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Zambezia (1993), XX (ii).

BOOK REVIEWS


Southern Africa has many arid and semi-arid regions where agro-pastoral production systems predominate among the indigenous peasant communities. Livestock forms an important part of the region’s socio-economic fabric, providing inputs into arable production, an investment outlet for excess funds, a form of subsistence from milk and from occasional slaughter, a source of cash from occasional commercial disposition, a means of creating ties of dependency within families and in the community. They are also important for religious and cultural ceremonies. Because of their important role, farmers tend to increase and retain their herds at levels which environmental scientists and extension workers regard as unsustainable because of overgrazing and environmental degradation. For this reason, the evolution of institutions for the conservation and management of grazing areas in the Communal Lands is an important issue in the region.

The book under review comprises papers which attempt to develop a conceptual framework for communal grazing schemes (Cousins, pp. 13-38), to make a case for the establishment of meaningful local-level common property management institutions (Murombedzi, pp. 39-58), and review Zimbabwean and regional experiences of attempts to develop full-fledged communal grazing management systems (Mache and Chivizhe, pp. 59-71; Paradza, pp. 72-80; Cousins, pp. 81-125; Nhira, pp. 126-38; Parawila, pp. 139-56; Robins, pp. 157-88; Merafe, pp. 189-202; and Motsamal, pp. 203-21).

The following general impressions may be inferred from the contributions to this book:

a) Current property regimes in the communal areas are held in common rather than on an open access system which is contrary to conventional assumptions, including those of policy makers, as reflected in Zimbabwe’s national livestock policy of 1988.

b) Interventions aimed at evolving full-fledged common property management institutions should appreciate the ecological, social, economic, and political make-up of the area under consideration rather than the use of models assumed to have universal applicability. These interventions should also call for the active participation of the target communities, both in designing the institutions and in their management.

c) Current interventions by government departments such as AGRITEX, non-governmental organizations such as World Vision, and donor agencies such as the EEC, are based on assumptions about the objectives of livestock ownership and available grazing and appropriate institutions for their management which are contrary.
to those held by the farmers concerned. This results in difficulties of implementation and a wholesale disregard of the established rules of operation.

d) Top-down planning is acceptable in those situations where it is perceived to generate material benefits in the form of funds for development projects which coincide with the target people's immediate needs.

The importance of this volume cannot be over-emphasized. The need for strategies that lead to a sustainable use of natural resources is of current global concern. Given the importance of livestock in the socio-economic fabric of the communal areas of Southern Africa, this book does well to highlight attempts to evolve appropriate strategies for a more effective management of common grazing regimes.

University of Zimbabwe

P. MAVIMA


Official policy makers consider commercial off-take in Zimbabwe's communal areas as unacceptably low, hence their concern to formulate a national policy to improve the situation. Environmental scientists, on the other hand, view current stocking levels as excessive, leading to overgrazing and land degradation. Fenced-off grazing areas (paddocks) have been established in an attempt to solve both problems. However, some of the contributors to this book cast doubts on the feasibility of both commercial livestock production and the promotion of conservation through the use of paddocks in the communal areas.

The need for a national policy for enhanced commercial livestock production in the communal areas is based on an assumption that commercial livestock production is desired by the farmers concerned but is currently constrained, among other things, by inadequate grazing. Contrary to that assumption, research findings presented in this volume assert that commercial livestock production is not a dominant objective among farmers in the communal areas. Livestock, especially cattle, are valued more for their role in providing intermediate goods such as draught power and manure for crop production and, albeit at very low levels, milk and meat for local consumption or sale. Livestock also has socio-cultural purposes, especially in settling marriage deals, and cattle are very important for religious purposes. Hence ownership of livestock is of great economic and cultural importance as it confers power, authority and social status. Parenthetically, those households or families that do not own livestock have to adopt a variety of strategies, such as hiring, exchanging cattle for field work or arranging work parties (nhimbe), to ensure access to the draught power of cattle (p. 267). The motivation among farmers in the
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 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.

University of Zimbabwe

I. Pikirayi

Making Music is a teachers' handbook intended as a source of information for those Zimbabwean music teachers both at primary and secondary levels who want to make their music lessons constructive, practical, informative, interesting and relevant to young Zimbabweans.

Although the focus of the book is on instruments (in particular those instruments which are indigenous to Zimbabwe) and their construction, this information is placed in its social and historical context.

A prefatory glossary clarifies technical words used in the main body of the text and two appendices provide information in concentrated form on the science of sound and the reading of the tablatures used in the book. There are extensive notes at the end of each chapter, acknowledgements to both researchers and performers and a bibliography, all of which give teachers ample opportunity to check the accuracy of the information and to further their own research.

The strength of the book lies in its thoroughness and attention to detail, which is understandable when one considers the author's background in science education. With reference to mbira, for example, there is a full description, with line drawings and measurements, of how to make a karimba; there are descriptions of all the major mbira (and some minor ones) found in Zimbabwe; playing techniques for each type of karimba and the social uses of its music. This approach is followed for each of the major instruments.

The different ethnic groups in Zimbabwe are given balanced representation. It is surprising how many Ndebele names the author has unearthed — especially as Ndebele traditions are largely vocal and the focus of the book is on instruments. Every attempt has been made to find terms in as many languages as possible for each instrument and for the materials used in constructing them. In addition to the Shona and Ndebele terms, Tonga, N’dau, Sena, Zulu, Kalanga and Chopi names also appear.

The book has some weaknesses. The editing is often poor; the typographical errors and inconsistencies in the book are numerous. The printing of the text and line drawings is clear but the photographs appear grey and indistinct; for example, on page 66 the string in the chipendani picture is hardly visible. The overall standard of the photography is adequate but some pictures lack style and personality and these cheapen the appearance of the book. The presentation of the pulse-line transcriptions is particularly poor. Often a transcription finishes half way down the page and the rest of the page is filled with empty staves. In the chromatic scale on page 178, the accidentals are incorrectly written and there is no clef.

The coverage of the various chapters is uneven. The author seems to realize that in many areas her book may be almost the only suitable source material available and so she tries to cover every angle relevant to the subject.

As regards language and style, there is evidence that the author has had difficulty in deciding at what level to pitch the tone of the book. For
example, the language in chapter three is rather simplistic, that in chapter eight is suitable for a general adult readership, while the appendix on sound is complex and technical. This is the greatest problem with the book: its approach to its readership. It is meant as a guide to all music teachers in Zimbabwe but the level of knowledge among music teachers in this country differs greatly from school to school. In one institution, the music teacher may have a thorough grasp of Western music and is simply looking for a source book to provide detail relevant to the Zimbabwean context; in another school, the teacher may have a detailed knowledge of African music but have had little or no formal training in the subject. However, if there are areas in the book which are difficult to follow, one should remember that the book is meant as a complement to working with musicians who would describe and explain their work and perhaps provide assistance with the building of instruments.

But, all things considered, it is a pleasure to have, at last, a comprehensive, well-researched, scientifically accurate resource book on an important aspect of Zimbabwean music which is of practical use for most music courses in this country. Even so, we still need many more books like it.

*Kunzwana Trust*

K. A. GODDARD


This book is the result of a project on Religious Education carried out jointly by the University of Zimbabwe and the University of Utrecht over a period of seven years and is the last of a series of three publications issued by the project. It is intended to be a resource book in the hitherto neglected area of African Traditional Religions for use by teachers of Religious Education. This is in keeping with the avowed intent of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Education and Culture to adopt a multi-faith approach to religious studies. This book does not set out to be a text book but rather to serve as a resource book with a genuine multi-faith approach.

The editors contend that African Traditional Religions constitute the appropriate context against which other religions should be studied if religious concepts are to be communicated meaningfully to the people of Zimbabwe. To date, despite government policy that all Religious Education curricula adopt a multi-faith approach, the curricula remain, in fact, basically Christian in content. One of the reasons for this is almost certainly the lack of any other type of material available to teachers and curriculum development officers. The contention of the editors of this book that African Traditional Religions should form the background for the study of other faiths is 'a challenge to the churches' who, understandably, have tended to view multi-faith issues against a Christian background. I would also add that the editors’ contention is a challenge to those possessing the
requisite knowledge to provide, in an accessible form, the materials needed for the recommended change. This book is a beginning: it is the first time relevant materials on African Traditional Religions have been made available to teachers of Religious Education in this country.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One is entitled 'Towards a multi-faith approach in religious education' and is composed of three chapters by different authors, and each of whom was involved in the project. The first chapter on 'African traditional religions in the religious history of humankind' provides a broad overview of the topic and forms a useful framework for multi-faith studies. The next chapter, 'African religions in religious education', is followed by 'Some general guidelines on teaching African traditional religions in religious education'. Part Two explores three important themes from African traditional religions — the ancestors, spirit possession, and healing — and focuses on practices found in Zimbabwe. Each chapter in Part Two presents a theoretical framework, case studies and gives the reader 'didactical guidelines'.

Teachers may, however, find this work disappointingly meagre as a resource book. Although extensive bibliographies are given (24 pages in all), much of this material is to be found in journals which are inaccessible to teachers in Zimbabwe. There is a certain amount of unnecessary repetition (particularly in chapters three and four). There is no index. This omission would have been less troublesome if the chapters in Part One had been given sub-headings as is the case with those in Part Two. As Chapter Two deals with important topics for teachers and pupils in the upper classes of secondary school it should have included 'didactic guidelines' which, together with the case studies, are most helpful in Part Two of the book. More case studies would have improved the book.

Despite these inadequacies this book should be very useful in theological colleges and teachers' colleges and should be most helpful to teachers of Religious Education in the upper classes of secondary schools as well as for ministers of religion throughout Zimbabwe. I hope that the University of Zimbabwe will produce more material in this important area.

JOYCE CHILDS


This volume comprises extracts from a seminar in Uppsala in 1989. Taking part were politicians, churchmen and scholars from Southern Africa, and several scholars from northern Europe. The resulting volume is mixed in quality and varied in scope.

The volume starts with a politician talking about churches, and several church people talking about politics. The scenarios presented in this section have, by and large, been overtaken by events in South Africa, and provide material for academic analysis rather than comprising such analyses themselves. Included among these contributions is a review of
the role of churches in Namibia by J. Chipenda, a churchman, which points out the racial cleavages within churches and the way in which some religious leaders side with the oppressed. There is also a six-page paper by an economist summarizing the economics of the region.

There are four, more scholarly, papers on South Africa, including a broad survey of Islam in Southern Africa by E. Mandivenga, and a useful review by P. Frostin of liberation theology applied to South Africa and the ‘Black Theology’ movement. O. Gustafsson presents evidence of the right-wing political activities of the RHEMA Bible Church. M. Schoeffeleers presents a substantial and original discussion of the relationship between healing and political acquiescence in African Independent Churches, and indicates a dialectic between religious healing and critical politics.

Four papers follow under the heading ‘Lessons from Zimbabwe’, although only Hallencreutz (‘Church and state in Zimbabwe and South Africa’) tries to make explicit the lessons South Africa may learn from Zimbabwe’s experience. P. Gundani’s discussion of the mobilization of Catholic Youth in Zimbabwe and A.C. Ongaro’s discussion of the role of churches in the development market are useful pieces in themselves, but bear little relationship to the rest of the volume.

Also included in the volume are two studies of the nineteenth century: one of Bishop Colenso in Natal and the other of Catholics and Protestants in Mozambique, both of which have been previously published at greater length elsewhere. The concluding remarks are brief and refer unhelpfully to several papers which are not presented in the volume.

There is no index. There are eight pages of photographs taken at the seminar.

Overall, the volume contains some useful pieces on diverse topics, but does not comprise compulsory reading.

University of Zimbabwe

M. F. C. Bourdillon