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## **An Evaluation of the Critical Economic Resources of Great Zimbabwe, 1200 -1500 AD: A Preliminary Ethno-botanical Survey of Edible Wild Fruits**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Great Zimbabwe is an archaeological site with the remains of large dry stone buildings built and occupied by a Shona ruling elite between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The stone walls crown the summit of a granite hill, the Zimbabwe Hill, rising 100 m above the adjacent valley. The ruin field spreads into the valley to the south covering some 250 hectares of land. The dry stonework forms enclosures which screened dwelling houses. It also retained platforms upon which houses were built. The stone buildings formed the core of the Great Zimbabwe settlement which otherwise was quite extensive. Presently 720 hectares is protected.

The spatial extent of Great Zimbabwe is clear testimony to the fact that during its time it was the largest settlement in Sub-Saharan Africa. The stone building tradition was practised mainly on the plateau between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers (what is now the modern state of Zimbabwe) where more than two hundred and fifty sites are known to exist. A few more sites are found in parts of South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana which border on Zimbabwe (Figure 7.1).

Archaeological explorations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century yielded a large body of