



# **Light and Power for a Multiracial Nation: The Kariba Dam Scheme in the Central African Federation (Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series)**

*Julia Tischler*

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The Kariba Dam, stretching across the Zambezi River between today's Zambia and Zimbabwe, was one of the most famous development projects in Africa in the late 1950s. As a producer of abundant and cheap power, Kariba was to boost the economy of the newly established Central African Federation. The book shows how the dam project crystallised both the hopes and the flaws of the Federation, a highly controversial experiment of 'multiracial' nation-building by which the British colonial power meant to appease both settler and African aspirations for independence. The author sketches the perspectives of a great variety of people involved in the Kariba project, including World Bank experts, colonial administrators, the local population, nationalist politicians, and the workers building the dam. By drawing out what these different groups imagined a 'developed nation' to be like and how they tried to put their visions into practice, the study provides a nuanced understanding of one of the most pervasive ideologies of the twentieth century. Refraining from both uncritical praise and blanket condemnations, the author draws out the fundamental ambivalence at the heart of modernisation, oscillating between empowerment and domination.

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