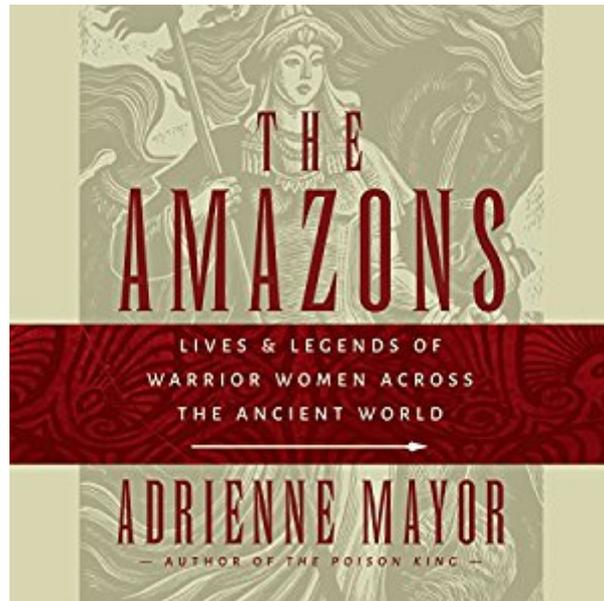


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# S: Lives And Legends Of Warrior Women Across The Ancient World



## Synopsis

s - fierce warrior women dwelling on the fringes of the known world - were the mythic archenemies of the ancient Greeks. Heracles and Achilles displayed their valor in duels with queens, and the Athenians reveled in their victory over a powerful army. In historical times, Cyrus of Persia, Alexander the Great, and the Roman general Pompey tangled with s. But just who were these bold barbarian archers on horseback who gloried in fighting, hunting, and sexual freedom? Were s real? In this deeply researched, wide-ranging book, National Book Award finalist Adrienne Mayor presents the s as they have never been seen before. This is the first comprehensive account of warrior women in myth and history across the ancient world, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Great Wall of China. Mayor tells how amazing new archaeological discoveries of battle-scarred female skeletons buried with their weapons prove that women warriors were not merely figments of the Greek imagination. Combining classical myth and art, nomad traditions, and scientific archaeology, she reveals intimate, surprising details and original insights about the lives and legends of the women known as s. Provocatively arguing that a timeless search for a balance between the sexes explains the allure of the s, Mayor reminds us that there were as many love stories as there were war stories. The Greeks were not the only people enchanted by s - Mayor shows that warlike women of nomadic cultures inspired exciting tales in ancient Egypt, Persia, India, Central Asia, and China. Driven by a detective's curiosity, Mayor unearths long-buried evidence and sifts fact from fiction to show how flesh-and-blood women of the Eurasian steppes were mythologized as s, the equals of men. The result is likely to become a classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Adrienne Mayor writes about the myths from ancient Greece and connects them to the real female horse archers who originated in the territories around the Black Sea, possibly as early as 1500 BC. She tells us that there is plenty of evidence from early Scythian and Sarmatian graves that these women fought as warriors on the steppes between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Their activities may conceivably have extended as far west as the Danube and as far east as the Great Wall of China – a stretch of about 4000 miles. Dr Mayor tackles many of the human interest questions that ordinary readers might ask themselves, including romance. There is an engrossing chapter on love and sexuality among the female warriors; elsewhere there are plenty of illustrations showing that they appreciated body art in the form of tattoos (just like the men of the period). Incidentally, the book contains a generous number of illustrations, many taken from Greek vases and sculptures. The quality of writing is good. Mayor writes in a scholarly way with plenty of references but she is also highly readable and appears anxious to make her work accessible to non-academics. She carefully balances history against myth to give her readers a state of the art account of the genuine female horse archers and the way that ancient writers such as Herodotus and Hippocrates (who called them Sarmatians) perceived them and integrated them into Greek literature. The ancient Greeks liked their women to be submissive and domesticated, so they must have been both fascinated and scandalised by the independent minded and sexually liberated women who formed the basis of their myths and legends. As far as we know, these women demanded and received total equality with men.

Twenty five hundred years ago the Greeks depicted in their legends and mythology, tribes of fierce warrior women they called the *Amazons*. These women lived free from men, as nomads on the Steppes of Euro-Asia and Scythia. The Greek hero warriors Achilles and Heracles fought them in desperate epic battles. Up until now, these women warriors were thought to be just Greek myths. But in her book, *The Amazons*, author Adrienne Mayor examines fact and myth and reveals the truth about the *Amazons*. The word "*Amazon*" was originally a name the Archaic Greeks used to designate little-known steppe peoples. Physically, women are not as robust as are men. However, the horse, the bow and the sword are equalizers, permitting women to compete as equals with men. This then was how Barbarian women (meaning they did not speak Greek) were raised from childhood, as equals who could ride and shoot as well as any man. In the wilderness of the Scythian steppes this was

necessary for defence from wild beasts and marauding tribes. They were masters of the horse. They each owned many. They especially coveted the Akhal Teke horses of the Ferghana Valley. Each horse was decorated with gold and leather ornamentations. They drank fermented mare's milk (Koumiss) as a staple. They made their own weapons; bows, arrows, swords, knives and battle axes. They fashioned crescent shields for defence. They did not worship the Greek pantheon of gods and goddesses. Many worshipped Ares and Cybele. They also worshipped a sacred black rock on (Giresun) Island in the Black Sea. The Greeks encountered them as they explored eastward into Asia, notably along the Black Sea routes. They formed liaisons with King Priam of Troy against the Greeks.

When I first heard about the ancient Greek myths and legends of brave, heroic, horse-riding warrior women known as Amazons, I remember wishing 'if only these stories were true.' When I stumbled across the writings of Herodotus, I realized that, to a certain degree at least, some of the legends probably were based on historical fact. When, over the past twenty years, the findings of post-Soviet forensic archaeology in Eastern Europe and Central Asia gradually became known to those of us in the West, I realized that now was the time for an intrepid and resourceful writer to accept the calling - that is, to accept the challenge of writing a sophisticated but readily accessible book which would expertly tie together all the myths, histories, and physical evidence now combining to make the case for the historical reality of a genuine, widespread, and durable Amazonian civilization - to reintroduce the world to the real 'Daughters of Ares' - our very own ancient ancestresses. Adrienne Mayor is such a writer and 'The Amazons' is that book. As you read through it, you will discover all manner of interesting insights and cultural detail, such as: - How the military tactics of Scythians and other mounted steppe nomads were ideally suited to the development of equalized gender relationships. Political power grows, it seems, out of having a remuda of fast horses, and a composite recurved Parthian bow. (And pants.) - The lustrous splendor of the Amazon's favored breed of horse - ancestral to today's magnificent Golden Akhal Teke.

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