Revue d'HISTOIRE CONTEMPORAINE de l'AFRIQUE

"Many of the dishes are no longer eaten by sophisticated urban Africans"

A social history of eating small grains in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) c. 1920s to the 1950s

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How to cite: Kauma Bryan and Sandra Swart (2021), "'Many of the dishes are no longer eaten by sophisticated urban Africans'. A social history of eating small grains in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) c. 1920s to the 1950s", *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique*, n° 2, 86-111, online. URL: https://oap.unige.ch/journals/rhca/article/view/02kaumaswart/04en
Online : 1st October 2021.
DOI : https://doi.org/ 10.51185/journals/rhca.2021.e554

Abstract

Founded in 1840, the city of Bulawayo provides a lens into understanding urban development and city cultures of consumption in southern Africa and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Home to a demographic range of both black Africans (of several ethnicities) and whites, by the time of Responsible Government in 1923, not only had the city established itself as the economic hub of the budding British colony but was also a reflection of the complex black-white relationships that characterized the colonial period. Using the story of African small grains – sorghum, millet and *rapoko* – cooking and eating patterns, this article traces the development of food in the city of Bulawayo. Relying on archival sources from the National Archives of Zimbabwe and secondary literature, this paper uses the social and political food history of African small grains to rethink facets of the story of black-white socio-political relations and changes in African urban cultures from the early 1920s until the dawn of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. Drawing attention to the city life of Africans, this paper shows how their eating patterns shifted over time, as different socio-political and economic factors including increased economic interaction between blacks and whites, drought and state interventions shaped the reasons and ways to produce and consume small grains in the city. We argue that, while in many cases urban black families were compelled by the colonial economic agenda and encouraged by social trends to adopt new ideas on what to eat, they equally also exercised agency and their own volition in retaining old culinary systems, adopting new ones or adapting both to suit their changing circumstances. This illustrates how African culinary practices were shaped by their ever-changing social and economic contexts and were neither static nor heterogeneous. Contributing to a growing historiography of African urban society, this paper demonstrates how the history of social relations and changes in consumption in Bulawayo in the colonial era can be viewed from the stomach.

Keywords : small grains; maize; food history; African urban culture; Bulawayo; Southern Rhodesia; Zimbabwe

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).[1] Provoking loud cheers and laughter among the over 70 000 crowd composed of party supporters and national leaders during a rally in September 2017, this remark by then Zimbabwean president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, opens up new questions concerning consumption patterns of Zimbabwe's staple meal *sadza*[2] – is there a *right* (and *wrong*) way of eating *sadza*? Is there a politically incorrect way – an "unAfrican" way – of consuming it? If so, what is it and has it changed over time? Who has pushed that message and why? Why has this food come to be politicised? What has contributed to these shifting patterns?

By tracing the history of small grains – sorghum, millet and *rapoko*[3] – we explore the political and social history of eating and culinary practices among black families in Zimbabwe's second largest city, Bulawayo. We analyse key changes within food consumption practices over the colonial period from the early 1920s to the cusp of Federal Union between the Rhodesias (Southern and Northern Rhodesia) and Nyasaland in 1953. Focusing on how small grains were eaten by different black Africans in Bulawayo, this paper seeks to engage existing historiographical conversations on food and urban society, with particular focus on how different social, environmental and political factors varyingly shaped food and culinary customs over time. We argue that African small grains cooking and eating methods were protean in nature, shaped diversely by African choices towards rapidly shifting socio-political and economic conditions. Moreover, in so doing, we will demonstrate beyond the established conventional fault-lines that while ordinary black Africans were sometimes compelled through economic and food policies to adopt new ideas on what and how to eat, they robustly exercised agency, responding to shifting environmental and economic vicissitudes by improvising their old culinary systems – or even innovated new ones.

Situated within historiographical debates on colonial efforts to shape urban spaces and African – white relations in the city, we will show how between 1924 to 1953, African cooking and eating patterns of small grains was shaped and developed by a multiplicity of social, political and economic factors occurring in the city. At the same time, we wish to show how everyday cooking and eating were not just social processes but affected by systematic political efforts to create an idealised urban society in Southern Rhodesia. Many anthropologists, ethnographers or sociologists writing on food have often concentrated on a few aspects of food – that is rites involving food, meanings, taste, colour and texture of food. These often portray food as ahistorical. But is it possible to tell a different story of African cuisine, which goes beyond this form of interpretation? Centralizing this conversation around Bulawayo as shown in Map 1 and Map 2, this paper explores shifting small grains eating patterns over time

[1] "Speech by President Mugabe at Zanu PF presidential youth interface rally Gweru, Midlands province, 1 September 2017", online. URL: https://www.facebook.com/ZimbabweTodayLive/videos/mugabe-on-eating-sadza-and-broccoli-/1505362159628845/ (last consulted 01.09.21). The audience laughed and jeered because in Zimbabwe, as this article will show, foods such as broccoli were (and still are) considered as elitist eaten by a select few also while also are not generally considered as relishes for *sadza*. Moreover, in a May 2013 interview, the Mugabe family shared how Mugabe had weaned himself off a white maize diet for nutritional reasons, and his reference to *sadza* referred to that prepared from small grains.

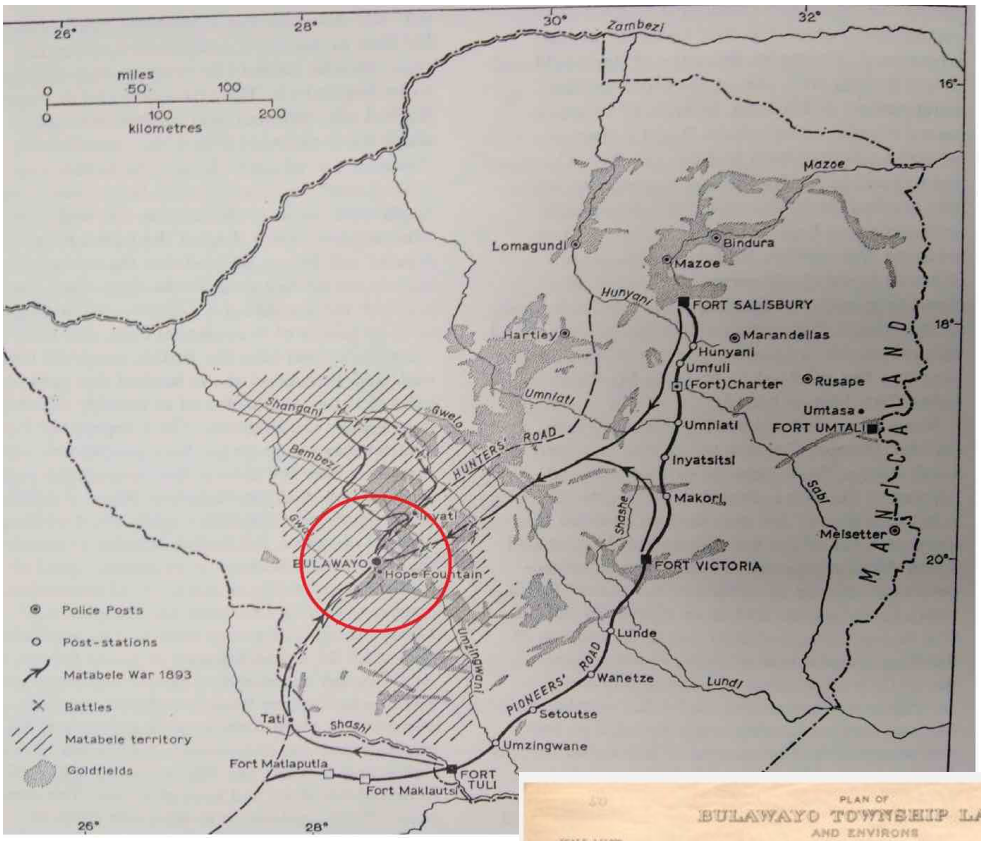
[2] *Sadza* is a thick porridge prepared from maize meal or small grain flour. It is preferably consumed while hot, but as this paper will show, by the 1930s eating *sadza* cold became increasingly widespread across black workers in the mines.

[3] A type of millet (*Eleusine coracana*).

to show how the history of food is equally a tale of contested spaces, food hegemonies and African agency in the city. It will show how different political and social factors variously influenced African food and eating habits, thereby shaping a key aspect of urban lifestyles. It too shows how Africans responded to these measures. By engaging with various primary sources from the National Archives of Zimbabwe as well as oral interviews and secondary material, we demonstrate that shifting eating patterns of black families impacted on the development of not only consumption but of African ideas of status.

To analyse these key dynamics, this article has been arranged thematically following a chronological discussion. It opens with a succinct historiographical review within which this study is situated, first, providing a contextual preamble to trace the key developments shaping food patterns in Zimbabwe over time, while the latter grapples with the politics of food and eating. It then grapples with the early years of Responsible Government leading to the enactment of the Maize Control Act in 1930, underlining how emergent crop hegemonies influenced the eating and development of small grains. The following section explores the Maize Controls years showing how this seminal legislation impacted food and eating patterns. The introduction of new foods is discussed next and illustrates its impact of the social and kinship linkages among Africans. We then show the role of the state in shaping eating trends with an emphasis on periods of strife such as drought and urban hunger. The final section concludes the discussion by paying attention to the changes in food and eating patterns in the post-World War II era, tracing how African's food consumption responded to the new social and economic realities. Taken together, these reconstruct not just a story of what and how African families ate but explores the rich history of urban survival and alternative strategies within the colonial project.

Map 1 and 2[4]



[4] Gale D.W. (1979), *Rhodesia 1890-1970, Eighty Years onwards*, Bulawayo, D.A. Blumberg, p. 23; Government of Southern Rhodesia (1950), *Township Maps of Zimbabwe*, Cape Town, University of Cape Town.

"Edible identities": The city, food and history

For many years, the histories of Bulawayo for both the colonial and postcolonial era have been described within the paradigm of the development – "rise and fall" – of the Ndebele people.[5] In comparison to Salisbury (now Harare), Bulawayo has not received much academic attention.[6] Scholars including Tsuneo Yoshikuni,[7] and Teresa Barnes and Everjoice Win[8] in their 1992 *To Live A Better Life,* offer a comprehensive social history of the African people in urban Zimbabwe in the early twentieth century. Notwithstanding the richness of these studies, they reflect a glaring historiographical silence on the developments outside Harare.

Yet, as Ennie Chipembere reminds us, in the 1940s Bulawayo was actually the economic hub of the colony.[9] Moreover, Terence Ranger's *Bulawayo Burning* echoes how the city was the birthplace of African nationalism in the early 1950s.[10] At the same time, the colonial mouthpieces such as the *Native Affairs Department Annuals* (NADA) focused on African life with attention to their roles as labour in development of tobacco,[11] maize[12] and dairy,[13] neglecting the rich urban history of African communities, in Bulawayo in particular. Historian Murray Steele shows how, in the making of colonial labour policy, by the 1920s British South African Company (BSAC) officials appreciated the shifting population dynamics of a significant African presence in the city as both a labour and consumer market for the budding settler industries.[14] Notwithstanding, Fuller Masuku[15] observes, colonial policy remained largely skewed to monitor and regulate the agrarian development of Africans.[16] Nevertheless, scholars such as Allison Shutt[17] and Timothy Burke[18] demonstrated how colonial policy changed to

[5] Ranger Terence (2010), *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*, Harare, Weaver Press; Musemwa Muchapara (2014), *Water History and Politics in Zimbabwe: Bulawayo's Struggles with the Environment, 1894-2008*, Trenton, Africa World Press; Vera Yvonne (1998), *Butterfly Burning*, Harare, Baobab Books; Yoshikuni Tsuneo (2007), *African Urban Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare before 1925*, Oxford, African Books Collective.

[6] Yet, it would be remiss to not acknowledge the seminal work by historians Terence Ranger and Muchapara Musemwa that have documented the social history of the city and its people.

[7] Yoshikuni T., *African Urban Experiences…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-51.

[8] Barnes Teresa and Win Everjoice (1992), *To Live A Better Life: An Oral History of Women in the City of Harare, 1930-70*, Harare, Baobab Books; Barnes Teresa (1999), *"We Women Worked So Hard": Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956*, Portsmouth, N.H. Heinemann.

[9] Chipembere Ennie (2007), *Colonial urban policy and Africans in urban areas, with special focus on housing, Salisbury, 1929-1964*, PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, p. 112. Some of the notable industrial sectors and enterprises that were headquartered in Bulawayo over the colonial period include David Whitehead Textiles, Gold Star (sugar), Cold Storage Company and the Rhodesian Railways.

[10] Ranger T., *Bulawayo Burning…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-81.

[11] Ncube Sibanengi (2018), *Colonial Zimbabwe Tobacco Industry: Global, regional and local relations, 1949-1979*, PhD Thesis, University of the Free State; Doro Elijah (2020), *A socio-environmental history of commercial tobacco farming in Southern Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, 1893-2000*, PhD Thesis, Stellenbosch University.

[12] Machingaidze Victor (1980), *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.

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

[14] Steele Murray (1972), *The foundations of native policy: Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1933*, PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University.

[15] Masuku Fuller (1989), *A study of agricultural change in the Ntabazinduna reserve with particular reference to the colonial period, 1923-1939*, Master dissertation, University of Cape Town.

[16] Ncube Trevor (1980), "Peasant production and marketing of grain crops in Zimbabwe, 1890-1980: An Overview", *Handerson Seminar Paper*, 72.

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

[18] Burke Timothy (1996), *Lifebouy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe,* Durham, Duke University Press.

appreciate the increased need for urban Africans to fit in with the developing "White Rhodesia" image in cities through racial etiquette, language, and culture by the 1930s. We show how food followed a similar trajectory.

In different instances such as critical moments of drought (in 1922, 1942 and 1947) African consumption patterns changed. As Kate Merkel-Hess has shown with her study of a very different geographic but similar temporal context, during the 1925 drought period, the Chinese government introduced the *Dingxian* reforms (food and agricultural reforms) and was able to reshape eating patterns to identify with what became known as the New Life Movement.[19] In Southern Rhodesia, recurring droughts across the country after the 1930s steered mounting social and economic pressures that contributed towards exploration of foods and culinary survival strategies by African families.[20] In the opening decade of the twentieth century, the mines became the prime market for European agricultural output,[21] while in both rural and urban areas, the African "plate" underwent some significant transformations that reflected the nature of agricultural harvests and wages earned by black workers.[22] By the end of the 1940s, mobile food markets for grains like maize and meat were on the rise catering to the rapid industrialization of the country. The city witnessed shifts within gender roles concerning food trade and preparation, and various industrial compounds saw more and more men becoming involved in culinary and catering jobs, chores previously primarily conducted by women.[23] An appreciation for the changing complex of food production is to be found not only across racial lines, but also along social lines with shifts in location – from rural to urban and vice versa. The 1940s onwards, following the enactment of the Urban Areas Act in 1943 were particularly hard on the mobility and freedom of Africans. This impacted on their traditional foods in the urban areas, their ability to remain in touch with their old identity was through sharing food with fellow families and also purchasing food from the proliferating food stalls trading in African commodities.[24]

The politics of food and eating

From the early 1920s until the 1950s, owing to the mounting social and economic pressures that accompanied colonial life, more profoundly in the urban centres, the African diet reflected the meagre wages earned by African labourers. This impacted on the social fabric of African families, notably reshaping of gender roles. There was also an upsurge of mobile food markets coupled with the rise of state and philanthropic assisted food relief initiatives to black homes. After the 1930s, the nature of the African plate transformed in response to the shifting diversity

[19] Merket-Hess Kate (2016), *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 80-82.

[20] Chigodora Joshua (1997), "Famine and Drought: The Question of Food Security in Zimbabwe", *Drought Network News (1994-2001)*, p. 40; Iliffe John (1990), *Famine in Zimbabwe, 1890-1960*, Gweru, Mambo Press, pp. 159-160.

[21] Nobbs Eric (1906), "The mines as a market: The crops required for native diet", *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, p. 795.

[22] Duggan William R. (1980), "The Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and the Rural African Middle Class of Southern Rhodesia", *African Affairs*, 79, pp. 227-239.

[23] Samasuwo Nhamo (2003), "Food Production and War Supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(2), pp. 487-502.

[24] Phimister Ian (1974), "Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914", *African Affairs*, 73, pp. 217-228.

of needs in the city. Food and culinary options mirrored shifting economic positions, while for others, food choices became a vital part in strengthening social connections.

The structural designs of township houses did not allow for families to grow their own crops.[25] For a while, this deliberate design was able to maintain blacks as a primary market, purchasing more from European stores than producing their own food.[26] However, the consumption of small grains was significantly limited in urban spaces. If anything, the Washington National Research Council's Noel Vietmeyer accurately describes small grains as being the "lost crops of Africa",[27] as their consumption all but disappeared. Food patterns shifted geographically too, shaped by the diversifying demography of urban Africans over time.

In some cases, food and small grains, in particular, patterns extended beyond these boundaries, to constitute a form of cultural and social expression of the ideological needs of African society. Historians James McCann,[28] Avital Livneh[29] and Gerald Mazarire[30] point out that small grains grew in importance as they bolstered the pre-colonial economy of the Shona and Karanga people in Zimbabwe. An ethnographic survey of the Shona and Ndebele by anthropologist Hilda Kuper *et al* further demonstrates how by 1910, sorghum and millet were the main crops widely consumed by both African and white settlers in the early years of colonialization.[31] Historian Thembani Dube[32] says, this widespread consumption of small grains by African families earned some of the Kalanga communities in Zimbabwe the title of the "millet people". Drawing inspiration from these earlier efforts, we seek to contribute this case study on how changes in food patterns affected African society.[33]

Maize: "The Rhodesian friend"?

African peasant produce dominated the early grain market in Southern Rhodesia, and both rural and urban African and whites enjoyed the consumption of small grains and maize as their prime starch sources.[34] However, with the expansion of secondary industries such as the railways and textiles in the city, the African population in urban Bulawayo also increased.[35] Naturally, the demand for food too increased, and before 1930, African grain traders benefited from this early boom. Historian Montague Yudelman observes how innovative grain traders set

[25] Jackson H.M.G., "Some reflections on the relation of Law to social anthropology", NADA, 1927, pp. 27-28.
[26] West Michael O. (2002), *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 55-69.
[27] National Research Council (1996), *Lost Crops of Africa: Grains,* Washington, Board on Science and Technology for International Development, National Academies Press.
[28] McCann James (2010), *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine*, Bloomsbury, Hurst and Company, p. 139.
[29] Livneh Avital (1976), *Precolonial polities in Southern Zambezia and their political communications*, PhD Thesis, University of London.
[30] Mazarire Gerald (2009), "Reflections on pre-colonial Zimbabwe, c. 850-1880s", in B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the pre-colonial period to 2008,* Harare, Weaver Press, pp. 36-37. 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 Wilmot Alexander (1895), *The Story of the Expansion of Southern Africa. Second ed*, London, T.F. Unwin.
[31] Kuper Hilda *et al.* ([1954] 2017), *The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia*, London, Routledge.
[32] Dube Thembani (2015), *Shifting identities and the transformation of the Kalanga people of Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South, Zimbabwe, c. 1946-2005*, PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
[33] Hastorf Christine A. (2017), *The Social Archaeology of Food: Thinking about Eating from Prehistory to the Present*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 36.
[34] Kauma Bryan, "'Small grains, small gains': Small grains production and marketing in Southern Rhodesia", *South African Historical Journal*, online. URL: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02582473.2021.1938192 (last consulted 15.09.21).
[35] Nobbs E., "The mines as a market…", art. cited, pp. 795-796.

camp on the outskirts of the city and mining centres looking to sell their grain to mine workers.[36] However, in 1906, Director of Agriculture Eric Nobbs expressed the frequent complaints from white farmers that Rhodesia has one crop – "mealies" – rising enquiries on how to expand this grain to be grown as a staple in the country, and for export as well.[37] In response, Ian Phimister notes how in 1908, white settler maize farmers successfully lobbied the BSAC to enact the Diet Ordinance, with the primary aim of increasing the popularity of maize produced by white farmers to replace both small grains and maize from African farmers and traders among African workers in the mines and industries.[38] However, although this Ordinance had a far-reaching impact on shaping what black workers ate, sometimes conflicting economic interests among white authorities contributed to its poor implementation. So small grain consumption continued to dominate among African families as opposed to the more costly white settler produced maize. Moreover, they remained popular because of their wider social uses, which included brewing opaque beer and preparing nutritious porridge and *sadza*.

Until the 1930s, African mine and railway workers remained the largest market for grain in the city. Maize and small grains were consumed as the main carbohydrate and energy starch as mostly *sadza* in the morning and evening meals among workers.[39] During the day, a non-alcoholic drink called *maheu* produced from small grains was consumed for both refreshment and energy-boosting.[40] When preparing these meals, small grains offered better taste sensation than maize and, in 1922, the report of the Chief Native Commissioner (CNC) observed how small grains produced a more intoxicating opaque beer favoured by industrial labourers and African societies especially by the men.[41] In the early 1920s, the Director of Native Development, Emory Alvord in what he described as the "maize complex" observed how "the native themselves know that maize is much easier and cheaper to grow than rapoko and larger returns are to be had from their labour".[42] Yet for the multiplicity of social factors such as its utility in brewing traditional opaque beer, small grains enjoyed widespread demand among Africans.[43] This market demand for small grains was further bolstered by the migratory shifts of African labour from household subsistence food producers or peasant producers to waged employment in the city, triggering a reliance on purchasing grain for their upkeep. Urban by-laws restricted urban Africans from crop cultivation while the long hours dedicated to industrial work deprived them both the opportunity and resources to grow their favoured small grains.

In 1922, Bulawayo suffered a dry spell that cut across the Matabeleland region. Food shortages were rife, worsened by what the Department of Native Affairs described as poor food

[36] Yudelman Montague (1964), *Africans on the land*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 174-175. By so doing they were closer to the market which was an added incentive to plying the grain trade in urban areas.
[37] Nobbs E., "The mines as a market…", art. cited, p. 795.
[38] Phimister I., "Peasant production…", art. cited, p. 220. Also see Punt Eira (1979), *The development of African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the interwar years*, Master Thesis, University of Natal, p. 74. Phimister and Punt underline that white settler maize comparatively pricier than African produced for several reasons including the labour and land constraints that limited yields.
[39] NADA, "Native food and culinary methods", 1933, pp. 101-104.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] National Archives of Zimbabwe (hereafter NAZ), 1095/06/S2, Southern Rhodesia, Report of the CNC, Insiza, 1922.
[42] Madimu Tapiwa (2016), "Responsible Government and Miner-Farmer Relations in Southern Rhodesia, 1923–1945", *South African Historical Journal*, 68(3), pp. 366-389.
[43] *Ibid.*

management by black households.[44] During the 1920s, the colonial state failed to adequately address the key concerns of hunger, instead primarily concerning themselves with curtailing African small grain production and its concomitant consumption by workers on the mines and urban populations.[45] If anything, the increased economic hardships of urban life characterized by paltry wages and an increasing disconnection from family life located in the reserves, exacerbated the impact of droughts and food shortages among blacks. These hardships triggered an increased need for small grains and maize cultivation among African farmers in the city up to the 1930s.[46] In response, the Bulawayo authorities emulated initiatives employed by local leadership in the Insiza, Belingwe, Inyati and Umzingwani mining districts, by establishing Trust Funds aimed at assisting blacks with grain and other food items to mitigate hunger and a looming crisis of nutritional deficiency.[47] In 1947, the National Drought Relief Committee operating under the authority of Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, offered an estimated at 102 000 bags of maize and 27 000 bags of small grains for around 318 000 Africans for four months during the 1947 drought outbreak in Bulawayo.[48] Notable from this food distribution, is the higher distribution of maize in comparison to small grains which was the preferred and environmentally suitable crop in the dry Matabeleland and Bulawayo region.[49] Persistently feeding blacks maize became part of a "propaganda and gentle persuasion" position by white maize farming interests towards influencing African food and eating trends.[50] Moreover, it reiterated the decades-old remarks by the then Director of Agriculture Eric Nobbs in 1910 that "necessarily maize must remain, whatever else may be grown, the main crop of the country".[51]

Despite the legislative moves such as the Diet Ordinance in 1908, the colonial state still struggled to control the consumption of African small grains by black workers. In so far as eating patterns were concerned, those Africans living in close social proximity to whites or "whiteness" in the city were mostly affected by the grain replacement measures largely because of their regular contact with the implementing authorities.[52] European foods such as rice, biscuits and canned corn, milk and beans were sold in kiosks serving African workers in the city. Indeed, between the 1940s and 1950s, small grains became less popular among the nascent African bourgeoisie. Their developing urban lifestyles witnessed significant socio-economic changes that began to integrate maize – by their own choice – as the primary staple of the African community, while small grains being used increasingly only occasionally as porridge and for alcoholic beverages.

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[44] NAZ, 1095/06/S2, Southern Rhodesia, Report of the CNC, 1923.

[45] Machingaidze V., *The development of settler capitalist…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 414-417.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 425. Africans in the city heavily relied on affordable grains produced in the rural areas.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] NAZ, S968/90, National Drought Relief Committee: Food Control and Distribution, CNC, Circular No. 58, Food requirements and famine relief, 26 July 1947, p. 2.

[49] Weinmann H. (1972), *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern African, 1890-1923*, Salisbury, University of Rhodesia, pp. 79-83. Tables show trends in the agricultural production and distribution according to areas of maize and small grains.

[50] Alvord Emory D. (1948), "The progress of Native agriculture in Rhodesia", *New Rhodesia*, 15, pp. 1-32.

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

[52] Ncube T., "Peasant production…", art. cited, p. 7. We use 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 state and powerful settlers and, as this paper shows, even for a few selected emerging African elites. Also see Alcoff Linda Martin (2015), *The Future of Whiteness,* Malden, Polity Press, p. 11.

It is important to emphasise, however, that both white and African society was not homogenous in their views on dietary changes among Africans, nor about replacing small grains with maize. Some white colonial officials were staunch supporters of small grains. For example, in 1927 the Secretary for Agriculture Charles Murray expressed how his department was concerned over native diet before they arrogantly assuming that Europeans diet was "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.[53] This position was rearticulated within the Howman Commission dossier on African food and diet in 1942.[54] It added to sentiments already shared at the time by medical doctor Michael Gelfand[55] that indeed small grains were providing more nutrients to African families than maize, while also being easier and cheaper to produce.[56] In his 1971 book, Gelfand too observed how, between the mid-1940s to the late 1960s African women did well to feed their families with small grains as this was able to provide adequate nutrition throughout the day.[57] In the water-scarce Bulawayo, African diets depended on millet as opposed to maize as it was better suited to the climate and arid soils.[58]

H. Weinmann records how, until around the late 1920s, on both the mining estates and settler farms, African grain especially small grains was fetching better market prices (from both whites and blacks) than maize.[59] In fact, although official records showed otherwise, it could be discerned from the informal trading of small grains, that their market demand remained keen among the urban workers for both their social and nourishing value in comparison to white produced maize.[60] Africans were cautious over eating maize grains from European shops describing them as an undesirable "hybridization of mixed grain" not suitable for export but also lacking in nutritional value.[61] Although during sales this grain mixing was not always noticeable, during cooking and consumption, the texture and taste of the meal exposed the chicanery of the traders.[62] Within the grain industry, it was common practice for intermediary Indian and white traders to participate in grain mixing – combining sorghum with either millet and rapoko, and sometimes even maize – to meet rising urban grain demand, thus compromising on the quality of grain.[63] This impacted on food choices made by African workers from the 1930s onwards, especially in low-income communities.

The Maize Control years

In 1930, the Maize Control Act was passed. What initially was supposed to be an *ad hoc* and temporary mechanism to shelter white maize farmers through the economic turbulence of the

[53] Weinmann H., *Agricultural research*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.
[54] Howman Roger (1943), "The native labourer and his food", *South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR),* p. 21.
[55] It is *expressed again in an ulterior book,* Gelfand Michael (1971), *Diet and Tradition in African culture*, Edinburgh, Livingstone, pp. 45-46.
[56] Ncube T., "Peasant production…", art. cited, p. 14.
[57] Gelfand M., *Diet and Tradition…*, pp. 45-46.
[58] Masuku F., "A Study of Agricultural…", art. cited, p. 19.
[59] Weinmann H., *Agricultural research*, *op. cit.*
[60] Howman R., "The native labourer and his food…", art. cited, p. 22.
[61] Jayne T. S. and Rubey Lawrence (1998), "Maize milling, market reform and urban food security: The case of Zimbabwe", *World Development*, 21(6), pp. 975-988.
[62] NADA, "Native food …", art. cited, pp. 101-104.
[63] Kauma B. "'Small grains, small gains…", art. cited, p. 27.

global economic slump,[64] became a permanent feature in colonial agrarian and economic policy[65] and a weapon to fend off African competition. At the same time, through uneven market regulation of grain distribution, the Maize Control Act became an instrument which changed African eating patterns through its skewed access to grain.[66] As noted earlier, in times of food shortages, limited access to grain moved many African families in the city to rely on state relief for food, witnessing African own food options increasingly became limited.

The Maize Control Act defined the value of gains based on both their location – Zone A and Zone B,[67] which were created to limit Africans from the lucrative trading zones reserved for white farmers. A few African farmers who lived on urban plots on the outskirts of the city such as Warringham, Kensington, and Ntabazinduna were able to permeate these earmarked white areas. As prospects for affluence elevated, by the end of the 1930s some Africans voluntarily embraced "white diets", as they preferred the flavours and variation, and this reflects changes in African eating habits through choice and individual preference in the colony. For others, it may have been an opportunity to not only expand their food choices but to indicate publicly their changed financial status that enabled their purchasing pricier "white foods".[68] Moreover, as maize increasingly became the main crop eaten by urban working-class blacks, as desired by white maize farmers.[69]

By the end of the 1930s, the city had become a hub for "white foods", which included pricier brands of refined maize meal, corned beef, condensed milk and bread. Consequently, small grains became less popular, increasingly used as livestock fodder.[70] During different public works operations and religious outreach programs townships including Pelandaba and Mzilikazi, so-called "European diets" were introduced by the state and some white religious and philanthropic groups to African families as what Information Officer in the Native Affairs Department, H. Preston described as the "right food to fight the hunger".[71] With the widespread popularity of such state initiatives, by the mid-1930s settler culinary ideas were popular among Africans. Strengthened by growing African participation in various Western religious churches, eating white foods became popular and by the mid-1930s, some African households were actively experimenting with settler culinary ideas using more maize than small grains in their meals. Entering the 1940s, African cooking was transforming – aided by the adoption of utensils including mechanized grinders. The choice to embrace more European-style recipes was influenced by how food preparation became more efficient, an aspect by workers constrained by long work hours. For maize, diesel-powered grinding mills became used commonly, while for small grains – even to this day – as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, Africans remained reliant on wooden or rock mortar and pestles to produce grain flour.[72] Wooden mortars, unlike mechanized grinders, did not leave the grain smooth. Moreover, when using a rock mortar, it

[64] Vickery Kenneth (1985), "Saving Settlers: Maize Control in Northern Rhodesia", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 11(2), pp. 212-234.
[65] Machingaidze V., *The development of settler capitalist*, *op. cit.*, pp. 414-417.
[66] Masuku F., "A Study of Agricultural…", art. cited, p. 19.
[67] Ncube T., "Peasant production…", art. cited, p. 11.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[69] *Ibid.*
[70] Chigodora J., "Famine and drought…", art. cited, p. 40.
[71] "Africans hunt for food as well as for *mutl'*", *The Chronicle*, 17 August 1958. Also see "Food relief for Africans", *The Rhodesian Herald*, 16 May 1935.
[72] Weinmann H., *Agricultural research…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

was commonplace to have small granules of stones and soil mistakenly mix with the ground grain.[73] This made it unpleasant for eating. At the same time, some African women who were employed as domestic labourers in white households learned different culinary skills that enabled them to experiment with different grain textures.[74] These skills, as Renata Coetzee observes, were also employed by Africans when they cooked their small grains.[75] For those Africans that embraced the use of these innovations including tinned foods, this lightened the task of food preparation, allowing them more time for other opportunities.[76]

Figure 1: Cinginkosi Dube, a Ndebele young woman using a wooden mortar and pestle to grind millet in Nkulumane township in Bulawayo, December 2020[77]

[73] McCann J., *Stirring the pot..., op. cit.*, p. 102.

[74] Keigwin H. S., "Native development", NADA, 1956, pp. 10-11. Although the traditional wooden pestle and rock grinding method continued to dominate, mechanized grinders spread, offering a new form of agricultural enterprise for some African farmers who purchased these machines. Charging a small fee, they would offer milling services, who would on occasion when a trading surplus was available, would opt for this option. See Steen Karin (2011), "A 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 Sustainable Science*, 2, pp. 45-51.

[75] Coetzee Renata (1982), *Funa Food from Africa: Roots of Traditional African Food Culture*, Durban, Butterworths, p. 33.

[76] Masenda A. (1987), *The Food Production Committee and state food policy in colonial Zimbabwe during the 1940s*, Mémoire de master, Université du Zimbabwe, p. 110.

[77] Image captured by Bryan Kauma in Nkulumane township in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, December 2020.

Figure 2: African family in one of Bulawayo's townships grinding their millet using wooden mortar and pestles, in the mid-1990s[78]

Pumpkins, gem squashes, and rice: New foods and African eating in the city

The Maize Control Act brought about sweeping changes to African access to grain. In some cases, culinary changes reflected the existing social and economic realities of paltry African wages. For others, culinary patterns were a combination of available resources and state policy. At the same time, local blacks as well as African migrant workers (mainly from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) kept their traditional cooking and eating habits like using clay pots for cooking and sun-drying meat even in the city.[79] Although still using old cooking methods, as noted earlier, the demand for small grains and meat rose and until around the late 1930s, on both the mining estates and settler farms.[80] In Bulawayo, African diets remained dependent on millet supplies from nearby areas including Ntabazinduna.[81] The geographical proximity between the two accounts for the continued availability of small grains in the city as farmers from the reserves took to clandestine small grains trade with city dwellers to augment their incomes. On the industrial compounds, different retail and grocery stores accessed by Africans sold a variety of food, most influenced by European tastes and economic interests such as rice and bread.[82] Some African workers were increasingly being introduced to "white" foods such as rice, spicy condiments (although, of course, neither of these were European in origin originally) and various vegetables by their employers. Between 1939 and 1944, the production and sales of white-produced crops namely maize, wheat, barley, pumpkins, squashes, tomatoes

[78] Image obtained from *The Chronicle*, File Box: Agriculture, iA8-IB2, FARMERS CLUB.
[79] Kingsley Fairbridge (1927), *The Autobiography of Kingsley Fairbridge*, London, Oxford University Press, pp. 89-91.
[80] Weinmann H., *Agricultural research…*, *op. cit.*
[81] Masuku F., "A Study of Agricultural…", art. cited, p. 19.
[82] Trevor N., "Peasant production and marketing…", art. cited, p. 7.

and green vegetables to African compounds significantly increased.[83] In 1943, one white settler went on to comment how African's kitchens were teeming with different flavours, and how African meals were increasingly composed of a variety of vegetables. With time, these meals too became aesthetically pleasant and enhanced African eating pleasure according to the Food and Nutritional Council official R. P Denny, who remarked that "they are now happy when they eat".[84]

The changes to how Africans prepared their small grains was a breakaway from what some white settlers described as "monotonous and unhealthy".[85] For other whites, the dark chocolate brown or ox-red colour that small grains meals produced, provoked an unease sensation over the aesthetic appearance and some choice of relishes on the African plate, perhaps as exemplified by Figure 3. Comments such as "it seems to contain a considerable amount of oil… I dare say… Africans eat the most indigestible substances as their relish" were common with reference to African plates in Bulawayo.[86] With the African population in Bulawayo just over 12 430, compared to only 1 200 whites in 1928, the rapidly changing composition of food points to increased white influences in African eating.[87] Local kiosks are noted to be selling more "white" foods such as rice, biscuits and canned food to African workers.[88] Some of these were not too expensive beyond for the increasingly socially aware workers. Also, these introductions also brought about culinary changes in the manner Africans cooked and ate. In many canteens across the city, it had become common to eat all meals using a fork and knife at the table, yet traditionally Africans enjoyed eating *sadza* using their bare hands.[89] Megan Vaughan says such etiquette impositions were part of creating "governable subjects" through formalizing certain foods with prescribed cooking and eating methods.[90]

No doubt, some of these eating methods proved too complicated for some industrial workers and contributed towards the lower "take up" of some of the foods – like rice and corned beef.[91] In 1933, the CNC reported how traders offering small grains and other African traditional foods such as *idelele* (okra) and *amasi* (sour milk) enjoyed brisk business because of this early low interest in European foods by black workers.[92] Yet, for others, this low consumption of these European foods was also purely financial. In comparison to their small grains *sadza*, these new food items such as rice, corned beef and bread were fetching higher prices at the local stores on the mining and industrial compound.[93]

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[83] Annual agricultural reports from *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal*, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1944 and 1946 under the Heading Native Production in Southern Rhodesia.

[84] 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.

[85] Morris R. M., *Report on Public Health for the year 1949*, Salisbury, Rhodesia Printing Company and Young Farmers' Club pamphlet: Meals in a Shona home, 1969.

[86] Meredith Martin (1979), *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia*, Norfolk, Andre Deutsch, p. 67.

[87] Secretary for Native Affairs: Report on the question of native housing and implementation of Land Apportionment Act in the Urban areas.

[88] Howman H., "The native labourer and his food…", art. cited, pp. 32-44.

[89] Haw R. G., "Some thoughts on Native development", NADA, 1950, pp. 20-23.

[90] Vaughan Megan (1991), *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, California, Stanford University Press, pp. 202-203.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[92] NADA, "Native food and culinary methods", 1933, p. 102.

[93] Masuku F., "A Study of Agricultural…", art. cited, p. 49.

Figure 3: Typical images of African small grain sadza meals eaten with a variety of traditional relishes[94]

As historian Diana Jeater argues, from the 1920s, different approaches and instruments within Native Policy including education and food policy, redefined the social status, and this impacted on African lifestyles.[95] For example, consumption of certain foods such as rice was able to stratify black society because of its developed impression of status and its availability in some areas over others.[96] In addition, the introduction of new foods such as pumpkins and squashes increased from the 1930s and meant that eating small grains became less popular among the emerging African elite as it was characterized as a "poor man's crop".[97] Equipped with more opportunities to acquire better and more advanced utensils and ingredients, the elites witnessed significant social and economic changes that enabled them to integrate foods and grains controlled under the Maize Board (later Grain Marketing Board – GMB – in 1954). So food such as maize, rice and wheat became their primary starch staples, while small grains were just occasionally used to prepare porridge.[98] Even so, eating porridge in the mornings shifted from the regular thick brown small grain meal to wider consumption of porridge prepared from maize, with the optional addition of butter and sugar.[99] Previously, most African women added bits of pumpkin and sweet cane to sweeten up the small grains porridge and mask its naturally bitter savour.[100] In both instances, these additions were to enhance both flavour and nutrition.

In addition, Pathisa Nyathi states that Africans have been growing and eating food such as pumpkins for centuries, but, the key changes came about with their preparation into various relishes added with newer culinary tools and utensils in the city.[101] Among the Ndebele, mealies, pumpkins and groundnuts were not eaten as whole meals, but snacks during the days

[94] Images captured by Bryan Kauma during research visit to Zimbabwe in December 2018.
[95] Jeater Diana (2020), "African Women in Colonial Settler Towns in East and Southern Africa", *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia, African History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 1-27.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[97] NAZ, 1905/F5, Abridged report of the Chief Native Commissioner in Belingwe for the Year ended 1935.
[98] Mosley Paul (1983), *The Settler economies: Studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 40-43.
[99] Howman R., "The native labourer…", art. cited, p. 22.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] Nyathi Pathisa (2020), *African food*, Bulawayo, Amagugu Publishers, p. 12.

especially during seasons of intensive activity that did not allow ample time for breaks to prepare meals.[102] Even in the city, food was prepared the previous evening and carried in a "*skoftin*" (lunchbox) to work. Food choices were also influenced by its ability to be eaten while cold, as most workers did not have the resources to warm up their food after cooking. Added to this, their ability to remain fresh throughout the day made such foods, which included rice and pumpkins gain more favour among workers.

"A taste of home"

By the early 1940s, both in the city and reserves alike, African lives were changing. The African kitchen more than any other social aspect of the African home underwent a drastic transformation. However, these changes were neither always imposed, nor always undesirable. Here many changes were adopted by Africans rather than foisted: it was not a top-down imposition but a shared process of observation and adoption. For example the Urban Areas Act and Howman Commission of Inquiry in 1943 formalized the spaces where blacks and whites could interact for both business and leisure. The Urban Areas Act also stipulated the forms of agricultural production permissible within African townships.[103] Both economic and social interactions between African and settler communities became more commonplace and intimate because African labour became increasingly required for the further expansion of white capitalist industries in the city. African home gardens in urban areas (and to a lesser degree rural) developed to include a wide variety of vegetables and herbs that were used to enrich the colour, flavour and nutritional content of daily meals. The emerging social interactions between blacks and whites as well as among blacks themselves, gave rise to new ideas to improve their homes. African women embraced these because they became busier, having to balance between domestic work and taking up small jobs in an effort to supplement their husbands' wages.[104] Thus African families modified their eating habits in parallel with the sweeping social and economic changes occurring across the country. In adopting some of these new culinary and food ideas, not all blacks neglected their consumption of small grains. Instead, some continued to include them in their meals and meals became composed of a variety of vegetables.[105]

As African coexistence with white people increased, urban African society striated (with class divisions) and this impacted on the way they prepared and ate their food. Visits home in the reserves not only allowed them space to share new food, ingredients and eating ideas from the city but were also a nostalgic space for them to enjoy some of the small grains that were increasingly scarce in the city. When returning to the city, they would carry with them pockets of small grains, some sharing or trading with others, and this allowed urban families far from home to stay in touch with their roots.[106] By 1942, more and more Africans in the city started

[102] *Ibid.*

[103] The Urban Areas Act controlled the areas in which blacks and whites could socialize, demarcating residential, economic and industrial (working) and leisure space. A notable outcome of this Act was the demarcating the consumption of small grains alcoholic opaque beverages to municipality monitored taverns located in the townships.

[104] NADA, "Native food and culinary methods", 1933, p. 101.

[105] 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.

[106] Williams-Forson Psyche (2014), "'I Haven't Eaten If I Don't Have My Soup and Fufu': Cultural Preservation through Food and Foodways among Ghanaian Migrants in the United States", *Africa Today*, 61, pp. 68-87.

to prefer "white" food despite an existing reliance on foods from the native reserves to maintain kinship bonds,[107] A 1956 report underlines that "many of the dishes are no longer eaten by sophisticated urban Africans",[108] alluding to how small grain *sadza* had disappeared from popular consumption.[109] This reflected William Whit's point about an asymmetrical relationship between the rural and urban areas which manifested in various ways – including culinary.[110] In Tjotsholo, some African workers from the city were known to always pompously walk around the village in their work overalls whenever they visited their rural homes and families. Many would bring home groceries from the city and a salient indicator of their presence was the accompanying baking of *vetkoek* or "fatcake" buns with self-raising wheat flour from the city, whose aroma lingered through the air.[111] To rural families, the equivalent of these appetizing buns was *amaqebelengwane* which were prepared using small grains mixed with maize meals. These did not produce the scented aroma of *vetkoeks*. Towards the 1950s, indulging in "fatcakes" increasingly became a social indicator of one's appreciation of so-called modern lifestyles. Indeed, by this time and especially during droughts, access to the city contributed to a measurable social status within the village.[112] In simple socio-economic terms: fat cats ate fat cakes.

It is worth noting that African males employed and resident in the city's townships increased from 15 322 in 1936 to around 48 000 by 1946.[113] From the mid-1940s, more African women also became residents in the city. African women migrating into Bulawayo occupied spaces especially in the high-density areas dominated by single men. By 1945, these women had occupied a wide share of the urban food market, establishing a new trade. Popular meals among the African labourers included those prepared from small grain and traditional opaque beer. In the post Maize Control era, the once-popular small grain had become scarce especially in the urban centres.[114] African workers, tired of limited and unvarying diets provided by the mines, preferred small grain meals, and were willing to pay much higher prices for them.[115] For women food traders, this thus "paid better and [was] a more pleasant life", which displayed a conscious understanding of the changing food market.[116] This culinary venture was able to sustain itself because African food stalls were also a nostalgic space where men far from home could stay in touch with their roots.[117] Thus these market stalls not only served as conduits to African foods not available in trading depots, but were communication hubs bridging rural families with those labouring within settler compounds.[118] As taste evokes memory: these meals

[107] Kuper H. *et al*, *The Shona…*, *op. cit*., pp. 24-28.
[108] Keigwin H. S., "Native development", NADA, 1956, pp. 10-13. See also Kayongo-Male Diane et Onyango Philista (1984), *The sociology of the African family*, London, Longman, pp. 34-36.
[109] "African culture has changed"; *The Rhodesian Chronicle*, 15 May 1952.
[110] Whit William (1999), "Soul Food as Cultural Creation", *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, 3(1), pp. 37-47.
[111] Desmond Judy (1963), *Traditional cookery in Southern Africa*, Cape Town, Books of Africa, pp. 12-14. Desmond notes how in other parts of southern Africa, similar flour baked buns are referred to as *vetkoek* in Afrikaans or *amagwinya* in siXhosa and isiZulu.
[112] Interview with Gogo Thokozani Nyathi, Maphisa Matobo District, 14 December 2019.
[113] Ashton H. (1957), *African administration in Bulawayo, (Bulawayo)*, pp. 3-5 quoted by Preben Kaarsholm (1995), "Si Ye Pambili-Which Way Forward?: Urban Development, Culture and Politics in Bulawayo", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(2), pp. 225-245.
[114] Phimister I., "Peasant Production …", art. cited, p. 219.
[115] NAZ, F1071/11, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, General statistics on African production and native life, 1951.
[116] Phimister I., "Peasant Production …", art. cited, p. 218. This despite factoring the overall cost of producing the meal, transporting and security of the clandestine trade that saw these mobile stalls not being able to operate as often as their demand would require.
[117] Williams-Forson, "I haven't eaten…", art. cited, pp. 69-87.
[118] Ncube T., "Peasant production …", art. cited, p. 13.

were significant perhaps because of the unique flavours of small grain meals, cooked in ways the men remembered from their previous lives.[119] It was the taste of "home".[120]

Added to the already strong white views on African diets (although there were white dissenters, as discussed earlier), there was also concern over nutrition and the influx of women and their small grains food trade. In 1941, a white female nutritionist (later assigned by the Department of Agriculture to work on peasant culinary education in the Matabeleland North district in 1962) observed a growing sense of urgency felt by the Native Affairs Department towards improving African diets through increasing the variety of perceived "good foods" such as maize-meal, bread, and vegetables available on sale to in stores serving urban blacks.[121] As a result, some employers such as the textile sectors, would offer food packages that included maize meal, flour and rice to their workers.[122] This influenced Africans' taste for "white" food.[123]

Hunger, State paternalism and African food

Periods of drought and food scarcity witnessed food relief initiatives by the state and supporting ecumenical partners, such as churches, which during periods of drought and food scarcity helped shape what and how Africans in the city ate. These measures historically, an advantage that rural families had over their urban African counterparts was the availability of natural food alternatives especially during such seasons of low agricultural harvest (as in a dry period, droughts or a pestilence). In the city, efforts by the municipality towards mitigating urban hunger brought about both material and ideological shifts in the way blacks ate and prepared their foods. The establishment of the Bulawayo Food Distribution Centre run by the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference, became a turning point in the history of food programming and policy development across in the country because of the dietary ideas it spread in the process of hunger relief between 1903 and 1945.[124] At first, meals consisted of mainly small grains, but gradually turned towards maize as white settler farmers gained more and more political influence in the country and maize became more popular among urbanites.[125] By the time of the drought in 1947, the meals served to blacks consisted of "native grains and mealies supplied at 2lbs per head per diem or 1 ½ lbs of rice".[126] At the same time, a wider variety vegetables, potatoes and beans, sourced from white farmers became popular dietary choices.

White concerns were expressed over the prevalence of a variety of said to be unhygienic food practices and extensive drinking of opaque beer, by small grain consuming Africans.[127] Local food markets were injected with "white food" like wheat bread flour, rice, potatoes and

[119] NADA, "Native food and culinary methods", 1933.
[120] Cusack Igor (2000), "African Cuisines: Recipes for Nation-Building?", *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13(2), p. 207.
[121] Allaart L. K. (1982), "Education for nutrition", *The Central African Journal of Medicine*, 28(8), pp. 195-197.
[122] Masenda A., *The Food Production Committee…*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[123] NAZ 1095/08, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs to Director of Native Development, 1949.
[124] Ruzivo Munetsi (2017), "Ecumenical initiatives in Southern Rhodesia: A history of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference, 1903-1945", *Studia Historiae Ecclesiaaticae*, 43(1), pp. 1-17. The first-ever government and church assisted food distribution centre was set up in Bulawayo in 1896, and for over seven years, the centre served an average of 3000 people every day.
[125] Yoshikuni T., *African Urban Experiences…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-49. Also, diets followed white religious understandings of foods considered as unclean and taboo. This was not always a similar and welcomed sentiment among African populations.
[126] *Ibid.*
[127] Moyo P. H. (1925), "Native life in the reserves", NADA, pp. 47-55.

condensed milk. Even after the scare of starvation, state food distribution points were maintained, transforming townships into spaces where a variety of foods were easily accessible.[128] During such periods of drought and hunger, some Africans also turned towards eating previously shunned meals such as meats including dog, frogs, and mice and some small grain varieties[129] – previously ridiculed by the Ndebele people for its unhygienic nature. However, blacks did not always allow hunger to dictate their eating patterns. For example, as drought relief in response to the acute food shortages of 1932 and 1947, the colonial state distributed the widely unpopular yellow maize and casava meal to African families in the city.[130] Addressing the City council on 12 October 1949, M. Dazinger noted that yellow grain was a flop and was widely shunned by many blacks across the city mainly for its known historical use as livestock fodder on settler in the farm estates.[131] Yellow grain also had an unpleasant taste and foul aroma when cooked.[132] By this time, unlike both white maize or small grains, it was unpleasant to eat among urban populations were exposed and enjoying , whose plates were increasingly being exposed to a wider and more appetizing foods. Naturally, *kenya*[133] – as the yellow grain became to be known – meals became unpleasantly associated with drought, bitterness, suffering and poverty among African families. Despite hunger, this maize variety was poorly received by urban Africans. Because of this rejection, many African families resorted to new means to access food.

While some men were at work in the mines and industries, others and women were employed as domestic helpers and gardeners in white households, with meals as part of their pay.[134] John Iliffe observes how this growing interaction between urban African families and whites over the 1940s was able to bridge the social gap on the appreciation for different food stuffs, and underlines the ability to exercise culinary choices despite the threat of hunger. Africans were aware of the food changes happening around them. At the railways, for example, workers expressed their disgruntlement over the switching of small grains to maize, which was further served in smaller portion than they were accustomed to.[135] Although African complaints over the nature of food were rife, by the mid-1940s, food protests by black workers were primarily for better cooked and larger portions to be served to workers.[136] Unlike the case of *enya*, workers were responding to the meals in the industry positively. In the late 1940s, the Food Advisory Committee (in the Agriculture Department) "discovered" how complaints over food were a result of the personnel assigned to allocating food rations to workers possessing

[128] *Ibid.*

[129] NAZ, N3/11/7, Drought and Famine report, Native Department, 1952. Among the Ndebele, rapoko was sometimes considered as unpleasant, largely for its more bitter taste among the small grain varieties.

[130] NAZ, 1095/-6/S2, Southern Rhodesia drought relief, CNC report, 1947.

[131] "An African problem", *The Chronicle*, 15 October 1949. Also see Weinmann H., *Agricultural development…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-39.

[132] *Ibid.*

[133] Today this maize meal is referred to as *kenya*, a somewhat derogatory slur whose origins remain uncertain, but stretch back to the post-WWII era and seems to refer to "outsiders".

[134] Iliffe John (1987), *The African Poor: A History,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 153-155.

[135] Nehwati Francis (1970), "The social and communal background to "Zhii": The African riots in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia in 1960", *African Affairs*, 69, pp. 250-266.

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

little nutritional knowledge.[137] The result was the introduction of a new food regime as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Prescribed African diet and costs for purchase[138]

Food option	Cost
Maize	4 pence per pound or £1.30 per ton
Rice	5 ½ to 6 pence per pound
Meat (beef)	2 ½ to 3 pence per pound
Pumpkins	1/5 to ¼ pence per pound or 30 to 40 shillings per ton
Wheat	£2.30 per pound
Sweet potatoes	1 penny per pound or £8 per ton
Potatoes	1½ penny per pound or £12 and 10 shillings per ton
Onions	2 pence per pound or £16 per ton
Beans	2 to 3 pence per pound or £16 to £24 per ton
Milk	1 ½ to 2 ½ pence per 50 litres
Groundnuts	1 ½ to 2 pence per pound or £12 and 10 shillings to £16 per ton

The Bulawayo municipality implemented this "starvation measure" to ensure that local industries did not capsize from labour migrations to other areas in search of food.[139] Owing to their own internal contradictions, they soon allowed Africans to continue with their so-called "traditional" ways of producing and consuming food for as long as it enabled them to fight the scourge of urban hunger.[140] In response, Africans increased their (now covert) reliance on urban grain agriculture in their backyards or on bushes closely located to their homesteads.[141] Backyard crop cultivation of maize mushroomed across the city because of their growing appreciation for the crops as well as its comparatively lower demand of land and labour in comparison to small grains, and different vegetables. This fuelled a new wave of social challenges for the colonial state, that of curtailing widespread illegal African movement, informal food traders as well as streambank cultivation which adversely affected urban water supplies.[142] As the cost of living for an urbanite rose by 100 % between 1939 and 1947, those Africans who were unable to produce their own food, faced starvation. To address expensive white maize costs, some families varied their menus, interchanging between starches maize, small grains, rice and bread.[143] Whenever they ate small grains, it became common to accompany this meal with a variety of new ingredients and condiments such as spices to

[137] Maravanyika Simion (2012), "Local responses to colonial evictions, conservation and commodity policies among the Shangwe", *African Nbula*, 5, pp. 1-20.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] Kuper H. *et al.*, *The Shona…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-28.
[140] *Ibid.*
[141] Ncube T., "Peasant production…", art. cited, p. 14.
[142] Ranger T., *Bulawayo Burning…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-156.
[143] Nyathi P., *African foods…*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

subdue its strong bitter taste.[144] It became a hybrid culinary culture – a fusion of "tradition" and "modernity", economy and status, choice and necessity.

"*Masiye-phambili* ?"[145]: Changes and continuities in African cuisines

The post-War War II era continued to witness changes across African homes with campaigns by the state and philanthropic organizations to shape the nature of African food and eating patterns in response to shifting economic trajectory skewed to cushion white settlers.[146] By the early 1950s, white inspired household backyard and community gardens, growing a wide variety of vegetables and herbs, were commonplace. It signified the embrace of new food and crop ideas by urban blacks.[147] These food crop production developments were supported through robust cooking campaigns by the state such as the "School on Wheels" which focused on the state training of food preparation to improve African diets in the city.[148] The "School on Wheels" initiative was essentially a home economics, culinary and nutrition education program established by the Native Food and Diet Committee within the Native Department in 1942, targeted at African families in Bulawayo's various township.[149] Lessons included introducing Africans to different varieties of maize like the Rhodesian Hickory King, Salisbury White and Eureka Field – how to cook and consume them and obtain adequate nourishment.[150] Students were taught how to prepare frugal meals that contained nutritional value. Lessons focused on how to cook using coal stoves as opposed to the commonly used firewood method.[151] Despite what seemed to be an overall low turnout in attendance, knowledge on the use of new ingredients and cooking methods similar to those used within white households spread across the city. Blacks adopted new ways to improve their cooking and by the early 1950s, African *sadza* meals were a fusion of tradition and modernity: as households were experimenting with wider varieties of vegetables, meats and herbs that enriched the colour, flavour and nutritional content of daily meals.[152]

Perhaps some of the culinary ideas taught reinforced prejudices against black "traditional" lifestyles.[153] There were efforts to regulate the flow of both Africans and their foods into the city.[154] A notable consequence was the self-preservation from "African contamination" and poor hygiene habits, through a paternalist effort to teach Africans the correct ways of

144 NAZ, G1/6/4/67, Annual Reports on Native Development 1936-42.

145 Masiye-phambili means "Let us go/move forward". It is a phrase that has since been adopted as Bulawayo's motto, encrusted on its coat of arms.

146 Page Sam L and Page Helena (1991), "Western hegemony over African agriculture in southern Rhodesia and its continuing threat to food security in independent Zimbabwe", *Agriculture and Human values*, 8, p. 11.

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

148 Masenda A., *The Food Production Committee…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-12.

149 NAZ, 1095/08, Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs, Chief Native Commissioner and Director of Native Development, 1949. The debut "School on Wheels" session was held at the Makokoba township attracted a paltry 31 African women out of an anticipated 110 in February 1942. This low turnout can be attributed to the complex living arrangements in the urban spaces in the 1940s, which was characterized by fewer women and children in comparison to men. Therefore, out of a possible urban population of over 3 000, by 1956 only a few over 600 African women from various townships across the city had formally received lessons in home economics that specialized in cooking, child nutrition and domestic etiquette through the "Schools on Wheels."

150 Allaart L. K., "Education for nutrition…", art. cited, p. 39.

151 Masenda A., *The Food Production Committee…*, op. cit., p. 112.

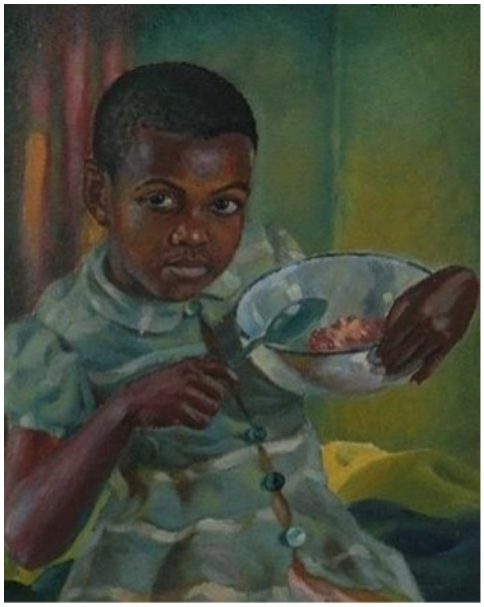
152 "African culture has changed", *The Rhodesian Chronicle*, 15 May 1952.

153 Diana Wylie (2001), *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa,* Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, pp. 209-213.

154 Masenda A., *The Food Production Committee…*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

cooking and eating their own African foods.[155] Thus, African diets and food choices had significantly broadened. Moreover, the culinary knowledge on how to enhance meals made African eating more employable within more white sectors. By the mid-1950s, Africans' interactions with whites increased, and more and more families were adopting new culinary methods and African foods. Figure 4 is a 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, showing how some Africans in the city fused Western and African cuisines and culinary etiquette into their daily lives. Also, these western culinary capabilities opened up prospects for African employment as cooks and domestic helps within white communities too.[156]

Figure 4: Painting of African child eating in the 1950s[157]



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Located within the broader conversation of the urban African history in Zimbabwe and African cuisine in general, this paper examined the social food history of small grains among African families from the 1920s at the election of Responsible Government until the early 1950s in the aftermath of the Land Husbandry Act of 1951. It traced the complex trajectory of small grains culinary patterns noting how conscious policies (over food and land use) and in some cases, incidental events (drought and famine) as well as an increased interaction between blacks and whites as domestic helps and gardeners, contributed to the varying cooking and eating methods by African families in the city. In so doing, it showed the changing nature of social relations among black families, and their coexistence with white communities and the

[155] Schmidt Elizabeth (1996), *Peasants, traders and wives: Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*, Harare, Baobab press, p. 66.
[156] Allaart L. K., "Education for nutrition…", art. cited, pp. 196-181.
[157] From Sekai Nzenza, "Our disappearing traditional food", *The Herald*, 12 mai 2014, online. URL: https://www.herald.co.zw/our-disappearing-traditional-food/ (last consulted 18.07.19).

state in the urban space and Bulawayo in particular. Ordinary Africans, including women traders 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 whites adopted varying new culinary ideas and methods, while in some instances, others remained using their so-called traditional ways of food preparation and eating. It was common to combine of traditional methods and new settler ideas to craft new culinary practices that were suited to the prevailing social, economic and cultural realities of the African family.

By examining this complex relationship between the state, Africans and food, we showed that black and white ideas towards African food and culinary practices were not linear nor static and they changed over time. While the colonial project was aimed at controlling African labour, fractures were not always rigidly black-white, nor was the settler community always homogenous towards Africans nor towards "African traditional life". Moreover, this mutable relationship impacted the development of not only small grains but of African ideas of food and status.

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