

SECTION 2

THE SCYTHIAN AMAZONS

Several generations later – and several thousand kilometers from ancient Libya – a second group of women warriors, also known as the Amazons, established themselves along what is today the Black Sea coast of Turkey. They were said by ancient writers to have originated in Scythia, and to have struck out on their own as a tribe of women warriors after all of the men of their tribe were killed.

The story is told by Justin, a Roman historian who lived in the 3rd century A.D. He drew from an earlier book, now lost, by Pomperius Trogus, who wrote in the time of Augustus (63 B.C. - A.D. 14).

The Amazons, according to Justin, were descendants of the Scythians, a nomadic people who lived to the east of the Black Sea (known as the Euxine Sea in ancient times), north of the Phasis River in what is today Georgia. He describes the Scythians as a people with “no landmarks, for they neither cultivate the soil, nor have they any house, dwelling or settled place of abode, but are always engaged in feeding herds and flocks, and wandering through uncultivated deserts. They carry their wives and children with them in their wagons, which as they are covered with hides against the rain and cold they use instead of houses... They live on milk and honey... They wear the skins of wild animals, great and small.”

The founding of the Amazon nation took place some time after the Scythians battled Sesostriis, an Egyptian pharaoh, driving him back to Egypt. The Scythians topped this victory by spending fifteen years subduing Asia.

According to the Egyptian genealogies, there were three kings named Sesostriis. Kheperkare Sesostriis I ruled from 1971-1928 B.C. Khakheperre Sesostriis II ruled from 1879-1878 B.C. And Khakaure Sesostriis III ruled from 1878-1843 B.C.

Sesostriis III raided into south Palestine and Ethiopia, and is the most likely match for the Egyptian king mentioned by Justin.

Justin describes the events that were occurring in the homeland while the Scythian warriors were subduing Asia.

“Among the Scythians, in the meantime, two youths of royal extraction, Ylinos and Scolopitus, being driven from their country by

a faction of the nobility, took with them a numerous band of young men, and found a settlement on the coast of Cappadocia, near the River Thermodon, occupying the Themiscyrian plains that border on it. Here, making it their practice for several years to rob their neighbors, they were at last, by a combination of the surrounding people, cut to pieces in an ambushade.

“Their wives, when they found that to exile was added the loss of their husbands, took arms themselves, and maintained their position, repelling the attacks of their enemies at first, and afterwards assailing them in return.

“They relinquished all thoughts of marrying with their neighbors, saying that it would be slavery, not matrimony. Venturing to set an example unimitated through all generations, they established their government without the aid of men, and soon maintained their power in defiance of them.

“And that none of their females might seem more fortunate than others, they put to death all the men who had remained at home. They also took revenge for their husbands that were killed in war, by a great slaughter of their neighbors.

“Having thus secured peace by means of their arms, they proceeded, in order that their race might not fail, to form connections with the men of the adjacent nations. If any male children were born, they put them to death. The girls they bred up to the same mode of life with themselves, not consigning them to idleness, or working in wool, but training them to arms, the management of horses, and hunting; burning their right breasts in infancy, that their use of the bow might not be obstructed by them, and hence they were called Amazons.”¹

The same story is told by Paulus Orosius, a historian who was born in Portugal in the 4th century A.D. He first locates the current (for his day) “land of the Amazons” in the more distant reaches of what is

today modern Georgia, “near the sea and the Caspian mountains.”

Orosius dates the battle between the Egyptian king (whom he calls Vesozes) and the Scythians to 480 years before the founding of Rome.² Once again, the Scythians spend fifteen years conquering Asia after driving the Egyptian king back.

“In the meantime among the Scythians, two youths of the royal family, Plynos and Scolopetius, driven from home by a faction of the nobility, took with them a large band of young men and settled on the shore of Cappadocia Pontica near the Thermodon River with the Themiscyrian Plains nearby, where, after a long period of plundering, they were slaughtered in ambush by the united action of their neighbors.

“Then, after obtaining peace by force of arms, they entered marital relations with foreigners; they killed male children as soon as they were born, but nurtured the females carefully after burning off the right breasts of the infants, that they might not be impeded in the shooting of arrows. For this reason, they have been called Amazons.”

Another ancient writer who made reference to the Scythian origin of the Amazons was Jordanes (also known as Jornandes), a Germanic historian who wrote a history of the Goths (Scythians) around A.D. 550. Jordanes places the rise of the Amazons just after the death of the Gothic king Tanausis, who waged a war against the Egyptian pharaoh Vesosis.

“Vesosis waged a war disastrous to himself against the Scythians, whom ancient tradition asserts to have been the husbands of the Amazons. Concerning these female warriors Orosius speaks in convincing language ...

“[The Scythians] dwelt at that time along a bend of Lake Maeotis, from the river Borysthenes, which the natives call the Danaper, to the stream of the Tanais. ...

After [Tanausis'] death, while the army under his successors was engaged in an expedition in other parts, a neighboring tribe attempted to carry off women of the Goths as booty. But they made a brave resistance, as they had been taught to do by their husbands, and routed in disgrace the enemy who had come upon them.

“When they had won this victory, they

were inspired with greater daring. Mutually encouraging each other, they took up arms and chose two of the bolder, Lampeto and Marpesia, to act as their leaders.”

The modern writer Charles Christopher Mierow, in his book *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, quotes Gutschmid as placing the approximately thirty-three-year rule of Tanausis between 1323 B.C. and 1290 B.C. The three generations of Amazons that follow (Lampeto and Marpesia, Menalippe and Hippolyte, and Penthesileia) are placed between the years 1289 and 1190 B.C., with the latter date being that of the Trojan War.

The rule of Tanausis, as given by Mierow, overlaps the reigns of three Egyptian pharaohs: Djeserkheprure Horemheb (1348-1320 B.C.); Menpehtyre Ramesses I (1320-1318 B.C.); and Usermare Ramesses II (1304-1237 B.C.). Of these pharaohs, Ramesses II is known to have fought a major battle against King Muwatallis of the Hittites (an ancient people who inhabited what is now central Turkey) in the fifth year of the pharaoh's reign. The battle of Kadesh, which took place in 1300 B.C. (or between 1304 and 1296 B.C.) was a decisive Hittite victory.

According to the modern writer Helen Diner, the Greeks called Ramesses II by the name Senostris.

It is possible that the stories of a Scythian victory over an Egyptian pharaoh were in fact based upon Scythians who fought alongside the Hittite forces.

Herodotus gives a different version of the battles of Sesostris against the Scythians and Thracians. Perhaps because the story was provided to him by Egyptian priests, Sesostris is listed as the victor. In any case, according to the Egyptian genealogies cited by Herodotus, Sesostris can be dated prior to the Trojan War; his grandson Proteus was reputed to have welcomed the Trojan prince Paris and his lover, the Spartan queen Helen (whose elopement with Paris was reputed to have been the cause of the war) when they were blown off course on their way from Sparta to Troy.

The Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea, who wrote in the 5th century A.D., also says that the Amazon nation was founded by women whose husbands were decimated in war.

“... barbarians from these regions [the Caucasus Mountains] together with their own women made an invasion of Asia with a great army, established a camp at the river Thermodon, and left their women there; then, while they themselves were overrunning the greater part of the land of Asia, they were

encountered by the inhabitants of the land and utterly destroyed, and not a man of them returned to the women's encampment.

"And thereafter these women, through fear of the people dwelling round about and constrained by the failure of their supplies, put on manly valor, not at all of their own will, and, taking up the equipment of arms and armor left by the men in the camp and arming themselves in excellent fashion with this, they made a display of manly valor, being driven to do so by sheer necessity, until they were all destroyed."

Diodorus of Sicily, in describing the Scythians, also recounts the story of the founding of the Amazon nation. He first talks about the expansionist wars of the Scythians, which expanded their power into Thrace on the west, and to Egypt in the southeast.³

"After these events there came in Scythia a period of revolutions, in which the sovereigns were women endowed with exceptional valor. For among these peoples the women train for war just as do the men and in acts of manly valor are in no wise inferior to the men ...

"The nation of the Amazons, after it was once organized, was so distinguished for its manly prowess that it not only overran much of the neighboring territory but even subdued a large part of Europe and Asia ...

"Now in the country along the Thermodon river, as the account goes, the sovereignty was in the hands of a people among whom the women held the supreme power, and its women performed the services of war just as did the men.

"Of these women one, who possessed the royal authority, was remarkable for her prowess in war and her bodily strength, and gathering together an army of women she drilled it in the use of arms and subdued in war some of the neighboring peoples.

"And since her valor and fame increased, she made war upon people after people of neighboring lands, and as the tide of her fortune continued favorable, she was so filled with pride that she gave herself the appellation of 'Daughter of Ares'.

"To the men she assigned the spinning of wool and such other domestic duties as belong to women. Laws also were established by her, by virtue of which she led forth the women to

the contests of war, but upon the men she fastened humiliation and slavery.

"And as for their children, they mutilated both the legs and the arms of the males, incapacitating them in this way for the demands of war, and in the case of the females they seared the right breast that it might not project when their bodies matured and be in the way; and it is for this reason that the nation of the Amazons received the appellation it bears.

"In general, this queen was remarkable for her intelligence and ability as a general, and she founded a great city named Themiscyra at the mouth of the Thermodon River and built there a famous palace; furthermore, in her campaigns she devoted much attention to military discipline and at the outset subdued all her neighbors as far as the Tanais River. And this queen, they say, accomplished the deeds which have been mentioned, and fighting brilliantly in a certain battle she ended her life heroically.

"The daughter of this queen ... on succeeding to the throne, emulated the excellence of her mother, and even surpassed her in some particular deeds. For instance, she exercised in the chase the maidens from their earliest girlhood and drilled them daily in the arts of war, and she also established magnificent festivals both to [the war god] Ares and to the [goddess] Artemis who is called Tauropolis.

"Then she campaigned against the territory lying beyond the Tanais [River] and subdued all the peoples one after another as far as Thrace; and returning to her native land with much booty she built magnificent shrines to the deities mentioned above, and by reason of her kindly rule over her subjects received from them the greatest approbation.

"She also campaigned on the other side [south of the Black Sea] and subdued a large part of Asia and extended her power as far as Syria.

"After the death of this queen ... women of her family, succeeding to the queenship from time to time, ruled with distinction and advanced the nation of the Amazons in both power and fame."

The same story was told by Xenophon, who wrote nearly four centuries earlier.

“Beside the Thermodon River, they say, was a nation ruled by women where women shared the obligations of war equally with men. One woman, who possessed the royal power, excelled the rest in courage and strength. She organized and trained an army of women and subdued some of her neighbors.

“Growing in bravery and fame, she campaigned ceaselessly against nearby peoples. Her fortunes prospered, and she took on lofty aspirations. She called herself the daughter of Ares and assigned to the men the spinning of wool and the domestic work of the women. She established laws according to which the women went to the contests of war, and humility and slavery were fastened on the men.

“[The Amazons] mutilated the legs and arms of the males who were born, rendering them useless for war. They seared the right breast of the female infants in order to prevent it from swelling out and being in the way when their bodies matured. For this reason the nations of the Amazons received their name.”

Ephorus, a writer of the 4th century B.C., says the tribe of Amazons originated when the women were raped by their husbands, kill them in retaliation, and then refuse to welcome back other men from a war.

The modern writer Donald J. Sobol cites another addition to the story of the founding of the Amazon race. Initially Scythians who lived near what is today known as the Don River, the Amazons were led to what would become their new homeland by Lysippe after her son developed an affection for her and drowned himself, rather than commit incest. (As a result, he gave his name to the river, which was known as the Tanais in ancient times.) Lysippe led her people south, through the Caucasus mountains. Defeating the people of Cappadocia, the band of Scythians settled on the southern coast of the Black Sea.

Traditionally, the new homeland of these exiled Scythians is said to have a city, known as Themiscyra, beside the Thermodon River. The modern Turkish city which occupies this site still bears the same name (albeit in slightly altered form): Terme.

LAMPETO & MARPESIA

Having established Themiscyra, the Amazons were initially ruled jointly by two queens: Lampeto and Marpesia. The former remained at home, while the latter campaigned with an Amazon army throughout what was then known as Asia (modern Turkey).

Jordanes tells the story:

“While they were in command, they cast lots both for the defense of their own country and the devastation of other lands. So Lampeto remained to guard their native land and Marpesia took a company of women and led this novel army into Asia.

“After conquering various tribes and making others their allies by treaties, she came to the Caucasus [Mountains]. There she remained for some time and gave the place the name ‘Rock of Marpesia,’ of which [the Roman poet] Vergil also makes mention: ‘Like to hard flint or the Marpesian Cliff.’ It was here Alexander the Great afterwards built gates and named them the Caspian Gates, which now the tribe of the Lazi guard as a Roman outpost.

“Here, then, the Amazons remained for some time and were much strengthened. Then they departed and crossed the river Halys [to the east of Themiscyra, in modern Turkey] which flows near the city of Gangra, and with equal success they subdued Armenia, Syria, Cilicia, Galatia, Pisidia, and all the places of Asia.

“Then they turned to Ionia and Aeolia, and made provinces of them after their surrender. Here they ruled for some time and even founded cities and camps bearing their name. At Ephesus also they built a very costly and beautiful temple for Diana [Artemis] because of her delight in archery and the case – arts to which they were themselves devoted.

“Then these Scythian-born women, who had by such a chance gained control over the kingdoms of Asia, held them for almost 100 years, and at last came back to their own kinfolk in the Marpesian rocks I have mentioned above, namely the Caucasus Mountains.”

The tale of the Amazons’ conquest of the whole of Asia sounds quite familiar to that of the African Amazons, who were said to have conquered much the same area. It is impossible to tell if the legends became confused – or if there were indeed two separate tales of conquest that just happened to cover the same geographical area.

Valerius Flaccus, a Roman poet of the 1st century A.D., mentions Marpesia (but not by name) in his book *Argonautica* in a passage describing the Thermodon River.

“... Thermodon that rolls even in mid-sea his angry tumult, a river sacred to Gradivus [Ares] and most rich with spoils, for to it the maiden [Marpesia] presents horses and promised battle axes, when in great triumph she returns through the Caspian Gates, with Medians and Massagetae at her chariot wheels.

“True breed and blood are [the Amazons], the war god is their sire.”

Justin also tells the story of the first two Amazon queens, in a more condensed form:

“[The Amazons] had two queens, Marpesia and Lampedo, who, dividing their forces into two bodies after they were grown famous for their power, conducted their wars, and defended their borders separately and by turns. And that a reason for their success might not be wanting, they spread a report that they were the daughters of [the war god] Mars [Ares].

“After subduing the greater part of Europe, they possessed themselves also of some cities in Asia. Having then founded Ephesus and several other towns there, they sent a detachment of their army home, laden with a vast quantity of spoil.

“The rest, who remained to secure their power in Asia, were cut to pieces, together with their queen Marpesia, by a combination of barbarous tribes.”

The story is repeated by Paulus Orosius, who probably used Justin as a source.

“[The Amazons] had two queens, Marpesia and Lampeto, who divided the army into two parts and drew lots for the responsibilities of war and defense of the homeland in turn. Then, when they had subdued Europe for the most part and had captured some cities of Asia, and furthermore, had themselves founded Ephesus and other cities, they summoned home the principal part of their army, heavily laden with the richest booty; the rest of the army, which had been left to guard their empire in Asia, together with Queen Marpesia, was slaughtered in an encounter with the enemy.”

ORITHYA

After the death of Marpesia, her daughter Orithya became the next queen of the Amazons. Like her mother, she shared the position with another Amazon queen, whose name is alternatively given as Hippolyte or Antiope.

During Orithya's reign, the Amazons were attacked by Achaean (Greek) raiders under the command of Heracles, a prince of Tiryns. This Heracles lived shortly before the Trojan War; his son and grandsons were said to have fought at Troy.

Heracles' attack on the Amazons was said to have been the ninth of the twelve “labors” that were imposed upon him by the king of Tiryns as punishment after Heracles killed his own wife and children. The task set for Heracles was to travel to Themiscyra and steal the “girdle” of the Amazon queen Hippolyte.

In the language of the ancient Greeks, “stealing a girdle” (a broad belt) is a euphemism for a man taking a woman's virginity. A passage found in Homer's *Odyssey*, describing the sea god Poseidon making love to a mortal woman, describes how he “unclasped her virgin belt.” In the myths of Heracles' labors, the word used for Hippolyte's girdle is “zoster.” The common word for a woman's girdle was “zone.” If a woman loosened her zone for a man, she was agreeing to have sex with him.

Heracles' true task may thus have been to seduce or rape the Amazon queen. But there is another way to interpret the labor. Since in the Bronze Age it was common for women to be carried away as slaves by the victors of a battle, it is possible that one of the objects of Heracles' raid was to bring back captive Amazons.

According to Helen Diner, in ancient times a “virgin” was an unmarried woman – as opposed to our modern definition of the term, which is used to describe a woman who has never had intercourse with a man.

Justin tells the story of Orithya's exploits, and of the Achaean attack that occurred during her reign.

“Orithya, the daughter of Marpesia, succeeded to the government in her room, and has attracted extraordinary admiration, not only for her eminent skill in war, but for having preserved her virginity to the end of her life. So much was added by her valor and conduct to the fame and glory of the Amazons, that [King Eurystheus], for whom Heracles was bound to perform twelve labors, ordered him, as if it were a thing impossible, to bring him the arms of the queen of the Amazons.

“Heracles, accordingly, having proceeded [to Themiscyra] with nine ships of war, the

principal young men of Greece accompanying him, attacked the Amazons unawares.

"Two sisters at this time held the government, Antiope and Orithya; but Orithya was engaged in a war abroad. When Heracles, therefore, landed on the coast of the Amazons, there was but a small number of them there with their queen Antiope, free from all apprehension of hostilities. Hence it happened that a few only, roused by the sudden alarm, took up arms, and these afforded an easy conquest to the enemy.

"Many [Amazons] were slain, and many taken prisoners; among the latter were two sisters of Antiope, Menalippe being taken by Heracles, and Hippolyte by Theseus.⁴

"Theseus, having received his prisoner as his share of the spoil, took her to wife, and had by her his son Hippolytus.⁵

"Heracles, after his victory, restored his captive Menalippe to her sister, receiving the arms of the queen as a recompense; and having thus executed what was imposed on him, he returned to [King Eurystheus]."

Jordanes repeats much the same story: "Heracles, they say, fought against [the Amazons] and overcame Menalippe,⁶ yet more by guile than by valor."

SINOPE

Paulus Orosius repeats the story of Heracles' attack on Themiscyra, but gives the name of Marpesia's daughter as Sinope, rather than as Orithya.

"Sinope, the daughter of Marpesia, took her place. She achieved a unique reputation for courage by reason of her permanent virginity.

"Such great admiration and fear spread by her fame through the peoples already alarmed that even Heracles, when he had been ordered by his master to bring the weapons of the queen, as if destined for inevitable danger, brought together the pick of all the noble youth of Greece and prepared nine vessels of war, and still not content with this gathering of strength, preferred to attack suddenly and to surround [the Amazons] unaware.

"At that time, two sisters, Antiope and Orithya, were in command of the kingdom. Heracles, traveling by sea, caught them off-guard and unarmed and indolent from the inactivity of peaceful times.

"Among the large number of killed and

captured were two sisters of Antiope. One of these, Melanippe, was taken by Heracles, and Hippolyte was taken by Theseus. Theseus married Hippolyte, but Heracles gave Melanippe back to her sister, Antiope, and received as the ransom price the weapons of the queen."

Diodorus of Sicily tells the story of the origin of the people of Sinope. According to him, the Scythians, at the time of their victory over the Egyptian pharaoh, resettled many of the peoples they had conquered in new areas. Among these were the Assyrians (White Syrians) who were "removed to the land between Paphlagonia and Pontus."⁷

Sinope was also a character of Greek mythology. Apollonius of Rhodes tells how Sinope tricked the god Zeus into allowing her to forever remain a virgin. "In [Zeus'] passion for the girl he had solemnly sworn to fulfill her dearest wish, whatever that might be; and she very cleverly had said, 'I wish to remain a virgin.' By the same ruse she outwitted [the god] Apollo when he made love to her; and the river god Halys as well. Men fared no better than the gods; this woman never was possessed by any lover."

Yet Sinope did give birth to a son, for whom the Syrians were named. According to Plutarch, the Syrians of Sinope were "descended ... from Syrus, the son of Apollo and Sinope, the daughter of Asopus."

AMAZONS vs. HERACLES

Diodorus told the story of the battle of the Amazons against Heracles in even greater detail. He is believed to have used as his source the book *Praise of Heracles*, by Matris of Thebes. Other material was drawn from the 2nd century B.C. scholar Dionysus, who wrote an encyclopedia of mythology called the *Kyklos* that included stories of the Amazons.

Diodorus says that Heracles' attack on the Amazons took place "many generations" after the reigns of the first two Amazon queens.

"Heracles then received a command to bring back the girdle of Hippolyte the Amazon and so made the expedition against the Amazons. Accordingly he sailed into the Pontus [Black Sea], which was named by him Euxeinus ["hospitable to strangers"], and continuing to the mouth of the Thermodon River he encamped near the city of Themiscyra, in which was situated the palace of the Amazons.

"First of all he demanded of them the

girdle which he had been commanded to get; but when they would pay no heed to him, he joined battle with them.

"Now the general mass of the Amazons were arrayed against the main body of the followers of Heracles, but the most honored of the women were drawn up opposite Heracles himself and put up a stubborn battle.

"The first ... to join battle with him was Aella ["Whirlwind"] who had been given this name because of her swiftness, but she found her opponent more agile than herself.

"The second, Philippis, encountering a mortal blow at the very first conflict, was slain.

"Then [Heracles] joined with Prothoe, who, they said, had been victorious seven times over the opponents whom she had challenged to battle.

"When [Prothoe] fell, the fourth whom [Heracles] overcame was known as Eriboea. She had boasted that because of the manly bravery which she displayed in contests of war she had no need of anyone to help her, but she found that her claim was false when she encountered her better.

"The next, Celaeno, Eurybia, and Phoebe, who were companions of Artemis in the hunt and whose spears found their mark invariably, did not even graze the single target, but in that fight they were one and all cut down as they stood shoulder to shoulder with each other.

"After them Deianeira, Asteria and Marpe, and Tecmessa and Alcippe were overcome. The last-named had taken a vow to remain a maiden, and the vow she kept, but her life she could not preserve.

"The commander of the Amazons, Melanippe, who was also greatly admired for her manly courage, now lost her supremacy. And Heracles, after thus killing the most renowned of the Amazons and forcing the remaining multitude to turn in flight, cut down the greater number of them, so that the race of them was utterly exterminated. As for the captives, he gave Antiope as a gift to Theseus and set Melanippe free, accepting her girdle as ransom."

According to Diodorus, the attack devastated the Amazons.

"[Heracles] embarked on this campaign, and coming off victorious in a great battle he

not only cut to pieces the army of Amazons but also, after taking captive Hippolyte together with her girdle, completely crushed this nation.

"Consequently the neighboring barbarians, despising the weakness of this people and remembering against them their past injuries, waged continuous wars against the nation to such a degree that they left in existence not even the name of the race of the Amazons."

On the way to attack the Amazons, Heracles befriends King Lycus of the Mariandyni, a tribe which lived to the west of the Amazons, along the Black Sea coast. According to Apollodorus Heracles sided with them in a battle against the Bebryces, a neighboring tribe,⁸ and killed King Mygdon of the Mygdonians, brother of King Amycus of the Bebryces.

This same King Mygdon had earlier sided with the Trojans when they fought the Amazons on the Sangarius River.⁹ That battle is briefly mentioned by Homer in the *Iliad*. The words are those of Priam, king of Troy.

"I went to Phrygia [a region east of Troy] once, the land of vines and galloping horses, and learned how numerous the Phrygians are when I saw the armies of [the Phrygian king] Otreus and King Mygdon encamped by the river Sangarius. I was their ally and I bivouacked with them that time the Amazons, who fight like men, came up to the attack."

Strabo also makes mention of this battle, in a discussion of the fertile land that lay to the west of the Halys River. "... even the Amazons took courage to attack it, against whom not only Priam, but also Bellerophontes, are said to have made expeditions."

Apollodorus adds detail to the story of Heracles' attack on the Amazons, explaining that Admete, the daughter of King Eurystheus, coveted an Amazon belt as a trophy. This belt was said to have been a mark of Hippolyte's queenship.

"The ninth labor [Eurystheus] enjoined on Heracles was to bring the belt of Hippolyte. She was queen of the Amazons, who dwelt about the river Thermodon, a people great in war; for they cultivated the manly virtues, and if ever they gave birth to children through intercourse with the other sex, they reared the females; and they pinched off the right breasts that they might not be trammelled by them in

throwing the javelin, but they kept the left breasts, that they might suckle.

“Now Hippolyte had the belt of [the war god] Ares in token of her superiority to all the rest. Heracles was sent to fetch this belt because Admete, daughter of Eurystheus, desired to get it.

“So taking with him a band of volunteer comrades in a single ship he set sail ...

“Having put in at the harbor of Themiscyra, [Heracles] received a visit from Hippolyte, who inquired why he was come, and promised to give him the belt. But [the goddess] Hera in the likeness of an Amazon went up and down the multitude saying that the strangers who had arrived were carrying off the queen. So the Amazons in arms charged on horseback down on the ship.

“When Heracles saw them in arms, he suspected treachery, and killing Hippolyte stripped her of her belt. And after fighting the rest he sailed away and touched at Troy.”¹⁰

According to Apollonius of Rhodes, after the attack on the Amazons Heracles returned to his Mariandyni allies “overland on foot with the belt of the fighting Amazon Hippolyte.”

The Amazons had put up enough of a fight to seriously injure at least one of the Achaean attackers. Apollonius, in describing the later voyage of the Argonauts (a shipful of Achaean explorers commanded by Jason) along the southern coast of the Black Sea, describes the tomb of one of Heracles’ fallen companions: “Next [the Argonauts] saw the tomb of Sthenelus son of Actor, who had joined Heracles in his daring attack on the Amazons, and on the way back had died on the beach from an arrow wound.”

Valerius Flaccus also describes the tomb and the Argonauts’ sighting of its ghostly inhabitant: “[The ghost of] Sthenelus goes forth: as he was when the martial Amazon beheld him and when Alcides buried his comrade, clad in his own armor, even so flashed he forth as he rose from his funeral mound upon the strand.”

The tomb was located east of the Callichorus River, and was also mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman historian of the 4th century A.D., who writes: “A short distance from these [tribes inhabiting the south shore of the Black Sea] are the tombs of famous men, in which are buried Sthenelus, Idmon, and Tiphys; the first of these was a companion of Heracles, mortally wounded in the war with the Amazons ...”

Other companions of Heracles – the brothers

Autolycus, Phlogius, and Deileon, were stranded in Sinope after the battle against the Amazons.

Plutarch provides more details of how the brothers wound up in Sinope. “On [Autolycus’] voyage of return, in company with Demoleon and Phlogius, he lost his ship, which was wrecked at the place called Pedalium, in the Chersonesus¹¹; but he himself escaped, with his arms and his companions, and coming to Sinope, took the city away from the Syrians.”¹²

Apollonius only briefly describes the Amazons’ stand against Heracles. “... Melanippe, daughter of Ares, having sallied out one day, was caught in an ambush by the great Heracles, though he let her go unharmed when her sister Hippolyte gave him her own resplendent girdle by way of ransom.”

Hyginus, a Latin author who compiled a collection of legends and myths in the 1st century B.C., also briefly mentions the Amazons’ battle against Heracles: “[Heracles killed] Hippolyte, daughter of Mars and Queen Otrera, and took from her the belt of the Amazon queen; then he presented Antiope as captive to Theseus.”

Valerius Flaccus mentions the Amazons’ battle against Heracles in the *Argonautica*, in a passage where the Argonauts are passing Themiscyra and their leader Jason is being told about the battle.

“... silently with regretful heart he hears of the pursuits and the labors of the maidens’ warfare, which first let go the reins and fell, which one her father’s stream [the Thermodon] bore half-dead to the sea, which fled away stripping the targe [shield] from her side and the quiver from her shoulder, overtaken soon and pierced by the shaft of Heracles; how Anger and a sire [the war god Ares] whom tears awaited urged on the axe-wielding companies, what terror the leader herself inspired, what fury drove her on, and how her baldric [sword belt] blazed conspicuous with gold.”

Among those participating in Heracles’ raid on Themiscyra was Telamon, a king of Salamis. A fragment from an ancient writer – thought to be the work of Hegesinus, Hesiod, or the 6th century writer Cynaethus – is quoted by Florence Mary Bennett in her 1910 book: “Telamon of the insatiable battle shout was the first to bring light to our comrades by slaying man-destroying, blameless Melanippe, own sister to the golden-girdled queen.”

The Greek writer Pindar (522-443 or 518-438 B.C.), confirms that Telamon, “whose might is famed afar as comrade of Iolaus” participation in the attack on

the Amazons. Pindar writes that Telamon followed Iolaus (a nephew of Heracles, and his charioteer) "to fight the mighty Amazons with their brazen bows."

Another of those to follow Heracles was Peleus, a king of Phthia and the brother of Telamon. A fragment of Pindar reads: "The youth of godlike Peleus shone forth with countless labors. With the son of Alcmena [Heracles] first went he to the plain of Troy ... and again, on the quest of the girdles of the Amazon."

Heracles's exploits were the subject of several plays in the Classical period. The play *Heracles Furens* was written by Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C. - A.D. 65). In it, he confuses the homeland of the Themiscyrian Amazons with that of the Sarmatae, a Scythian tribe.

"There she [Hippolyte] who rules over tribes unwed, with a golden girdle about her loins, stripped the glorious spoil from her body, her shield and the bands of her snow-white breast, on bended knee looking up to her victor."

Another passage in the play remarks, "Thermodon's unwed queen [Hippolyte] of ever-virgin couch could not prevail against [Heracles]."

In his play *Hippolytus*, Seneca again confuses the Amazon and Scythian homelands in a passage where Phaedra talks about disguising herself as an Amazon.

"Tossed at random, let my locks fall down upon my neck and shoulders and, moved by swift running, stream upon the wind. My left hand shall be busied with the quiver and my right wield a Thessalian spear. In such guise as the dweller by Tanais or Maeotis, leaving cold Pontus' tract behind, led her hordes, treading Athenian soil, and, binding her locks in a knot, let them flow free, her side protected by a crescent shield; so will I betake me to the woods."

Yet in his play *Medea*, Seneca places the Amazons firmly along the banks of the Thermodon River. The Colchian princess Medea, notes, "All the land that Phasis waters with its calm, winding stream, all that Scythian Pontus sees behind it, where the sea grows sweet with marshy waters, all that the unwedded hordes [Amazons], crescent-shielded, hemmed by Thermodon's banks, fill with alarm – over all this my father rules."

In *Heracles Oetaeus*, another of Seneca's plays, Heracles bemoans the fact that his wife has poisoned him, and wishes instead that he might have been overcome instead by an Amazon. He says of his wife,

"Would that with lifted club I might crush out her wicked life just as I smote down the Amazonian pest upon the slopes of snowy Caucasus." Once again, Seneca is confused as to the location of the Amazonian homeland; Themiscyra lay far to the west of the Caucasus Mountains.

Seneca mentions the Amazons in several of his other plays, including one titled *Agamemnon*, in which the chorus says, "Warlike Hippolyte saw the spoil snatched from about her breast ..." In a later passage of the same play, the prophetess Cassandra, in one of her visions, describes the queen of Sparta: "... a Spartan by her garb, but carrying an Amazonian axe."

In another of his plays, titled *Oedipus*, Seneca confuses the Amazons of Themiscyra with the African Amazons who fought both for and against Dionysus. Describing the god Bacchus (Dionysus), one passage says, "He has wrested their arms from the warrior maidens; with downcast face they fell to earth, those Thermodontian hordes, gave up at length their light arrows, and became maenads [female followers of the god Dionysus]."

An earlier play, this one by the Greek playwright Euripides, was titled *Heracles* and produced in 417 B.C. A passage from it reads:

"[Heracles] passed the swelling sea of black, and fought the Amazonian force foregathered at Maeotis where the many rivers meet. What town of Hellas missed him as he mustered friends to fight, to win the warrior women's gold-encrusted robes, in quest for a girdle's deadly quarry?

"And Hellas [Greece] won the prize, spoils of a famous foreign queen, which now [the city of] Mycenae keeps."¹³

Heracles later presented Hippolyte's battle axe to Omphale, queen of the Maeonians (Lydians), a people who inhabited what is now the Turkish Aegean coast. According to Plutarch, the axe later wound up in the hands of a statue of the god Zeus in Caria (a land to the south of Lydia).

"When Heracles had slain Hippolyte, together with her other arms he took her axe and gave it as a present to Omphale. The Lydian kings who succeeded Omphale used to carry it as a part of the sacred regalia, handing it down one to the other until it came to Candaules. He deemed it of little worth and gave it to one of his companions to carry.

"But when Gyges revolted and was at war with Candaules, Arselis came from Mylasa

with an army as an ally for Gyges and slew both Candaules and his companion and brought the axe to Caria together with the other spoils.

“He therefore constructed a statue of Zeus and placed the axe in its hand, and called the god Labrandeus; for the Lydians call the axe ‘labrys.’”

A labrys is a double-headed axe, similar in design to those used in Bronze Age religious ceremonies at Knossos, on the island of Crete. The name comes from the word “labyrinth” or “maze” – a term used to describe the complicated architecture of the royal palace at Knossos. The association of Amazons with this form of axe was one which continued through the centuries. In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon of Athens describes his journey with an army that marched along the southern coast of the Black Sea on the way back to Greece in 401-400 B.C. A prisoner captured by the Greek troops was “carrying a Persian bow and quiver, and a battleaxe like those worn by the Amazons.”

In ancient Greece, depictions of Heracles’ labors were popular. Pausanias lists two illustrations of Heracles’ attack on the Amazons of Themiscyra, both located in the city of Olympia. In describing a temple dedicated to Zeus, Pausanias notes that “over the rear doors [Heracles] is taking the Amazon’s belt ...” The statue of the god shows Zeus sitting on a throne; between the feet of this throne are four bars, each decorated with a scene.

Pausanias describes the first bar, then adds, “On the other bars is Heracles’ regiment fighting the Amazons. The number of figures on both sides is twenty-nine, and Theseus is serving with Heracles’ allies.”

The statue also included a footstool under the god’s feet, which was also decorated: “The stool under Zeus’ feet ... has golden lions worked on it and Theseus fighting the Amazons, the first Athenian act of valor outside civil war.”

The same temple also has a painting of a later Amazon queen, Penthesileia, who fought in the Trojan War: “Finally in these paintings Penthesileia is breathing her last breath and Achilles is holding her up...”

Elsewhere in the city is an image of “Heracles fighting for the belt with a mounted Amazon.” The piece was done by Aristokles of Kydonia, and was dedicated by Euagoras of Zankle. The work of art was old in Pausanias’ time (the 2nd century A.D.); he notes: “Aristokles must be numbered with the most ancient artists; no one can say for certain in what generation he lived.”

THE SAUROMATAE

The Greek historian and geographer Herodotus, writing in the 5th century B.C., provided an interesting twist to the story of Heracles’ attack on the Amazon homeland. According to Herodotus, at least some of the Amazons captured by Heracles later escaped when the Achaean ships they were held captive on were blown north across the Black Sea to Scythian territory. Here, the Amazons joined with Scythian men, to produce the tribe known in Herodotus’ day as the Sauromatae.

“In the war between the Greeks and the Amazons, the Greeks, after their victory at the river Thermodon, sailed off in three ships with as many Amazons on board as they had succeeded in taking alive. Once at sea, the women murdered their captors, but, as they had no knowledge of boats and were unable to handle either rudder or sail or oar, they soon found themselves, when the men were done for, at the mercy of wind and wave, and were blown to Cremni – the Cliffs¹⁴ – on Lake Maeotis [the Sea of Azov], a place within the territory of the free Scythians. Here they got ashore and made their way inland to an inhabited part of the country.

“The first thing they fell in with was a herd of horses grazing; these they seized, and, mounting on their backs, rode off in search of loot.

“The Scythians could not understand what was happening and were at a loss to know where the marauders had come from, as their dress, speech, and nationality were strange to them. Thinking, however, that they were young men, they fought in defense of their property, and discovered from the bodies which came into their possession after the battle that they were women.

“The discovery gave a new direction to their plans; they decided to make no further attempt to kill the invaders, but to send out a detachment of their youngest men, about equal in number to the Amazons, with orders to camp near them and take their cue from whatever it was that the Amazons then did: if they pursued them, they were not to fight, but to give ground; then when the pursuit was abandoned, they were once again to encamp within easy range. The motive behind this policy was the Scythians’ desire to get children by the Amazons.

“The detachment of young men obeyed

their orders, and the Amazons, realizing that they meant no harm, did not attempt to molest them, with the result that every day the two camps drew a little closer together. Neither party had anything but their weapons and their horses, and both lived the same sort of life, hunting and plundering.

"Towards midday the Amazons used to scatter and go off to some little distance in ones and twos to ease themselves, and the Scythians, when they noticed this, followed suit; until one of them, coming upon an Amazon girl all by herself, began to make advances to her. She, nothing loth, gave him what he wanted, and then told him by signs – being unable to express her meaning in words, as neither understood the other's language – to return on the following day with a friend, making it clear that there must be two men, and that she herself would bring another girl.

"The young man then left her and told the others what had happened, and on the next day took a friend to the same spot, where he found his Amazon waiting for him and another one with her. Having learned of their success, the rest of the young Scythians soon succeeded in getting the Amazons to submit to their wishes.

"The two camps then united, and Amazons and Scythians lived together, every man keeping as his wife the woman whose favors he had first enjoyed.

"The men could not learn the women's language, but the women succeeded in picking up the men's; so when they could understand one another, the Scythians made the following proposal: 'We,' they said, 'have parents and property. Let us give up our present way of life and return to live with our people. We will keep you as our wives and not take any others.'

"The Amazons replied: 'We and the women of your nation could never live together; our ways are too much at variance. We are riders; our business is with the bow and the spear, and we know nothing of women's work; but in your country no woman has anything to do with such things – your women stay at home in their wagons occupied with feminine tasks, and never go out to hunt or for any other purpose. We could not possibly agree. If, however, you wish to keep us for your wives and to behave as honorable men, go and get from your parents the share of property which is due to you, and then let us

go off and live by ourselves.'

"The young men agreed to this, and when they came back, each with his portion of the family possessions, the Amazons said: 'We dread the prospect of settling down here, for we have done much damage to the country by our raids, and we have robbed you of your parents. Look now – if you think fit to keep us for your wives, let us get out of the country altogether and settle somewhere on the other side of the Tanais [River].'

"Once again the Scythians agreed, so they crossed the Tanais and traveled east for three days, and then north, for another three, from Lake Maeotis, until they reached the country where they are today, and settle down there.

"Ever since then the women of the Sauromatae have kept to their old ways, riding to the hunt on horseback sometimes with, sometimes without, their menfolk, taking part in war and wearing the same sort of clothes as men.

"The language of these people is the Scythian, but it has always been a corrupt form of it because the Amazons were never able to learn to speak it properly.

"They have a marriage law which forbids a girl to marry until she has killed an enemy in battle; some of the women, unable to fulfill this condition, grow old and die in spinsterhood."

In Herodotus' day, the Sauromatae lived past the Don River and "occupied a stretch of country which runs northward fifteen days' journey from the northern tip of the Sea of Azov."¹⁵

Among most of the Scythian tribes, the women remained in the family wagons while the men went off hunting or to war. But Herodotus notes one other Scythian tribe similar to the Sauromatae: "... a remarkable thing about [the Issedones] is that men and women have equal authority."

According to Herodotus, the Scythians had their own name for the Amazons: "Oeorpata" or "Mankillers." The word is derived from the Scythian words "oeor" or "man," and "pata" or "kill."

Diodorus of Sicily gives an alternative origin for the Sauromatae. According to him, the Scythians, at the time of their victory over the Egyptian pharaoh, resettled many of the peoples they had conquered in new areas. Among these were the people of Media, who were "planted along the Tanais [River], its people receiving the name Sauromatae."

The Greek writer Plato (428-348 B.C.) mentions

the Sauromatae in his work *Laws*, putting the words into the mouth of one of two characters who are holding a dialogue with each other.

“I believe the old tales I have heard, and I know now of my own observation, that there are practically countless myriads of women called Sauromatides, in the district of Pontus [the Black Sea coast of modern Turkey], upon whom equally with men is imposed the duty of handling bows and other weapons, as well as horses, and who practice it equally.”

The character argues that women should be trained to defend their cities, or else they will be “unable to handle with skill either a bow, like an Amazon, or any other missile ...” Women untrained for war, “certainly would not dare to adopt the fashion of the Sauromatides, whose women would seem like men beside them.” Given the example of the Sauromatae, it is irrational, he argues, that men and women should not follow the same pursuits – this produces “half a state.”

ANTIOPE

There are several versions of the story of the capture of the Amazon queen Antiope by Theseus. In some, Theseus is merely one of those who accompanies Heracles on his raid; in others, he leads a separate attack on Themiscyra. Antiope is variously depicted as having been captured by force by Theseus – and as having betrayed the Amazons by going with him willingly. In any case, she winds up in Athens, where she bears a son whom she names Hippolytus. This son is later falsely accused of raping Theseus’ next wife, princess Phaedra of Crete, and is killed by the gods after his father evokes a curse upon him.

The most complete story of Antiope’s capture is told by Plutarch, in his book *Greek Lives*.

“According to Philochorus and various other writers, Theseus also sailed to the Black Sea and took part in a campaign with Heracles against the Amazons and here he was given Antiope as a prize for his valor.

“But most authorities, including Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Herodotus, tell us that Theseus made an expedition of his own there after the time of Heracles and took the Amazon prisoner, and this is a more convincing story. For there is no record that any of his companions captured an Amazon, while Bion mentions that even this one was carried off by a trick.

“The Amazons, according to [Bion], were by nature well disposed to men and did not try to escape from Theseus when he landed on their coast. On the contrary, they even sent him presents and he invited the bearer of these to come on board his ship; then, as soon as she did so, he put out to sea.

“An author named Menecrates, who wrote a history of the Bithynian city of Nicaea, says that Theseus with Antiope aboard his ship stayed for some time in those parts, and that he happened to have serving with him on this expedition three young Athenians who were brothers, named Euneos, Thoas and Solois. Solois, he tells us, unknown to the others, fell in love with Antiope, and confided the secret to one of his intimate friends. The man approached Antiope on his behalf, but she firmly rejected him, although she handled the affair gently and with discretion and did not accuse him in front of Theseus.

“Solois in despair threw himself into a river and was drowned, and Theseus, when at last he heard of the young man’s fate and the reason for it, was deeply distressed, and in his sorrow there came back to him the words of an oracle he had once been given at Delphi. The Pythian priestess there had charged him that when trouble came upon him and he was plunged into grief in a foreign land, he should found a city there and leave some of his followers to govern it.

“So he founded a city on this spot and named it Pythopolis after the Pythian god, and the nearby river Solois in memory of the young man who had been drowned in it. He left Solois’ two brothers to be the city’s chief magistrates and lawgivers, together with Hermus, an Athenian nobleman.”

Pausanias cites a different version of the story.

“Pindar says [Antiope] was carried off by Theseus and Peirithous, but Hegias of Troizen wrote in a poem about her that when Heracles was besieging Themiscyra on the Thermodon and was unable to reduce it, Antiope fell in love with his companion Theseus, and so betrayed it. That is the story Hegias tells in his poem, but the Athenian version is that at the coming of the Amazons [to attack Athens], Antiope was shot by Molpadia, and Molpadia was killed by Heracles.”

Apollodorus, in his *Epitome*, tells the story of Antiope's capture briefly.

"Theseus joined Heracles in his expedition against the Amazons and carried off Antiope, or, as some say, Melanippe; but Simonides calls her Hippolyte ...

"And though he had a son Hippolytus by the Amazon, Theseus afterwards received from Deucalion [a son of Minos] in marriage Phaedra, daughter of Minos [king of Crete]; and when her marriage was being celebrated, the Amazon that had before been married to him appeared in arms with her Amazons, and threatened to kill the assembled guests. But they hastily closed the doors and killed her.

"However, some say that [Antiope] was slain in battle by Theseus.

"And Phaedra, after she had born two children ... to Theseus, fell in love with the son he had by the Amazon, to wit, Hippolytus, and besought him to lie with her. Howbeit, he fled from her embraces, because he hated all women.

But Phaedra, fearing that he might accuse her to his father, cleft open the doors of her bedchamber, rent her garments, and falsely charged Hippolytus with an assault. Theseus believed her and prayed to Poseidon that Hippolytus might perish. So, when Hippolytus was riding in his chariot and driving beside the sea, Poseidon sent up a bull from the surf, and the horses were frightened, the chariot dashed in pieces, and Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged to death. And when her passion was made public, Phaedra hanged herself."

The "bull from the sea" is likely a poetic description of a freak wave, striking the coast after an earthquake offshore. But Pausanias tells the story differently, saying the reins became tangled in a wild olive tree.

A later passage in Apollodorus' *Epitome* gives three alternative names to the Amazon who was captured by Theseus.

"Hippolyte was the mother of Hippolytus; she also goes by the names of Glauce and Melanippe.

"For when the marriage of Phaedra was being celebrated, Hippolyte appeared in arms with her Amazons, and said that she would slay the guests of Theseus. So a battle took

place, and she was killed, whether involuntarily by her ally Penthesileia, or by Theseus, or because his men, seeing the threatening attitude of the Amazons, hastily closed the doors and so intercepted and slew her."

Plutarch mentions an early work, which also tells the story of Antiope's attack on Theseus after he takes another wife.

"There is, it is true, the so-called *Rising of the Amazons*, which was composed by the author of the *Theseid*, and tells how, after Theseus' marriage to Phaedra, Antiope and the Amazons who fought to avenge her attacked Theseus and were killed by Heracles, but this bears all too clearly the marks of a fable.

"Theseus certainly married Phaedra, but not until after the death of Antiope, by whom he had a son, Hippolytus, or Demophoon, as Pindar calls him."

Elsewhere, in his *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch gives an alternative name for the Amazon who bore Hippolytus: "Theseus ... begat a son Hippolytus from Hippolyte the Amazon and took a second wife, Phaedra ... Phaedra fell in love with her stepson, and sent her nurse to him. But he left Athens and, coming to Troezen, devoted himself to hunting."

According to Pausanias, Hippolytus worshipped Artemis, just as his Amazon mother did, and erected a shrine to her at Troezen.

"Near the theatre, Hippolytus built a shrine of Artemis of Wolves: I could find out nothing about this title from the officials, but I suppose Hippolytus drove off a pack of wolves that was making havoc of the Troezenian countryside, unless perhaps this was an Amazon title for Artemis, as Hippolytus was related to the Amazons through his mother ..."

The Amazon queen Antiope is also mentioned briefly by other ancient authors. Jordandes writes: "Theseus, moreover, took Hippolyte captive, and of her he begat Hippolytus."

She is also mentioned by the playwright Seneca, in his *Hippolytus*: "Harsh was he even to a virtuous wife; foreign Antiope found his hand severe¹⁶ ... Hating the very name of woman, he [Hippolytus] flees them all, sternly devotes his years to single life and shuns the marriage tie. Thou wouldst know him of the Amazonian breed."

Euripides does not mention Antiope by name in his

play Hippolytus, which was performed in 428 B.C. But in a confrontation between Hippolytus and Theseus, Hippolytus' mother is described as "the horse-loving Amazon queen."

According to the modern writer Florence Mary Bennett, the story of Antiope and Theseus was later than the story of Heracles and the Amazons. She cites as her evidence the fact that Theseus "appears in company with the Amazons only on vases of the red figured technique, never on the older specimen of ceramic art."

According to William Blake Tyrrell, the Theseus myths were invented and disseminated during the later decades of the 6th century B.C. by bards. The complete story of Theseus was said to have been contained in a poem known as the *Theseid*.

Tyrrell adds that the confusion over the name of the Amazon abducted by Theseus is "a sign of the myth's youth; truly ancient myths have a fixed nomenclature." He adds that vase paintings list her name as Antiope, and that this name was commonly used in the myth as it existed in the 5th century B.C. The name Hippolyte prevailed in the 4th century B.C.

According to Tyrrell, Antiope's story is told by the Greek writer Pherecydes in his mythological handbook (written some time before 475 B.C.). Pherecydes is said to have written that Theseus mounted an independent expedition against the Amazons.

Tyrrell says that images of the capture of the Amazon by Theseus appeared on the Temple of Apollo Daphnerphorus in Eretria about 510 B.C., and on vases that pre-dated the Persian War, but that these images "disappeared" after the wars, "when Persians from the east were equated with Amazons.

"In post-war myths, the Amazon is killed fighting with Theseus or against him, and the Amazons themselves are annihilated. In speaking of an agreement and the Amazon surviving the war, Cleidemus has either devised a new conclusion or, through writing late, returned to an earlier form of the myth. The latter is more likely since there was no reason after the Persian War to have an Amazon fighting for the Greeks. Annihilation, moreover, had long before Cleidemus' time become critical to the exploitation of the Amazon myth in Athenian political propaganda."

THE ATTACK ON ATHENS

Infuriated by Theseus' capture of their queen, the Amazons set out to take their vengeance. Diodorus of Sicily tells the story.

"While Heracles was busied with the matters just described (setting up commemorative pillars at the point where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic Ocean, then trooping through Europe and down into Italy), the Amazons, they say, of whom there were some still left in the region of the Thermodon River, gathered in a body and set out to get revenge upon the Greeks for what Heracles had done in his campaign against them. They were especially eager to punish the Athenians because Theseus had made a slave of Antiope, the leader of the Amazons, or, as others write, of Hippolyte.

"The Scythians had joined forces with the Amazons, and so it came about that a notable army had been assembled, with which the leaders of the Amazons crossed the Cimmerian Bosphorus [the Strait of Kertch, which connects the Sea of Azov with the Black Sea] and advanced through Thrace. Finally they traversed a large part of Europe and came to Attica, where they pitched their camp in what is at present called after them 'the Amazoneum.'

"When Theseus learned of the oncoming of the Amazons he came to the aid of the forces of his citizens, bringing with him the Amazon Antiope, by whom he already had a son Hippolytus. Theseus joined battle with the Amazons, and since the Athenians surpassed them in bravery, he gained the victory, and of the Amazons who opposed him, some he slew at the time and the rest he drove out of Attica.

"And it came to pass that Antiope, who was fighting at the side of her husband Theseus, distinguished herself in the battle and died fighting heroically.

"The Amazons who survived renounced their ancestral soil, and returned with the Scythians into Scythia and made their homes among that people."

Justin also tells the story of the Amazons' attack on Athens, but adds the fact that the queen leading the attack was Orithya.

"Orithya, when she found that war had

been made upon her sister, and that the assailant was a chief of the Athenians, exhorted her followers to revenge the affront, saying that the 'coast of the Pontus, and Asia, had been conquered in vain, if they were still exposed, not merely to the war, but to the marauding invasions of the Greeks.'

"She then solicited aid from Sagillus, king of Scythia, representing to him 'their Scythian descent, the loss of their husbands, their obligation to take arms, and their reasons for making war,' adding, 'that they had proved by their valor that the Scythians must be thought to have women not less spirited than their men.'

"Sagillus, alive to the glory of his nation, sent his son Panasagoras, with a numerous body of cavalry, to their aid. But some disagreement having occurred before the battle, [the Amazons] were deserted by their auxiliaries, and worsted in the conflict by the Athenians.

"[The Amazons] had, however, the camp of their allies as a place of refuge, under whose protection they returned to their kingdom unmolested by other nations."

Hellanicus of Lesbos, who wrote a history of Athens in the 5th century B.C. (the work has been lost), said the Amazons crossed the frozen Bosphorus to get to Athens. He describes them as "a golden-shielded, silver-axed, female, male-loving, male-infant-killing host" who removed their right breasts by cauterization.

The Greek poet Lycophron, who lived in the 3rd century B.C., also mentions the Amazon attack on Athens, but gives a different name for the woman carried away by Theseus: Orthosia.

"[Theseus] went with [Heracles] ... and stole the belt [of the Amazon queen] and roused a double feud, taking away the girdle and from Themiscyra carrying off the archer Orthosia; and her sisters, the maidens of Neptunis, left Eris, Lagmus and Telamus and the stream of Thermodon and the hill of Actaeum to seek vengeance and relentless rape.

"Across the dark Ister [Danube] they drove their Scythian mares, shouting their battle cry against the Greeks and the descendants of Erechtheus. And they sacked all [Attica] with their spear and laid waste with fire the fields of [Athens]."

A.W. Mair, who translated Lycophron, says Orthosia is a "cult title" of the goddess Artemis. Mair adds that the name Neptunis may either be an alternative name for Hippolyte or another "cult name" of Artemis.

Apollodorus gives details of the topography: "Wherefore the Amazons marched against Athens, and having taken up a position about the Areopagus they were vanquished by the Athenians under Theseus."

The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares, is also mentioned by the Athenian playwright Aeschylus in his play *Eumenides*.

"And this Hill of Ares, whereon the Amazons had their seat and pitched their tents, that time they came, embattled, in resentment against Theseus, and in those days built up this new citadel with lofty towers to rival his, and sacrificed to Ares; whence the rock takes its name from him, even the Hill of Ares."

The most detailed description of the battle at Athens is given by Plutarch, in the *Theseus*.

"Now this expedition [by Theseus to Themiscyra] was the origin of the war with the Amazons, which seems to have been anything but a trivial or womanish affair; for the Amazons could never have pitched their camp inside the city walls or fought hand to hand close to what is now the Pnyx and the Museum, unless they had first overrun the surrounding country and so could safely approach the city.

"It is less easy to believe Hellanicus' statement that they came round by the Cimmerian Bosphorus, having crossed over on the ice, but the fact that they encamped almost in the heart of the city is confirmed both by the names of certain places there and also by the tombs of those who fell in battle.

"Both sides held aloof for a long time and hesitated to begin the fighting, but at last Theseus, after sacrificing to Fear in obedience to an oracle, attacked the women. The battle took place in the month Boedromion on the day on which the Athenians still celebrate the festival of the Boedromia.

"Cleidemus, who sets out to give the exact details, states that the Amazons' left wing extended to what is now called the Amazoneum, while their right rested on the Pnyx, at the point where the gilded figure of Victory now stands. He says that the

Athenians engaged the left wing, attacking it from the Museum, and that the tombs of those who fell are on either side of the street leading to the gate near the shrine of the hero Chalcodon, which is now known as the Piraeic gate.

“On this flank, he tells us, the women routed the Athenians and forced them back as far as the shrine of the Eumenides. But on the other side, the Athenians who attacked the Amazons from the Palladium and Ardetus and the Lyceum, drove their right wing back to their camp and killed great numbers of them.

“Cleidemus adds that after three months a peace was arranged through Hippolyta, for it is this name, not Antiope, which he gives to the Amazon whom Theseus married.

“There is another story that Hippolyta was killed as she fought at Theseus’ side by a javelin thrown by Molpadia, and that the column which stands near the sanctuary of Olympian Earth [Gaia] was set up in her honor.¹⁷

“But it is hardly surprising that history should go astray when it has to deal with events so remote in time as these. There is, for example, another tradition that Antiope had the wounded Amazons secretly moved to Chalcis and nursed there, and that some were buried in that neighborhood near what is now called the Amazoneum.

“However we have at least some evidence that the war was ended by a treaty. The proof of this is the name of the place adjoining the Theseum, which is called Horcomosium,¹⁸ because of the oaths that were sworn there, and also the sacrifice which in ancient times was offered to the Amazons before the festival of Theseus.¹⁹

“The people of Megara also show a place in their country where Amazons were buried: it is on the way from the market square to the place named Rhus, where the so-called Rhomboid stands.

“Other Amazons are said to have died near Chaeronea and to have been buried by the banks of the little stream which in ancient times was apparently called the Thermodon, but today has the name of Haemon ...

“And it appears that in Thessaly, too, the Amazons did not pass through unopposed, for their graves are pointed out to this day in the neighborhood of Scotussa and Cynoscephalae.”

The ancient Greeks had twelve months of either twenty-nine or thirty days each. The year began with the new moon closest to the summer solstice, typically at the end of June. Boedromion, the third month of the year, thus fell approximately in September.

Macrobius, a Roman historian of the late 4th and early 5th centuries A.D., mentions Theseus’ sacrifice in his book *The Saturnalia*.

“It is customary in a prayer for health to pronounce the words ... ‘Heal, O god of healing’; but to say ‘Launch thine arrow and smite’ ... when invoking a curse on a person...”

“It is said that the Delphic oracle sanctioned this expression when the Athenians were seeking the aid of the god against the Amazons in the reign of Theseus, for, as they were about to enter upon the war, the god bade them call on him with these very words and exhort him to be himself their helper.”

Pausanias lists monuments still in existence in his day (the 2nd century A.D.) set up to commemorate the battle – or erected by the Amazons themselves.

“When you get into the city [of Athens] you come to the monument of the Amazon Antiope ... The Athenians also have a memorial to Molpadia.”

Pausanias mentions the monument to Antiope in a passage in which he is entering the city from Phaleron; the area where the monument stood would thus have been southeast of the ancient city.

Elsewhere in Athens, the Painted Colonnade and a sanctuary of Theseus (located near a gymnasium to the south of the Agora) both featured paintings of armies in battle; among these was a depiction of the Amazon attack on Athens.

“On the middle part of the walls [of the Painted Colonnade] Theseus and his Athenians are fighting Amazons. Only with women is it true that nothing bad that happens to them can take away their appetite for trouble. Themiscyra fell to Heracles and the fighting force they sent against Athens was wiped out, and yet they still went to Troy and fought there against Athens and the whole of Greece.”

“Beside the gymnasium is a sanctuary of Theseus [the Theseion]. The pictures are Athenians fighting Amazons; the same war is on the shield of Athena and on the plinth of Olympian Zeus.”

Depictions of Amazons could even be found inside the Acropolis of Athens. Pausanias mentions a series of dedications, made by Attalos of Pergamon in the 3rd century B.C. to commemorate various legendary and historic victories (against giants, Amazons, Persians, and Gauls). Pausanias writes: "By the south wall are the dedications of Attalos [including] the Athenian battle with the Amazons ... each of these covers three or four feet."

The Amazons were also said by Pausanias to have also attacked Troezen, a city on the opposite side of the Saronic Gulf from Athens that was reputed to be the birthplace of Theseus.

"On the way down to the harbor, by Kelenderis as they call it, is a place named the birthplace where they say Theseus was born. In front of it is a shrine of Ares, because also here Theseus overcame some Amazons in battle: they must have been some of those who fought Theseus and the Athenians in Attica."

Plutarch, in writing about the life of the Greek orator Demosthenes, describes how Greek soldiers in the battle between the Athenians and Philip II of Macedonia in 338 B.C. found a statue of an Amazon. The soldiers were camped in Chaironeia, beside a stream known as the Haemon.

"Some soldiers who were pitching a tent and digging a trench about [the stream] found a small stone figure, an inscription upon which signified that it was [the river god] Thermodon, carrying in its arms a wounded Amazon."

Monuments to Amazons were well known in Classical Greece; the playwright Aristophanes refers to one such painting in his play *Lysistrata*, written in 412 B.C. The passage reads: "... women know how to ride; they're good in the saddle. Just think of Mikon's paintings, all those Amazons wrestling with men!"

Here, Aristophanes may be referring to the paintings of Mikon that, together with those of the painter Polygnotus, decorated the Theseion. This monument (also known as the Theseum), celebrated the exploits of Theseus and was erected in Athens in 475 B.C.

The Theseion was located southwest of the Agora, and probably consisted of a large precinct and at least one building, which housed the "bones of Theseus." The paintings inside it depicted scenes from Theseus' life, including the Amazons' attack on Athens.

Alternatively, he may have been referring to

Mikon's painting of Amazons that decorated the Stoa Poikile ("Painted Porch"), completed in 460 B.C.

According to the modern writer William Blake Tyrrell, Mikon painted the Amazons mounted on horses and carrying wicker shields. They were dressed in the checkered trousers worn by Persians, Thracians and Scythians, and wore boots and the pointed Phrygian cap with distinctive flaps over the ears. In some cases they were shown in "diaphanous" clothing, "a technique introduced by Polygnotus."

The Stoa Poikile was named after the paintings it sheltered, which were done on wooden boards. The paintings are both the Stoa Poikile and the Theseion no longer exist, but they survive in partial copy on vase paintings from the period.

Each of the paintings and monuments to Amazons that have been mentioned thus far were erected by Greeks in the centuries after the Amazons attacked Athens. But according to Pausanias, a number of monuments found in Greece were dedicated by the Amazons themselves. One of these was in the city of Pyrrichos.

"They have sanctuaries in their territory of Unwarlike Artemis, because the Amazon expedition stopped its advance here, and Amazonian Apollo. Both the cult statues are wooden idols, and they say they were dedicated by the women of Thermodon."

Another of the monuments mentioned by Pausanias was near Megara, at a place called Rhous. The monument was located just down the hillside from a shrine dedicated to Apollo and Artemis, and another shrine dedicated to the Athenian king Pandion.

"Near Pandion's shrine is the memorial of Hippolyte; I shall record the Megaran legend about her.

"When the Amazons went to war with Athens over Antiope and were overpowered by Theseus, most of them died fighting, but Antiope's sister Hippolyte, who was chief at the time, escaped with a few of them to Megara. She was in despair about their situation after the failure of the expedition, and still more about the prospects of getting home safely to Themiscyra; she died of grief and they buried her: the memorial stone is shaped like an Amazon's shield [crescent-shaped]."

American archaeologists, excavating in and around the Athenian Agora, have found a number of Mycenaean and sub-Mycenaean burials. One of these

was a chamber tomb, located on the north slope of the Areopagus. Said to be the grave of a “princess,” it can be dated by its Mycenaean III B pottery (1300-1225 B.C.). It contained an ivory box carved with deer and griffins, at least 100 gold ornaments, and a bronze ladle, mirror and hairpins. A dog, buried with a large beef bone, is nearby.

Hundreds of years after the Amazon attack on their city, the Athenians of the Classical period were still boasting about how they drove the horsewomen back. Reference is made to the battle in a number of funeral orations, the earliest of which dates to the 5th century B.C. – nearly eight centuries after the event it describes.

Herodotus records one such Athenian boast: “Another memorable exploit of ours was against the Amazons from the river Thermodon, on the occasion of their inroad into Attica ...”

In most cases, the Amazon attack is mentioned in chronological order with other battles fought by the Athenians. In the account of Herodotus, the Amazon attack comes after the city of Athens was attacked by King Eurystheus of Tiryns (who sought to capture the sons of Heracles that the Athenians had sheltered), after the war of the Seven Against Thebes, and prior to the Trojan War.

The Greek orator Isocrates composed the Panathenaicus between 342 and 339 B.C. In it, he describes an Athens “still ruled by kings,” which was attacked first by the Thracians under Eumolpus, then by “the Scythians, led by the Amazons, the offspring of Ares, who made the expedition to recover Hippolyte, since she had not only broken the laws which were established among them but had become enamored of Theseus and followed him from her home to Athens and there lived with him as his consort.” Later attacks on Athens included that of King Eurystheus of Tiryns, and troops under Dareius who landed at Marathon.

An earlier work, the Panegyricus, of 380 B.C., also mentions the Amazons.

“While Hellas [Greece] was still insignificant, our territory was invaded by the Thracians, led by Eumolpus, son of Poseidon, and by the Scythians, led by the Amazons, the daughters of Ares – not at the same time, but during the period when both races were trying to extend their domination over Europe; for though they hated the whole Hellenic race, they raised complaints against us in particular, thinking that in this way they would wage war against one state only, but would at the same time impose their power on all the states of Hellas.

“Of a truth they were not successful; nay,

in this conflict against our forefathers alone they were as utterly overwhelmed as if they had fought the whole world. How great were the disasters which befell them is evident; for the tradition respecting them would not have persisted for so long a time if what was then done had not been without parallel.

“At any rate, we are told regarding the Amazons that of all who came not one returned again, while those who had remained at home were expelled from power because of the disaster here.”

Another oration, written by Lysias and probably presented around 392 B.C., recounts the greatness of the Amazons – based upon the fact that they were one of the earliest people to ride horseback and use iron weapons. He leaves out any mention of Theseus’ attack on the Amazons, instead blaming their attack on Athens on expansionism and a simple desire for conquest.

“Well, of old there were the Amazons, daughters of Ares, dwelling beside the river Thermodon; they alone of the people round about were armed with iron, and they were first of all to mount horses, with which, owing to the inexperience of their foes, they surprised them and either caught those who fled, or outstripped those who pursued.

“They were counted as men for their high courage, rather than as women for their sex; so much more did they seem to excel men in their spirit than to be at a disadvantage in their form.

“Ruling over many nations, they had in fact achieved the enslavement of those around them; yet, hearing by report concerning this our country how great was its renown, they were moved by increase of glory and high ambition to muster the most warlike of the nations and march with them against this city.

“But having met with valiant men they found their spirit now was like to their sex; the repute that they got was the reverse of the former, and by their perils rather than by their bodies they were deemed to be women.

“They stood alone in failing to learn from their mistakes, and so to be better advised in their future actions; they would not return home and report their own misfortune and our ancestors’ valor – for they perished on the spot and were punished for their folly, thus making [Athens’] memory imperishable for its valor; while owing to their disaster in this region they

rendered their own country nameless. And so those women, by their unjust greed for others' land, justly lost their own."

Demosthenes, in a funeral oration presented in 338 B.C., claims that the Amazons were driven from their Themiscyrian homeland, eastward to a point beyond the Phasis River, located at the eastern end of the Black Sea and today known as the Rioni River. "[The Athenians] so prevailed over the invading host of the Amazons as to expel them beyond the Phasis." Demosthenes obviously took the story of the Amazon invasion as historical fact; in a later passage he says he has omitted mentioning "many exploits that are classified as myths" in recounting the stories of attacks against Athens.

The Greek orator Aristides, in his Panathenaic Oration (which was probably delivered in A.D. 155), also mentions the Amazon attack on Athens. Its story of a grand expansion of the Amazon nation is reminiscent of the stories of the conquests of one of the earliest Amazon queens, Marpesia – or of the conquests of the African Amazons, when they invaded what is today the Aegean coast of modern Turkey.

"[The Athenians] fought a cavalry engagement against the Amazons who surpassed their nature by their deeds, and they annihilated them, although no one up to Attica opposed them.

"Now [the Amazons] had extended their lines equally through both continents, beginning from Thermodon, as it were the center of a circle, and passing through Asia up to Lycia, Caria, and Pamphylia, as if part of their encampment, and through Europe up to their encampment at the city [of Athens].

"But now from this point [after the Amazon defeat at Athens], as if a rope had broken, all snapped back, and the Amazons' march of empire was undone.

"And here too the city [of Athens] aided the whole race, and now it is doubtful if the Amazons ever existed."

According to Aristides, the invasion of the Amazons took place after that of the Thracians under Eumolpus. This Thracian king was defeated by the Athenian king Erechtheus, who according to the genealogies, was the great-great-grandfather of Theseus.

Plato, in his dialogue Menexenus, also mentions the Amazons. "Time would fail me to tell of [the Athenians'] defense of their country against the invasion of Eumolpus and the Amazons ..."

AMAZONS AT COLCHIS

According to the Roman writer Valerius Flaccus, the Amazons were also involved in a battle that took place at Colchis, when more than a dozen tribes of Scythians attacked that city. This battle took place when Aeetes was king of Colchis, and just after the Achaean prince Jason and his band of sailors (known as the Argonauts) arrived in the city.

Describing his armies to Jason, King Aeetes mentions one of the Amazons who will be fighting for his city:

"Now let thy mind's eye range the spreading plains, and see Euryale²⁰ here trampling the corpses with her wing-swift car, how she exults, the warrior maid, in her valiant troops, how terrible she is with uplifted battle axe and targe, dear to me not least among my true-born daughters."

During the battle, the Argonaut Canthus dies and is carried away from the battle and placed in Euryale's chariot. The passage that follows mentions four other Amazons who are fighting on the side of the Colchian.

"Forward she flies, and the Haemonidae [men of Thebes] with her, and the whole band attack [the Scythian] Gesander alone. he, when he sees the new conflict and the maiden's weapons cries, 'Women too, then, are we to fight? Ah, for shame!'

"Then he strikes Lyce near the breast and Thoe where her targe leaves a space; and now was he rushing against Harpe, who scarce yet had begun to draw the bow horns with the light string, and Menippe, who was pulling up her stumbling horse, when the princess [Euryale], with redoubled blows of a battle axe heavy with knobs of gold, cleaves in sunder his head and his helm of wild beast's hide."

According to the genealogies, Prince Jason of Iolcus lived in the same time period as King Theseus of Athens. (Medea, a Colchian princess who elopes with Jason, later winds up meeting Theseus when he is a teenager.)

AMAZONS vs. BELLEROPHON

As well as battling against Heracles and Theseus, the Amazons also had to fend off attacks by another Achaean – a prince of Corinth by the name of Bellerophon (or Bellerophontes).

Falsely accused of making advances on the wife of the king of Tiryns, Bellerophon was exiled to Lycia, a territory located on the Aegean coast of what is today modern Turkey. Iobates, the king of Lycia, received instructions to kill Bellerophon. In response, the king assigns three tasks to Bellerophon that are designed to kill him: he must fight the pirate Chimarrus (whom legend has garbled into a three-headed, fire-belching monster known as the Chamaera); he must defeat the Solymi, a neighboring tribe; and he must attack the Amazons. (Interestingly enough, the chimaera may have been female; Homer uses the female pronoun in describing the beast.)

Apollodorus tells the story of the Amazons' fight against Bellerophon in his book *The Library*.

“After that contest [killing the Chimera] Iobates ordered [Bellerophon] to fight the Solymi, and when he had finished that task also, he commanded him to combat the Amazons. And when he had killed them also [Iobates] picked out the reputed bravest of the Lycians and bade them lay an ambush and slay [Bellerophon].”

Pindar briefly mentions the story of the Amazon battle with Bellerophon in his *Ode for Xenophon of Corinth*, written in 464 B.C.

“... riding on that steed [Pegasus], he assailed from the lonely bosom of the chill air that army of womankind, the archer host of Amazons; and even slew the fire-breathing Chimaera and the Solymi.”

Homer, in the *Iliad*, also mentions Bellerophon. The words are those of Glaucus, a Lycian prince and the grandson of Bellerophon. While fighting with the Trojan forces, Glaucus recites the deeds of his ancestor.

“Bellerophon let himself be guided by the gods, and succeeded in killing her [the chimaera]. His second mission was to fight the famous Solymi – he spoke of that as the most terrific battle he had ever fought. And by way of a third task, he killed the Amazons who go to war like men.”

The story is also mentioned by Plutarch in his essay *The Bravery of Women*, in a passage describing how the women of Lycia demanded of their rulers the repair of a dyke that had been broken down by a wave sent by Bellerophon in retaliation against Iobates.

“This man [Chimarrus] Bellerophon slew, pursuing him with Pegasus as he was trying to escape. Bellerophon also drove out the Amazons, but met with no just treatment; in fact, Iobates was most unjust with him.”

Unable to kill Bellerophon and impressed by his exploits, King Iobates allows him to marry his daughter Philonoe. As a result, Bellerophon inherits the kingdom of Lycia. This system of passing the kingship of a country through the female line was also practiced in ancient Achaea; there are several instances of young men inheriting rulership of a city after marrying the daughter of its king.

According to the Greek writer Arrian (also known as Flavius Arrianus), who wrote in the 2nd century A.D., Asia Minor had been “ruled by women” since the time of Semiramis. This name is the Greek form of Sammuramat, a Babylonian/Assyrian queen of about 800 B.C. who ruled for forty-two years.

Herodotus noted one “unique” custom of the Lycians, whom he said were originally settlers from Crete. “In one of their customs, that of taking the mother’s name instead of the father’s, they are unique. Ask a Lycian who he is and he will tell you his own name and his mother’s, then his grandmother’s and great-grandmother’s and so on. And if a free woman has a child by a slave, the child is considered legitimate, whereas the children of a free man, however distinguished he may be, and a foreign wife or mistress have no citizen rights at all.”

PENTHESILEIA

The next Amazon queen whose name is known to us is Penthesileia, who fought in the Trojan War on the side of Troy.

According to Justin, Penthesileia was an Amazon queen who reigned after Orithya.

“After Orithya, Penthesileia occupied the throne, of whose valor there were seen great proofs among the bravest heroes in the Trojan War, when she led an auxiliary force thither against the Greeks. But Penthesileia being at last killed, and her army destroyed, a few only of the Amazons, who had remained at home in

their own country, established a power that continued – defending itself with difficulty against its neighbors – to the time of Alexander the Great.”

Quintus of Smyrna, who is thought to have written in the 4th century A.D., tells the story of Penthesileia at Troy in great detail. He begins his story with the death of Prince Hector of Troy – the place where Homer’s *Iliad* ends.

“And then from the streams of the broad river Thermodon there came Penthesileia, wearing the beauty of the gods. She was at once eager for cruel war and bent of avoiding loathsome and ugly talk. She was afraid that someone among her own people would attack her with reproaches about her sister Hippolyte, for whom she felt a growing sorrow. She had killed [Hippolyte] with a heavy spear, quite involuntarily, while aiming at a stag. This was why she had come to the famous land of Troy.

“Besides, she had this thought in her warlike heart: she might cleanse herself of the hideous defilement of murder and appease with sacrifices the dreadful Furies. These invisible creatures, angry over her sister, had set about following her at once. For they always dog the feet of wrongdoers, and no one who does wrong can escape the goddesses.

“With Penthesileia came twelve other Amazons, all splendid and all longing for war and ugly battle. Distinguished through they were, these were her handmaids, and Penthesileia far surpassed them all ...

“These were their names: Clonie, Polemoussa, Derinoe, Evandre, Antandre, glorious Bremoussa, Hippothoe, dark-eyed Harmothoe, Alcibie, Antibrote, Derimacheia, and Thermodosa, moving proudly with her spear ...

“The Trojans hurried round from every side, marveling greatly when they saw tireless Ares’ daughter in her tall greaves. She looked like the blessed gods, for about her face there was a beauty at once terrible and splendid. Her smile was charming, and under her brows her lovely eyes sparkled like sunbeams. Modesty brought a blush to her cheeks, and a divine grace clothed her strength ...

“[King Priam of Troy] took the queen into his palace and was zealous in showing her every honor, just as though she were a daughter come home from far away after

twenty years. He had a dinner prepared for her with every sort of food, such as glorious kings eat when they have destroyed nations and feast at great banquets to celebrate their victory. He gave her presents, too, beautiful and precious, and promised many more if she would help the Trojans, who were being cut to pieces. She undertook the task and agreed to do what no mortal had ever hoped: she would kill Achilles, destroy the great army of the Greeks, and throw fire on their ships ...

“The sun, whirling through its swift course, sank into Ocean’s deep stream, and the day was done. When the banqueters had finished their wine and the lovely feast, then the maids prepared a comfortable bed in Priam’s palace for brave Penthesileia. She went and lay down, and sweet sleep fell upon her, covering her eyes.

“Then from the depths of the upper air there came, at the will of [the goddess] Athena, the force of a guileful dream, so that as [Penthesileia] looked upon it she might become an evil for the Trojans and for herself, through her longing for the confusion of war. This was what the wise Athena Tritogeneia had in mind. And the grim dream stood over Penthesileia, looking like her father [the war god], and urged her to fight boldly face to face with swift-footed Achilles.

“She, when she heard this, was utterly delighted in her heart, because she thought that on that very day she would accomplish a great deed in the dreadful combat ...

“But when the early-born one, the rosy-ankled Dawn, came swiftly up, then it was that Penthesileia, her heart full of courage, leapt from her bed and put about her shoulders the decorated armor that the god Ares had given her. First about her silvery legs she put greaves of gold, which fitted her perfectly. Then she put on her dazzling breastplate, and she proudly placed about her shoulders her great sword, all enclosed in a scabbard beautifully fashioned of silver and ivory. She took up her splendid shield, in outline like the moon when over deep-flowing Ocean stream it rises half full with curving horns; so marvelously it gleamed. On her head she put her helmet, its top covered with golden plumes...

“Moving quickly to leave the great hall, she took two javelins to hold beneath her shield and in her right hand a double battleaxe. Eris, terrible goddess of strife, had given her

this as a great protection in deadly war.

"Laughing with pleasure at this weapon, she hurried outside the towers and urged the Trojans into battle where men win glory. The princes gathered there were quick to be persuaded, though they had not previously wanted to stand against Achilles, because he utterly defeated everyone.

"[Penthesileia], of course, could not restrain her exultation. The stallion she sat upon was beautiful and very fast. Boreas²¹ wife Oreithyia²² had given him to her as a present some time ago, when [Penthesileia] had gone to Thrace ...

"Seated on this horse, Penthesileia then left the high houses of the city ... Round about, many Trojans on unreturning feet followed the brave girl into ruthless battle, in crowds, like sheep after a ram which runs on ahead ... so the sturdy Trojans and the high-spirited Amazons, greatly eager in their might, followed after her ...

"Then, putting their shining armor about them, [the Greeks] poured out from the ships ... The Trojan plain grew red.

"Then Penthesileia killed Molion and Persinous, Elissus and Antitheus and manly Lernus, Hippalmus, Haemonides, and strong Elasippus. Derionoe killed Laogonus, and Clonie killed Menippus ... His death stirred the spirit of Podarces, Iphicles' son, because he loved him especially among his comrades. He immediately threw his spear at godlike Clonie, and the strong shaft went down through her belly. Her black blood quickly flowed out around the spear, and all her entrails followed with it.

"Penthesileia was naturally greatly angered at this, and she struck Podarces on the thick muscle of his right arm and cut through the blood-filled veins. His black blood gushed from the wound he had received, and he darted to the rear, groaning from the severe pain afflicting his spirit ... When he had withdrawn a little from the fighting, he died in the arms of his comrades.

"Idomeneus killed Bremousa, hitting her on the right breast with his spear and taking her life instantly. She fell like an ash tree ... As it falls it produces a dreadful whistling and a thud, so she uttered a wail as she fell. Doiom loosened all her joints, and her soul was mingled with the blowing winds.

"Meriones killed Evandre and

Thermodosa as they rushed at him in the deadly fighting. He drove his spear into the head of one of them, and the other he struck with his sword under the belly. Their life left them forthwith.

"The mighty son of Oileus destroyed Derionoe, running his jagged spear through her collarbone. Tydeusson with his terrible sword cut off the heads of both Alcibie and Derimacheia, necks and all right down to their shoulders. They both fell just like heifers that a man quickly deprives of life by hitting their neck tendons with a strong axe, so they, laid low by the hands of Tydeusson, fell on the Trojan plain, and their bodies were far away from their heads ...

"Because Penthesileia's strength did not flag at all, but as some lioness in the high mountains darts through a glen deep in the cliffs and leaps upon cattle in her longing for blood, and this greatly cheers her spirit; so then did the warrior girl leap among the Greeks. Their spirits were filled with surprise, and they drew back.

"She followed them ... slaughtering the ranks of the Greeks, and, with a heart full of exultation, she threatened them: 'You dogs, how you will pay today for the evil outrage you did Priam. None of you will escape my strength and be a joy to dear parents, sons, and wives, but you will die and lie here a food for birds and beasts; you will find no tomb in the earth. Where is mighty Tydeusson now? Where Achilles? And where Aias? Talk has it that they are your best. But they will not dare to contend with me, for fear I may take their souls from their limbs and dispatch them to the dead.'

"She spoke and, with proud thoughts, rushed upon the Greeks. Her strength was like the strength of Death, and great was the host she subdued. Sometimes she cut deep with her axe, and sometimes she brandished a sharp javelin. Her nimble horse carried her quiver and pitiless bow, if ever she might need in the bloody turmoil grim missiles and bow ...

"Many a Trojan was filled with wonder and delight when he saw Penthesileia rushing up through the army like a dark storm which rages on the sea ... And in his empty hopes one of them said: 'Friends, how obvious it is that today some one of the immortals has come down from heaven to fight against the Greeks ... For I think this is no woman I see before me

so brave and wearing such glorious arms, but Athena, or mighty Enyo, or Eris, or Leto's famous daughter Artemis ...

"[Penthesileia] was contriving evil for one man after another, and her strength and courage alike kept growing ever greater. Never did her spear plunge in vain, but it kept tearing the backs of men running away or the chests of those who charged upon her. She was quite drenched in hot blood, but her limbs were light as she rushed on; no weariness overcame her fearless spirit, but might unconquerable possessed her ... [Grim Fate] was hidden in darkness, but, ever unseen, she urged Penthesileia on and led her to evil destruction, glorifying her for one last time. And Penthesileia kept killing, one here, another there ...

"The Trojan women were marveling from afar at Penthesileia's military feats. And love of war took hold of Tsiphone, daughter of the cavalryman Antimachus and wife of Meneptolemus. In the vigor of her thoughts, eagerly she made a bold proposal, urging her friends to cruel conflict; boldness roused her strength:

"Put in your breasts stout hearts like our men's ... We ourselves, too, with brave spirits, should take thought to share the battle. We are not much different from vigorous men. The sort of courage they have, we have too; our eyes and legs are the same, and everything is alike. Light and the flowing air are common to all. Our food is not different. What other thing has god made better for men?

"Let us not, then, run away from fighting. Why, aren't you looking upon a woman far superior to the men accustomed to close combat? She has nothing here, not her family or her own city, but she fights with spirit for a foreign king. With boldness in her heart and a fearless mind, she cares nothing for the men. While we – troubles lie all around our feet. These women have had dear sons and husbands die fighting for the city; these wail for fathers who are no more; others grieve at the loss of brothers or kinsmen ... No woman is without her portion of sorrow and trouble, and we may well expect to look upon the day of our slavery. Let there be, therefore, no further postponement of war for us women in our distress. It is better to die in the fight than later on be led off by foreign men along with our helpless children, when grim necessity is

upon us, our city is burning, and our men are no more.'

"So she spoke, and upon them all there fell a love of loathsome battle. They were planning to go swiftly out before the wall, eager to defend in arms their city and their people, and courage was stirred within them ... the Trojan women were busy urging one another to conflict. They put from them their wool and their work baskets and laid their hands on cruel weapons.

"They would have died outside the city along with their men and the mighty Amazons in the fighting, if sensible Theano [a priestess of Athena] had not checked them in their haste and won them over with her shrewd words:

"Why this eagerness for toiling in the terrible rout of battle, poor wretches, when you have had no previous experience in fighting, but rush on like fools, ignorantly eager for an intolerable task? Your strength is not equal to that of the Greeks, with their knowledge of fighting.

"For Amazons, pitiless battle and horsemanship and all the tasks done by men are a delight from birth. This is obviously why they have always shown a warlike spirit and feel no need of men, because the work of war greatly strengthens their courage and makes their bodies fearless. This Penthesileia is reported to be the daughter of mighty Ares; so it isn't at all fitting for any woman to compete with her – or possibly she is one of the gods come in answer to our prayers ... we must keep away from the uproar of fighting and work at our weaving within our own homes; our men will take care of the war' ...

"Penthesileia was still destroying hosts, and the Greeks around her were terrified. They had no way of escaping wretched death ... It was no longer a desire for battle that possessed the men but a desire for flight ... So the great army of Greeks was laid in the dust by the will of the Fates and the spear of Penthesileia ...

"[Achilles and Aias] rushed for their bright arms, put them on, and took their stand to meet the crowd ...

"Achilles killed Antandre and Polemoussa and Antibrote, with them spirited Hippothoe and Harmothoe besides ...

"When Penthesileia, the skillful warrior, noticed [Aias and Achilles] rushing like wild beasts through the dreadful battle, she started toward them both ... the warrior men lifted

their spears and awaited Penthesileia. Their bronze armor was noisy about them as they moved.

“Brave Penthesileia first threw a long spear. It landed on Achilles’ shield, but broke and was deflected as though from a rock ... With her hands, she aimed another swift javelin at Aias, and she threatened them both:

“‘Although just now the spear lept from my hands to no purpose, I think with this one I shall soon destroy the strength and spirit of you both, who boast of being the mighty ones among the Greeks. Then the misery of war will be lighter for the Trojan horsemen. But please come closer up through the turmoil, so that you may see how much strength rises in Amazons’ hearts. My stock, too, is warlike, and no mortal man sired me, but Ares himself, who can never have his fill of the shouts of battle. This is why my might is far better than men’s.’

“So she spoke, but her proud talk made them laugh. Quickly her spear point drove at Aias’ solid silver greave. But it did not penetrate inside, for all its eagerness to reach his handsome flesh. For the cruel point had not been fated to mix with that man’s blood in the battles of enemies. Aias disregarded the Amazon and leapt into a crowd of Trojans. He left Penthesileia to [Achilles] alone, since he knew in his heart how easy a task she would be for Achilles, strong though she was. It would be alike a dove against a hawk.

“She gave a deep groan at having thrown her spear without result, and the son of Peleus spoke to her insultingly:

“‘Woman, how proud you were of empty words, when you came against us filled with desire for battle. We are easily the best of the heroes upon the earth, and we are proud of our descent from the stock of loud-thundering Zeus ... You are completely out of your mind in being so bold and threatening us with destruction today. Your own last day will quickly come. No, not even your father Ares himself will save you from me now, but you will die an evil death ...’

“With these words, he swooped upon her, brandishing in his powerful hand the long, murderous spear that Chiron made. Quickly he stabbed brave Penthesileia above the right breast. The dark blood flowed swiftly out, and the strength in her limbs was broken at once. The great battle axe fell from her hand, night

veiled her eyes, and anguish sank into her heart.

“But even so she revived and looked at her enemy, now about to drag her down from her swift horse. She wondered to herself whether she should draw her great sword in her hand and await the onset of Achilles rushing at her, or speedily leap down from her fast horse and entreat the glorious man, offering him at once abundant bronze and gold ... Somehow with these she might persuade the deadly strength of Achilles, or he might let her return home, out of regard for the youth that they shared – and she longed to escape.

“These were the thoughts she had; but the gods arranged it otherwise. For [Achilles] rushed upon her filled with rage and quickly pierced the body of the girl and the wind-swift horse alike ... his raging spear cut quite through Penthesileia and her beautiful horse.

“Still comely, she fell quickly to the ground and rolled in the dust and destruction. Nothing shameful disgraced her beautiful body, but she was stretched out face down, still quivering about the long spear and resting against her swift horse ... her strength was shattered.

“The Trojans, when they saw her cut down in the fight, at once rushed in terror toward the city, their spirits grieving with a sorrow beyond telling ...

“[Achilles] was laughing over her and loudly boastful:

“‘Lie now in the dust and feed the dogs and birds, you wretched girl. Who tricked you into coming against me? I have no doubt you thought you would go home from battle with splendid gifts from old Priam for the Greeks you had killed ... Unlucky you were, because dark Fates and your own mind roused you to leave women’s work and go to war, which frightens even men.’

“With these words, [Achilles] pulled his ashen spear from the swift horse and dread Penthesileia; both of them, killed by a single spear, were in their death throes. Then he took from her head the helmet gleaming like the rays of the sun or the radiance of Zeus. Though she had fallen in the dust and blood, her face shone out under her lovely brows beautiful even in death.

“The Greeks who thronged around marveled when they saw her, for she was like the blessed gods. She lay on the ground in her

armor like strong Artemis asleep, Zeus' child, when her limbs grow weary as she hunts swift lions in the mountains. [The goddess] Aphrodite of the fine crown, wife of mighty Ares, personally made Penthesileia attractive even among the dead, so that noble [Achilles] too might feel some pain ...

"Achilles could not stop the pain in his heart because he had killed her and had not brought her as a glorious wife to Phthia, land of good horses, for in size and beauty she was faultless and like the immortal goddesses ...

"[Achilles] felt deep sorrow as he looked at the girl's lovely strength in the dust. Strong pains were eating his heart on this account, as great as he had felt before when his comrade Patroclus had been killed.

"Thersites stood before him and vigorously reviled him with evil speech:

"Achilles, grim of mind, what heavenly power has beguiled the spirit in your breast because of a destructive Amazon? She was eager to plan many troubles for us, but the heart within you is woman-mad, and you are as concerned for her as for a sensible wedded wife ... It would have been better if she had hit you first with a spear in the fighting, because your heart takes such excessive pleasure in women. Your destructive mind feels no interest at all in a glorious deed of valor, when you catch sight of a woman.

"Poor wretch, where are your strength and your intelligence? Where the might of a noble king? Don't you have any realization of how much pain has come to the Trojans because they were woman-mad? There is no other pleasure more ruinous to mortals than sexual desire, which makes even a wise man a fool ..."

"At these reviling words, quick-tempered Achilles felt a great anger in his heart and at once struck Thersites on the jaw and ear with his mighty hand ... Quickly the feeble spirit fled from the body of the worthless man ...

"Seized with pity for splendid Penthesileia – and themselves, too, struck with admiration – the royal Atreussons gave her body to the Trojans to carry along with her armor to the city of famous Ilus, when they learned that Priam had sent a message. Priam had in his mind the plan to put the brave girl, her armor, and her horse as well into the great tomb of rich Laomedon. He had a funeral pyre heaped up for her in front of the city, lofty and broad.

On this he had them place the girl with all the many possessions that it is right to burn in the fire with a wealthy queen who has been killed.

"The ... destructive fire devoured her. The people standing around, some on this side, some on that, quickly quenched the fire with fragrant wine. They collected the bones, poured sweet oil lavishly over them, and put them into a hollow chest. And about them they threw on top the rich fat of a cow that had been pre-eminent among the herds pasturing on the hills of Ida.

"The Trojans uttered shrill laments for her as for a loved daughter, full of pain as they buried her by their strong wall at a projecting tower, putting her beside the bones of Laomedon as an honor for Ares and for Penthesileia herself. Along with her they buried all the other Amazons who had accompanied her into battle and had been killed by the Greeks."

Quintus of Smyrna is thought to have drawn from works written centuries earlier, in the 7th century B.C., including three Greek epic poems: the *Aethiopis*, and the *Sack of Troy*, both by Arctinus of Meletus, and the four books of the *Little Iliad*, usually attributed to Lesches of Mitylene.

(Other early works which told the story of the Amazons included: *Insurrection of the Amazons*; the *Theseid*; the *Amazonika* by Onasus; and the *Atthis* or *Amazonides* of Hegesinus.)

Only fragments of these works remain, although the *Aethiopis* is summarized in the epitome of Proclus (A.D. 410-485).

"The Amazon Penthesileia arrives to aid the Trojans in war. She is the daughter of Ares and a Thracian by birth. Achilles kills her while she is fighting at her best, and the Trojans bury her. Achilles kills Thersites, who railed at him and reproached him for loving Penthesileia."

Hesiod also summarizes the *Aethiopis*, first establishing its proper order in the epic cycle.

"The *Cypria* ... has its sequel in the *Iliad* of Homer, which is followed in turn by the five books of the *Aethiopis*, the work of Arctinus of Miletus. Their contents are as follows:

"The Amazon Penthesileia, the daughter of Ares and of Thracian race, comes to aid the

Trojans, and after showing great prowess, is killed by Achilles and buried by the Trojans. Achilles then slays Thersites for abusing and reviling him for his supposed love for Penthesileia. As a result a dispute arises amongst the Achaeans over the killing of Thersites, and Achilles sails to Lesbos and after sacrificing to Apollo, Artemis, and Leto, is purified by Odysseus from bloodshed.”

Hesiod adds that the ending of Homer’s *Iliad* may once have been different than the ending we have today: “Some read: ‘Thus they performed the burial of Hector. Then came the Amazon, the daughter of great-souled Ares and the slayer of men.’”

The modern writer J.G. Fraser adds: “According to Tzetzes (Schol. on Lycophron 999) Thersites excited the wrath of Achilles not only by his foul accusations but by gouging out the eyes of the Beautiful Amazon.”

Apollodorus also writes of Penthesileia at Troy:

“Penthesileia, daughter of Otrere and Ares, accidentally killed Hippolyte and was purified by Priam. In battle she slew many, and amongst them Machaon,²³ and was afterwards herself killed by Achilles, who fell in love with the Amazon after her death and slew Thersites for jeering at him.”

Hyginus also lists Otrere as the mother of Penthesileia, in his list of Trojan War combatants and their adversaries: “[Achilles] with Penthesileia, daughter of Mars [Ares] and Otrere; Penthesileia was killed.”

Diodorus of Sicily also cites Penthesileia’s accidental killing of her sister as the reason behind her decision to join with the Trojan forces.

“Penthesileia, the queen of the surviving Amazons, who was a daughter of Ares and had slain one of her kindred, fled from her native land because of the sacrilege. And fighting as an ally of the Trojans after the death of [the Trojan prince] Hector she slew many of the Greeks, and after gaining distinction in the struggle she ended her life heroically at the hands of Achilles.

“Penthesileia was the last of the Amazons to win distinction for bravery ... the race diminished more and more and then lost all its strength; consequently in later times, whenever any writers recount their prowess, men consider the ancient stories about the Amazons to be fictitious tales.”

Jordanes also mentions Penthesileia briefly: “And in later times [after Theseus took Antiope captive] the Amazons had a queen named Penthesileia, famed in tales of the Trojan War.”

Paulus Orosius writes: “After Orithyia, Penthesileia ruled the kingdom, of whose courage among men in the Trojan War we have received very distinguished accounts.” He then adds a commentary on the predations of the Amazons.

“O tribulation! The shame of human error! Women, fugitives from their native land, entered Europe and Asia, that is, the greatest and most powerful parts of the world, wandered far and wide, destroyed, and for almost a hundred years kept control by overthrowing many cities and establishing others.”

Two other ancient authors to tell the story of Penthesileia at Troy were Dictys the Cretan and Dares the Phrygian. Although both claimed to have been participants in the Trojan War, they clearly lived after Homer (who himself was born centuries after the war). Both frequently contradict Homer.

Dictys – whose writing later authors translated from Greek into Latin, not word for word, and condensing the final four books into one – is known to have lived prior to A.D. 206. (A papyrus fragment bearing part of his text was dated to this year.) Dictys’ name is said to have been derived from Dicte, the name of a mountain on Crete; Dictys therefore is thought to have been Cretan. He writes:

“After a few days news was suddenly brought that Hector and a few other men had set out to meet Penthesileia, the queen of the Amazons. Why she was coming to Priam’s aid, whether for money or simply because of her love of war, was uncertain; her race, being naturally warlike, was always conquering the neighboring peoples and carrying the Amazon standards far and wide.

“Accordingly, Achilles chose a few faithful comrades and hastened to lay an ambush for the Trojans. He caught them off guard – they were trying to cross a river – and surrounded and slew them before they knew what hit them ...

“During the funeral [of Hector] Penthesileia ... arrived. She brought a huge army of Amazons and other neighboring peoples. On being informed of Hector’s death, she was very upset and desired to go home.

But Alexander [Paris] gave her much gold and silver, and finally prevailed upon her to stay.

"Several days later she drew up her forces and made an attack, without any help from the Trojans, so great was her trust in her people. She arranged the archers on the right flank, the foot soldiers on the left, and the cavalry, to which she herself belonged, in the center.

"Our men [the Achaeans and their allies] were drawn up to meet her ... Thus the two armies, having drawn up their forces, joined battle.

"The queen slaughtered many, using her bow; as did Teucer for us. Meanwhile the Ajaxes were leading the foot soldiers; advancing with their shields before them and pushing back any who got in their way, they wreaked general havoc; no one, it seemed, could stop them from wiping the enemy out.

"Achilles found Penthesileia among the cavalry and, hurling his spear, hit the mark. Then – no trouble now that she was wounded – he seized her by the hair and pulled her off her horse. Her followers, seeing her fallen, became disheartened and took to flight. We pursued and cut down those who were unable to reach the gates before they closed; nevertheless, we abstained from touching the women because of their sex.

"Then we returned, all of us victors, our enemies slain. Finding Penthesileia still half-alive, we marveled at her brazen boldness. Almost immediately a meeting was held to determine her fate, and it was decided to throw her, while still alive enough to have feeling, either into the river to drown or out for the dogs to tear apart, for she had transgressed the bounds of nature and her sex.

"Achilles favored just letting her die and then giving her burial. Diomedes, however, prevailed: going around, he asked everyone what to do and won a unanimous vote in favor of drowning. Accordingly, dragging her by the feet, he dumped her into the Scamander.

"It goes without saying that this was a very cruel and barbarous act. But thus the queen of the Amazons, having lost the forces she had brought to aid Priam, died in a way that befitted her foolhardy character."

Dares, whose manuscript exists only in Latin copies that are said to be word-for-word translations, is also thought to have been a Greek, probably an Athenian. But the first ten sections of his work, which

describe events prior to the Trojan War (the voyage of the Argonauts) seem to be later additions, probably made in the early 6th century A.D. In his version of the story, it is Achilles' son Neoptolemus who kills Penthesileia.

"On the next day, in the city, Priam buried Alexander ...

"On the next day Agamemnon drew up his army in front of the gates [of Troy] and challenged the Trojans to come out and fight. But Priam stayed in the city, increasing his fortifications and waiting for Penthesileia to come with her Amazons.

"When Penthesileia arrived, she led forth her army against Agamemnon. A huge battle arose. It raged several days, and then the Greeks, being overwhelmed, fled for their camp. Diomedes could hardly prevent Penthesileia from firing the ships and destroying all the Greek forces.

"After this battle, Agamemnon kept his forces in camp. Penthesileia, to be sure, came forth each day and, slaughtering the Greeks, tried to provoke him to fight. But he, following the advice of his council, fortified the camp, strengthened the guard, and refused to go out to battle – until Menelaus arrived ...

"Penthesileia, according to her custom, drew up her army and advanced as far as the camp of the Greeks. Neoptolemus, in command of the Myrmidons, led forth his forces. And Agamemnon drew up his army. Greeks and Trojans clashed head-on. Neoptolemus wreaked great slaughter. Penthesileia, having entered the fray, proved her prowess again and again.

"For several days they fought fiercely, and many were killed. Finally Penthesileia wounded Neoptolemus, and then fell at his hands; in spite of his wound, he cut her down.

"The death of Penthesileia, the queen of the Amazons, caused all the Trojans to turn and flee in defeat for their city. And then the Greeks surrounded the walls with their forces and prevented anyone's leaving."

The modern writer Donald J. Sobol adds the story that, after the Trojan War, a group of Amazons sought revenge against Achilles by attacking his tomb, which lay on the isle of Leuce, situated off the mouth of the Ister (Danube) River. Women were forbidden on the island. To get there, the Amazons camped by a river, captured seamen who came ashore there, and forced

them to build boats to transport them and their horses. Reaching the island, the Amazons rode to the temple, only to be thrown from the restless horses as their mounts leapt from the cliffs of the island. The remaining Amazons, sailing home, were battered by a storm. Only a handful survived.

Strabo argues that “The Amazons were not allies [of Troy], because Priam had fought in alliance with the Phrygians against them: ‘At that time, says Priam, I was among their auxiliaries on that day, when the Amazons came to attack them.’”

But then Strabo adds, “The people also who were living on the borders of the country of the Amazons were not situated at so great a distance that it was difficult to send for them from thence, nor did any animosity exist, I suppose, at that time to prevent them from affording assistance.”

Vergil mentions Penthesileia in the Aeneid. Aeneas, coming upon a temple in the middle of Carthage, a city on the north coast of Africa, sees scenes on its walls depicting the fall of Troy. “Penthesileia the Amazon blazes in fury, leading her crescent-shielded thousands, a golden buckle below her naked breast, a soldieress fighting with men.”

A later legend has Penthesileia bear a son named Cayster by Achilles.

The 1st century writer Propertius mentions Penthesileia in a long list of strong women: “Maeotian Penthesileia once dared on horseback to assail the Danaan [Greek] ships with her arrows, even she whose bright beauty conquered the conquering hero [Achilles], when the helm of gold laid bare her brow.”

According to Pausanias, Penthesileia was depicted in a painting by the 5th century B.C. artist Polygnotos. the painting, which showed the events of the Trojan War, was located in a building known as the Club House, situated above a spring called Kassotis that flowed under the Temple of Apollo²⁴ at Delphi.

“As you go into the building all the right of the painting is the fall of Troy and the Greeks sailing away ...

“Above Sarpedon and Memnon is Paris still beardless, clapping his hands like a peasant: you would say Paris seems to be calling Penthesileia by the noise of the clapping.

“Penthesileia is there, looking at Paris, but by the angle of her head she seems to ignore and despise him. Penthesileia appears as an unmarried girl with a bow like the Scythian bows, and a leopard skin on her shoulders.

“The women above Penthesileia are carrying water in broken pots ...”

Penthesileia is also mentioned by the playwright Seneca, in his play *Troades*. In it, Hecuba lists Penthesileia among the foreign heroes who came to fight for Troy: “... she who sees over her borders the wandering Scythians and with her virgin hordes scourges the Pontic shore – even she by the sword is razed ...” A later passage, telling of Achilles’ exploits on the battlefield, reads: “Then fell the fierce Amazon, our latest dread.” A later passage refers to Penthesileia as “the fierce Amazon who scattered the Argive squadrons.”

In the play *Agamemnon*, Seneca describes Penthesileia as “the Amazon, with her painted quiver, battle axe in hand, and crescent shield.”

THE TROJAN WAR

Nobody is certain when the Trojan War took place. But it is possible to use a combination of accounts by ancient authors and excavation reports by modern archaeologists to approximate its date.

The Trojan War is said to have taken place anywhere from around 1250 B.C. (Herodotus, who said the war took place four hundred years before Homer’s time), to 1135 B.C. (Ephorus). Other suggested dates include 1334 B.C. (Doulis of Samos), and a date of either 1184 or 1183 B.C. (Eratosthenes, a librarian of Alexandria who lived from 276-194 B.C., and who calculated by generations).

Troy has been excavated by a number of archaeologists, including Frank Calvert (1865), Heinrich Schliemann (1870-1873 and 1878-1879), Wilhelm Dorpfeld (1893-1894), Carl Blegen (1932-1938), and Manfred Korfmann (1990s).

The strata of the city has been divided into nine major periods (containing about 50 layers in all) that range from about 3600 or 3000 B.C. to the 6th century A.D. Each of the layers was dated using the type of pottery it contained, and in comparing styles with Aegean and Egyptian pottery of a known date. The most likely layer for the Troy of the Trojan War is Troy VI, dated to about 1700-1250 B.C.

(Schliemann mistakenly dated the Trojan War to Troy II, the level in which he found the so-called “treasure of Priam.” The city that occupied this level was destroyed by fire – but it pre-dated the traditional date of the Trojan War by about one thousand years.)

The walled city that occupied the hill during the period represented by Troy VI featured a number of gates. There was a major gate on its east side, near a large square tower. But the most important gate was on the south side of the ancient acropolis. It featured a massive tower fronted by stone bases that may once have displayed images of the gods. This gate (which

faced inland, rather than toward the ocean) is believed to have been the main entrance to the city and may be the “great tower of Ilios” mentioned in Homer’s *Iliad* or the “Scaean Gate.”

The city was estimated to have a total population, inside its massive walls, of about one thousand people. Another five thousand people may have lived outside the walls.

The city that was Troy VI suffered destruction that archaeologists have attributed either to war or earthquake. Wall foundations shifted, and there is evidence of fire.

The next period (Troy VII) shows evidence of hasty rebuilding. Pottery in this level has been dated to between 1190-1160 B.C. Thus the destruction of Troy VIIa, which Blegen attributes to the Trojan War, probably occurred around 1180 B.C. (Blegen himself placed the Trojan War between 1270 and 1240 B.C.)

Michael Wood attributes the destruction of Troy VII to the mysterious “peoples of the sea” who conquered a number of lands during this time. He prefers a date of about 1250 B.C. for the Trojan War.

Wood also comments on the estimations of the ancient authors:

“Such dates – expressed as ‘so long before the first Olympiad [of 776 B.C.]’ – were usually computed from genealogies, with estimates of the length of generations ...

“The most precise ancient dating of the Trojan War is to be found on the Parian Marble, a chronicle of notable events, imaginary or real, computed on the legendary genealogies of the kings of Athens coming down to the mid-3rd century B.C. ... [that dated] the first Greek settlements in Ionia to 1087 B.C., Homer’s floruit at 907 B.C., and the sack of Troy to 5 June, 1209 B.C.

“Unfortunately the intriguing precision of the month and day is an astronomical computation derived from a misunderstanding of a line in the *Little Iliad*: ‘It was midnight and a bright moon was rising’ – which was interpreted as meaning a full moon. The nearest one to midnight occurs on the last lunation before the summer solstice.”

CLETE & CAULONIA

The Amazon Clete, said to be one of Penthesileia’s servants, is mentioned by Lycophron in the *Alexandra*, in a passage in which the Trojan princess Cassandra is prophesying the fate of the Trojans after the fall of their city.

“And others shall take to them the steep Tylesian hills and sea-washed Linos’ hilly promontory, the territory of the Amazon [Clete], taking on them the yoke of a slave woman, whom, as servant of the brazen-mailed impetuous maiden [Penthesileia], the wave shall carry wandering to an alien land: slave of that maiden whose eye, smitten as she breathes her last [gouged out by Thersites], shall bring doom to [Thersites], wounded by the bloody shaft.

“And the men of Croton shall sack the city of the Amazon, destroying the dauntless maiden Clete, queen of the land that bears her name. But ere that, many shall be laid low by her hand and bite the dust with their teeth, and not without labor shall the sons of Laureta sack the towers.”

According to A.W. Mair, who translated Lycophron, adds the following footnotes: “When Clete heard that Penthesileia had fallen at Troy, she set out in search of her but was carried by stress of weather to Italy, where she founded a town which bore her name in Bruttium ... Not only the city but also the queens who succeeded the first Cleite [Clete] bore the same name. As Clete was mother of Caulon, founder of Caulonia, the reference seems to be to the taking of Caulonia by Croton.”

A city named Caulonia was located in ancient times on the “toe” of Italy. The city was a Greek colony.

THALESTRIS

Arrian, a writer of the 2nd century A.D., composed the *Anabasis*, a story of the exploits of the Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), the Macedonian king whose armies conquered Asia, reaching as far as modern India.

According to Arrian, the Amazons were still active in Alexander’s day. At one point on his march to India, Alexander was approached by “Pharasmanes, king of the Chorasmians, [who came] to Alexander with fifteen hundred horsemen, who affirmed that he dwelt on the confines of the nations of the Colchians and the women called Amazons, and promised, if Alexander was willing to march against these nations in order to subjugate the races in this district whose territories extended to the Euxine Sea, to act as his guide through the mountains and to supply his army with provisions.” Alexander declined.

Later, Alexander encounters Atropates, the satrap of Media, whose army included several Amazons. In recounting this story, however, Arrian notes that he

does not believe that the Amazons were still around in Alexander's day – although he points out that there is no reason to believe that they didn't exist in a previous century.

“[Atropates] gave [Alexander] one hundred women, saying that they were of the race of Amazons. These had been equipped with the arms of male horsemen, except that they carried axes instead of spears, and targets instead of shields. They also say that they had the right breast smaller than the left, and that they exposed it in battle.

“Alexander dismissed them from the army, that no attempt to violate them might be made by the Macedonians or barbarians; and he ordered them to carry word to their queen that he was coming to her in order to procreate children by her.

“But this story has been recorded neither by Aristobulus nor Ptolemy, nor any other writer who is a trustworthy authority on such matters.

“I do not even think that the race of Amazons was surviving at that time, or even before Alexander's time; otherwise they would have been mentioned by Xenophon, who mentions the Phasians, Colchians, and all the other barbaric races which the Greeks came upon, when they started from [the city of] Trapezus [located on the Black Sea coast] or before they marched down to Trapezus. They would certainly have fallen in with the Amazons there, if they were still in existence.

“However, it does not seem to me credible that this race of women had no existence at all, because it had been celebrated by so many famous poets. For the general account is that Heracles marched against them and brought the girdle of their queen Hippolyte into Greece; and that the Athenians under Theseus were the first to conquer and repulse these women as they were advancing into Europe. The battle of the Athenians and Amazons has been painted by Micon [Cimon], no less than that of the Athenians and Persians.

“Herodotus also has frequently written about these women; and so have the Athenian writers who have honored the men who perished in war with orations. They have mentioned the exploit of the Athenians against the Amazons as one of their [city's] special glories.

“If therefore Atropates showed any

equestrian women to Alexander, I think he must have shown him some other foreign women trained in horsemanship, and equipped with the arms which were said to be those of the Amazons.”

Quintus Curtius, in his *History of Alexander*, adds a name: Queen Thalestris. In his version of the story, Thalestris and her Amazons came on their own initiative, rather than as part of a larger force.

“There was ... neighboring on Hyrcania a race of Amazons, inhabiting the plains of Themiscyra, about the river Thermodon.²⁵ They had a queen, Thalestris, who ruled all who dwelt between the Caucasus Mountains and the river Phasis.

“She, fired with a desire to visit the king [Alexander], came forth from the boundaries of her kingdom, and when she was not far away sent messengers to give notice that a queen had come who was eager to meet him and to become acquainted with him. She was at once given permission to come.

“Having ordered the rest of her escort to halt, she came forward attended by three hundred women, and as soon as the king was in sight, she herself leaped down from her horse, carrying two lances in her right hand.

“The clothing of the Amazons does not wholly cover the body; for the left side is nude as far as the breast, then the other parts of the body are veiled. However, the fold of the robe, which they gather in a knot, does not reach below the knee. One nipple is left untouched, and with it they nourish their female children; the right is seared, in order that they may more easily stretch their bows and hurl their spears.

“With fearless expression Thalestris gazed at the king, carefully surveying his person, which did not by any means correspond to the fame of his exploits; for all the barbarians feel veneration for a majestic presence, and believe that only those are capable of great deeds whom nature has designed to adorn with extraordinary physical attractiveness.

“However, on being asked whether she wished to make any request, she did not hesitate to confess that she had come to share children with the king, being worthy that he should beget from her heirs to his kingdom; that she would retain any female offspring but would return a male to his father.

“Alexander asked her whether she wished

to serve in war with him; but she, giving as an excuse that she had left her realm without a guard, persisted in asking that he should not suffer her to go away disappointed in her hope.

"The passion of the woman being, as she was, more keen for love than the king, compelled him to remain there for a few days. Thirteen days were spent in satisfying her desire. Then she went to her kingdom, and the king to Parthiene."

The same story is told by Diodorus of Sicily.

"When Alexander returned to Hyrcania there came to him the queen of the Amazons named Thalestris, who ruled all the country between the rivers Phasis and Thermodon. She was remarkable for beauty and bodily strength, and was admired by her countrywomen for her bravery.

"[Thalestris] had left the bulk of her army on the frontier of Hyrcania and had arrived with an escort of three hundred Amazons in full armor. The king marveled at the unexpected arrival and the dignity of the women. When he asked Thalestris why she had come, she replied that it was for the purpose of getting a child. He had shown himself the greatest of all men in his achievements, and she was superior to all women in strength and courage, so that presumably the offspring of such outstanding parents would surpass all other mortals in excellence.

"At this the king was delighted and granted her request and consorted with her for thirteen days, after which he honored her with fine gifts and sent her home."

Justin tells the same story, but offers an alternative name for the Amazon queen: Minithya. He adds that she was among the last of the Amazons, and in a later passage says the Amazons shared a border with the Albanians.

"[The Amazon] queen Minithya, or Thalestris, after obtaining from Alexander the enjoyment of his society for thirteen days, in order to have issue by him, returned into her kingdom, and soon after died, together with the whole name of the Amazons."

Paulus Orosius paraphrases Justin, saying, "Alexander the Great after the death of Darius

subjugated the Hyrcani and the Mardi, where too, the shameless Amazon, Thalestris, or Minothea, with three hundred women met him, still intent on war, she being stirred with the desire to conceive offspring from him."

Several ancient writers were of the opinion that the Amazons did survive long enough for this meeting to have taken place. Jordanes writes: "These women [the Amazons] are said to have kept their power even to the time of Alexander the Great."

But Plutarch, in telling the story, lists not only those who held it to be true, but those who believed it was fictional.

"Here the queen of the Amazons came to see [Alexander], as most writers say, among whom are Cleitarchus, Polycleitus, Onesicritus, Antigenes, and Ister; but Aristobulus, Chares the royal usher, Ptolemy, Anticleides, Philo the Theban, and Philip of Theangela, besides Hecataeus of Eretria, Philip the Chalcidian, and Duris of Samos, say that this is a fiction.

"And it would seem that Alexander's testimony is in favor of their statement. For in a letter to Antipater which gives all the details minutely he says that the Scythian king offered him his daughter in marriage, but he makes no mention of the Amazon.

"And the story is told that many years afterwards Onesicritus was reading aloud to Lysimachus, who was now king, the fourth book of his history, in which was the tale of the Amazon, at which Lysimachus smiled gently and said, 'And where was I at the time?'"

It is entirely possible that the story of an Amazon queen riding out to meet Alexander the great had its origin in this offer of wedlock between the Macedonian leader and a Scythian woman, whose clothing and equipment would have resembled that of the Amazons, and whose ability to ride horseback would have convinced the Greeks that she was an Amazon.

Strabo, too, disputes the story of Thalestris and Alexander. He says it is impossible to believe writers who tell the story of "Thalestria, queen of the Amazons, with whom, they say, Alexander associated in Hyrcania and had intercourse for the sake of offspring." He notes: "This assertion is not generally accepted."

"Cleitarchus says that Thalestria set out from the Caspian Gates and Thermodon and visited Alexander; but the distance from the Caspian country to Thermodon is more than

six thousand stadia.

“The stories that have been spread far and wide with a view to glorifying Alexander are not accepted by all; and their fabricators were men who cared for flattery rather than the truth.”

Quintus Curtius suggests that the women warriors Alexander encountered on the plains of Media, a horse-breeding region that lay southwest of the Caspian Sea, may have given rise to the story of the Amazon queen.

“Thither Atropates, satrap of Media, brought one hundred barbarian women skilled in horsemanship and armed with round shields and axes; this equipment led some to believe that they were survivors of the race of the Amazons.”

BREAST MUTILATION

Stories of Amazons mutilating both their male offspring (to keep them subservient) and their female children (searing the breast so that it would not get in the way of a drawn bow) were told by many ancient writers. Clearly, these tales were intended to add to the Amazons’ reputation for ferocity and barbarousness.

One of those who repeated these stories was Hippocrates, a Greek writer of the 5th century B.C. who wrote a medical text discussing injuries to the joints.

“Some tell a tale how the Amazons dislocate the joints of their male offspring in early infancy – some at the knees and some at the hips – that they may, so it is said, become lame and the males be incapable of plotting against the females. They are supposed to use them as artisans in all kinds of leather or copper work, or some other sedentary occupation.

“For my part, I am ignorant of whether this is true, but I know that such would be the result of dislocating the joints of young infants.”

Some of the ancient writers insist that the Amazon tribe included men – albeit men who were deliberately crippled and who served as slaves. Others report that the Amazon nation was comprised entirely of women, but that they had regular liaisons with the men of neighboring tribes so that their race would not die out.

Jordanes describes this custom as follows:

“Fearing their race would fail, [the

Amazons] sought marriage with neighboring tribes. They appointed a day for meeting once in every year, so that when they should return to the same place on that day in the following years each mother might give over to the father whatever male child she had borne, but should herself keep and train for warfare whatever children of the female sex were born. Or else, as some [writers] maintain, they exposed the males, destroying the life of the ill-fated child with a hate like that of a stepmother.

“Among [the Amazons] childbearing was detested, though everywhere else it is desired. The terror of their cruelty was increased by common rumor; for what hope, pray, would there be for a captive, when it was considered wrong to spare even a son?”

Seneca, in his play *Hippolytus*, makes reference to the tradition that the Amazons killed their male offspring. The passage is one in which a nurse tells Antiope’s son Hippolytus that he is fortunate to have been spared.

“Of-times doth love put curb on stubborn hearts and change their hate. Look at thy mother’s kingdom; those warlike women feel the yoke of Venus [goddess of love]. Thou bearest witness to this, of her race the only son.”

HOW THE AMAZONS LIVED

What would the Amazons have looked like, and how would they have lived?

Tim Severin, who re-enacted the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts, visited a museum in Sinope that contained artifacts from the 13th century B.C. Its curator showed Severin the site of a settlement that would have been flourishing in that century. (Sinope lay just two hundred kilometers west of Themiscyra.)

Severin writes: “The late Bronze Age houses had all been built of timber, the natural building material of this heavily wooded area, and the people had made a plain pottery and tools of bronze and bone. The general impression, said the curator, was of a culture that was simple, robust, and had close links with the other tribes living along the coast in both directions.

“The inhabitants, a people known as the Kaska²⁶ occupied a section of what was in effect a coastal corridor, running from the Bosphorus in the west to the Caucasus [Mountains] in the east, and had contacts with one another along the coast rather than inland to the

plateau [the homeland of the Hittites].”

The Kaska, or Gaska, effectively cut the Hittite empire off from the Black Sea coast. They appear just south of the coast of the Black Sea on a map by John Garstang and O.R. Gurney in the book *The Geography of the Hittite Empire*. The same map shows a region or people named Tibya in the area between the Iris River and the Yasun Burnu peninsula – an area that takes in Themiscyra.

Two ancient cities in northern Turkey have names that are tantalizingly close to the word Amazon. Samsun, a city about sixty kilometers west of Themiscyra along the Black Sea coast, was originally known as Amisos. Another city with a similar name is Amastris, west of Sinope on the southern Black Sea coast.

Excavations in northern Turkey have yet to take in the area immediately around the Thermodon River, although a “brief survey” of northern Turkey was done in 1926 by von der Osten.

In 1940/1941, excavations were carried out by K. Kokten and T. Ozguc in Dundartepe, Tekekoy and Kavak, ancient sites along the Black Sea coast. The pair also surveyed near Bafra, Alacam, Vezirkopru, Havza and Ladik. The investigation resulted in the discovery of a number of prehistoric and 2nd millennium settlements, such as Ivritepe, Gokcebogaz, Kuzcular, Ikiztepe and Salur Hoyuk.

In 1955, Burney surveyed the region from lower Sakarya in the west to the mouth of the Kizilirmak (Iris River) in the east. His survey report contains a “comprehensive” account of early Bronze Age pottery in northern Turkey.

In 1971, U.B. Alkim founded the Samsun expedition. During surveys done by the expedition in 1972 and 1973, more than sixty new sites were recorded.

One of the major excavations of a site along the Black Sea coast that resulted from the survey was at Ikiztepe, located seven kilometers northwest of Bafra on the western bank of the Iris River. This prehistoric site, dating from the late Chalcolithic (4000-3300 B.C.) and early Bronze Age (3300-2000 B.C.) now lies inland, but would have been close to the sea in its heyday.

Excavation at Ikiztepe began in 1974 under Alkim and continued under Yakar, and later under O. Bilgi. Graves, houses and granaries were found.

It seems safe to assume that house construction would have remained relatively consistent during the centuries that followed, and that similar techniques would have been used all along the Black Sea coast.

Generally, the houses were made of wood and mud, in a wattle-and-daub construction. While Yakar

found no clear-cut house plans, he was able to reconstruct the general form of the houses, based on post holes and flat stones that were used as a support for wooden posts.

“Most domestic structures must have been free-standing. These rested mainly on vertical wooden posts which were partly driven into the earth. The space between these neatly aligned posts was sometimes filled with pise (rammed earth).

“Long horizontal beams were then placed on top of these posts in order to build the superior part of the walls. The common method of walling utilized a combination of diagonal, vertical and horizontal plank or split-plank framework which was either filled with pise or covered with interlaced twigs which were then daubed with chaff-tempered mud. Both faces of the walls were plastered with lime or mud and whitewashed.

“The alignment of the foundation posts suggest that houses were mainly rectangular in plan and subdivided into a number of quarters by partition walls. It is also possible to imagine that this type of architecture imposed certain structural limits on building annexes on the side of the dwellings, mainly because of the restrictions on gabled roofs.

“Not all the EB houses were built the same way. In some cases irregularly spaced, large unhewn stones were used to support the substructure of the walls. House floors, eg: kitchen quarters, were usually plastered and as a result of periodic replastering an renovations they were elevated, thus providing some of the necessary insulation against extremely humid surroundings.

“Sleeping quarter inside the houses must have been provided with additional insulation, such as wooden planks overlying plastered floors, and even layers of kilims over the wood floor.

“If the contemporary village architecture in the Black Sea region is taken as a model, then it is possible to assume that some houses of the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd millennia B.C. too were timber structures. The foundations of these houses seem to have rested on corner stones and posts partly driven into the ground. In such literally elevated houses, the floors were built of split planks, providing much better insulation against humidity.

“All types of habitations were heated by

means of fireplaces probably enclosed by low pise walls. In houses with plastered floors the hearths were circular in shape.

"It is also possible to postulate the existence of portable hearths in the form of large clay or pedestaled pottery receptacles containing a slow-burning substance, such as dried cakes of dung, to heat the rooms with wooden floors. Otherwise rooms with wooden floors would have been heated with clay-insulated fireplaces built against one of the walls of the room and provided with a wooden chimney.

"The built-in household furniture included at least two types of ovens, probably built in kitchen quarters in enclosed courts adjacent to the houses. The first type, characteristic of this region, is a low oval-shaped pise oven with a vaulted opening. The second is a rectangular oven whose floor was completely paved with small pottery sherds. This type of oven too, which is also known in eastern Anatolia [Turkey] in the EB period, was encircled by a low enclosure wall made of pise."

Yakar also describes modern houses in the region that were built "a generation or more ago." This type of architecture featured a 30- to 40-centimeter space between the soil and the wooden house floor. In some cases, the foundation consisted of logs driven two-thirds of the way into the soil, or wooden beams set over stone slabs.

"Foundation work is completed by filling in all the space between the vertical supports with pise. In the kitchen quarter of the houses the earth floor is elevated and plastered, bringing it more or less to the level of the wooden floor of the living quarters ...

"The timbers are not fastened together with nails but interlocked at the notched ends and tied together ...

"Heavy rainfall in the area of the Black Sea has made it necessary to provide roofs with rather steeply sloping sides ... Occasionally, flat stones are then placed over all as an overweight to prevent strong winds damaging the roof cover. The light roofing material and scattered flat stones among the debris of the EB houses at Ikiztepe suggest that this type of roof was known in this region as early as the late 4th millennium B.C."

The ancient author Apollonius briefly described the houses of the Mossynoeci, who lived to the east of the

Amazons: "... the Mossynoeci live in the mossynes or wooden houses from which they take their name."

Alkim adds: "Archaeologists of the present day are inclined to think that the pitched roof used by the Phrygians and by the Lycians on the south coast of Asia Minor may merely be a feature taken over from wooden buildings, in which the form was determined by technical requirements."

Yakar also describes the typical village layout of the early Bronze Age.

"As far as the 4th, 3rd, and 2nd millennia B.C. are concerned, the main type of settlement, except the possible camp sites used by pastoralists, is the mixed farming village. Some of these villages may have been quite large and possibly fortified, while others were small and open. In the 2nd millennium B.C., Hittite texts referring to the Kaska tribes living mainly in this region describe their settlements as being fortified ... the fortification walls must have been largely built of wood ...

"The village economy was based on mixed farming and hunting. Metallurgy was known, but only a very small percentage of tools and objects like pins or awls were made of unalloyed copper ..."

The Amazons probably practiced mixed farming and hunting, like their neighbors along the coast. At Ikiztepe, Yakar found "large quantities of deer, wild boar, goat, fish bones and sea shells." Large numbers of loom weights and spindle whorls suggested that there was an important weaving industry at Ikiztepe.

If the Amazons were indeed descendants of the Scythians, they would have the same kind of armor and weapons. According to M. Rostovtzeff, in historic times (once contact with the Greeks was established) Scythian cavalry wore bronze helmets and greaves obtained from the Greeks, and a scaled corslet with pectoral badge.

Weapons included spears, javelins, arrows with triangular bronze heads, a distinctive Scythian (recurved) bow, a gorytus (a bowcase and quiver in one, made of wood covered by metal or leather), a short sword hung in a scabbard from the belt, and a dagger attached by straps to the left leg.

William Montgomery McGovern says Scythian armor consisted of leather covered with scales of horn, horse's hoof, bone, bronze, or iron. The Scythians used battle axes, spears, and swords, with the favored weapon being the short composite bow. Arrow heads were of bone, stone, bronze or iron, and featured a distinctive, triangular cross section, with backward-

pointing barbs.

McGovern adds that the Scythians had bridles and saddles – but without stirrups.

McGovern credits the Scythians with the introduction of the trouser and leather boot – both developed for horseback riding – to the Greek world. The Scythians also wore a coat or robe with close-fitting sleeves, held in place by a belt around the waist and often decorated with bronze or gold plaques that were sewn onto it. The material used was skins or furs. On their heads, the Scythians wore a cap, often peaked or pointed at the top. They also wore rings, bracelets, neck rings, and earrings.

THE AMAZON HOMELAND

The location of the Amazon homeland is pinpointed by Apollonius of Rhodes in *The Voyage of Argo*, the story of Jason and the Argonauts. In this work, the tribes that live along the southern coastline of the Black Sea are listed, in a passage in which the Achaean sailors receive information on what they will encounter on their voyage to Colchis.

The sailors are told that, after entering the Black Sea from the Aegean, they will sail past the territories of the Bithynians, the Mariandyni, and the Paphlagonians.²⁷ The next landmarks are the Halys River, the Iris River, and the Thermodon River. “Here is the plain of Doeas, and the three towns of the Amazons near by.”

East of the Amazons are the iron-working Chalybes,²⁸ the sheep-farming Tibareni, and the Mossynoeci.

“When you have left these behind, you must beach your ship on a low-lying island, though not before you find some means of driving off the innumerable birds that haunt the lonely shore and pay no deference to man. Here the queens of the Amazons, Otrere and Antiope, built a marble shrine for Ares when they were going to war.”

In a later passage, Apollonius describes the temple of Ares on the island.

“[The Argonauts] made their way to the temple of Ares to sacrifice some sheep, and quickly took their places around the altar. It was made of small stones and stood outside the temple, which had no roof. But inside, a black rock was fixed in the ground. This was sacred, and all the Amazons used at times to pray to it. But it was not their custom, when

they came over from the mainland, to make burnt offerings of sheep or oxen on this altar. Instead they used the flesh of horses. They kept great herds of them.”

Tim Severin, a modern author who built a replica of the *Argo* and retraced the voyage of the Argonauts, located the Isle of Ares²⁹ just off the coast of the modern Turkish town of Giresun.

“Giresun Island, 1.5 miles northwest of the present town, fits the location exactly ... Rank upon rank of cormorants and gulls could be seen sitting on the rocky flanks of the island as we approached ...

“No one lives on the island, which is only some 250 meters in breadth, though it was fortified in Byzantine times.

“Now the island is visited every May 20 by people from the mainland who come to invoke its magic ... The custom is to go first to a riverbank on the mainland and throw in seven double handfuls of pebbles, followed by a single handful. This symbolizes a release, the act of casting off care and misfortune. Then the supplicant hires a boatman to row him out to Giresun Island and circle it three times, always from east to west.

“Going ashore, the visitor approaches a solitary black boulder, which stands exposed on the eastern shore of the island. This black rock, some ten feet in diameter like a huge billiard ball, is made of very much the same conglomerate material as the ‘clashing rocks’ and is pockmarked with small holes.

“In these holes the believer places tokens of his wish: a pair of small pebbles nestling together comes from sweethearts who hope to marry; a single stone is from a childless couple who want to have a baby. A strip of cloth may be nailed to the rock simply as a token.

“If he is young and fit, the man can strengthen the magic by climbing around the rock itself, spread-eagled against its rough surface, again three times.

“The old boatman who made a living ferrying these visitors out to the island spoke of men who had dug for buried treasure on the island, the center of which is now covered with thick undergrowth, groves of trees and tumbledown Byzantine ruins. No treasure has ever been found, as far as he knew, but the black rock was famous among all the country folk for its magic.

“Could the massive black boulder be the same ancient ‘black stone’ where Apollonius said the Amazons slaughtered sacrificial horses? It is possible.”

The worship of a black stone finds a parallel in Roman history. According to the Roman historian Livy (59 B.C. - A.D. 17), the goddess Cybele was worshipped in the form of a black stone in Pessinus in Phrygia.

The modern town of Giresun has been cited as the location of the ancient city that the Hittites knew as Aripisa. The records of three Hittite kings (who reigned from 1400 to 1315 B.C.) list Aripisa as being a fortress of the Azzi or Hayassa – enemies of the Hittites. The fortress was said to lie “in the sea” on a high, rocky peak. The Azzi or Hayassa do not appear in the annals of later Hittite kings.

Beyond the Isle of Ares, according to Apollonius, were the Philyres, the Macrones, the Becheiri, the Sapeires, the Byzeres, and the city of Colchis.

As the Argonauts sail along the coastline, they pass the Halys River, the Iris River, and the “delta land of Assyria” or home of the White Scythians.

“On that same day they rounded the distant headland that guards the harbor of the Amazons ... And here in the bay beyond the cape, as the sea was getting rough, the Argonauts ran ashore at the mouth of the Thermodon.

“There is no river like the Thermodon, none that divides itself into so many branches – only four short of a hundred, if you care to count them all. Yet the real headwater is a single stream which flows down to the lowlands from mountains called the Amazonian Heights, and then on through hilly country, which causes it to follow tortuous ways. Separate streams, at varying distances, meander here and there, each seeking its own easiest way to lower levels. Many of these are swallowed up and end without a name. But there is no mistaking the parent river when, rejoined by a few of them, it bursts with an arching crest of foam into the [Euxine] Sea.

“Had the Argonauts stayed here as they intended and come to grips with the Amazons, the fight would have been a bloody one. For the Amazons of the Doeantian plain were by no means gentle, well conducted folk; they were brutal and aggressive, and their main concern in life was war.

“War, indeed, was in their blood, daughter

of Ares as they were and of the Nymph Harmonia, who lay with the god in the depths of the Acmonian Wood and bore him girls who fell in love with fighting.

“But Zeus once more sent forth the northwest wind, and with its help the Argonauts stood out from the curving shore where the Amazons of Themiscyra were arming for battle.

“I must explain that the Amazons did not all live in one city; there were three separate tribes settled in different parts of the country. The party on the beach, whose queen at that time was Hippolyte, were Themiscyreans. The Lycastians lived apart, and so did the Chadesians, who were javelin throwers.

“At nightfall on the following day [the Argonauts] reached the land of the Chalybes.”

Pliny (?) adds the names of other Amazon cities, located along the Thermodon River, which he says flows past Mount Amazonius. Cities near it include one “of the same name as the river,” as well as Amazonium, Themiscyra, Satira, Amasia³⁰ and Comana.³¹

Valerius Flaccus also writes about the Amazon homeland in his version of the tale of the Argonauts.

“Next are the fields that Thermodon’s stream doth cleave; the famous tribe of Amazons, sprung from great Mars [Ares], is there; nor deem those warriors women, but of such a sort and of such might as Enyo triumphant over men, or the virgin goddess [Athena] who bears the monstrous Gorgon.

“Let not then the driving blast carry thy ship to those dreadful shores, what time the troop in arrogant sport fly here and there exultant on dusty steeds, and the ground trembles to their halloing, and their sire incites them to battle with brandished spear.

“Have not such terror of the race of the Chalybes, savage though it might be ...”

Ammianus Marcellinus also places the homeland on the Thermodon River, but says the Amazons retreated there after being forced out of other territory – and after the attack on Athens.

“The next river ... is the Thermodon, flowing from Mount Armonius and gliding through the Themiscyraean groves, to which the Amazons were forced to migrate in days of yore for the following reason.

“The Amazons of old, after having by constant losses worn out their neighbors, and

devastated them by bloody raids, had higher aspirations; and considering their strength and feeling that it was too great merely for frequent attacks upon their neighbors, being carried away besides by the headstrong heat of covetousness, they broke through many nations and made war upon the Athenians.

“But after a bitter contest they were scattered in all directions, and since the flanks of their cavalry were left unprotected, they all perished.

“Upon the news of their destruction the remainder, who had been left at home as unfit for war, suffered extreme hardship; and in order to avoid the deadly attacks of their neighbors, who paid them like for like, they moved to a quieter abode on the Thermodon.

“Thereafter their descendants, who had greatly increased, returned, thanks to their numerous offspring, with a very powerful force, and in later times were a cause of terror to peoples of diverse nationalities.”

In a later passage, Marcellinus places the current (4th century A.D.) homeland of the Amazons well to the north of the Black Sea, along the Tanais River. He distinguishes them from the Sauromatae, whom he lists separately.

“Behind these [tribes] dwell the inhabitants of the Cimmerian Bosphorus ... Next, at a considerable distance, are the Amazons, who extend to the Caspian Sea and live about the Tanais ...

“Beyond the Tanais the Sauromatae have a territory of wide extent, through which flow the never-failing rivers Maraccus, Rombites, Theophanes and Totordanes. However, there is also another nation of the Sauromatae, an enormous distance away, extending along the shore which receives the river Corax and pours it far out into the Euxine Sea.”

Procopius of Caesarea also gives Themiscyra as the original location of the Amazons: “... close to Amisus is the town called Themiscyra and the river Thermodon, where they say the army of the Amazons originated ...” But he adds that, in his day, the Amazons no longer lived in this area.

“And they say that the Amazons really originated here [the country that extends from the Caucasus Mountains to the Caspian Gates] and afterwards established their camp near

Themiscyra on the Thermodon River ... at the place where the city of Amisus is at the present time. But today nowhere in the vicinity of the Caucasus range is any memory of the Amazons preserved or any name connected with them ...

“But it seems to me that those [Strabo and other ancient writers used by Procopius as sources] have spoken the truth about the Amazons at any rate better than any others, who have stated that there never was a race of women endowed with the qualities of men and that human nature did not depart from its established norm in the mountains of the Caucasus alone ...”

He insists that the stories of the Amazons were true, citing examples, from the region where the Amazons were thought to have originated, of tribes that included women warriors.

“That the Amazons did make an expedition with their husbands, I too believe, basing my judgment on what has actually taken place in my time. For customs which are handed down to remote descendants give a picture of the character of former generations. I mean this, that on many occasions when Huns have made raids into the Roman domain and have engaged in battle with those who encountered them, some, of course, have fallen there, and after the departure of the barbarians the Romans, in searching the bodies of the fallen have actually found women among them.

“No other army of women, however, has made its appearance in any locality of Asia or Europe. On the other hand, we have no tradition that the mountains of the Caucasus were ever devoid of men.”

For many Classical writers, Themiscyra was firmly fixed as the home city of the Amazons. Sextus Propertius, writing of the strength of Spartan women who wrestled, threw balls, rolled the hoop, participated in the footrace, threw the discus, boxed, went hunting with hounds and carried swords and shields, compared them to “the warrior throng of Amazons who bathe with bosoms bare in Themodon’s streams.”

In the play *Prometheus Bound*, by Aeschylus, the titan Prometheus gives Io instructions for reaching the Amazons. (According to myth, Io was a Greek woman who was transformed into a cow that was driven on a tortuous journey around the northern limits of the

Euxine Sea and on to Egypt.) In this passage, Aeschylus places the Chalybes (neighbors of the Amazons) near the Sea of Azov.

“First, from this spot, turn thyself toward the rising sun and wend thy steps over untilled plains and thou shalt reach the Scythian nomads, who dwell, perched aloft, in wattled houses on strong-wheeled wains [wagons], and are accoutred with far-darting bows. Approach them not, but keeping thy feet nigh the rugged strand, whereon the sea breaks with a roar, pass on beyond their land.

“On the left hand dwell the workers in iron, the Chalybes, and of them thou must beware, since they are savage and not to be approached by strangers.

“Then thou shalt reach the river Hybristes [“Violent”], which does not belie its name. Do not cross this – for it is hard to cross – until thou comest to Caucasus itself, loftiest of mountains, where from its very brows the river pours out its might in fury. Over its crests, which neighbor the stars, thou must pass and enter upon a southward course, wherein thou shalt reach the host of the Amazons, who loathe all men. They shall in time to come inhabit Themiscyra on the Thermodon, where, fronting the sea, is Salmydessus’ rugged jaw, evil host of mariners, step-dame of ships.

“The Amazons will guide thee on thy way right gladly. Next, just at the narrow portals of the mere, thou shalt reach the Cimmerian isthmus. This thou must leave with stout heart and pass through the channel of Maeotis; and ever after among mankind there shall be great mention of thy passing, and it shall be called after thee the Bosphorus [“Passing of the Cow”]. Then, leaving the soil of Europe, thou shalt come to the Asian continent.”

Elsewhere in the *Prometheus* the Amazons are described as “the dwellers in the Colchian land, maidens fearless in battle,” who live near “the throng of Scythia, who possess the land at the ends of the earth about Lake Maeotis [the Sea of Azov].”

The geographer Strabo discusses possible locations for the Amazon nation. In one passage of his book *Geography*, he acknowledges the Black Sea coast as their homeland in a discussion of river deltas. He mentions “the coast of Themiscyra, named the plain of the Amazons, near the mouths of the Thermodon and Iris [rivers] ...” In another passage, he mentions “the Themiscyrian plain of the Amazons.”

He writes: “Themiscyra and the plains about Thermodon and the mountains that lie above them are by all writers mentioned as having belonged to the Amazons; but they say that the Amazons were driven out of these places.”

Discussing the tribes that lived along the southern coast of the Black Sea, Strabo cites the Halys river as the dividing line between the Paphlagonians to the west and the “White Syrians” to the east.

“Pindar says that the Amazons ‘swayed a Syrian army that reached afar with their spears,’ thus clearly indicating that their abode was in Themiscyra.

“Themiscyra is in the territory of the Amiseni; and this territory belongs to the White Syrians ...”

Other tribes near the Paphlagonians include the Phrygians and Galatians to the south, and the Bithynians and Mariandyni to the west.

Elsewhere, Strabo discusses earlier writers’ interpretations of where the Amazons who fought at Troy hailed from – and whether they fought under the command of the neighboring Chalybes.

He mentions the fact that “the poet” – Homer – uses the name Alybes in place of Chalybes. (Homer calls the land of the Albye “the native place of silver”; the Chalybes were noted as iron workers.)

The actual passage in Homer’s *Iliad* reads: “Odios and Epistrophus led the Alizones, from distant Alybe, the native place of silver.”

Strabo comments that while some of the ancient authors interpreted this as meaning that the Alizones came “from afar,” others interpreted the passage as meaning “far from Chalybe.” He adds:

“Some persons alter the word to Alazones, others to Amazons, and ‘Alybe’ to ‘Alope’ or ‘Alobe,’ calling the Scythians above the Borysthenes [River] Alazones and Callipidae, and by other names ...

“Some say that the Amazons were situated between Mysia, Caria, and Lydia near Cyme, which is the opinion also of Ephorus, who was a native of the latter place. And this opinion may not be unreasonable, for he may mean the country which in later times was inhabited by the Aeolians and Ionians, but formerly by Amazons.

“There are some cities ... which have their names from the Amazons; as Ephesus, Smyrna,³² Cyme and Myrina. But would one think of inquiring in these places after Alybe, or, according to some writers, Alope, or Alobe; what would be the meaning of ‘from afar’ or where is the silver mine?

“These objections [Ephorus] solves by an alteration in the text, for he writes the verses in

this manner: 'But Odius and Epistrophus led the Amazons, who came from Alope, whence the tribe of the Amazonides.'

"By this solution he has invented another fiction. For Alope is nowhere to be found in that situation, and the alteration in the text, itself a great change, and contrary to the authority of ancient copies, looks like an adaptation formed for the occasion.

"The Scepsian [Demetrius] does not adopt the opinion of Ephorus, nor does he agree with those who suppose them to be the Halizoni about Pallene, whom we mentioned in the description of Macedonia ... He much approves of the opinion of Hecataeus the Milesian, and of Menecrates of Elea, disciples of Xenocrates, and that of Palaephatus.

"The first of these [Hecataeus] says in his work entitled *The Circuit of the Earth*, 'near the city of Alazia is the river Odysses, which after flowing through the plain of Mygdonia from the west, out of the lake Dascylitis,³³ empties itself into the Rhyndacus.' He further relates that Alazia is now deserted, but that many villages of the Alazones through which the Odysses flows are inhabited ...

"Menecrates, in his work *The Circuit of the Hellespont*, says that above the places near Myrleia there is a continuous mountain tract occupied by the nation of the Halizoni ...

"Palaephatus says that Odius and Epistrophus levied their army from among the Amazons then living in Alope, but at present in Zeleia [a city northeast of Troy, near the Sea of Marmara] ...

"Demetrius [speaks] of the existence of Amazons near Pygela, between Ephesus, Magnesia, and Priene ..."

Themiscyra, once close to the ocean, probably now lies inland. Tim Severin writes: "The coastline of this area has been drastically altered by the masses of silt, stones and sand brought down by rivers such as the Izilirmak [Iris River], and deposited as deltas pushing out to seaward. Apollonius had noted how this stretch of coast was a land of changing deltas..."

Despite the fact that the Amazons were traditionally located along the Thermodon River in what is today the Black Sea coast of Turkey, later writers moved their homeland further east. Quintus Curtius, writing in the 1st century A.D., gives an accurate account of the tribes to either side of the Amazons, but places all of these tribes south of the Caspian Sea.

"There is a continuous valley extending as far as the Caspian Sea, to which arms, so to speak, of that land jut forth; these, bending slightly in the middle, form a curve very like the moon with its horns standing out when that heavenly body does not yet fill out its complete orb [is crescent-shaped].

"The Cercetae and the Mossyni, and the Chalybes are on the left [west], and on the other side the fields of the Leucosyri and the Amazons ..."

Pomponius Mela, a Roman historian of the 1st century A.D., locates the Amazons well north of the Scythians.

"On the other side [north of Arabia] are the Caspians, next neighbors to the Scythians, beyond whom are the Amazons, and out beyond them are the Hyperboreans ... [Bordering] upon the Amazons and the Hyperboreans lie the Cimmerians, the Scythians, the Eniochians, the Georgians, the Mosches, the Corsices, the Phoristes, the Ryphakes, and where the country passes along unto our seas the Mardes, the Antibaraeans, and from thence somewhat better known names: the Medes, the Armenians, the Comagenes, the Murrans, the Vegets, the Cappadocians, the Galgrees, the Lycaonians, the Phrygians, the Pysidians, the Isaurians, the Lydians and the Syroclicians."

"The Caspian Sea breaks into the mainland at the straight (?) being a narrow and long gutte (?) like a river, and when it is flowing in after that manner, in a straight channel, it heads abroad into three bays: namely into the Hirecanians, directly against the mouth; into the Scythians on the left hand; and on the right hand into that which particularly and by the name of the whole is called the Caspian Bay ...

"At the right hand as we enter in the Scythians afore (?) named nomads, possess the sea shores. Within it to the Caspian Bay are the Caspians [and] the Amazons, otherwise called Sauromats."

According to the modern writer T. Sulimirski, Mela was describing the area directly north of the Sea of Azov, with Scythians to the west of the Tanais River, and Amazones to the east. Sulimirski places the Sauromatians to the north of the Caspian Sea.

Mela also connects the Amazons with the Caucasus Mountains: "From hence [Colchis] rise certain mountains which ... are called the Caraunii. The same [hills] are called by sundry other names, as Taurish, Moschian, Amazonish, Caspian, Coraxincian and Caucasian, according to the sundry nations that border upon them."

Although he calls the Sauromatians "Amazons," Mela locates the original home of the Amazons at the Thermodon River in his chapter on the Chalybes (a tribe that lived further east along the Black Sea coast).

"The Chalybes, who were next neighbors to [situated to the east of] Paphlagonia, have two right famous cities, Amysos [Samsun] and Sinope ... and the rivers of the Halys and Thermodon. By Halys is the city Lycast, and along by the Thermodon is a plain wherein was the town Themiscyre and the camp of the Amazons, and therefore they call it Amazonia..."

Like other ancient writers, Mela made special note of those tribes whose women went to war. In his chapter on the Chalybes he writes:

"Among the Iaxamathians, the women exercise the same feats that the men do, insomuch that they be not privileged from the wars. The men fight afoot with arrows, and the women fight on horseback. Neither encounter they with weapons, but such as they can snare with ropes, they strangle [by] drawing them after them."³⁴

"[The women] marry, howbeit, to the extent that they may be counted unmarriageable, the matter consists not in their years, for they abide unmarried until they have killed an enemy."

Finally, Pindar's *Ode for Alcimedon of Aegina* (written in 460 B.C.) mentions the Amazons, in a passage in which a prophecy about the fall of Troy is revealed. The location of the Amazon homeland, however, is unclear. He may have been placing them along the Ister (Danube) River – or in their traditional homeland of Themiscyra, on the way to the Ister. Two translations of the passage are:

"Thus spoke the god [Apollo] full clearly, and hastened on his way to Xanthus [a city on the southwestern tip of modern Turkey in ancient Lycia], and to the Amazons with their noble steeds, and to the Ister."

"So the god spoke clearly, and rode full speed for Xanthos, to the Amazons and the Danube, while Poseidon steered for Isthmos, bringing Aiakos to Aegina [a Greek island near Athens]."

THE AMAZON ERA

When were the Amazons of Themiscyra at their height? Unfortunately, the only Amazon whose name is connected with a datable historical event is Penthesileia, the Amazon queen who fought in the Trojan War.

To date any of the other events cited in the Amazon legends, we must turn to the Greeks who fought them – whose genealogies are recorded, albeit sometimes with contradictions. Each of these men may be dated in relation to the Trojan War, giving a rough date for the battle against Heracles at Themiscyra, the attack on Athens, the battle against the Scythians at Colchis, and the war against Bellerophon.

Some modern writers are willing to assign specific dates to these events. Donald J. Sobol, in his book *The Amazons of Greek Mythology*, places Heracles at 1261-1209 B.C., and the Amazon invasion of Athens at 1256 B.C. The voyage of the Argonauts is placed at 1225 B.C., while the 10-year-long Trojan War is said by Sobol to have spanned the years 1192 to 1183 B.C.

Unfortunately, these dates are open to speculation. We have only rough guesses as to when these events took place – even in the case of the Trojan War, the dates are uncertain.

Heracles appears to have lived two generations prior to the Trojan War. Both his sons and grandsons fought at Troy.

Some time after his attack on Themiscyra, Heracles attacked Troy in revenge for a past insult by the Trojan King Laomedon. In the battle, Laomedon and all of his sons were killed. Podarces (who was re-named Priam after the battle) became the next king of Troy. It was this Priam who fought the Amazons on the Sangarius River – a battle which took place prior to the Trojan War.

Theseus, the Athenian king who captured Antiope, was said to have been sent, when he was just a youth, as tribute to King Minos of Knossos (a city on the island of Crete.) For this reason, Theseus is usually placed in the 15th century B.C., a time period prior to the collapse of Cretan power in the Aegean. This collapse, and the subsequent domination of Crete by Mycenaeans (Greeks from the mainland), probably occurred as a result of a massive volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Thera in the first half of the 15th century B.C., weakening Crete.

This tradition of placing Theseus in this century poses a problem, since Theseus is also said to have been fought at Themiscyra with Heracles – who lived more than two centuries later.

Theseus in fact should be placed in the 13th century B.C., just prior to the Trojan War, when a Mycenaean king – also called Minos – controlled Crete.

According to Thucydides, an Athenian historian of the 5th century B.C., there were two Cretan kings named Minos. The first was the man for whom the “Minoan” era is named – an era in which Crete dominated the Aegean. The second King Minos was said by Thucydides to have lived in the 13th century B.C. Idomeneus, a grandson of the second King Minos, led Cretan troops into battle in the Trojan War, and Minos’ great-grandson Agamemnon was commander of the Greek forces at Troy.

The Parian Marble lists the first Minos as having lived from 1462-1423 B.C. The second King Minos appears circa 1294/1293 B.C.

Placing Theseus just prior to the Trojan War also ties in with the fact that Menestheus, who usurped Theseus to claim the Athenian throne, fought in the Trojan War.

When the Colchians fended off the Scythian tribes, both Amazons and Argonauts joined in the battle, fighting on the side of Colchis. Thus if a time period can be established for Jason, leader of the Argonauts, a rough date for this battle can be approximated.

Jason seems to have lived about one generation prior to the Trojan War. During his voyage with the Argonauts, he is said to have impregnated Hypsipyle, a princess of the Isle of Lemnos. The son of this union, Euneus, ruled the island at the time of the Trojan War.

According to legend, Jason seems to have traveled to Colchis when Theseus was just a boy. Medea, a Colchian princess who eloped with Jason and returned with him to Greece, later winds up at Athens, where she takes part in a plot to poison the young Theseus, who has just arrived at his father’s palace. (There is also a second, genealogical connection; Medea’s aunt Pasiphae married the King Minos that Theseus was sent to as tribute.)

If this is indeed the case, Theseus must have mounted his own attack on the Amazons, since he was just a teenager when stragglers from Heracles’ army were met by the Argonauts, and the grave of one of Heracles’ raiders was spotted by Jason’s men as they passed through the Black Sea on their way to Colchis.

It is uncertain when Bellerophon’s attack on the Amazons took place, in relation to the other attacks by Achaeans. According to some genealogies, Bellerophon lived five generations before Heracles. (Bellerophon married Philonoe, a sister of Anteia. This Anteia was

married to the brother of Heracles’ great-great-great-grandfather.)

At the same time, the genealogies make Bellerophon a contemporary of Jason. (Their grandfathers were brothers.)

The legends also make Bellerophon one generation earlier than Theseus. Bellerophon was once a suitor of Aethra, Theseus’ mother, before he was banished to Lycia.

But perhaps the best clue to dating Bellerophon lies in the fact that his grandson fought in the Trojan War.

Perseus, Mycenaean king who attacked Medusa and the Gorgons of Africa, has links with two of the men listed above. First, he is the great-grandfather of Heracles. Secondly, Perseus’ grandfather Acrisius was the twin brother of Proetus, the king who exiled Bellerophon to Lycia. (Bellerophon went into battle mounted on the winged horse Pegasus, said to have sprung magically from the blood of Medusa’s severed head.) Thus Bellerophon would seem to be earlier than Heracles.

In summary, it would seem that all four of the Greeks who either encountered or fought against the Amazons (Heracles, Theseus, Jason, and Bellerophon) lived one or two generations prior to the Trojan War. The attack by King Priam of Troy also took place prior to the Trojan War. But the precise order of these attacks is difficult to pin down.

In some cases – especially between Heracles and Theseus – it seems that one Greek hero has been attributed the exploits of another. Gradually the stories converged, until both Heracles and Theseus were involved in the same raid on Themiscyra. In other cases, the exact order of events seems to have been garbled. Thus we have the unlikely scenario of Heracles raiding the Amazons, Jason seeing the stragglers on his voyage to Colchis, Medea leaving with Jason and arriving in Athens in time to meet Theseus as a young boy – and Theseus somehow jumping back in time to participate in Heracles’ attack on Themiscyra.

Finally, the stories are complicated by the fact that ancient writers sometimes took one of the heroes of their city and placed his name in the list of those who participated in a particular event (eg: the voyage of the Argo). Gradually, the exploits of their national hero grew – until they wound up participating in events that occurred generations apart.

AMAZONS IN ART

One of the earliest representations of Amazons in sculpture is a fragment of a stone slab, showing Achilles (named) attacking with a spear and shield over the legs of a fallen warrior named Ainia. This piece of

sculpture is thought to date from the late 7th or early 6th century B.C. The name is similar to that of Anaia (alternatively spelled Anaea) – said to have been an Amazon who was buried opposite Samos in a place that still bore her name in ancient times.

Other early representations of Amazons can be seen on a terra cotta shield of Argolic shape, found in a bothros at Tiryns in fragments. The shield is dated to either the turn of the 8th century or to the 7th century B.C., or to the early black and white style.

It shows two warriors in a larger scale, two smaller-scale warriors to either side, and a fallen warrior below. Of the larger-scale warriors, a bearded man holds the plumed helmet of a woman wearing a broad belt and kilt (decorated in a checkerboard pattern with geometric bands above and below), possibly with bare breasts, and carrying a spear. Above the women is a bird with a fish in its mouth. The male warrior is about to slash at her with his sword, and she menaces him with her spear.

Bronze reliefs, or shield strips, dating to the late 7th and mid-6th century B.C., bear a number of images of Amazons, some of them named. The most common is Penthesileia (who appears on three of the strips, fighting Achilles). She wears a short chiton (sleeveless tunic) and high-crested helmet, and carries a spear and a round shield. Other shield strips show Perseus and Medusa.

Bronze tripod fragments from the Acropolis of Athens (possibly parts of the same tripod) show running Amazons looking behind themselves, wearing Illyrian helmets with high crests and short chitons that expose the right shoulder. The tripods date from approximately the third quarter of the 6th century B.C.

Images of Amazons decorated much of the architecture of ancient Greece. The acrolithic metope (a square space in a frieze) of Temple E at Selinus shows an Amazon with a short chiton over an “Oriental” costume of trousers and a long-sleeved shirt, wearing a pointed cap – which Heracles seizes. The woman is barefoot, wears a wide belt, and carries a shield over her left arm. Heracles is stepping on her right foot to prevent her from escaping. The work is dated to the early second quarter of the 5th century B.C.

From the Temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus comes a depiction of a woman on horseback and in armor identical to that worn by Greek hoplites (heavily armed foot soldiers) of the Classical period. Protecting her chest is one of the hoplite flexible corslets, which were made of leather and covered with small overlapping metal plates. Across her shoulders are the distinctive shoulder pieces of the corslet, which were secured at the back and then pulled over the shoulders and laced at the front. As did the hoplites, the woman wears her

armor over a simple chiton that reaches to mid-thigh. In her left hand she holds a bow.

Depictions of Amazons could also be found at Bassae near Phigaleia. The east frieze of the Temple of Apollo Epikourios (Epicurus) contains a detail of the combat between an Amazon and a Greek warrior. (The sculpture now is in the British Museum.) In the frieze, the Amazon is shown wearing a belted chiton with the right breast bare, a cape attached to her left shoulder, and a belt crossing her torso diagonally from the right shoulder to left hip. Her right arm is raised, possibly to throw a spear. This marble frieze dates to between approximately 421 and 418 B.C., and is thought to be by Iktinos, the architect of the Parthenon.

The frieze has been variously interpreted as showing Achilles and Penthesileia, or Heracles and an Amazon. Donald J. Sobol interprets it as showing a wounded Greek being helped off the field of battle by an Amazon.

On the east side of the Hephaisteion in Athens can be found a metope depicting Heracles’ attack on Themiscyra. It is extensively damaged, but it is the latest depiction of an “Amazonomachy” showing Heracles in Attic art. Heracles is carrying a shield and advancing to the right, and an Amazon has fallen on her left knee. Only outlines of the other figures can be seen.

On the Parthenon in Athens, fourteen of the ninety-two metopes include representations of Amazons attacking the Athenian acropolis. These metopes are dated to between 447 and 440 B.C., and are all badly damaged.

The west metopes of the Parthenon show an Amazon holding an axe in both hands, mounted Amazons, and Amazons carrying the pelta shield. Each of the seven odd metopes shows a rider attacking a naked Greek. Theseus is thought to be represented in the last metope, attacking an Amazon archer who is kneeling. (This grouping is often shown on pottery.)

A terra cotta pediment from Corinth, found in fragments in a well and thought to have formed the pediment of a small temple, shows parts of at least five figures, all two-thirds life-sized. The pediment is thought to date from about 500 B.C., and shows Amazons in short chitons with corslets and greaves, carrying shields.

Donald J. Sobol mentions a fragment from a small marble pediment found in Thebes as being “similar in style.” On it, a fallen Amazon archer, less than half life-sized, lies beside the right leg and foot of a Greek.

The Athenian Treasury at Delphi was a structure that originally had thirty metopes (six on each short side and nine on each long side). The northern metopes showed Heracles (thought to be shown fighting at Themiscyra), while Theseus was represented on the

south. A depiction of Heracles' tenth labor (fetching the cattle of Geryon) is shown on the west, while Amazons are on the east. Single metopes, showing Theseus and an Amazon, and Heracles and an Amazon, were thought to have been on the southern and northern flanks of the big series of metopes on the eastern side of the treasury. The building is thought to have been erected in the period just after the victory at Marathon (490 B.C.).

The Amazons in these sculptures are depicted advancing, about to dismount from horses, and shooting arrows. They wear a corslet over a short chiton and carry quivers. One is shown wearing an Attic helmet without cheek pieces. The Amazon also wears earrings.

The subject matter of the eastern metopes is thought to be the raid on Themiscyra by Theseus and Heracles. (It is less likely that it shows the Amazon attack on Athens, since Heracles is included.)

The west pediment (a triangular space surmounting a wall or colonnade) of the Temple of Apollo Daphnephoros at Eretria, found in fragments in 1900, shows the abduction of Antiope. Theseus is mounting his chariot, with Antiope standing beside him. His right arm (now lost) held the reins, while he held Antiope in his left arm. His left leg (now lost) was on the ground, but his right leg (now lost) was bent, with one foot in the chariot, in which Antiope already stood. Both figures were life-sized. Kneeling Amazon archers are also shown. Fragments of other Amazons and Greeks were found with Theseus and Antiope on the west side of the foundations of the temple.

Antiope wears a diadem, earrings, chiton and a jacket with a V-neck. The pediment is thought to date from the last decade of the 6th century B.C. (The Persians are known to have destroyed this temple in 490 B.C.)

A marble metope from the Temple Zeus at Olympia shows an Amazon fighting Heracles. The sculpture is nearly life-sized. Unfortunately this metope, the last on the west side of the temple, is the worst preserved. It shows an Amazon's head, right knee, and perhaps a bit of her kolpos. (The metope is the one described by Pausanias as being above the back chamber of the temple.) The twelve metopes showing the labors of Heracles are thought to date to between 465 and 460 B.C., and the temple was completed in 456 B.C.

A battle scene from the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, done by Leochares in the 5th century B.C., shows Amazons in belted chitons (with torsos unarmored) carrying single-bladed axes with a ball at the top of the axe handle and a straight, blunt projection opposite the blade.

The three Amazons found here are by Timotheos in

the first half of the 4th century B.C., by Scopas in the first half of the 4th century B.C., and by Scopas in the fourth century B.C.

The temple of Artemis Leucophryene at Magnesia ad Moeandrum shows an Amazon in a distinctive Scythian hat. The hat is soft, folded over to the front on top of the head, and is long in the back with ear flaps.

A frieze on the Temple of Juno (which is mentioned in both the Aeneid and the Post Homericus of Quintus Smyrnaeus) is said to have inspired the Aithiopsis of Arktinos of Miletus.

The "wounded Amazon" was a popular subject for sculptors of the 5th century B.C. Among those to tackle the subject, probably in bronze, were Polycleitos (Polyclitus), Pheidias (Phidias), and Cresilas – and possibly also Kydon and Phradmon. All were competing in a contest to have their statue placed in the Sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesus. The contest, thought to have been held around 445-435 B.C., was said by Pliny the Elder to have been won by Polycleitos; Phidias came second.

We know what these statues looked like from marble copies, done in Roman times. Most show a woman with short curly hair, parted in the middle, wearing a cape and a thigh-length draped chiton that is belted at the waist and worn to expose the left breast. One copy shows the torso of a woman, possibly with a quiver on her left hip, beside a Phrygian shield.

One of these copies (said to be of Pheidias' work) is in the Vatican. Other "wounded Amazon" statues are in the Capitoline, in Berlin, and in the Lansdowne Vienna Collections.

Abby Wettan Kleinbaum, in her book *The War Against the Amazons*, says the tradition of portraying an Amazon with her chiton draped to reveal the right shoulder and breast was a Hellenic tradition. She says there was no mention, at this time, of the removal of a breast by cauterization. That tradition began only in the literature of the later Hellenistic and Roman periods. It was a convention of Roman literature that the Amazons rode into battle with one breast exposed.

Other sculptures in the "wounded Amazon" style combine Classical Greek helmets (not only an anachronism but the equipment of the enemy Achaeans) with the traditional crescent-shaped shield of the Amazons. This shield was known to the Greeks because it was used by the Phrygians in their battles against the Greeks of the 6th to 4th centuries B.C. The shield allowed its bearer to get close to mounted fighters while still offering protection. The Phrygians are known to have fought with spear, shield and doubled-bladed axe – many of the weapons traditionally used by the Amazons, with whom they were equated by the Classical Greeks.

An ivory relief from Delphi shows an Amazon kneeling and about to draw her sword. She holds the helmet of a fallen Greek. The ivory also shows other Greeks fighting Amazons, and an Amazon carrying a dead or wounded comrade.

A terra cotta statuette uses an Amazon on horseback as the frontal decoration for a handled cup. It dates from about 440 B.C. and still has traces of its original color. The Amazon wears white shoes with red soles and purple laces, purple trousers, a sleeved garment that is blue with red dots, and a yellow leopard-skin with black spots over her jacket. She carries a red quiver with a wavy pattern done in blue along its edge. Her horse is white, and its bridle, reins and collar are red.

An intaglio (seal stone) of sard (a reddish-brown gem) from Cyprus shows a Greek warrior carrying a shield and spear stepping on a fallen Amazon who wears a pointed cap, chiton, earrings, necklace and possibly bracelets, with a quiver by her side. Her left hand holds a bow, a spear is falling from her right hand, and her chiton is hiked up above her thighs. The stone dates from approximately 480 to 470 B.C.

Amazons are also thought to appear on Persian coins. They are found on the stater, obol, tetrobolon and hemiobol coins from Soli (Cilicia) and show a bunch of grapes on the reverse side. The coins date from the first quarter of the 5th century B.C., from approximately 450 B.C., and from the last quarter of the 5th century B.C. They show a kneeling archer who is thought to be an Amazon. She wears a pointed cap (sometimes winged), a short chiton, and a jacket with sleeves. She carries a large quiver, often with a second bow attached. Her left breast seems to be exposed (although this could be the rounded end of her cap), and her hair is medium length.

A silver Attic tetradrachm coin from Cyme dating after 190 B.C. shows the head of the Amazon Cyme on one side and a bridled horse with a foreleg raised, enclosed in a wreath of (oak?) leaves on the obverse. Cyme is shown in profile, with short curling hair and a thin headband tied around her forehead. Her appearance is similar to that of Artemis as the goddess is depicted in profile on other coins from the region, although this may be a coincidence or an artistic convention for the depiction of the female profile.

Amazons became a popular subject for carvings on sarcophagi from the 4th century B.C. onward.

One of the later images of an Amazon comes from Tarquinia in Italy – a painted sarcophagus of the 4th century (A.D.?) that shows two Amazons with dark hair riding in a chariot pulled by four white horses. One drives and carries a shield, while the other holds the side of the chariot and carries a weapon. Both wear white chitons over longer tunics that reach to calf level.

They are armed with a bow, possibly with an axe, and with a curved red shield that appears to have a crescent shape.

THE SHIELD OF ATHENA

One of the most famous depictions in the ancient world of the Amazons attacking Athens could be found on the shield of Athena Parthenos that was carved by Phidias. The huge statue stood in the east cella of the Parthenon, and the painting was on the outside of the goddess' shield.

Although the shield itself has been lost, Evelyn B. Harrison studied marble copies of it found on a later sarcophagus. She interprets the figures as being involved in a battle before the gates and on the walls of the acropolis of Athens itself.

The Amazon figures on the copies include:

A dead Amazon in a double-girt chiton, fastened only on the right shoulder and leaving the left breast bare. She is holding a composite bow, the tip of which ends in a hawk or griffin head. She is barefoot and has short curly hair.

An Amazon falling from a wall is wearing a chiton. In front of her is a long-handled double axe with curved blades and one corner of a pelta shield whose tip ends in a duck's head. In some copies, a round shield adorned with bird heads is nearby, although this may have been discarded by an Athenian.

A seated Amazon wears a crested Attic helmet with a griffin in relief on the bowl of the helmet. Behind the helmet, on some copies, her long hair hangs down her back. One copy, says Harrison, appears to show smoke beside the Amazon's face, possibly from a torch held in her left hand, as she prepares to burn the city. She appears to carry a spear or sword in her right hand.

An Amazon pursuing a figure (believed to be Erechtheus) is drawing a sword, possibly after having discarded her bow. Her helmet bears a snake, a motif seen on another depiction of an Amazon's helmet. Harrison writes: "The snake on this Amazon's helmet may mark her as an opponent of Erechtheus."

An Amazon, being killed by a spear thrust, has a bow lying beside her left hand.

An Amazon is helping a wounded companion. (Athenians are also shown helping their wounded.)

Some Amazons carry round Greek shields, while other carry shield that are Persian.

While Harrison believes that the battle depicted took place around the acropolis, others have argued that it takes place around the Pnyx and Mouseion hills and the road to the Piraeus gate.

CLASSICAL POTTERY

The Amazons were a favorite subject of the artists who painted pottery during the Classical period. One of the earliest depictions of Amazons on Greek pottery is an imbric alabastron from Samothrace, possibly dating to the late 7th century B.C. It shows Amazons in long belted peplos (a voluminous outer garment, worn draped in folds) that is open on the right side. The Amazons are also wearing high crested helmets and are carrying spears and round shields.

The names found on this alabastron include those of the Amazons Areximacha (who wears a Phrygian cap, carries a quiver and bow, and is fighting Heracles), Alkinoia (who is fighting Iolaos), and Andromeda (who is fighting a Greek named Menoitias).

Amazons are not found either on proto-Attic pottery, or on the first generation of Attic black figure pottery, which was created from the 7th to mid-6th century B.C. They first appear suddenly, and in great numbers, on painted pottery of the Classical Greek period, primarily on neck amphorae of ovoid shape. William Black Tyrrell says this sudden appearance occurred around 575 B.C.

It is thought that many of the paintings found on pottery reflect the monumental "Amazonomachies" created in Athens by Mikon and Phidias in the 5th century B.C. for the Theseion, the Painted Porch, the western metopes of the Parthenon, and the outside of the shield of Athena Parthenos inside the Parthenon. According to Guy Cadogan Rothery, some of the Amazons depicted on pottery have the head of Medusa on their shields – an obvious connection with Athena's shield.

Amazons can be found extensively on both Attic (and non-Attic) black figure pottery, and on Attic red figure pottery of the archaic, early Classic, and Classical periods. They are especially easy to spot on Attic black figure ware, due to the use of white paint to depict female skin.

Amazons appear battling Greeks, preparing for battle, in scenes of worship (which are quite rare), and standing alone. On some pieces of pottery, they appear to be fighting beside male archers (Trojan allies?) or beside Greeks in chariots (Antiope fighting beside Theseus at Athens?).

Amazons in groups by themselves (without Greek opponents) begin to appear in the second quarter of the 6th century B.C. on Attic black figure pottery. Some are simply excerpts from battle scenes, and show Amazons in fighting poses, or carrying away their dead and wounded. But other Amazons are shown in a variety of poses: adjusting a cuirass while another woman (interpreted as her mother) holds her shield and helmet;

putting on greaves; picking up shields; putting on helmets; stringing bows; slinging or adjusting scabbards; picking up spears; sounding long-necked trumpets; and traveling on horseback with a bundle tied to their spears.

On Attic red figure pottery, Amazons by themselves (without Greek opponents) are also shown in a variety of poses: sitting on a horse, waiting for another Amazon to tie her corslet (torso armor) and pick up weapons; standing quietly; carrying two spears and taking leave of her parents (this may be a Greek woman); and a group of three in which one is swimming in the open sea beside fish, another is about to dive, and the third is oiling herself after swimming, using an aryballos (a piece of athletic equipment reserved for men). This latter, by the Andokides painter, is in the Louvre.

An Attic red figure hydria by Hypsis (now in Munich) that comes from Vulci shows three Amazons: all named. Antiope tests a trumpet (as depicted, the trumpet would be about a meter long); Hypsoplye looks around; and Andromache has picked up her helmet and holds a spear.

Battle scenes show the Amazons either solo, against a single opponent, or attacking in groups. In black figure ware, a bird flying overhead is often used to indicate the direction of the battle.

Clothing worn by the Amazons on the black figure and red figure pottery includes traditional Greek garments such as the belted chiton (both short and long), the kolpos, the chalmys (a rectangular shawl), the sakkos (a loose cloth cap, sometimes worn wound around the head like a turban, and decorated with a lossenges-and-dots design, or with dots and a red hem), a nebris (a fawn skin worn by followers of the god Dionysus) over either a tunic or belted peplos (a form of chiton), and the ankle-length chiton worn by Greek charioteers (shown on an Amazon who is harnessing horses to a chariot).

The chitons worn by Amazons are decorated either with dots and crosses, or with a scale design. A knee-length tunic or chiton begins to replace the shorter chiton around 440 B.C. Eventually, the chitons expose one breast.

The Amazons are also shown in clothing of peoples familiar to the Greeks; they sometimes wear a Thracian cloak or mantle, worn over one shoulder.

Thigh-length tunics with short sleeves, often belted, are also worn, some with intricate designs. These include running dogs, bands of chariots drawn by winged horses alternating with band of lotus or lotus with palmette designs, and bands of animals alternating with geometric patterns, sometimes with a tasseled fringe. One Amazon wears a long-sleeved tunic which

reaches to her ankles.

Some Amazons wear an animal skin, thought to represent that of a leopard, worn around the waist. Some wear an apron with a tasseled fringe, or a skirt with animal designs or decorated with palmettes. Other Amazons wear a belt (the "girdle"?) with a high, rounded centerpiece that comes up over the stomach.

Most of the Amazons have long, dark, curly or wavy hair, sometimes tied with two bands. Some are shown bareheaded, with a fillet tied around their foreheads, while some wear skull caps, probably of leather. Many wear the long pointed hat with distinctive tail and hanging ear covers that is associated with the Phrygians. This felt hat is shown with its slender peak either upright, flying out to the rear, or rolled up on top of the head in the Phrygian manner. In some cases, the long tail of the cap is tucked up under a fillet, or headbands. One unusual variation of this hat has a pointed peak as well as a tail, and a turned-up brim at the front.

One of these caps is spotted, and is thought to have been made of animal skin. Another, also of animal skin, has an animal tail at the back.

Nick Sekunda, in the *Men at Arms* series book *The Ancient Greeks*, says the fur cap (of fox fur) with ear flaps was a Thracian invention. Fur-lined fawn skin boots, laced up the front and tied at the top of the calf so that the fur lining fell down in three lapets, were also "distinctively Thracian," as was a crescent-shaped, hide-covered wooden shield for javelin troops.

Amazons are also shown wearing the loose cloth cap (with a loose, bulky, rounded top) that is worn by the Persians.

Many Amazons are shown barefoot, although there is one representation of sandals. Later, soft shoes with slightly turned up toes appear. They are ankle-high and have laces. Amazons are also shown wearing high, knee-high or calf-high boots, some of which have been interpreted as having fur tops, or as having the tops turned down, some with fringe.

To this list Guy Cadogan Rothery adds, "a strap over the ankle to hold the spur. In the best specimens of art, the feet and legs are bare, only the ankle strap for the spur being shown."

"Oriental" costumes (trousers and long-sleeved shirts, tight fitting at the ankles and waists) begin to appear first on Attic red figure pottery, often as an undergarment for a chiton, skirt, perizoma, or belted tunic. These costumes include the high cap known as the kidaris.

These trouser-and-shirt combinations are often decorated with geometric designs, stripes running lengthwise, or dots. On some, both the trousers and shirt are of the same pattern. But on others, the shirt

differs from the trousers, or the pattern will vary on the four quarters of the body; the right arm and left leg will be one pattern, while the left arm and right leg will be a different pattern.

One Amazon is shown in what looks like abbreviated trousers, or shorts.

Donald J. Sobol says their "Oriental" costumes became familiar to the Greeks during the Persian Wars (550-449 B.C.), which also introduced the wicker shield.

The dress of the Persians who invaded Greece in the 4th century B.C. is described by Herodotus (quoted by Peter Wilcox in his book *Rome's Enemies (3): Parthians and Sassanid Persians*). Armed with a bow, short sword and spears (but no shields), these Persians wore tall caps with long tail and ear pieces, close-fitting tunics, trousers, ankle boots, and a lidded quiver slung from a waist belt on the left side. They rode horseback, on saddlecloths, but without stirrups.

The Amazons on the painted pottery also wear jewelry. A bracelet on the left arm is said by Bothmer to mark a figure as a woman. Amazons also wear diadems, necklaces (shown as zigzag lines across the neck, a design also used as a necklace on representations of Athena), round earrings, and disk-shaped earrings (seen in the left ear of one Amazon who is shown in profile).

Over their clothing, Amazons wear corslets (usually over chitons, in the fashion of Greek warriors). Some of these corslets have reliefs on the chest. Designs include a panther's head, Eros, and a Gorgonian. Other armor worn by Amazons includes both the leather and plate cuirass.

One Amazon wears a tunic with a scale pattern that may represent scale armor.

Amazons also wear metal greaves, covering the leg from above the knee to the ankle, strapped on just below the knee and above the ankle. These greaves are open at the back. Thigh guards are sometimes shown, and there is one representation of an Amazon bending over to tie on ankle guards, which lace up over the foot.

Amazons wear a variety of helmets, most of Greek design. They wear the classic Attic helmet with high crests and a variety of shaped cheek pieces (including the L-shape), the Corinthian helmet, the Ionic helmet, and the closed Doric helmet. They also wear the Thracian helmet, and the Phrygian helmet with cheek pieces that flip up. Skullcaps with high crests are also shown, as are helmets with horns on them. (Horns were first depicted on helmets on the Mycenaean "warrior vase.")

Donald J. Sobol says the Attic helmet typically had a neck guard, a frontlet above the forehead, and hinged cheek pieces, either L-shaped or oblong. The older

Corinthian helmet (which got its name from representations of Athena on the coins of Corinth), used by Greeks until the middle of the 5th century, had a face guard with a T-shaped opening for the eyes, mouth, and nose. Both types of helmets often had a crest of horse hair or feathers, running along the crown of the helmet and often elevated by a crest support. Helmets with dual crests were worn by cavalry, which only became a part of the Greek army in the 5th century B.C. Prior to that, the Greeks had only had saddle cloths for their horses.

Unusual helmet devices found on Amazons include a wheel-shaped crest support (also seen on a male warrior's helmet), and a double crest which looks like wings, when drawn in frontal view. Another Amazon has a normal helmet crest, but beside it, standing erect, are two feathers. Another unusual crest looks like a pair of antlers, but may represent two animals standing erect. Bothmer interprets it as "lobster claws."

One unusual helmet takes the form of a cap with a bull's ears and tail.

Amazons on Greek pottery carry a variety of shields. There is the standard Greek aspis, a round shield with either flat, painted-on designs or a raised device at the center. They also carry the "violin-shaped" Boeotian (Theban) shield that is almost oval in shape with semi-circular "cutouts" on both sides. They also carry the Phrygian (possibly Scythian) crescent-shaped shield (depicted as hide-covered), and the pelta, a rounded, crescent-shaped shield, usually shown with cross hatching representing wicker, that is shown carried upside down over the left shoulder by mounted Amazons. (The pelta was used by Classical Greek warriors as a small shield to be carried by soldiers armed with javelins. The javelins they used were about two meters long, with small, leaf-shaped iron heads. They were thrown by means of a thong fixed to the javelin with a temporary hitch knot. The thong formed a loop which was hooked around the index finger; it fell off the javelin when the weapon was thrown and stayed in the hand.)

Florence Mary Bennett interprets the shields carried by the Amazons shown in pottery paintings as "shaped like an ivy leaf."

According to A.D. Snodgrass, in his book *Arms and Armor of the Greeks*, the wickerwork shields carried by Amazons in paintings are the Persian gerrhon shields. Snodgrass quotes Phrynichus of Bithynia, who wrote in the 2nd century A.D., as his reference.

Donald J. Sobol writes: "The Amazonian pelta [a wicker shield covered with sheep or goat hide] is crescent-shaped, and according to literature, wider than high. It was held with the tips upwards."

Designs found on shields carried by Amazons

(both on the round, Boeotian and pelta shields) include the following symbols: a dog; a standing bird that Bothmer interprets as a raven; two birds above and below a ball; a bearded satyr's head; a feline protome that Bothmer interprets as a panther; a sphinx; a white bird; nine white balls; a bull protome (the face of a bull in front view); a tripod (which became a popular design after the mid-500s B.C.); snakes, many with mouth open and tongue out; a centaur wielding a pine tree; a wreath; an eye; a pair of quails divided by a diagonal line; a club (similar to that used by Heracles); a wheel; an ithyphallic mule; a phallus; an octopus; an ivy wreath; two dolphins; a swan; a feline that Bothmer interprets as a lion; a feline (lion) in side view; a griffon or winged horse; a scorpion; a kantharos cup; a wheel with four wings; a five-leafed plant; arcs; a boar in profile; ivy (with distinctive, heart-shaped leaves); a leaf; the hind part of a horse; rings; a single dolphin; a triskeles (three running legs, joined); a chariot box; a "thunderbolt" (a series of three teardrop shapes, lined up on either side of a ball); a feline (panther) head at the center of a thunderbolt; a chariot and sphinx; and a winged dolphin.

A common design on Amazon shields is the "rosette," a flower design made up of either geometric patterns or teardrop shapes in a round format. These rosettes sometimes separate animal designs; an example is one found between a bird (eagle) and a feline (panther).

One of the most unusual shield designs shows a warrior (Bothmer says he is bearded and wearing boots, a chiton and a pointed cap) running and carrying a pelta shield.

One round shield (the one with the club device) has an apron, or leg guard below it, with an eye and eyebrow device decorating the leg guard.

Raised devices seen on shields carried by Amazons include a bearded satyr face, a snake, and a feline (lion) protome.

It is tempting to interpret these devices as representing individual Amazons whose names and symbols were known to Classical Greeks. But a large number of these symbols appear on shields carried by Greek warriors. Certain symbols do seem to appear more frequently on shields of specific Greek heroes, and it may be that the Amazons who bear these designs are the opponents of these men. But it is equally likely that the pottery painters of the Classical period simply chose shield designs that were popular in that era.

Sekunda comments on the designs found on Greek shields of the Classical period: "Some shield devices had a more personal significance, and could make some comment on the prowess of the bearer. For example, one Sophanes of Dekeleia had an anchor as his shield

device to indicate his steadfastness in the ranks. Cases of 'canting arms' also existed. Individuals might bear arms which had a family significance ... Epameinondas at Mantinea was decorated with a shield with a snake design upon it, intended to signify that he was a member of the clan of the Spartoi ...

"Representations of hoplites with clubs are sufficiently rare in Greek art to make us think that the club was not a common shield device, so where they do occur it may be that the artist wishes to show a Theban." (The club of Heracles was Thebes' emblem.)

A solo Amazon who appears on an amphora, however, is surrounded by cocks and sphinxes; are these heraldic devices?

The specific type of shield that an Amazon would traditionally carry was fixed in the minds of the Romans. In his book *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79) compares the coastline of Italy to an Amazon's shield: "Italy much resembles an oak leaf, being far longer than it is broad, bending towards the left at its top and ending in the shape of an Amazon's shield." Translator H. Rackham says the shield was "shaped like a crescent but with two curves and a projection between them on the inner side."

Weapons carried by Amazons in Greek pottery include the sword (carried in a scabbard at the left hip on a strap over the shoulder), spears, javelins, and axes with a single blade on one side and a spike at the other side. (Helen Diner says the Amazons had a double axe called the *sagaris*.) A single-bladed axe was known as a *pelekus*.

Pliny the Elder attributes the invention of the battle axe to the Amazon queen Penthesilea.

Donald J. Sobol adds that Amazons were shown more often in sculpture carrying a sword, due to the difficulty of carving a slender bowstring or arrow shaft in stone. But in vase painting, where no such problem existed, Sobol says the principal weapon was the spear, used in thrusting, or the thrown javelin, the principal weapons of the Greek hoplites of the era from which the painted vases come. "Poised below the shoulder, it is a spear about to be thrust. Poised above the shoulder it is a javelin about to be hurled. If a warrior, Greek or Amazon, clutches two or more shafts, the weapons are javelins.

"Oddly, the double-edged axe ... is seldom pictured. When it is, it is usually conceived with but a single edge backed by a prick-like point, and in this shape it may be what Herodotus calls a *sagaris* ... Amazons who wear a short sword at the waist generally keep it sheathed as a reserve weapon while attacking or defending with the spear."

The axe is shown being used either one-handed or two-handed, with either the blade or the spike in action.

Spears, when not being used either one-handed or two-handed, are shown stuck in the ground, blade upright, tied together, ready for use.

Weapons only seldom shown include the sling, and a special kind of spear with a "sickle" just below the spear head, which Herodotus said was used by the Carians and Lycians. Some unarmed Amazons pick up stones to use as weapons.

Many Amazons, both mounted and on foot, carry bows. Some are simple straight bows (long bows) while others are recurved Phrygian or Scythian bows. Quivers are large, worn on the left hip at a slant, and have a flap (probably of fringed or scallop-edged leather) that is shown hanging free, but that probably covers the open top of the quiver when the quiver is not in use. One large quiver shows a bow tied to it.

According to Tyrrell, the bow was considered, in Homeric times, to be a coward's weapon, because warriors could use it to kill from a safe distance. During the Classical period, it was a weapon associated with the Persians.

Guy Cadogan Rothery adds nets to the weapon list. These, he said, were thrown over enemies "who were then strangled or dispatched with the lance."

Amazons mounted on horseback use a full bridle and saddle; stirrups were not yet invented. When riding, they are sometimes shown accompanied by dogs, or by birds (similar to those shown on the shields) flying above them. (These may simply indicate the direction of battle.)

Traditionally, a rider dismounting from a horse was shown sliding down on the right side of the animal. Other Amazons are shown leading horses or standing beside them.

One non-Attic black figure amphora shows an Amazon (thought to be Penthesilea), galloping on horseback with the reins wrapped around her waist, turning to shoot an arrow. A Greek (thought to be Achilles) pursues on foot with a javelin in hand and an arrow lodged in his shield. The Amazon wears greaves, a short chiton, cuirass, Attic helmet with a high crest, and a necklace. She carries a quiver. The amphora, from Etruria, is dated to shortly after the mid-6th century B.C.

Amazons are also shown driving chariots, or a biga, and harnessing horses in preparation for a chariot ride. The chariots shown have four-spoked wheels, and are drawn by four horses, two on either side of a central post. The chariot is the same as that used by Greeks, and would have been prepared for battle by a team of five people. (A charioteer stands beside the pole with an assistant, another stands with one foot on the chariot, holding the reins, and two more lead up the trace horses.)

In battle, however, the chariot carried one driver (shown as an Amazon armed with a spear) and one warrior (shown after she has leaped from the chariot to do battle).

The Greek armor worn by the Amazons was “modern” armor to the Classical Greeks. Amazons are often shown with hoplite armor and weaponry.

These were not, however, the armor or weapons that would have been in used during the time of the Achaeans, the Amazons’ opponents. The Achaeans instead wore boar’s-tusk helmets and overlapping plates of bronze (rather than the corslet) and carried huge “tower” shields or “figure-of-eight” shields like those shown on Minoan frescoes.

The chitons the Amazons are shown wearing are not only anachronistic but impractical. As horseback riders, the Amazons would have been clothed in a similar fashion to the Scythians, who are credited with the invention of trousers. A closer approximation of Amazon dress would have been the clothing worn by the Sauromatian women who fought with their men in battle: a tunic over close-fitting trousers.

Often, Greek vase painters show the Amazons in the “Oriental” clothes and weaponry of the Phrygians or Persians, with whom they were more familiar. The Classical painters and sculptors, with no first-hand knowledge of Amazon weapons or style of dress, simply incorporated elements of those cultures that came from roughly the same area.

While Amazons are often shown on Classical Greek pottery, only once are they seen against the backdrop of a city – the Greek interpretation of what Themiscyra would have looked like. The only known depiction of Themiscyra comes from an Attic black figure Tyrrhenian vase from Tarquinia, by the Castellani painter. The vase now is in Florence, with one fragment in Berlin.

The vase shows, in a narrow, subsidiary frieze, Amazons in crested helmets, looking out over the gates of a walled city with crenellated battlements. (It is unlikely that the Amazon capital resembled a walled Greek city.)

There are a total of twenty-five participants in the battle. The fighters are in eight groups, with four fallen warriors. The Amazons wear belted peploi, high-crested Attic helmets with cheek pieces, and greaves. Their shields are all round, except for one Boeotian shield. One of the shields shows a satyr’s head in relief.

Heracles, who seizes Andromache by the wrist, is shown wearing his lion skin. One Greek warrior has a three-dimensional snake design on his shield.

Other pieces of pottery show the battle of Themiscyra (the site can be inferred from the named participants) but not the city itself. Attic black figure

pottery depicts the following scenes:

Heracles killing Glauke.

Iphito prepares to kill Glauke, who begs for mercy.

The archer Glauke is wounded. Nearby, Andromache defends herself with a sword and carries a shield with a rosette design. She is backed up by Alkaia, who has a helmet or cap with bull’s ears and tail. Alkaia carries a shield with either a tripod or triskeles. Nearby, Pantariste carries a shield with a sphinx design, Areto carries a shield with a snake design, Ainippe carries a shield with a tripod design, and Anaxileia carries a shield decorated with birds.

Ainippe fights Telamon, while Andromache fights Heracles. Pantariste, whose helmet has a wheel-shaped crest, fights a Greek named Timiades.

Mnesarchos kills two Amazons, one of whom falls near Toxophile. Glauke stands over a dead Greek. Andromache, Pisto and other Amazons have been wounded, and are falling near Heracles, Telamon and Iolaos.

From Attic red figure pottery come the following scenes:

The Amazon Kydoime is dying of wounds while Toxis is wounded by Telamon (who has a kantharos design on his shield).

A wounded Xanthippe attacks Telamon.

Scenes from the Trojan War are also common. The easiest way to spot these (where name inscriptions are lacking) is to look for the negro archers who accompanied Memnon of Susa into battle on the side of the Trojans. Other telltale images from the Trojan War include scenes of Ajax assaulting the Trojan princess Cassandra, or of Achilles dragging the body of the Trojan prince Hector behind his chariot. The Amazons found on the obverse of these vases, can be interpreted as participants in the Trojan War.

Pottery that shows men in “Oriental” costumes, fighting beside Amazons, may indicate either the Trojan War – or the siege of Athens, in which Scythians were said to have bolstered the ranks of the Amazons.

An Attic black figure neck amphora, now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, shows an Amazon to the right of her horse (presumably having just dismounted) standing before a seated man. Bothmer suggests that this might represent Penthesileia arriving

at Troy, appearing before King Priam.

Another Attic black figure neck amphora, now in Vienna, shows an Amazon with a horse waiting for a youth (believed to be male) who is putting on greaves.

A black figure amphora by the painter Exekias (who lived in the third quarter of the 6th century B.C.) depicts Achilles killing Penthesileia. The Amazon carries a large round shield and wears a sleeveless, thigh-length, belted chiton. Below her waist hangs a leopard skin, and there is a suggestion that the chiton, which is shown with spots, may also be part of this skin. Penthesileia wears a helmet similar to those worn by Scythians of the 4th century B.C., with an open face, a curving crest with plumes, and a three-dimensional device shaped like a snake that projects from the front of the helmet. The helmet also has a long back that protects the neck.

Penthesileia appears alone on a white ground alabastra (a vase used only by women) from Delphi that is now in Athens. Her name is inscribed beside her. She runs left, carrying a bow and two arrows in her left hand, and wears sandals, a long-sleeved shirt, trousers with a skirt or apron over them, and an Attic helmet. Other decorations on the vase include a maenad and a crane.

Other alabastra show Amazons and palm trees (used to represent a foreign country) with negro archers.

H.W. Parke, in the book *Festivals of the Athenians*, comments that a palm tree and altar together signified a sanctuary of Artemis.

Scenes in which an Amazon is fighting beside a man in Greek costume are said to represent Antiope, fighting beside Theseus during the siege of Athens.

In one Attic black figure hydria, now in London, an Amazon driving a chariot has run over one Amazon and is about to run over a second. Beside the chariot, a walking man in Greek armor attacks a fourth Amazon.

An Attic black figure lekythos from Attica, now in New York, also shows an "Amazon" in a chariot being attacked by two other Amazons. It also depicts Heracles (identified by his lion skin and club) attacking an Amazon.

A myth about a battle between Dionysus and an Amazon, popular in Classical Greece but subsequently lost, may be represented on an Attic black figure neck amphora, now in Boulogne. It shows an Amazon fighting a man dressed in a white chiton, panther's skin, and belt, with an ivy wreath in his hair. The same story is illustrated at Ephesus, in sculpture, 100 years later.

Attic black figure pottery is also filled with figures who watch the battles between Amazons and Greeks. Among these onlookers are a man in a robe, holding a staff, whose back is turned to the scene. Other

onlookers include Athena and a god, both seated, a man with a staff beside a youth, two warriors on horseback, youths with mantles, horsewomen, warriors, and a pegasus (a reference to Bellerophon?).

Some pottery depicts unusual scenes, showing Amazons worshipping at altars or involved in what may be religious ceremonies. An Attic black figure olpe, now in Munich, shows an Amazon standing in front of an altar, her battle axe and pelta shield (decorated with a tripod design) on the ground behind her. She is barefoot, wears a shirt, trousers, and pointed hat, and is gesturing with open hands. Her arms are bent and her palms are held outward at shoulder height, over the altar. Above her are the heart-shaped leaves that Bothmer interprets as ivy. However, the fact that they are on a vine and that they alternate with bunches of dots, suggests grapes (a reference to Dionysus?). To either side of the Amazon are representations of a frond from another type of plant. Bothmer interprets the scene as an Amazon sacrificing before battle.

An Attic black figure hydria from Camiros, now in London, shows an Amazon, dressed as a hoplite and carrying a shield with a snake design. She is running with a dog and looking around at a shrine. A flame is burning on the altar. (Many sacrifices involved the ceremonial burning of meat.)

An Attic red figure lekythos, now in the Louvre, shows an Amazon kneeling and placing her hands on either side of an altar. Her quiver and bow hang behind her. She wears a long chiton, a spotted animal skin around her waist, and a sakkos complete with diadem. A palm tree is behind the altar. Bothmer interprets the scene as an Amazon taking refuge at Ephesus. The piece is dated to the second quarter of the 5th century B.C.

According to Parke, the palm tree and altar are essential components of a shrine dedicated to the goddess Artemis. The tree behind the altar suggests that the Amazon may be worshipping this goddess.

An Attic black figure skyphos, now in Berlin, is described by Neugebauer (Bothmer's reference) to show three Amazons dancing in armor in front of a flute player.

An Attic black figure lekythos, now in the Louvre, may also show Amazons dancing. In it, four women, dressed in short chitons, cuirasses, and pointed hats, march to the right. The leader, says Bothmer, "has the right arm akimbo and the left extended," while the others have "both arms extended." Around the Amazons are branches with white fruit.

Two other Attic black figure pieces may show religious themes. One, a cup (now in Munich) shows goats in a farmyard on one side and four "snake nymphs," all with blonde hair (a trait that has appeared

previously in depictions of Amazons) on the obverse. One of the women carries a column krater, another plays a flute, a third has a cup, and a fourth carries a pelta and spear and wears an "Oriental" hat.

The second, a skyphos (now in Boston) shows a lion attacking bulls on one side and on the obverse, a female archer dressed in a cross-hatched garment with sleeves and wide-bottomed trousers. She wears an "Oriental" hat, and is mounted on a roaring lion. She shoots at a checkered monster with the body of an overgrown fowl and the head of a bat that seems to breathe fire. Between the woman and the monster is a tree with fruit on the branches and a white snake around the trunk.

Two pieces of Attic red figure pottery contain interesting symbols, located above Amazons. The first, found on a volute krater from Numana (now in New York) shows a quarter-moon symbol, filled with a geometric design and pointing upward, behind some of the Amazon character. The symbol also appears between Amazon and Greek characters. (This may be a reference to the Amazon shield, which traditionally was crescent-moon shaped.)

The second symbol is found on a non-Attic black figure neck amphora from Vulci (now in Wurzburg). Above a fallen Amazon who is about to be speared by a Greek is an owl, standing in profile with its head turned toward the viewer, and the letters ch - - th (or th - - ch).

The opponents of the Amazons shown on Greek pottery include: Acamas, Achilles, Astyochos, Deiptes, Enpylo(s), Eudoros, Euphorbos, Heracles, Iolaos, Korax, Lykos, Megareus, Mnesarchos, Mounichos, Perithous, Phaleros, Phorbas, Phylakos, Rhoikos, Sthenelos, Teithras, Telamon, Theseus, and Timiades.

Other names, that may possibly be Greek opponents, include: Alachos, Alkandros, Deinomacho(s), Egesos, Eunoms, Hiparchos, Naynikos, Ponidas, Poseidonos, and Smikoi.

LATER AMAZONS

According to many of the ancient authors, the nation of the Amazons was said to have died out (or to have been forced out of their homeland at Themiscyra, toward the east) just after the Trojan War (circa 1200 B.C.). But "Amazons" continued to appear throughout the centuries that followed – although many of these sightings may be attributed to those who confused the Scythian women, fighting alongside their men, for Amazons.

Paulus Orosius writes: "Thirty years before the founding of the city [Rome] ... a sudden invasion into Asia by a tribe of the Amazons and Cimmerians caused lengthy and very widespread devastation and

destruction."

Orosius dates this invasion to the time of the 6th century B.C. But Cimmerian refugees, fleeing from the attacking Scythians, first began appearing south of the Caucasus Mountains at the end of the 8th century B.C. By the 7th century B.C., they had swept into most of what is today modern Turkey.

In 66 B.C., the Roman general Pompey waged war against Mithridates VI, an Asian ruler who had previously pushed the Romans out of what is today northern Turkey. The ancient historian Plutarch described the campaign, in which Pompey invaded the city of Colchis (located at the southeastern corner of the Black Sea), crossed the Cynus River, and engaged Mithridates' brother Cosis and his forces in battle near the Abas River.

"In this battle it is said that there were also Amazons fighting on the side of the barbarians, and that they came down from the mountains about the river Thermodon. For when the Romans were despoiling the barbarians after the battle, they came upon Amazonian shields and buskins; but no body of a woman was seen.

"The Amazons inhabit the parts of the Caucasus Mountains that reach down to the Hyrcanian Sea, and they do not border on the Albani, but Belae and Leges dwell between. With these peoples, who meet them by the river Thermodon, they consort for two months every year; then they go away and live by themselves."

The Roman historian Appian of Alexandria, who wrote in the 2nd century A.D., describes the battle slightly differently, saying that the women warriors were spotted during a battle between Pompey's forces and those of the Albanians and Iberians, along the Cyrtus River.

"Pompey ... drove the barbarians into a thick wood. These people are skilful forest-fighters, taking cover and attacking without showing themselves. So Pompey surrounded the wood with his army, set it on fire, and pursued the fugitives when they ran out, until they had surrendered and brought him hostages and presents.

"... Among the hostages and prisoners many women were found, who had suffered wounds no less than the men. These were supposed to be Amazons, but whether the Amazons are a neighboring nation, who were

called to their aid at that time, or whether any warlike women are called Amazons by the barbarians there, is not known.”

(A city by the name of Themiscyra was still in existence during the 1st century B.C. Lucullus (the Roman general who led forces against Mithridates prior to being replaced by Pompey) besieged this city in 72 B.C. During the siege, the Romans tried tunneling under the city walls. They were harried in their digging by bears and bees, turned loose by the Themiscyreans. Nevertheless, the city eventually fell.)

In the Geography, Strabo also mentions the Amazons in connection with Pompey’s expedition, explaining that the women warriors once lived beside the Thermodon River, but had been pushed to the east, into the Caucasus Mountains, by the time of Pompey.

“The Amazons, also, are said to live in the mountains above Albania. Now Theophanes, who made the expedition with Pompey and was in the country of the Albanians, says that the Gelae and the Legae, Scythian people, live between the Amazons and the Albanians, and that the Mermadalis River flows there, midway between those people the Amazons.

“But others, among whom are Metrodorus of Scepsis and Hypsicrates, who themselves, likewise, were not unacquainted with the region in question, say that the Amazons live on the borders of the Gargarians, in the northerly foothills of those parts of the Caucasian Mountains which are called Ceraunian.

“[These authors say] that the Amazons spend the rest of their time off to themselves, performing their several individual tasks, such as plowing, planting, pasturing cattle, and particularly in training horses, though the bravest engage mostly in hunting on horseback and practice warlike exercises; that the right breasts of all are seared when they are infants, so that they can easily use their right arm for every needed purpose, and especially that of throwing the javelin; that they also use bow and sagaris [a single-edged weapon] and light shield, and make the skins of wild animals serve as helmets, clothing and girdles ...

“They have two special months in the spring in which they go up into the neighboring mountain which separates them from the Gargarians. The Gargarians also, in accordance with an ancient custom, go up thither to offer sacrifice with the Amazons and also to have intercourse with them for the sake

of begetting children, doing this in secrecy and darkness, any Gargarian at random with any Amazon; and after making them pregnant they send them away ...

“The females that are born are retained by the Amazons themselves, but the males are taken to the Gargarians to be brought up; and each Gargarian to whom a child is brought adopts the child as his own, regarding the child as his son because of his uncertainty.

“The Mermodas [probably the same as the Mermadalis River] dashes down from the mountains through the country of the Amazons and through Siracene and the intervening desert and then empties into Lake Maeotis. It is said that the Gargarians went up from Themiscyra into this region with the Amazons, then revolted from them and in company with some Thracians and Euboeans who had wandered thus far carried on war against them, and that they later ended the war against them and made a compact on the conditions above mentioned, that is, that they should have dealings with one another only in the matter of children, and that each people should live independent of the other.”

Although he relates the history of the Amazons, Strabo takes pains to note that he does not believe it possible for a tribe of women warriors to have existed.

“A peculiar thing has happened in the case of the account we have of the Amazons; for our accounts of other peoples keep a distinction between the mythical and the historical elements; for the things that are ancient and false and monstrous are called myths, but history wishes for the truth, whether ancient or recent, and contains no monstrous element, or else only rarely.

“But as regards the Amazons, the same stories are told now as in early times, though they are marvelous and beyond belief. For instance, who could believe that an army of women, or a city, or a tribe, could ever be organized without men, and not only be organized, but even make inroads upon the territory of other people, and not only overpower the peoples near them to the extent of advancing as far as what is now Ionia, but even send an expedition across the sea as far as Attica? For this is the same as saying that the men of those times were women and that the women were men.

“Nevertheless, even at the present time these very stories are told about the Amazons, and they intensify the peculiarity above mentioned and our belief in the ancient accounts rather than those of the present time.”

When the Roman general Aurelian defeated Zenobia in A.D. 272, he took a number of Goths as prisoners. The general's triumphal procession included captives from many nations, each with a sign around their necks to identify them. The ten Gothic women who were captured on the battlefield were identified as “Amazons.”

SCYTHIAN GRAVES

It is possible that the legends of the Amazons originated in stories, relayed by the first Greeks to explore the Black Sea, of women warriors among the Scythians. There is ample archaeological evidence to suggest that, among certain Scythian tribes, women probably rode into battle. A number of female graves include the weapons of war.

One of these tombs, of a Sarmatian³⁵ queen, was located near the village of Chuguno-Krepenka in the Ukraine. It dates to the 1st or 2nd century A.D. and was excavated by an archaeological expedition from Donetsk University³⁶ and was reported in *Popular Archaeology Magazine* in February, 1986.

One section of the barrow was plundered in ancient times, but in a niche in the wall of a second part of the tomb were found the remains of a young woman, wearing a dress made of cloth-of-gold and decorated with a number of gold paillettes. A tamga (a symbol of royalty) was found on a bronze cauldron in the pit.

The grave also contained an ornamented battle axe and a mirror made of silver alloy. There were also gold rings, earrings, a gold pectoral with a pendant, a gold vial decorated with filigree and precious stones, a piece of antique jewelry that still contained a few drops of perfume, bronze weights, amber dice, statuettes of gods and goddesses, masks, and a stone chicken's egg. The archaeologists also found a cameo, carved from carnelian, that depicted the myth of Actaeon, who was turned into a deer when he looked upon the naked Artemis.

According to E.V. Chernenko, about one-third of all Scythian female burials include arrow heads. (These are often found in children's graves as well.)

Chernenko says that several women's tombs found near Ordzhonikidze contain examples of war gear for women. Their clothing included trousers, a collarless tunic with a long skirt, and a “tiara” headpiece. Typical weapons found include bows, arrows in a gorytos that

had a sheath in its front for a knife, spears, and javelins.

“Swords are rare in female tombs, only three being known,” he adds.

Tadeusz Sulimirski defines the “Sauromatian period” of Sarmatian history as occurring during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. He notes that nearly 500 Sauromatian burials have been found.

Female graves from the south Ural, dating to this time period, frequently include pedestaled stone “altars” or flat, rounded stone dishes with raised rims, often decorated in the Scythian “animal style.” Sulimirski interprets these objects, which he says appear both in rich and moderate graves, as having a function in these women's roles as priestesses. He interprets them as altars used in fire worship.

Other objects in female burials include bronze rings, necklaces of semi-precious stones, lumps of white, red, green and yellow paint, and lumps of charcoal.

“Characteristic of female burials are broken saddle querns, toilet utensils, and personal ornaments: bronze, sometimes gold bracelets, adornments for the temples and earrings, small decorated plates with a zoomorphic ornament sewn on to garments, pendants, and amulets.

“There are beads, loose or forming necklaces, made of gold, colored glass, chalcedony or other stones, and occasionally of amber. Bronze-handled mirrors, a few of Olbian origin, are frequently found.

“Several richly furnished graves, exclusive to the Samara Ural group, presumably those of priestesses, yielded the stone dishes thought to have been portable altars. Most of them are pedestaled, with three or four legs, all have raised edges, and some are decorated in the Scythian style. Traces of burning, possibly of incense, were noticed on them.

“Occasionally there are small glass vases of phials, imported from some West Asiatic center, and small spoons of bone or antler with a carved zoomorphic terminal on the handle.

“Thought chiefly an attribute of male burials, weapons are also found in up to twenty per cent of female graves investigated. In almost all the graves, male and female, iron knives are found. Female graves contain iron or bone awls, while sheep astragali are found in those of several children.

“Horse skeletons occur in both male and female, though more often in male, richly

furnished princely graves of the Samara Ural group.

"Human sacrifices, except of wives following their dead husbands, were restricted to princely burials."

Sulimirski defines the "early Sarmatian period" as occurring in the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. From this time period, about 550 graves have been excavated.

"Male burials were usually equipped with weapons, although arrow heads were occasionally found in female burials.

"Female graves contained mainly ornaments and pottery, simple bronze earrings and beads being the most common objects ...

"Bronze mirrors, which have usually been ritually broken, were a developed form of those current in the country during the Sauromatian period. Bronze and gold neck rings appeared only in the richer graves.

"No stone altars typical of the Sauromatian culture were found, but a few decorated stone dishes with a raised rim may be regarded as a survival of this tradition."

Sulimirski also describes burials from the region of the lower Dnieper and Molochna, dating from the later Scythian period (the 4th to early 2nd century B.C.)

"The female burials were no less modestly furnished, with animal bones and potsherds, together with pieces of broken saddle querns and personal ornaments such as bronze, or very occasionally silver, earrings, bracelets, occasionally a pin, and exceptionally a mirror with a handle.

"The most common objects are necklaces of beads which are usually made of glass or paste, occasionally of amber or bone, and only exceptionally of gold. In a few female graves arrow heads were found, but they were rarely in a quiver.

"Two burials in particular are remarkable. A female burial in the catacomb of a barrow grave at Kut, west of the lower Dnieper, yielded an iron sword and a quiver with thirty-six arrows. Other goods included a bronze mirror, bronze earrings and ornaments and a necklace of glass beads.

"The other, at Akermen on the Molochna, was a catacomb burial of a young woman, equipped with a bronze mirror, a necklace of glass beads, silver, bronze and glass bracelets, a few wooden vessels and a Greek amphora.

Beside her were two iron spear heads and two lance heads, a quiver with twenty arrows, and a suit of scale armor. She is thought to have been the Sarmatian wife of a Scythian.

"A few female burials of the 6th, and also of the 4th century B.C., equipped with arrow heads, have been found in the forest steppe zone of the Ukraine.

"A princely female burial at Nowosiolka, east of Vinnitsa, contained the skeleton of a camel, evidently brought from the steppes of Kazakhstan."

A royal burial of the mid-4th century B.C., found in the town of Melitopol, contained a female burial.

"The female grave had been partly looted, but Greek red varnished vases, gold, glass and paste beads, bracelets and finger rings were found, together with the remains of a funeral cart and its yoke, a bronze cauldron and eleven amphorae."

The middle Sarmatian period, which Sulimirski describes as the 2nd century B.C. to the mid-1st century A.D., has yielded more than two hundred Sarmatian burials from an area between the Don and Dniester rivers. Female burials have been found in Scythian Neapolis. These were "richly furnished with gold ornaments, brooches, bronze mirrors, beads and pendants, Egyptian scarabs, etc."

Sulimirski says the late Sarmatian period occurred between the 1st and 4th centuries A.D. A female burial from the early 2nd century A.D., at Bolshaya Dmitrievka near Saratov, has yielded a silver strainer, two bronze rings ornamented with camel figurines, and a red clay vase.

The Khokhlach barrow grave in the vicinity of Novochoerkassk (located between the Don and Dnieper rivers) contained a female "tribal chief or queen." It dates from the late Sarmatian period.

"The grave goods included at least thirteen gold objects, mostly decorated in the animal style and/or studded with turquoise, amethyst and coral, and richly ornamented bracelets, cases and jugs, a diadem and perfume bottle ... There are hundreds of small gold plaques sewn on to garments and headdresses."

According to M. Rostovtzeff, the Scythian culture originated in the 8th century B.C. and lasted well into the Roman period. The Scythians first established

themselves along the coast of the Sea of Azov in the 7th century B.C., in territory originally inhabited by the Cimmerians. As a result, the Cimmerians (and possibly some Scythians) moved into areas along the southern coast of the Black Sea, beginning about 695 B.C.

The Greeks, says Rostovtzeff, knew of several tribes living adjacent to the Sea of Azov, but lumped them all together under the name Maeotian. The strongest two tribes were the Sauromatians (who lived in the valley of the Don River) and the Sindians (who lived on either side of the Strait of Kerch).

Rostovtzeff theorizes that Herodotus' story of the Amazons being the founding mothers of the Sauromatian tribe as having its roots in battles between these two tribes and the Scythians, followed by a truce and intermarriage.

In each of these tribes, women played a leading role in both political and military life – something the Greeks noted. Rostovtzeff credits the “matriarchal” aspects of the Sauromatians to their religious beliefs. Chief among their deities was a “mother goddess.” He adds: “In the historic period, the peninsula of Taman was covered with sanctuaries of this deity, whom the Greeks identified with their Artemis, their Aphrodite, their Demeter ... Not only the cult of the mother goddess, but also the matriarchal structure, persisted for a very long time in certain places, especially on the shores of the Black Sea – in the immediate neighborhood of the Greeks – among the Sindians, the Maeotians, the Sauromatians, and in the Crimea, among the Taurians, who sacrificed travelers to their Parthenos, their virgin goddess.”

Archaeologists have excavated temples of this “pre-Hellenic divinity” – one on the Taman Peninsula, one near Phanagoria, and one on a promontory on Lake Tsukur in the Kuban delta. Rostovtzeff believes that other temples of the same goddess were located near Hermonassa and in the vicinity of Gorgippia (modern Anapa) and says the cult became predominant at Panticapaeum. The same deity was the patron goddess of Chersonesus, appearing as Artemis on that city's coins.

The goddess, says Rostovtzeff, had serpent feet and wings terminating in horned, lionlike griffin heads. She controls two eagle-headed griffins, is represented with an ear of corn, and holds in her right hand a siren's head and in her left hand a dagger. Her sacred animals are the raven and the dog.

AMAZON NAMES

Where did the name “Amazon” come from? Ancient writers believed it was derived from the Greek word “mazos,” or “breast.” Diodorus of Sicily

translates the name “Amazon” as meaning “without a breast.”

The ancient geographer Strabo suggested that the name might be a corruption of the tribal name Alizone – a people who participated in the Trojan War, as allies of Troy. (The leaders, as listed in the *Iliad*, were male.) This group came “from distant Alybe, the native place of silver,” and were probably, in fact, the Chalybes – neighbors to the Amazons.

Herodotus noted that the Scythians, from whom the Amazons were said to be descended, called these warrior women “Oeorpata” (also spelled Airorpatai) or “Mankillers.” The name blends the Scythian words “oeor” or “man” with “pata” or “kill.”

Modern writers have also tried to decipher the roots of the name Amazon. Helen Diner speculates that it may have its root in the Greek phrase “a maza” or “without barley bread,” or that it may have arisen from “amazosas” or “opposed to man.” Another alternative is “azona” or “virgin belt.”

Diner offers the alternative speculation that “Amazon” may be a corruption of a Scythian word. She suggests (probably here quoting George Thomson) the Cherkessian “emetchi” or “those who count by the mother.” (Thomson translated it as “descended through women.”) She also notes that, in the Kalmuck language, a strong, healthy woman is called “aemetzaine.”

Finally, Diner says that Homer's word for the Amazons was “Antianeirai,” which she translates as “man hating” or “mannish.”

Guy Cadogan Rothery suggests the word Amazon may have been derived from the word “maza” or “moon.” Other interpretations given by Rothery include “vestals,” “girdle bearers,” “game eaters,” and “eaters of strong foods.” He concludes: “But after all, the word is hybrid Greek, not a native name, and may be classed as a nickname, itself much younger than the supposed state [of the Amazons].”

Rothery quotes anthropologist J.C. Pritchard (who quotes M. Venture) as noting that the Berbers of Africa inhabiting the Atlas Mountains, “call their language Amazigh, which has been translated as ‘the noble language.’”

Donald J. Sobol adds other definitions that have been suggested by various scholars. Richard Pyne Knight suggests a derivation from the Phoenician words “am” and “azon” or “adon,” which translate as “mother lord.” Burton suggests the Scythian words “amm” and “azzon” (but does not give a translation of these words). George Thomson suggests the Greek words “amao” (“reap”) and “zonai” (“wearing girdles”).

A.H. Sayce (whose 1925 book on the Hittites is quoted by Sobol) believed that the word Amazon arose as a descriptive term for a sect of armed priestesses who

worshipped the goddess Ma. Sobol, however, disagrees, saying, “Nowhere in the rites of the mother goddess Ma is there record of armed priestesses.”

Sobol also suggests an Indian origin for the word Amazon. He cites the Sanskrit word “Uma-soona” or “children of Uma.” The city of Amastris (said to be an Amazon settlement) may thus have gotten its name from “uma” and “stri” – “Uma’s women.”

But perhaps the search for the root of the word Amazon should be kept closer to the traditional homeland of the Amazons.

The dominant power during the Amazon era was the Hittite nation, which sprawled across what is today central Turkey. The Hittite empire lasted from about the mid-1700s to 1200 B.C.

In the language of the Hittites, “ama” means “mother.” The former is actually a Sumerian word used by the Hittites. Another Sumerian word, “zun,” is a plural sign. If Hittite grammar allows these two words to be combined, the name Amazon may have originated from a Hittite word meaning “many mothers.”

The Hittite word “maz” is the root of words that mean to stand one’s ground, to withstand, or to refuse.

The Hittite’s own descriptions of the geography of their nation notes a predatory tribe living to the north, between the Hittite homeland and the Black Sea coast, known as the Gaska (or Kaska). In Hittite, the word “gasan” (again, a Sumerian word) means “queen.” It is tempting to interpret the tribal name Gaska as a corruption of this word.

But there are other possibilities. “Kas” (a Sumerian word) means either “road,” “campaign” or (slightly different pronunciation) “beer.” “Ka” or “ga” (both Sumerian words) can mean “milk,” “word,” “gate,” “door,” or “strong drink.” The same word (in the Hittite tongue) can mean “here.”

It may even be that the tribal name Halizone (also spelled Alizone), which was cited by Strabo as one of the names that could have been corrupted into Amazon, had a Hittite root. In Hittite, “halis” means either “defense,” “walled enclosure,” or “stable.” If Hittite grammar allows this word to be pluralized with the addition of “zun,” then “halis zun” may mean “many stables.”

Should the Hittites choose to describe a tribe of women warriors in their own language, that term would likely include the word “woman.” In Hittite, it is thought to translate as “salhitis” or “salhiyantis” (the meaning of these words is questionable). “Dam” is the Hittite (Sumerian) word for “wife,” while “dumu sal” or “dumu tu(m)” are the Hittite (Sumerian) words for “daughter.”

“Sal lugal” is the Hittite (Sumerian) word for “queen.” “Daggalas” may be the Hittite word for breast.

The names of individual Amazons, as we know them today, are those recorded by the Greeks of the Dark Ages and Classical period. All are compounds of Greek words, describing the characteristics of a particular woman.

Hyginus, his book *Fabulae*, provides a list of Amazon names: Agave, Antioche, Clymene, Dioxippe, Glauce, Hippolyte, Hippothoe, Iphinoe, Laomache, Ocyale, Otrere, Penthesileia, Polydora, Theseis (an epithet meaning “wife of Theseus”), and Xanthe. He says Penthesileia, who was killed by Achilles, was the “daughter of Mars and Otrere.”

A number of Amazon names can be found on the vase paintings. From Attic black figure pottery come the following names: Ainippe, Alkaia, Anaxilea, Andromache, Antiopeia, Antimache, Areto, Glauke, Iphito, Kleoptoleme, Lykopolis, Okypous, Pantariste, Penthesileia, Pisto, Skyleia (Skyleilei), (Tel)epyleia, and Toxophile.

From Attic red figure pottery of the early Classic and Classic period come the following Amazon names: Alexandre, Andromache, Antianeira, Antiope, Aristomache, Gygamis (this may be a Persian), Klymene, Kreousa, and Okyale.

Other Attic red figure pottery gives the following Amazon names: Andromache, Barkida, Euope, Hippo, Hippolyte, Hypsipyle, Kallie, Kydoime, Lykopolis, Penthesileia, Teisipyle, Thero, Thraso, Toxari(s), Toxis, and Xanthippe (a blonde).

Other pottery from the Classical period bears the following Amazon names: Amynomene, Charope, Doris, Echephyle, Eumache, Mimnousa, Menalipe, and Sinope.

Other names found on Classical Greek pottery that may be Amazon names include: Chrysis; Euphsepye, Euryleia, Hipponike, Inai, Kepes, Oigme, and Pyrgomache.

A number of Amazons share their names with other characters from Greek mythology. Other women who bear the same name as an Amazon include the following:

Agave was the daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes. She married Echion and was the mother of Pentheus. Together with her sisters Autonoe and Ino, she maligned their sister Semele, who had died after becoming impregnated by Zeus (after giving birth to Dionysus?). Agave was punished with madness, and tore her son to pieces. Exiled from Thebes, she later married King Lycotheres of Illyria, then killed him so that her father could claim that throne.

Another Agave was one of the fifty daughters of King Danaus of Argos. Forced to marry their fifty male cousins, all but one of the daughters beheaded their husbands. Agave’s husband was Lycus.

Alcippe was the daughter of the war god Ares and the Athenian princess Agraule (Aglauros). She was raped near the acropolis by Halirrothius, who was killed by Ares. The resulting trial of Ares by Poseidon, held on the Areopagus, gave name to the hill ("Hill of Ares") where the Amazons set up their camp when attacking Athens.

Andromache was the daughter of Eetion, king of a city named Thebes near Troy. She married prince Hector of Troy. She was the mother, by him, of Astyanax; both husband and son were killed in the Trojan War. After the fall of Troy, Andromache was claimed by Achilles' son Neoptolemus. She was the mother, by him, of Molossus, Pielus, and Pergamus. She was also the mother, by Helenus, of Cestrinus. She later traveled with her son Pergamus to Mysia. He captured Teuthrania and renamed it Pergamon; the city had a shrine to Andromache.

Andromeda was the daughter of King Cepheus of Ethiopia and Cassiopeia. Either she or her mother boasted that she was more beautiful than the nereids, a sea-monster ravaged the land. Andromeda was to be sacrificed to it, but instead was married to Perseus after he killed it.

Antimache was the daughter of Amphidamas and was the mother, by Eurystheus, of Amphidamas.

Antiope was a Theban princess who became pregnant by Zeus and fled the city, rather than face the wrath of her father, King Nycteus. She married King Epopeus of Sicyon, but he was killed by her uncle, Lycus, who dragged Antiope back to Thebes and imprisoned her. After escaping, she located her twin sons Zethus and Amphion, and together with them killed Lycus and tied his wife Dirce (who had abused Antiope) to a bull. Because Dirce had been a worshipper of the god Dionysus, Antiope was then punished by the god, who drove her mad. She was later cured by Phocus, whom she married.

Another Antiope was the daughter of Thespius and was the mother, by Heracles, of Alopis.

Asteria was the daughter of the titan Phoebe. She married Perses (the son of Eurybia) and gave birth to the goddess Hecate. Later, fleeing from Zeus' advances, she leaped into the sea and became a quail (ortyx). An island (possibly Delos) emerged from the sea on that spot and was named for her. The island later sheltered her sister Leto.

Another Asteria was one of the fifty daughters of King Danaus of Argos. Her husband was Chaetus.

Celaeno was one of seven daughters of Atlas and the Oceanid Pleione that were known as the pleiades. She had a son, by Poseidon, named Lycus. Some writers add a second son, Nycteus, who together with Lycus usurped the throne of Thebes.

A second Celaeno was said to have been a harpy – a mythical creature with either the body of a bird and face of a woman, or the body of a woman with a bird's head, wings, and talons. The harpies were described by Homer as "snatchers" and were responsible for unexplained disappearances. Celaeno was the leader of a band of harpies who attacked the Trojan noble Aeneas when he was fleeing to Italy after the defeat of Troy.

A third Celaeno was one of the fifty daughters of King Danaus of Argos. Her husband was Hyperbius.

Cleite (Clete?) was a daughter of Merops, king of Percote on the Hellespont. She married Cyzicus, the young king of the Doliones (in Mysia) who was later killed by the Argonauts. Stricken with grief at his death, she killed herself. The wood nymphs mourned her; their tears formed a spring known by the name of Cleite.

Clite (Clete?) was one of the fifty daughters of King Danaus of Argos. Her husband was Clitus.

Clymene was the daughter of Minyas of Orchomenus, and was the mother of Iphiclus by Phylacus (or Cephalus), of Atalanta by King Iasus of Arcadia, and of Alcimedea, the mother of Jason.

A second Clymene was the daughter of King Catreus of Crete. She was to be sold as a slave when her father received an oracle that one of his children would kill him but instead was married by Nauplius, the man who was to sell her. She was the mother, by him, of Palamedes, Oeax, and Nausimedon.

A third Clymene was the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. She was the mother of Atlas, Menoetius, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. Other authors say she married King Merops of Egypt and was the mother, by Helios (Phoebus Apollo) of Phaethon.

A legend recorded by Pausanias lists Clymene, together with Dictys, as "the saviors of Perseus."

Creusa was the daughter of King Erechtheus of Athens and Praxithea. She married King Xuthus of Athens. She was raped by Apollo in a cave under the Acropolis and exposed her child Ion there, but later was reunited with the boy at Delphi. She may also have been the mother of Dorus.

A second Creusa was the daughter of King Priam of Troy and Hecuba. She married Aeneas, and was the mother of Ascanius (Iulus). Captured by Greeks upon the fall of the city, she was saved by the goddesses Cybele and Aphrodite. She was later left behind in Troy by her husband when he fled.

Deianeira was the daughter of King Oeneus of Calydon (or the god Dionysus) and Althaea, and was the sister of Meleager. She married Heracles. She was tricked by the Centaur Nessus into believing that a poisonous potion was in fact a "love potion," and smeared it onto Heracles' tunic after he took another lover, killing him. She was the mother, by Heracles, of

several children, including Hyllus.

Apollodorus records that this Deianira “drove a chariot and practiced the art of war.”

The ancient writer Apollodorus adds: “This Deianira drove a chariot and practiced the art of war, and Heracles wrestled for her hand with Achelous, who assumed the likeness of a bull; but Heracles broke off one of his horns. So Heracles married Deianira ...”

Doris was a sea goddess, the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. She was the mother, by the sea god Nereus, of fifty daughters, known as the nereids. The ancient writer Hesiod provides a list of her daughters that includes several Amazon names: Doris, Glauce, “the lovely” Hippothoe, “shining” Menippe, and Thoe. The other daughters are Agave, Aktaie (Actaea), Amphitrite, Autonoe, Doto, Dynamene, Eione, Euagore, Euarne, Erato, Eudora (Eudore), Eukrante, Eulimene, Eunike (Eunice), Eupompe (Eumolpe?), Galateia (Galatea), Galene, Glaukonome, Halia (Hali), Halimede, Hipponoe, Kymatolege, Kymo (Cymo), Kymodoke, Kymothoe, Laomedea, Leagore, Lysianassa, Melite, Nemertes, Nesaie (Nesaea), Neso, Panopeia (Panope), Pasithea, Pherousa, Ploto, Pontoporeia, Poulynoe (Polynome?), Proto, Protomedea, Pronoe, Psamathe, Sao, Speio (Spio), Themisto, and Thetis.

The ancient writer Apollodorus adds other names to the list of nereids: Agave (an Amazon name), Calypso, Ceto, Cranto, Cymothoe, Dero, Dione, Evagore, Ianira, Ione, Limnoria, Nausithoe, Neomeris, Plexaure, and Pontomedusa.

Eurybia was a daughter of the sea god Pontus and the earth goddess Ge (Gaea). She is described by Hesiod as “flint-hearted.” She was the mother, by the titan Crius, of Astraeus, Pallas, and Perses.

Another Eurybia was the daughter of Thespius and was the mother, by Heracles, of Polylaus.

Glauce was a Colchian princess. On the occasion of her wedding to Jason she was killed, together with her father King Creon, while trying on a robe that had been poisoned by Jason’s first wife, the Colchian princess Medea. (Some accounts list her name as Creusa, rather than Glauce.)

Another Glauce was one of the fifty daughters of King Danaus of Argos. Her husband was Alces.

Hippo was the daughter of Tethys and Oceanos.

Another Hippo was the daughter of Thespius and was the mother, by Heracles, of Capylus.

In Euripides’ play *Melanippe the Wise*, Hippo is the daughter of the Centaur Cheiron. Hippo’s daughter, Melanippe, relates the story of how her mother angered the gods by practicing the art of healing: “[Hippo], because she canted songs of prophecy to men, expounding remedies and a release from pain, Zeus

covered with the plumage of a bay horse’s hair. Thick fell a tempest from heaven, and she was driven forth, and left by the Corycian mountain of the muses. That nymph of prophecy is called Hippo [“Horse”] by the world, by reason of her body’s change.”

Hippolyte was the daughter of King Cretheus of Iolcus. She married Acastus, a king of Iolcus. After Peleus rejected her advances, Hippolyte told his wife that he was about to take another wife. Peleus’ wife killed herself. Peleus later killed Hippolyte.

Hippothoe was the daughter of Mestor (the son of Perseus, who fought the Gorgons) and Lysidice. She was carried away to the Taphian islands by Poseidon. She was the mother, by Poseidon, of Taphius.

Hypsipyle became queen of Lemnos after the women there killed off all the men on the island. She saved her father, King Thoas, by hiding him and then setting him adrift in a boat or chest. Hypsipyle was the mother, by Jason, of Euneus and either Nebrophonus or Deipylus. Later, when the other women learned she had saved her father, she was either sold into slavery or captured by pirates. Purchased by King Lycus (or Lycurgus) of Nemea, she became a nurse for his son Opheltes. While showing a spring to men attacking Thebes (Seven Against Thebes) the boy was killed by a snake.

Iphinoe was the daughter of King Proetus of Tiryns and Sthenoboea or Anteia (who tried to seduce Bellerophon). Iphinoe’s sisters were Lysippe and Iphianassa. The three of them were driven mad, together with other women after either refusing the rites of Dionysus or disparaging a wooden image of the goddess Hera. All but Iphinoe were cured by the seer Melampus.

Another Iphinoe was the daughter of King Alcathous of Megara (whose son participated in the Calydonian board hunt). She died a “virgin girl” and had a memorial at Megara.

Another Iphinoe was the daughter of King Nisos of Megara. She married Megareus

Klymene was the daughter of Tethys and Oceanos. She was the mother, by Iapetos, of Atlas, Menoitios, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. She is also the mother, by Helios, of Phaethon.

Melanippe was a daughter of Aeolus (keeper of the winds) or of Desmontes. She was the mother, by Poseidon, of the twins Aeolus and Boeotus. Blinded by her father, she was later rescued by her sons and had her sight restored by Poseidon. Traveling to Icaria with her sons, she married Mtapontus, the boys’ adoptive father.

Oreithyia was the daughter of King Erechtheus of Athens and Praxithea. While dancing by the Ilissus River, she was carried away by the north wind, Boreas,

to Sarpedon's Rock in Thrace. She was the mother, by Boreas, of Chione, Cleopatra, Zetes, and Calais.

Phoebe the titan was a daughter of the sea god Uranus and the earth goddess Ge (Gaea). She was the mother, by her brother Coeus, of the goddess Leto (mother of Artemis), Asteria, and Hecate.

A second Phoebe was the daughter of Leucippus, king of Messenia. She was abducted by the Dioscuri (twin Spartan princes who sailed with the Argonauts). Phoebe was the mother, by Polydeuces, of Mnasinous or Mnesileus.

Polydora was the daughter of King Peleus of Phthia and Antigone. She married Borus, a prince of Messenia. She was the mother, by the river god Spercheius, of Menesthius.

Smyrna (or Myrrha) was the daughter of Cinyras, the king of Paphos in Cyprus, or of King Theias (Thias) of Assyria. Due to her beauty, she was punished by the goddess Aphrodite with an infatuation for her father, whom she tricked into sleeping with her and making her pregnant. When her father learned of her trick and pursued her with a sword, she changed herself into a myrrh tree. When the tree split open nine months later, the hero Adonis was born. An alternative story makes Smyrna the daughter of King Belus of Egypt and Orithyia.

Tecmessa was a Phrygian princess who was captured by Ajax after he raided the city of her father, King Teleutas. She was the mother, by Ajax, of Eurysaces.

Thoe was the daughter of Tethys and Oceanos.

Xanthippe was the daughter of Dorus, a leader of the Curetes (early inhabitants of Aetolia). Xanthippe married Pleuron. She was the mother, by him, of Agenor, Sterope, Stratonice, and Laophonte.

¹ The word Amazon is said to have been derived from the Greek word 'mazos' or 'breast.' The word 'Amazons' is translated as meaning 'without a breast.' But several alternative origins for the word Amazon have also been proposed.

² According to tradition, Rome was founded in 753 B.C. This date is unlikely to be accurate.

³ C.H. Oldfather, who translated Diodorus, places these events around 630-625 B.C. – but this conflicts with the generally accepted dating of the Scythian Amazons to a period prior to the Trojan War of approximately 1200 B.C.

⁴ Theseus, a king of Athens, according to the genealogies was a contemporary of Heracles. Theseus lived just prior to the Trojan War; his son was said to have fought at Troy.

⁵ Other ancient writers say that the Amazon who was captured by Theseus was named Antiope.

⁶ This is probably a misspelling of Melanippe.

⁷ The city of Sinope is said by R.J. Hopper to have been founded around 630 B.C. by Ionian Greeks. He notes, however, that the city may have had to have been "refounded" after an original city was destroyed by the Cimmerians, who swept through the area in the 7th century.

⁸ According to Apollonius of Rhodes, Heracles helped the Mariandyni battle a number of neighboring tribes – the Mysians, Phrygians, Bithynians, and Paphlagonians. The king of the Mariandyni at the time was Dascylus, father of Lycus, and the battles occurred after Heracles had attacked the Amazons, not before.

⁹ The river, located just east of the Sea of Marmara, is today known as the Sakarya River.

¹⁰ According to the legends recounted by Apollodorus, Laomedon was the ruler of Troy when Heracles arrived there. This king lived prior to the Trojan War; his son Podarces (Priam) was king of Troy during the war – and was described as an elderly man with grown sons.

¹¹ "Chersonesus" or "Peninsula" was the name given to the modern Crimea. Compare this account with that of Herodotus' tale of the captive Amazons who captured Heracles' ships but were shipwrecked in this same location.

¹² These Syrians, known to the ancients as the "White Syrians," should not be confused with the Syrians of the modern Middle East.

¹³ Eurystheus, the king who assigned Heracles his labors, was said to have been the king of both Tiryns and Mycenae. Thus it would seem logical that at least some of the spoils captured by Heracles at Themiscyra would have wound up in the city of Mycenae.

¹⁴ Cremni is likely the modern Crimea. Herodotus later says that Cremni is "a trading post on the shore of the Sea of Azov." The modern author M. Rostovtzeff says it may have been one of two towns that were founded by the Cimmerians. The towns were known as Kimmerikon and Kimmerie.

¹⁵ Herodotus calculated a day's journey at 200 furlongs, or about 41 kilometers.

¹⁶ According to Seneca, Theseus killed Antiope in a fit of anger.

¹⁷ Helen Diner says that Antiope was killed at the Itonic Gate at the temple of the moon.

¹⁸ "Horkos" is the Greek word for "oath."

¹⁹ The festival of Theseus, or Theseia, was celebrated on the eighth day of the month of Pyanepsion (in late October).

²⁰ The Amazon shares her name with Euryale the Gorgon.

²¹ Boreas, the god of the north wind, was said to

have lived in Thrace.

²² Oreithyia was the daughter of Erechtheus, the first king of Athens. She was the mother of Zetes and Calais, two Argonauts. Interestingly, her name is very similar to that of the Amazon queen Orithya, daughter of Marpesia.

²³ According to Pausanias, the ancient author of the *Little Iliad* says that it was the Trojan Eurypylos who killed Machaon.

²⁴ The Kassotis spring also flows past the church of Kastri, known as Hagios Nikolaos.

²⁵ Here, Quintus Curtius is mixing up the Black Sea, which the Thermodon River emptied into, with the Caspian Sea, far to the east.

²⁶ The Kaska (or Gaska, as the tribal name is alternatively spelled) were a thorn in the side of the Hittite empire, which dominated central Turkey. They waged continual war against the Hittites, at one point overrunning the Hittite capital.

²⁷ The ancient Greeks used the name “Paphlagonia” for the Black Sea coast of Turkey that lay to the west of the modern city of Bafra.

²⁸ Tim Severin, in postulating a homeland for the Chalybes, notes that black or very dark gray beaches lie east of Samsun (a city approximately 60 kilometers west of the site of ancient Themiscyra). Some are so rich with iron that grains of the metal can be picked out of the sand with a magnet.

²⁹ The island today is known as Buyuk Ada, or “Big Island.”

³⁰ This city lay about seventy kilometers up the Iris River (from the Black Sea). Alternative spellings are Amasea and Amasya.

³¹ A city by the name of Comana Pontica was located, in the Roman era, on the Iris River, near the modern city of Tokat.

³² R.J. Hopper says that excavations at the city of Smyrna revealed its earliest phase to date from the end of the 10th century B.C.

³³ Mygdon and Dascylus were rival kings who ruled tribes to the west of the Amazons, along the Black Sea coast. They seem to have given their names to local geographical features.

³⁴ Pausanias describes a Scythian battle tactic that echoes this one: “They throw ropes around any enemies they meet, and they wheel their horses to trip them in the tangle of rope.”

³⁵ The Sarmatians were related to the Scythians by origin, but spoke a different language. They overran the Scythians in the 3rd century A.D.

³⁶ Chief of the Department of Archaeology at the time was Alla Moruzhenko.