

communal areas is, therefore, to retain and increase their herds rather than to sell them off.

The inadequacies of the orthodox grazing scheme in the communal areas are said to arise from the inability of the system to take cognizance of what Ian Scoones calls 'farmer knowledge' (p. 227), especially in their adaptive use of 'strategic resources' in dealing with insufficient grazing. In most cases such 'strategic resources' are not included in the paddocks so the paddocks may worsen instead of improve animal health. This view, however, misses the point that current farmer strategies are a desperate attempt to deal with a desperate problem. Current livestock holdings per household in Zimbabwe's communal areas are meagre and very difficult to sustain. In fact, as many as half of the households in the communal areas do not own cattle. In most cases, the cattle owned by a household do not provide sufficient manure or draught power for crop production. The situation is even worse now after the devastating drought of 1991/2 than when this book was published. The major factor of this scenario is pressure for land in the communal areas. Nothing short of an effective national policy for land redistribution will make livestock production, even as a source of intermediate goods for crop farming, a successful venture. Without such a reorganization, romantic views about the use of 'farmer knowledge' and 'strategic resources' will serve to sustain only the current, insufficient stock levels during normal rainy seasons. In situations of severe drought the survival of even current stock will be threatened.

On the whole this book, another contribution by the University's Centre for Applied Social Studies in the area of sustainable resource management, is of use for both practical policy making and academic research. It has its limitations, however, most of them being those associated with any collection of conference papers. There is a great disparity in the quality of the contributions: some are thoroughly academic, based on rigorous methodologies, presenting substantial research results and containing lengthy bibliographies, while others are short, descriptive accounts of livestock production policies and programmes. In addition there are numerous editorial and typographical errors which should have been corrected.

University of Zimbabwe

P. MAVIMA

Rivers of Gold By H. Ellert. Gweru, Mambo Press, Zambeziana 22, 1993, xii, 194 pp., illus., ISBN 0-68922-529-4, Z\$68,00.

Rivers of Gold is a socio-cultural treatise on the role of the Portuguese in the Zimbabwean plateau from the beginning of the sixteenth century until about 1900.

The first chapter describes the history of Portuguese settlement in East Africa from 1498 to the late seventeenth century, dealing with their arrival in Mozambique and their gradual contact with, and ultimately settlement in, the Mutapa state in what is now northern Zimbabwe. This

chapter presents a historical setting for the discussion of the Portuguese *feiras* in the second chapter.

The third chapter describes trade items imported into the Mutapa state via Portuguese contacts. Of particular interest are the stoneware and porcelain from the Far East, wares from the Persian Gulf area and earthenware and glass beads from Europe. The description and dating of the artefacts allows for a definition of the ceramic route and gives an indication of the intricacy of the Indian Ocean commercial network at this period.

The fourth chapter presents well-researched information on the crops and animals introduced into the Zimbabwe plateau by the Portuguese, demonstrating another dimension of the impact that Portuguese settlement had on the local people. The fifth chapter presents evidence that gold was not the only commodity exported from the 'Rivers of Gold' region; iron, copper and ivory were also traded. (It is interesting to note that the exploitation of these raw materials forms part of an economic tradition that has survived up to the present day.)

The sixth, and last, chapter summarizes Portuguese history from the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century including details on changing Afro-Portuguese relations, the gradual decline of the *prazo* system, the loss of Portuguese influence in northern Zimbabwe and the effect of all of these changes on Afro-Portuguese trade. The research presented in this chapter helps one understand why the Portuguese failed to make a lasting socio-cultural and political impact in northern Zimbabwe.

This book stresses the Portuguese perspective and there is a tendency to generalize on the Mutapa dynastic succession, especially after 1628. The period from 1628 to 1700 is little researched and poorly understood but it was during this period that the first signs of the future collapse of the Mutapa state became apparent, as is evidenced by recent archaeological research. Examining the period after 1630 within the context of the *prazo* system is certainly appropriate but the origin of this problem may be found much earlier — in the late fifteenth century — in the rise of the Portuguese warlords. In addition, disturbances north of the Zambezi in the 1570s had a ripple effect on the Zimbabwe plateau — threatening the existence of the Portuguese trading networks and forcing the Portuguese to forge new relationships with the Mutapa and other chiefdoms.

Unfortunately, the cartographic data is not very well presented or particularly helpful. The serious researcher will have to consult other works to discover the changing Portuguese perceptions of the 'Rivers of Gold' of the Mutapa state. The referencing system (both bibliography and endnotes) is idiosyncratic and, in some cases, inconsistent and incomplete.

Nevertheless, this book makes easy and interesting reading for anyone studying the history of the Portuguese in East Africa. It is written in simple, non-technical English and should be of value to secondary-school and university students studying history or archaeology. It also adds to our understanding of the historical archaeology of this country, particularly the period of the Mutapa state.