Tanzania's Operation Vijiji and Local Ecological Consciousness: The case of Eastern Iraqw land (1974-1976)

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Abstract

Tanzania's *Ujamaa* villagization campaign of 1973‑6 was one of the greatest social experiments in postcolonial Africa. Occurring during a time of continuing hope for a better future for the nation, the experiment aimed to improve the lives of the majority of rural Tanzanians. Despite this noble intention, the attempt at rural modernization failed miserably in many respects. Discussions of these failures have tended to give prominence to tangible explanations, ignoring more nuanced and qualitative issues, including environmental concerns based on local cosmologies. In an attempt to fill this gap, the present article uses a case study of eastern Iraqw land in northern Tanzania to explore local articulations of the compulsory villagization campaign and to interpret them in light of ecological perspectives that were prevalent at the time in Iraqw village communities.

Key Words: Tanzania; development; environment; land tenure; political ecology; socialism.