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## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE MAFIA ARCHIPELAGO, TANZANIA: NEW EVIDENCE FOR NEOLITHIC TRADE LINKS

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### INTRODUCTION

The Mafia archipelago (Fig. 5.1) is located on the central coast of Tanzania. The main island is crossed by grid lines 7° 8' South and 39° 8' East and has several smaller islands surrounding it including Bwejuu, Jibondo, Chole and Juani. To the northeast, towards the mainland, about 40 km from Mafia, are two other smaller islands known as Koma and Kwale. The main island of Mafia is one of the largest islands on the coast of East Africa after Zanzibar and Pemba to the north and the four islands of Comores to the southwest. Together, these islands form the core of the Swahili cultural network dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD (see, Horton 1996; Radimilahy 1998; Chami 2002c). Pre-Swahili sites of the cultural tradition known elsewhere as Triangular Incised Ware (TIW) are also found in some parts of these islands dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD (see Horton 1996; Chami 1994).

The Tanzanian members of the Swedish Sida/SAREC funded research project (also with partial support from the British Institute in Eastern Africa) have conducted several archaeological expeditions on the island of Mafia as well as other smaller islands south and northeast of it. The archaeological reconnaissance of these islands began in 1995 and some of the results have already been published (Chami and Msemwa 1997a; Chami and Msemwa 1997b; Chami 1999). Further research was carried out on the archipelago in 2000 and 2001 (Chami 2000). The present report presents a summary of the archaeological research data that have been accumulated to date on these islands including the nearby areas of the Rufiji Delta and the island of Zanzibar. In addition, the report also provides the results of the latest work on Mafia to supplement the preliminary report (Chami 2000) cited above. The results of specialist analyses of some of the finds that were conducted by different experts are also presented.