

## Hostilities in East Africa in 1888-1896 according to Msimulizi<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) has made available almost 1000 pages of Msimulizi, the first printed journal in Swahili language. The Msimulizi texts in the archives are from years 1888-1896. The journal of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa describes hostilities between various groups from the viewpoint of local people, who experience the events on the grassroot level. One of the themes in the journal are the hostilities between English, German, Portuguese, Arabs, and the local Africans. These news are scattered all over the journal. In this report, I describe how the information on this theme can be extracted effectively using the advanced search system described elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

**Key Words:** *information retrieval, war, hostilities.*

### 1 Introduction

One of the main motivations for establishing the Universities' Mission to Central Africa was to stop the slave trade in this area. Among the founders of the society were the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, and Dublin. The alarming reports of European travellers, especially of David Livingstone, gave impetus to efforts for doing something to the situation. One solution was to educate the local people, so that they would be aware of a different kind of life, where slavery was not part of normal life.

When the first issue of Msimulizi appeared in 1888, the mission agency had been in work for 30 years. The first expedition in 1861 to Shire Highlands, southwest from Lake Nyassa, had ended up in disaster. Led by Bishop Mackenzie, the small expedition intended to establish a permanent mission station, but the health conditions there were so bad, that the bishop himself, and also other members of the group and many local people died soon. Malaria was apparently the most serious malady in that region. The mission station was abandoned and under the leadership of Bishop Tozer the mission's headquarters were moved to Zanzibar, where health conditions were better. Kiungani, and especially its mission school St. Andrew's, became the main centre of mission work.

From the very beginning, emphasis was in helping slaved children away from their miserable life. School education was considered the most effective way of achieving the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/salama/msimulizi-as-corpus-for-accurate-search.pdf>

aim, and mission schools were established in several places. It is not clear how big role the freed slaves played in these schools, but the reports in Msimulizi give reason to believe that it was substantial. The Mbweni settlement in Zanzibar was established especially for freed slaves to live in.

When Edward Steere was appointed as bishop after Tozer in 1874, new plans were made for establishing mission work in Lake Nyassa area. While earlier routes to the lake were via sea and rivers, now the plan was to establish a series of mission stations on dry land across the southern part of current Tanzania. It took ten years until Charles Janson and William Percival Johnson reached the lake in 1884. The central mission station at Nyassa was located on Likoma island, the bigger one of the two islands of Lake Nyassa. The area was not free of malaria, but it was healthier than the Shire Highlands. Nevertheless, Charles Janson soon died there, but other missionaries continued the work.

When Msimulizi started to appear in 1888, the mission work in the area had continued for several years. Also, the Germans had arrived in the area, although they had not yet established their administration. In fact, the first issues of Msimulizi report on various clashes between the German forces and various local authorities, such as the Arab administration in Zanzibar and the local chiefdoms on the mainland.

The purpose of this paper is not to give a comprehensive report on hostilities in eastern Africa soon after the partition of Africa had taken place in 1884-1885. I describe how these hostilities were described in Msimulizi in years 1888-1896. The experiences portray the grassroot view of events. In particular, the paper demonstrates the special features of the advanced search system, which uses enriched text format as source.

Part of the mission stations discussed here are displayed on the map at the end of the report.

## 2 The concept *vita* (war) in Msimulizi

The word *vita* (war) appears in Msimulizi 268 times. The war is of concern each year of the study period. Table 1 shows how many times the word *vita* appears each year.

Table 1.

Year	<i>vita</i>
1888	5
1889	46
1890	60
1891	24
1892	24
1893	20
1894	45
1895	28
1896	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>268</b>

It appears that the concept *vita* appears most often in 1889 and 1990. This was the time when the German administration was not yet accepted as a peaceful authority in the area.

The Arabs as well as local authorities in the mainland protested the German intrusion. Msimulizi gives the impression that the British presence in the area had already been accepted, because their ships had been sailing along the Indian Ocean for a long time, and they had traded following the accepted rules. The German ships were something new and it was not clear what their intentions were.

### 3 The concepts *uthia* and *uthi* in Msimulizi

Msimulizi uses often such concepts as *uthia* and *uthi* for describing a threat, which does not develop necessarily into war. The word *uthia* is a noun and the word *uthi* is a verb. Their occurrence in Msimulizi is describes in Table 2.

Table 2.

Year	<i>uthia</i>	<i>uthi</i>
1888	4	0
1889	43	1
1890	29	3
1891	17	2
1892	11	0
1893	5	0
1894	5	2
1895	5	0
1896	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>10</b>

The spelling of the word in current standard Swahili is *udhia* and *udhi*. Only once the spelling *udhia* appears in 1895, but all other occurrences use the old spelling.

It seems that the beginning years of Msimulizi were uneasy times, and the term was frequently used in reporting on events and feelings. In later years, the terms were only seldom used, which hints to more settled times.

### 4 The concepts *ua* and *uawa* in Msimulizi

Among central terms for indicating about hostilities are the words *ua* (to kill) and its passive form *uawa* (to be killed). Their occurrence in Msimilizi is in Table 3.

Table 3.

Year	ua	uawa
1888	4	1
1889	22	13
1890	6	14
1891	8	16
1892	12	8
1893	11	6
1894	1	3
1895	12	6
1896	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>68</b>

We see that the active form *ua* was used to report on the actual killing, and the passive form *uawa* for reporting on the result of violence.

There are also more general terms for describing the end of life, such as *kifo* (death), *kufa* (to die), and *kufariki* (to die, to pass away). These words are used most often for describing the end of life as a result of a disease, accident, or any other cause, where another human being was not causing the death. For the sake of comparison, the occurrence of these words in Msimulizi are in Table 4.

Table 4.

Year	kifo	kufa	kufariki
1888	0	8	0
1889	0	35	7
1890	0	37	13
1891	0	28	11
1892	0	40	10
1893	0	7	19
1894	0	13	17
1895	0	22	17
1896	0	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>94</b>

The noun *kifo* was not used at all in Msimulizi. Perhaps the noun was not yet established in language that time. Another reason for its absence might be that the infinitive forms of the verbs *kufa* and *kufariki* were used, when a noun for death was needed. In fact, a few times the infinitive form *kufa* was used as noun.

The verb *kufa* is the basic verb for expressing the end of life. It was used more often than the verb *kufariki*, which is a more polite verb for the same thing.

Africa was a very harsh environment for white people, and an alarmingly large number of missionaries died there. A large number of death reports in Msimulizi is on deaths of whites, although deaths of local people were also reported.

## 5 Attitudes towards the German presence

Much of the hostilities reported on in Msimulizi are related to the emerging German administration in eastern Africa. Reports in Msimulizi describe the clashes between interest groups without providing more wide background information, such as the decision in Berlin that the area of Tanganyika would be the colony of Germany. According to reports, it seems that even the Arabs did not have a true picture of the situation. The Germans were forced to fight for establishing their position. Arabs were definitely against the intrusion of German soldiers to the area, but so were also part of local chiefs.

Gradually it became clearer that the most important aim of Germany was to establish peace in the area, so that people would be free to travel and trade in the whole area. Even the normal travelling was often harassed by youth gangs and sometimes by local chiefs, in the hope of tribute payment. There are several reports in Msimulizi about such problems, and even the convoys of the missionaries were often stopped on sea and land. Gradually even the local people understood that peace would be beneficial to all.

The new administration attempted to collect all illegal weapons, but its success was not very impressive. At least mission stations seem to have been well armed, judging on the reports on gun salutes when a bishop or some other dignitary arrived.

At the arrival of the German military force it was not clear how they should be called in Swahili. Initially they were called *Wadoicha* (sg. *Mdoicha*). This form does not fit well to the phonotactic rules of Swahili language. It gradually changed to *Wadachi* (sg. *Mdachi*). Also, the forms *Dachi* and *Madachi* were used, because the word was a loan and not a native word. The breakdown of the usage is in Table 5.

Table 5.

Year	doicha	dachi
1888	13	0
1889	25	43
1890	11	78
1891	3	29
1892	5	27
1893	2	14
1894	0	13
1895	6	15
1896	0	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>230</b>

The table shows clearly that first the form *Mdoicha/Wadoicha* dominated in reporting on events. Then starting from 1891 its use decreased dramatically and in later years it was used only sporadically. The form *Dachi/Madachi* appeared already in 1889, and since then it was the dominant Swahili form for German.

We can also see in the table that references to the Germans decreased over the years. This can be interpreted as a sign of decreased hostilities between the Germans and other agencies in the area. The statistics in Table 1 also show that the term *vita* (war) appeared

most often in years 1889 and 1890, the time when the Germans had not yet established their position in the area.

In the years 1888, 1889, 1890 and 1892 there is also a special chapter on war, which is a sign of importance of this subject.

## 6 Hostilities in different areas

The advanced search system makes possible a survey on hostility reports in the vast area, which the Msimulizi reports cover. First, we make a total survey of hostility reports year by year.

Table 6.

<b>Year</b>	<b>hostilities</b>
1888	11
1889	110
1890	109
1891	55
1892	51
1893	33
1894	52
1895	44
1896	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>483</b>

Now we look in more detail from which areas the hostility reports came each year. The statistics are in tables 7-15.

Table 7.

<b>1888</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Magila	1
Mbweni	1
Msimulizi	1
Nyassa	2
Pwani	2
Safari	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 8.

<b>1889</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Chitangali	9
Kiungani	11
Magila	2
Masasi	11
Misozwe	3
Mkunazini	2
Msaraka	1
Msimulizi	18
Newala	3
Nyassa	2
Safari	2
Shamba la Mbweni	1
Uganda	9
Vita	25
Yerusalemi	1
Mkuzi	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>

Table 9.

<b>1890</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Chitangali	8
Kiungani	6
Likoma	12
Magila	3
Masasi	7
Mbweni	1
Misozwe	12
Mkunazini	2
Msaraka	5
Msimulizi	9
Msumba	3
Newala	4
Nyassa	7
Pwani	8
Shamba la Mbweni	1
Uganda	4
Vita	2
Wareno	9
Mkuzi	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>

Table 10.

<b>1891</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Chitangali	1
Kiungani	2
Korogwe	9
Misozwe	5
Msaraka	1
Msimulizi	17
Newala	7
Nyassa	5
Pachia	5
Shamba la Mbweni	2
Mkuzi	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

Table 11.

<b>1892</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Korogwe	11
Likoma	14
Masaki	1
Misozwe	7
Mkunazini	1
Nanyanga	1
Newala	2
Nyassa	4
Safari	1
Shamba la Mbweni	2
Vita	6
Mkuzi	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>

Table 12.

<b>1893</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Chitangali	6
Kiungani	1
Korogwe	3
Likoma	3
Mkunazini	10
Nanyanga	3
Newala	6
Nyassa	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>



Table 13.

<b>1894</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Chitangali	3
Likoma	4
Masasi	4
Mbweni	1
Miwa	1
Mkunazini	7
Msaraka	1
Nanyanga	10
Newala	17
Nyassa	3
Uganda	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>

Table 14.

<b>1895</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Kiungani	2
Likoma	4
Machemba	7
Masasi	11
Msimulizi	10
Newala	7
Unangu	2
Mkuzi	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 15.

<b>1896</b>	<b>No. of times</b>
Masasi	9
Mwiti	5
Newala	1
Nyassa	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>

Note that in tables 7-15 above there are also such names that are not place names, such as Msimulizi (reported without reference to place of writing), Pwani (coastal area), Nyassa (widely the lake Nyassa area), Safari (travel report), Vita (special report on war).

When reading the reports themselves, one can testify the same trend as can be seen in the above statistics. In earlier years, most reports on hostilities were from the coastal area in north-eastern Tanganyika. Clashes between Arabs and Germans were usual. Also, local

chiefdoms caused trouble to travellers and tried to exploit the situation, where no law ensured peace.

In later years, the emphasis was more in the southern areas, such as Newala, Masasi and Likoma. The intrusion of Ngoni, who were refugees from South Africa, tried to push northward and occupy lands from the earlier settlers. These hostilities were mostly between local groups, although also the Portuguese were counterparts in these clashes.

The Ngoni, who were living in southern Africa, were forced to flee northwards because of the expansion of the Zulu. The Ngoni moved as far as the southern Tanganyika, where the earlier inhabitants had to confront the newcomers. These clashes are reported in Msimulizi, although there is no comprehensive description of them.

Table 16 shows how many times the three clashing ethnic groups, Wanyassa, Wayao and Wangoni, and Wareno (Portuguese), are mentioned in Msimulizi each year.

*Table 16.*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Wanyassa</b>	<b>Wayao</b>	<b>Wangoni</b>	<b>Wareno</b>
1888	0	0	0	0
1889	6	4	17	11
1890	0	3	5	14
1891	6	4	6	1
1892	1	5	7	0
1893	1	6	0	0
1894	1	2	8	4
1895	1	5	3	0
1896	1	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>

Especially in year 1889 the Ngoni were mentioned several times. There is quite a detailed report of the inhabitants in the southern area, and clashes between the Ngoni and earlier inhabitants are reported. An interesting feature is that local people build fortifications around settlements in fear of Ngoni attacks. Such fortifications are not common in more northern areas, such as the area north of Lake Nyassa.

The Portuguese defended their area in the south and caused trouble to travellers, who used the sea route via Zambezi to Lake Nyassa. They also had disagreement on the border line on their northern border. Travelers were also often prohibited to go through the normal routes overland from Lindi through Newala to Lake Nyassa. These problems are described especially in years 1889 and 1890.

## **7 Hostilities in Uganda**

Uganda does not belong directly to the area, where the Universities' Mission to Central Africa worked. There was, however, active mission work of the Anglican Church, and the followers of that faith were called Wamasihya, as they were called in the core areas of the UMCA. The students from Uganda, who studied in Kiungani, were a link to Uganda, and the Anglicans in Zanzibar followed keenly the whereabouts in Uganda.

There were severe hostilities against mission work. Especially Mwanga, the king of Uganda, persecuted Christians. The Arabs, who exercised slave trade, also hated missionaries, because their aim was to stop the trade.

There were also French missionaries in the area, and Mwanga became a proselyte and was baptised. He totally changed his course and declared freedom of faith in his area. These events and news were reported in detail in Msimulizi, and understandably they encouraged Christians in other areas.

The conversion of king Mwanga was around year 1889. Things did not settle fully, however. In 1893 Henry Wright Duta, one of the leaders of the Wamasihya from Uganda, reported in his letter about fierce fight between Arabs and Wamasihya, including Europeans. The Arabs tried to persuade the Nubian soldiers, *Manjolinjoli* (the long-legged ones) to join them and attack the Wamasihya while they were in church service. The Arabs thought that because the Nubians also were Muslims, they could be turned against their employers. The plot was detected, the Nubians did not join the Arabs, and the Arabs were beaten and driven to the Toro country.

After year 1893 there are no hostility reports from Uganda.

## 8 Conclusion

Msimulizi is a unique archive of many kinds of events in years 1888-1896. Its special value is that events are seen from the grassroot perspective. It is also a collection written by a large number of writers from a vast area. In this report I have concentrated on hostilities generally. I have exploited the potential of an advanced search system, which is covering and accurate. The found information is in statistical form. This is in contrast to the customary method, where the writer picks examples on one's own will and leaves the rest unaccounted for.

Location of part of the mission stations of UMCA in eastern Africa in 1888-1896.  
Source data: geonames.org and naturalearthdata.com.



Map produced by Pekka Hurskainen