Agrarian Capitalism and the Development of the Coffee Industry in Colonial Zimbabwe

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1900-1980

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To my daughter, Tadiwanashe, my son, Victor and my mother, Esther

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PREFACE

This work reconnoitres the dynamics involved in the evolution of the coffee industry in colonial Zimbabwe[1] from c.1900-1980. It traces the transformation of the sector from the fringes in the early 1900s to a fully-fledged commercial agricultural industry and a significant contributor to the Zimbabwean colonial economy by 1980. Using a micro-level analysis, it offers a prism through which to dissect the essential fundamentals informing the crescendos in the development of settler agrarian capitalism in Southern Rhodesia. The book unpacks the interrelationships of forces–endogenous and exogenous–that informed the structure of the anatomy of agrarian capitalism in the country. Coffee production was predominantly undertaken in the Eastern Highlands, particularly, Chipinga, Melsetter[2] and Vumba, and in the mid-1970s, it expanded to include areas in the Midlands, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West provinces. Three courses are noticeable in the development of the industry: the pre-Second World War period, the post-Second World War period up to 1965 and, lastly, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) period up to 1980.

The first trend was characterised by individual white settlers' experimentation efforts at making a footing in coffee production with very little success due to lack of the necessary skills and technology in coffee culture. No significant support was extended to coffee farmers by the state as the crop was considered as a "side-line" within the state's agricultural policy. However, during the post-war period, the colonial state made

[1] Colonial Zimbabwe has had several names applied to it at different times during the colonial period, i.e. Southern Rhodesia; 1890-1953, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland; 1953-1963, Rhodesia; 1964-1979 and Rhodesia Zimbabwe; 1979-1980. This study uses these names interchangeably; although the author takes note of the appropriate name for every given period. Place names used in this book are colonial except where there was no change of name after 1980. The terms "industry" and "sector" shall in this book be used interchangeably to accommodate major processes in the coffee value-chain mainly; production, labour and marketing, and policy governing these processes.

[2] Post-colonial names for Chipinga and Melsetter are Chipinge and Chimanimani respectively.

concerted efforts at developing ways that enhanced sustained production of the coffee crop. It provided support, most notably, through the establishment of the Coffee Research Station at Chipinga in 1956, engaging coffee specialists from coffee growing countries especially Kenya, availing credit to coffee farmers among other support services. The UDI period witnessed a major resurgence of coffee production to its peak. While there were considerable advances in the coffee sector between 1950 and 1964, the UDI period provided the third wave that saw the industry developing into a big sector. The sanctions that were imposed on the country as a result of the UDI impacted badly on the tobacco crop–the main agricultural-export in the country–in terms of marketing. This forced the government to revise its agricultural policy and encourage farmers to diversify away from tobacco and cultivate alternative export crops to cover for the revenues lost as a result of the tobacco embargo. In light of this, various coffee settlement schemes were rolled out in the Eastern Highlands from 1965 to 1970 to encourage farmers to take on coffee growing. These developments contributed significantly to an increase of land under coffee cultivation and yields which coincided with a surge in coffee prices on the international market from 1973 to 1980. The handsome incomes collected stabilised farmers, and coffee production expanded to other areas outside the Eastern Districts and, by 1980, coffee production occupied a significant position in colonial Zimbabwe's aggregate economy. Central to this book is an analysis of the developments that informed the state's approach to the coffee sector over the years, which in itself became the basic defining factor for the course of agrarian capitalism in colonial Zimbabwe.

To accomplish its objectives, this work applied a fusion of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with a notable bias in favour of the former. The work benefited much from the use of primary archival written documents, and documents from coffee institutions. This information was corroborated and triangulated with oral evidence and data from secondary sources to guarantee cohesion and reliability. The main conclusion of the study is that the development of the coffee sector was quite consistent with the central goals of the state of ensuring permanent white settlement. Thus, at the centre of the state's support of agrarian capitalism, was the need to fulfil the objective of expanding economic opportunities for the white settlers and increase their incomes in order to inspire immigration and discourage emigration. Expanded incomes were similarly vital in sponsoring the highly eulogised, so-called civilised standards of living.

The book casts the development of the coffee sector as an alternative perspective through which the nature of the anatomy of the colonial Zimbabwean political economy can be unpacked. Like a few studies before it, this study is a departure from the dominant macro-approach in examining the development of colonial Zimbabwean agrarian capitalism, to the micro-twist which is crucial in analysing sector specificities important in enhancing our understanding of the Rhodesian economy. This macro-approach has led to gross generalisations in the writing of Zimbabwean agrarian economic history. It obscures some realities in specific agricultural sectors as all sectors are homogenised without engaging the disparities between or among the various sectors of agriculture with regards, for example, to factors influencing specific developments in different sectors and their impacts on the different components of the Rhodesian society. The book, therefore, presents the coffee industry as an alternative angle through which to comprehend the finer details of the anatomy of the Southern Rhodesian political economy.

The book consists of six chapters. Chapter One, *The Anatomy of Settler Agrarian Capitalism in colonial Zimbabwe: An overview*, is an introductory outline of the forces behind the development of settler agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe. It situates colonial Zimbabwean agriculture within the global economy. Chapter Two, *Emergence of the Rhodesian Coffee Economy: the First Phase; c.1900-1950* gives an account of the earliest developments in the coffee sector. It focuses on coffee experimental efforts by individual farmers, and their unsuccessful attempt to lure the state into supporting them. Chapter Three, *The Road to Commercialisation; the Coffee Industry from 1950-1965*, details the factors leading to the change in the government's attitude towards supporting coffee production. The chapter discusses the various efforts made by both the state and farmers to ensure sustainable coffee production in the country. Chapter Four, *UDI and the Rhodesian Coffee Industry; 1965-1980*, focuses on the development of the coffee sector during the UDI period, 1965-1980, paying particular attention to the effects of sanctions on the sector, particularly how sanctions encouraged the expansion of coffee production. Chapter Five, *Labour dynamics in Rhodesian Coffee plantations, 1900-1980*, is devoted to discussing the organisation of labour in coffee plantations. It analyses how the Rhodesian political-economic landscape shaped labour supply trends in the plantations. Chapter Six, ***"****Rhodesia Needs Farmers and farmers Need Profits;" Coffee Marketing in Colonial Zimbabwe; 1962-1980*, discusses coffee marketing in colonial Zimbabwe. It examines the challenges faced by Southern Rhodesia in marketing coffee globally and the measures taken by the government to circumvent

those problems. The chapter also accounts for the dynamics involved in coffee marketing, particularly from liberalisation to control. It concludes by showing the position occupied by coffee in the Rhodesian economy in terms of revenues collected and contribution to the GDP.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ANATOMY OF SETTLER AGRARIAN CAPITALISM IN COLONIAL ZIMBABWE: AN INTRODUCTION

The development of the coffee sector in colonial Zimbabwe is located within the broader milieu of the development of settler-agriculture in the country. Yet the development of settler agrarian capitalism in Southern Rhodesia in its complete logic is a multifarious subject with numerous branches that could be explored independently. Clearly, no single study can "adequately" address all the developments in the agricultural industry and this study specifically focuses on the coffee industry. The study aims at contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in the development of agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe. A lot has been written on other various branches of agriculture–tobacco, maize, cotton, tea and the beef industry–to mention but a few. This study, however, is the first scholarly attempt to unpack the various endogenous and exogenous factors that influenced the development of the coffee industry and their impact on the colonial Zimbabwean macroeconomy and society.

Although not initially the foundation stone for the establishment of Southern Rhodesia, agriculture soon became the linchpin of colonial Zimbabwe, not only economically but also in defining the socio-political landscape of the country. Consequently, agriculture became a significant factor in determining the relationships among different groups constituting Southern Rhodesia, a platform of contestations among diverse clusters of people–the white settlers, the blacks and the settler governments. The struggle for political and economic existence in colonial Zimbabwe became more expressed in agriculture than in any other sector of the Southern Rhodesian economy. Agricultural development in colonial Zimbabwe turned out to be the focal point from which major socio-political and economic developments that spanned the whole colonial and post-colonial period in Zimbabwe can be traced.

After the occupation of Southern Rhodesia in 1890, the British South Africa Company (BSAC) government cherished the dream of building the colony into a strong white man's country[1] and to make huge profits through mining operations based on an imagined "second rand" approximating to that in the Witwatersrand in South Africa. W. J. Barber points out that the term "Company-Government" implies a mixture of the economic goals of the BSAC as a company (making maximum profits) and its political mandate as a government (creating a strong and stable white man's country).[2] As such, the BSAC's policy was initially geared towards mining. M. Rukuni notes that "the BSAC had an operational mining policy but no operational agricultural policy until 1908." [3] However, it became evident in a decade or so of colonial occupation that prospects for a "second rand" were a myth. This, in turn, threatened the company's profitability as its shares constantly depreciated at the London Stock Exchange and the Company's quest to create a strong white-man-central-African country was thrown into disarray.[4]

The development of settler capitalist agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe was hence, premised on the failure of the "second rand" north of the Limpopo. The Company fell back on its land asset, realizing that developing agriculture would make the Company's investment more profitable and at the same time, an alternative lure for more settlers into the territory.[5] Settler agriculture became the pillar of the BSAC government strategy and continued to be so in the policy of the Responsible Settler Government.[6] In 1934, a Committee of Inquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia was tasked to assess the potential of agriculture as the basis of establishing an economically prosperous and politically stable state. The recommendations of the Committee confirmed that the country had a good agricultural potential

[1] A. Mlambo, "Building a White Man's Country: Aspects of White Immigration into Rhodesia up to World War 2," *Zambezia* 25, no. 2 (1998): 123.
[2] W. J. Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa: A Case Study of Economic Development in a Dualistic Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 13.
[3] M. Rukuni, "The Evolution of Agricultural Policy: 1890-1990," in *Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution*, eds., M. Rukuni and C. K. Eicher (Harare: UZ Publications, 1994), 20.
[4] *Ibid.* See K. Chitofiri, "Hopes and Expectation: The Relationship between the British South Africa Company Directors and Shareholders, 1890 to 1923," (MA Diss., UZ, 2007).
[5] J. Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Harare: UZ Publications, 1990), 13.
[6] D. J. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 59.

which could be the basis of national development.[7] A commitment to the development of agriculture on the part of the government continued to derive from the goal of developing Southern Rhodesia as a colony for white settlement. The prosperity of agriculture depended on attracting new immigrants while the new immigrants' political and economic security was, in turn, preserved in agricultural development.[8]

The realisation of the opportunities that agriculture offered to the Company's two related objectives, economic viability, and white settlement (political security), made the Company to abandon the hope for the "second rand" and consider agricultural development. This resulted in the launch of what R. Palmer calls the white "agricultural policy" which became more defined in 1908.[9] At the turn of the twentieth century, there was evidence of interest in the development of agriculture. For example, the *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal* was established in 1903. This was to disseminate information concerning the agricultural potential of the different areas in the territory and to inform the settlers about agricultural developments made in different parts of the country.[10] In 1907, a group of Company directors came into the country to assess the economic situation after which they recommended that the economic base of the country is diversified and that the paramount way of achieving this was through boosting settler farming.[11]

To this end, the Department of Agriculture was reorganised in 1908 after the appointment of Eric A. Nobbs–a scientist from the Cape–as the Director of the department, as previous officials were novices.[12] Under the leadership of Nobbs, the Department of Agriculture was engaged in numerous agricultural research projects aimed at ascertaining the agricultural potential of different regions of the country. Several specialists were employed, among them, a botanist, entomologist, irrigation engineer,

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[7] Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa*, 25.
[8] Murray, *The Governmental Systems in Southern Rhodesia*, 59.
[9] R. Palmer, "Agricultural History of Rhodesia," in *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa,* eds., R. Palmer and N. Parsons (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 230.
[10] Rukuni, "Evolution of Agricultural Policy, 1890-1990," 20.
[11] Palmer, *"*Agricultural History of Rhodesia*,"* 230.
[12] *Ibid,* 231. See also, V. E. Machingaidze, *Company Rule and Agricultural Development: The Case of BSA Company in Southern Rhodesia* (London: ICs, 1978).

a chemist and agriculturalist.[13] In 1909, two experimental stations were established, the Salisbury and Gwebi Research Stations and, by 1917, two major experiment farms had been acquired, the Rhodes Inyanga and Matopos.[14]

Meanwhile, the Company-Government made aggressive measures to attract more white settler farmers to the country. This policy was clearly articulated in 1905, in a speech to the Legislative Council when the Company Administrator, Sir Thomas Charles Scanlen, stated that:

> the Company is desirous of assisting as far as may be expedient, the settlement of suitable immigrants … [and]is preparing a scheme under which considerable funds will be provided for the purpose. The main object will be to obtain settlers of the agriculture class, with sufficient capital to ensure the beneficial occupation of the land.[15]

To pursue the stated objective, an Estates Department was set up in 1908 to promote European settlement and to handle applications for land. The department was to work in conjunction with the Rhodesian Emigration and Information Office established in 1906 in London and a newly opened branch in Glasgow in 1908. Moreover, two agents were sent to South Africa to recruit farmers for Southern Rhodesia.[16] As Scanlen stated, the Company sought immigrants who were "endowed with capital and experienced with farming on the African high veld."[17]

In 1912, the government established the Land Bank whose mandate was to provide loans on easy and generous terms to persons of European descent only. Loans of up to £2000 were advanced to individual farmers and were to be repaid at 6% interest within ten years.[18] There was also a deliberate move to reduce the minimum prices of land in the country compared to its neighbouring territories of South Africa and Northern

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[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Southern Rhodesia Legislative Council Debates, 1st Session, 3rd Council, (26 April-11 May, 1905), 1.
[16] Palmer, "Agricultural History of Rhodesia," 231.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *Ibid.* See V. E. M. Machingaidze, "The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with Particular Reference to the Role of the State, 1908-1939," (PhD Diss., London, 1980) and I. Phimister, *A Social and Economic History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1949* (New York: Longman, 1988).

Rhodesia (Zambia).[19] The result of these efforts in the development of agriculture was that; after 1912, white agriculture was adequately lucrative to attract capital hitherto employed in mining and that most of the miners' food requirements were met by settler farmers who concentrated on the production of maize and beef.[20]

The expansion of white settler agriculture resulted in the concomitant contraction of African peasant agriculture.[21] These developments sums W. Rodney's assessment of the development of underdevelopment in Africa in general, as African agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe was put on a sacrificial altar by settler rectors as a ransom for the development of settler-agriculture.[22] This is revealed by the fact that, up to 1912, African peasant agriculture was productive enough to supply the food requirements of the mines and the white population. However, from around 1915, white settler agriculture gradually assumed this role after coercive extra economic measures were taken to expedite the *depeasantisation* process of the African.[23] The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development acknowledged that "for the Africans, the costs for the development of European agriculture were colossal. It was one long sad story of dispossession, systematic deprivation of elementary human rights and an endless series of humiliating experiences in everyday life." [24] This process of dispossession and exclusion from mainline economic activities, particularly agriculture, took various forms at different times, starting from the 1894 Land Commission which legalized the episodic looting of African cattle and the subsequent alienation of land

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[19] *Ibid*.

[20] C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900 – 1933* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), 41-42.

[21] See Phimister*, An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe: 1890-1948*, 64.

[22] W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1972), 162. Admittedly, the dependency theory has suffered criticism at the hands of scholars owing to its simplicity and generalisations that cannot apply to the entire African continent. However, the section on the "development of underdevelopment" seems to accurately capture what became of African agriculture as a result of the rise of white settler agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe. See B. Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 1980), among other books for a critique of the dependency theory.

[23] A lot has been written on measures used by the Company-Government to dislodge Africans from the land for labour purposes; see I. Phimister, R. Palmer, G. Arrigh, J. Herbst and C. van Onslen.

[24] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Zimbabwe Towards a New Order: An Economic and Social Survey,* (1980), 1.

in 1895.[25] This policy continued to be expressed in various forms through the notorious Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930, the Maize Control Act of 1931 (MCA) and the Industrial Conciliation Act (ICA) of 1934, to mention but a few.[26]

Agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe became a platform of contestation for political and economic survival between white settlers and the Africans. For Herbst, the main reason for strengthening the position of the settlers was "insecurity of the colonist in the face of an unfriendly atmosphere."[27] The settlers, therefore, looked to the state for protection against economic competition from Africans and to place those Africans in a permanently disadvantaged economic and political position. This was made possible by the measures stated earlier, to ensure effective occupation, control and guarantee the subordination of the African population.[28] Settler political security and safeguarding economic opportunities, particularly in the agricultural industry, were used as a bait to attract more white settlers and discourage emigration. As D. J. Murray notes, the settlers depended, for the upkeep of socio-economic and political hegemony, on the maintenance of an economic cleavage, where whites would live according to "civilised" standards by appropriating the economic benefits of the society for themselves.[29]

As a result of the continued suffocation of African agriculture, from 1912 onwards, white settler agriculture showed signs of positive development. In 1909, maize was exported for the first time to the United Kingdom while in 1916, beef was exported to the Union of South Africa and later to the United Kingdom.[30] The Company itself, apart from relying on its railways, selling land and mining for profits, began to be directly involved in farming with a bias towards tobacco and citrus production,

[25] *Ibid,* 9.
[26] For a detailed study on the exclusion of Africans from main line economic activities see: Murray, Palmer and Parsons, W. J. Barber, M. Rukuni and C. K. Eicher, C. Leys and E. Punt, "The Development of African Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, With Particular Reference to the Interwar Years," (MA Diss., University of Natal, 1979).
[27] Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe*, 18.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia*, 1.
[30] Rukuni, "Evolution of Agricultural Policy," 21.

using farms in Bulawayo, Gwelo, Umtali and Marandellas.[31] The Company took steps to develop the tobacco industry, first by appointing G. M. Odlum to the Department of Agriculture as a tobacco expert. Odlum was then sent to the United States of America, Turkey and Greece to study tobacco growing.[32] During the period of the Company-Government, tobacco, maize and beef were the three major agricultural products produced.

Despite the Company's efforts in developing the agricultural sector, some settlers consistently felt that the Company was not doing enough to encourage farming and white settlement.[33] Partly because of this and the fact that the administrative mandate of the Company cost its profitability, a referendum was held leading to the transfer of power to the Responsible Government in 1923. The Responsible Government continued with the policy to encourage white settlement and agriculture. According to Rukuni, the period from 1923 to 1965 basically shaped the structure of agriculture in present Zimbabwe. The government became more involved in research, pricing and marketing as agriculture was targeted to be the basis for establishing a strong industrial state.[34] Measures were taken to sequestrate more land from the African, through the LAA, and to protect white farmers from the rigours of the Great Depression through the MCA. These policies were developed and revised at different times during the colonial period for the purpose of protecting white farmers.[35]

The general impression created by these developments is that the state was highly active in the development of agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe for the basic reasons of maintaining political and economic hegemony. Nevertheless, this oversimplification obscures variations in the development of different sectors of agriculture. It is the variations within branches of agriculture that call for sector-specific studies in order to provide a more informed and comprehensive understanding of the development of agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe and for this reason, this study deliberately focuses on coffee production.

Within this broader milieu of colonial Zimbabwean agriculture, coffee production began in Chipinga District on a small scale soon after the

[31] Gwelo, Umtali and Marandellas are now Gweru, Mutare and Marondera respectively.
[32] Palmer, "Agricultural History of Rhodesia," 231.
[33] Mlambo, "Building a White Man's Country," 134.
[34] Rukuni, "Evolution of Agricultural Policy," 21.
[35] Ibid.

arrival of the pioneer white settlers. R. C. Smith points out that coffee was introduced by members of the Moodie Trek from the Orange Free State in 1891.[36] These settlers established few backyard coffee trees for subsistence. Owing to favourable climatic and ecological factors like high rainfall, high altitude and rich loam soils, Chipinga highlands, in particular, became the centre for intensive coffee production from which farming spread to other areas in the Eastern Highlands, particularly the Vumba Mountains and Honde Valley. By 1978, coffee production in colonial Zimbabwe had spread to areas such as Chiredzi, Sinoia, Que-Que, Gatooma, Guruve, Lomagundi and Mt Darwin in what coffee planters termed the "northward-expansion."[37]

However, due to coffee diseases and lack of adequate knowledge on how to grow the crop, coffee nearly died out in the 1920s.[38] There was a great lull in the production of coffee in colonial Zimbabwe from the late 1930s up to the late 1940s. Nonetheless, the early 1950s witnessed a renewed interest in the production of coffee for commercial purposes. It was also at this point in time when the state made tremendous efforts in its endeavour to establish coffee production as a fully-fledged agricultural sector in the colony.

The most important of these efforts was the establishment of the Coffee Research Station in Chipinga in 1964. Agreements were also made between the state and the Kenyan government setting a stage where Southern Rhodesian planters would benefit from the technological expertise and experience of the Kenyan planters on matters related to coffee production. Between 1972 and 1975, coffee emerged as a strategic export crop in the Rhodesian economy, a position it maintained even after independence. As a result of its primacy as an export crop, coffee was

[36] R. C. Smith, *Avondale to Zimbabwe* (Salisbury: Collins, Salisbury, 1978), 8. For more information on the occupation of the Chipinga-Melsetter area (Gazaland), see H. V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984), 110 and S. Sinclair, *The Story of Melsetter* (Salisbury: M.O Collins, 1971).

[37] The expression "northward-expansion" is hereby used to denote the spread of coffee production to areas other than the Eastern Districts of the country. Sinoia, Que-Que, Gatooma and Lomagundi are presently Chinhoi, Kwekwe, Kadoma and Makonde, respectively.

[38] H. Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia: 1924-1950* (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, Salisbury, 1975), 13.

declared a controlled product in 1972, alongside traditional export crops like tobacco and maize until it was decontrolled in 1993.

Although the country was a small producer accounting for about 0.2% of the world's coffee production in 1980, the industry's contribution to the Rhodesian economy was significant. Coffee exports accounted for an estimated 2.1% of the Gross Domestic Product and the sector employed over 40 000 people by 1975.[39] The livelihoods of many ordinary people in the Eastern Districts and neighbouring Mozambique were, with a few exceptions, closely linked to the coffee industry. However, coffee production during the colonial period was unilateral, being only planted by white settlers while Africans were relegated to the provision of cheap labour in the coffee plantations.

In general, there are fascinating dynamics in the development of the coffee industry in colonial Zimbabwe which can be classified into three trends. The first one encompasses the pre-Second World War period when white settlers strove to make a footing in coffee production with very little success. The second was the post-Second World War period up to 1965 when the state's hand was quite visible in supporting the development of the industry. Third, was the UDI period, which witnessed a major resurgence of coffee production to its peak up to 1980.

The world coffee economy: A survey

The emergence of the coffee industry in colonial Zimbabwe did not begin in a vacuum. It was a process which, to a considerable extent, was influenced and shaped by trends in the development of the global coffee economy. It is, therefore, necessary that an appreciation of the global coffee scenario be given, in order to establish the context within which coffee production in colonial Zimbabwe can be explored. Coffee evolved to be the second most valuable commodity in international trade after oil.[40] The industry is responsible for nourishing several millions of livelihoods and, for producing countries, coffee is an important earner of strong currencies, contributing in various degrees, to the national incomes and guaranteeing a basis of "economic development."[41]

[39] "Draft Coffee Policy Document for Zimbabwe" (Unpublished, 2006).
[40] H. R. Cambrony, *Coffee Growing* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 2.
[41] *Ibid.*

Coffee is categorised as a non-alcoholic stimulant together with cocoa and tea. The refreshing and mild stimulating effects it has are the basis of the strength that coffee has earned as an international commodity.[42] Nonetheless, the early history of the coffee plant is shrouded in antiquity and usually, where the history of beginnings is hard to pin down, legends and folktale must suffice to fill in the earliest details. There are several myths that are put forward in order to account for the discovery of coffee and these come in different shapes and forms. While it may not be so essential to dwell on myths and legends, this study will spare a few lines to highlight one of them in order that the reader may have a taste of what is behind a cup of coffee.

The most widely known legend, which historians are about to tame into history, is the story of an Ethiopian goat herder, Kaldi. While Kaldi was herding his goats, he was astonished at his goats' sudden change of their normal habits, when the goats which used to eat "quietly and politely, were dancing on their hind legs, bleating loudly with joy."[43] During the night after this encounter, Kaldi was further stunned by the fact that the goats remained awake, gambolling all night. The following morning, Kaldi gave himself to tracing where the goats were grazing the previous day for he suspected that their behaviour should have come from the goats' food. It was at this time that he found "a pretty shrub with a greyish bark and brilliant foliage, the slender branches of which at the base of their leaves had clusters of small berries, others which had reached full maturity were the size, shape and colour of a cherry and it was the coffee shrub!"[44] Having verified its invigorating effects, Kaldi reported the matter to a Moslem holy man who was much distressed by constantly being overcome by drowsiness during his meditation. The mullah, tasting these unusual berries, made himself a potent brew, and spent the night in a state of "delicious intoxication which, however, in no way affected his intellectual capacities."[45] News of this discovery spread and, in no time at all, coffee was being served during prayers in the mosques and at Mecca.[46]

Despite the variety of these legends, scholars are generally agreed that Africa is the cradle of the different coffee species. There are numerous coffee varieties but the most important one in international trade is *Coffea*

[42] K. C. Wilson, *Coffee, Cocoa and Tea* (New York: CABI Publishers, 1999), 1.
[43] N. Kolpas, *Coffee* (London: John Murray, 1972), 14.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] *The Financial Gazette,* May 24, 1985.
[46] *Ibid.*

Arabica followed by *Coffea Robusta*.[47] The latter originated in Uganda, and it was a custom among Ugandans to chew the dried *Robusta* fruits during arduous expeditions and journeys. [48] Other non-commercial varieties include *Liberia coffee* which originated in Liberia and *coffea swynnertonnii* which originated in the dense Chirinda forest of the Eastern Districts of Zimbabwe.[49] The most economically lucrative coffee species is the *Arabica* type, which originated in the Ethiopian Highlands of Harar. According to A. E. Haarer, there are accounts of *Arabica* coffee being used by the aborigines of Abyssinia to comfort and stimulate themselves and also to get sustenance during excursions into the desert.[50] On these jaunts into the deserts, the only food that the Ethiopians prepared was roasted coffee, mixed with oils and fats, and made into balls, each of which would give sustenance for twenty-four hours.[51]

From the Highlands of Ethiopia, coffee was smuggled to Arabia (Yemen) by Arabian slave-raiders who had learnt of the satisfying effects of coffee. In Arabia, coffee seeds were grown in the Royal Botanic Gardens and the first cultivation started between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and nowhere else until the seventeenth century. [52] The name *Arabica* does not, therefore, suggest that *Arabica* coffee originated in Arabia, but that it was in Arabia where coffee was first cultivated, and from which coffee preparation evolved from stewing leaves and fermenting ripe cherries to roasting the dried beans.

Coffee drinking habits soon spread across the Middle East as the beverage was regarded as helpful by the Moslems in their night devotions to keep them awake and by the common folk who wished to work or travel at night or simply to refresh and elevate their moods. [53] On several occasions, coffee became a subject of a heated religious debate on whether the Koran and the Bible allowed coffee drinking. In the first place, strict Moslems considered it to be an intoxicant and, therefore, prohibited by the Koran. In 1511, coffee drinking in Mecca was forbidden on religious grounds by the Governor, Khain Berg. His successor, however, waived the

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[47] A.E. Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production* (London: Leonard Hill, 1958), 1.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] G. W. Marshall, "Coffee Culture in Southern Rhodesia," *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal* 24, (1927), 835.
[50] Haarer, *Modern Coffee Production*, 2.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid, 3.*

prohibition and permitted coffee drinking. Twelve years later, the Priest Abdallah Brahim denounced coffee drinking in the Mosque of Haffanaine and trouble ensued again between those who condemned the beverage and those who considered it an innocent and harmless pleasure to have coffee.[54] After a long debate, coffee was finally permitted as a drink. From the Middle East, coffee spread to Constantinople (Istanbul) where the first coffee houses were established. This development soon attracted the wrath of religious opposition as coffee houses became scenes of lure that impeded attendances at the mosques. This prompted Sultan Amuret III to close the coffee houses.[55] However, his descendant reopened them.

Coffee continued its excursion from Turkey to Rome where it sparked another religious debate, among Christians, on whether or not the Bible allowed coffee drinking. Those who denounced coffee considered it as "Satan's latest trap to catch Christian souls"[56] and, as such, it had to be banished by a holy edict. An appeal was presented to Pope Clement VIII (1592–1605) who, after tasting a cup of coffee, considered that "the delicious drink be baptized as a Christian drink."[57] From then onwards, coffee entered the Italian markets without restrictions. From Italy, coffee drinking rapidly spread across the whole of Europe, particularly, Holland, Germany, France, Austria and England, to mention but important future international coffee markets, as the fame of coffee as a refreshing and satisfying beverage spread.[58] Coffee became the major beverage in the USA following the Boston Tea Party of December 1773, which was a protest against the taxation of tea entering the then British colony. The USA and Europe soon became the destination of most of the coffee produced around the globe.[59]

The introduction of coffee in England particularly resulted in the development of a new social order. Life in that country revolved around the coffee houses which by 1675 reached three thousand.[60] According to

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[54] *Ibid.*
[55] Kolpas, *Coffee,* 19.
[56] *Ibid, 25.*
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid*, 35.
[59] Wilson, *Coffee, Cocoa and Tea*, 5. For more on The Boston Tea Party, see C. G. Gunderson, *The Boston Tea Party American Moments* (Minnesota: ABDO Publishing Company, 2004) and J. Pollard, *The Boston Tea Party; December 1773, (*Harvard University, 1882).
[60] Kolpas, *Coffee*, 19.