

The Archaeology of Kifumangao Site: Rufiji Tanzania

Emmael Sasi Gibinagwe

Abstract

This paper is a report on recent archaeological research conducted in Kifumangao village in July 2009. Kifumangao is found in Mkuranga District, between Kisiju and Rufiji Delta along the coast of Tanzania. (Fig. 1). This is one of historical towns reported by German sources to have collapsed in the beginning of 20th century (Gwassa, 1969). Other towns include Mkwaja, Winde, Mbweni, Mbwanaji, Kisiju, Nyamisati and Msindaji. The aim of the research was to investigate the settlement of pre-German period at Kifumangao area. Previous archaeological researches in the coast of Tanzania have concentrated on early periods. The region's potential to yield information about post Portuguese period has been ignored. The results of surveys and excavations reveal that Kifumangao is a post Portuguese site and suggest contact with European world probably through trade.

Introduction and Background

This paper reports on exploratory field research conducted in Kifumangao village, Mkuranga district, Tanzania. The site was discovered during the 1996 archaeological surveys that were conducted by the African Archaeology Network Project (AAN) whose results were published in Chami (1997). The current researcher developed interest in further exploring the site through excavations in order to add knowledge to an on-going research on environmental change and its human contribution. In the 1990s, Chami, searching for sites that could provide light to the whole question of environmental change and its human contribution, conducted research between Kisiju and Rufiji. As a result of this survey work, several sites including pre-Islamic sites were found. One site was found near the mouth of Kifumangao river. The earliest occupation for the site was located on the northern bank. Very old sites potsherds, probably related to Early Iron Working (EIW) pottery tradition were found scattered on this site. At Kivinja area on the terrace facing the ancient shoreline, the surveys recorded a large EIW site. Other sites of different time periods including Late Stone (LSA) sites, were found south of Kivinja towards Msindaji village. One is LSA site, while another was dated between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The survey around Kikale also yielded one LSA site located near the old beach in the north east direction. Nyamisati which is south of Kifumangao was found to have some post 10th century AD sites spread over a large area.