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The changing nature of co-operatives and the Law in Tanzania (Mainland)

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The nature of co-operatives in this country has shown a chameleon character. The colours of this “chameleon” being dictated by the varying socio-economic conditions that prevailed at the different historical epochs. The impact of these colours however, has not always ensured that what more called “co-operatives” were in-fact co-operatives. Laws governing co-operatives have also been changing and today there exists a multiplicity of Laws, all claiming to protect the co-operative institution. There is the 1968 Co-operative Societies Act, The 1975 villages and Ujama Villages (Registration, Designation and Administration) Act, Muungano wa Vyama Vya Ushirika (Establishment) Act 1979 and for Zanzibar, The Co-operative Societies Decree No. 3 of 1979. What is curious about all these laws is that, they all set a different standard and protection for this institution called “Co- operatives”. The study therefore makes an attempt to trace the metamorphosis through which co-operation in Tanzania has passed since the 1920s; with a view to ascertaining the extent to which such changes conform with the theory and practice of cooperation. In particular, the current trend of cooperation is depicted in chapters III, IV, V and VI. A critique of the laws governing the co-operatives as well as the contradictions that exist between the policy and the actual practice are considered. It is your strong conviction that the present state of affairs which is responsible for the nonexistence of true co-operatives calls for immediate action. Chapter VII considers that the direction of this change remains a very critical issue. Changes that will not ensure that the peasants as owners of these co-operatives, exercise control of the affairs of their co-operatives, will not put the trend of co-operation on the correct path. Existence of a class of masters dominating the institution that is christened “co-operative” is to conceal the true nature of such an institution. We believe that to pave the way for socialism, a strong co-operative movement must be allowed to emerge.