

## Non-standard words in Msimulizi in 1888-1896<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This report is of the use of non-standard Swahili words in Msimulizi in years 1888-1896. A word is considered non-standard, if its spelling does not conform to the current orthographical rules. Swahili is a well-standardised language, due to the standardisation committees since colonial times. Therefore, it is fairly easy to judge whether a word is written according to standards or not. I have made use of the enhanced Swahili language analyser, which identifies and analyses also non-standard word-forms, but marks them as non-standard. Making use of this facility, I have made a classification of non-standard forms and a statistical study of their occurrence in Msimulizi. Where applicable, I have also followed the development of some new words and show how they were adapted to language.

**Key Words:** *language standard, spelling.*

### 1 Introduction

Although language is considered to be in perpetual change, Swahili shows remarkable stability during the past century. When we talk about non-standard features in language, we must make a distinction between non-standard spelling, non-standard inflection, and non-standard words. In Msimulizi, most non-standard features concern spelling. Also non-standard inflection occurs, as well as non-standard words. It is often difficult to decide whether a word is non-standard, because coinage of new words is normal in languages. It is easier to make a judgement with the other two non-standard features.

In this report I will concentrate on non-standard spelling and non-standard inflection. Because it is difficult to judge what precisely are non-standard words, I leave this subject out in this report.

Non-standard features can be studied in many ways. Here I do it in two phases. First, I make a statistical analysis of all non-standard words in Msimulizi. I divide the words according to noun classes and POS categories. These statistics are shown in tables (1-12). In the second phase, I take a look at various types of features in non-standard words.

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## 2 Non-standard words in various noun classes and POS categories

Table 1. Noun class 1/2

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	mhadi		<i>pilgrim</i>
2	mkohani	mkuhani	<i>rabbi</i>
115	wangine	wengine	<i>others</i>
5	wangineo	wengineo	<i>others</i>
46	mdoicha	mdachi	<i>German</i>

Table 2. Noun class 3/4

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
10	mpila	mpira	<i>ball</i>

Table 3. Noun class 5/6

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
11	barra	bara	<i>continent</i>
1	bithaa	bidhaa	<i>merchandise</i>
9	boonde	bonde	<i>valley</i>
6	mangine	mengine	<i>others</i>
16	rathi	radhi	<i>disease</i>
1	ridio	radio	<i>radio</i>
9	selaha	silaha	<i>weapon</i>
2	thambi	dhambi	<i>sin</i>
1	yayi	yai	<i>egg</i>

Table 4. Noun class 7/8

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	kinwa	kinywa	<i>mouth</i>
9	kitwa	kichwa	<i>head</i>

Table 5. Noun class 9/10

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	aththuuri	adhuhuri	<i>noon</i>
3	alasili	alasiri	<i>afternoon</i>
11	anjili	injili	<i>gospel</i>
27	asikari	askari	<i>soldier</i>
5	assubuhi	asubuhi	<i>morning</i>
19	assubui	asubuhi	<i>morning</i>
1	asubui	asubuhi	<i>morning</i>
14	bandera	bendera	<i>flag</i>
1	biskwiti	biskiti	<i>biscuit</i>
15	buddi	budi	<i>must</i>
5	chayi	chai	<i>tea</i>
3	faraga	faragha	<i>seclusion</i>
1	fathili	fadhili	<i>favour</i>
4	fayida	faida	<i>profit</i>
12	fetha	fedha	<i>money</i>
2	fetheha	fedheha	<i>disgrace</i>
1	forotha	forodha	<i>customs</i>
2	fortha	forodha	<i>customs</i>
5	frasi	farasi	<i>horse</i>
2	ghathabu	ghadhabu	<i>rage</i>
28	ginsi	jinsi	<i>type</i>
1	kibandera	kibendera	<i>flag</i>
5	mayili	maili	<i>mile</i>
3	moskiti	msikiti	<i>mosque</i>
1	raiya	raia	<i>citizen</i>
2	rassi	rasi	<i>promontory</i>
2	rayia	raia	<i>citizen</i>
1	rayiya	raia	<i>citizen</i>
1	shalbati	sharbati	<i>sherbet</i>
1	shangwi	shangwe	<i>rejoicing</i>
1	sharbeti	sharbati	<i>sherbet</i>
2	shauko	shauku	<i>anxiety</i>
1	sherbeti	sharbati	<i>sherbet</i>
15	shidda	shida	<i>hardship</i>
1	tharuba	dharuba	<i>impact</i>
1	thawabu	dhawabu	<i>spiritual reward</i>
1	thoruba	dhoruba	<i>tempest</i>

Table 6. Noun class 11

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	uhayi	uhai	<i>life</i>
1	uthaifu	udhaifu	<i>weakness</i>
1	uthalimu	udhalimu	<i>oppression</i>

Table 7. Noun class 9/6

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
37	balyozi	balozi	<i>ambassador</i>
12	barozi	balozi	<i>ambassador</i>
1	doktari	daktari	<i>doctor</i>
1	fithuli	fidhuli	<i>arrogant person</i>
3	kathi	kadhi	<i>judge</i>
7	nahotha	nahodha	<i>captain</i>
14	nakhotha	nahodha	<i>captain</i>
6	sermala	seremala	<i>carpenter</i>

Table 8. Verbs

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	asili	wasili	<i>arrive</i>
1	athibu	adhibu	<i>punish</i>
1	chukuwa	chukua	<i>take</i>
1	fathili	fadhili	<i>sponsor</i>
1	fayidiwa	faidiwa	<i>profit</i>
1	hifathi	hifadhi	<i>preserve</i>
1	juwa	jua	<i>know</i>
1	kabithi	kabidhi	<i>hand over</i>
3	khutubu	hutubu	<i>address</i>
9	kwitwa	kuitwa	<i>call</i>
2	nia	kusudia	<i>intend</i>
1	rithi	ridhi	<i>agree</i>
1	rithiwa	ridhiwa	<i>agree</i>
31	sayidia	saidia	<i>help</i>
1	sayidiana	saidiana	<i>help each other</i>
4	sayidiwa	saidiwa	<i>help</i>
5	shariki	shiriki	<i>participate</i>
1	sharikisha	shirikisha	<i>make participate</i>
1	sharikishwa	shirikishwa	<i>make participate</i>
3	sumulia	simulia	<i>narrate</i>
2	taraja	taraji	<i>hope</i>
25	thani	dhani	<i>think</i>
3	thania	dhania	<i>think</i>
3	thaniwa	dhaniwa	<i>think</i>
2	tharau	dharau	<i>despise</i>
1	thoofika	dhoofika	<i>become weak</i>
1	thoofisha	dhoofisha	<i>become weak</i>
2	thulumu	dhulumu	<i>oppress</i>
10	thuru	dhuru	<i>hurt</i>
4	uthi	udhi	<i>annoy</i>
68	uthia	udhia	<i>annoy</i>
2	uthika	udhika	<i>annoy</i>
1	uwa	ua	<i>kill</i>
1	zowea	zoea	<i>be used</i>

Table 9. Adjectives

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
4	hayi	hai	<i>alive</i>
39	ingine	nyingine	<i>another</i>
2	kathawakatha	kadhawakadha	<i>some</i>
2	mngine	mwingine	<i>another</i>
5	thaifu	dhaifu	<i>weak</i>

Table 10. Adverbs

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
5	afathali	afadhali	<i>rather</i>
6	bass	basi	<i>then</i>
431	bassi	basi	<i>then</i>
11	burre	bure	<i>uselessly</i>
2	dayima	daima	<i>perpetually</i>
475	hatta	hata	<i>even</i>
1	kassa	kasa	<i>to</i>
2	kassi	kasi	<i>fast</i>
5	kathalika	kadhhalika	<i>similarly</i>
2	kuaheri	kwaheri	<i>good bye</i>
2	magaribi	magharibi	<i>west</i>
143	marra	mara	<i>immediately</i>
16	naswi	nasi	<i>with us</i>
1	pangine	pengine	<i>perhaps</i>

Table 11. Numerals

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
7	asharini	ishirini	<i>twenty</i>
1	ashirini	ishirini	<i>twenty</i>
1	sabwini	sabini	<i>seventy</i>
2	settini	sitini	<i>sixty</i>
1	sitaashara	kuminasita	<i>sixteen</i>
1	thelitashara	kuminatatu	<i>thirteen</i>
5	tissa	tisa	<i>nine</i>

Table 12. Conjunctions

No	Word	StdWord	gloss
1	angawa	ingawa	<i>although</i>
1	balli	bali	<i>but</i>
106	illa	ila	<i>except</i>
5	illakini	ilakini	<i>but</i>
4	illi	ili	<i>so that</i>
16	wallakini	walakini	<i>but</i>

### 3 Spelling of non-standard words in various noun classes and POS categories

As can be seen in the statistical description of non-standard words in tables (1-12), the most common feature is the spelling. This occurs most often in words of foreign origin, especially Arabic. The quality of vowels in Arabic is not stable, and this causes variation also in Swahili.

Consider the examples in (Table 13)

Table 13. Vowel variation

<b>Word</b>	<b>StdWord</b>	<b>gloss</b>
wangine	wengine	<i>others</i>
mkohani	mkuhani	<i>rabbi</i>
ridio	redio	<i>radio</i>
selaha	silaha	<i>weapon</i>
anjili	injili	<i>gospel</i>
bandera	bendera	<i>flag</i>
moskiti	msikiti	<i>mosque</i>
shauko	shauku	<i>anxiety</i>
doktari	daktari	<i>doctor</i>
shariki	shiriki	<i>participate</i>
sumulia	simulia	<i>narrate</i>
asharini	ishirini	<i>twenty</i>
settini	sitini	<i>sixty</i>
angawa	ingawa	<i>although</i>

Most of the words in (Table 13) above come from Arabic.

Perhaps the most common source of non-standard spelling is the fricative sound. Arabic words have two variants of fricative, the voiced and voiceless ones. Bantu languages did not have such sounds, and they have come to the language through loan words. It seems to have been unclear how such sounds should be spelled.

In Msimulizi the solution seems to be that all fricatives, voiced and voiceless ones, are spelled as voiceless fricatives. Consider the examples in (Table 14).

Table 14. Voiceless fricatives

<b>Word</b>	<b>StdWord</b>	<b>gloss</b>
bithaa	bidhaa	<i>merchandise</i>
rathi	radhi	<i>disease</i>
thambi	dhambi	<i>sin</i>
aththuuri	adhuhuri	<i>noon</i>
fetha	fedha	<i>money</i>
fetheha	fedheha	<i>disgrace</i>
forotha	forodha	<i>customs</i>
ghathabu	ghadhabu	<i>rage</i>
tharuba	dharuba	<i>impact</i>
thawabu	dhawabu	<i>spiritual reward</i>
thoruba	dhoruba	<i>tempest</i>
uthaifu	udhaifu	<i>weakness</i>
uthalimu	udhalimu	<i>oppression</i>
fithuli	fidhuli	<i>arrogant person</i>
nahotha	nahodha	<i>captain</i>
athibu	adhibu	<i>punish</i>
fathili	fadhili	<i>sponsor</i>
hifathi	hifadhi	<i>preserve</i>
kabithi	kabidhi	<i>hand over</i>
khutubu	hutubu	<i>address</i>
rithi	ridhi	<i>agree</i>
thani	dhani	<i>think</i>
tharau	dharau	<i>despise</i>
thoofika	dhooofika	<i>become weak</i>
thulumu	dhulumu	<i>oppress</i>
thuru	dhuru	<i>hurt</i>
uthi	udhi	<i>annoy</i>
thaifu	dhaifu	<i>weak</i>
afathali	afadhali	<i>rather</i>
kathalika	kadhalika	<i>similarly</i>

Bantu languages have difficulties in cases, where two vowels come after each other in loanwords. There is a tendency to add a suitable consonant between the vowels. This is reflected also in Msimulizi texts (Table 15).



Table 15. Adjacent vowels

Word	StdWord	gloss
yayi	yai	<i>egg</i>
chayi	chai	<i>tea</i>
mayili	maili	<i>mile</i>
raiya	raia	<i>citizen</i>
rayiya	raia	<i>citizen</i>
uhayi	uhai	<i>life</i>
juwa	jua	<i>know</i>
kwitwa	kuitwa	<i>call</i>
sayidia	saidia	<i>help</i>
uwa	ua	<i>kill</i>
zowea	zoea	<i>be used</i>
hayi	hai	<i>alive</i>
dayima	daima	<i>perpetually</i>

#### 4 Non-standard verb prefixes

The inflection of verbs follows mostly current grammatical rules. However, there are a few subject prefixes, which do not occur any more in Swahili. Especially the first person plural prefix *twa-* occurs with past tense, as can be seen in table (16).

Table 16. Special subject prefix

Word	StdWord	gloss
1 twaliacha	tuliacha	<i>leave</i>
4 twalienda	tulikwenda	<i>go to</i>
1 twalifika	tulifika	<i>arrive</i>
1 twaliingia	tuliingia	<i>enter</i>
1 twalikawia	tulikawia	<i>lag</i>
1 twalikusanyika	tulikusanyika	<i>come together</i>
5 twalikuwa	tulikuwa	<i>be</i>
1 twalimrudisha	tulimrudisha	<i>return</i>
1 twalionana	tulionana	<i>see each other</i>
1 twaliongea	tuliongea	<i>talk</i>
1 twalipata	tulipata	<i>get</i>
3 twalisikia	tulisikia	<i>hear</i>
1 twalitaka	tulitaka	<i>want</i>
1 twalitengeneza	tulitengeneza	<i>prepare</i>
1 twaliucheza	tuliucheza	<i>play</i>
1 twaliwashinda	tuliwashinda	<i>win</i>
1 twaliwasindikiza	tuliwasindikiza	<i>escort</i>
1 twalitoka	tulitoka	<i>leave</i>
1 twalitumainia	tulitumainia	<i>hope</i>
1 twaliuthika	tuliudhika	<i>annoy</i>

The subject prefix *twa-* occurs in standard Swahili as a merged structure of the subject prefix *tu* and the tense prefix *a*, such as *twatazamia*.

The prefix *-li-* in above examples could in some cases be the object prefix, whereby the prefix *twa-* could be interpreted as a combination of the subject prefix and tense marker. However, examples such as *twali-u-cheza* and *twali-wa-shinda* show that the clitic *-li-* must be a tense marker.

## 5 Adopting the term for German

The German presence in the area was new at the time when the first issues of Msimulizi appeared, and it is reflected in how the terms for calling these newcomers vary and gradually get more or less standardised. Table (17) shows the use of different word variants for German. The root term is Deutsch, and it is adapted to the Swahili phonotax. As a result, it is glossed a *Mdoicha/Wadoicha* and located to class 1/2. There is only one instance, where it is located in class 5/6 (*Doicha/Madoicha*)

Initially the forms *Mdoicha/Wadoicha* were used. In 1889 also another version (*Mdachi/Wadachi*) was used. This version became common in later years, and the first version almost disappeared later.

Currently the standard form is *Mdachi/Wadachi*, although also the form *Mgerumani/Wagerumani* is used.

Table 17. The use of word variants for German

Year	Mdoicha	Wadoicha	Madoicha	Kidoicha	Mdachi	Wadachi	Madachi	Kidachi
1888	3	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
1889	1	22	0	0	10	10	20	0
1890	1	7	0	2	20	35	18	4
1891	1	2	0	0	9	12	4	2
1892	2	2	0	0	10	12	2	1
1893	0	1	0	1	7	4	3	0
1894	0	0	0	0	5	3	2	2
1895	0	2	1	2	8	1	1	4
1896	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13</b>

## 6 Conclusion

The non-standard spelling examples in this report were written by a large and varied number of people in Eastern Africa at the end of the 19th century. Writing styles differ, but the text is generally correct, obviously due to the proofreading process before printing. When editing the scanned Msimulizi text, I corrected the clear typing errors that were still left in the printed version. Non-standard wordforms were not corrected to standard form. They were left as such, and they represent the language used and written that time. These non-standard forms are the source material of this report.

The report deals only with non-standard forms. It would be interesting to see the variation of writing styles of the same word. The same word is sometimes written in

standard form and at other times in non-standard form. It would also be interesting to see whether there is difference in using non-standard forms in various areas, such as Njassa, Newala, Unguja, Korogwe etc. This is a subject of another report.