	4	3	5	7	5	11	13	26	47	13	142
1965	17	10	9	4	4	5	3	4	10	22	7	10	105
1966	9	3	14	11	3	8	10	10	12	11	3	3	94
1967	3	3	5	3	3	1	4	-	4	3	7	8	43
1968	5	4	2	3	1	3	5	1	3	4	4	4	40
1969	2	4	1	0	2	3	3	1	-	-	3	-	19
1970	-	3	2	2	2	4	1	3	2	7	7	4	37
1971	2	2	5	2	3	4	-	3	1	4	3	-	30
1972	1	-	1	1	5	4	0	2	1	3	2	-	20
1973	4	6	2	4	2	2	9	2	3	3	5	3	45
1974	5	2	2	2	4	2	5	5	3	4	2	1	37
1975	3	-	5	-	1	1	3	2	1	1	3	1	23
1976	4	-	2	1	1	4	2	-	-	1	-	-	15
Months Total	64	47	56	40	41	51	60	54	65	92	99	53	

For Africans, the early years of the UDI impacted their nutrition in different ways. As noted earlier, by the mid-1960s African workers' in government industries such as the railways recorded improvements in the state of their nutrition. Conversely, on the cusp of UDI in 1965, despite its resourcefulness, the Smith regime was reluctant to expand nutritional lessons to Africans not employed by the state, inheriting the mindset of the Federal era that placed a lower priority on blacks outside their direct economic field of operations.[137] Its

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[135] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 193-4. Also see E. Baker Jones, 'Some nutrition problems in central Africa', *CAJM*, 2, 2, 1956. Jones observes how African dissatisfaction towards 'native diet' imposed in the industry created food riots in some areas during the 1940s and 50s.

[136] *Ibid*.

[137] Mpofu, 'No Place for 'Undesirables', 62.

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primary focus was on those it felt were making a 'reasonable economic contribution towards growing the economy.'[138] Added to this, Patel remarks how rural populations, had little trouble with sourcing food, relying heavily on their crops and their local natural environments.[139] Consequently, the task of monitoring and improving the nutrition of the largely rural and urban unemployed population was left to various religious institutions such as the Methodist and Catholic churches, and the ubiquitous community rotating saving and credit associations and burial societies that operated in those areas.[140]

Notwithstanding the rigorous awareness strides towards improving African incomes and nutrition that the religious and social groups made, without the support and involvement of the state, their impact was geographically limited and they also yielded poor results often because of financial limitations.[141] According to Sister P Walsh, a medical officer operating from St Theresa's clinic in Matabeleland South, notable improvements within household eating habits and nutrition were only realised around the mid-1960s following the Provincial Agriculturalist Officer conducting door-to-door community outreach campaigns funded by the state.[142] The Provincial Agriculturalist Department, much like the agricultural demonstrators, was actively involved with introducing African families to cultivated foods that would improve their diets.[143] Such foods included small grains, which by the 1950s were facing declining acreage in this and other regions – although they remained a common staple across the Matabeleland region – owing to the growing African appreciation for maize as the main staple, despite its sporadic agricultural performance.[144]After all, 'maize is the prime crop which they know and from which they obtain a definite price.'[145] Yet these unpredictable climatic cycles and low maize yields impacted adversely on food supply and affected nutrition.[146]

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[138] *Ibid*.
[139] Patel, *Stuffed and Starved*, 23.
[140] Leila Paterl *et al*, 'Indigenous welfare and community based social development: Lessons from African innovations', *Journal of Community Practice*, 20, 1-2, 2012, 12-31. Also see Ben Madondo, 'Community development: A quiet evolution from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, *Community Development Journal*, 20, 4, 1985, 293-298.
[141] NAZ, MS418/6/6, Grains and GMB, *Annual Report of the Provincial Agriculturalist for Matabeleland*, 1963, 24-31.
[142] Sister P. Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', *CAJM*, 28, 8, 196-7,1982.
[143] *Ibid.*
[144] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 417.
[145] Punt, 'The development of African agriculture', 155-6. It must be remembered that unlike small grains, maize had was being formally marketed by the GMB, while only sorghum was controlled by the GMB albeit with an unclear pricing policy until the early 1970s. Refer to Chapter Three on Challenges and contradictions.
[146] Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition', 198.

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To mitigate recurring hunger from low maize yields, different missionary groups and the state participated collectively in the distribution of a variety of nutrient-rich foods to African families.[147] Agricultural economist Carl K. Eicher notes how these foods were similar to those consumed by labourers in the city.[148] He argues that these similarities were a result of the state wanting to both satisfy white agricultural food crop producers as well as combat African hunger simultaneously.[149] At the same time, the Home Economics Office (HEO) that had operated during the Federal years under the Federal Public Health and Nutrition Department was resuscitated in August 1966 to be in charge of equitable food distribution across rural areas.[150] It was tasked with creating and coordinating a food and agricultural record that would bridge food supplies during the gap between agricultural seasons. In addition to this, it was responsible for providing monthly reports on the nutritional status of African families in both rural and urban areas, with a special emphasis on monitoring food consumption trends.[151]

As part of the responsibilities, the Home Economics Office was to work more closely with women, whom different collective and independent surveys by the Departments of Health and Agriculture had highlighted as being the primary caregivers and responsible for food provision in African homes.[152] While this was largely true for rural families, within most of the main industries including the railways, the textile industry, and sunflower and groundnut refineries, the chefs employed were male.[153] Effectively, this meant that for conversations concerning nutrition to be effective, they needed to be spread across gender boundaries. This was an unanticipated task for the HEO. However, as will be shown in sections below, through various agricultural, hygiene and food campaigns with African families – despite unchanged financial allocations for food

[147] Carl K. Eicher, 'Flashback: Fifty years of donor aid to African agriculture', *Revised version of a paper presented at an International Policy Conference 'Successes in African Agriculture: Building for the Future'*, Pretoria, South Africa, December 1-3, 2003.
[148] *Ibid*.
[149] *Ibid*.
[150] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The economic development of African agriculture and area: Matabeleland and Midlands, 1966-7. During the Federal decade, the Home Economic Office was very inactive because of limited government support to initiate any activities. They were however key players during the formulation of the diet schedule for worker in government service in 1962.
[151] *Ibid*. Also see RP Walker, 'Eating for living and longevity in South African cultural Groups, *CAJM,* 27, 9, 1981.
[152] *Ibid*.
[153] Rudo Gaidzanwa, 'Women and land in Zimbabwe: State, democracy and gender', Arrigo Pallotti and Corrado Tornimbeni, *State, land and democracy*, (New York: Ashgate, 2015), 149-169.

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purchases for workers throughout the 1960s, as noted in **Table 6** – nutritional improvements were being made with reduced cases of hospitalizations.[154] Likewise in African homes outside their work stations, different periodic reports compiled by the Department of Health in 1968 noted improvements in the state of the African nutrition at household levels.[155] As observed in Chapter Four, African women showed great agility in food production, improvising on their diets, increasingly preparing their everyday small grains in various ways by incorporating new culinary techniques, for example, mixing with bread, corn or pumpkin to enrich both tastes and nutritional value.[156]

'No one may starve in the British Empire'[157]: Political grain and African nutrition.

On 17 December 1965 Britain imposed economic sanctions on the Ian Smith regime. Economically and socially, this presented several challenges to both black and white communities concerning nutrition. For example, by August 1966 African food rations dwindled significantly because of oil embargos that both dampened production and the transportation of food across the country's various districts.[158] For most Africans, this meant not only reduced portions but a diet switch to cheaper and lower-quality foodstuffs and this adversely impacted their nutrition.[159] Moreover, although by the inception of sanctions, the state's economic policy of import substitution was already in effect on a large scale, to further protect the white Rhodesian economy, workloads for African workers increased to counter the economic decline. T. Skålnes says different mainstream industries such as the railways and public works administered by the municipalities retrenched workers on a large scale owing to strained markets, yet at the same time made up for this by increasing the workload of the remaining workers with no additional incentives. Other industries resorted to increasing working hours as some increased the output expectations from each worker.[160] Although these new workloads sat unpleasantly with the African proletariat, their continued consumption of

[154] *Report of the Advisory Committee*, 'The economic development of African ,1966-7. 167.
[155] Paxton Chikanza *et al*, 'Health status of farmworker communities in Zimbabwe', *CAJM*, 27, 1981, 88.
[156] *Ibid*.
[157] M. Purcell, 'The Gold Coast Government, the Colonial Office, and Nutrition: Facts of an Astonishing Colonial Episode, *Letters to the Editor'*, West Africa, 4 December 1943, p. 1095 in John Nott, ''No one may starve in the British Empire': Kwashiorkor, Protein and the Politics of Nutrition Between Britain and Africa, *Social History of Medicine*, 2019, 1–24.
[158] NAZ, F1075/103, GMB grains during UDI, 'Agricultural Economics report for the period ending August 1966', Secretary for Native Development, Also see Robert McKinnell, 'Sanctions and the Rhodesian Economy', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 7, 4, 1969, 559-81.
[159] *Ibid*.
[160] T. Skålnes, 'Economic Nationalism during UDI, 1965–79', in *The Politics of Economic Reform in Zimbabwe. International Political Economy Series*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 56-57.

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small grains often worked against them as they were viewed as physically fit and well to conduct their duties.[161]

African complaints grew louder.[162] However, in 1967, as Agricultural officer, C.O. Oates and David Smith, the head of the Agriculture Department, received mounting complaints of hunger from both rural and urban sectors, they remained convinced that not all African cases of hunger and malnutrition were genuine.[163] Their views were confirmed by a report early in the same year to the Nutritional Council by the Rhodesian National Farmers Union that more and more from the mid-1960s there seemed to be a never-ending habit among African workers to try and 'put one over', never missing an opportunity to augment their food ration by taking two portions during meal times.[164] In response, Smith asked:

> Why should the bachelors always be complaining about food when they get the same ration as the married men? Why should I give them meat? It is the one thing that makes them cheeky…when I asked my boys how they were the other day after they had finished their meal in the lands, they said they were dying of hunger![165]

On behalf of the railways, Secretary for Commerce and Industry, D.H. Cummings noted how workers had repeatedly confronted him over the size of their ration, yet 'they gorge themselves in one grand gesture and a few days later complain they have no meat…a large man requires more calories than a small one…they are small!'[166]. However, while the state doubted the veracity of the workers' claims of hunger, behind closed doors the Food and Nutrition Council argued how government officials assigned to allocate food rations to African workers held little knowledge of how to construct balanced diet rosters and how to distribute food equitably among the workers.[167] They noted how several supervisory positions were held by unskilled white and sometimes black personnel, and their ineptitude and even corruption often countered the imperial principle that 'no one may starve in the British Empire.'[168] Continued government malfeasance in providing African food supplies impacted adversely on their nutrition and the

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[161] NAZ ZCF 1/1/1 Commissions and Committees. Native Labour Supply Committee of Inquiry- Disputes and complaints, September 1967.
[162] *Ibid*.
[163] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Annual Report for Agriculture Department, 1967, 6. Also see G.K. Garbett, 'The Rhodesian Chiefs Dilemma: Government Official or Tribal Leader?', *Race*, 8.2, 1966, 113.
[164] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Annual Report for 1967, 6.
[165] *Ibid*.
[166] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Minutes of National Nutritional Council, 1967 in Advisory Board Annual Report for 1967.
[167] A. Masenda, 'The Food production Committee and State policy in colonial Zimbabwe during the 1940s', *MA dissertation,* University of Zimbabwe, 1987, 21.
[168] Nott, ''No one may starve', 1–24.

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work they produced. Moreover, it was driving a wider wedge between Africans and their consumption of small grains, which as noted in Chapter Four, was a psychological link with home.[169]

In 1968 the Department of Agriculture carried out a nutritional survey on different foods and crops eaten within the country, with particular attention devoted to the foods consumed by African labourers. Findings as displayed in **Figure 13** showed the nutritional advantage that small grains held over maize. The Food and Nutrition Council noted that most African diets at home included a variety of other foods such as rice, bread and potatoes.[170] Yet, despite this wider selection, foods remained concentrated on starch nutrients over others and the diet thus remained largely unbalanced. As also shown in Chapter Three, by the 1960s African foods had significantly developed an aesthetic appeal, with these changes in a big way being attributed to the Africans 'proximity to whiteness' and the growing social status associated with eating some of these new foods that were being sold by whites.[171] For example, there was growing popular that families with a family member working in the city were easily identifiable by baking 'fatcook' (as known in Zimbabwe, yet derived from the Afrikaans *fat cake*) buns with self-rising flour and having the aroma filter through the air.[172] The regular preparation of *amaqebelengwane* (buns made from small grains) increasingly became an indicator of one's limited access to the city and undermined social status within the villages.[173] Concerning nutrition, in the urban areas, the notable outcome was stagnation despite the wider variety of foods being eaten by Africans.[174] This echoes Vonke's hypothesis on the 'nutrition paradox' accentuating indeed how despite close access to a wider variety of food in some urban areas, the existence of poverty limited African access to these and therefore did not improve African nutrition.[175] In contrast, across different rural areas where small grains – which were often considered as a mundane diet by both whites and

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[169] Baxter Tavuyanago *et al*, 'Traditional grain crops in pre-colonial Zimbabwe: A factor for food security and social cohesion and the Shona people', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 12, 6, 2010, 1-8.
[170] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Minutes of National Nutritional Council, 1967 in Advisory Board Annual Report for 1967.
[171] 'Notes on native cooking', *NADA*, 1959.
[172] Judy Desmond, *Traditional cookery in Southern Africa*, (Cape Town: Books of Africa, 1963), 12-4. Desmond notes how in other parts of southern Africa, South Africa in particular similar flour and small grain buns are referred to as 'vetkoek' in Afrikaans or *amagwinya* in siXhosa and Zulu.
[173] Interview with Gogo Thokozani Nyathi, Maphisa Matobo District, 14 December 2019.
[174] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Minutes of National Nutritional Council, 1967 in Advisory Board Annual Report for 1967.
[175] Vonke, 'The Paradox of Malnutrition in Developing Countries', 46-48.

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Africans – continued to dominate the everyday diet, families seemed to remain well-fed and maintaining their levels of nutrition, as observed by the various religious denominations monitoring different food aid schemes there.[176] Nevertheless, across most areas in the countryside African families were not precluded by the politics of the day from eating their small grains to augment their nutrition.

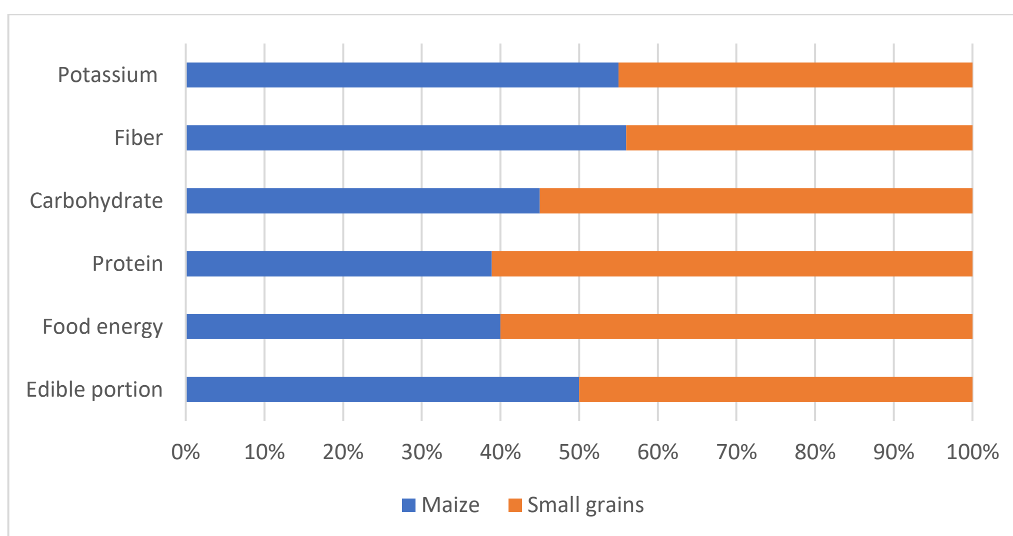

Figure 13: Abridged nutritional comparison between maize and small grains by Ministry of Agriculture[177]

'If our stomach does not feel us, we are still hungry'[178]: African eating habits and nutrition.

The early 1970s ushered in more problems for Southern Rhodesia concerning African nutrition. For one, Africans contested some of the measures the regime opted to employ to counter sanctions and hunger. For instance, drawing from their past experiences of the oppressive agrarian and labour policies of the Smith regime and earlier administrations, from around 1968 Africans living along the gold belt stretching through the Matabeleland south and Midlands region were actively displaying signs of resistance to Western ideas on what they should eat to improve their nutrition.[179] According to historian L.A. Colorne, different reports emerged showing how white supervisors in the railways and textile industries were concerned that Africans were not enjoying their meals provided at work, a conclusion derived from the

[176] Kuda Murwira *et al, Beating Hunger*, 35-7.
[177] 'Crop assessment report for 1967', Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, 1, 1968. Also see NAZ, SB/295/6, Grains under UDI, Maize and other grains assessment Report, 1970.
[178] NAZ 1095/F5, Grains, Report for the Secretary of Mines from the Department of African Agriculture, 11 June 1968.
[179] NAZ, H2/10/1, Letter by PH Marshall-Hole to Fleming dated 26 November 1969.

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increased food wastage collected each week by the local municipal waste collectors.[180] It was thus suggested by the senior official for Eastern and Southern Affairs in the Colonial Office, Eugene Reed, that the railways rather revert to the old diet that was comprised of 'more African' foods, which included small grains, until such a time that the economy was stable enough to make the workers appreciate the 'real value of what they are eating.'[181] He explained how such challenges of selective eating were never experienced with the Africans in the communal areas, whose diet was largely a mixture of both locally produced grains and food treats like flour-baked 'fatcook' buns sent back home from the city.[182] Thus, going forward, whites openly showed their reluctance to accommodate African social attitudes towards what they were eating, insisting on prescribing a uniform approach towards addressing rural and urban eating patterns.

In the 1970s African society showed signs of increased social and material mobility. The number of 'Master farmers' (as discussed in Chapter Three and Four) producing good harvests was growing; for example, in Matabeleland, the Department of Agriculture captured how the number of Master Farmers increased from 761 in 1969 to 1 098 in 1971, while their average bags per acre of small grains also increased from 5.3 to 9.2 over the same period.[183] As noted in Chapter Three, this witnessed the number of African farmers becoming eligible and capable to purchase land in the Tribal Trust Lands increasing.[184] Concomitantly, more and more Africans were becoming lawyers, doctors and teachers.[185] Yet despite these improvements overall, in 1971 the Nutrition Council was alert to the declining state of African welfare and nutrition in the Midlands and Matabeleland region. In response, the Council with the support of the Department of African Health recommended that more local white grain-processing companies align their products to cater for the growing local population as a means to remain afloat amid the economic turbulence of the 1970s, as the civil war raged.[186] This measure was intended to improve the diet of the many Africans whose labour kept the industries and

[180] Michael Wood, *Great Railway Journeys of The World: Zambezi Express*, Documentary film by historian Michael Wood, (USA: Public Media Inc/Films Incorporated, 1981).
[181] NAZ F196/6, Memo from Director of Eastern and Southern Affairs Eugene Reed to Native Affairs office, 1969
[182] *Ibid*.
[183] NAZ, F1095/02, Report of the Secretary for Agriculture to Director of African Development 1971-3.
[184] Pius Nyambara, 'That place was wonderful!' African tenants in Rhodesdale estate, colonial Zimbabwe, 1900-1952, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 38, 2, 2005, 78-81.
[185] Herbert Ushewokunze, *An agenda for Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984), 3-4.
[186] NAZ, MS418/6/6 Grain and the GMB, 1965-1980. Council minutes for meeting held 21 May 1971. During the period between 1965 and 1968, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on exports tumbled from £164.7 m to £97.4 m. Also see McKininell, 'Sanctions and the Rhodesian Economy', 565.

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economy afloat, yet constrained by limited financial means, and not subject them to consuming low-quality food.[187] By the end of 1971, several firms including the largest milling company, Rhodesian Milling Company (formerly Rhodesian Milling and Manufacturing), responded by diversifying their food displays to include more African foods such as *mamtshakaka* (samp), *mfushwa* and mealie grain prepared from sorghum, breaking away from their long-standing dominant interests in maize milling.[188] This move reflected a shifting tide by white colonial authorities and investment towards appreciating African food and nutrition ideas, while of course being able to make a profit from them. According to Ephias Makaudze et al., this diversification was warmly received by African families noted by steady trade increases in grain by Africans until steady balance at the zenith of the war around 1975.[189] The increasing presence of African foods was a marker both of African triumph over white views on what Africans were supposed to eat to improve their nutrition, and a show of growing African nationalism amid a repressive political regime.

However, this move to include in labourers' diet more African-consumed foods such as small grains were not universally welcomed. Bourgeoning black Rhodesian property and finance market commentator known as 'Muchengeti' observed that

> the shift in product manufacturing is unlikely to attract those seeking a profit. In the present state of the market, the issue price seems well pitched for the serious investors, who in the long term, should see reasonable growth in capital and dividends. Stags are unlikely to find the issue particularly attractive.[190]

Muchengeti was of the view that African consumers were not well informed or concerned enough about nutrition to invest in it.[191] His remark was based principally on the 1950s-1960s market trends that showed how African workers bought luxurious items as opposed to making investments in their health and nutrition.[192] In addition, despite any seeming surpluses from wages of agricultural activities that Africans were occupied in, in reality, a major challenge was how Africans incomes were distributed, with much going towards taxes, radios, bicycles and clothes, leaving very little for food – hence their constant cries of hunger and poor

[187] NAZ, MS418/6/6 Grain and the GMB, 1965-1980. Council minutes for meeting held 21 May 1971.
[188] Jonathan Waters, 'National Food Anniversary Supplement, Silver Jubilee Anniversary', *The Chronicle*, September 1971.
[189] Ephias Makaudze *et al*, 'A time series analysis of Zimbabwe's corn sales to the Grain Marketing Board', *Development Southern Africa*, 15, 3, 1998, 413-427.
[190] 'National Food Anniversary Supplement, Silver Jubilee Anniversary', *The Chronicle*, 21 June 1971.
[191] *Ibid*.
[192] NAZ, MS418/6/6, Grain and the GMB, 1965-1980. Council minutes for meeting held 21 May 1971.

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nutrition.[193] Furthermore, he noted that based on their skills and wages many African workers did not have the buying capacity to sustain the viability of a local food market, comprised of both European and African foods.[194] Yet, on the other hand, L.A. Colborne points out how for many African farmers, their extensive production of small grains played the double roles of enhancing their food and nutrition as well as affording them a little surplus to indulge in purchasing a few household items after the sale of their crops.[195] Moreover, contrary to Muchengeti's assertions, the cropping patterns of African farmers – choosing small grains over maize, further displayed an African consciousness towards their nutrition.[196]

Moreover, absent from the National Foods (the largest grains miller in the country) Silver Jubilee Supplementary Note written by Jonathan Waters is any mention of the acute need to improve African wages. As rightly argued by Patel, poverty accounts for most cases of poor nutrition in Africa; by paying meagre wages to their workers, white companies in Southern Rhodesia were restricting Africans' ability to finance the development of their agricultural sectors.[197] This allowed not only poor nutrition to prevail but also the underdevelopment of small grains alike. This one-sided linear thinking dominated state rhetoric extensively throughout the 1970s, reinforcing white hegemony over Africans and expanding the material gap between black and white societies.[198]

In addition, Allaart traced government efforts towards addressing African nutrition notes that repeatedly throughout the 1970s the steps adopted by the colonial regime – as elaborated in the next section – were by and large skewed in favour of promoting white hegemony over Africans.[199] Food aid and handouts plus a systematic stocking of grocery stores with selected food items produced in the light of white culinary ideas of what is right and nutritious to eat underscored white settler economic motives in the development of African lifestyles, food and

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[193] Stephen F. Burgess, 'Smallholder voice and rural transformation: Zimbabwe and Kenya Compared', *Comparative Politics*, 29, 2, 1997, 127-149.
[194], National Food Anniversary Supplement, Silver Jubilee Anniversary, *The Chronicle,* 21 June 1971.
[195] L. A. Colborne, 'Indigenous foods, their role in combating malnutrition in Zimbabwe', (unpublished thesis, 1975) cited in L. Allaart, Nutrition Education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1980, *The Central African Journal of Medicine*, 29, 3, 1983, 197.
[196] *Ibid*. Also see Kuper et al., *The Shona,* 12. As argued in Chapter Two, small grains were used as the main commodity in African internal and long-distance trade during the early years of settler encroachment and colonialism.
[197] Patel, *Stuffed and Starved*, 15-7.
[198] David McDermott Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, landscape and the problem of belonging*, (New York: Palgrave 2010).
[199] Allaart, 'Nutritional education', 186.

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nutrition discourse. And although by the 1970s African nationalism was a strong challenge to white supremacy, the impact of 'whiteness' was widespread and, in some cases, it was even the aspiration of an emerging African bourgeoisie, as captured in these comments:

> At the village primary school before independence, we did not just learn how to speak English, we were introduced to English food even though it was not there. …We sat there, on the dusty floor, listening and wondering what their food looked like. Our mouths salivated when Miss Rwodzi described a picnic basket full of ham and tomato sandwiches, tinned sardines, currant buns, biscuits, meat pies… I imagined myself fully educated one day, *ndafunda zvikuru* [well educated] …getting married and setting the table with forks and knives… I was going to serve everything straight out of Enid Blyton's books. There would be some ham, roast beef…[200]

'There is completely nothing to eat at home'[201]: Differences in understanding nutrition.

In 1974 then Secretary for Health Mark Webster stated that 'there is no doubt that undernutrition or poor nutrition is the biggest single cause of health problems in Africa…and is also due to lack of knowledge about feeding.'[202] As the country entered into a new decade, still smarting from conflicting ideas over nutrition, by 1970 it had become abundantly clear that the state, apart from its limited financial capacity, was hampered by their knowledge of African nutrition.[203] Moreover, the Nutritional Council had taken note of how across different African groups, including the Karanga and Shona, there was a tendency to link nutrition to religious and spiritual principles.[204] From as early as 1912 extensive and protracted outreach initiatives, which included rural dispensaries administered by Christian missionaries, grew popular, and by the 1970s Africans displayed an appreciation for Western medical facilities.[205] However, a significant portion of the African population, especially those residing in the rural areas, still held onto their distrust of the state medical facilities, recounting previous fatalities owing either to lack of medication or under-staffing within the facilities.[206] This ambivalence was exacerbated by the prohibitive costs charged to African families whenever they visited

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[200] Sekai Nzenza, "Our disappearing traditional food", https://www.herald.co.zw/our-disappearing-traditional-food/ Accessed 18 July 2019. Aspects of 'Whiteness' were envied by black Africans for their social status, which as shown in Chapter Two, in some cases could translate to political and economic influence.

[201] Remarks by Fungai Simbisayi a villager from Mataga district in Mberengwa awaiting food relief from the government, 'Mberengwa has a problem with food relief', *The Chronicle*, 15 January 1985.

[202] M.H. Webster 'Food for the family' quoted in Allaart, 'Nutritional education', 56.

[203] L. Allaart, Nutrition education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1981', *CAJM*, 29, 3, 1983, 56.

[204] NAZ, H2/10/2, Public Health, Council minutes of the Advisory Nutrition Council, March 1972. Among African communities, good nutrition was seen as an endorsement by the ancestors. Also see Kuper *et al*, *The Shona and Ndebele* and Shoko, *Karanga tradition*, 78.

[205] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 57-59.

[206] Bruce Frayne, Jonathan Crush and Milla McLachlan, 'Urbanization, nutrition and development in Southern African cities', *Food Security*, 4, 2014, 101-122.

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these medical centres.[207] These expenses differed across different families, with historian Glen Ncube stating that the colonial state believed them to be reasonable and affordable for African families.[208] Added to this was the historical dark reputation of these facilities, being known as 'black houses' for their high African casualty rates.[209] Many Africans were reluctant to pay for this assistance. Accordingly, in terms of seeking medical and nutritional advice and assistance, white-run medical facilities were not a preference for many Africans. Yet, as observed by historians including Glen Ncube[210] and Clement Masakure[211], the growing political influence of missionaries in a great way reshaped African perspectives on so-called modern medicine and Western ideas on nutrition, and as this chapter will show in subsequent sections, accounted for the varying reception of nutritional education over the 1970s.

In stark contrast, Conservative British legislator Lord Hastings observed how Africans had no problem consulting with traditional 'mountain healers', 'willingly paying up to three goats'.[212] These healers were favoured by Africans for their use of 'nature-based solutions' consisting of locally available crops and plants including small grains, roots, seeds and herbs, neatly pruned and introduced into their diet as antidotes for various ailments from mild colds to severe malnutrition.[213] While Africans were not always able to afford these methods, for the sake of retaining a bond with their ancestors, Africans continued to hold these healers in high esteem showering them with gifts.[214] Richards underscores how African consultations with traditional healers formed part of the 'most important cohesive forces in the community unit which allowed members identify with each other and differentiate them from other communities.'[215] Indeed, social and cultural norms were conveyed through food. Added to this, environmental historian Vimbai Kwashirai shows how within this complex of nutritional ideologies, the natural environment was a strong dimension of African nutrition, relied upon for its multiple

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[207] Gelfand, *Diet and tradition*', 78-81.
[208] Ncube, 'The problem of health of the native' 817-826.
[209] *Ibid*. The term 'black-house' was coined by African societies in the early 1920s from the association of death with darkness and the colour black.
[210] Ncube, 'The problem of health of the native', 824-6.
[211] Clement. 'One of the most serious problems, '110.
[212] 'The question of labour tenancy', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 4 May 1972. Without brazenly casting doubt on the potency of these mountain healers, the colonial state was however sceptical over their operations in the wake of their popularity yet cases of malnutrition and illness among Africans continued to mount. These healers in the eyes of some medical officers both black and white, were sometimes seen as being deceptive, accumulating wealth from the gullible peasants. See Shoko, *Karanga indigenous* religion and Megan Vaughan, *Curing their ills: Colonial power and African sickness*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 23-26.
[213] Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe Health and Well-Being*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 67-91.
[214] *Ibid*.
[215] Audrey I. Richards, *Hunger and work in a savage tribe,* xxv.

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roles, analogically perceived as a 'granary, pharmacy, and source of energy', using land positively to produce food and medicines.[216] As experienced with early nomenclature differences, discussed in Chapter One, once again white understanding of black ideas on the existing relationship between nutrition and their physical environment was by and large limited. This is vividly reflected and illustrated by both their chosen course on nutritional education for Africans over the 1970 and 1980s and the challenges experienced within the process of educating and improving African nutrition.

Cultural conflicts were a major challenge faced by the government in their efforts of educating Africans on nutrition. In Matabeleland North's Binga and some parts of Manicaland, for instance, malnutrition ailments were hardly addressed as a matter of eating the right type of food. Instead, villagers believed this to be a spiritual matter.[217] 'Our people are quite fatalistic and believe that it will be the will of the God – we'll take the child home to die' remarked one village elder.[218] When Africans felt unwell, suffering from nutrition deficiency, they used various recipes as antidotes not explored in colonial teachings. These methods coincided with the expansion of new and enviable, yet elitist and white-influenced ideas on African eating, nutrition and lifestyle – as noted in the observation by Sekai Nzenza above.[219] Indeed, as expressed by McCann, Africans ideas towards eating and nutrition were not static but fluid to accommodate their ever-changing social and economic experiences and realities.[220]

As already observed in Chapter Four, agricultural and food education programmes intended for Africans in Southern Rhodesia were not a new phenomenon by 1970.[221] However, until now, African nutrition was taught in various syllabi conducted by various government ministries, formal and informal voluntary and religious organizations.[222] Moreover, most of these lectures were conducted by unskilled instructors.[223] In addition, overseas textbooks were

[216] Vimbai C. Kwashirai, 'Environmental History of Africa', *World Environmental History*, 2017, 11.
[217] 'African culture is lost', *The Chronicle*, 12 August 1977.
[218] D. Drake, 'Workshop report', *The Central African Journal of Medicine*, 28, 8,1982, 197.
[219] Refer to Footnote 127.
[220] McCann, *Stirring the pot*, 3.
[221] As early as in 1921, Emory Alvord introduced Agricultural colleges and demonstrator three years later to educate Africans on how to productively utilize their land. In 1941, the Native Diet Policy by the Native Department built upon the 'School on Wheels' (name given to the agricultural demonstrator program over the 1930s) and introduced urban culinary lessons for African women as shown in Chapter four. Also see Weinmann, *Agricultural research* and Helen Tilley, *Africa as a living laboratory: Empire, development and the problem of scientific knowledge, 1870-1950*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011).
[222] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 57-59.
[223] The patter of hiring underqualified personal remained a recurring habit within the Smith regime. It was not uncommon for this to trigger a series of inaccurate instructions being disseminated to the Africans.

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used, with no reference to local African cuisines and foods.[224] As seen earlier from the culinary columns in the *Bantu Mirror*, recipes and ingredients mainly promoted white and Westerns cuisines, most of which were not considered as forming a key part of African nutritional requirements by some Africans. Consequently, cookery demonstrations not only ignored local aspects and culinary possibilities to enhance nutrition, but they further strengthened European ideology into African citizens. This was perpetuated for many years among African workers on settler estates.[225]

The curriculum addressed by the Nutritional Council in 1972 underlined how African cases of malnutrition were a result of Africans' poor and inadequate diet of *sadza*, vegetables and milk.[226] However, despite the excess carbohydrates and insufficient proteins within this meal, it did not expose the nutritional weaknesses of the diet as Africans often felt sated. [227] It was therefore not uncommon for malnutrition among adults to go unidentified by both medical practitioners and Africans alike, with a typical consequence being false treatment.[228] Among adults, clear nutrient deficiency of proteins drew attention to *pellagra* instead.[229] Among children, nutrition deficiency and unbalanced diets lead to kwashiorkor as shown in **Table 7:** Percentage of infant population suffering from kwashiorkor between 1975-77. This disease commonly attacks children under the age of 12 years, and became increasingly widespread in Zimbabwe around the mid-1970s (**Table 7**), with an average level of about 15% of the nation's child population being affected. Also, as shown in the Table, areas, where small grains were not predominately grown, suffered the most causalities, while urban spaces such as Harare with more medical facilities witnessed lower percentages of cases of kwashiorkor. Strangely, while *pellagra* has similar symptomatic features to kwashiorkor, and was rampant across several Africa rural districts, Gelfand captures how it was often ignored because its visible symptoms of a bulging round belly that was principally associated with African images of 'prosperity' –

[224] In 1953, a team from the Food and Agriculture Organization visited Southern Rhodesia and soon afterwards distributed various instructive publications on the correct feeding of children as well as industrial workers. However, since then little to no proper follow up was carried out due to earlier stated territorial conflicts and administrative red-tape in the Federal union. Much of the work carried out during this phase contributed little towards national policy, only being published sporadically across various papers, almost exclusively as by-products of other broader research studies.

[225] Gelfand, *Diet and tradition,* 56.

[226] Julia Tagwireyi, Thom Jayne and N. Lenneiye, 'Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe', *UN ACC/SCN country case study supported by UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund. A case study for the XV Congress of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences, September 26 to October 1, 1993, Adelaide,* 30-31.

[227] Gelfand, *The sick African*, 37.

[228] Michael Gelfand, 'The African in transition, *CAJM*, 31, 9, 1985.

[229] S. K. Chandiwana *et al,* A study of nutritional status, parasitic infections and haematology in a farmworker community in Zimbabwe, *CAJM*, 30, 9, 1984, 56.

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high consumption of alcoholic drinks especially small grain opaque beer and eating too much meat.[230] Because most cases were experienced in the Midlands region – small-grain eating areas – it can be argued that families sometimes overlooked in some cases taking for granted their nutritional deficiencies based on their reliance on the small grain as nutritious.[231] Images such as those reflected by **Figure 14** were not uncommon in many rural areas across the country.

To address this misconception and reduce these diseases, the Nutritional Council, supported by a financially strong and politically connected Catholic clergy, resolved that more African families needed to be educated on how to utilise their plots of land and improve their diets and nutrition with subsistence farming.[232] The recurring shifts towards commercial cropping over the years was not providing the anticipated financial returns to improve on their nutrition. Moreover, according to a survey conducted by the Department of Statistics for the period between 1965 and 1966, the exclusion of the family unit – parents + children – in discussions on nutrition led to conflicting ideas on food and what should be eaten, further contributing towards both high cases of food wastages as caregivers fail to know the foods needed by the children, leading to food deficiencies and starvation.[233] There was greater commitment towards teaching families about health care, farming and nutrition, and how they support raising healthy children. Similar to Soviet farms in the 1950s as described by Leigh Smith,[234] lessons to African families in Zimbabwe during the 1960s and 1970s were aimed at teaching them how to coordinate their crops, growing the right crops which included small grains and different legume bean varieties, rearing small animals such as chickens and goats for relish, eggs and milk, as well as practising sanitary hygiene by collecting water from safe sources.[235]

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[230] Gelfand, *The sick African*, 65-7. Also see Kuper *et al*, *The Shona and Ndebele,* 23-24.
[231] P. Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', *The Central Journal of Medicine*, 28, 8, 1982, 196-197. Also see Ethel Tawse Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia*, (London, Hutchinson and Company, 1924), 145-152.
[232] Chandiwana *et al*, 'A study of nutritional status', 47-9.
[233] *Ibid*.
[234] Smith, *Works in progress*, 135-137.
[235] RJ Theisen, 'Socio-economic factors involved in profitable cropping', *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 76, 1, 1979, 27-34.

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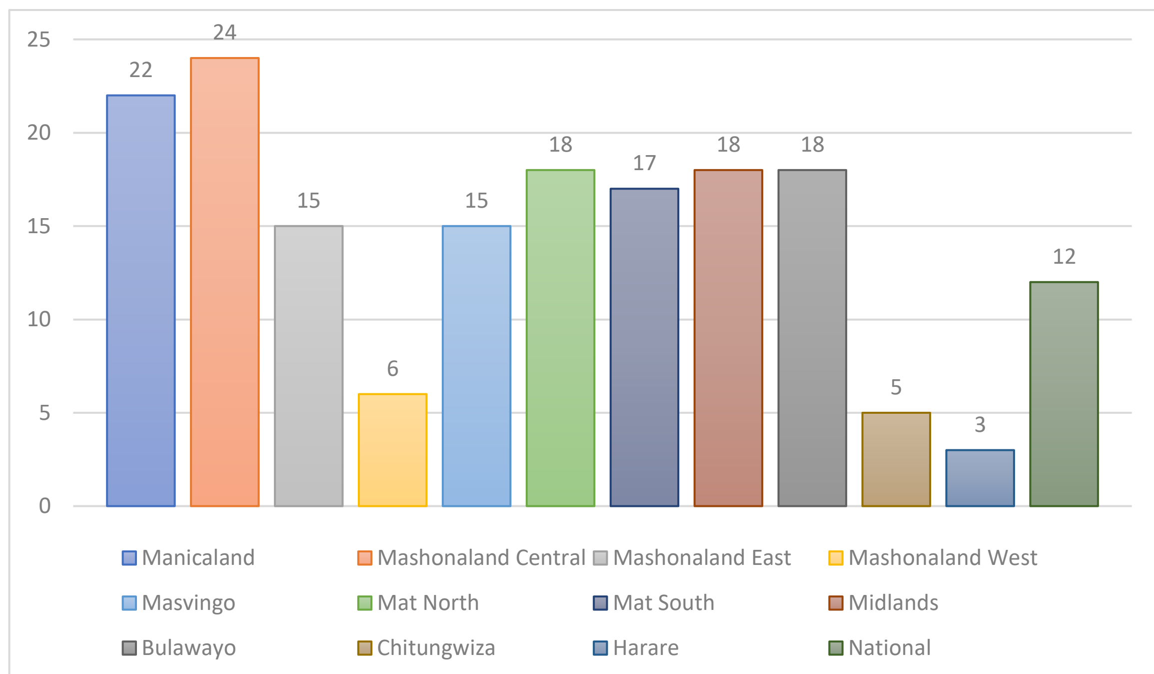
Figure 14: A mother carrying her baby (Little Beauty) who suffers from kwashiorkor in 1985.[236]

Table 7: Percentage of infant population suffering from kwashiorkor between 1975-77.[237]



[236] 'Mberengwa has a problem with food relief', *The Chronicle*, 15 January 1985. Kwashiorkor was particularly widespread across areas deeply affected by drought and food shortages.

[237] Tagwireyi et al., 'Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe', 18-23.

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'Food for the family'[238]: Food and nutrition education in Zimbabwe, 1970-1981

Among the most outstanding nutritional education programmes during the two decades from 1960 to 1980, one, Freedom from Hunger Campaign, was launched globally in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization, and in Southern Rhodesia in 1971.[239] In Southern Rhodesia, the FAO produced seminal studies by various authors, including renowned medical expert and university academic who later became President Mugabe's personal doctor, Michael Gelfand's *Food for the family* in 1974.[240] This compilation of articles/chapters traced the complex dynamics of nutrition within African society, which included how socio-economic conditions were often the root causes of poor nutrition among children and played a key role in the work of health and medical assistants, as well as mothers and children as well as in supervising children's health and nutrition through correct eating and feeding practices. Out of a great need for such guidance, within three years three reprints – including a simplified version of this text in Shona – were published, further attempting to spread education on nutrition among Africans.[241] By 1981 the Shona volume had been included among the major works in teaching food and nutrition in schools across Zimbabwe.

A major highlight of *Food for the family* and other public service literature, including pamphlets and a 1978 film called *Balanced meals for better nutrition* shown to African audiences, was its emphasis on the need for African meals to consist of at least three food groups covering the essential nutrients, including carbohydrates, especially in labour-intensive communities.[242] Sources of these nutrients were noted to include maize and small grains, and bread, rice and samp, where applicable for diversity. The other highlight was an indication of acceptance by the state of the culinary and nutritional contributions of African foods, and small grains in particular, to African society. By being at the forefront of these educational activities, the state was able to navigate the consumption of African foods while at the same time gradually reduce the number of African causalities of malnutrition hospitalized across the country from 1963 to 1976, as noted in **Table 6.**[243]

[238] Michael Gelfand, *Diet and tradition in an African culture*, (E and S Livingstone and London Pages, 1971), 56.
[239] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 56-7.
[240] *Ibid*.
[241] *Ibid*.
[242] *Ibid*.
[243] *Ibid*, 58.

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Moreover, despite the civil war, nutrition education with an emphasis on the use of locally available and affordable African crops and ingredients was extended through training local women as community advisors by the state, which by this point was receiving a lot of critical attention from nationalist forces in addition to increasing employment of educated Africans, some assuming top positions, for example, Herbert Ushewekunze as Director in the Ministry of Health since 1967.[244] They were tasked to assist health workers in identifying malnutrition, especially among children.[245] By 1979 an estimated 3 500 women's clubs with a varying membership of between 20 to 80 per club, depending on their community location and size, were functioning across the country.[246] Essentially, these clubs developed into designated focal points for various community development programmes, including feeding centres that increasingly became popular across mainly rural schools from the late 1960s. In 1976 in the Ministry of Community Development, working with the Provincial Medical Officer of Health from different provinces, and the Ministry of Education launched the 'Health and Home' scheme for primary school leavers between the ages of 12-13, later developing a handbook for all school grades called *A happy, healthy me,* which integrated the key aspects of agriculture, budgeting, sanitation and environmental issues.[247] Through harmonizing child and parent education on nutrition, the colonial state was able to better encourage the use of local foods and local foodways in providing improved and secure food and nutrition.

According to Sister P. Walsh, a medical caregiver operating in the Chilimanzi communal area, levels of vitamin A and riboflavin were too low in African diets and this was stunting the growth of children in that area in the late 1970s.[248] This resulted from the food restrictions that emerged from the 1973 drought that produced low crop yields leading to an over-dependence on sorghum as the sole main starch within a community accustomed to a combination of small grains and maize.[249] Resembling the similarly apathetic attitude as the early European settlers towards educating African women in Southern Rhodesia before the 1920s,[250] village elders in 1975 were irked at the establishment of a Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre headed by the

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[244] R. Laing, 'Nutrition education: What are we trying to achieve?', *CAJM*, 28,8,1982, 185. Also see Ushewokunze, An agenda for Zimbabwe, 3-4.
[245] *Ibid*.
[246] *Ibid*.
[247] Allaart, 'Nutrition education', 56-59.
[248] P. Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', *The Central Journal of Medicine*, 28, 8, 1982, 196-197.
[249] *Ibid*, 197.
[250] Carol Summers, ''If You Can Educate the Native Woman...': Debates over the Schooling and Education of girls and women in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1934', *History of Education Quarterly*, 36, 4, 1996, 449-471.

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church.[251] Within a short space after its opening, it was abruptly shut down in 1978 due to overwhelming political and social interference from village patriarchs opposed to the selective benefiting of some members (women) of the community – expanded upon in Chapter Six.[252] However, during its short time of operations, the church coordinated formal and informal lectures, establishing 23 Child Welfare clinics, where along with diet cards, posters on sanitary hygiene were distributed.[253] A visit to the area a few months before independence in April 1980 by various donor groups, including Oxfam, was met with the disheartening and shocking news that, instead of nutritional improvements, several children had died from malnutrition in the area. Among the 200 children identified between 1975 and 1978, about 50-60% were reasonably nourished, eating a regular diet of small grains, legume varieties and vegetables.[254] The overarching factor for this trend was persistently poor agricultural outputs leading to acute household food insecurity, especially among families that were planting maize in this dry district.[255]

Added to the above, records indicated how most of these children came from families where agriculture was not the sole form of subsistence. The Nutrition Advisory Council had in the past in 1964 underscored the need for income diversity among African families, encouraging the keeping of small domestic gardens in some cases in designated areas to mitigate food shortages.[256] About 11% of children in the Chilimanzi area had died, while 20% still remained severely malnourished.[257] Noted of the Chilimanzi case was how most of the affected children emerged from the same family suggesting that issues of malnutrition caused by poverty were largely family orientated, with the fathers mostly away in the city – sporadically sending home remittances.[258] Added to this, these families were rather large, consisting of up to 7 children below the age of 13 in one instance. The main observation in Chilimanzi, which was equally common in other districts where different religious and non-governmental organizations operated food aid programs, was the number of fragmented families. Adding to this, nutrition initiatives by various stakeholders including the government were dominated by women and mothers, and given their other domestic chores, effective and consistent attendance and

[251] Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', 196-197.
[252] *Ibid*. Yet ironically the development of the women extended to being the improvement of the entire family.
[253] *Ibid*.
[254] *Ibid*.
[255] Kuda Murwira et al, Beating Hunger, 43.
[256] *Southern Rhodesia Nutrition Advisory Council Meeting Records*, 1967, 463.
[257] Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', 196.
[258] Allison Shutt, 'Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in Marirangwe Purchase area, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947', *African Studies Review*, 43, 3, 2000, 59-80.

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coordination of various nutrition training programmes were difficult.[259] Also, due to the nature of the area – semi-arid and dry – bearing the brunt of agricultural activities further added a strain to the condition of women, contributing to weaning children off breastfeeding prematurely, and an overreliance on *bota* (small grains or maize porridge).[260] Moving forward, a major lesson learned by the government and stakeholders towards improving nutrition education, was the need to stress the significance of income and culinary diversity. Despite being a healthy choice, small grains had to be consumed with a variety of other foods and relishes for nutrient balance, and therefore the need to improve the quality of rural life to facilitate this.

In other areas, such as Binga, when nutrition lessons were developed as a collective project within the local community, Dominique Brunet and Mduduzi Mbuya note how these initiatives were resisted by the predominately matrilineal vaTonga families in the district.[261] The major contestations stemmed from how different teachings such as land tenure systems altered and, in some cases, undermined their existing socio-economic fabric. For example, fish farming was the mainstay of their economy, with the cultivation of grain crops, mainly rapoko and millet, being for *sadza* and brewing beer for social and cultural reasons.[262] For local Tonga, their diet was sufficient and nourishing; however, when health workers visited the Chief Sinasengwe village in 1976, they discovered that most of the children in the area were severely malnourished.[263] This grave situation was not uncommon, but widespread in many other remote parts of the country.[264] In Binga, it was not until the late 1970s that the Ministry of Health deployed active health advisors to educate about and monitor basic nutrition, sanitation, food and hygiene.[265]

Similarly in Chilimanzi in 1978, when a team of nutrition specialists funded by Oxfam attempted to disseminate information on balanced diets and good eating practices to the community, most village elders, uninterested in participating in the educational activities, resisted and were quick to point out how '*ambuya* (grandmother) has seen it all' and that there

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[259] Walsh, 'Short presentation on experiences in nutrition education', 196.
[260] Muchineripi, *Feeding five thousand*, 12.
[261] Dominique Brunet and Mduduzi Mbuya, *Nutrition survey: Binga District, Matabeleland North*, (Harare: Save the Children-UK, 2001), 14-6.
[262] *Ibid*.
[263] Save the Children (UK), *A report on household economy assessment: Binga District, Matabeleland North Province*, (Harare: Save the Children (UK), 2001), 6.
[264] *Ibid*, 18.
[265] Brunet and Mbuya, *Nutrition survey: Binga District,* 21.

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was nothing new that the young village health workers could teach them.[266] For many, the creation of a Nutrition Centre was regarded as 'completely useless', with a worse consequence of growing social stigma towards those villagers who were seen to be visiting these centres.[267] Visits to the Centre were associated with fraternizing with the white man and his different ways that were against the local ancestral traditions and the nationalist cause against white minority rule.[268] Such occasions exposed the ongoing social conflict between traditional ideas versus modernity within an evolving society. These conflicts formed a major part of the opening challenges for the post-colonial government as far as developing modern nutrition practices across society was concerned. Food and nutrition to the African farmers represented more than just nourishment – they entailed political choices.[269]

Characteristic of many families was a tendency to pass over under-eating as a passing phase of lack of appetite, a rather prevalent behavioural pattern among young children, especially after repeating the same diet for too long.[270] However, to counter this, African mothers were wise to add a few changes such as sprinkling extra sugar or changing between peanut butter, butter and sour porridge for small grain *bota* recipes to soften down the regular bitter taste of small grains and enrich the body of the consumers.[271] Gogo Hove, a peasant farmer from Mberengwa shares how the 'tongue of a child and sick person is very strange, it wants so much but the stomach refuses it.'[272] Children had to be approached with statements such as '*dlana ukudla kwakho uqede yikho ukuthi ukhule kahle*' (eat all your food that way you may grow up well) to convince them to eat their food.[273] Her daughter sitting next to her interjected by sharing how, as she was growing up, her mother would maintain their diet of *rukweza* (rapoko) sour porridge, pointing out that when one was genuinely ill, they did not have the strength to be picky about what to eat.[274] Apart from small-grain porridge being a popular meal for its affordable use of ingredients, it contained a balanced combination of nutrients: zinc, iron, magnesium, protein,

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[266] *Ibid*.
[267] *Ibid.* 197.
[268] Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, 'Making sense of cultural nationalism and politics of commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 3, 2009, 945-965.
[269] Interview with Sobuku (chief) Siphephamandla Donga, Mlondoloze, Binga 2018.
[270] Focus group discussions held in Mberengwa, Maphisa and Gweru in December 2019. Also see Pathisa Nyathi, *Isiko lamaNdebele*, (Bulawayo: Amabooks, 1998), 21.
[271] NAZ, S482/719/39, Native Nutrition and health, Department of Health Gwelo Town Council.
[272] Interview with Gogo Hove, Mberengwa, 16 November 2018.
[273] Informal conversation with Gogo Mahadebe in Mkoba 10, Gweru on 24 December 2019. Such statements were often used to encourage little children to eat when they were feeling weak with no appetite or when one was being fussy or found food un-appetizing.
[274] Interview with Mai Hove, Mberengwa, 16 November 2018.

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fat, carbohydrates, energy, crude fibre and vitamins to avoid kwashiorkor.[275] In small, intimate moments like these one observes the changing understanding of nutrition.

'Nxa ufuna imali…lima'[276]: Political changes and continuity during the 1980s socialist period

The date 18 April 1980 marked the end of civil war and the start of an African-led dispensation in the newly minted Zimbabwe. Amid the euphoria of black rule, however, this new administration faced a myriad of new challenges. Incoming Health Minister, Herbert Ushewekunze, promising a new vibrant and inclusive health and nutrition policy, described the task before them as 'mammoth' and 'currently separated by years of financial differences' yet needing the collective corporation of all races and ethnic groups to rectify.[277] Indeed, at independence, the immediate challenge was to build upon the momentum set by their predecessors – to maintain and establish new support links, while integrating the Rhodesian state's apparatus to accommodate the political switch. A major impediment towards improving African nutrition remained the stunted economic capacity of the black majority. These economic disparities required cushioning the less privileged within this new Republic. A Robert Mugabe-led black government inherited much of colonial systems as far as policy towards African nutrition was concerned. It was faced with a series of challenges over the next decade characterized by both trials and triumphs within increasing dependency on the state by the population until the prevailing economic inequalities were adequately redressed, and also because two years into independence drought struck.[278] This triggered massive food insecurity concerns among African families.

The early years of independence witnessed a continuation of colonial systems of handling African nutrition and agriculture. For much of the colonial era, African small-grain farmers bore the brunt of low market prices for their grain and primarily relied on informal markets and intermediaries to trade their goods.[279] However, despite this, by 1980 African agriculture had developed significantly and black farmers were producing good-quality crops.[280] Into

[275] Government of Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe Nutritional Survey 2015 Report*, (Harare, Government Printers, 2016), 56-61.
[276] Translated to 'if you want money, tilt the land.' Speech by Joshua Nkomo to African families in Kezi in the early 1990s. https://joshuankomolegacy.org/nkomoism, Accessed 18 November 2020.
[277] Ushewokunze, *An agenda for Zimbabwe*, 3-4.
[278] Loewenson and Sanders, 'The political economy', 124.
[279] Ncube, 'Peasant grain production', 16-9. Also see Chapter Three.
[280] 'African farmers deliver grain to the GMB', *Zimbabwean Agricultural Journal,* 4, 1982, 11.

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independence, it was not until 1984 that the GMB listed rapoko and other so-called 'lower grades' of African small grains onto the list of controlled grains.[281] Although markets for small grains were provided by the bourgeoning and emergent breweries and livestock industries, yet even at this point, market prices for grains remained low, and small-grain farmers remained at a disadvantage.[282] This did not offer a tangible economic reprieve to improve African farmers' eating practices and nutrition. It was not uncommon to witness African families languishing in hunger with poor nutrition as a result of low economic gains from their crop cultivation. By 1983 acute malnutrition was on the rise, with statistics by UNICEF suggesting that in Zimbabwe one in every three children was likely to suffer from poor nutrition if the prevailing food policy persisted.[283] 'It breaks my heart to see my baby lying there helplessly and I cannot properly feed her…we could have lost her', lamented one African mother in response to how low market trading for their grain impacted on her attempts to feed her family.[284] Small grains continued to have a lowly image from a state perspective, discouraging people from investing in their products and or even in their consumption. This show of low state confidence in small grains was essentially detrimental for low rainfall and drought-prone communities such Mberengwa in the Midlands and greater parts of Matabeleland South, for example – as will also be demonstrated later in Chapter Six – that were then driving themselves to grow maize, yet with repeated disappointing harvests year after year.[285] These strains impacted adversely on their nutritional status over time.

Data gathered by different aid agencies including Christian Care in 1980 showed how in Harare under-nutrition and stunted growth were prevalent among children below the age of two, while in rural areas across the Mashonaland East province 'wasting' (low weight and height index) ranged between 44 to 62%.[286] The major aetiological factors were the early weaning off breast milk and the introduction of unbalanced solid foods, especially among low-income families.[287] At the start of 1981, the new government of Zimbabwe outlined a health policy briefing the population on the urgent need to better understand and identify cases of infant and child malnutrition, improve monitoring of Child Health cards and introduce immunisation

[281] Mbwanda and Rohrbach, 'Small grain markets', 131-3.
[282] 'Govt to open new markets for farmers', *Zimbabwe Agricultural Journal*, 2, 1981, 2-4.
[283] ''We could have lost her': Nutrition development in Zimbabwe in the 1990s', *The Guardian*, 6 December 2020.
[284] *Ibid*.
[285] Mbwanda and Rohrbach, 'Small grain markets', 137.
[286] K. Truscott, 'The Wedza Project', *Agritex*, 1985, 9-11.
[287] *Ibid*.

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programmes to prevent and combat parasitic conditions among young children.[288] The following year the Health Advisory Board recommended the formal integration of teachers into the national dialogue on child nutrition.[289] They would act as monitors of child health at school, while religious institutions and churches were encouraged to take a leading role in expanding this theme to non-school-attending family members.[290] By the end of the first decade of independence, Julia Tagwireyi et al. noted that immunization coverage expanded significantly from 25% to over 85% of all children in both rural and urban Zimbabwe, creating a noticeable steady decline in child malnutrition levels in urban areas, while rural parts showed slowing regression.[291] The slow progress in the rural areas was largely attributed to the poor diets that characterized these areas. Yet as **Table 9** (in Chapter Six) indicates, African agriculture production up to the 1990s was significant.[292] This created what Julie Tagwirei underlines as the food security-nutrition paradox because, as illustrated by **Figure 15**: Nutrition surveillance per province, 1981-1987, most small-grain growing areas such as Matabeleland and Manicaland recorded higher cases of people affected by poor nutrition.[293] As stressed in Chapter six, the continued impoverishment of the Matabeleland region was a systematic attempt by the Mugabe regime to discipline political rivals and rising opposition voices. Moreover, as noted earlier, because of the continued low market value for their small grains, farmers reluctantly shifted to growing maize which underperformed, while concomitantly their cultivation of small grains was not sufficient to address either their food or economic needs, accounting for the widespread poor and low nutrition status.

[288] GoZ, *Ministry of Health Zimbabwe, National Nutrition Survey*, March 1981.
[289] GoZ, *Report of the Department of Food and Nutrition in the Ministry of Health*, 1981.
[290] Kuda Murwira *et al*, *Beating Hunger*, 45.
[291] Jesimen T. Chipika, 'Food security: The experience of Zimbabwe since 1980', *Food Systems under Stress Research*, 1993, 6.
[292] Sam Moyo *et al*, *Fast Track Lad Reform Baseline Survey in Zimbabwe, Trends and Tendencies*, 2005/6, (African Institute for Agrarian Studies, 2009), 51.
[293] GoZ, *Ministry of Health Zimbabwe, National Nutrition Survey*, March 1981. Statistics were complied with particular attention to children between the ages 5 and 12 years.

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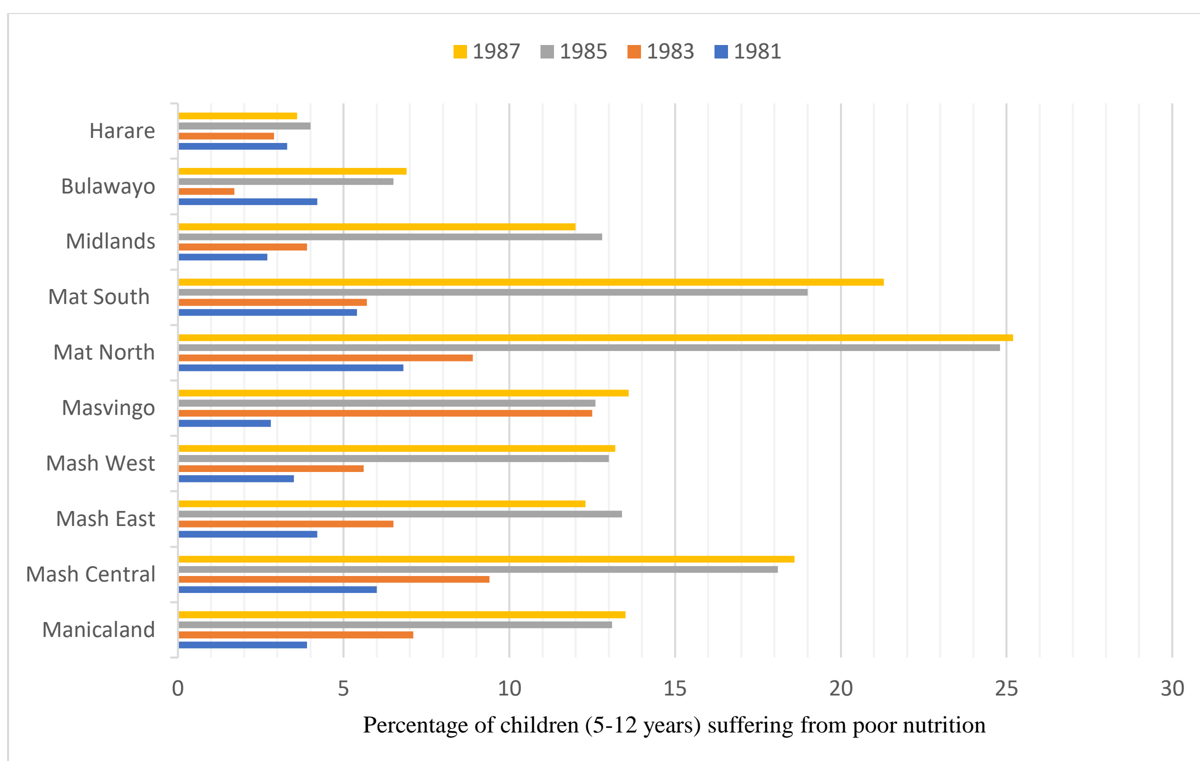

Figure 15*:* Nutrition surveillance per province, 1981-1987[294]

Notwithstanding these developments, by 1986 the focus was gradually shifting from monitoring nutrition alone to the active provision of food aid through food parcels by foreign charities such as World Vision in Matobo and Lupane.[295] With the opening of the schools' second term in June 1984, the state reintroduced the Children's Supplementary Feeding Programme (CSFP) at schools and community centres across both rural and urban areas.[296] Under this initiative, the previously criticized carbohydrate-dominated diets consisting mainly of bread with jam, milk and small-grain porridge was served to primary children in both rural and urban areas.[297] Principals within this programme underlined how the quantities served to children were to be based on their body structure, physical work throughout the day and the distance they travelled to reach school.[298] UNICEF underlined how fatigue among children was

[294] Compiled with data from the GoZ, Ministry of Health Zimbabwe, National Nutrition Survey, 1981 and 1987. Also refer to Julia Tagwireyi, Thom Jayne and N. Lenneiye, *Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe.*

[295] Bryan Kauma, 'A social and economic history of Matobo District in Zimbabwe, *MA dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2016, 54. As will be expanded in Chapter Six, this developed into an unscrupulous survival mechanism for many African families.

[296] Chipika, 'Poverty, food insecurity', 13. The CSFP was initiated in November 1980 in response to post war food needs. It provided a daily energy rich meal of sorghum and legumes to children in communal areas. The program operated between 1981 and 1986 during the height of the drought.

[297] Ministry of Health, *The evaluation of the Child Supplementary Feeding Program*, (Harare, Mimeo, 1984), 21.

[298] *Ibid*, 21.

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a major factor fuelling their poor nutrition.[299] At the peak of the programme in 1984 over a quarter of a million children in over 8 000 communal area feeding points received food to enable them to attend school undistracted by hunger, fatigue and lethargy.[300] As social economists Julian May and Ian M Timæus rightly underline, poor eating habits and inadequate food among children (and adults alike) inhibited good nutrition, in turn increasing the prevalence of disease, low cognitive development and disturbing their concentration during their work and studies.[301]

A decade later, in 1994, the Ministry of Health was reviewing the progress of the scheme as part of its pre-budget assessment exercise and learned how rural children were faring much better in comparison to their urban counterparts.[302] According to feeding charts, most rural children's diets were crippled largely by limited finances and consisted of more so-called traditional meals which included small grains, *umfushwa* (dried green vegetables), *umtakura* (a combination of different beans cooked together) and *amagwadla* (dried boiled mealies).[303] These dietary insights gave new impetus to the government to press for more inward-looking solutions adaptable to the local community to mitigate hunger, for example, encouraging the growth of more ecologically appropriate crops in different areas as opposed to the previous stance of a national uniform crop across all different districts.[304] This would allow the CSFP to not place heavy demands on the national budget by trying to accommodate a uniform agrarian and food pattern within an uneven terrain. Moreover, locals would have more affordable access to food to feed their families, and this would reflect more positively on the government's efforts towards achieving food security and improving African health.

From 1980-1989, nationally, the infant mortality rate declined from a high 88 in 1980 to 61 per 1 000 live births in 1989 (in comparison, for South African white children it was 52 per 1 000 live births and 60/1 000 among black children[305]; in the United Kingdom it was 9.5 over the

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[299] UNICEF, Annual Report: Zimbabwe, (Pretoria: UNICEF, 1990), 4.
[300] *Ibid*. 24.
[301] Julian May and Ian M Timæus, 'Inequities in under-five child nutritional status in South Africa: What progress has been made?', *Development Southern Africa*, 31, 6, 2014, 761-774.
[302] GoZ, *Minister's Report of Child healthcare and nutrition for the month ending 31 July 1994*, (Harare: Government Printers, 1995), 12.
[303] Ned Breslin, 'USAid, The State, and Food Insecurity in Rural Zimbabwe: The Case of Gokwe', *University of Witwatersrand African Studies Institute Seminar Paper 333*, 1993, 4-6.
[304] 'Locals urged to plant more local grains' *The Chronicle*, 15 November 1994.
[305] Michael Hendricks et al., *Child nutrition*, 205.

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same period).[306] Child malnutrition remained an aspect of broad policy on health and child welfare under the primary responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Owing to continued support from both private religious institutions assisting the state in both urban and more particularly rural areas, at the end of the first decade of independence, weight-for-age child malnutrition declined from 21% to about 12%.[307] It must be underlined how these successes in improving child nutrition were a part of an elaborate policy on health and child welfare purposely linked to agricultural policies and initiatives, and underwritten by private external charities such as the Red Cross and Caritas.[308] This unquestionably underscores the interdependence of African nutrition and agriculture, the state, the market and private philanthropy. However, at a state policy level, the various ministries and departments in charge of agriculture, health and nutrition, and business development remained operating as separate entities, creating the irony in 1988 of then-President Mugabe winning the coveted World Hunger Prize as a symbol of international recognition for a country's efforts to sustain agricultural success, yet in the same year, Zimbabwe could neither boast of food security at a household level nor excellent household nutrition, as Chapter Six will show.[309] Added to this, while the GMB recorded full silos across the country, in reality, millions of Zimbabweans could not afford food[310] amid poor state investments in rural subsistence agriculture.[311] The state's attitude was marred by the politics of controlling the flow of food and this perpetuated the expansion of the existing social and economic gap between agricultural policy and the state's resources, and the so-called cultural realities experienced by African families that shaped the nature of their nutrition.[312]

During this 'decade of socialism period', scholars including Rukuni et al. rightly observe how the food and nutrition policy was targeted at improving African nutrition through food self-sufficiency, yet in reality, it produced results that were at the expense of household food security. There remained an economic disconnect between food production and the available

[306] 'Major boost for Zimbabwe health', *The Herald*, 14 June 90. Statistics for the UK were obtained from Vasita Patel, *Child and infant mortality in England and Wales:* A decade analysis, (Office for National Statistics, 015). https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/death/bulletins/childhoodinfantandperinatalmortalityinenglandandwales/2015, Access 29 November 2020.
[307] Jesimen T. Chipika, 'Food security: The experience of Zimbabwe since 1980', 11.
[308] Breslin, 'USAid, The State, and Food Insecurity', 6-7.
[309] *Ibid*, 6.
[310] 'GMB urged to increase maize producer price', *The Herald*, 9 April 2000.
[311] Assefa Mehretu and Chris C. Mutambirwa, 'Social poverty profile of rural agricultural areas' in Mandivamba Rukuni *et al*, *Zimbabwe's Agricultural revolution revisited*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2006), 119-140
[312] *Ibid*, 119-140. Also see Ian Scoones, Land reform, and the politics of agrarian change', in Arrigo Pallotti and Corrado Tornimbeni (ed) *State, land and democracy in Southern Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 127-148.

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resources for most African rural families, while poverty continued to hamper urban food purchasing abilities.[313] Strikingly, from around 1985, agricultural and nutritional gains were heavily dependent on individual gains among African families.[314] In addressing this, the government launched the National Steering Committee on Food and Nutrition (NSCFN) in May 1990, consisting of seven key government ministries including Land, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, Health, Finance, Education and Urban Planning, among others.[315] The NSCFN undertook public and stakeholder consultations on the state of nutrition among the community, generating key conversations to resolve some key questions including Who are the food insecure and malnourished? Where are they located? Why are they malnourished and what are the major determinants of food insecurity? One of the main achievements noted by this team was that by the outbreak of drought in 1992, the state had been able to identify vulnerable communities beforehand, and had already liaised with various non-governmental agencies such as UNICEF, to assist in developing different formal and informal self-help corporative food initiatives, for example, village lending and saving groups, and '*mushandira pamwe*' (collective agriculture) cooperatives working in the area of food and nutrition-related issues.[316]

Added to this, a drought relief levy was temporarily introduced in 1993 to assist the government finance food aid distribution to vulnerable areas.[317] Thus, although the 1992 drought was widespread and unprecedented in post-colonial Zimbabwe, agricultural economist Ngonidzashe Munemo says 'for those without access to cash and other entitlements, free food (from the state and donor agencies) were their food intake.'[318] By the close of the 1980s, African nutrition was a vast combined effort of the state, private philanthropy and robust African efforts to mitigate hunger. By 1989 most rural grassroots-level initiatives encouraged African families' increased reliance on small grains and during the early phases of the protracted 1992 drought, for instance, amid poverty and drought, renowned areas such as Nkayi and Lupane exhibited better preparedness and survived from their small grains, while the bulk

[313] Mehretu and Mutambirwa, 'Social poverty profile', 123.
[314] Jayne L Stanning, Smallholder maize production and sales in Zimbabwe: Some distributional aspects, *Working Paper AEE*, 2/89, 1989, 4.
[315] Loewenson and Sanders, 'The political economy', 137.
[316] Tawedzera, 'Vulnerability and resilience in crisis', 153.
[317] Ngonidzashe Munemo, 'The pathologies of drought relief in Zimbabwe' in *Domestic politics and drought relief in Africa*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012), 97.
[318] *Ibid*.

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of the country took to relying on food imports, pioneering the consumption of yellow maize known as 'Kenya' as shown in the following section.[319]

'Beating hunger'[320]: Food relief and the (re)shaping of African nutrition, 1990-2000

The awakening was rude. Zimbabwe entered the 1990s and immediately confronted a myriad of socio-economic and environmental challenges. These challenges impacted African nutrition and Africans' relationship with small grains in particular. For Naomi Chazan and Timothy Shaw, 'the greatest challenge to African nutrition is not always a lack of what to eat, but an absence of the right foods.'[321] Essentially, the major lesson learned by the Mugabe government from the previous decade was the need to harmonize agrarian policies with food and nutrition policies to improve African nutrition. Concomitantly, slogans such as '*Pamberi na Comrade Robert Mugabe*' (Forward with Comrade Robert Mugabe) praising Mugabe were often shouted before food was distributed.[322] In the wake of a devastating drought, in 1993 an emergency symposium was called by the NSCFN to map a way forward beyond the ad hoc measures such as grain subsidies on food imports from Zambia, Malawi and Russia.[323] Moreover, a world recession lasting from around 1992 to around 1995 resulted in investment budget cuts from Zimbabwe's Western donors that included religious benefactors and USAid, who were actively continuing to extend their aid assistance through various food and nutrition programs running across the country.[324] Maternal under-nutrition resurfaced, while both the working classes and subsistence farmers suffered nutritional deficiencies, which led to deficiency-linked diseases thriving. The government budget on health alone skyrocketed to over 35% of the annual fiscus, while allocations towards peasant food crop agriculture were reduced, instead allocated largely towards food imports.[325] Once again, the roots of poor nutrition were misunderstood by the government as seen by their choice of action and financial priorities. African nutrition continued to suffer in the wake of poor agricultural investment.[326]

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[319] 'Food relief arrives in Gwanda', *The Chronicle*, 12 August 1992.

[320] Kuda Murwira *et al*, *Beating Hunger*, 45.

[321] Naomi Chazan and Timothy M. Shaw, 'The political economy of Food in Africa', in Naomi Chazan and Timothy M. Shaw (ed), *Coping with Africa's food crisis*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), 3-4.

[322] Munemo, 'The pathologies of drought relief in Zimbabwe', 97.

[323] Makandivamba Rukuni and C. K. Eicher, *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1994), 56-61.

[324] Dominique Brunet and Mduduzi Mbuya, *Nutrition survey: Binga District, Matabeleland North*, (Harare: Save the Children-UK, 2001), 14-6.

[325] Paul Muchineripi, *Feeding five thousand: The case for indigenous crops in Zimbabwe*, (London: Africa Research Institute, 2008), 2.

[326] *Ibid*.

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Consequently, as the nation battled drought, the load was much heavier on small farmers who were forced to watch helplessly as state food and nutrition policy towards Africans that previously cushioned their production was dismantled by the crisis.[327] However, for other farmers and families, reverting to so-called 'traditional' drought-combating mechanisms offered a lifeline for their survival. According to agriculture economist, Paul Muchineripi, African families in southern Gutu in the Masvingo province were able to evade the prolonged 1992 disaster by planting *rapoko*, which was ordinarily a taboo plant in the region.[328] Initially, there was reluctance to make this move because the ancestral spirits had been disrespected when farmers abandoned their traditional crop in favour of maize, and every time they attempted to plant it, swarms of locusts would invade.[329] As predicted in 1995, as the drought subsided but local families continued to grow rapoko, a swamp of locusts invaded, but intuitively the local villages simply harvested them to add to their relish. In this manner, local communities' broke taboos and were able to evade hunger and attain nutrition. Perhaps more strikingly, was their exposing how too often in African societies so-called 'tradition' negatively affected social development, potentially inhibiting avenues of innovation to improve their everyday lives.

The Gutu case was not unique. As argued by Madimu, it was common for many African families in the rural areas to augment their nutrition by obtaining their food through various means, including reliance on remittances from urban kinship ties.[330] This emphasises the key role of social cohesion – as underlined in Chapter Two – in strengthening African nutrition. Through reciprocity, in times of plenty, for example, rural people were quick to share their harvests, sometimes for free while other times at a reasonable cost, as noted in Chapter Six. Increasingly towards the 2000s, the rural network became the primary supplier of small grains consumed across most urban areas as grain crop-growing was forbidden in the city.[331] Although evidence from scientific, governmental and nongovernmental reports was already clear on the advantages of small grains for food security and African nutrition, from as early as the 1970s, and then highlighted in 1986-7,[332] growing international markets from South Africa and

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[327] Nutrition policy included the development of maize agriculture as the primary staple of the country across all districts. Moreover, the introduction of a Drought Relief Levy in 1993 formed a part of the policy development to mitigate widespread hunger.
[328] *Ibid*, 5-6.
[329] *Ibid*.
[330] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Food imports, hunger and state making in Zimbabwe, 2000-2009', *Journal of Asian and African Studies,* 55, 1, 2020, 128–144.
[331] Scoones, Land reform, and the politics of agrarian change', 137.
[332] Jayne L Stanning, Smallholder maize production, 7.

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Europe, including England, for small grain as fodder for livestock reduced the desire for its consumption among African families.[333] The idea of sharing food with animals was not appealing and this acted as a brake to the potential growth of small-grain consumption and nutritional security.[334]

In so far as nutrition was concerned, the 1990s were characterized by an array of contradictions among African families. For example, on the one hand, statistical surveys by the government for 1995, showed how in urban Harare and Bulawayo in particular, African households were enjoying a wide variety of foodstuffs including macaroni, sweets, mayonnaise, among many other refined foods, which made their way into the country with economic liberalism, open borders and relief programmes over the later years of the 1990s.[335] Between 1992 and 1995, while a wider variety of foods including small grains became popular and available on the shelf, **Table 8** shows how maize consumption declined against increasing national demand,[336] causing notable strains on African nutrition, as captured in **Figure 16** on the prevalence of malnutrition until 1998. According to Jayne and Tagwirei, the growing presence and widespread consumption of different foods with low nutritional value such as fast foods and takeaways, account for a sizeable, yet very small portion of cases of reduced nutrition.[337] For Patrick Fleuret and Anne Fleuret, the prevalence of poor nutrition was attributed to poverty linked with limited access to cultivation lands by many African families. They underscore how 'the relationship between poor nutrition and income is quite apparent' and is 'the most powerful predictor of material wellbeing and general economic wellbeing.'[338] In Zimbabwe, by July 1997, a total of only 52 000 African families had access to cultivation lands in various resettlement areas across the country as opposed to the targeted 237 000.[339] This accounts for the limited access to food access and increasing poor nutrition across the country. In addition, the poor implementation of food and agricultural and policy among other highlighted issues such as natural disasters, all adversely compromised African nutrition.

[333] P. Mukarumbwa and A. Mushunje, 'Potential of sorghum and finger millet to enhance household food security in Zimbabwe's semi-arid regions: A review', *Paper presented at the 3rd African Association of Agricultural Economists*, 19-23 September 2010, 16.
[334] Mbwanda and Rohrbach, 'Small grain markets in Zimbabwe', 133.
[335] Mbwanda and Rohrbach, 'Household national food security, 139.
[336] Tagwireyi et al., 'Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe', 23.
[337] *Ibid*.
[338] Patrick Fleuret and Anne Fleuret, 'Nutrition, consumption and agricultural change', *Human Organization*, 39, 3, 1980, 250-260.
[339] Muchineripi, Feeding five thousand, 2

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Supporting the above, Chipika summarizes that in post-colonial Zimbabwe, the major contributors to dwindling nutrition was incessant poverty combined with poor harvests, drought and poor hygiene, among other factors.[340] Apart from being insightful towards understanding African nutrition, these different factors expose (different colonial and post-colonial) governments' unwillingness to redress the key concerns of rural and urban poverty. Needless to add, by 1996 food scarcities increased with food prices soaring beyond the reach of many ordinary urban households.[341] Yet, in stark contrast, while Africans' poor nutrition was attributed to low incomes and lack of savings,[342] a report by the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe observed a sharp rise in purchases in a variety of household goods, furniture and luxury items by Africans.[343] In the rural areas alike, it was increasingly common that small-grain farmers after selling their grain to either the GMB or private traders would use a significant portion towards purchases of various household appliances, instead of food.[344] Maintaining a balance in nutrients was yet again impaired by the desire for self-enrichment amid poverty, characterized by limited resources and growing social obligations.[345]

Table 8: Maize supply versus demand for the years 1992 to 1995[346]

	Maize supply	Small grain supply	Maize Demand	Net Deficit
Year	000 metric tonnes			
1992/3	770	82	915	-63
1993/94	764	91.2	960	-104.8
1994/95	758	97.2	1100	-244

[340] Chipika, 'Food security and nutrition', 8.
[341] *Ibid.*
[342] Tagwireyi et al., 'Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe', 38.
[343] International Peasants Movement, 'Small grains are an important food crop' https://viacampesina.org/en/small-grains-are-important/, Accessed 5 November 2020.
[344] *Ibid*.
[345] James Muzondidya, 'From buoyancy to crisis, 1980-1997', in Brian Raftopolous and Alois Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe, A history from the precolonial period to 2008*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009) 172-180.
[346] Tagwireyi et al., 'Nutrition−relevant Actions in Zimbabwe', 23.

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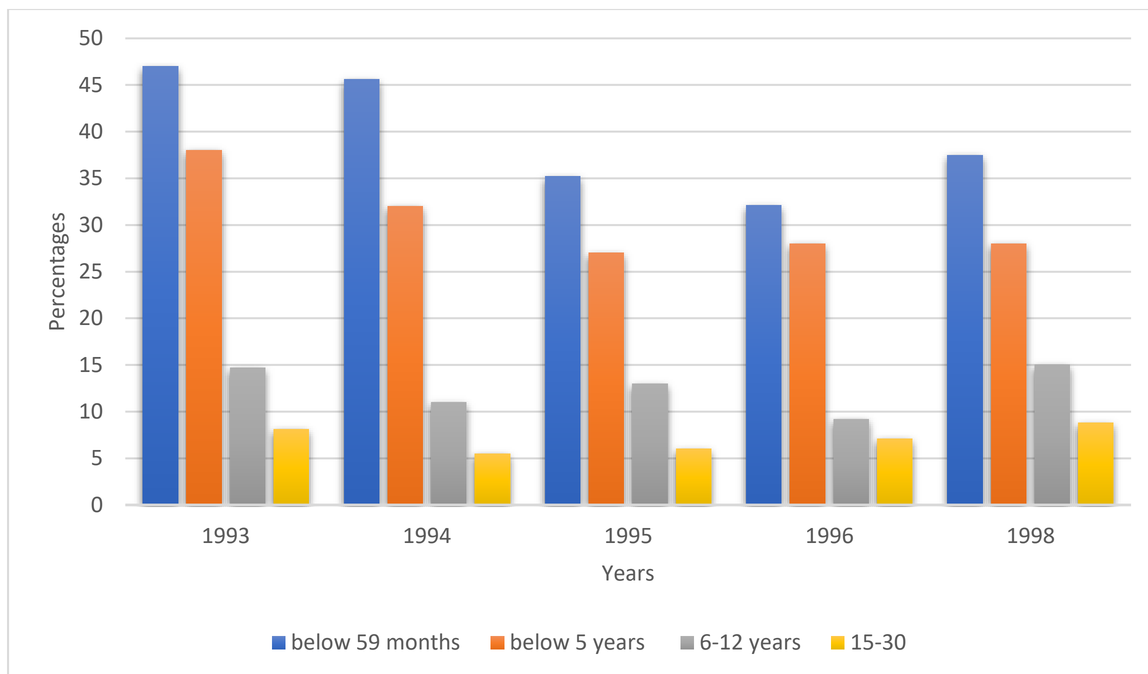

Figure 16: National malnutrition prevalence percentage, 1993- 1998.[347]

At the same time, African and government perceptions and attitudes towards African health were undergoing their own transformations. Most of these changes emerged from the growing diversification of ingredients, diets and commodity consumption trends by the early 1990s. As shown in **Figure 17:** Compilation of different foods made from small grains sold mainly to urban populations., not only did the uses of small grains diversify more widely to include ready-to-drink *maheu* (small-grain non-alcoholic drink) and sorghum and millet meal, but Jephias Dera also underlines how increasingly from the mid-1990s small grains were being packaged and branded into various fancy packages to accommodate sophisticated urban tastes.[348] Capturing an urban population, the niche market for nutritious African foods including small grains grew increasingly over the 1990s, also in response to the global clamour by the World Food Organization (WHO) for healthier eating habits among urban African families.[349] According to a consumer report in *The Chronicle* on 11 September 2000, African urban middle classes were consuming more and more overly processed, refined and takeaway meals such as Chicken Inn,[350] as access to whole-grain meals including small grains became more limited

[347] Data collected from the Global Nutrition Initiative, 'Global Nutrition Report: Zimbabwe', http://www.globalnutritionreport.org/zimbabwe, Accessed 05 November 2020.
[348] Jephias Dera, 'Sorghum and millet processed products availability in retail supermarkets: Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, *MAYFEB Journal of Agricultural Science,* 2, 2017, 18-27.
[349] 'Grow more millets: WHO', *The Chronicle,* 4 August 1998.
[350] 'Chicken Inn a local favourite', *The Chronicle*, 11 September 2000.

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mainly to urban folks,[351] and more centrally, as Chapter Six will demonstrate, small grains became more expensive and beyond the reach of middle-class Africans, in response to the 'organic movement' that championed the consumerism of fresh organic foods as opposed to genetically modified and enhanced foods from the dawn of the 2000s.[352] At the same time, in stark contrast this allowed African families to enjoy their traditional African food without being deterred by the old ideas such as 'poor person's crop,' or 'famine food' that was associated with small grains.[353]

In 1999 the WHO noted how owing to inconsistent harvests combined with cumbersome access to affordable food by city dwellers across the country, the number of people eating nutritious foods was on the decline in Zimbabwe.[354] By the end of the 2000s, this trend contributed towards widespread poor nutrition countrywide. The economic stagnation that was intensifying in the aftermath of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme introduced in 1990 and implemented the following year, witnessed a situation whereby, despite the diversification of food with market liberalization and increasing food imports, both maize and small grains remained the main source of starch and energy contributing just over 80% of the calories within the urban African diet.[355] Using these foods, African families were able to augment their nutritional needs, without always having to rely on the government to provide for their needs. As Chapter Six will show, in times of weak food supplies, small grains acted as a solution to hunger, and by extension addressing the challenges of the declining state of African nutrition. Although initially slow at first, over the later 1990s small grains witnessed a steady aesthetic culinary transformation and more and more urban and rural families alike were consuming small grains, and this greatly improved the state of African nutrition.[356]

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[351] 'Farmers urged to deliver produce', *The Chronicle*, 6 April 2001.
[352] Albala, *Eating right in the renaissance*, 32-34.
[353] 'Unpacking the health benefits of small grains', *The Herald*, 14 June 2019, https://www.herald.co.zw/unpacking-the-health-benefits-of-small-grains/, Accessed 4 December 2020.
[354] UNICEF, *The State of The World's Children: Growing Well in A Changing World 2019 Report*, (New York: 2000).
[355] *Ibid*.
[356] Brantley, *Feeding families*, 44.

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Figure 17: Compilation of different foods made from small grains sold mainly to urban populations.[357]

Conclusion

This chapter traced the major highlights and changes that shaped and influenced African nutrition and diets in Zimbabwe from the 1950s after the Native Land Husbandry Act in 1951 up to 2000 before the white farm invasions. Both these hallmark events had a significant impact on the agrarian economy of the country and impacted African nutrition. The chapter opened with a contextual synopsis of the literature on African nutrition, showing how black and white society held different and sometimes similar, ideas about African food and nutrition. It later showed how these ideas developed over time and in varying degrees shaped food and nutritional policy and trends throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods. It showed how sometimes the state instituted enacted policies that enabled the greater exploitation of African labour in the mines and various industries. Yet concomitantly, some of these policies contributed much towards promoting the state of African nutrition. This chapter also highlighted some of the contradictions within state policy to African nutrition which sometimes exacerbated poverty and poor nutrition among African workers. The colonial state introduced

[357] Dera, 'Sorghum and millet processed products', 21-22.

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diets for mine and industrial workers that barely consisted of small grains, instead promoted white farmer produce such as maize, which was sometimes unfavoured by African families. African responses to these changes triggered the rise of nationalism during the later 1960s into the 1970s.

The chapter showed how the postcolonial government inherited much of colonial initiatives at handling African nutrition, relying a significant much on missionary and private philanthropic organizations to assist with education and feeding programmes to enhance African nutrition in both rural and urban areas. At the same time, African families were conscious of how to control their nutrition and during periods of drought, for example, in 1992, some African families in especially the Matabeleland and Midlands regions preferred the growing of small grains to maize as a source of both food and nutrition. This chapter showed how through different appreciations of small grains within nutrition discourse, the contestations over space and hegemony between the state, blacks and whites and among blacks themselves too was evident, reinforcing how small grains are political.

This chapter showed how African nutrition is a complex conversation involving politics, agriculture and the economy as a whole. It traced the recurring challenges at the government's formalization and enforcement of a coherent nutrition policy that took into account African ideas of nutrition, economic status as well as spiritual and religious beliefs. Despite the façade of independence, many African families continued to rely on government support to maintain their nutrition, and this was argued by this chapter as owing much to poor agrarian policies that support African agriculture especially with the increasing scourge of climate change and droughts. It showed how small grains contributed in many different ways towards improving African nutrition yet continued to suffer major drawbacks from lack of support for it as a main staple from the state.

This chapter extended the historiographical conversation on the interplay between so-called 'tradition' and 'modernity' within socially contested spaces by showing the protean nature of the relationship between agriculture, policy and nutrition. Both the colonial and postcolonial state attitudes towards African nutrition were grounded within a myriad of ideas on what is best for both the economy and Africans. Sometimes the state was unbelieving of African concerns over hunger and nutrition and this greatly impacted the foods served to African workers. At the same time, this chapter showed how some African families were unreceptive

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to new ideas on nutrition and eating especially from the younger generation agricultural and medical workers. Some maintained that the consumption of their so-called traditional foods such as small grains was the means of maintaining a nutritious lifestyle, and this chapter was able to show the tenacity of small grains in telling the story of African families in this regard.

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Chapter Six

'*Makati murikushaya chikafu? manje muchashaisisa*'[1]: Small grains and the politics of food (in)security in Zimbabwe, c.2000-2010.

> Man-made starvation is 'slowly making its way into Zimbabwe' and most households in the country are unable to obtain enough food to meet their basic needs.
>
> Hilal Elver, United Nations Special Rapporteur, 28 November 2019[2]

> They [government officials] claim huge per diems for their visits…these handover ceremonies are a chance to rebuke the opposition…people eat for two days but thereafter go back to their dry fields.
>
> Local Binga Councillor, 23 June 2007[3]

Introduction

As I write this chapter, this year (2021), many people are starving in Zimbabwe.[4] Owing to a convergence of ecological, economic, and political factors, hunger became a reality for many people at the start of the twenty-first century. Zimbabwe was undergoing a series of socio-economic and political upheavals, while also faced with growing food demands. Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean government took insufficient steps to address widening hunger and food insecurity.[5] There were dwindling national grain harvests for the country's staple – maize. Political commentators noted, with dark humour, that the breadbasket of Africa had become a basket case. Yet in stark contrast, as this chapter will demonstrate, this same period saw steady growth in the cultivation of small grains – sorghum, millet and rapoko. Against this background, this chapter explores how varying political interests shaped the development of small grains in Zimbabwe from the start of the 'Third Chimurenga' (land reform programme)

[1] Translated to mean, 'you are saying you have no food; it will only get worse', Spoken by then Movement for Democratic Change president, Morgan Tsvangirai during a rally in 2002 in Gweru. 'Mugabe vs Tsvangirai in violent Zimbabwe elections (2002)', https://youtu.be/Ws3NaEQIA2o, Accessed 6 October 2020.

[2] UN News Global Perspective Human Stories, 'Zimbabwe facing man-made starvation, says UN expert', https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/11/1052411, Accessed 21 September 2020.

[3] 'Furore over maize donations', *The Southern Eye*, 23 June 2007.

[4] According to the World Food Programme in 2019, about 5.5 million people in Zimbabwe do not have enough to eat and are vulnerable to starvation. This is almost half the nation's population based on ZIMSTAT census records that note current population as 13.2 million.

[5] There is a distinction between 'food insecurity' and 'hunger'. Hunger may represent the absence of food, but food security is a much more encompassing term, described to denote a situation when people, at all times, have access to sufficient and nutritious food. See Food and Agriculture Organization, Food Assessment report: FAO crop and food security assessment mission to southern Africa, 2001. (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United, 2001), 23-26

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in 2000[6] until the end of the decade, two years after the signing of the Global Political Agreement between Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and the two main Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations in September 2008. The chapter argues that food insecurity in Zimbabwe during this period was largely a manmade crisis spurred on by a combination of calculated and inadvertent interventions, intended to further the political and economic interests of a few elites. The 'slow violence' of climate change exacerbates the problem, but the 'sudden violence' of the 2000 decade saw food and agricultural production instrumentally manipulated by the Mugabe regime to consolidate its power over the masses and settle scores with white Zimbabwean citizens. It will then show how various elites politicized food aid and agricultural mainly grain resources, shrewdly using the looming food crisis to amass capital – both political and financial – for themselves.

The history of food (in)security in Zimbabwe is a story of state violence, corruption and inequality. Using various primary materials, including newspaper articles from *The Chronicle* and *The Herald*, secondary literature and interviews, this chapter revisits Zimbabwe's 'lost decade'.[7] It explores Zimbabwe's battle with food insecurity showing how through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) in particular, the Mugabe regime romanticized domestic agrarian realities and took control of the socio-political narrative to counter international perceptions of Zimbabwe after 'land reform'. The chapter will show how individuals within the ruling party systematically leveraged the crisis to augment their personal wealth while settling political scores against the opposition and its supporters. For families in some communal dry areas, small grains had for years been providing their daily food requirements and greatly reducing their general reliance on government handouts during subsistence cultivation, in contrast to maize farmers in other districts across the country who continued to suffer from declining yields, as will be demonstrated in this chapter. Thus, for the regime, small grains unlike maize represented the social and political aspirations that constrained their options during state-making. This chapter will show that control of the GMB by ZANU PF gratified cartels to serve the needs of the political minority elites.[8] The GMB monopoly purposefully exacerbated the impoverishment of African families through the perpetuation of low market prices for small

[6] Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, 'Outside the Third Chimurenga: The challenge of writing a national history of Zimbabwe', *Critical African Studies*, 4, 6, 2011, 2-14.
[7] Lloyd Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's lost decade: Politics, development and society*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2011).
[8] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 417. Also see Alois Mlambo and E. Pangeti, *The political economy of the sugar industry in Zimbabwe, 1920-1990*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996).

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grains, thereby intentionally deterring their cultivation to maintain citizen reliance on government support for their livelihood. This was one way to maintain the political status quo.

This chapter is divided into six thematically arranged sections beginning with a succinct overview of the historiography on food security. It then examines the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) to show how the politics of the programme shaped the growth of small grains and food security. The remaining sections focus on different themes including the politicization of grain and food assistance by different political elites, corruption and mismanagement of state resources and agencies, and social marginalization, and devote attention to the different challenges in achieving food security over time. These sections demonstrate that food (in)security is political, as Sen observed. Collectively, this chapter amplifies historian Tapiwa Madimu's remarks that during periods of crisis in Zimbabwe, the ZANU PF government persistently made use of the prevailing (food) crisis to consolidate their political power and control the socio-political narrative within the country.[9] The expansion of small grains during the decade was therefore shaped by sectional political interests aimed at maintaining their grip on power through the stomachs of their subjects.

State making, food (in)security and history.

Globally, and for Zimbabwe, in particular, there is a strong body of academic studies from various disciples including economics, agricultural/environmental science and history that have explored the fast-growing subject of food security. To begin with, for many years up to the early 1980s food security epistemology was grounded within classical Malthusian ideas about the relationship between population growth and food production.[10] The reasoning was that food availability declined inversely with a correlated increase in population. However, over the last two decades, the literature and outlook have expanded. Discourses on socio-environmental change; global warming and climate change,[11] political shifts including land

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[9] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Food Imports, Hunger and State Making in Zimbabwe, 2000–2009', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55, 1, 2020, 128–144.

[10] Mamadou. Baro and Tara F. Denbel, 'Persistent hunger: Perspectives on vulnerability, famine and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35, 2006, 521-538. Thomas Malthus believed in the control of human population through natural and unnatural measures such as famine, war and disease. This was a means to ease pressure on resources and allow for adequate food among the population.

[11] Nelson Chanza and Veronica Gundu-Jakarasi, 'Deciphering the Climate Change Conundrum in Zimbabwe: An Exposition', in John P. Tiefenbacher (ed), *Global Warming and Climate Change*, (IntechOpen, 2020), 1-25 and Donald Brown, 'Climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation in Zimbabwe', *IIED Climate Change Working Paper Series 3*, 2012, 1-40.

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reform programmes,[12] social movements such as food riots and protests,[13] and the outbreak of pandemics and proliferation of aid relief[14] have all in varying ways contributed towards fresh perspectives on the roots, nature and impact of food security.

This research shows that the subject of food security is not a new phenomenon and has long featured in both colonial and postcolonial conversations on agrarian and labour history.[15] The World Food Program defines food security as the state of being able to feed oneself from one season (often measured in terms of agricultural seasons but more flexibly refers to periods between incomes[16]) through to the next.[17] The evaluation of food *security* at the national level is based on the total amount of the main staple – maize grain in the case of Zimbabwe – in the country during a specified period in relation to the demand.[18] Food *insecurity* means the inability by society to access affordable and nutritious food at any given time throughout a measured period of time.[19] Added to this, copious scientific literature from the 1980s onwards has underlined small grains as the ideal crop to combat the risk of food insecurity across Africa and Zimbabwe in particular.

The UN maintains that hunger arrived in Zimbabwe in 2004 – but, of course, it has a long history. John Iliffe has explored various droughts in Zimbabwe from the early colonial era in 1911, essentially underlining how the roots of famine differed over time.[20] Megan Vaughan underlines how Africans responded differently to droughts, including prayers and songs to the ancestors to end the scourge of hunger.[21] Among other communities, hunger emerged as a

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[12] Andre Degeorges and Brian Reilly, 'Politicization of land reform in Zimbabwe: Impacts on wildlife, food production and the economy', *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 64, 5, 2007, 571-586.
[13] Godfrey Madimu, *Zimbabwe* Food *Security Issues Paper*, (Forum for Food Security in Southern Africa), 1-52.
[14] Godfrey Tawodzera, Lazarus Zanamwe and Jonathan Crush, 'The state of food insecurity in Harare, Zimbabwe, *Urban Food Security Series No. 13*. (Queen's University and AFSUN: Kingston and Cape Town, 2012).
[15] Mandivamba Rukuni *et al* (ed), *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution Revisited*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publishers, 2006).
[16] Alan Whitehead, 'I'm hungry, Mum: The politics of domestic budgeting', in K. Young *et al*, (ed), *Of marriage and market*, (London: CSE Books, 1984), 34.
[17] World Food Programme (WFP), 'State of Food insecurity and vulnerability in southern Africa: Regional synthesis – November 2006', *National Vulnerability Assessment Committee Reports*, April -June 2006, Gaborone: WFP, 2006), 3-4.
[18] Jayne *et al*, 'Zimbabwe's food security paradox', 525–541.
[19] Karen Morin, 'Differentiating Between Food Security and Insecurity', *MCN, The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*, 39, 6, 2014, 381. Measured periods include between harvest or between one wage until the next in wage earning communities.
[20] John Iliffe, 'Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960', *University of Zimbabwe History Department Seminar Paper 70*, 1987, 4-5.
[21] Megan Vaughan, 'Famine analysis and family relations: 1949 in Nyasaland', *Past and Present*, 108, 1985, 177-205.

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result of human decisions even in favourable environmental conditions.[22] Vaughan, Iliffe and Sen alike underscore the different shades of human-made or anthropogenic droughts and their socio-political ramifications for society.

Different countries have employed various measures to ensure food security.[23] Some countries experienced 'green revolutions'; for example, Libya was able to rehabilitate the uncultivated lands and reduce hunger by about 80% by the end of the twentieth century.[24] However, such successes did not happen everywhere, including sub-Saharan Africa – something that was variously blamed on increasingly inefficient states, erratic rains, declining soil fertility, fast-growing populations and widening inequality levels.[25] By 1986 the Organization of African Unity developed Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) aimed at meshing economic policy and modern agrarian approaches towards ensuring the food security of the continent.[26] However, in the next generation food insecurity recurred and, as this chapter argues, the political nature of food was central to food insecurity, with African leadership often using hunger as a weapon.

A key moment that laid bare such power relations was the FTLRP, a turning point in Zimbabwe's socio-economic and agrarian history.[27] Scholars have examined how this programme had multiple social and economic consequences for society[28] and agriculture,[29] each impacting food security in different ways. The ad hoc land grabs generated much global criticism – as captured by historians Jocelyn Alexander,[30] Rory Pilossof[31] and Angus Selby,[32]

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[22] *Ibid*.
[23] Naomi Chazan and Timothy Shaw, 'The political economy of Food in Africa, *Coping with Africa's food crisis*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), 1-37.
[24] The World Bank, *The challenge of Hunger in Africa: A call to action*, (Washington: International Bank for Reconstruction and development, 1988), 4-6.
[25] Mario Zamponi, 'State, land and democracy in Southern Africa', in Arrigo Pallotti and Corrado Tornimbeni (ed), *State, land and democracy in Southern Africa*, (London: Routledge, 2015), 1-20.
[26] Chazan and Shaw, 'The political economy, 3.
[27] Grasian Mkodzongi and Peter Lawrence, The Fast-track land reform and agrarian change in Zimbabwe,' *Review of African Political Economy*, 46, 159, 2019, 1-13.
[28] Lionel Cliffe et al, *Outcomes of the post 2000 Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, (London: Routledge, 2013) and Lloyd Sachikonye, 'The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe' *Report prepared for the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe*, (London: CIIR, 2003).
[29] Sam Moyo and Walter Chambati, *Land and agrarian reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond white settler*, (Codesria: 2013).
[30] Jocelyn Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe, 1893-1903,* (London: James Currey Publishers, 2006).
[31] Rory Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012).
[32] Angus. Selby, 'Commercial farmers and the state: Interest group politics and land reform in Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University of Oxford, 2006.

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who demonstrate how, emerging from ostensible land reform initiatives, the state-enforced an authoritarian and militaristic approach towards ordinary white farmers and black and white critics and burgeoning voices for political change.

As economist Amartya Sen remarked: ‘there is no such thing as an apolitical food problem’.[33] The scholarly focus on food has shifted towards the structure of access, control and distribution of food resources. Expending on this perspective, this chapter builds on the Marxist Jean Francois Bayart’s seminal *Politics of the belly*[34] to analyse the conflict between ‘big men’ versus ‘little men’, politicians and grain cartels versus hungry communities. It shows how patronage politics were embedded in the everyday operations of developmental programming, especially during episodes of heightened food shortages. This extends 2013 work by historians Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, which argues that patronage politics eroded agrarian development because of constant intimidation, violence and partisan distribution of food.[35] Occasionally, select communities, ruling party cadres and, almost always, top ZANU PF elites were able to appropriate government aid for themselves. Added to political agitation, these glaring disparities fuelled social protest, triggering citizen resistance manifested in some cases through food riots[36] and subaltern initiatives such as a growing reliance on the informal traders[37] and more formal initiatives like food imports[38] to combat hunger.

The role of monopolies plays a crucial part in shaping food security. In countries like Liberia in 1979,[39] Ghana[40] and Sudan alike[41] in the early 1980s, governments operated along a liberal capitalist trajectory.[42] Food prices were high, and poverty increased. On the other hand, in countries such as Tanzania and Zimbabwe during the 1980s, government monopolies kept food

[33] Sen, ‘The Food problem’, 459.
[34] Jean Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, (London: Longman, 1993). A phrase that conceptualizes the necessities of survival through securing food, motivating different social and political decisions among African communities.
[35] Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, ‘Introduction: Politics, Patronage and Violence in Zimbabwe, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 4, 2013, 749-763.
[36] ‘Hungry Zim people grab food in new riot’, https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/hungry-zim-people-grab-food-in-new-riot-50779, Accessed 21 September 2020.
[37] Tinashe Nyamunda, ‘Cross border couriers as symbols of regional grievance? The Malayitsha remittance system in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, *African Diaspora*, 7, 2014, 38-62.
[38] Madimu, ‘Food imports, hunger, 132.
[39] S.K Asante, ‘Food as a focus of National and regional policies in contemporary Africa’, in Art Hansen and Della E. McMillan (ed), *Food in sub-Saharan Africa*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1986),
[40] Jon Kraus, ‘The pollical economy of food in Ghana’, in Naomi Chazan and Timothy Shaw, (ed), *Coping with Africa’s food crisis*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1988), 75-118.
[41] The World Bank, *The challenge of Hunger*, 4.
[42] Chazan and Shaw, ‘The pollical economy of Food in Africa’, 6.

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prices low through subsidies aimed at cushioning families and subduing citizen protest by buying their support through food security.[43] However, agriculture economist Pricilla Masanganise echoes historian Victor Machingaidze when she argues that, in so doing, agricultural monopolies created commodity marketing boards that stifled natural sectoral growth by relying heavily on government subsidies to remain afloat. [44] For as long as these agricultural commodity boards continued to serve the economic and political interests of the ruling elites, their existence was guaranteed. This chapter will show that control of the GMB by ZANU PF epitomized colonial behaviour that gratified cartels to serve the needs of the minority elites.[45] Moreover, it demonstrates how a purposefully, the GMB monopoly by ZANU PF exacerbated the impoverishment of African families through the perpetuation of low market prices for small grains, thereby intentionally deterring their cultivation to maintain political face in the aftermath of the haphazard farm invasions in the early 2000s. This cycle of poverty, as explained by Lionel Cliffe, fuelled the politicization of food over the crisis-era from 2002 onwards and enabled the government to consolidate power over its citizens.[46] This study builds on the work of historians Stein Eriksen,[47] Madimu[48] and Muchaparara Musemwa[49] to demonstrate that during the 2000s, food insecurity was appropriated as a key tool by the Mugabe regime to consolidate power by leveraging African hunger in exchange for political allegiances. It further shows that between 2000 and 2010 in Zimbabwe there was a 'state-induced famine'.[50]

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[43] *Ibid*, 6-8.

[44] Priscilla Masanganise, Marketing agricultural commodities through the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019, library.fes.de/fulltext/bueros/simbabwe/01176.htm, Accessed 25 August 2019 and Victor Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with reference to the role of the state', *PhD Thesis*, University of London, 1980.

[45] Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist', 417. Also see Alois Mlambo and E. Pangeti, *The political economy of the sugar industry in Zimbabwe, 1920-1990*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996).

[46] Cliffe et al, *Outcomes of the post 2000 FTLRP*, 6-9.

[47] Stein S. Eriksen, 'State formation and the politics of regional survival: Zimbabwe in theoretical perspective', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 23, 2, 2010, 316-340.

[48] Madimu, 'Food imports, hunger, 132.

[49] Muchaparara Musemwa, 'Disciplining a 'Dissident' City: Hydropolitics in the city of Bulawayo, Matabeleland Zimbabwe, 1980-1994', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, 2006, 239-254.

[50] Connor. Cavanagh, 'Entitlement removal and state induced famine in Zimbabwe', *Sojourners: Undergraduate Journal of Sociology*, 1, 2009, 1-16.

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A lost decade? Fast track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and its impact small grain production, 2000-10.

Historically, there are several conflicting academic opinions on the FTLRP.[51] However, it is generally agreed that it transformed agriculture. Many critics add that the worsening of Zimbabwe's social, economic and political crisis has its roots within this land redistribution exercise. Soon after its implementation, domestic agriculture was burdened by economic sanctions imposed by Britain, the United States of America and all 15 members of the European Union (EU)[52], which came at a time of successive years of low rainfall with concomitant lowered agricultural productivity. The post-2000 era was marked by political unrest in response to the shrinking economy characterized by hyperinflation. Because of trade restrictions and increasing foreign currency deficits to import implements and food, by 2002 the state of food insecurity worsened through a lack of capacity to effectively and adequately produce adequate grain for domestic consumption. Still, even at the peak of crisis between 2007 and 2008, small grains faired relatively well, unlike other crops such as deciduous fruits, wheat and maize. This was largely because for most of the time the development of small grains did not rely on direct government support, thus managing to escape the daunting government administrative red-tape that was adversely affecting the cultivation of other crops.[53] Furthermore, small grains relied on a domestic market, so international trade sanctions impacted the local market demand to a lesser extent.[54] Moreover, as observed in Chapter Five, small grains were widely appreciated for their nutritional contributions to African diets.

Contrary to the tag 'the lost decade' ascribed to the period from around 2000 until 2010, insofar as small grains production is concerned, this period witnessed some of its most significant material developments as a crop in the post-colonial era as shown in **Table 9** (same data

[51] Sam Moyo and P. Yeros, *Reclaiming the land: the resurgence of moral movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, (London: Zed Books, 2005). A comprehensive list of this literature has been also captured in Chapter One of the thesis and earlier sections of this chapter.

[52] In 2002 countries that formed the European Union that endorsed sanctions upon the Zimbabwean Mugabe government included Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. 'EU imposes sanctions on Zimbabwe', https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/feb/18/zimbabwe. Accessed 19 October 2020.

[53] 'Small grains are tough sell', https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/95489/zimbabwe-small-grains-are-tough-sell. Accessed 6 October 2020. As succeeding sections of this chapter will show, the little attention provided by the GMB towards the development of small grains was both a blessing and curse. At one level by placing priority and operational emphasis on maize and wheat, small grains were not affected by red-tape. However, this hindered the marketing support of the grains.

[54] 'Small Grains Hold Promise for Alleviating Food Insecurity in Zimbabwe', https://globalpressjournal.com/africa/zimbabwe/small-grains-hold-promise-alleviating-food-insecurity-zimbabwe/, Accessed 20 October 2020.

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represented on different tables for visualization). The Third Chimurenga saw more than 4 000 white settler commercial farms being repossessed, repartitioned into A1 and A2 estates to benefit over 150 000 African families by 2002.[55] Sachikonye[56] and Ian Scoones[57] alike acknowledge that these land and agricultural disruptions contributed in a great part towards Zimbabwe's status as the breadbasket of the region reaching its abrupt end. This status historically pinned primarily on white commercial farmer production of maize and wheat.[58] However, the FTLRP shifted the impetus of agricultural production from a national outlook to a more individualistic level through the increased number of small communal plots that became available to be cultivated by African families.[59] These newly resettled farmers dedicated 78% of their cropped land towards cultivating food grains, including both maize and small grains.[60] In addition, many brought with them traditional ideas of cultivation such as intercropping and dry planting known as *gatshopo* across the Matabeleland region,[61] which despite their supposed 'outdatedness', enabled small grains to be more widely grown, as they were especially suited to the erratic and low rainfall patterns that were widespread between 2000 and 2005.[62]

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[55] Sam Moyo *et al*, *Fast Track Lad Reform Baseline Survey in Zimbabwe, Trends and Tendencies*, 2005/6, (African Institute for Agrarian Studies, 2009), 80.

[56] Sachikonye, 'The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers', 7-9.

[57] Ian Scoones, 'Land reform, livelihoods and politics of agrarian change in Zimbabwe', in Pallotti and Tornimbeni, *State, and land democracy,* 131-4.

[58] Frederic Baudron, Raymond Nazare and Dorcas Matangi, 'The role of mechanization in transformation of small holder agriculture in Southern African: experience from Zimbabwe', in Richard A. Sikora *et al*, *Transforming agriculture in Southern Africa*, London: Routledge, 2020), 152-160.

[59] Moyo et al, *Fast Track Lad Reform Baseline,* 8. On average, the A1 beneficiaries were given 5-6 six hectares of arable land for farming and 7-15 hectares for grazing per household. A2 models were the self-contained farms.

[60] Moyo, 'Changing agrarian relations.'

[61] Interview with Desmond Ndlovu, Agritex Officer, Maphisa, Matobo District, 11 November 2018.

[62] Moyo, 'Changing agrarian relations',

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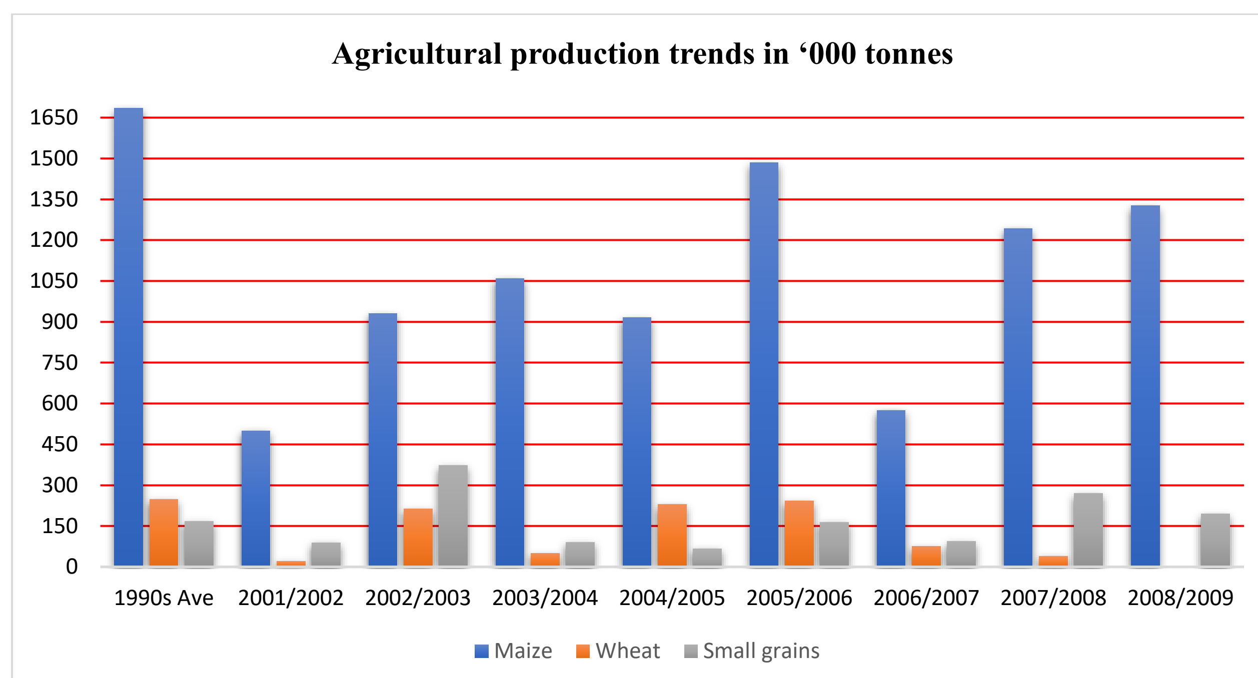
Table 9: Agricultural production trends in '000 tonnes and % change from the 1990s in parentheses[63]



Crop	1990s Ave	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Maize	1684	499 (-70.4)	930 (-44.8)	1059 (-37.1)	915 (-45.6)	1485 (11.8)	575 (-65.5)	1242.6 (25.5)	1327.6 (-20.4)
Wheat	248	20 (92.2)	213 (-14.1)	49 (-80.2)	229 (-7.8)	242 (-2.6)	75 (-65.8)	38 (-82.7)	-
Small grains	167	89 (-46)	373 (123.4)	90.7 (45.7)	66 (-60)	164 (-1)	93.2 (86.4)	270.2 (440.4)	193.9 (287.7)

Between 2002 and 2003, small grains production grew exponentially, benefiting from reduced competition from white maize farmers who had been expelled from their farms.[64] Added to this, a boost in grain prices by the GMB in August 2002 of about $30 more per tonne from $220 to between $250 and $280, while reducing the cost of millers' purchasing for local resale by 25% to try and cushion against growing hunger, greatly generated interest in grain

[63] Moyo et al, *Fast Track Lad Reform Baseline*, 53.
[64] Cotton Ginners Association, *Cotton pricing 2010 report, May 2010,* (Harare, 2010), 9.

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cultivation among the newly resettled farmers.[65] In the short term, such pricing incentives by the GMB motivated black small-scale farmers to take up cultivation actively despite the handicap of limited capital such as ploughs, insecticides and seeds that affected most of them.[66] However, as subsequent sections will also demonstrate, this limitation was exploited by ZANU PF to maintain control over African families through purposefully distributing maize seeds instead of small grain seeds, as sometimes requested by local farmers. Families observed to be growing crops outside those whose seed came from the government were often socially ostracized and targeted as working with the opposition party to defy the government's efforts towards boosting agricultural production.

In the aftermath of the farm invasions, in June 2001, the GMB introduced a new grain trading policy,[67] which turned out to be an opportunity for major grain heists by senior government officials.[68] These elites highjacked the trading of grain through their political influence over key apparatus in the acquisition and allocation of grain.[69] Effectively, grain cartels controlled the flow of grain and by the end of 2003, only 15 buying grain trading and milling permits had been issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, allowing only about 35 private companies out of over 120 applicants access to buy grain in large quantities directly from the GMB.[70] These 35 companies became intermediaries between all the private millers who wanted to acquire subsidized grain from the GMB. Of note is that, before the FTLRP, similar monopolies were controlled by the Commercial Farmers Union which had largely served white farmer interests.[71] Now, these monopolies were held by 'loyal friends of the party'.[72] This gave individuals loyal to the regime full access to Zimbabwe's food supply, enabling them to influence social and political support through food control.

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[65] 'Food shortages ruled out', *The Chronicle*, 22 September 2002.
[66] Kuda Murwira et al, *Beating hunger: The Chivi experience*, (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 2000), 86.
[67] 'GMB advises farmers on cards', *The Chronicle*, 9 June 2001.
[68] 'Govt challenged over GMB monopoly', *The Chronicle*, 8 August 2001.
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] 'GMB renews grain permits for 'friends', *The Standard*, 26 July 2002. These were companies allowed to purchase grain directly from the GMB and sell mealie-meal at subsidized prices because they received government financial support to accommodate this subsidy.
[71] 'Millers welcome grain traders ban', http://southerneye.co.zw/2014/087/21/milers-welcom-grain-traders-ban/, Accessed 28 September 2020.
[72] 'GMB renews grain permits for 'friends' *The Standard*, 26 July 2002.

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At a macro level, access to regional and international grain markets was jeopardized for local farmers following the FTLRP.[73] As noted above, various Western countries imposed targeted economic sanctions and restrictions on Zimbabwe's leaders and selected companies operating in and with Zimbabwe.[74] This significantly reduced Zimbabwe's export market for agricultural produce, including small grains that were being sold for fodder in Britain.[75] Moreover, with its foreign currency income streams cut off, the country's access to financial support for domestic development was adversely affected. Export-orientated agriculture collapsed and by 2008 was virtually non-existent.[76] To counter tumbling grain markets, in November 2004 the GMB initiated various contract farming projects for oilseeds and small grains within resettlement areas.[77] GMB executive Retired Colonel Samuel Muvuti stated that this new venture had earmarked 150 000 hectares across the country for the 2004/5 season and boasted that this would provide 'enough food in the country…[and] there is not going to be a need of food aid.'[78] Accordingly, this boosted the production of small grains and revived prospects of food security. Apart from enhancing food security in the country, the project also targeted generating forex through the export of small grains, which since the low rainfall patterns across the southern African region from around 2001, were increasingly enjoying favourable attention across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries especially in neighbouring South Africa and even a few selected European countries, he added.[79]

However, contrary to Muvuti's predictions, owing to a combination of both a prolonged dry spell since around 2001 and the expulsion of commercial white farmers, local maize output was low and Zimbabwe was placed on the UN priority list for hunger and starvation along with Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique by the start of 2005.[80] However, while maize output improved slightly from 915 m/t to 1485 m/t during this period, small grains witnessed more significant increases, growing by over 75% from 66 m/t to 164 m/t.[81] Yet this was significantly far short of the expected yields. As the economy took a dip, agricultural output

[73] Food and Agriculture Organization, *Special report: FAO/WFP crop and food security assessment mission to Zimbabwe, 22 June 2009*. (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United, 2009), 23-26.
[74] Nyoni, 'The curse is real in Zimbabwe', 6.
[75] Masanganise, 'Marketing agricultural commodities', 11.
[76] *Zimbabwe Independent*, 'Manufacturing companies reduce operations', https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2008/02/15/manufacturing-companies-reduce-operations/, Accessed 28 September 2020.
[77] 'GMB embarks on contract farming for small grains', *The Chronicle*, 24 November 2004.
[78] *Ibid* and 'Food crisis ruled out', *The Herald*, 25 November 2004.
[79] 'GMB embarks on contract farming for small grains', *The Chronicle*, 24 November 2004.
[80] WFP, 'State of Food insecurity and vulnerability in southern Africa', 4-6.
[81] Moyo et al, *Fast Track Lad Reform Baseline*, 53.

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was also adversely affected. However, small-grain cultivation grew, arguably as a result of its adoption to improve household nutrition, especially by HIV/AIDS-affected families.[82] Emphasizing that small grains formed a handy inclusion in traditional African meals for many years (predating colonial rule as discussed in Chapters Two and Four), various health practitioners increasingly over the 2000s encouraged their consumption among African families.[83] Moreover, despite the political contestations that characterized the post-FTLRP period, a great number of the communal farmers were able to get material and educational support on how to grow small grains from different international donor and religious agencies, including World Vision, ORAP, Catholic Relief Services and the World Food Program.[84] This relationship between African families and civil society organizations exposed the flaws within the national indicators of food security that continued to be measured against maize output by farmers and that stored by the GMB in its depots across the country.

From 2004, although the state made more calls on communal communities especially in the drought-prone regions to grow small grains, it emphasized that it was a substitute 'in case maize failed.'[85] Masanganise observes that in parts of the Midlands and Matabeleland South provinces, responding positively to these calls, small grain yields steadily improved while maize and wheat yield suffered repeated losses between 2005 and 2008, largely because of adverse climatic conditions.[86] For small-grain-growing communities, this improvement reduced their demand for food assistance from the government. Although this eased the burden on the government for food support, in equal measure it reduced state leverage through food and this perhaps in part accounts for the glowing performance of opposition politics in these regions.[87] Added to this was how during this period, small grains seemed to be widely encouraged for cultivation and consumption by various international organizations suspected to be working in cahoots with being aligned with the opposition MDC, the favourable yields,

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[82] J. Mazzeo, 'The Double Threat of HIV/AIDS and Drought on Rural Household Food Security in Southeastern Zimbabwe" *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 35, 1, 2011, 167-186 quoted in Godfrey Tawodzera, Lazarus Zanamwe and Jonathan Crush, 'The state of food insecurity in Harare, Zimbabwe', *Urban Food Security Series No. 13. Queen's University and AFSUN: Kingston and Cape Town, 2012,* 18.
[83] P. Mukarumbwa and A. Mushunje, 'Potential of sorghum and finger millet to enhance household food security in Zimbabwe's semi-arid regions: A review', Paper presented at the 3rd African Association of Agricultural Economists, 19-23 September 2010, 16.
[84] Tawodzera *et al, The state of food insecurity, 24-5.*
[85] 'GMB acquires Induna', *The Chronicle,* 13 March 2005.
[86] Masanganise, Marketing agricultural commodities, 11.
[87] 'Zimbabwe's food security in crisis but not for reasons you think', https://africasacountry.com/2019/12/zimbabwes-food-security-in-crisis-but-not-for-reasons-you-might-think, Accessed 21 September 2020.

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especially during dry seasons, made for very large electoral gains for the opposition. This was much to the chagrin of the ZANU PF government that continued to insist on maize as being the main crop of the country.

According to environmental ecologist Paul Muchineripi, for much of the post-2000 period, across the Masvingo province, many families were less anxious over maize shortages as compared to people from other provinces, especially Mashonaland Central, relying extensively on their small grains.[88] The same applied to places like Mberengwa, Zvishavane and Chivi[89] as shown in **Map 5.**[90] Nationally, although still cultivated less than maize, in the minds of many, small grains were gradually replacing the maize and wheat monopoly as the grain staple after 2000.[91] In some areas the drawbacks of erratic rainfall for maize production coincided with the haphazard nature of the FTLRP, indicating the need for urgent diversification by cultivating the more ecologically suitable small grains or face hunger.[92] By 2005 continued cultivation of maize stoked acute fears over food insecurity and, in an unanticipated turn, this enabled small-grain production to increase and improve domestic food security.[93] For most parts of south-eastern Zimbabwe and sections in Matabeleland North like Binga,[94] small grains were not considered as 'a poor man's crop', despite their negligible economic contribution to the national economy.[95] Nciizah goes on to describe small grains as 'a panacea to a failed land reform exercise…' and '…certain starvation of the Zimbabwean people.'[96]

[88] Paul Muchineripi, *Feeding five thousand: The case for indigenous crops in Zimbabwe*, (London: Africa Research Institute, 2008), 12.
[89] Murwira *et al*, *Beating hunger*, 7-8.
[90] FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM), *Zimbabwe: Severity of Food Insecurity by District*, 2007, https://reliefweb.int/map/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-severity-food-insecurity-district-cfsam-2007-map-1-2. Accessed 21 October 2020.
[91] Focus group discussion with five youths in Maphisa, Matobo District, 12 November 2018.
[92] Keith Phiri *et al*, 'Small grains 'resistance': making sense of Zimbabwean small holder farmer cropping choices and patterns within a climate change context', *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5, 2019, 1-13.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] Siambabala Bernard Mayena, Maureen Fordham and Andrew Collins, 'Disaster resilience and children: Managing Food security in Zimbabwe's Binga District', *Children, Youth and Environments*, 8, 1, Children and Disasters, 2008, 303-331.
[95] Mukarumbwa and Mushunje, 'Potential of sorghum and finger millet', 16.
[96] Nciizah, 'The contribution of small grain production to food', 59.

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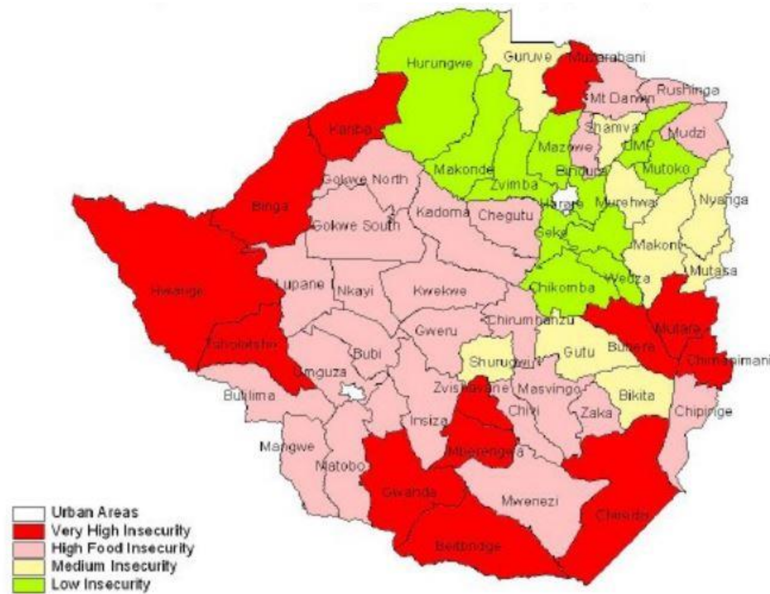
Map 5: Zimbabwe: Severity of Food Insecurity by District[97]



'*ngokweZANU lokhu*'[98]: Politics of food distribution and allocation, 2003-2006

During a ZANU PF election campaign rally in Gwanda in October 2001, Mugabe made an unprecedented move in the history of post-colonial ZANU PF politicking – abruptly ending the party rally without conducting the much-anticipated distribution of food and grain-seed donations as was vintage ZANU PF campaign strategy.[99] This was puzzling to many including political analyst Ibbo Mandaza, who rightly observed that in the 2002 election ZANU PF was faced with the robust and newly formed MDC who were their toughest political rivals since Joshua Nkomo led ZAPU in the 1980s.[100] Adding to the surprise was the state humiliation during the constitutional referendum in February 2000 and the subsequent parliamentary elections in June of the same year.[101] During both contests, the opposition MDC celebrated monumental victories over ZANU PF in the Matabeleland South province.[102] Significantly, these elections drew attention to the increased cases of local politicians using international food aid to lure and reward supporters. Despite various efforts by the opposition to challenge the use of food tokens in electioneering, stretching their political muscle, ZANU PF was still able to

[97] FAO/WFP CFSAM, *Zimbabwe: Severity of Food Insecurity.*

[98]Meaning 'this belongs to ZANU PF', Interview with Alert Ncube, Maphisa, Matobo District, 12 November 2018.

[99] Kenneth Good, 'Dealing with Despotism: The people and the Presidents', in Henning Melber (ed), *Zimbabwe's presidential election 2002: evidence, lessons and implications*, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstititet, 2002), 7-30.

[100] *Ibid*. 6.

[101] Jairos Kangira, 'A study of the rhetoric of the 2002 presidential election campaign in Zimbabwe', *PhD Thesis*, University of Cape Town, 2005, 31.

[102] *Ibid*. 55.

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manipulate and control the flow of food in their favour across the country.[103] The most widespread method used was the registering of food and grain-seed beneficiaries with local traditional leaders such as chiefs. By 2001 they had been co-opted by inclusion onto the government payroll.[104] As Toyin Falola observed, those in power tend to reward those who are 'loyal' as well as those with whom they share rural roots and heritage,[105] ZANU PF control of traditional institutions became their primary tool in the retention of power. Securing party allegiance was enforced through controls on food and grain tenure, preventing non-ZANU PF supporters from receiving grain aid with the fear of hunger being a key motivation to remain committed to the party by several members.[106]

In so doing, the Mugabe government successfully re-invented 'political grain', just as the Maize Board had done in the early 1930s, as noted in Chapter Three. Over the next few years, he was able to churn out developmental programmes along party, ethnic and geographical lines in order to punish what the party perceived as opposition voices. While never openly admitting to this, several ZANU officials were always quick to shift the blame onto starving populations, arguing that the prevalence of hunger in certain areas was because of citizen apathy and reluctance to accept government agricultural programming saying '*ngokweZANU lokhu*' (that belongs to ZANU PF bigwigs and members).[107] The expanding politicization of the supply of agricultural implements and grain was widespread by 2004, with repeated complaints from society and civil society organizations (CSOs) alike over recurring shortages in so-called opposition strongholds,[108] while other equally dry and remote areas such as Mouth Darwin and Bindura, where the ruling ZANU PF dominated in elections, did not experience such shortages.[109] Renson Gasela, the MDC Secretary for Agriculture, complained saying that 'when organisations go to distribute food, everything will appear normal and orderly, but on the ground, our supporters are starving.'[110] Political scientist Mark Chingono adds how during

[103] Cliffe *et al*, Outcomes of the post 2000, 38.
[104] Valentine Maponga, 'Zimbabwe: Concern as ZANU PF lures chiefs with perks, money', https://allaftrica.com/stories/200405100395.html, Access 29 September 2020. Also see Lotti Nkomo, 'Chiefs and government in postcolonial Zimbabwe: The case of Makoni District, 1980-2014', *MA Dissertation*, University of the Free State, 2015, 105.
[105] Toyin Falola, *The power of African cultures*, (Rochester, University of Rochester Press 2003), 119-20.
[106] Maponga, 'Zimbabwe: Concern as ZANU PF lures chiefs with perks, money.'
[107] 'Small holder farmers get funding', *The Chronicle*, 9 April 2008.
[108] This encompassed most urban areas including Harare, Bulawayo, Gweru and Masvingo as well as rural Matabeleland North and South and parts of the Midlands. See Good, 'Dealing with Despotism', 16.
[109] Mark Chingono, 'Food aid, village politics and conflict in rural Zimbabwe', http://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/food-aid-village-politics-and-conflict-in-rural-zimbabwe/, Accessed 29 September 2020.
[110] SADOCC 12 April 2002, 'Zanu PF hijacks food aid distribution from WFP, https://www.sadocc.at/sadocc.at/news2002/2002-127.shtml, Accessed 21 September 2020.

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food distribution the beneficiaries were selected through a rudimentary process whereby other villagers identity and vote for eligible members whom they could confirm shared the same political affiliation.[111]

The targeted shortages of grain against the opposition members were, however, not unexpected. In 2002, stressing the need to remove ZANU PF from power to bolster hope for an economic turnaround, then MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai addressing a rally in the Midlands remarked, '*Murikuti murikushaya chikafu, manje muchashaisisa*' (you are saying you have no food, it will only get worse).[112] He meant that with ZANU PF at the helm, the continued politicization of food would leave millions in a perpetual state of hunger. On the ground, in both urban and rural areas alike, constituencies belonging to ZANU PF members of parliament were more frequently benefiting from different state-funded 'food-for-work' programmes facilitated by the GMB and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.[113] Together these preferentially distributed grain seeds to African families during exclusively ZANU PF functions as captured in **Figure 18 and Figure 19** below.

Figure 18: Food and seed distribution by the RBZ in Chirumanzi District, in 2005.[114]
Figure 19: Maize seed distribution in Mberengwa, November 2018 (by author).[115]

In Mberengwa, for example, during the 2002/3 drought period, various cases of so-called 'war veterans' and ZANU PF militia youths aggressively preventing opposition supporters from participating in agricultural and food schemes funded by donors or buying maize grain from

[111] Mark Chingono, 'Food aid, village politics and conflict in rural Zimbabwe'.
[112] 'Mugabe vs Tsvangirai in violent Zimbabwe elections (2002)', https://youtu.be/Ws3NaEQIA2o, Accessed 6 October 2020.
[113] Human Rights Watch, 'Not eligible: The politization of food in Zimbabwe', *Human Rights Watch*, 15, 17, 2003, 35.
[114] 'Politics of the stomach takes centre stage', https://www.newsday.co.zw/2013/01/politics-of-the-stomach-takes-centre-stage/, Accessed on 28 September 2020.
[115] Picture captured by researcher during field visit in Mberengwa, 2 November 2018.

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the GMB were documented by CSOs.[116] Opposition supporters were publicly removed from food queues by some ZANU PF youth brigade militia in the presence of state security personnel, further revealing the power ZANU PF youths wielded in the communities.[117] At the same time, notwithstanding the prevalence of political grain, in 2002 there were a few incidents in which local government politicians used international food aid to reward supporters, actively using the state-controlled GMB for these machinations.[118] National machinery was being used to serve party interests benefiting a small segment of the population. It seemed that Tsvangirai's observations were correct. People were going to starve.

Nevertheless, ZANU PF stalwarts blamed urban and rural hunger on the failure of opposition leaders to spearhead agricultural development projects in their constituencies.[119] However, to mask various opposition ventures such as the successful 'Harnessing Youth Potential' (HYP) project run by various MDC youths in Silozwi village in Matobo District,[120] critics swiftly shifted the conversation to accuse the MDC of being a Western-sponsored puppet and agent for regime change, spreading falsehoods on the food situation in the country by selling small grains as opposed to maize to reflect an artificial food crisis in the country.[121] Substituting small grains for maize across various districts where maize was previously popularly grown and strongly encouraged by the regime through costly agricultural mechanization programmes easily became tantamount to treason, with small-grain farmers being perceived as opposing the national interest in striving towards reviving maize production that had suffered a slump since the FTLRP.

'Man-made' starvation

By the end of 2005 widespread hunger was real. According to the WFP, about 6 074 000 people – almost half of the national population – was in dire need of food assistance.[122] Recommendations by different agricultural experts were to harness the agricultural potential

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[116] Human Rights Watch, 'Not eligible: The politization of food in Zimbabwe', 35.
[117] *Ibid*.
[118] Human Rights Watch, 2003 Country Report, 'Zimbabwe: Food Used as Political Weapon',
[119] 'Beit Bridge gets 50 tonnes of maize from President's Office', *The Chronicle*, 16 December 2005.
[120] The HYP project is a project carried out by a Matobo based NGO, Youths for Today and Tomorrow. This livelihood project is made up of about 60 youths growing millet and goat rearing with an active market of Matobo Game Park staff and tourists. See Bryan Kauma, 'A socio-economic history of Matobo District in Zimbabwe, 1980-2015', *MA Dissertation*, University of Zimbabwe, 2016, 45-48.
[121] 'Small grains are tough to sell in Zimbabwe', http://carbon-based-ghg.blogspot.com/2012/05/small-grains-are-tough-sell-in-zimbabwe.html, Access 7 October 2020.
[122] WFP, 'State of Food insecurity', 16.

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and rejuvenate existing institutions by promoting the cultivation of local drought-resistant crop varieties – primarily small grains.[123] This would lighten the accumulating burden on the fiscus caused by over-investing in maize production and grain imports. Annually Zimbabwe required approximately 2.2 million tonnes of grain.[124] According to statistics by the Agriculture Marketing Authority, this target could have been easily achieved for 2005 by combining the maize and small grains marketed via the formal marketing boards, which included the GMB.[125] Yet, in a counter-intuitive move, the Minister of Trade and Commerce in September 2005 sanctioned an export order on small grains to different breweries and millers based in Zambia in a move to raise much needed foreign currency for the GMB to import 150 000 tonnes of maize to meet domestic food requirements.[126] Behind this action was the desire by the ZANU PF regime to strengthen political ties with various regional countries and generate sympathy over the Western-imposed sanctions on the regime, while to the West reflecting a robust commercial sector despite the imposition of economic sanctions. At home, these moves were peddled to the populace as attempts at engagement with various developmental partners.

Yet under the surface rhetoric was the opportunity to manipulate the flow of grain. Massive looting of resources and trade irregularities by selected agents in the grain industry worsened the state of food insecurity in the country. An independent UN human rights special rapporteur, Hilal Elver, observed that instead of crafting durable solutions to tackle food insecurity and improving efficiency in agriculture and food distribution, the Zimbabwean government concentrated on maintaining its control of political power and facets of the economy as well as on wealth accumulation by top lieutenants.[127] Zimbabwe was succumbing to manmade starvation and 'most households in the country are unable to obtain enough food to meet their basic needs'.[128] For example, in 2006 one of the country's major bread makers, Lobels Holdings, was acquired by David Chiweza, a retired military general who still had strong links with the ruling party.[129] It would emerge later that, through this acquisition, cronies were able to syphon foreign currency into their personal accounts, while investments towards supporting

[123] Mario Giampietro, 'Food security in Africa: A complex issue requiring new approaches to scientific evidence and quantitative analysis.' in Richard A. Sikora et al, *Transforming agriculture in Southern Africa: Constraints, technologies, policies and processes*, (London: Routledge, 2020), 298-307.
[124] Agricultural Marketing Authority Annual Audit Report, 2006, 4.
[125] *Ibid*.
[126] 'Grain millers import 150000 tonnes of maize', *The Chronicle*, 19 September 2005.
[127] UN News Global Perspective Human Stories, 'Zimbabwe facing man-made starvation, says UN expert', https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/11/1052411, Accessed 21 September 2020.
[128] *Ibid*.
[129] 'Massive irregularities at parastatals', *The Chronicle*, 21 May 2006.

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grain production declined due to low capital injections under the new ownership.[130] The most fundamental consequences for food security were a significant decline in wheat production, as shown in **Table 9** earlier above, culminating in a series of serious bread shortages.[131] Yet difficulties in securing wheat moved families to use small grains innovatively to bake what is referred to as '*isimodo*' (small-grains bread), as noted in Chapter Four. For many, this became a welcomed alternative to constantly challenging their exclusion from access to food.[132]

'We need more than just grains': Political grain, challenges and contradictions.

Seemingly unmoved by the state of deepening hunger, the ZANU PF regime continued to concentrate on the politics of safeguarding its status quo privileges.[133] At the same time, some farmers took the initiative of their own volition to improve their domestic food security by creating cooperative units within their villages. These helped nascent farmers to gain access to inputs like ploughs, fertilizers and seeds.[134] For example, in 2006 in Gutu, the Chinyika Communities Development Project was established to address food shortages by facilitating the growth of more small-grain varieties among locals.[135] Seeds were sourced from various places including South Africa and distributed to households, while modern farming techniques and business concepts were taught on the sidelines to promote value addition to their small grains.[136] Very few projects like this made an open display of wanting to circumvent partisan politics and focused instead on holistically improving the state of food security in the community. Similar initiatives operated by the ZANU women's league in different wards in the Masvingo province, for instance, often failed because of the politics of patronage during decision making and corrupt allocation of resources that stifled progress.[137] Moreover, poor management as a result of nepotism limited farmers' profits even after good small-grain harvests.[138]

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[130] *Ibid*.
[131] 'Acute food shortages loom', *The Herald*, 21 March 2007.
[132] Focus group discussion with 5 women in Mberengwa, 3 November 2018.
[133] Madimu, 'Food imports', 137-8.
[134] Muchineripi, *Feeding five thousand*, 9. By so doing this was also improving their bargaining power during trading with large supermarkets that demanded consistent large quantities of grains at regular intervals.
[135] *Ibid*, 11-12.
[136] *Ibid.*
[137] Informal communication with Happiness Nyoni, ZANU PF Women's League Liaison Officer, Harare Province, 27 December 2019.
[138] *Ibid*.

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In Masvingo, several families complained of their incapacity to cultivate and because of their kinship relations with senior government ministers and officials, several families in the district were soon granted agricultural inputs via the Presidential Input Scheme.[139] Started in 2002, by mid-2006 it had spent millions of dollars on seed and fertilizers, fuel and other agricultural merchandise.[140] Yet once again this benefited selected farmers, mostly those aligned to the ruling party.[141] Some of these beneficiaries accumulated these benefits, only to sell them quickly instead of using them in agricultural production.[142] One such beneficiary defended their actions saying, 'we need more than just grain…now I have money to buy other foods stuff I need.'[143] With misused resources, little agricultural cultivation occurred and both household and national prospects of food security were jeopardised.

However, those who were able to make effective use of different agricultural support schemes became the envy of their peers. For example, in early March 2006 just before harvest time, the field of a prominent opposition member and a small-grain farmer was set alight in a case of suspected rivalry over the success of their agricultural projects which was fairing considerably better than maize irrigation schemes carried out by the ruling ZANU PF in the area.[144] When his small-grain crops showed better growth as compared to other crops in the village, especially the maize under the 'Presidential scheme', he was accused of so-called 'witchcraft'. Local traditional leaders decided to destroy the fields and thereby cleanse the village of evil spirits.[145] In Guruve, a similar incident occurred. Several families affected by HIV/AIDS who chose to plant small grains instead of maize were accused of treason: wanting to reverse the gains of the FTLRP and clandestinely working with the West.[146] Social stigma and growing suspicions led to their constant victimization and denial of food assistance.[147]

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[139] 'Challenges with the Presidential Input scheme'. *The Herald*, 26 April 2008.
[140] *Ibid*
[141] 'Famine becomes Mugabe weapon', https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/10/zimbabwe.famine, Accessed 30 September 2020.
[142] 'Challenges with the Presidential Input scheme', *The Herald*, 26 April 2008.
[143] Bernard Kusena, 'Coping with new challenges: The case of Food shortage affecting displaced villagers following diamond mining activity at Chiadzwa, Zimbabwe, 2006-2013, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 17, 2, 20015, 14- 24.
[144] *Ibid*.
[145] *Ibid*.
[146] As noted earlier, by 2004, a lot of HIV/AIDS programming conducted in Zimbabwe was sponsored by the same Western countries whose governments were being labelled as enemies of Zimbabwe by the Mugabe regime. Consequently, their support in various programs was often (conveniently by ZANU PF hardliners) misinterpreted as being efforts to undermine the constitutionally elected by government.
[147] Informal communication with Fortunate Matshiya, Silvera House Harare, 13 December 2019.

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Although social ostracization along ethnic lines was ostensibly outlawed after the 1987 Unity Accord following the Gukurahundi massacres of the 1980s, this did not stop the continued marginalization of largely Ndebele-speaking societies in the Matabeleland region.[148] For some, their feelings were rekindled by the nature of food and agrarian policy across the country. Using René Lemarchand's hypothesis based on Keynesian economics of supply and demand, we observe that food prices in drought-prone regions are likely to be higher than elsewhere where agriculture fares much better. However, despite this, at independence in 1980 post-colonial government took up the prerogative to ensure that these drought-prone regions obtain affordable all-round access to food.[149] The aim was to combat food insecurity. Yet, by 2006 for many Zimbabweans this was not the case, as shown **Map 6** and **Map 7**. Grain prices were significantly higher in Matabeleland and the parts of Midlands and Masvingo areas hardest hit by food insecurity.[150] Not only were these areas largely populated by historical 'rivals of the ZANU PF regime', but despite their high probability of risk of starvation, they continued to receive little attention from the state and were perpetually suffering from food insecurity.[151]

For many families in Matabeleland, however, these trends reflected latent ethnic and political inequalities that continued to govern the distribution of wealth and development initiatives across the country since independence in 1980.[152] The unresolved politics of the Matabeleland Zambezi Water Project stands out as another example to support the argument of the Matabeleland families.[153] However, historian Wesley Mwatwara challenges the view that there was linear targeted marginalization, underscoring that it was not only the Matabeleland region that fell victim to state neglect creating fears over food security.[154] Indeed, as displayed in the maps below, much of the entire country, save for the few spaces patronized by the senior ruling elite, grappled with food insecurity and high grain prices. Accordingly, notwithstanding the realities of targeted marginalization by the ZANU PF regime against the Matabeleland region, insofar as food insecurity was concerned, the challenge overlapped across ethnic and political

[148] Musemwa, 'Disciplining a 'Dissident' City', 239-254.
[149] René Lemarchand, 'The political economy of food issues', in Hansen and McMillan (ed), *Africa's food crisis,* 33. As noted in Chapter Five, in the 1980s and 1988 in particular Zimbabwe was a leader in food security in the region with President Mugabe being awarded a prestigious prize for his efforts at eradicating hunger.
[150] *FAO and WFP*, Crop and food supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe Special Report, 18 June 2008.
[151] Former Magistrate Johnson Mkandla during interview with Zenzele Ndebele, 'Gukurahundi genocide-36 years later', September 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2b5iVGCDs0, Accessed 6 October 2020.
[152] 'Famine becomes Mugabe weapon', https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/10/zimbabwe.famine, Accessed 22 October 2020.
[153] Musemwa, 'Disciplining a 'Dissident' City', 239-254.
[154] Personal online communication with Wesley Mwatwara, 8 October 2019.

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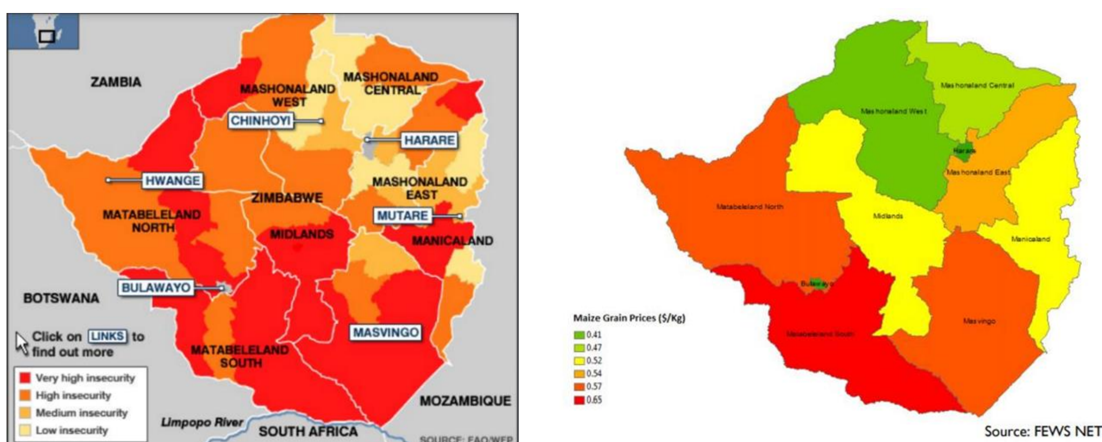
boundaries. The severity of these challenges, however, was admittedly softened by closer proximity to ZANU PF elites.



Map 6*:* Distribution of food insecure populations, 2005-9.[155]
Map 7*:* Prices of grains per kg, 2006.[156]

Repeatedly throughout the decade, the government continued to cite funding incapacity for its inability to support adequately support different youth agricultural start-ups from the Matabeleland region. A lot of these productive ideas that would not only have provided a means of livelihood but also make effective use of idle lands and improve food security died prematurely.[157] Complaints by the young farmers in Matobo district, for example, were not unjustified. They rightly argued how most funds in the Youth Fund were exhausted by other youth projects operating from Harare and the surrounding Mashonaland areas before reaching them. For example, a youth-planned agricultural fair effectively had to be cancelled after the Ministry of Youth based in Gwanda failed to raise adequate funds to accommodate what was needed for a high-level ministerial delegation to attend.[158] The communities' sense of state favouritism was reinforced when barely a few months later a similar agricultural fair was successfully held in Mount Darwin and Bindura and well-publicized across local media outlets.[159] Some interviewed community members pointed out how this failure to receive government support cascaded across other agricultural projects for as long as they did not adhere to what the government felt was of national interests, despite its infeasibilities.

[155] *FAO and WFP*, Crop and food supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe Special Report, 18 June 2008.
[156] *Ibid*.
[157] Interview with Thabani Ngwenya, Youth Officer for the Ministry of Youth Maphisa, 11 October 2019.
[158]*Ibid*. Youth projects in Matobo District relied on the Ministry of Youth that was stationed in Gwanda.
[159] *Ibid*.

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Moreover, government malfeasance further stifled the growth of other small-grain agricultural projects carried out by different youth groups across several villages of Matobo including Sankonjana, Homestead and Bhalagwe. In order to be able to sell their small grains to mainstream supermarkets, these youths needed to be registered and have a trading license. However, due to limited access to the lucrative markets, chances of raising funds to officialise their trading were thwarted.[160] They were forced to sell their small grains to much smaller and informal local markets. In the end, locals came to accept that their growing of small grains was going to have to proceed without government support.

'*Garai two two, tea yaibva*'[161]: Marginalization and the control of grain

Unequal distribution of food did not occur along political lines alone. The food crisis worsened and by 2007 stratified distribution of food benefitting not only political elites but also religious elites. They received more expensive foodstuffs from international well-wishers and government donations to local communities, as discussed in Chapter Five, while the rest of the congregation were left to eat those foods considered inferior. This reality is epitomised by the popular satirical religious hymn formed by a supposed disgruntled congregant. It follows:

> *Garai two two, tea yaibva* (sit in pairs, tea is ready) x2
> *Inema zai ndeamfundisi, dzenyu imbhambaira* (The plate with eggs is for the pastor, yours has sweet potatoes) x2
> *Inemukaka ndeyamfundisi, yenyu ilemoni* (the cup with milk is for the pastor, yours has lemon) x2

This 'traditional' song became increasingly popular from the late 1990s and reflects how status is an integral aspect of resource distribution, class, gender and ethnicity shaping who gets access to what opportunities.[162] The composition and growing popularity of this song reflects a consciousness by the society of the existence of the preferential allocation of food. Focus group discussion with village elders in Mberengwa revealed how this song was formed post-1997 after the disbursement of war veteran gratuities by the state. While others got Z$50000, other veterans did not get these grants or were given far less. It has been repeated over the years

[160] *Ibid*. Most of the members of the association came from poor households. It was envisaged that funds from the sale of their small grains would be used to assist in accessing the trading permits needed to officialise their trade and gain access to the more lucrative grain markets.
[161] Apostolic Faith hymn whose composer is unknown to the researcher. It neatly captures the politics of food distribution along social and religious lines in society.
[162] Jean Davison, *Gender, Lineage and ethnicity in Southern African*, (London: Westview Press, 1997), 157-58.

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to reflect situations of uneven distribution of resources within rural communities. [163] In times of hunger, the government prioritized feeding its loyal constituencies with maize. Yet between 2005 and 2008 it advised other constituencies to turn to the less expensive small grains for their food security – an aspect that (ironically for the Mugabe regime) proved very beneficial in the long run as maize increasingly underperformed agriculturally.[164]

Criticising ZANU PF's partisan distribution of food and agricultural inputs, in November 2005 Tsvangirai noted how the best way to end the national food insecurity crisis was to do away with a heavy reliance on food hand-outs to rural families and instead develop a vibrant rural agricultural foundation to promote area-specific crops.[165] He pointed out how farmer dependency was a growing problem, with farmers no longer showing the initiative to source their own inputs, just constantly waiting for government support. The politicization of state programmes coupled with the weak and ineffective administration in government, lead to distribution delays that in turn jeopardized national food security.[166] In Mberengwa's Chamakudo-Mataga village, for instance, grain seed and food were being distributed at Chamakudo primary school, Mbuya Nehanda military camp and Ngungubane military camp, renowned bases for youth terror groups that were pro-Mugabe groups.[167] This acted as a deterrent to many farmers regardless of political affiliations. Several organizations, including FAO, recommended that the state relocate essential departments such as the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture and the GMB to more neutral and safe areas in closer proximity to the farmers.[168] Moreover, this would facilitate more regular contact between agricultural experts and farmers, greatly improving African agriculture in the communal areas. However, the state maintained these depots and made little attempt to increase the number of specialized service offices in certain areas. For some grain farmers in the Mberengwa and Matobo districts, this gave them little confidence to expand their crop cultivation, fearing the burden of having to source new markets on their own.[169]

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[163] Ian Scoones, 'Land reform, livelihood and politics of agrarian change in Zimbabwe', in Pallotti and Tornimbeni, *State, and land,* 131-2.
[164] Pallotti and Tornimbeni, *State, and land*, 156-6.
[165] Aljazeera, 'Zimbabwe's aid dependence growing', https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/2/7/zimbabwe-aid-dependence-growing, 13 October 2020.
[166] *Ibid*.
[167] 'Famine becomes Mugabe weapon'.
[168] *FAO and WFP*, *Crop and food supply Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe Special Report.*
[169] 'Farmers bemoan govt support', *The Chronicle*, 26 April 2008.

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Increasingly from 2002, there were several government-initiated food security ventures, although not proportionately distributed across the country. One such initiative was Operation Maguta launched in 2004. It was projected to produce 2,3 million tonnes of maize, 90 000 tonnes of tobacco and 210 000 tonnes of cotton each season. However, for several reasons this initiative failed dismally, producing less than a quarter of its projected targets. The army-run Nuanetsi Ranch in the dry region of Masvingo province that was earmarked to produce 10 000 tonnes of maize scarcely managed to yield 10 tonnes.[170] Exacerbating the poor decision to exclude small grains as part of the key crops to be grown, reports from other provinces also indicated that not much was expected in the form of returns owing to highly unfavourable climatic conditions. However, the greatest challenge inhibiting the performance of this scheme was the theft of farm equipment by influential and senior government officials. Between 2000 and 2010 alone, over 15 high-profile cases implicating top brass within the government made the news headlines.[171] In Manicaland, for instance, out of the targeted 224 hectares for maize cultivation, only 40 were utilised with top government ministers, including Didymus Mutasa and Joseph Made, reportedly taking for their personal benefit, the equipment, seed and fertilizers needed for planting.[172] Between 2004 and 2007, over 428 tractors disappeared under unclear circumstances from the ARDA properties, with no effective accountability, further destabilizing efforts to implement Operation Maguta and creating food insecurity.[173] Overall agricultural production including that of small grain was stifled by this maladministration.

Political grains and 'a last chance to vote right'[174]

In March 2005 ZANU PF won more House of Assembly seats in the parliamentary elections and their actions that followed reshaped the landscape of food access across the country. Later that year in cities the government rolled out Operation Murabatsvina, described by some scholars including Deborah Potts as a 'purge against [the] urban opposition'.[175] A human rights watch group report had earlier described the 2005 election as citizens' 'last chance to vote right' or risk facing hunger.[176] However, the government defended this operation saying it was

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[170] 'Operation Maguta a flop', https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2005/01/28/opeation-maguta-a-flop/, Accessed 9 September 2020.
[171] Grain Millers Association Zimbabwe (GMAZ), *GMAZ Annual Audit Report*, (Harare, 2011), 12-16.
[172] 'Operation Maguta a flop, https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2005/01/28/opeation-maguta-a-flop/,
[173] 'Stamp out rot at ARDA', *The Chronicle*, 21 July 2007.
[174] Redress and the Amani Trust, *Torture in Zimbabwe,* 24-6.
[175] Deborah Potts, 'Restoring Order'? Operation Murambatsvina and the urban crisis in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, 2006, 273-291. This operation was conducted within constituencies where the ruling ZANU PF had failed to win seats during the elections.
[176] Redress and the Amani Trust, *Torture in Zimbabwe,* 24-6.

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simply clearing the streets of the mushrooming black-market traders who were selling scarce basic commodities at exorbitant prices.[177] In an ad hoc move to mitigate food insecurity, in August 2005 the state shelved its plans for the revitalization of African grain production, including grain smalls, to focus instead on regulating the distribution of food and controlling prices. In September sale of maize mealie meal was restricted to two 10 kg bags per customer.[178] This was followed by the Reserve Bank pouring millions of US$ into a quasi-fiscal undertaking known as the National Basic Commodities Supply Enhancement Programme.[179] This means that both rural and urban households received groceries at heavily subsidised prices. Madimu points out how in the process of state-making, the government was expanding domestic debt in an economy already in free-fall since 2000.[180] In response to rising food insecurity, the government strategy was anchored ostensibly on counteracting measures when food shortages caused severe social unrest that threatened political stability in the country. The launching of the tepid Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACOSSI) programme in mid-2007 following food riots in parts of Harare further supported this argument.[181] While these government responses such as the implementation of BACOSSI were noble and widely welcomed initiatives, they were temporary with an adverse long-term impact on local grain production. Between June 2007 and April 2008, registered millers were buying subsidized grain from the GMB at prices that were significantly cheaper than from local farmers. Even after the resale of this grain, it proved less expensive than producing locally for most local farmers.[182] These realities discouraged local farming that was already suffering from low yields. By the end of 2007, more and more families relied on government-subsidized

[177] *Ibid*.
[178] 'Govt introduces prices controls', *The Chronicle*, 19 September 2005.
[179] Government of Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates*, 16 June 2005. Quasi-fiscal activities include the undertaking by state-owned enterprises charging less than usual market rates for commodities. Government grain subsidies are an example of quasi-fiscal operations. This package comprised of a food hamper containing 12 products including 10 kgs of mealie meal, 2 litres of cooking oil, soap, flour, salt and sugar all priced to be below US$4, subsidized from the market equivalence of US$12.
[180] Madimu, 'Food imports', 137-8.
[181] Simbarashe Moyo, 'Regime survival strategies in Zimbabwe in the 21st century', *Journal of Sociology and Social work*, 2, 1, 2014, 21-49. Most villagers in Plumtree viewed this initiative as having negligible impact saying it did not improve the availability of food, if anything within week store shelves were empty due to business protest over price controls. Also see 'Zimbabwe: villagers gain little from food initiative', http://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-villagers-gain-little-food-intiative/, Accessed 6 October 2020.
[182] 'Transport and cash hampering inputs distribution', *The Chronicle*, 12 August 2008. As noted earlier, it was not uncommon for many farmers to remain perpetually handicapped without farming equipment such as tractors and fuel for production. This was because of their ill practice of selling their farming implements donated to them by the government. For many this behaviour was continuously possible by their close affiliation to the ruling party that through patronage continued to allocate them wares during agricultural implements and food distributions. Also see *The Chronicle*, 'Small holder farmer get funding', 9 April 2009

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grain.[183] This grain was obtained from various sources, including imports from Zambia and the few tangible harvests from the few state-sponsored farms across the country.[184]

Although chorusing the need to grow small grains to combat hunger, in reality, state policy was reflecting the opposite. According to the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange, on 4 November 2007, the GMB held over 90 000 metric tonnes of small grains at the depots in Bulawayo, Gwanda and Lupane.[185] This was enough to cater for the region's needs until the next major harvest in April the following year. However, the GMB submitted to the government several requisitions to import maize to combat food insecurity. These were duly granted, essentially reflecting that both GMB and government alike were not willing to accept small grains as a major staple and alternative to maize, despite its widespread consumption and availability in the country.[186]

By 2007, the state of the economy (and food security in particular) had declined further. Forecasted rains were unexpectedly low. Maize crops failed.[187] In many parts of the country, agriculture had all but stagnated, surviving under state-sponsored life-support through various loan and farm mechanization schemes funded by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe.[188] By the end of 2007, just over 68% of families nationwide that mainly relied on maize were left vulnerable to hunger. During this period, many families turned to rely on imported mealie-meal from neighbouring South Africa.[189] However, although the poor rainfall patterns impacted widely across society, for some families the strain of food insecurity was lessened by private cultivation of small grains that fared well throughout the low rainfall periods between 2007 and 2009. In rural areas such as Polimagama in the Matobo District, for example, families even had surplus grain and took to supplying nearby cities in Bulawayo and Gwanda.[190] Despite silence from the government about promoting the commercial cultivation of small grains, small

[183] 'GMB starts distributing winter farming inputs', *The Chronicle*, 17 May 2008.
[184] 'Farmers begin deliveries to the GMB', *The Herald*, 26 April 2005.
[185] Grain Millers Association Zimbabwe Annual Audit Report, 2010.
[186] *Ibid*.
[187] FAO *Mission Report* 2008, 4. By this time Zimbabwe was grappling with an acute shortage of foreign currency, resulting from its dwindling agricultural export base among other ad hoc quasi fiscal operations engaged by the central bank to complement ZANU PF's economic agenda.
[188] Ministry of Finance, 'The 2011 mid-year fiscal policy review: 'Riding the storm: economics in the time of challenges', presented to Parliament by Hon. T. Biti, MP, Minister of Finance. 26 July 2011.
[189] Madimu, 'Food imports', 20.
[190] Interview with Thabani Ngwenya, Youth Officer for the Ministry of Youth Maphisa, 11 October 2019.

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grains proved the most dependable during the turbulent 2000s, doubling their 1990s production mark by 2008.

'There is no food crisis in Zimbabwe'[191]

A major obstacle towards securing food security in Africa was the growing use of populist political rhetoric to enforce agrarian development instead of harnessing scientific innovations.[192] By mid-2007 it had become apparent that the country was in a grave food crisis.[193] Still, the government remained determined to sell the image of a flourishing nation in stark contrast to Western media narratives on the crisis since the expulsion of most of the white farmers. In selling this rhetoric, multiple regional allies were engaged: for example, on 12 April 2008 South African President Thabo Mbeki announced, 'there is no crisis in Zimbabwe.'[194] However, with persistent erratic rainfall patterns from around 2005, even with the heavy government investments in maize and wheat production – crops formerly grown by the ousted white farmers – yields remained disproportionate with the level of state investment. For instance, some farmers targeted to produce about 10 000 tonnes of maize were barely achieving over 5 000 tonnes.[195] However, even as maize yields were significantly lower than expected, the state described talk of grain shortages as artificial.[196] In June 2008, former Information Minister Jonathan Moyo remarked,

> The war in Iraq was about oil, the war in Zimbabwe is about land and the country's detractors are using any means foul to get it… there is no food crisis in Zimbabwe…the lies are designed not to harm ZANU (PF), not harm the President, but Zimbabwe and Zimbabweans…it is foolish for anyone to expect 2.4 million tonnes of grains to be delivered to the GMB depots simply because the country harvested that figure.…we know that the majority of people live in rural areas. They know that they are communal and A1 farmers and most of them kept their grain. Farmers bring their surplus to the GMB.[197]

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[191] News24, 'There is no crisis in Zim- Mbeki', -https://www.news24.com./news24/there-is-no-crisis-in-zim-mbeki-20080412, Accessed 7 October 2020.

[192] Giampietro, 'Food security in Africa', 307.

[193] 'Starvation Strikes Zimbabwe's Urban Dwellers', https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/starvation-strikes-zimbabwe-s-urban-dwellers, Accessed 25 October 2020.

[194] News24, 'There is no crisis in Zim- Mbeki', -https://www.news24.com./news24/there-is-no-crisis-in-zim-mbeki-20080412, Accessed 7 October 2020.

[195] GMAZ, *GMAZ Annual Audit Report, 2009*, 21.

[196] 'Artificial shortages loom ahead of holidays', *The Herald*, 8 April 2008

[197] 'GMB unveils new grain products', *The Chronicle*, 20 June 2008.

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But barely three months later the Minister of Agriculture, Joseph Made, admitted that the 'long-term benefits of the FTLRP were yet to kick in', and Zimbabwe was faced with grain deficits.[198] Once again, as opposed to turning to local small-grains stocks, the government was prompt to import maize from various countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi and Zambia to address the looming food insecurity.[199] Doing this reinforced regional trade relations and, more centrally, did not expose the poor agricultural performances of maize farmers that would be reflected with an open public shift to consumption of small grains.

In addition, with Statutory Instrument 111 of 2005 on Grain Marketing and Control (Sale of Maize Regulations) in place, grain cartels were able to transport grain duty-free between international borders under full government subsidy and resell at a self-calculated price.[200] In the meantime, to calm local resistance, in August 2005 the government allowed for the duty-free importation of basic commodities namely mealie-meal, cooking oil, salt, and flour, to a maximum of six items each per traveller to mitigate starvation.[201] Also in the same month, they confirmed reports of ongoing negotiations with the South African government to exercise leniency towards Zimbabwean travellers using Emergency Travel Documents as opposed to the standard passports when travelling between the two countries in search of basic foodstuff.[202] Without openly admitting to a crisis, these moves were subtle indicators that the government was failing to handle the food crisis and was instead more concerned with saving face regionally and in the international community, as opposed to fulfilling its mandates to feed the people.

NOT TO BE SOLD: Corruption and fuelling of a food crisis

As noted, until the late 1990s Zimbabwe was considered the breadbasket of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (formerly Southern African Development Coordination Conference [SADCC]), responsible for ensuring food security in the region.[203] However, by 2002 the country had fallen to being one of the region's largest and consistent

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[198] 'Mealie-meal shortages resurface', *The Herald*, 11 August 2008.
[199] Madimu, 'Food imports', 19-21.
[200] Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates, Committee for Food Security: The Grain Marketing Board, August 2005. Section 4b: Statutory Instrument 111 of 2005 on Grain Marketing and Control (Sale of Maize Regulations), 23. Available at http://parlzim.gov./national-assembly-hansard/, Accessed 5 October 2020.
[201] Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates, September 2007, Available at http://parlzim.gov./national-assembly-hansard/, Accessed 15 August 2020.
[202] For SA, Zimbabweans were offering the cheap skilled labour in the build up to the prestigious 2010 FIFA soccer world cup.
[203] Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's lost decade*, 56.

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grain importers. Zimbabwe has become a permanent statistic of poverty on NGO charts in the twenty-first century.[204] In theory, the land reform and grain marketing pricing policy reconfigured the agrarian templet of African production, ending decades of racialized and restrictive distribution of resources. Yet, in reality, the improvements were few and far between insofar as the development of small grains was concerned. Thus, as observed above, the year 2000 with the FTLRP was a turning point for Zimbabwean agriculture. The major challenge in the fight against food security was the deeply embedded politicization and monopoly of food and in the grain industry, in particular by ZANU PF. In addition to this control was massive looting and maladministration in key agricultural ancillary sectors such as the transport industry and grain packaging companies, being awarded lucrative GMB tenders without due process.[205] In 2009 newly appointed Minister of Finance Tendai Biti complained of the creation of unnecessary positions in the grain sector to compensate party cadres by ZANU-PF that was consuming too big a portion of the annual allocation reserved for the purchasing of grain from local farmers by the GMB.[206] Moreover, this created an unnecessary red tape that was causing delays in the disbursement of government assistance to the needy communities.[207] Apart from dampening economic growth, between 2005 and 2010 this negatively affected the status of food security in Zimbabwe.

Jan Vasina and John Iliffe both note that, during episodes of crisis, African families have found innovative ways to obtain food and survive.[208] As food shortages worsened in 2007, urban cultivation of maize and increasingly small grains became ubiquitous in Bulawayo.[209] However, in April 2007 the Bulawayo municipality cautioned over the increased usage of already scarce water, especially in the townships, as more and more residents were relying on Council water instead of rain to maintain the fields and mitigate hunger.[210] In these sprouting urban gardens, small grains were grown as opposed to maize. This reflected the widespread participation by locals in various NGO programmes that encouraged the eating of small grains

[204] WFP, 'State of Food insecurity and vulnerability in southern Africa, 23.
[205] Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates, August 2009, Available at http://parlzim.gov./national-assembly-hansard/, Accessed 15 August 2020.
[206] 'Red-tape delays loan disbursements', *The Chronicle*, 29 May 2009.
[207] *Ibid*.
[208] Jan Vansina, 'Finding food and the history of precolonial equatorial Africa: A plea', *African Economic History*, 7, Contributions to a history of agriculture and fishing in central Africa, 1979, 9-20 and John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 196.
[209] 'Residents warned against streambank cultivation', *The Chronicle*, 12 April 2007, Also see 'Council warns over defiance on urban cultivators', *The Chronicle*, 29 April 2007.
[210] *Ibid*.

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through seed and meal distribution during their education activities on living with HIV and AIDS and in developing drought-resilience strategies.[211] Moreover, such NGO initiatives not only developed from scientific studies that underlined small grains' nourishing and more resilient features, but they were able to grow in dry areas with low rainfall, relying in a great way on the long-standing social history and intimate knowledge of small grains among African families, as discussed in Chapters Two and Four.

As an added incentive, unlike with most government-sponsored grain schemes, working with NGOs was preferred because they disregarded one's political affiliations.[212] This enabled more local families to benefit from the donations of small-grain and legumes meal packs that were distributed.[213] Interestingly though, although these donations were branded in bold **USAid – NOT TO BE SOLD** (**Figure 20**). Yet by the end of 2007, these packages were being sold in stores all over the country, albeit at a significantly lower price in comparison to mealie-meal.[214] According to a country report by the WFP 2010, various agencies including USAid were by early 2008 forced to start selling their aid grain to dispel any regime-change agenda suspicions and rumours that often followed their activities in Zimbabwe.[215] Despite the costs paid by the hunger population to purchase this grain, this assistance by the USAid enhanced both domestic nutrition as well as food security. One local farmer in rural Gwanda notes how this sorghum grain was sold at 'give-away' prices '*ngoba ngeke besinike mahala'* (it was very cheap, merely avoiding giving us the grain for free).[216]

[211] Ralf Otto, *NGOs and humanitarian reform: Mapping study Zimbabwe Report*, (Belgium: NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project), 33-34.
[212] Mark Chingono, 'Food aid, village politics and conflict in rural Zimbabwe'.
[213] *Ibid*.
[214] Personal experience and observations noted by researcher of the 2007-8 crisis period.
[215] 'Starvation Strikes Zimbabwe's Urban Dwellers', https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/starvation-strikes-zimbabwe-s-urban-dwellers, Accessed 8 October 2020.
[216] Interview Mr Simango, Bulawayo, 21 June 2020.

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Figure 20*:* Small grain meal donated by USAid to vulnerable local families across Zimbabwe between 2007-2008.[217]

For as long as the economy continued to spiral out of control, little could be done to prevent the exploitation of citizens by a power-hungry state or money-hungry opportunists. As the crisis worsened throughout 2007, unscrupulous retailers were able to promote an illegal black market for basic commodities by deliberately hoarding the grain and limiting its supply on the market just to trigger higher buying prices for their goods.[218] Predominantly in the rural areas, politicians leveraged rural hunger through food handouts.[219] For as long as the threat of starvation prevailed, the ruling ZANU PF was able to attract large numbers to attend its rallies – where food handouts, among other wares, were distributed.[220] These large crowns fitted well in favour of ZANU PF's defence during challenges on electoral outcomes. They operated as an alibi, offering a statistical measurement of ZANU election victory and popularity across the county to reinforce the idea that sizable numbers voted for the party.[221] Thus efforts at rectifying the hunger problem were based on terms that maintained this status quo.

However, public reception of such aid was not always uniform, and neither was it always positive. In June 2007 a donation of 50 000 tonnes of maize seed by a visiting government delegation irked furious villagers in Binga. *The Chronicle* reported mounting complaints by locals at how the government was 'wasting resources and giving people what they did not need.'[222] Outraged residents explained that Binga was the epicentre of drought in the province

[217] Chingono, 'Food aid, village politics and conflict in rural Zimbabwe'.
[218] Madimu, 'Food import', 139.
[219] USAid, *Zimbabwe Food security brief*, 2010.
[220] Moyo, 'Regime survival strategies, 32-5.
[221] *Ibid*.
[222] 'Furore over maize donations', *The Southern Eye,* 23 June 2007.

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– '…maize does not do well here.'[223] Yet, under the guise of community support, maize seed was constantly distributed by the government. Such donations were necessary for state propaganda on community development, while at the same time managing to keep vulnerable locals dependent on the state through patronage. According to political analyst Mark Chingono, such donations demonstrated political unwillingness to address food insecurity over the long term.[224] A despondent local councillor in Binga shared that government officials 'claim huge per diems for their visits…these handover ceremonies are a chance to rebuke the opposition…people eat for two days but thereafter go back to their dry fields'.[225]

Villagers made numerous requests for more suitable small-grain seeds, but instead, maize seed was what they always received.[226] In addition, in August 2008 the winning opposition member of parliament for Binga south Joel Gabuza reiterated before parliament that it was known by all that small grains were better suited for dry areas such as his constituency[227], grappling with what Rob Nixon describes as the 'slow violence' of anthropogenic climate change and its negative impact on crops and livestock production.[228] Yet the government continued to drag its feet in formally encouraging the replacement of the less drought-resistant maize with small grains.[229] Instead, the government-run Agriculture and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) introduced a new so-called drought-tolerant maize variety seed – ZF265.[230] These performed dismally in the arid south.[231] However, forgoing maize as the main staple also meant relinquishing a lot of kickbacks earned by various corrupt officials in government and the grain industry during grain speculation through constant imports and exports of maize.[232]

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[223] *Ibid*.
[224] Chingono, 'Food aid, village politics and conflict in rural Zimbabwe'.
[225] 'Furore over maize donations', *The Southern Eye*, 23 June 2007.
[226] *Ibid*.
[227] *Ibid*.
[228] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 132. The effects of climate change are greatest in the long term, adversely affecting rainfall and climatic patterns, thereby rendering agricultural seasons unpredictable.
[229] 'Furore over maize donations', *The Southern Eye*, 23 June 2007.
[230] 'Arda introduces new drought tolerant seed', *The Chronicle*, 4 May 2008. This variety took 120 days to mature with an envisaged potential yield of 12 tonnes per hectare.
[231] '1000s in need of food aid in Lupane', *The Chronicle*, 6 January 2009.
[232] 'Massive irregularities exposed at the GMB', *The Chronicle*, 19 March 2012. Grain corruption included but not limited to controlling the transportation of grain. For example, for every tonne of maize imported by the GMB, truckers pocketed half the value of the consignment. Such exemptions were made for maize and not small grains hence the incentive to maintain maize.

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In stark contrast, in August 2008 a smaller 41-tonne donation of small-grain meals destined for distribution in parts of Matabeleland North by American USAid was received warmly by locals.[233] However, this occurred during a bitter political stalemate following the unresolved June presidential election runoff. On the defensive, ZANU PF accused this aid donation as an attempt at stirring insurgency against the sitting government. After heated diplomatic exchanges, which saw NGO operations being brought to a halt for a while, normalcy was restored by September with the most notable victory for domestic agriculture being that all future NGO donations should first explore the availability of local suppliers and consist of at least 65% local co-ownership developmental investments.[234] Little objection was made by CSOs as this policy looked towards discouraging the 'career beneficiary' syndrome among local communities.[235] At the same time, it promoted the development of local agriculture during project implementation.[236] In the opening six months of 2009, following the signing of the GNU in September 2008, of the 84 tonnes of small grain distributed in Lupane, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts by World Vision, 55 000 tonnes were sourced from local farmers in various parts of the country, mainly from Matabeleland South and the Midlands area.[237] The rest was composed of imports from Zambian farmers.[238]

More significantly, there was a policy shift towards small grains ushered in by GNU.[239] Moving forward, together with the new government, different NGOs actively encouraged the cultivation of small grains to counter ecological crises, collecting surpluses from farmers and distributing them to food-deficient areas.[240] An added bonus for small-grain farmers was that NGOs paid in foreign currency whenever they bought their grain.[241] This heightened the incentive for more and more farmers to grow small grains and according to a joint ministry and ICRISAT 2010 report, acreage cultivation increased from about

[233] *The Guardian*, 'Mugabe suspends foreign aid agencies' work in Zimbabwe,' http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/06/mugabe.aid/, Accessed 6 October 2020. ,
[234] 'Big boast for local farmers', *The Chronicle*, 29 September 2008.
[235] 'Career beneficiaries is a term coined to refer to locals who entered not the uncouth habit on relying on government and donor handouts for their livelihood even during periods when alternative means of subsistence were probable. Also see Kauma, 'A socio-economic history of Matobo District in Zimbabwe, 45-48.
[236] 'Big boast for local farmers', *The Chronicle*, 29 September 2008.
[237] 'Farmers urged to use ASPEF funds', *The Herald*, 30 July 2009.
[238] *Ibid*.
[239] The signing of the GNU witnessed an increase in the number of international agencies operating in Zimbabwe and this included significant partners that encouraged the growing of small grains as opposed to maize to combat hunger and malnutrition.
[240] Mukarumbwa and Mushunje, 'Potential of sorghum and finger millet', 17-9.
[241] *Ibid*.

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1 794 527 hectares in 1999 to around 2 655 687 hectares by 2010,[242] while, small-grain yields likewise doubled from 2006 levels by the end of 2009.

As the economy continued to implode, there was a growing appreciation for small grains, especially among urban families. As shown in **Figure 21** and **Figure 22**, this translated into brisk business, with various rural long-distance bus terminuses such as the Renkini and the Entubane and Nkulumane ranks in Bulawayo's townships becoming hives of activity with farmers using these as centres to trade their grain with city dwellers. This helped alleviate urban hunger. Notwithstanding that, for a greater part of the economic crisis, small grains remained priced significantly lower than maize – even when charged in foreign currency, their availability was more widespread thus having a greater impact on preserving food security.

Figure 21: Local bus delivering grain from rural areas.[243]
Figure 22: Informal grain traders at the rural long-distance bus terminus.[244]

Pervasive political power plays and mismanagement of the grain industry fuelled food insecurity across the country. In October 2005, on behalf of the Matabeleland North Economic Development Priority Plan, the government imported just over 200 000 tonnes of maize and wheat seed. Deliveries were made to the GMB Bulawayo depot, where they then lay unused for the next 14 months before being condemned as being unsuitable for use by agricultural experts.[245] Responsibility for this negligence was tossed around between the GMB and the Ministry of Agriculture, with the former absolving itself from any wrongdoing by underlining that, as a parastatal, they were merely acting as a storage facility for the inputs purchased by

[242] GoZ Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development, 57.
[243] Fortune Moyo, 'Small grains hold promise to alleviating food insecurity in Zimbabwe, http://globalpressjournal.com/africa/zimbabwe/small-grains-hold-promise-alleviating-food-insecurity-zimbabwe/, Accessed 6 October 2020.
[244] 'Small grains are tough sell', https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/95489/zimbabwe-small-grains-are-tough-sell. Accessed 6 October 2020.
[245] 'Imported seed rots at GMB', *The Herald*, 27 May 2009.

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the government.[246] An unnamed official with the ARDA informed the newspaper that the original requisition was for small grains and legumes to meet the rising demand from local farmers. However, in turn, the ministry made various deliveries of 'drought-resistant' maize seed, which was openly shunned by farmers in Filabusi, Maphisa, Plumtree, Lupane and Tsholotsho. This led to the rotting of the seed in storage.[247] So the government intensified monitoring the actions of communal farmers and by the end of 2008 rural communities were widely infiltrated with government secret intelligence offices operating undercover to ensure farmers' operations remained aligned with national agricultural development agendas and were not covers aimed at effecting regime change.[248] The ZANU PF regime was constantly anxious about community programmes whose goals empowered communities with possible outcomes of disrupting the political status quo.

In November 2009, the government revived the National Committee on Food and Nutrition, whose agenda was aimed at promoting the cultivation of nutritious small grains across the country. Launching this committee, Vice President Joice Mujuru emphasized that, although 'President Mugabe is still being demonised by Western countries because of the land reform program…he said there should be a committee on food and nutrition which should go directly to the people and teach them how to utilise their land in a productive manner, and encourage them to grow local grains suitable for their soils.'[249] Mujuru's remarks maintained the overarching rhetoric of the Mugabe regime – a mixture of an appeal to local sentiment on a traditional ethos with constant reminders of the ongoing battles with the West over the land reform. As noted by historian Musiwaro Ndakaripa, this mantra became a focal point in the dispensation of the first republic to account for any of their failures.[250]

Conclusion

This chapter examined the socio-political history of small grains in Zimbabwe from 2000 at the start of the contested FTLRP until the end of the decade in 2010, shortly after the Government of National Unity between ZANU PF and the two MDC factions to show how politics was embedded in the development of small grains. Joining a growing body of historical and scientific literature on food security in postcolonial Africa and Zimbabwe in particular,

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[246] *Ibid.*
[247] *Ibid.*
[248] Moyo, 'Regime survival strategies, 32-5.
[249] Govt sets up committee on food and nutrition, The Chronicle, 12 November 2012.
[250] Ndakaripa, 'Zimbabwe is open for business', 1- 27.

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this chapter made use of examples to show how food insecurity was both instrumental and (sometimes) inadvertent, but largely a result of the actions of the ruling ZANU PF government and various elites. Following the violent expulsion of white commercial farmers, the years after 2000 were characterized by a deepening economic crisis and increasing political instability. Food shortages became rife. This chapter showed how through the unequal distribution of food aid, agricultural implements including grain seeds, fertilizers and ploughs, the state was able to regulate and control the political narrative and the population. Through the Grain Marketing Board and Reserve Bank, the Mugabe regime over-invested in the development of maize and in other formerly white agricultural sectors, including tobacco and deciduous fruits, in a strained attempt to counter Western perceptions that since the FTLRP, Zimbabwean agriculture had declined. Through manipulating the demand, supply and distribution of food, the Mugabe regime was able to control and, in many instances, reprimand rising opposition voices. By 2008 hunger was a weapon used in political campaigning.

This chapter argued that food security was compromised through state corruption and mismanagement within the grain sector. Manipulated by party cadres, food security initiatives were abused as an opportunity to amass wealth at the expense of African families. The politicization of food and agricultural assistance became rampant as the socio-economic crisis worsened. Despite this, citizens responded resiliently to both the politicization of their hunger and food insecurity. By importing food from neighbouring South Africa, turning to urban cultivation and shifting towards small grains in place of maize, both rural and urban spaces were able to mitigate hunger. The anthropogenic crisis coincided with erratic rains, jeopardising food security further. However, amid these challenges, this chapter also showed how the limitations of maize production presented opportunities for small grains to develop. Consequently, insofar as peasant agriculture is concerned, aspects such as the FTLRP became a mixed blessing to the country, enabling communal farmers to both earn at least a subsistence living and, in some cases, trade their surpluses for profit. Centrally, this chapter argued that, through food subsidies and donations, the Mugabe regime was able to control the socio-political narrative of the country and punish those who opposed it.

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This chapter explored the impact of protracted economic sanctions placed on the regime – and the country[251] – by the United States of America (USA) and the European Union from 2001. It argued that the Mugabe regime labelled these as unjust sanctions intended to force regime change. Subsequently, the regime pinned the blame for rising domestic socio-economic instability on sanctions (and foreign interference generally), while instrumentally this was a justification for its violent clampdown on opposition voices associated with the West.[252] The chapter showed how the Mugabe regime used food insecurity both weapon and as an alibi for its hard-line domestic politics against regime change.

The signing of the GNU in 2008 witnessed significant policy changes towards domestic agriculture and small grains in particular. The arrival of international funding was able to rekindle and revive the growth of small grains in communal areas beyond the discourse of health for vulnerable families living with HIV and AIDS. This revival benefited much from the longstanding African appreciation of small grains that various non-governmental organizations including ICRISAT were able to benefit from and use to promote local consumption of small grains, amid a political contestation on food security unsettling the political status quo. This chapter showed how food security in different ways triggered social resistance and was equally used by the state to manipulate electoral outcomes in the favour of increasingly despotic ZANU PF government. Accordingly, an anthropogenic 'hunger' was effectively able to prolong ZANU PF's dominance over society.

[251] Thabani Nyoni, 'The curse is real in Zimbabwe: economic sanctions must go!' *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*, 96911, 2019, 1-13.
[252] Musiwaro Ndakaripa, 'Zimbabwe is open for business': Aspects of post Mugabe economic diplomacy, *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 2020, 1- 27.

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Chapter Seven

Conclusion: Small grains in the past, present and future.

This thesis has examined the interrelationship between small grains and the shifting socio-political and economic dynamics in what is today Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial era, from around 1500 to 2013, at the end of the Government of National Unity between ZANU PF and the two factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It explored the changing role of small grains in Zimbabwe's long agrarian past, underlining how changing social, ecological and political forces impact the use and development of small grains over time and place. Historiographically, there is a dearth of work that devotes primary attention to the history of food among Zimbabwe's peoples. Moreover, historically, much of Zimbabwe's agrarian history has been represented through the lens of the three pillars of settler-colonial agrarian development – maize, tobacco and beef. Revisionist African scholars, including historians Eira Punt,[1] Sibanengi Ncube,[2] Nhamo Samasuwo[3] and others, have previously explored these agrarian sectors offering an Africanist perspective on this history. Yet still, in comparison, the 'underbelly' of the country's economic and social development – African peasant society and their cultivated crops – remains a neglected area. Consequently, this thesis joins a rich and growing, yet notably fragmented, agrarian historiography on the African peasantry, attempting to fill gaps in the literature on the contributions of African crops towards the development of economy and society in Zimbabwe.

Making use of archival material, secondary literature and oral sources, this thesis has extended the existing historiographical conversations on social history, 'food' history and agrarian history by demonstrating the intertwined nature of agrarian systems, food production, eating and nutrition patterns, and the cultural and social meanings of food. In so doing, it was able to integrate the growing historiographical debates on crop production and racial and class categories within agrarian, social and political spaces in Zimbabwe. In southern Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, small grains have historically been juxtaposed with maize the state

[1] Eira Punt, 'The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with articular reference to the interwar years', *MA Thesis*, University of Natal, Durban, 1979.

[2] Sibanengi Ncube, 'Colonial Zimbabwe Tobacco Industry: Global, regional and local relations, 1949-1979', *PhD Thesis*, University of the Free State, 2018.

[3] Nhamo Samasuwo, 'Food Production and war supplies: Rhodesia's beef industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2, 2003, 487-502.

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and some African farmers. This thesis traced the development of this trend, showing how the maize-small grain rivalry over 'crop hegemony' precipitated socio-economic and political contestations on the very nature of African society and their relations with white colonists and later white society. The thesis traced the trajectory of African cultivated small grains from their early adoption and integration into African society around the sixteenth century, which changed some societies significantly into pastoral communities with more permanent settlements practising a wide variety of agricultural activities with a wider array of cultivated food which included grains, groundnuts and tubers. It then showed how early white visitors – like Missionaries, merchants and traders from around 1850 and then colonialization from 1890, brought about changes in African grain production and consumption patterns. The thesis was able to demonstrate how Africans responded differently to various colonial and later post-colonial policies that altered the nature of small-grain production, cooking and eating over time. This thesis argues that the social, economic and political history of small grains was not linear but shifting in significance across different social groups over time. Moreover, its trajectory was turbulent and changed over varying key periods, shaping and shaped by political, social and environmental forces.

The opening chapter of this thesis revisited the key contestations on nomenclature when studying the social history of Africa with a focus on the language used when discussing small grains. It observed how early colonial writers on Zimbabwe's pre-colonial past and the early colonial era possessed limited knowledge of local languages, and this was evidenced by the challenges in accurately capturing the names of some crops. For example, the terms millet and *rapoko* were often incorrectly and interchangeably used by merchants and native commissioners and, as Chapter Three demonstrated, this often distorted historical accounts on the types of crops grown by African farmers. Moreover, in some cases too, this resulted in colonial officials wrongly claiming that certain communities cultivated all varieties of small grains or some varieties of grain, which has fuelled historical inaccuracies.

Chapter One also revisited the seminal debate on the Africa peasantry, which was observed to mainly describe poor rural farmers, whose subsistence and consumption was derived from their cultivation of the land. This thesis then integrated the story of African peasantry and African families with the more recent historiographical concept of 'whiteness', as articulated by

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historian Linda Martin Alcoff[4] and Rory Pilossof.[5] The thesis was, therefore, able to offer a different perspective on the shifting relations between African and white communities over times of changing economic and political interests. It stretched this historiographical conversation on the intersection of blacks and white to show how the two were able to coexist and how Africans were not unaware of the changing economic and political landscape. This thesis captures some of the African responses to hunger and famine, economic booms, and slumps as well as during periods of political strife and belligerence. Some Africans displayed economic savviness and ingeniousness in responses to forces of trial, for example trading their grain crops on through informal markets or even by seeking alternative markets altogether. Some African families were also able to use small grains to challenge various repressive colonial and post-colonial machinations aimed at altering their way of life for the benefit of minority elites. Through sometimes successfully navigating through varying challenges over the precolonial to postcolonial era, this thesis rightly showed how some African farmers demonstrated the robust and industrious nature of African farmers as active economic and political members of society, who are able to modify and sometimes craft new ways to avert hunger and poverty. This echoed what anthropologist James Scott describes as 'weapons of the weak' within agricultural communities.

Focused on the pre-colonial past, Chapter Two showed how small grains have been appreciated differently across societies. This chapter underscored the various uses of small grains among African families, and over-achingly accounting the varying economic, religious, political and social representations attached to these grains by various pre-colonial communities over time. As observed from different Portuguese merchant records, across different pre-colonial societies, including the Karanga and Shona, small grains were a primary source of food after they constructed more permanent settlements and subsequent practice of agriculture from around the sixteenth century. This saw an economic and social value change for grain crops, witnessing small grains becoming an essential factor in domestic and long-distance trade as well as for servicing tribute, taxation and patronage obligations in the centuries between 1500 and 1900, shortly after the British South Africa Company took over the colonial administration

[4] Linda Martin Alcoff, *The future of Whiteness,* (Malden: Polity Press, 2015), 11. As explored in Chapter Four 'whiteness' is deployed to mean white colonial settler ideology, ideas and, in some cases, their physical presence that was considered by themselves to be superior economically and socially. This terms as used in the thesis is noted as serving the interests of the colonial state, a select group of white farmer and settlers, and in some cases - as argued - a few elite Africans.

[5] Rory Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012).

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of the country. This thesis has argued, however, that this was not limited to the pre-colonial era alone but stretched over the colonial and even post-colonial epochs (as seen from Chapters Three to Six). At the same time, for others, a deeper social and spiritual connection was generated, with small grains being at the centre of various rites of passage during birth, death and agriculture, as well as rainmaking and harvesting ceremonies. For the Shona, for instance, this widespread use of small grains in various social activities witnessed these grains being embedded within the cosmology and culture of the people. Their homesteads, artwork and even language (poems, prose and idioms) incorporated various aspects of their growing appreciation of small grains as a society. The chapter argued that small grains played an important role in shaping African culture and multiple representations of religion, spirituality and ideas of health. Some communities used small grains to connect with their Mwali and their ancestors. They brewed opaque beer from small grains during such rituals and ceremonies.

Over time, these various practices became integral to identity and heritage and were preserved through their sometimes metaphorical forms (in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, poems, songs and jokes) or as tangible icons (through archaeological remains of buildings and customary ceremonies). This thesis showed how a historian including small grains in this realm (rather than only agrarian or economic realms) can demonstrate that small grains were integral in everyday life as well as significant in social ceremonies, rituals and rites of passage. Because of these roles in societies, small grains were key in social cohesion processes – as food and beer were consumed to cement relations among members of society. This was captured in various indigenous social and linguistic expressions such as proverbs and idioms. One such example is the Shona idiom, '*hukama igasva hunozodwa nechikafu*' (relationships are only made whole and adequate with the consumption of food) that emphasizes how food was a catalyst for social cohesion among some African families. Indeed, Chapters Two and Four go on to illustrate how small grains were widely consumed during different social gatherings, facilitating moments for the community, kinship groups and family to connect, share oral narratives and counsel. The consumption of small grains underlined the significance of African knowledge systems (the processes of transmitting knowledge from one generation to the next) through strengthening the development of social connections among African families and communities. At the same time, there existed a robust commercial trade in grain and other foodstuffs among Africans and even when Portuguese merchants and later British traders and settlers arrived. These two systems of exchanging and sharing food coexisted within society.

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But society is not static. This study showed how over the colonial period, during periods of food scarcity, some families would trade their grains and other foods to more needy communities. This practice was widespread despite some Shona peoples' so-called cultural belief that it was taboo to deny food to the needy or visitors. It belies romantic historiographic visions of a pre-colonial Africa without either commerce or inequalities of resources or power. Chapters Three and Four showed how the arrival of colonial rule that introduced steep tax obligations from African families was a compelling force towards the proletarianization of Africans. These forces reshaped African ideas about food – its production, consumption and distribution. For others, these changes dismantled their social bonds with each other and increasingly from the 1930s, in some urban areas and mining compounds, small grains remained a culinary favourite among African workers because it provided a 'taste of home' to the migrant labourers. For other African families, shifting agrarian and culinary patterns presented vast opportunities for economic and social mobility. Africans relationship with small grains was complex and fluid, different from one community to another and among individuals.

Chapter Three analysed the production and marketing of small grains over the colonial era from 1890 to 1980. This chapter argued that the colonial period, especially from the 1930s to the 1970s, was a particularly turbulent period for African farmers because of their threat to white maize farmers up to the 1930s. In fact, contrary to conventional wisdom, Africans initially dominated the grain industry in the colony. The study observed how small grains were in constant competition with maize, which had been earmarked as the 'Rhodesian farmer's friend' by the Department of Agriculture in 1907.[6] Motivated by economic factors, white settlers remained uneasy towards African dominance in the grain markets and sought to reverse this monopoly. Engaging with the work of scholars including Timothy Burke,[7] Allison Shutt[8] and Godfrey Hove[9], the thesis showed how different prejudices about African etiquette and hygiene were used to reduce the competitive edge small grains held over white settler-produced maize. Chapter Three showed that to address these white insecurities, a series of pieces of legislation, notably the Maize Control Act in 1930, were enacted by the colonial state to collectively curb African production, marketing and

[6] NAZ, GI/14, G.M Odlum, *Agricultural and pastoral Rhodesia*, 1906, 5.

[7] Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 17-35.

[8] Allison Shutt, *Manners make a nation: racial etiquette in Southern Rhodesia, 1910-1963*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2015).

[9] Godfrey Hove, 'The State, Farmers and Dairy Farming in Colonial Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia), c.1890-1951', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2015, 70-75.

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consumption of small grains. However, such policies had a differential impact on African life, in a significant way shaped influenced by Africans' proximity to white society, from the late 1930s increasingly. This meant that those Africans living and working in closer proximity to the white maize farmer, for instance, experienced greater enforcement of cultivation, diet and eating as well as marketing regulations to enforce grain trading restrictions as opposed to these cultivating remotely in the native reserves. The Diet Ordinance in 1908 that effectively replaced small grains with maize as the prime staple on the settler mines and estates was one such policy. The state intended to have Africans eating more white settler-produced maize, thereby promoting that budding sector. This thesis made the point that, in some cases, more stern measures such as fines and changing the foods available in stores were used to enforce different eating practices among Africans, aimed at promoting the sales of maize produced by white farmers instead. Other white sectors, mining capital, in particular, were reluctant to follow through with enforcing the dietary switch from small grains to white produced maize, primarily concerned with keeping their workers healthy at the lowest cost possible. As noted in Chapter Five, they actually believed that small grains were healthier, more resilient as a crop, filling and a cheaper food option for their African workers. This showed how white settler sentiments towards small grains were not always homogenous. It also showed that in so far as marketing was concerned, small grains were fetching lower prices, which encouraged mining capital to maintain its continued consumption within African diets. Moreover, in comparison to maize, it was the healthier and preferred option by the labour force.

The enactment of the Maize Control Act of 1930 was a decisive moment in African agricultural history. Joining Victor Machingaidze and Kenneth Vickery in the conversation about the impact of this legislation, Chapter Three showed the multiple dimensions of the Maize Control Act from the perspective of African small-grain farmers. For some years afterwards, between 1930 and 1954, when the Maize Board transformed into the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and listed sorghum as a controlled grain for marketing, African grain was systematically shifted the periphery away from the lucrative markets. This fuelled the strained production and marketing of African grain (both small grains and maize) and the underdevelopment of African agriculture. However, in so doing, this Act also necessitated African ingenuity and sometimes covert – even illegal – behaviour during the marketing and trading of their grain. Using what

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anthropologist James Scott describes as 'weapons of the weak'[10], Chapter Three showed how it became common practice among African farmers to mix different grain varieties trying to increase the amount of their grain on the market. These different constraints on African producers also stimulated the need to seek new markets for their crops. While some made use of Indian intermediaries to trade with the Grain Board (and later GMB from 1954), others resorted to selling to private millers and breweries, where they were in some cases even able to attract higher prices for their grain. From the 1950s onwards, the Maize Control Act, despite its restrictions, inadvertently led to some African farmers sourcing alternative markets for their grain. Although farmers sometimes earned low prices, by the 1970s the informal markets became the primary trading areas for African farmers, and they were able to achieve small gains from their small grains.

The politics of food and eating are at the centre of Chapter Four. The discussion of African eating and culinary practices develops within the theoretical perspectives of identity.[11] Food both influenced and shaped the way of life of different societies. Adding to this, the chapter adopts environmental historian Elijah Doro's concept of 'crop hegemonies' within the agrarian development of peasant societies.[12] Building on these two perspectives, the chapter and thesis as a whole, showed how ideas towards small grains and food are idiographic, complex, and nonlinear in their adoption. This chapter examined the politics of food in a number of sections. African proximity and interactions with white communities in a great way shaped the nature of African's conscious adoption of new culinary and food habits. Africans began experimenting with different recipes and ingredients, while at the same time forgoing their own with small grains. The chapter showed how by the late 1950s African families made use of both settler ideas and their own to prepare their meals, and one white settler commented on how Africans' kitchens were 'teeming with different flavours… composed of a variety of vegetables aesthetically arranged for their eating pleasure'.[13] In addition, the chapter argued that although blacks and whites did not at first share the same ideas on African culinary habits, during the early 1930s

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[10] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (London: Yale University Press, 1985).

[11] Thembani Dube, "Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe District, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005", *PhD thesis,* University of Witwatersrand, 2015.

[12] Elijah Doro, 'A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1893-2000', *PhD Thesis*, Stellenbosch University, 2020. Also see Chapter Three footnote 8.

[13] NAZ, S482/781/39, Maize, Wheat, Grain etc, 1945-1960, Communication between the Department of Native Affairs and the Secretary for Health, 15 January 1959.

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some white communities regarded African food as 'indigestible' and aesthetically unappealing, over time, sometimes through systematic measures such as market control of the food sold to Africans, and sometimes through Africans' own volition, ideas about small grains changed. Some regarded these changes as improvements on both the quality of their food and nutrition – as seen in Chapter Five also. Others, though, remained sceptical about the innovations introduced by the whites, arguing that they sought to further erode their traditions and way of life by replacing them with white settler ideas.

Notwithstanding the varying views towards African food and subsequent innovations introduced over time, the thesis showed how by the mid-1950s African families that had embraced settler foods (like tinned meat, bread and rice) had their task of food preparation significantly lightened. This allowed them more time for leisure, other household tasks, and livelihood opportunities. This was especially beneficial in response to the increasing urbanization within the colony, which increased the demand for African labour. Chapter Four showed how the plough used from 1910 enhanced cultivation and diversity within the food crops available for African consumption. Increased crop productivity among African farmers leads to their having more grain to trade. Thus, even though still restricted by the measure of the GMB (formerly Maize Board until 1954), their surpluses could be used to improve their economic fortunes because of some of the social contracts they had concluded that sustained the existence of an informal grain market system.

However, improved economic status did not always lead to improvements in the eating habits and nutrition of African families. In explaining this complex reality within the evolution of small-grain consumption, Chapter Five traces the development and continuities within approaches towards African nutrition from the time of the declaration of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 into the post-colonial era under Robert Mugabe in 2000. This chapter explored the interface between the state and food regimes within a protean political and social milieu. Showing how state paternalism influenced eating habits especially among government workers, the thesis argued that African nutrition became a growing priority for the Ian Smith regime at the same time that it was compromising the abilities and production capacities of the labour force, adversely impacting national economic production. The thesis showed how the Smith regime grappled with the need to improve African nutrition and resorted to supplying those living in government compounds across the country with the food they wanted,

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including small grains, which rekindled their kinship bonds with those at home. Concomitantly, until the late 1960s, infant and child nutrition was primarily under the guidance and support of religious and private missionary and philanthropic groups. Through the establishment of a Food and Nutrition Council in early 1962, the government attempted to improve and manage African eating habits to ensure that workers were always well-nourished and fit for work. Perhaps the most notable achievements of the task force were introducing a new diet into the workspace that included a variety of meals and nutrients for the workers. However, affected by government malfeasance, follow-through was typically weak and African diets maintained their tendency to include carbohydrate starches from *sadza* (maize and small grains). Moreover, those outside government employment continued to suffer from limited attention to their diets and nutrition. This chapter showed that for most of the 1960s Southern Rhodesia did not have a coherent and comprehensive policy on African nutrition. Instead, it inherited much of the Federal state's apathetic attitude towards investing in the health and nutrition of its wider population. Nevertheless, in rural areas, African families were not prevented by these politics from eating their small grains to augment their nutrition.

This chapter added a missing yet important dimension to the conversation on African nutrition in Zimbabwe, that of 'nutrition education'. By showing the state of nutrition before the 1970s, this chapter went on to trace the development of policy covering African eating, nutrition and small grain cultivation. The chapter demonstrated the policy disharmony within nutrition policy and the lived realities of most African families, that made nutrition education ever more essential. In 1967 the Nutrition Council was established, and the chapter traced different attempts by the government to educating society on how to create healthy nutritious diets for their families. Some of these included education films, made in collaboration with agricultural demonstrators to improve food variety and nutrients. We observe in these attempts, the shifts within colonial mindset as earlier underlined in Chapter Three. White colonialists aimed at crafting and elevating the Africans into 'elite' citizens by introducing them to white settler foods and concomitant standards of living. This was in order both to secure a local market for white produce while at the same time improve the eating and nutritional lifestyles of African families.

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A more robust strategy for black families was implemented by the Food and Nutrition Council in the 1970s through their collaborative work with various international and religious institutions, including the World Food Program. The chapter explored how the decade of the 1970s was characterized by extensive outreach initiatives towards educating and improving the nutrition of African families. In 1978 the film *Balance meals for better nutrition* heralded a new dawn in the state's attitude towards Africans. This was because Southern Rhodesia stepped up to embrace the global agenda of the World Food Program to eradicate hunger and poor nutrition within its communities through the activation of proactive eating and nutrition programming. The thesis showed how by independence in 1980 over 700 educators were commissioned to teach Africans home economics skills related to food and nutrition. Into the 1980s the newly independent African-led government adopted these policies and complemented them with the introduction of other key policies and programmes such as the Children's Supplementary Feeding Program in 1984. This witnessed the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare taking a leading role in the dissemination of food and nutrition programming after 1980. Notwithstanding, the chapter showed how despite the government's proactive position in community feeding programs, Zimbabwe still failed to handle the growing cases of malnutrition, especially among young children and women and girls. This was a growing problem because of persistent poor harvests among rural subsistence farmers who, as Chapter Six argues, maintained growing maize instead of small grains, despite their favourable outcomes within the changing ecology. Even after (ironically) winning the coveted World Hunger Prize in 1988, Zimbabwe, failed to improve the state of African nutrition at a household level, because while the GMB national grain coffers were full, millions remained unable to afford food and subsistence agriculture also remained significantly underfunded.

Increasingly from the mid-1980s the number of casualties reeling from malnutrition worsened over the socialist-oriented decade between 1982 and 1992 and was exacerbated during periods of drought such as in 1992. The thesis (especially in Chapter Six) showed that as the 1990s progressed, different communities became increasingly dependent on government and donor assistance to meet their food and nutritional needs. This was heightened by the politicisation of food distribution amid an environment characterized by low agricultural output by farmers as a result of unfavourable climatic conditions. Describing such households as 'career beneficiaries' in Chapter Six, this thesis demonstrated how different families sometimes

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appropriated government and donor feeding initiatives largely for self-enrichment. In some areas, this accounted for the failure of government initiatives to eradicate domestic and national hunger and poor nutrition over the post-colonial era as resources were misused.

After the 2000 white farm invasions by the so-called 'war veterans', the politicization of resources and food, in particular, was gaining traction. Various scholars including Sam Moyo[14] underline that land reform was long overdue in Zimbabwe to redress the growing social and economic inequalities and address worsening poverty among Africans. Yet, as the thesis showed, on the whole, the post-2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) created more socio-economic and political challenges that worsened the existing 'pauper state' of African farmers and indeed society. Between 2000 and 2010 commercial agriculture, especially maize and wheat production performed poorly. However, Chapter Six showed that during this period small grains survived the 'lost decade' – in fact recording significant growth surpassing previous levels. This was attributed to a multiplicity of factors, the chief one being the sturdiness of small-grain varieties (compared to maize) in surviving the dire ecological problems – including the drought that was widespread throughout this decade.

Moreover, different donor and intermittently government community programs witnessed the distribution of small grains along with the encouragement for more and more families to adopt small grains as a solution to food insecurity. Chapter Six centrally argued that food insecurity challenges were largely 'manmade' by the ZANU PF regime to control the political and social narrative within the contested political arena, especially with the emergence of a robust opposition in the form of the Movement for Democratic Change in late 1999. With ample opportunities to promote the indigenous cultivation of small grains among Africans, the Mugabe regime instead continued to distribute maize seed as relief packages to a sometimes-disgruntled electorate, who showed an awareness of and a growing desire for small grains after repeated seasons of failed maize crops. At some point growing small grains was considered treasonous and going against the national agenda of creating a robust maize-producing state. Conceptually located within discussions independently presented by historians Tapiwa

[14] Sam Moyo and Walter Chambati. 'Introduction: Roots of the Fast-Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe', in *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism*, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2013), 1–28.

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Madimu[15] and Megan Vaughan[16] on the nexus of food and political power, the chapter traced how small grains have been at the centre of a political discourse driven by Mugabe which asserted that 'there is no crisis in Zimbabwe'. By 2005 the regime had adopted food as a tool for state-making during an era of widespread hunger and food insecurity amid an economy in freefall. Added to this, during this period the growth of small grains was stifled by the state and selected ruling party elites, who used the Grain Marketing Board grain monopoly for self-enrichment through flouting various import and grain trade rules in their favour, with no remorse or reprimand. The chapter analyses various debates that are embedded within local narratives of food (in)security in Zimbabwe, echoing economist Amartya Sen's assertion that 'there is no such thing as an apolitical food problem'.[17]

'Sadza-eaters' and the future of small grains

On 16 November 2020, the new President Emerson Mnangagwa launched a new economic blueprint, National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), part of whose aim is to increase maize production from the current projected 907 629 tonnes annually in 2020 to 3 million tonnes by 2025.[18] While it is still too early to draw any conclusions about this initiative, this strategy is aimed at curbing food insecurity. Currently, Zimbabwe is facing stagnant maize production levels despite heavy investments from the Presidential Farm Mechanization Scheme and Command Agriculture programme, dubbed 'Command Ugly- culture' (a bastardization of the term 'agriculture') for its inherent corruption, extensive misappropriation of funds and dysfunctional ancillary support agencies such as the Grain Market Board and Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. Maize farming continues to disappoint yet remains a favourite mechanism among political leaders in Zimbabwe. This policy shows how over the years ZANU PF has learned little – if anything at all – from history.

In addition to this, the GMB has been inundated with debts accruing over the past couple of decades and has failed to mitigate hunger adequately during the national lockdown period in response to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in early March 2020 in Zimbabwe. Comparing Zimbabwe's response to that of its neighbour, South Africa, commentators pointed to both a

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[15] Tapiwa Madimu, 'Food imports, hunger and state making in Zimbabwe, 2000-2009', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55, 1, 2020, 128–144.

[16] Megan Vaughan, 'Famine analysis and family relations: 1949 in Nyasaland', *Past and Present*, 108, 1985, 177-205.

[17] Amartya Sen, 'The Food problem', 459.

[18] 'President launches National Development Strategy', *The Chronicle*, 17 November 2020.

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general lack of strategy and the opportunity for the Mnangagwa regime to crush the opposition. Citizens were not spared criticism, being described as being very complacent about the virus. In their defence, several public opinions stressed how the nature of Zimbabwean subsistence and livelihood could not survive under restrictive lockdown regulations as they would 'starve to death.'[19] Yet for others, this attitude towards the plague was described as typical Zimbabwean behaviour in crisis – remaining aloof and uninvolved towards crisis resolution. A striking statement that integrates small grains and African food within this contested dialogue was by one commentator who remarked that 'the problem with *sadza-eaters* is that they get full and forget their worries until their next meal.' Ensuing exchanges pinned the blame for Zimbabweans tepid responses to continued political misgovernance on their consumption of *sadza*. As highlighted in Chapter Five, similar remarks on workers' consumption of *sadza* meals were expressed by colonial authorities in the 1950s. Chapter Six went on to further illustrate how the politics of the belly influenced everyday social and political interactions in society.

At the same time, although the thesis showed through various examples how differently Africans exercised agency to counter these narratives that sadza impaired their judgement and ability to work, the post-2013 social landscape no doubt provides fresh perspectives for study. As Chapter Six demonstrated, society is not homogenous and this is evinced by the varied responses towards the intertwined relationship between society, political consciousness, electoral and voting patterns, livelihood activities, agrarian, and food consumption patterns across rural and urban Zimbabwe. This thesis captured events up to 2013, just before a joint parliamentary and presidential election in Zimbabwe. Accordingly, standing on the shoulders of historians such as Jenny Leigh Smith, who historicizes the notion of 'progress' within historical narratives, future studies may look to critique the way that 'progress' has been understood and developed within Zimbabwe's agrarian history from the lens of political outcomes in the twenty-first century. Attention may consider focusing on how far Zimbabwean society has systematically and not just institutionally moved with regards to challenging notions of food, grain in particular, as a tool for political expedience.

[19] Responses to Covid- 19, https://twitter.com/daddyhope/status/1199032023807165377s09, Accessed 14 November 2020.

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The elections in 2013 were won by ZANU PF, during a significant economic recovery that was ironically attributed to their union with the MDC. Key questions remain: to what extent did historical processes affected by the politicization of grain maintain their decisive influence in swaying the electorate in favour of ZANU PF? What does this reflect about the state of agrarian affairs within the country, especially with state policy being slow to embrace small grains despite all the historical knowledge about its social, ecological and economic advantages? Added to this, given that the opposition party MDC were also in government during the stint from late 2008 to early 2013, why did they not leverage to their advantage the state's control over food distribution and control? Are the hunger and suffering of the masses, as historian Muchapara Musemwa describes it, 'not a priority' for elected leaders?[20]

While this thesis has cast a light on a previously neglected subject of political influence within food regimes in Zimbabwe, this conversation on the intertwined relationship between politics and society in the making of food history has by no means been exhausted. Each day, social perceptions and narratives undergo change and transformations in response to the ever-changing global needs and interests of society. There is no doubt that this calls for constant revisiting, and further exploration in so far as agrarian and food development are concerned. By 2013 small grains enjoyed a growing upmarket clientele, whose consumption was predicated on their nutritional and so-called medicinal attributes. How did this growing influence impact and shape the production of small grains and its market value on the formal, and informal markets, even if it was to serve their personal interests? Also, what does the continued preferential treatment of maize over small grains in the era of growing information on climate change and unprecedented global pandemics reflect about the social and political consciousness of '*sadza* eaters' within Zimbabwe? Are Zimbabweans a work in progress and will they be adept at investing in small grains as a solution to their food woes? After all, as shown in this thesis, small grains have for many years been a key expression of African social, economic, religious and political life.

As this thesis stated in Chapter One, a major stakeholder, the GMB, was reluctant to share its archive files with the researcher and public in general, largely due to the prevailing hostile climate during the time of the study. A notable consequence was a methodological reliance on

[20] Muchapara Musemwa, 'Disciplining a dissident' city: Hydropolitics in the city of Bulawayo, Matabeleland in Zimbabwe, 1890-1994, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 2, 2006, 239-254.

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alternative sources, including newspaper articles and oral interviews with knowledgeable people. However, in the absence of empirical primary data from the key GMB and the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture, essential conversations on state policy, market trends and correspondence within the sectors that influenced the trajectory of African agriculture remain abstract if not altogether silent. Scholarship has had to rely on information already within the public domain, some of which is scripted to serve specific interests, as has been highlighted by Chapter Six. For historians, what became strikingly apparent is the scarcity of state environmental perspectives and efforts towards the development of small grains. After the 1962 Matobo Research study on the environmental utility of small grains (discussed in Chapter Four), what other efforts were made by the state towards studying the environmental benefits of small grains? Access to the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture as well as GMB records in future is a prerequisite towards documenting this story precisely.

In addition, in the age of climate change and the Anthropocene, studies on genetically modified food crops have become big business. Similarly, in the academic world, they have gained traction mainly from scientific institutions, focused on understanding how best they can fight against the 'slow violence' of climate change and beat global hunger. Environmental historians have also shown a keen interest in the role of humanity in shaping these developments, past, present and future. Indeed, to historians, climate change is by no means a new phenomenon in the twenty-first century, with several studies having explored the subject from different perspectives. Standing out from the pack is the work by biologist Rachel Carson, whose legacy from her seminal 1972 *Silent Spring,*[21] who opened a Pandora's Box with regards to agri-business causing huge environmental harm in the process of industrial crop and food production. For years now, the subject of extensive versus intensive agriculture has been contested and, as this thesis showed, as early as 1905 African agriculture was classified by the British South Africa Company's agricultural officers as causing harm and damaging the environment. This exacerbated the underdevelopment of small grins and widespread impoverishment of the African farmers and their families over time. A survey of scientific studies carried out across Zimbabwe showed that the failure to adequately support the claims that small grains harmed the environment. Yet, equally, they fail to show that cultivating small grains over maize, for instance, is good for the soil and the environment.

[21] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, (Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

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This dearth of information has witnessed the persistent use of toxic substances during production. It is necessary to explore small grains as both fertile and drought resistant alternatives. Perhaps these findings may give impetus to local government to encourage more small-grain cultivation to improve soil quality. In addition, in Zimbabwe conversations on small grains as a solution to minimize the use of expensive and harmful pesticides and fertilizers alike have increased since around 2015, when President Mugabe first mentioned the issue in Parliament. He asked why small grains remained so expensive and yet are the traditional 'staple of Africa'[22] Was the nonagenarian reflecting on the government's agricultural policy? Yet still by 2020 at the time of writing this thesis, maize remains Zimbabwe's farmers' 'friend'. Future study into how society has responded to the emerging global interest in small grains vis-à-vis the domestic perpetuation of maize cultivation will help us understand the complex nature of Zimbabwe's agrarian and food history, showing how food does more than sustain the human body – food sustains the body politic.

[22] 'President opens eighth parliament', *The Herald*, 15 September 2015.

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