

The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World

By Adrienne Mayor

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Amazons--fierce warrior women dwelling on the fringes of the known world--were the mythic archenemies of the ancient Greeks. Heracles and Achilles displayed their valor in duels with Amazon queens, and the Athenians reveled in their victory over a powerful Amazon army. In historical times, Cyrus of Persia, Alexander the Great, and the Roman general Pompey tangled with Amazons.

But just who were these bold barbarian archers on horseback who gloried in fighting, hunting, and sexual freedom? Were Amazons real? In this deeply researched, wide-ranging, and lavishly illustrated book, National Book Award finalist Adrienne Mayor presents the Amazons as they have never been seen before. This is the first comprehensive account of warrior women in myth and history across the ancient world, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Great Wall of China.

Mayor tells how amazing new archaeological discoveries of battle-scarred female skeletons buried with their weapons prove that women warriors were not merely figments of the Greek imagination. Combining classical myth and art, nomad traditions, and scientific archaeology, she reveals intimate, surprising details and original insights about the lives and legends of the women known as Amazons. Provocatively arguing that a timeless search for a balance between the sexes explains the allure of the Amazons, Mayor reminds us that there were as many Amazon love stories as there were war stories. The Greeks were not the only people enchanted by Amazons--Mayor shows that warlike women of nomadic cultures inspired exciting tales in ancient Egypt, Persia, India, Central Asia, and China.

Driven by a detective's curiosity, Mayor unearths long-buried evidence and sifts fact from fiction to show how flesh-and-blood women of the Eurasian steppes were mythologized as Amazons, the equals of men. The result is likely to become a classic.

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Editorial Review

Review

Winner of the 2016 Sarasvati Award for Best Nonfiction Book in Women and Mythology, Association for the Study of Women & Mythology

2015 Silver Medal Winner in the Independent Publisher Book Awards, World History category

Selected for *The New York Times Book Review's* "The Year in Reading" 2016

Shortlisted for the 2014 London Hellenic Prize

One of *Foreign Affairs'* Best Military, Scientific, and Technological Books of 2015

Selected for *American Scientist's* Science Book Gift Guide 2014

"In her quest to separate reality from mythology, Mayor left few stones unturned, even examining the graves of women with war wounds and mummified tattoos. She skillfully presents her findings with wit and conviction in this superbly illustrated book"--**Lawrence D. Freedman, *Foreign Affairs***

"Fluidly written and exhaustively researched, this fascinating book lit up my mind and my sense of humanity, not just with women *in* it, but under it, above it, flinging out constellations and atoms; carving out grand canyons hand-in-hand with men and beasts and glaciers, too."--**Neko Case, singer-songwriter, *New York Times Book Review***

"*The Amazons* is elegantly written, nicely illustrated and will no doubt excite a lot of attention."--**Simon Goldhill, *Times Literary Supplement***

"Mayor specializes in connecting artifacts--paintings, sculptures, coins, bones, weapons, clothing, fossils--with the more diffuse evidence found in literature, lore and legend . . . in order to illuminate the lives of the ancient warrior women. . . . Impressive investigative work . . . fascinating."--**James Romm, *London Review of Books***

"[A] fascinatingly detailed account."--**Emily Wilson, *Wall Street Journal***

"Mayor (*The Poison King*) looks at ancient writings and archeological evidence to argue that yes, 'Amazons' were based on real nomadic women, though much different from the way ancient Greeks or contemporary audiences imagine them. . . . Mayor speculates on the origin of such misconceptions in ancient writings and art, smartly suggesting that, though Amazons are usually depicted heroically in Greek art and mythology, the male-centric Greeks perhaps struggled to understand a society based on equality between the sexes. . . . Her expertise shines throughout."--***Publishers Weekly***

"An encyclopedic study of the barbarian warrior women of Western Asia, revealing how new archaeological discoveries uphold the long-held myths and legends. The famed female archers on horseback from the lands the ancient Greeks called Scythia appeared throughout Greek and Roman legend. Mayor tailors her scholarly work to lay readers, providing a fascinating exploration into the factual identity underpinning the fanciful legends surrounding these wondrous Amazons. . . . Mayor clears away much of the man-hating myths around these redoubtable warriors. Thanks to Mayor's scholarship, these fearsome fighters are attaining their historical respectability."--***Kirkus Reviews***

"A must-read for anyone interested in either Amazonian myth or history."--**Fred Poling, *Library Journal***

"No one before has ever marshalled the full sweep of evidence as Mayor does here. . . . The result is a book as erudite as it riveting, one that is surely destined to serve as the definitive work on the subject."--**Tom Holland, *Literary Review***

"There are myriad myths surrounding the Amazons, but which are based on truth? . . . This is the question which Adrienne Mayor seeks to answer in her hugely informative and entertaining Encyclopaedia Amazonica."--**Natalie Haynes, *Independent***

"[A] lively and engaging exploration . . . vivid, compelling and detailed . . . a rich compendium."--**Lloyd Llewellyn Jones, *Times Higher Education***

"A beautiful book. . . . *The Amazons* by Adrienne Mayor is required reading."--**Anna Meldolesi, *Corriere della Sera***

"Driven by a detective's curiosity, Mayor unearths long-buried evidence and sifts fact from fiction to show how flesh-and-blood women of the Eurasian steppes were mythologized as Amazons, the equals of men. The result is likely to become a classic."--**Peter Konieczny, *History of the Ancient World blog***

"Mayor writes elegant, jargon free, frequently witty prose."--**Barry Baldwin, *Fortean Times***

"If Adrienne Mayor had merely applied her rigorous scholarship and poetic charm to documenting the shifting image of Amazons in classical, medieval and post-Renaissance European culture, she would have written an important contribution to ancient history. But she has achieved much more. By painstaking research . . . she has broken down the often impenetrable walls dividing western cultural history from its eastern equivalents. . . . Mayor opens up new horizons in world storytelling and feminist iconography. . . . There may not be Amazon dolls in today's toyshops, but a good substitute would be to read this wonderful book with your children and show them its pictures."--**Edith Hall, *New Statesman***

"For anyone who thinks Amazons were as mythical as centaurs or sphinxes, this pleasurable book proves that misconception is wondrously wrong. . . . Mayor's beautifully illustrated book, truly encyclopedic on all things Amazonian, reclaims the historic image of these dauntless figures in the heroic frame they deserve."--**Fran Willing, *Bust.com***

"Mayor's book is popular history at its best. Much of her archaeological evidence is new -- such as her descriptions of 'Scythian' female graves with horses and weapons. She chooses wonderful illustrations which makes the book enjoyable and easy to read."--**Zenobia blog**

"Clearly, with this clever, systematic and engaging work by Mayor, Amazons got their classic book. And it is a riveting read, too."--**Ephraim Nissan, *Fabula***

"Mayor's fascinatingly readable book convincingly argues that many of their characteristics may have derived from real nomadic womenwarriors of antiquity. . . . It represents a remarkable scholarly breakthrough: no one will ever be able to discuss the Amazon myths again without taking into account the historical evidence she provides."--**Tassos A. Kaplanis, *Journal of Historical Geography***

"Adrienne Mayor has written an ambitious 'Encyclopedia Amazonica' as she calls her book, a kind of compendium of information about the Amazons. . . . Her charming and seamless style can certainly provoke a reader's interest in the still distant and unknown terra incognita of the Black Sea and Caucasus regions and their nomadic life."--**Eleni Boliaki, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review***

"I can't . . . begin to say how great it is to have a book like this, because it's exactly the kind of book I like. Not one that just dismisses old stories as being too tall or made up, but really gives them the benefit of the doubt and tries to correlate and reconcile them with hard evidence. This is brilliantly achieved in *Amazons*. . . . This in many ways is an exhaustive study, every facet that could be thought of has been included, and very little left out."--**Adventures in Historyland**

"Mayor writes well, and not without dry humour, and although hardly given to the sensational, the sheer depth and breadth of her research and discoveries carry you along. You won't devour this in a sitting, just as you wouldn't eat a whole gooey gateau at once, but each slice of book is appetising enough to keep you coming back for more."--**Lynn Picknett, *Magonia Review of Books***

From the Back Cover

"In her groundbreaking book, Adrienne Mayor has gone above and beyond all past works in making the Amazon women of legend real. The stories of who the Amazons were, how they really lived, and why they loved their lives with such timeless vivacity make the reader of this sensational work want to stand up and raise her sword to the sky to cheer! Never before has one author so seamlessly merged the iconic lives and lore of the Amazons with genuine images, facts, and research. With the depth of a textbook and the easy conversational style of a good friend, Mayor rapidly dispels myths about one of the strongest female cultures in history while uplifting the hearts of readers with dreams of strength and adventure. *The Amazons* is an absolute must-have for any person who yearns to learn about how women in the ancient world really lived and for those modern heroes and heroines who will surely be inspired by the rich, vibrant history of our world's cultures."--**Virginia Hankins, actress-stuntwoman**

"*The Amazons* is a stupendous achievement--a long-anticipated centerpiece in the great puzzle of humankind. The story of these forbidden women, silenced for so long by the rigidity of traditional scholarship, is as exciting and surprising as a bestselling murder mystery; I simply couldn't put it down. Through scholarly brilliance and passion, Adrienne Mayor has opened the door to a forgotten world of gender equality, and her book ought to be required reading in every college history course."--**Anne Fortier, author of *The Lost Sisterhood: A Novel***

"Nobody brings ancient history and archaeology to life like Adrienne Mayor. From the Russian steppes to China, and from Roman Egypt and Arabia to the Etruscans, she leads the reader on a breathtaking quest for the real ancient warrior women reflected in myths--their daring, archery, tattoos, fine horses, and independence from male control. The book's rich erudition, communicated in sparkling prose and beautiful illustrations, makes it a riveting read."--**Edith Hall, author of *Introducing the Ancient Greeks: From Bronze Age Seafarers to Navigators of the Western Mind***

"Adrienne Mayor's inquiry into the myth--and surprising reality--of Amazon women begins with the fierce Greek huntress Atalanta, but takes us deep into the past and as far afield as the Great Wall of China. With the restless curiosity and meticulous scholarship that have become her hallmark, the author once again has found a gap in my bookshelf and filled it, admirably."--**Steven Saylor, author of *Raiders of the Nile: A Novel of the Ancient World***

"Adrienne Mayor excels at demonstrating the truth that lies behind what seems simply storytelling, and there is no more exciting confrontation of myth and history than in the story of the Amazons. This is a great book--at once exhaustive, scholarly, thrilling, and imaginative, spanning the history, art, and imagination of ancient peoples from Italy to China."--**John Boardman, University of Oxford**

"One can only wonder at the courage and conviction of the ancient warrior women who dared to defy their

peers, and who became such powerful inspirations that their memory lives on for millennia. We owe it to them to remember their stories. Adrienne Mayor's fabulous book illuminates a complex picture of ancient lives. It gives us the chance to understand these amazing female fighters, and to recognize their daughters in our midst, those who fight with courage and conviction for what they know is a better world."--**Samantha "Swords" Catto-Mott, medieval long-sword champion and creator of special effects in film**

"In this fascinating book, which combines flowing prose, a lively and engaging presentation, and wonderful illustrations, Adrienne Mayor brings the reader into the excitement of discovering the truth about the Amazons. She demonstrates quite convincingly that the Amazon traditions largely derive from the undeniable historical fact that nomadic, armed horsewomen existed on the fringes of the ancient Greek world. Mayor is the first to examine the evidence systematically and in detail and she makes a concrete and persuasive case."--**William Hansen, author of *Classical Mythology: A Guide to the Mythical World of the Greeks and Romans***

"In this comprehensive account of the Amazons, Adrienne Mayor examines the subject in a way that no one else has done and presents overwhelming evidence that they were not entirely fictitious. Only Mayor has looked at the evidence from all the relevant fields to show how, together, they can solve what to each of them separately are complete mysteries. This will be the classic book on the subject for a very long time."--**Elizabeth Wayland Barber, author of *The Dancing Goddesses: Folklore, Archaeology, and the Origins of European Dance***

About the Author

Adrienne Mayor is a research scholar in classics and history of science at Stanford University, and the author of *The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithradates, Rome's Deadliest Enemy* (Princeton), which was a finalist for the National Book Award.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Connie King:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each book has different aim or even goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They may be reading whatever they have because their hobby is reading a book. Why not the person who don't like reading through a book? Sometime, man feel need book if they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will want this *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World*.

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This *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* book is just not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is information inside this guide incredible fresh, you will get data which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This specific *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* without we realize teach the one who studying it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient*

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