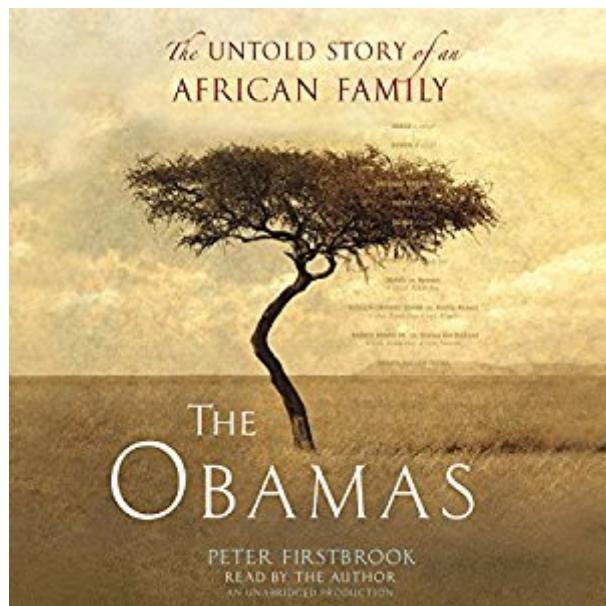


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# The Obamas: The Untold Story Of An African Family



## **Synopsis**

Peter Firstbrook spent many months in Kenya researching the history of Barack Obama's family. Peter is the only person to have traced Obama's roots from the present back through more than 20 generations, thanks to the Luo tribe's remarkable oral tradition. Seen through the eyes of the Obama family this will be the story of an African dynasty going back over 400 years. It is a truly astonishing drama culminating in the inauguration of Barack Obama on 20 January 2009, watched by Obama's African family on a flickering television clustered under a group of trees in the twilight of Kobama village in Kenya. A very special hundred or so men, women and children amongst billions all around the world who viewed the momentous event of the swearing in of the first black President of the United States. This book establishes the early ancestry of the Obama family in the Alego region, telling the story of farmers and fishermen, of love and tribal warfare, of families lost and found. It traces the Obama roots from famous tribal warriors in the 17th century to the first encounters with the white man in the early 1900s; generation by generation we follow the family through colonial rule and the fight for Kenyan independence, including the Mau Mau and the relationship of Barack Obama's father with President Kenyatta. This is a book about a family whose destiny is unknown to them. It is a true testament to the belief that any person can make their mark in the world no matter how humble their origins.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Well written, just not interesting to ME. Not the author's problem, mine. Not much more to say, I am certain others will find it interesting.

I particularly enjoyed Peter Firstbrook's book because I left England in 1954 and settled in the then-named Kenya White Highlands, about 30 miles from Nanyuki. He relates an astonishing story about a part of a great Continent that once an outsider visits, grips you for ever. Parts of it left me reeling with nostalgia for a period in history (and my life) never to be repeated. By 1955 I was a 17-year-old Kenya Police Reserve Tracker Team leader in the forests where the Mau Mau gangs hid, especially the Mt. Kenya Crown Forest. Later, like President Obama's father, I went to university in America, in my case UCLA. The author has done an exceptional job in describing the years of the Mau Mau 'Emergency' (really a real war) and the immense complications for Africans born into a rural, often nomadic world but plunged into the modern era as Britain decolonised. He has given me insights I never gained in my years there and I wish he had written it back in that faraway but crucial period in Kenya's history, those 1950s, when the lives of millions of Kenyans were being transformed out of all recognition, not least that of a certain young ambitious flirtatious male who - directly due to the deadly rivalry between the Soviets and the Americans - became the father of the first American President with African ancestry.

I've heard it said that the best way to get your family genealogy prepared is to run for a high public office. It's been published (true?) that on his mother's side President Obama is distant kin to Sarah Palin and Rush Limbaugh. Here is a genealogy for his father. It is not a recitation of names and dates and places. It tells the fascinating story of the President's African family and places it within the history of the Luo tribe and the development of what we know today as Kenya. Firstbrook begins on the night of the President's inauguration in K'obama where three TVs (one brought in by wheel barrow) and generators to run them are set up for an outdoor communal watch. He then takes you through the migrations that brought the Obamas to western Kenya and eventually to the place they call "Home Square". You learn that both father and grandfather were high achievers for their place and time and that both were both temperamental. It is not a fact, but the implication is there, that Obama's birth grandmother left Obama's grandfather because she feared for her life. The frequently seen presidential grandmother Sarah is not "the" grandmother, but "a" grandmother... the one who raised Barak Hussein Obama, Sr. when his birth mother fled. You learn why Sarah lives in K'ogelo and not K'obama. The huge extended family is described and there are examples of their daily lives and the type of arguments that have torn them apart. Many are Seventh Day Adventists; others followed President Obama's grandfather to Islam. Raised a Muslim, Obama's father claimed no religion as an adult. Hussein (a name he selected upon conversion to Islam) Onyango Obama, the President's grandfather, was educated and influenced by the British. He participated in two World

Wars on behalf of the British, only to be jailed and broken by them during the Mau Mau (he was neither a member nor sympathizer) uprisings. Barack Obama, Sr., went to Hawaii on a scholarship privately funded by Americans who in the aftermath of Kenyan independence wanted to help build the country through educating its youth. Following his time in the US (and the birth of his now famous son), he had a series of important jobs in Kenya, all lost due to alcohol. His life may have been lost due to alcohol, or as many Luo believe, in a veiled political assassination. Firstbrook brings all this to life. Like his forbearers, Obama is a scholar and a participant in the politics of his time. There is a staggering comparison of his life to that of his kinsmen. The book is highly readable and has excellent support documents. There is very clear family tree, a detailed timeline, and two glossaries, one for people and another for terms and place names. I highly recommend this book for those interested in the President's Kenyan family.

I was very happy to see that this was not only a great insight into the family of our President, but also a thoughtful look at the history of the land and people. This puts so much into context that we as Americans could not otherwise understand. It reminds me that no person is without a long, complex history that shapes each of us, even without knowing how.

This book is a must read for every American as evidence that no matter what your background, through hard work and education, every citizen has the opportunity to become President of the United States. In what can truly be called the "prequel" to Obama's own "Dreams of My Father", author Peter Firstbrook completes the journey of a family from the obscurity of central Africa to the most powerful office in the world. Although it is the story of an African family, it is, in reality, the story of the American Dream. It begins the night of Obama's inauguration. Firstbrook paints a picture of the President's relatives in a remote village in western Kenya gathering to watch the historic event on television. He talks about people walking for miles, the lack of a television or a generator. Finally, televisions and generators arrive, some by wheelbarrow, and 500 relatives settle in to celebrate. Juxtapose this picture against the scene in Washington, DC, where the elite and powerful parade through this nation's capital in limousines, where everyday citizens turn out by the thousands in support of the first black President, and a nagging question arises. How can someone just one generation removed from tribal living in K'obama, Kenya, be elected to the most powerful position in the world? Firstbrook puts it this way. "It is a journey that started with a local chief living in a mud hut overlooking the White Nile, and ended seven centuries later with the leader of the most powerful nation on earth, living in the White House." The answer to how one can go from tribal living to

President of the United States appears early in the story and is repeated throughout. The Luo, Obama's tribe in Kenya, place a great deal of emphasis on education. It was this dedication to education that led Obama's father to a university in Hawaii where he met and married the President's mother and it was education that ultimately led Obama to the White House. One of the more fascinating aspects of this book is how it chronicles the history of the Obamas over hundreds of years, from tribal warriors and nomadic people through British colonial rule to independence and positions of importance in a newly independent country. The importance of this book cannot be overstated as it preserves for posterity what had been an oral history passed down from generation to generation. It was amazing to me that Firstbrook gathered the elders of the family and listened to them tell their stories, which we now have recorded for the ages. It's hard to imagine that Obama himself can know all of the information Firstbrook has gathered. As I searched for answers, I came up with more questions. There is the question of whether Obama's father was already married when he married the President's mother in Hawaii? There is the question of whether Obama's father dies in a car accident or was he purposely killed in what was made to look like an accident? Everyone who believes in a better future should read this book. It confirms that the American Dream is not a thing of the past, but is available to every citizen who values and treasures education and is willing to put in the hard work required to stand out from the others, as the Luo did as a tribe, and as Obama did as an individual. This dream is available to everyone.

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