



Traditional African Names

Jonathan Musere

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African names are elaborately structured and contain more than one possible interpretation of meaning. They can associate one with family, location, and occupation. Many commemorate major occurrences or traditions of the culture. The range of significance is broad, making an understanding of African names not just a valuable personal tool, but also a study aid to African culture and traditions.

Traditional African Names considers primarily countries around the African Lakes such as Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zaire, and Zimbabwe, but a wide variety of names from other southern African countries are included as well. Using thousands of detailed examples, the book identifies the genesis and evolution in African name formation and meaning. Many of the 6,000 names (complete with pronunciation guidelines) are treated in English for the first time. Each entry discusses the origins of the name, its meaning, and the wide cultural and social connotations of its use, as well as variations and differences in the meanings of similar words used in related ethnic contexts. This analysis provides a unique reservoir of information concerning migration, assimilation, and cultural cross-connection.

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