

This study is an interrogation of the role of environment on settlement on the lower Tana. Data recovered was filtered through an interdisciplinary prism to show that there were a multiplicity of variables at play in the environmental matrix formation. The net process ultimately impacted on settlement configuration on the lower Tana. There were a number of research questions whose answers addressed the thrust of the research. An inquiry was undertaken on the impact of climatic variability through time, the impact of the changes in the subsistence base and the consequences of the El Niño phenomenon in the quest for settlement.

The research took recourse to various methodological approaches viz oral interviews, excavations and ethnoarchaeological approaches that were used in tandem with written sources. Excavation of the sites of Muryuwa Kae, Kijiuni and Chikamba was done with a discriminative approach in order to address environmental questions in relation to their settlements during the Holocene. The process resulted in the recovery of zoo archaeological material which included the remains of animals, insects, human, fish, and bird bones especially the former may sufficiently be used in explanation of the kind of environment the animals thrived in. This faunal material was also used in the interpretation of environmental variability over time. On the other hand palynological evidence was crucial for conclusions on the past vegetation and by implication past climate. In this connection pollen investigation executed in this research was crucial.

The study is about environmental variability and the capacity of man to meet the challenge of the change. The work was encased in the theoretical underpinning of cultural ecology. Aspects of systems theory and human ecology were useful in, their subsidiary support in the concretization of the theoretical thrust. This study has shown that while the role of the environment cannot be underestimated there were other factors at play when it came to the choice for areas for settlement in the Lower Tana .