

# Women warriors of the amazon

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Beautiful and fearless, these women warriors functioned as rulers, priestesses, warriors and domestics in their nomadic society.

There have been many speculations, myths and tales of great women warriors. The variation of stories about women warriors range from the stories of Amazons being oiropatas, man-killers, to women warriors such as Boudicca, Icenian warrior queen that set fire to London. With such diversity in the history of the Amazon women, who wouldn't find them extremely interesting? Well maybe not the men of those days! But I sure do.

Penthesilea leading the Amazons - Christine de Pisan - c 1460 Looking at the findings of Dr. Jeannine Davis-Kimball, who spent five years excavating more than 150 women warrior burial mounds of 5th century B. C. nomads, there is more than enough evidence that these beautiful women warriors did exist.

Dr. Davis-Kimball states, " Women priestesses, warriors, and hearth women were given positions of prominence in burial mounds and depicted in cave paintings as substantially larger and more powerful than men. " (Davis 73) During the excavations, Dr. Davis-Kimball discovered many of the women were buried with ordinary household items, weapons for both men and women, religious and cultic items and some were even buried in religious clothing. This suggests that these women retained powerful positions within their clan. Although the legendary Amazon Women were known to be man-killers that lived only amongst other women, Dr. Davis-Kimball found no physical evidence for a tribe of women warriors living independently of men, at least not at the excavation site near Pokrovka, Russia .

There was a tribe of Amazons was believed to have been taken captive by the Greeks. These women were put on board ships and set to sea, where ultimately they murdered the entire crew. Without knowledge of how to sail, they managed to floundered until they landed by the cliffs of the Scythians. There they overtook many villages by fighting the people and stealing the horses. When the Scythians figured out that the warriors they were fighting were women, they managed to communicate to the women that they were willing to mate and impregnate them to ensure survival. The Amazons didn't resist, but encouraged the process. This was complicated by a language barrier and custom differences.

In time, the men showed interest for the women to become their wives. The Amazons, knowing that they couldn't live within the Scythian patriarchy, insisted the men leave their native land and start a new life in the manner they were accustomed to the Scythian men obliged and they set out and established several new villages. " These new clans were known as the Sauromataes, who spoke a version of Scythian adapted by the Amazons. " (Kimball) In their dress and style of living the Massagetai resemble the Scythians or more so the Sauromataes. They fought both on horseback and on foot, neither was strange to them. These women used bows and lances, but their favorite weapon was the battle-axe. They wore cuirasses made of either of gold or brass.

They carried bow and arrows, spears and battle-axes made from brass. They made head-gear, belts, and girdles, from gold. To protect their horses in battle, they gave them breastplates made from brass, with gold about the

reins, the bit, and the cheek-plates. They used brass and gold because it was in abundance, they had no iron or silver. They were married as husband and wife, but most of the hunting and fighting was done by the women. When the husbands grew old and became unable to provide mating for the women, the wives would kill the husbands, boil their bodies, and if killed in good health, they would eat the remains. " (Arkenberg 28) The bronze age in the Netherlands Haute Marne, bronze cuirass for a woman -11th - 8th century B.

C. The Hittites of the Bronze-age, these women held high religious positions and were great magical practitioners; many became warriors at times of need. They wore bracelets of bronze snakes to represent their power. The women Hittites would stand in for their husbands if ill or already at war. Many attacks on the Hittites were defended by the women of their community. During attacks on their villages, if the men were ill or away fighting the women would gather and cast spells of strength and power among each other. Then the women would arm themselves with spears and axes, wearing the same dress as the men and go into battle.

Although these women were generally domestic, they fought with great success. " Raise not your sword without reason. " (Wilde 19) Hypsipyle was the Queen of the island Lemnos, this island was known only inhabited by women. Lemnos was also known as Gynaikokratumene, which means reigned by women. In the Greek myth about the Argonauts, a group of men comes to this island on their way to the land of Colchis just east of the Black Sea. According to myth the women of Lemnos received the Greeks kindly for a short time of mating and trade and then armed with swords and battle-

axes, forcefully sent them on their way. These women of Lemnos lived as self-confident Amazons on this island, their aim of life was not focused on fighting against men just surviving without them.

This Island was surrounded by a tall stone wall and was believed to have never been occupied by men. “ Maroula was the last Amazon of Lemnos. (The Amazons) There are more legends than facts known about the Assyrian Queen Sannuramat, Woman Warrior. After leading her own troops in conquering Babylonia, she was responsible for the famed Hanging Gardens and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World as a memorial to her own success. She defended attacks by Alexander and India. She rode alongside her troops on horseback as she conquered Bactria and Ethiopia. Her army was estimated to have had 300, 000 foot soldiers, 5, 000 horses, plus camels and war chariots.

Queen Sannuramat fought alongside her troops in each and every battle. Legend has it that she was born in the desert and raised by doves. Other legends state that she was born of the goddess Atargatis, that her army attacked and killed the sun-god Er, or that she was born because a vengeful Astarte caused the goddess Derceto to fall in love with a Syrian boy named Caystrus, so that Derceto abandoned the child to the doves in shame.

Boudicca, Iceni warrior queen, led troops in a revolt against Rome. After the death of her husband, the King, Rome seized her territory, she was tortured and beaten, her daughters raped, and her nobles enslaved. After such a devastating attack, she rose again and created her own army. She was present with her troops when they set fire to Londinium (London).

The Roman historian Tacitus claims, " that seventy thousand Romans and Romanized Brits died. "(Wakeman 42) Her victory lasted only a year; she died either in battle. Her military troops were so conditioned to women warriors that when her troops were taken to the court in Rome, they marched straight for the throne of the Empress Agrippa and ignored the Emperor Claudius. Antiope was known as an Amazon Queen when Theseus attacked. When she was defeated, she married Theseus and had his son, Hippolytus. In one tale, Antiope survived the battle between the Amazons and Theseus, but was betrayed by the Athenian king, unfortunate for him chose to marry another woman. Antiope planned an attack on the day of his wedding.

Alongside her Amazons she had planned to massacre the King and his bride along with the guests who attended this betrayal ceremony. It took Theseus, his companions and Herakles to kill her. Her name means, " Confronting Moon. Diodorus, a scholar/historian of ancient Greece wrote of the origins of the Amazons as dating back to the ancient time of Atlantis. In his account, the Amazons lived in western Libya, the land of civilized people, and from where the gods came. According to Diodorus, the Amazon's culture and customs were the exact opposite to that of normal day Greece. The men who worked in the domestic sphere of life, while the women held political positions, fought in war, and were required to train and serve in the army during their adolescence years.

Diodorus states, " only after a woman had completed military training was she allowed to procreate. " (Ancient) The men took care of the children, if it

was a boy the men would rear them domestic and if it was a girl, one breast would be scared and then military training would began around the age of nine. Many women through out the years have fought battles, faced death and defended their families. I believethat the women warriors of yesterday continue to inspire the women warriors of today.