



Title: Daughter of Kura

Author: Debra Austin

Description:

A half-million years ago in Africa, an extraordinary woman faces a cultural cataclysm. She is destined to be leader of the Kura, a *Homo erectus* tribe, but an unforeseen threat changes everything.

Reviews

Tess Gerritsen, author of *The Keepsake*:

The prehistoric past comes vividly to life in this thrilling and boldly imaginative epic of a girl's journey into womanhood. Debra Austin recreates a fascinating world that might have been, and she makes us believe every detail.

Elle Newmark, author of *The Book of Unholy Mischief*:

In the tradition of *Clan of the Cave Bear*, *Daughter of Kura* is a highly imaginative recreation of a prehistoric matriarchy. The fascinating twist is an exploration of the roots of religion and the willingness of certain people to exploit it for personal power. I found it an intelligent and engrossing read.

Dorothy Hearst, author of *Promise of the Wolves*:

Daughter of Kura is an intriguing look into what life might have been like in the hearts and minds of our ancient ancestors. The complexities of Austin's homo erectus culture and the heartfelt story of a young woman's coming of age are fascinating and compelling.

Glendale News-Press:

Debra Austin is a part-time paleoanthropology enthusiast, former obstetrician and philosopher. And if that wasn't enough syllables for you, she's an author of a provocative novel titled *Daughter of Kura*. Set in Africa around the dawn of *Homo erectus* nearly 2 million years ago, the story provides a fascinating sociological perspective of a tribe called the Kura.

Three generations of women, Chirp, Whistle and Snap, sit as matriarchal leaders to a peaceful hunter-gatherer collective. Living seems simple but not easy, as there is a constant threat of wildlife lurking in the shadows. The tribe marks the turning of seasons with various symbolic rituals, one of which bonds them to a mate for the long winter months. Men come from surrounding tribes hoping to be selected by one of the

women, forming a bond based more on need than love.

As the time comes for the bonding ritual, and for Snap to choose her first mate, two significant strangers emerge on the scene. The mate of Snap's mother Whistle does not return from hunting, forcing her to make a new choice in mate. Snap chooses an intriguing young stranger called Ash, while Whistle chooses Bapoto, a stranger claiming there is a spirit called the "Great One" that guides the fates of the living and the dead. Snap is enamored with her mate, but very skeptical of Bapoto and his theories that contradict so many of the tribe's traditions.

It isn't long before Bapoto's beliefs take hold of other tribe members, and conflicts arise between Snap and Bapoto. When he tries to force her to mate with someone else, she rebels and is banished from the village. She struggles to survive in the wild, through pregnancy and horrible weather, and begins to start a new life for herself. Soon, Bapoto's true colors emerge, and many things change not only for Kura, but for Snap and her new tribe.

One of the great things about this book is the fact that it recognizes the earliest of civilizations as being predominantly run by the matriarchs of the culture. Austin does a fantastic job of surprising the reader in the opening scene of the book, detailing a very graphic and violent hunt, and it is only after a few paragraphs the reader realizes it is a woman enacting a stereotypical "male" activity. The author subtly weaves the rise of the patriarch and religion into the disintegration of the tribe, the dissolution of trust and the concept of right and wrong. For the reader, it becomes an emotional ride through power, anger, loss and redemption.

Austin ran the risk of writing a book that parallels so many of the themes of the Jean Auel series *Clan of the Cave Bear*, but managed to surpass any redundancy in her content, while developing a riveting plot and portraying many anthropological aspects in an interesting fashion. I was disappointed when the book came to an end, and sincerely hope the author will write more about Snap and her people in the future.

HistoricalNovels.info:

Set a half-million years in the past, *Daughter of Kura* is the imaginative story of a young woman coming of age in a matriarchal culture in southeastern Africa.

Snap's struggle to survive and her yearning for community and affection are portrayed with great emotional immediacy. Although her matriarchal clan's customs are strikingly different from those of modern human societies, the consistency and realism of their portrayal makes them both convincing and fascinating.

Library Journal:

Austin, a former obstetrician with a lifelong passion for paleoanthropology, has written an original and fascinating first novel set approximately 500,000 years ago in Africa, the cradle of humankind...This debut, which offers a fascinating peek into humanity's earliest days, stands out as well researched and wholly believable.

Publishers Weekly:

In Kura, a prehistoric village of women, peace and stability reign under the rule of the tribal Mother. The granddaughter of the current Mother, Snap, is about to undergo her first Bonding ritual, when the women choose mates. Bapoto, a strange man with unfamiliar spiritual ideas, arrives and begins to accumulate power, shifting the society

away from its matriarchal structure. Snap resists and is driven from the village. Desperate and pregnant, she must find the wisdom and courage to save her village from Bapoto's threat. Austin, a former doctor with a serious passion for paleoanthropology, brings exhaustive research and strong writing to her debut. She accomplishes an extremely difficult task to get readers to understand a community that resembles both human and animal societies...a remarkable first effort.