Names in Chindali

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Abstract
This paper explores naming practices among speakers of Chindali (a Bantu language), including the act of naming, the selection of names, their significance and uses, as well as the impact of sociocultural changes on naming. The author uses data from an ongoing study gathered in Ileje, Rungwe and Mbozi districts in Tanzania. Members of Chindali-speaking communities bear at least five types of names: childhood names and associated praise names, personal names, clan names and clan praise names. Grandparents play an important role in the choice and bestowal of childhood names. Clan names are prescribed: they are transmitted from generation to generation through sons and signal common descent. Parents select personal names for their children but the latter may select others later in life. Childhood, personal and clan names have meanings, mainly linked to the circumstances of birth, and convey cultural and social values. Contact with other languages - Kinyakyusa, English, Swahili - and the migration of Chindali speakers to Rungwe and Mbozi districts have had impacts on naming practices. Chindali speakers have borrowed foreign names and nativized them and speakers of other languages have modified Chindali names. Clan names and associated praise names generally appear resistant to some of these changes.