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ARCHAEOLOGY OF UPPER RUFJI CATCHMENT

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Rufiji is the longest and biggest river with a large catchment area in Tanzania. It has also a large delta on the Indian Ocean so important for mangroves and fishing. Research that has been conducted around the delta has produced important archaeological finds that show that the coast of East Africa had trade links with the Roman Empire from as early as the second century AD (Chami and Msemwa 1996, Chami 1999). However, the archaeology of the area that lies between latitudes $8^{\circ} 00'$ - $9^{\circ} 35'$ S and longitude $34^{\circ} 40'$ - $36^{\circ} 00'$ E, here referred to as the Upper Rufiji catchment (Gulliver 1959:66), is poorly known. This is despite the fact that the area is well known for its rich fauna and flora and its high potential for hydropower development (Stronquist et al 1999). The famous Selous Game Reserve and the Udzungwa National Park partly fall within this geographical area.

The topography of Upper Rufiji catchment is very picturesque. With an altitude varying from as low as 300m to as high as 1500m above sea level, its climate varies from hot and humid at low altitude to cool and dry at higher altitude. Coupled with an annual precipitation of more than 1000mm, the area experiences reliable rainfall. The area is well drained with rivers such as Kihansi, Mpanga and Ruhudji which at their lower altitude join the Kilombero river, a major tributary of the Rufiji river (Fig. 5.1).

The drainage pattern and picturesque landscape of upper Rufiji catchment, characterized by mountain ranges, such as Udzungwa, water falls, caves and scenic low round hills with convex slopes is a result of long geological processes of faulting, tiding and weathering. Around Njombe and drained by Ruhudji river, we find such low round hills with convex slopes as a result of long geological processes of faulting, tiding and weathering. Another feature of this area are caves believed to have been formed as a result of reversed drainage pattern. Rivers in this area flowed to the west in the geological past instead of the present easterly flow.

In addition, a greater part of the land that lies below 1000m above sea level is covered with miombo save for the few areas such as Uhafiwa and Ukami in Kihansi, Mufindi District, where forests have been destroyed through agricultural activities (Msemwa 1996a).

Upper Rufiji catchment is important in many ways. First, the unique landscape characterized by beautiful rolling hills with convex slopes, expansive grasslands and an ideal cool climate,