

*With the written
compliments*

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNION GOVERNMENT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BANTU STUDIES
AND RESEARCH

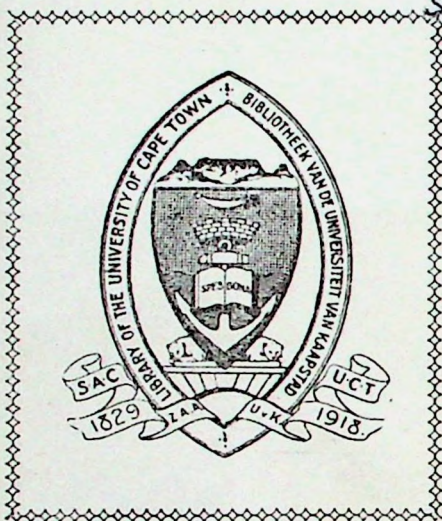
A Practical Orthography
for Xhosa

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A Practical Orthography for Xhosa

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNION GOVERNMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON
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The Central Orthography Committee, delegated by the Union Advisory Committee to deal with orthography, decided at its meeting held in Johannesburg, on the 16th of July, 1930, to make certain recommendations with regard to Xhosa, and these were subsequently approved by the Union Government Committee.

1. The most important changes on the existing orthography are as follows :—

(a) Aspiration, hitherto represented by a rough-breathing mark over the following vowel, is to be represented by *h*; e.g. *thetha* for *tétâ*, *Xhosa* for *Xósa*.

(b) The prepalatal voiceless fricative, now represented by *sh*, is to be represented by the I.P.A. symbol *ʃ*; e.g. *fufu* for *shushu*; *umʃhatho* for *umtshátó*.

(c) Implosive *b*, now represented by the plain letter, will be represented by a new symbol, *ɓ*, and the plain *b* will represent the explosive *b*; e.g. *ukuɓaɓa* for *ukubaba* (to itch), and *ukubaba* for *ukubábá* (to fly).

(d) *R*, which now represents both the voiceless velar fricative and the rolled *r* of English, will represent only the rolled *r*; and a new symbol, *r̥*, will represent the unvoiced fricative, *g̊* the voiced, and *k̊* the ejective varieties; e.g. *ukuṙana* for *ukurana*, *igṙonya* for *irhonya*, and *ikṙele* for *irele*.

(e) The radical click sounds following a nasal will be represented by the click symbol preceded by *k*, instead of by the dotted symbol; e.g. *inkcani*, *inkqayi* (bald head), *inkxaso* (sustenance) for *incani*, *inqayi*, and *inxaso*.

(f) The aspiration of nasal clicks will be represented by *h* instead of the rough-breathing mark; e.g. *incha*, *inqhayi* (water-pot), *inxhowa*, for *incá*, *inqáyi*, and *inxówa*.

(g) When it is necessary for clearness, long vowel sounds are to be shown by doubling the vowel; e.g. *naalo* (*ihaʃe*), there it (the horse) is: but *nalo* (*ihaʃe*), and *it* (the horse).

2. The full scheme of sound representation in Xhosa will therefore be as follows :—

VOWELS

a	lala	lie down	o	olo	that (Cl. 5 sing.)
e	elo	that (Cl. 2 sing.)	o	olu	this (,, ,,)
e	eli	this (,, ,,)	u	mu	completely
i	imi	standing			

PLAIN CONSONANTS

	Bi-labial.	Denti-labial.	Alveolar.	Pre-palatal.	Velar.	Glottal.
<i>Explosive :</i>						
Radical . . .	p		t		k	
Aspirated . . .	ph		th		kh	
Voiced . . .	b		d		g	
<i>Implosive . . .</i>						
	ɓ					
<i>Nasal</i>						
	m		n	ny	ng	
<i>Fricative :</i>						
Radical . . .		f	s	ʃ	ɽ	h
Voiced . . .		v	z		ʒɽ	
<i>Rolled</i>						
			r			
<i>Lateral :</i>						
Voiced . . .			l			
Rad. Fric. . .			hl			
Voiced Fric. . .			dl			
<i>Affricate :</i>						
Radical . . .				tʃ		
Aspirated . . .				tʃh		
Ejective . . .		mf	nts	ntʃ	kɽ	
Voiced . . .		mv	nz	j nj		
<i>Lateral Affricate :</i>						
Ejective . . .			ntl			
Voiced . . .			ndl			
<i>Semi-Vowel . . .</i>						
				y	w	

Examples

Explosives :

p	ipoma	tall object
	impuku	mouse
t	teketa	talk like a child
	intuku	mole
k	kakade	of course
	inkomo	a beast
ph	phepha	escape
th	thetha	speak
kh	ikhaka	shield
b	baba	fly (verb)
	hamba	go
d	deda	give way
	indoda	man
g	ugaga	dried hide
	nguye	it is he

Implosive :

ɓ	ɓaɓa	itch
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Nasals :

m	memeza	call out
n	nina	you (plur.)
ny	unyana	son
ng	ingwe	leopard

Fricatives :

f	ufefe	grace
s	kusasa	early morning
ʃ	ʃufu	hot
ɾ	ɾana	suspect
h	hamba	go
v	vula	open
z	zuza	get
ʒ	igɾonya	coarse sacking

Rolled :

r	iorenji	orange (foreign)
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Laterals :

l	lala	lie down
hl	ihlahla	piece of bush
dl	dlala	play

Affricates :

tʃ	tʃeqa	cut through
tʃh	tʃhona	sink, set
mf	imfe	sweet cane
nts	phantsi	down
j	ijojo	sour veld
ntʃ	intʃonalanga	the west
kɾ	ikɾele	sword
nz	amanzi	water
mv	imvu	sheep
nj	inja	dog

Lateral Affricates :

ntl	intle	it is beautiful
ndl	indlu	house

Semi-Vowels :

y	yiya	go !
w	umwewe	heap of stones

Notes

(i) Ejection will not be marked, nor will syllabic m be marked as such.

(ii) Intervocalic y and w will be used, except where it can be shown that the sound is not present ; e.g. yiya, lawula, but iula, iorenji.

(iii) The nasal velar coming before a velar explosive will be represented, as hitherto, by n, but before a vowel it will be represented by ng' ; e.g. ing'ang'ane, ukung'ong'ozá.

(iv) H will represent the diacritic for the sounds hitherto represented by ny' nyw' and m' ; e.g. inyhonyha, inywheša, imhaka, for inyónyá, inywéba, imaka.

CLICK CONSONANTS

	Dental.	Palato-alveolar.	Lateral.
Radical	c	q	x
Radical preceded by Nasal	nkc	nkq	nkx
Aspirated	ch	qh	xh
Voiced	gc	gq	gx
Voiced preceded by Nasal	ngc	ngq	ngx
Nasal	nc	nq	nx
Nasal followed by voiced glottal fricative	nch	nqh	nxh

Examples

c	caca	bc clear
q	uqaqqa	couch-grass
x	xoxa	discuss
nkc	inkcani	marksman
nkq	inkqayi	bald head
nkx	inkxaso	sustenance
ch	chana	hit the mark
qh	iqhalo	proverb
xh	xhasa	support
gc	gcada	roast
gq	igqudu	large knobbed stick
gx	gxotha	drive away
ngc	ingcambu	root
ngq	ingqumbo	anger
ngx	ingxolo	noise
nc	ncama	give up hope
nq	umnqayi	fighting stick
nx	nxifa	put on, wear
nch	incha	grass
nqh	inqhayi	water-pot
nxh	inxhowa	bag

3. LENGTH

A vowel symbol is to be doubled to represent a long vowel sound, but this usage is to be limited to instances where confusion is likely

to arise ; it is, however, to be consistently employed in all cases of the same word. Thus we shall write inkosi, chief, and iinkosi, chiefs ; nalo (ihafe), and it (the horse), and naalo (ihafe), there it (the horse) is ; umphunga, steam, gas, and umphuunga, lung ; ulusu, skin, and uluusu, stomach.

4. STRESS

Is not to be marked in broad script.

5. TONE

For practical purposes only relative tone will be marked, and that only when it is necessary to avoid ambiguity. This is to be marked by a small vertical line on movable type, placed before the vowel, the line to stand above the upper line of the small letters for relatively high tone, and below the lower line of the small letters for relatively low tone. As the falling tone occurs with long vowels, the doubling of the vowel will sufficiently distinguish such cases ; e.g. ithang,a (pumpkin), ithang'a (thigh), ithaanga (mountain veld) ; ndithand'e (I have loved), ndith,ande (and love, present subjunctive), ndithaande (love me) ; ,uthanda (thou lovest) and 'uthanda (he loves).

6. WORD COMPOSITION

The recommendations of the Xhosa Sub-Committee as passed by the Central Committee and the Union Government Advisory Committee, are as follows :—

While a word should not have more than one main stress, the lack of a main stress should not prevent the separation of elements, where etymology and facility of reading justify it.

(i) Demonstratives should always be separated, thus : esi sixeko, le nto.

(ii) **Kwa** also to be written separately, save when it is incorporated in a verbal form, thus : kwa nama-Xhosa, ukwalungile.

(iii) **Nje** and **nga** (as great as) to be written separately, thus : nje ngam, nga ngam, kanga ngokuḡa, enga ngeponti.

(iv) **Ukunga** (verb) to be written separately, save where vowel fusion makes this impossible ; thus : ndinga ya, (si)nge singayanga ; but ndingema, ndingakha (I could build).

(v) The auxiliary verbs **ḡa**, **ya**, **za** to be written separately, save where fusion of vowels makes this impossible, thus : ndiya funa, ndiya ḡafuna, ndiya kufuna, andiyi kufuna, ndiḡe ndifuna, ndaye ndifuna, ndiza kufuna ; but eḡefuna, ndandifuna.

(vi) Elided vowels: such expressions as *usel' efikile, ufuman' ethetha.* etc., not to be written as one word, but as above with apostrophe, or else, in school books and literary work preferably, as *esele efikile, ufumana ethetha,* etc.

(vii) The particles *na* and *ni* (interrogatives) and *ke* to be written separately; thus: *ke kaloku ke, uya bona na? uthi ni? nithi ni na nina?*

(viii) *Proper nouns:* (a) The article, the locative prefix and prepositions to be joined to proper nouns by a hyphen, thus: *u-Phatho, e-Qonce, kwa-Komani.*

(b) The prefix *um-* in names of nationality and rivers to be treated as a prefix and to have no capital, thus: *um-Xhosa, akukho m-Xhosa, um-Ngqefa, em-Gwali.*

(ix) *Reduplicated stems:* The elements to be separated by a hyphen, thus: *ukuchola-chola, ukucholwa-cholwa, intlofo-ntlofo.*

(x) The vocative particle to be joined to the noun without hyphen, thus: *mfazindini.*

7. CAPITALS AND CURSIVE FORMS OF SPECIAL SYMBOLS

The following are the forms proposed for implosive *ɓ*, the prepalatal fricative *ʃ*, and the velar fricative *ɣ*.

Print:

ɓ ʃ
 ʃ Σ
 ɣ Γ

Cursive:

ɓ ʃ
 ʃ ʃ
 ɣ ɣ

8. GENERAL

From the examples given it will be seen that the new orthography, will often make the writing and printing of Xhosa words longer, and in some cases even clumsy, as compared with the present system. But the changes will have many advantages to outweigh any possible disadvantages:—

(i) Diacritics, whose use is not understood, and is therefore neglected, by the great majority of Natives, and which, in an indifferently printed sheet, are trying to the eyesight, are abolished, except in one case, and that not a common one.

(ii) Greater consistency is attained.

(iii) Many ambiguities will be removed ; e.g., r will represent only, one sound, and the doubling of long vowels will distinguish at once words where length of vowel has semantic value. Reading is therefore made very much easier, especially for children and the imperfectly educated.

(iv) The writing of Xhosa and Zulu will now be practically identical for the same sounds, and both are brought into close approximation with the accepted orthography of most of the other Bantu languages, to the great advantage of the student of comparative philology, and of Natives who know one Bantu language and desire to learn others.

W. G. BENNIE.

XHOSA SPECIMENS IN THE NEW ORTHOGRAPHY

(Psalm XVIII, 1-5)

1. Ndikuthanda ngemfilini yam, Yehova, lomelelo lwam.
2. Yehova, ngxondoṛa yam, mboniselo yam, msindisi wam,
Thixo wam, liwa lam, endizimela ngalo,
Ngweletsetse yam, luphondo losindiso lwam, ngxonde yam !
3. Ndinqula u-Yehova ongowokudunyiswa,
Ndiya sindiswa ezintjafeni zam.
4. Izintya zokufa zandijikela ;
Imilambo yobutshijolo yandidandathekisa.
5. Izintya zelaḡafileyo zandibijela ;
Iziṛintyelo zokufa zaḡetha kum.

(Job XLI.)

1. Unokuyiṛola na ingwenya ngegwegwe ?
Ulutshonise elutyeni ulwimi lwayo ?
.
3. Ingataṛuzisa kunene na kuwe ?
Ithethe amazwi athambileyo kuwe ?
.
6. Anga ṛweḡa ngayo na amahlulelana aḡambisayo ?
Ayafḡe phakathi kwaḡaṛweḡi.
.
10. Akukho sijoṛa sokuyixhokonxa ;
Nḡuḡani na ke onga zimisa phambi kwam ?

