

Ujamaa in the Kilombero Valley: Msolwa and Signali Villages as Symbols of a National Project, ca. 1967 – 1990s

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Abstract

In central southern Tanzania, the Kilombero Valley is a potential economic zone. Villagers in this area have witnessed the changing landscape of development efforts from colonial to postcolonial times. Kilombero's development story is one of government initiatives as well as local people's processes shaped by environmental and policy factors. This study explains how development was conceived, implemented, and impacted the valley's production and land use systems. We indicate that distinct circumstances resulted in different outcomes when Ujamaa was implemented. The paper uses the cases of Msolwa and Signali to show how the two communities stood out as success stories amid a larger concern about Ujamaa's ineffectiveness not only in the valley, but also in Tanzania as a whole. This research examines the dynamics of development initiatives in Msolwa and Signali villages using archival and oral sources.

Keywords: Rural transformation, *Ujamaa*, Land use, Kilombero Valley, Local Agency, Msolwa, Signali.

1.0 Introduction

The Kilombero valley's land use change is rooted in a long history of rural development molded by government policy and local participation. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, Tanzania and Kilombero in particular witnessed several approaches to development, with a particular focus on rural change. Soon after independence, the administration became overly focused on industrial growth, attracting investors before focusing on agricultural development. Despite the fact that this method did not work, the government's obligations were maintained. Frustrations with the country's early attempts at growth prompted the government to issue the Arusha Declaration in 1967, which served as a defining philosophy and guideline for Tanzania's development and enhancement of people's well-being. The administration pushed rural transformation based on the *Ujamaa* program, which was achieved through collectivization. *Ujamaa* brought together dispersed communities to boost agricultural production by introducing modern farming technologies and enlisting the help of extension officers or persons with similar abilities.¹ With land being publicly owned for the benefit of all, agriculture became the backbone of economic development and rural

¹ Cranford Pratt, *The Critical Phase in Tanzania 1965-1968, Nyerere and the Emergence of Socialist Strategy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 63

transformation.² Collectivised farming aimed to eliminate rising commercial agriculture, which was seen as imperialistic and exploitative at the time, characteristics that socialist beliefs did not condone. The postcolonial approach to development differed from one region to the next, as did the effects. Rural settlement in the past was centred on community settlements, with a strong emphasis on the agricultural sector to maintain food security, according to historical studies. Agriculture has been designated as a national initiative with the goal of transforming rural development and people's well-being by fostering collective and smallholder farming systems.

Yet, the government intervention on developing the rural people was not a new invention of the postcolonial period but a continuation of the colonial approaches though with varying policies. During the British era for example, state intervention in rural development included the 'grow more crops' campaign, tsetse fly reasserting programme, compulsory native concentration procedures and anti-erosion schemes just to mention a few of them.³ The Second

² Andrew Coulson, *Tanzania: A Political Economy*, 2ndEdn, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 174

³ Jamie Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway: How a Chinese Development Project Changed Lives and Livelihoods in Tanzania*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 20; N.N Luanda, "Rural Development in Colonial Tanganyika: An Overview", *Tanzania Zamani: A Journal of Historical Research and Writing*, Vol.1, No.2, (1992), 1.

World War effects on the economy⁴ that were characterized by shortage of food and edible oil forced Britain to encourage the establishment of large scale farming in the territory⁵ that culminated into opening up of the Kilombero valley because it was already spotted as a potential area.⁶ Peasants in the valley witnessed substantive efforts of the British colonial state to encourage production for example rubber in Kalunga forest area in Mang'ula, sugarcane and rice in Msolwa and Signali villages.⁷ Peasants in these villages had a sense of commercial farming and the benefits coming from it.

The development of agriculture in the Kilombero valley, which used modernization strategy as a result of *Ujamaa* in Tanzania managed to confront and manipulate more land in different ways and thus led to land use changes in the 1960s

⁴ Bonaventure Swai, "Tanganyika and the Great Depression 1929 - 1936", *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 9, No.1 (2), (1980), 197-198

⁵ D.P Bowels, "The Political Economy of Colonial Tanganyika 1939-1961" in Kaniki M. (ed.), *Tanganyika Under Colonial Rule* (London: Longman, 1979), 170; Joseph Kuzu Mabuga, "The Effects of Dissolving Cooperative Unions" on Cash Crop Production in Tanzania: The Case of Cotton Production in Musoma - District" (MA Dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam, 1988), 20

⁶ Monson, *Africa's Freedom*, 20; Jonathan Jackson, "'Off to the Sugar Valley': The Kilombero Settlement Scheme and 'Nyerere People', 1959-1969," *Journal of East African Studies*, Vol.15 (3), (2021), 505-526.

⁷ Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) Library Dodoma, 5/1008/15, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1971; Interview with Mzee Meza and Khamis Kaminuka at Signali, 27.10.2019; Nicholas Westcott, "The Impact of the Second World War on Tanganyika, 1939-49", in Killingray D, Rathbone R. (Eds.), *Africa and the Second World War*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), 191.

and 1980s.⁸ The changes in the newly created *Ujamaa* villages in general, among others, involved clearing of bushes and forests for agricultural development, which resulted in change of land use from shifting cultivation to communal cultivation.⁹ This paper examines these dynamics, and the impacts of *Ujamaa* programs on land use changes from the traditional systems to commercial landholdings in Msolwa and Signali villages. We indicate that there were continuities and change in the way development was modelled in the colonial and postcolonial periods. The two villages are used to demonstrate successful *Ujamaa* villages amidst narratives of failure that has taken a huge proportion in the *Ujamaa* literature. As a postcolonial historiography, the two villages demonstrate what independence meant to them in the context of social and economic aspects.

2.0 Contextualising the Valley

Kilombero valley comprises of the most fertile lands, which attracts diverse economic activities with ethnic composition from different parts of Tanzania. Its geography makes it convenient for agricultural activities specifically for food crops dominated by rice and cash crops dominated by cotton and sugar cane. ¹⁰ The mixture of wetlands, lowlands,

⁸ Monson, *Africa's Freedom*, 72-83.

⁹ Yusufu Q. Lawi, "Tanzania's Operation Vijiji and Local Ecological Consciousness: The Case of Eastern Iraqwland, 1974 - 1976", *Journal of African History* 48, (2007), 69 - 93.

¹⁰ United Republic of Tanzania, hereafter URT, Morogoro Regional Planning Office Report, 1995

woodlands, agricultural lands, and closed canopy forests makes agricultural activities a primary consideration on the list of people's livelihood options. In addition to agricultural potentials, Kilombero district lays along the valley, which forms part of the Rufiji River basin. This is the largest river basin that makes up the largest seasonally freshwater lowland flood plain in East Africa and is attractive for permanent settlement.¹¹ These qualities have made the land so fragile and activities dynamic responding to changing needs and opportunities in both the colonial and postcolonial periods.

Central to cultivation, peasants have used formal and informal ways to obtain land and sustain it through continuous use. Inheritance, bush clearance and purchase inform the moral economy of peasant's livelihoods and promote farming activities commercially and in subsistence forms.¹² Market opportunities in the valley since the colonial days to the early independence days necessitated transitions from subsistence to commercial farming and the reverse when market flows became unpredictable. Rice and sugarcane switched in turns in the fields in response to the

¹¹ John Connors, "Agricultural Development, Land change and Livelihood in Tanzania's Kilombero Valley" (PhD Dissertation, Arizona State University, 2015)

¹² Interview with Hamis Meza and Khamis Kaminuka at Signali, 27.10.2019; Rebecca Smalley et al, "The Role of State and Foreign Capital in Agricultural Commercialization: The Case of Sugarcane in Kilombero Valley," Working Paper 106, PLAAS, (2014), 20.

advantages presented and government interventions to modernize the rural economy.¹³

The post-colonial party and government leaders tried different strategies to modernize the peasantry sector with success and failures at the same time. For example, emphasis on small-scale farming proved to be yielding less than expected while large-scale investment and labour intensification seemed to be not only expensive but also challenging to supervise. Communal approach adopted by the *Ujamaa* policy encouraged rural people to join collective agriculture regardless of its productivity for development of the rural sector.¹⁴ Although we have sufficient evidence to suggest that unlike other areas where *Ujamaa* was implemented with little success in Tanzania while the villages of Msolwa and Signali succeeded with this exercise, still, it was not a smooth road. In its early days, things like shortage of food and labour to the established villages were common.¹⁵ Coupled with other challenges like starting life in

¹³ National Records Centre (NRC), Dodoma, 450/CCU/S100/III, *Ujamaa Villages General, 1972-1973*; Monson, *Africa's Freedom*, 2

¹⁴ NRC, Dodoma, Semina ya Mkuu wa Wilaya na Wenyeviti TANU Kuhusu Siasa ni Kilimo na Uuzaji wa Mazao katika Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kilombero, 08.08.1972, 4; Nyerere, *The Arusha Declaration Ten Years After*, (Tanzania: Government Printers, 1977), 2; Interview with Abdullah Mpoka at Mkamba, 3.11.2019.

¹⁵ Interview with Njakamoto and Abdullah Mpoka at Msolwa Ujamaa, 2.11.2019; Deborah Bryceson, "Peasant Commodity in Post-Colonial Tanzania", *African Affairs*, 81 (25), (1982), 547-567; Monsoon, *Africa's Freedom*, 77; Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa*, 96; Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s* (Dar es Salaam, 2011), 6.

new environments, forging new social networks and institutions, societies in these villages had a daunting start only their persistency paid later. It took commitment and sacrifices to arrive at what remains as a notable example of an exercise that seem to have passed like a sweeping thunder in the cloud of hopes and expectations of a young nation.

During the difficulty decade of Tanzania's economy, 1970s and 1980s rural mobilisation was considered a solution for self-sufficiency. Government intervention in the supervision of food and cash crops production and marketing told a story of the struggles with internal and external pressures on the economy. Internally, ideological fight within the context of the cold war politics and the identity that Julius Nyerere had established defined and juxtaposed Tanzania's economic ideals within a globally challenging environment. Externally, pressures related to economic policies were also mounting to persuade and sometimes force internal policy changes. It was a period marked by intensive implementation of *Ujamaa* projects and it was during this period also where forced villagisation came about.¹⁶ Production of both food and

¹⁶ NRC, Dodoma, 450/CCU/S100/III, *Ujamaa Villages General, 1972-1973*; Lawi, "Tanzania's Operation", 69 – 93; Maxmillian Chuhila, "To plan is to choose': Navigating Nyerere's Economic and Political Thoughts, 1961-1980s" in Artwell Nhemachena and Tapiwa V. Warikandwa (Eds.), *From African Peer Review Mechanisms to African Queer Review Mechanisms? Robert Mugabe, Empire and Decolonization of African Orifices* (Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2019), 387-404; Helge Kjekshus, "The Tanzanian Villagisation Policy: Implementational Lessons and Ecological

commercial crops was given impetus in order to boost the economy. While food crops subsidised importation of food, commercial crops added into the growing demand of foreign exchange highly needed at the time.

In areas like the Kilombero valley, production expanded in anticipation of the available demand for agricultural produces. This motivated peasants to open up more land for farming of the most wanted crops. The interview from Signali village attests that 'we changed our farms for commercial farming. In Msolwa they produced sugarcane while in Signali we produced rice'.¹⁷ This reveals the importance accorded to environmental provisions in response to market opportunities available. It was out of the local people and governments' investment in agriculture in Msolwa that makes it the most successful symbol of *Ujamaa* projects in Tanzania. Even when, *Ujamaa* declined after 1985, Msolwa continued with communal activities that have made it to stand out as an icon of *Ujamaa* in the whole of Kilombero and Tanzania at large.¹⁸ It remains a typical

Dimensions", *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 11, no. 2, (1977), 269-282.

¹⁷ Interview with Mzee Meza at Signali Village, Abdullah Mpoka at Kidatu, 24.10.2019.

¹⁸ CCM Library, Dodoma, File No, 100/A5, Vijiji Vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru; NRC, Dodoma, File No. 764, Msolwa Farmers, 1961-64; NRC, Dodoma, File. No, 1737, Msolwa Growers Cooperative Ltd, 1973; NRC, Dodoma, File. D.40/s, Uchaguzi wa Vijiji vya Mfano na Maendeleo Wilayani, 1984; NRC, Dodoma, File. UMC/16/44, Muhtasari wa Mkutano wa Maafisa Ujamaa na Ushirika Mkoa wa Morogoro, Feb,

Ujamaa village in the 21st century where the societies of Tanzania have completely forgotten what it means by living in *Ujamaa* values.

Local articulations from Msolwa and Signali indicate that people's participation in rural development was more voluntary and the response to government interventions reflected their readiness. Villagers were self-motivated into cash crop production given that reliable market existed. Production of sugarcane followed the expansion of the Kilombero Sugar Company Limited (KSCL) in the 1970s, which attracted more out-growers into the sugarcane industry. Commercial farming improved peasant's wellbeing and attracted more of them into farming. In the end, the government had little to do to motivate them. Contrary to the success stories, in the villages where market systems were unpredictable, cash crop farming activities lagged behind and the *Ujamaa* exercise was seen as a barrier to progress.¹⁹ For example, with the nationalisation of land, all the settlement schemes were banned following the launch of *Ujamaa* in villages.

Unlike other areas in Tanzania such as Songea, Handeni and Ismani, *Ujamaa* in Msolwa was implemented within the

1979; Interviews with Ali Mkapila at Signali Village, 22.10.2019 and Mzee Mmari at Kidatu, 4.11.2019.

¹⁹ UCM/16/44 Ofisi ya Mkuu wa Mkoa, Muhtasari wa Mkutano wa Maafisa *Ujamaa* na Ushirika Mkoa wa Morogoro, 1982; interview with Mzee Meza at Signali and Abdullah Mpoka at Nkamba, 10.11.2019

already established patterns. In areas where new structures were created, the experiences of the exercise is quite different to that demonstrated in Msolwa and Signali villages.²⁰ Evidence further indicates that land dispossession targeted those who owned large plots of land in favour of communal farming. For example, the current location of Msolwa village was acquired from a former TANU member by the name Raju Sadru.²¹ Julius Nyerere under *Ujamaa* preferred communal activities than privately owned firms whether small or large enterprises. From the land that Raju Sadru gave, after allocation of the village and village farms, the other part was portioned and given to smallholder peasants and more than four hundred hectares became under the Kilombero Sugar Company in 1974. This made villages and cooperatives centres of economic production and rural transformation.²²

After the independence of Tanzania, the government and TANU party aimed at resettling five hundred urban people into the valley to clear land and engage them in farming

²⁰ See for example, Maximillian Julius Chuhila, "Maize Farming and Environmental Change in Iringa District: The Case of Ismani, 1940s-2010s", (MA Dissertation, University of Dar es Salaam, 2013); Herbert Ndomba, "Ruvuma Development Association and Ujamaa in Songea District, 1960s- 1990s" (MA Dissertation, University of Dar es salaam, 2014), 116.

²¹ Interview with Abdullah Mpoka and Alex at Kidatu, 22.10.2019, and Lutengano Mwambona, 08.11.2019 at Msolwa Ujamaa.

²² Julius Nyerere, *Socialism and Rural Development*, (Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press, 1976)

activities.²³ If successful this would be a good pilot scheme to inform the development discourse of a postcolonial nation. Campaigns were used to attract and push urban dwellers into the rural areas for agricultural activities especially to participate in smallholder sugarcane production for the Kilombero Sugar Company.²⁴ In order to encourage more cultivators, the government provided incentives in terms of farm inputs and services on credit to boost agricultural production.²⁵ Although before the implementation of the policy communities had their own way of production, little evidence indicates whether the pre-*Ujamaa* move in the valley was successful. Settlements remained scattered and production based on individual initiatives.²⁶

After the introduction of *Ujamaa* villagisation in 1973, peasants participated in its implementation at several sites along the road from Kidatu towards the eastern part of Ifakara at the existing population centres and adjacent

²³ NRC, Dodoma, 450/CCU/S100/III, *Ujamaa Villages General, 1972-1973*; NRC, Dodoma, 548/R.20/1 *Village Settlement Republic of Tanzania 1963-1965*, 1; Coulson, *Tanzania*, 22.

²⁴ Chama Cha Mapinduzi, "Tathmini ya Azimio la Arusha, 1967- 1987" (1987), 1-2; Monsoon, *Africa's Freedom*, 74; Kato Futoshi, *Development of Major Rice Cultivation area in the Kilombero Valley, Tanzania*, African studies Monograph, (2007), 3-18.

²⁵ E.L.M. Sprenger, *Sugarcane Outgrowers and Kilombero Sugar Company in Tanzania*. (Nijmegen: Third World Centre, 1989)

²⁶ Jonathan Jackson, "'Off to Sugar Valley': the Kilombero Settlement Scheme and 'Nyerere's People', 1959-69," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 15, no. 3 (2021), 505-526.

cultivated lands.²⁷ The party and the government were determined and convinced that using existing population centres would make the implementation of *Ujamaa* projects less stressful. In the villages of Msolwa and Signali it was easy to introduce *Ujamaa* because people were already used to the environment following the establishment of the villages before *Ujamaa* became a compulsory – countrywide undertaking. Most of the population that participated in the programme came from migrant railway workers who settled after construction of the railway was completed. *Ujamaa* policy converted the settlement scheme and railway construction camps into new structures of the rural economy.

3.0 Ujamaa in the Kilombero Valley, 1960s – 1970s

In 1962, Tanzania launched the first postcolonial land settlement program with targets to improve settlement and agricultural patterns. Therefore, what came during *Ujamaa* resettlements was not new but another turn of rural mobilization strategy for development.²⁸ In his speech before the parliament on 10th December 1962, President Nyerere mentioned the importance to live in village communities. He did this in anticipation of cooperation of smallholder farmers

²⁷ CCM Library Dodoma, 5/1008/15, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1971; interview with Khamis Kaminuka and Khamis Meza at Signali, 27.10.2019; Jacob Abel, *Foreign Aid in Agriculture: Introducing Israel's Land Settlement Scheme to Tanzania*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 188.

in order to increase productivity.²⁹ After this call from the president, by 1965 there were already twenty-three established settlements with a total of 3,400 families as a pilot scheme countrywide.³⁰ This was an indication of what was expected next and what was coming in the 1970s. More than ten years later after the president's call, more than eighty per cent of people lived in established villages as *Ujamaa* development communities countrywide. Morogoro region had 397 such villages in Kilombero, Kilosa, Mahenge Ulanga and Morogoro Districts by March 1973 with a population of 123,256 that made it on top of the regions with *Ujamaa* development.³¹ In the Kilombero valley, Msolwa and Signali were the first established villages that got the advantage because of the main road from Kidatu to Ifakara, the KSCS plantations and the railway construction camps. Village communities dealt with subsistence farming and in other areas growing of sugarcane became common due to market forces in place.³²

²⁹ CCM Library Dodoma, *Nyerere's Speech*, December 1962

³⁰ See '476 Ujamaa villages established - Kisumu', *The Nationalist*, 15.07.1969; Kikula, *Policy*, 21.

³¹ Ofisi ya Waziri Mkuu na Makamu wa Pili wa Raisi, *Maendeleo ya Vijiji*, (Dodoma: Idara ya Ujamaa na Ushirika Sehemu ya Maendeleo ya Siasa na Utafiti), Juni, 1975

³² CCM Library Dodoma, 5/1008/15, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1971; see also, Baum, "Land use in the Kilombero Valley: From Shifting Cultivation Towards Permanent Farming," in H. Rutenberg (ed), *Smallholder Farming and Smallholder Development in Tanzania: Ten case studies* (Munich: Weltforum Verlag), 1968, 23-24.

Farming in the villages of the Kilombero valley went on both fertile and unfertile lands, dry and irrigated areas to sustain the increasing number of people. The demographic data from National census reports and other sources showed parallel expansion of population and settlement during *Ujamaa* especially to those villages along TAZARA corridor from 1978. Population levels grew at an accelerated pace in some areas after 1988. For example, Signali village in Kiberege ward grew at an annual rate of 5.35 per cent while the general rate in Tanzania was 2.8 per cent. Other areas such as Kibaoni grew by 4.37 per cent, Idete 5.9 per cent and Msagati ward grew by 1.53 per cent. The rate of population growth during *Ujamaa* was 4.7 per cent from 1978 to 1988.³³ Cultivation expanded to the Miombo forest and continued to the vicinity of the road where other land uses existed.³⁴ Conversion of this land for agriculture and settlement increased pressure on land in the Kilombero valley. It opened up opportunities for more migrants to come and start new farms.

Farmers in this area practiced individualized, shifting cultivation, which combined fallow with traditional

³³ URT, National census Report, 1978 and 1988, Kilombero District File D.40/2/Vol.2.

³⁴ NRC, Ofisi ya Waziri Mkuu na Makamu wa Pili wa Raisi, *Maendeleo ya Vijiji*, (Dodoma: Idara ya Ujamaa na Ushirika Sehemu ya Maendeleo ya Siasa na Utafiti), Juni, 1975; Tanzania National Archives (TNA), Morogoro/ Kilosa District Book; Andrew Coulson, "A Simplified Political Economy of Tanzania," ERB Paper, 74.9, UDSM, (1974), 1-10.

irrigation, which gradually gave way to permanent farming and settlement. These developments were aided by the Agriculture Credit Agency that was established by the government to provide loans and credits to peasants.³⁵ The intensity of land use and productivity depended on the farm time devoted by peasants and not necessarily the fertility of the soil. Time spent well in planting and weeding justified how much was to be harvested in the end of the season. Famous among other crops in the valley was cassava that was grown in areas where rice and sugarcane could not grow. On economic scales, growing different crops on different lands was an intensive land use as all potential arable land was under cultivation. Notably, such farming went without interference as no crop could grow in another area where a different crop sustained. Competition on land was therefore not between agricultural crops but between agriculture and other land uses such as conservation and pastoralism.³⁶

Despite the mixed land use functions in the Kilombero valley as conservation, pastoralism, and arable land, expansion of farming activities as central to rural modernisation continued. Challenging the agricultural potential of the valley commonly known as one of the grain-baskets of Tanzania is the unpredictable infrastructure networks

³⁵ TNA, 2/Ar. F1/30: Correspondence General

³⁶ CCM Archives, Dodoma, Box 5, File 1008/14, “Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru”

especially during the rain season.³⁷ Apart from the infrastructure constraints the Kilombero valley stood as an important agricultural zone in Tanzania. Land use experienced changes during *Ujamaa* period because farmers were persuaded to embark on intensive communal farming rather than individual farming. The target was each village to have a communal farmland “*Mfumaki*” – *Mfuko wa Maendeleo Kijijini* – where commercial crops grew. The slogan was “Living together, working together for the benefit of all that aimed at eliminating individual interests”.³⁸ This was the implementation of the collectivisation strategy adopted as a framework of villagisation effort.

Under “*Mashamba ya Vijiji or Mfumaki*”, villagers were required to work on communal farms and share the proceeds according to what they contributed in production.³⁹ *Mfumaki farms* were created along the railway and farmers participated to generate income for the village development fund.⁴⁰ The operation-involved areas that already had concentrations of population and adjacent cultivated rice and sugarcane fields mostly using migrant labourers from

³⁷ Interview with Abdullah Mpoka at Kidatu, 22.10.2019, and Lutengano Mwambona, 08.11.2019.

³⁸ NRC, Dodoma, S/100/2/79, Ex- Settlement Schemes Report, Commissioner for Cooperative Development Morogoro Region, July 1970; TNA, 550/A/1382/71/IS/I/329, *Wito wa Kuanza Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1971.

³⁹ NRC, Dodoma, 450/CCU/S100/III, *Ujamaa Villages General*, 1972-1973

⁴⁰ Interview with Abdullah Mpoka at Mkamba, 3.11.2019.

the railway construction camps.⁴¹ The result of communal work in Msolwa and Signali unlike other areas was a success story because production increased. This attitude was built on by Nyerere's vision, which put emphasis on working together for the benefit of all.⁴²

Again, the farmers were supposed to stay and produce along TAZARA in order to serve as first line of defence against sabotage.⁴³ The railway was constructed within an ideological struggle shaped by cold war politics where the Americans supported road construction and at the same time the Chinese from the East supported railway construction. Sabotage was an ideological speculation from mutual suspicion of American and Chinese supported projects as each represented a major bloc in the cold war. At the time when people were invited to settle along the railway, the land use patterns started to change because farmers were persuaded to embark on an intensive communal farming rather than individual farming.⁴⁴ Msolwa and Signali were suitable locations for rice and sugar cane production. Farmers participated fully in the *Ujamaa* programs, which resulted into land use changes from

⁴¹ TNA, 550/A/1382/71/IS/1/329, *Wito wa Kuanza Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1971

⁴² TNA, 967/82, also Nyerere, *Socialism and Rural Development*

⁴³ Monson, *Africa's Freedom Railway*, 74

⁴⁴ CCM Library Dodoma, 5/1008/15, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa*, also, interview with Mzee Khamis Kaminuka, Signali Village, 27.10.2019

shifting cultivation to permanent and communal kind of farming.⁴⁵

Although *Ujamaa* period was portrayed as difficult in people's lives in the country, in Msolwa *Ujamaa* and Signali villages it was a blessing. It was a turning point in the history of Msolwa and Signali in terms of crop production and livelihood supporting mechanisms.⁴⁶ For instance Sugarcane was cultivated marginally for household needs and little surplus for selling from the colonial period to 1960s.⁴⁷ With *Ujamaa* program sugar cane production increased to an average of 129,675 tons in 1975 from the 5,175 tons produced in 1967 in Msolwa village.⁴⁸ This increase was progressive year-by-year making the village a good example of *Ujamaa* efforts.

The major reason for this increase was people's commitment to work and that the government was prepared to play an active role in economic development through improvement in the agricultural sector. The agricultural policy interventions resulted into massive transformation of the rural sector from 1967 to 1980s. Again, Sugarcane production was especially important in the valley where mechanized

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Interview with Mwambona Lutengano and Alex at Kidatu, 30.10.2019

⁴⁷ NRC, Dodoma, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*, 1973-1975; Baum, *Land Use*, 1968, 25-26

⁴⁸ NRC, Dodoma, Agriculture, Food and Advisory Services Division, 16th July 1969-75

agriculture was proposed.⁴⁹ Government commitments to engage people in communal work and through provision of fertilizers; skills to farmers and equipment attracted many farmers to produce sugar cane in Msolwa village.⁵⁰ By emphasis on sugarcane production, the village became self-sufficient. Rice provided enough of the food they wanted and surplus rice was sold. At the same time, in the postcolonial period sugarcane was grown in a large scale for commercial purposes.

Nevertheless, this strategy began to record some failures especially when the government changed the political ideology from *Ujamaa* to government farms and then to *bega Kwa bega*. Through *bega Kwa bega* slogan, farmers were given individual two-acre parcels of farming plots where they spent too much time on them while neglecting the communally owned farmlands.⁵¹ Additionally, living and working together especially to the locals was fundamental notwithstanding the productivity of such effort. There are wide-ranging narratives of the *Ujamaa* exercise in some parts of the valley. Summarized in brief, its organization was labour intensive while its output unrelated to the investment done. Oral articulations put it that, had it been not a

⁴⁹ Monson, *Africa's Freedom*, 22-23.

⁵⁰ TNA, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru*; interview with Khamis Kaminuka, Pascali Mkakala and Mzee Meza at Signali, 25.10.2019

⁵¹ NRC, *Dodoma, Semina ya Mkuu wa Wilaya na Wenyeviti TANU Kuhusu Siasa ni Kilimo na Uuzaji wa Mazao katika Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kilombero*, o8.o8.1972, 4.

compulsory project many would have deserted the villages or the exercise, as they did not like the *bega kwa bega* approach. The interview from Signali indicates;

Resettlement was compulsory for us to work in *Ujamaa* projects. We were all committed to work in our villages however, in some instances what we produced was not rewarding. Those who resisted living and working in collective villages were punished. It was difficult to work with strangers while leaving behind your family. Because of the difficulties in the new villages, some started to run away from them.⁵²

Still, such challenges were not strong enough to act as barriers to development projects like what was the case in other areas of Tanzania. While the exercise had a general failure in the valley, the experiences from Msolwa and Signali were different because the implementers of the policy were mostly migrants and ex-workers of TAZARA who accepted *Ujamaa* and implemented it energetically. Despite the failure of *Ujamaa* ideology national wide, people at Msolwa and Signali village practice *Ujamaa* values to date. For instance, the area of *Kidogobasi* there is a village farm that all members of the village work communally and the fruits of that labour is used for the development of the village. There were a number of rules in place from local village leaders or “*Mnyakigoda*” as regard to collective works and social

⁵² Interview with Mzee Khamis Kaminuka, Signali Village, 27.10.2019

welfare. Although the top-down authority to the later villagisation programme opposed this kind of authority where leadership was interpreted as something to empower⁵³ still the villages proved to be different because leaders were and are a part of the village and most importantly peasants themselves.⁵⁴ In case of sickness, these leaders made sure that the sick fellow was taken to the hospital and that the bills were settled by the village funds in case he could not pay by himself. In turn the villager has to pay back by working in the farm after recovery.

Implementation of the *Ujamaa* program in Msolwa and Signali promoted large-scale production of sugarcane and rice that led into clearance of large areas of land for farming in Msolwa and Signali while leaving much to be desired in other villages.⁵⁵ This was a big boost for agricultural development in the valley because the experience was different in other areas where *Ujamaa* was a stumbling block.⁵⁶ Although, some informants would point failure of *Ujamaa* in their villages, Msolwa's experience comes up as a success story from within the village or from people in other

⁵³ Gerrit Huizer, "The Ujamaa Programmes in Tanzania: New Forms of Rural Development," in *Studies of Comparative International Development*, Vol 8, No.2 (1973)5; also, Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 223-224

⁵⁴ Interviews with Abdullah Mpoka at Kidatu, 29.10.2019 and Pascal Mkakala at Signali, 29.10.2019.

⁵⁵ Monson, *Africa's Freedom*, 74-75, CCM Library Dodoma, 5/1008/15, *Vijiji vya Ujamaa*; interview with Mzee Meza, Mzee Kaminuka at Signali Village, 27.10.2019.

⁵⁶ See for example, Maxmillian Chuhila, "Agrarian Change and Rural Transformation in Isimani, ca. 1940-2010," *Utafiti* Vol.14(1), (2019), 1-22.

villages.⁵⁷ This means *Ujamaa* projects were not uniform. No generalized experiences on the failure or success but depended on mixed contributions of policy issues, the environment and people's feelings to part of the broader implementations.

For the case of success of *Ujamaa* in Msolwa and Signali than other villages in the valley was the high importance given to social activities that strengthened the feeling of togetherness among the villagers. For instance, village meetings were conducted and ended with a communal dinner, singing or dancing, the fact that kept villagers together as a kind of a one big family.⁵⁸ Such events agreed with the spirit of Nyerere on family-hood as the basis of African socialism. The spirit of communal farming in these villages was important for promoting production activities. Before 1960s, the whole area was heavily forested and wild animals threatened agricultural production. With *Ujamaa*, people especially migrant labourers who ended their employment with TAZARA construction and decided to settle in the valley lived together in groups, and the control over wild animals towards destruction of crops was closely maintained and brought high yield in return.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Interview with Paskali Mwingizi at Sanje village, 20.10.2019

⁵⁸ Interview with Mzee Meza and Hamis Kaminuka at Signali village, 27.10.2019; see also NRC, Dodoma, File. UMC/16/44, Muhtasari wa Mkutano wa Maafisa Ujamaa na Ushirika Mkoa wa Morogoro, Feb, 1979

⁵⁹ Interview with Mzee Khamis, Kaminuka at Signali Village, 27.10.2019

Yet, in other areas of the country production was contrary to what was observed in Msolwa and Signali. For instance, in Handeni District, the average of communal land for cultivation was only 0.3 acres during 1973 to 1974, which resulted into poor produces. Weak spirit of family-hood and inability of the villagers to generate reasonable amount of money from *Ujamaa* production accounted for the varied success of the programmes.⁶⁰ As of this, it seems, what determined success were not the plans imposed from above. Through the example we get from Msolwa and Signali, people's committed participation influenced success and failures. Besides, unlike other *Ujamaa* villages in the valley such as Chita and Itete the spirit of *Ujamaa* in Msolwa and Signali was stronger because most people who participated in the program were migrants and former construction workers who decided to settle and join *Ujamaa*. Government intervention added value to the already spirited peasants and did not come as a newly imposed system of production and living.⁶¹

During harvests peasants in Msolwa and Signali shared their experience on what made them successful to other neighbouring villages as a mechanism to catalyse them to

⁶⁰ Zaki Ergas, "Why Did the Ujamaa Village Policy Fail: Towards a Global Analysis", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 18, no. 3 (1980), 387-410

⁶¹ See 'Msolwa Morogoro's Best village', *Daily News*, 17.05.1978; 'Juhudi za Msolwa Kuelekea Ujamaa', *Uhuru*, 17.02.1982.

produce collectively.⁶² Cooperative unions in Msolwa and Signali played pivotal role to enhance connection between farmers along the main road from Kidatu to Ifakara because of the advantages of communication networks, that is the road and railway linking them, production areas and the market.⁶³ A branch of railway, which was constructed from Kilosa on the central line to Mikumi for the purpose of transporting sugar from KSCL, was likewise important to transport other crops. Railway as a cheap means of transport encouraged more farming through construction of irrigation schemes and reliability of cheap transport for sugarcane and rice produced in Msolwa and Signali villages.⁶⁴ Msolwa and Signali were and even today have been recognized nationally as good examples of *Ujamaa* villages. Particularly, the history in Msolwa indicates that until recently it has retained its structural components of *Ujamaa*.⁶⁵

This was catalysed by the fertile flood plains of Ruembe River and the eastern edge of Udzungwa mountains with rich landscapes of green fields suitable for agricultural

⁶² Interviews with Mzee Meza at Signali village 29.10.2019 and Abdullah Mpoka at Kidatu, 08.11.2019

⁶³ NRC, Dodoma, File no.125. Pub.1934, Kilombero Ujamaa Cooperative society, 1971; Interviews with Aloyce Nguwani at Signali, 18.10.2019 and Alfa Hekeno at Signali, 2.11.2019

⁶⁴ NRC, Dodoma, File no.580.ACCS/A, Maendeleo ya Vijiji vya Ujamaa Tanzania Bara

⁶⁵ NRC, Dodoma, Ofisi ya Mkurugenzi Wilaya, Taarifa ya Miaka Hamsini ya Uhuru, Halimashauri ya Wilaya ya Kilombero, 2011, 39-40; interview with Innocent Magesa (Acting DAS) – Kilombero District Council, 03.10.2019

development played a decisive contribution towards development in the valley.⁶⁶ Unlike other areas, Msolwa and Signali had another added advantage of labour that comprised of migrants from within and outside the valley. Majority of the new farmers were those who had migrated into the valley for wage labour and later became interested to become peasants in the area. In the end, they developed a pattern of peasant wageworkers and traders living closer to the railway.⁶⁷ The TAZARA railway workers who had ended their employment were joined by *Ujamaa* arrivals and decided to stay, clear more land and settle as farmers, a situation that resulted into high sugarcane production.⁶⁸

Unlike the nationalization of private enterprises in other parts of Tanzania in the 1960s, large-scale sugar farming was encouraged on private basis in Kilombero. Sugarcane farming gained more recognition as the socialist government was aiming for self-sufficiency in sugar and was planning to build the second plant of the KSCL (K2 plant) in support of its Second Five-Year Plan and the establishment of the Sugar Development Corporation.⁶⁹ Following the growing importance of sugar in the country, farmers in this area grew

⁶⁶Interview with VEO at Kidatu, 22.10.2019; TNA, A/1382/71/IS/1/329, *Wito wa Wito wa Kuanza Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru, 1971*

⁶⁷ TNA, A/1382/71/IS/1/329, *Wito wa Kuanza Vijiji vya Ujamaa Kando ya Reli ya Uhuru, 1971*

⁶⁸ TNA, 550/A/1239/71IS/I.379, *Habari Kutoka Mkoani Morogoro: Reli ya TAZARA Mali Yetu, 1971*

⁶⁹ URT, *First Five-Year Development Plan, 1964-1969* (Dar es Salaam; Government Printers, 1964).

more sugarcane to supply to KSCL for sugar production. This was made possible because the area had the advantage of communication networks both roadway and railway for the transportation of goods and services. Nonetheless, this situation was reversed in 1980s with the adoption of Structural Adjustment Policies, which weakened *Ujamaa*.⁷⁰

Msolwa Ujamaa and Signali villages are better off economically than any other villages in the Kilombero valley. There are two primary and two secondary schools at each village that were built by the villagers in the 1970s and they still exist. While Tanzania had initiated country campaigns for the establishment of ward secondary schools, these two villages already had two secondary schools, which are still maintained by the villagers. This success was in fact because the villages maintained the *Ujamaa* spirit.⁷¹ At the same time, while we have experience from other parts of Tanzania where villagers contribute to school development, in Msolwa village the money for such contributions come straight from shared income accrued from village farms until today. Villagers also have a shared social responsibility. Village income can assist anyone failing to pay medical bills or facing a social problem that he cannot manage. This is

⁷⁰ See for example, Emmanuel Sulle, 'Social Differentiation and the Politics of Land: Sugar Cane Outgrowing in Kilombero, Tanzania', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43, no. 3 (2017), 517–533; TNA, 548/R.20/1 Village Settlement Republic of Tanzania 1963–1965, 1; interview with Lutengano Mwambona at Kidatu, 28.10.2019

⁷¹ Interview with village chairman, Msolwa Village 29.03.2022

however not entirely for free as the beneficiary is required to pay back by working on collective projects to compensate the expenses used on them.

4.0 The valley in the 1980s

By the early 1980s, it was clear that Tanzania was into a great economic crisis. As a strategy to restructure its economy, it embarked on the adoption of structural adjustment policies to agitate the conditions that had to be followed in order to get foreign aid.⁷² Rural communities along the Kilombero valley were beginning to experience the effects of the new economic policies based on market liberalisation and structural adjustments.⁷³ The transition from *Ujamaa* and later the implementation of liberal policies from 1980s led to social and economic reforms in Tanzania such as removal of subsidies in agricultural inputs by the government and the encouragement of private farms which among other factors paved a way to the disintegration of *Ujamaa*.⁷⁴ Following the policy change in the valley, the development of villages was affected significantly because the country had to liberalize her economy and cut off expenditure on service provision as well as devaluating her currency. The economic remedies

⁷² Goran Hyden & Rwekaza Mukandala, "Studying Foreign Aid Organisations: Theory and Concepts" in Goran Hyden & Rwekaza Mukandala (Eds.), *Agencies in Foreign Aid; Comparing China, Sweden and the United States & Tanzania* (New York: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), 10.

⁷³ Smalley et al, "The Role of the State," 8-9.

⁷⁴ Jamie Monson, "Defending the Peoples Railway in the Era of Liberalisation: TAZARA in Southern Tanzania", *African Socialisms and Postcolonialism* 76 (2006), 113-114

introduced in the 1980s caused more stress on the rural economy than was expected to be solutions to an ailing economic situation.

In Msolwa and Signali villages, there were noticeable impacts on land use patterns where the *Mfumaki* farms changed its status to become available for private development and that farmers started to rent for private farming.⁷⁵ Importantly, Subsidies on agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and equipment suffered cut-offs, a situation that transformed the villages into individual farms.⁷⁶ During this time, more people in this area started to rely on the informal sector to make a living. On the other hand, rice farming was becoming prohibitively expensive because of the steep increases in prices of agricultural inputs, such as chemical fertilizers and the removal of subsidies.⁷⁷ In response, Msolwa and Signali villages became a target destination for a new wave of migrants after the mid-1980s.⁷⁸ Migrants from within and outside the valley mostly from Iringa and Singida were seeking relief from increasing pressures on both urban and rural livelihoods. Newcomers sought to benefit from rice

⁷⁵ Interview with Ezra Mwekeno, Pascal Mkakala and Mzee Meza at Signali village, 3.11.2019

⁷⁶ Ofisi ya Mkurugenzi Wilaya, Taarifa ya Miaka Hamsini ya Uhuru, Halimashauri ya Wilaya ya Kilombero; Smalley at al, "The Role of the State," 39-40; interview with Aloys Nguwani, Khamis Meza and Khamis Kaminuka at Signali village, 25.10.2019,

⁷⁷ Interview with Aloys Nguwani and Mzee Meza at Signali Village, 25.10.2019; Monsoon, "Defending the Peoples Railway", 122.

⁷⁸ Monson, "Defending the Peoples Railway", 123.

farming in Signali, sugarcane in Msolwa and small-scale trade available in the valley as a whole. Thus, liberalization had a dual effect for the communities in these villages in terms of economic hardships for some families, especially those who migrated in search of a new livelihood. At the same time, liberalization allowed intensive private agriculture, an expansion of small-scale trade and informal economic activity that was facilitated by the operation alongside the railway.⁷⁹

The period from late 1980s to early 1990s marked the period of outgrowing land use pattern that expanded production. For example, in Msolwa village people were given two acres of land by the village government, which made the households to increase in number. At the same time plots were also made available for newcomers to lease.⁸⁰ The number of households in Msolwa village increased from 490 in 1980 to more than 1,200 in 2013.⁸¹ This meant an increased pressure on land. On the government's average of six members (2 parents, 4 children) per household it indicates that more land would be required to feed the increasing population and to get other livelihood supplies by selling cash-crops.

Allocation of farmland took place with the support of the

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 123-124

⁸⁰ NRC, Dodoma, MGR 61, Msolwa Society, 1987; Interview with Lutengano Mwambona, 20.10.2019; Smalley et al, "The Role of State," 6-8

⁸¹ Kilombero Sugar Company, 2019

Kilombero Sugar Company Limited with back up of loans for farmers from National Micro Finance Bank (NMB), in order to ensure the supply of sugarcane. Due to the support and encouragement of KSCL, *Ujamaa* producing societies transformed and joined out growers' schemes in the 1990s. Others were reported to have joined the scheme because they were impressed with the income and reliable market for their produce while others were attracted by the progress that was achieved by their fellow villagers who joined the scheme therefore felt obliged to change their food crop plots into cash crops especially sugarcane.⁸² This resulted in high productivity that shot from 100,000 tons of cane in 1994/1995 to more than 500,000 tons of cane by 2004/2005 season. In addition to that the total area cultivated by out growers also increased from below 2,000 hectares in 1990 to 16,000 hectares in 2010.⁸³

Between 2007 and 2012 seven block farms were established in Kilombero with the average size of 67 acres. Two among these block farms with average plot size of 2.3 acres per farmer were at Msolwa village. Initially, these blocks were financed by the European Union but now the blocks have established other block farms, which are financed by Tanzanian local Banks such as CRDB and NMB.⁸⁴ Others are under the support of Private Agricultural Sector Support

⁸² Interview with Maneno Mpangala, at Msolwa Ujamaa, 30.10.2019

⁸³ Interview with Khamis Kiwanuka at Signali, 27.10.2019; SBT, *Area Under Cane and Production Data*, 2014 from www.sbt.go.tz

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Trust from the Royal Danish support, which help farmers to develop business proposals to access loans from financial institutions and guarantee loans. The establishment of blocks is a result of large farms being split up then redistributed to villagers by the village government in regular parcels as well as the continuation of *Ujamaa* institutions in the village.⁸⁵ What is seen in this area is that the company has promoted block farming and that its impact to land use is the fact that the individually owned plots of land are demarcated to fall under a single block and are cultivated together. This is similar to *bega Kwa bega* mentioned earlier as well as block farms established by the company for groups of small holders in the early 1990s.

The spirit of communal farming in these villages made them to appropriate farming activities in a positive way. Consequently, the formerly forested area in Kiberege area turned into a settlement with people in agriculture. Kiberege forest area had wild animals that without clearing would not be suitable for agriculture. With the spirit of communal work from villagers, people lived together in groups, and the control over wild animals towards destruction of crops was closely maintained which resulted into high yield in return.⁸⁶ Although it was a custom for these people to live together and help each other, the family hood was stronger than any cooperative element. This is because they had the spirit of

⁸⁵ Interview with Abushiri Kazimoto at Msolwa Ujamaa, 30.10.2019

⁸⁶ See 'Msolwa Morogoro's Best village' *Daily News*, 17.05.1978; interview with Khamis, Kiwanuka at Signali Village, 27.10.2019

working together especially in planting more sugarcane than it was needed by the household and to sell to the Indians since 1920s.⁸⁷ However, in other areas of the country production was observed to decline with the implementation of *Ujamaa* programmes. For instance, the villages of Handeni District given as examples in this paper demonstrate how the *Ujamaa* exercise was not a uniform undertaking in terms of advantages and disadvantages.⁸⁸ In areas where peasant farmers were not motivated enough to open more areas for cultivation because little was earned from what they produced, *Ujamaa* lagged behind. We understand that the exercise was uniform in way it was conceptualized but in practice it varied depending on a combination of factors put together.

5.0 Conclusion

From the 1960s through the 1990s, this research looked at the *Ujamaa* program and the dynamics of land use in the Kilombero valley, ranging from traditional systems to commercial landholdings. People in this area were impacted by policy changes and continuities in land use, which had an impact on their livelihood, according to the findings provided in this study. The government's intervention, particularly during the *Ujamaa* implementation phase, was largely responsible for land use changes, particularly the

⁸⁷ NRC, Dodoma, File No. 4368, Msolwa Cooperative Society Ltd, 1983/84; Baum, *Land Use*, 25-27.

⁸⁸ Ergas, "Why Did the Ujamaa Fail", 387-410

conversion of open land into agricultural land. However, the combination of other variables such as population growth, the introduction of modern farming practices, and market impact were also factors driving land use changes. Conflicts and ambiguous land ownership, as well as a desire for increased income among the villagers, were also factors in the changes. Communities were compelled to convert and reclaim significant areas of the land as a result of this circumstance. Economic factors such as crop price incentives have prompted a shift from conventional to extended cropping methods, as well as the conversion of cultivated land to protected territory. As a result, this research contributes significantly to the narrative of agrarian transformation in the Kilombero valley. The study's main contribution is that it has revealed evidence that the *Ujamaa* exercise was not a uniform undertaking, as the ramifications and experiences varied from village to village. The villages of Msolwa and Signali are used to illustrate the nature of this variation. *Ujamaa* programs failed and thrived in the same ecological and socioeconomic environments of the Kilombero valley. There is no way to generalize *Ujamaa's* impact; rather, a deductive approach will yield a variety of results from different locations where it was applied.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge the research funding from the Collaborative Research Centre in the Ao2: Past Futures Project, which was coordinated by the University of

Bonn, Germany. Fieldwork in Kilombero and archival research in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam were made possible by the money. We also like to express our gratitude to the residents of Msolwa *Ujamaa* and Signali villages for sharing their life histories with us unconditionally.