

AN AUTHOR-CENTERED APPROACH TO  
UNDERSTANDING AMAZONS IN THE  
ANCIENT WORLD

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of History of Indiana University

November 2007

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Modern classicists have examined the function of the Amazon legend in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds for over 150 years, using a variety of methods and theories to explain the popularity and meaning of the warrior women as evidence of matriarchal societies, cultural taboos, and social anxieties, often without historical context. My research deliberately uses a historical approach to test previous conclusions about the Amazons and reveals a dynamic Greek culture where individual authors constantly competed and contributed to the developing legend. I have applied a modified theory of narratology to four specific Greek authors: Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Plutarch. I explored each author's work on three levels: the story itself (the narrative), how each story fits within each author's similar work (the metanarrative), and how it differs from previous or contemporary variations (the cultural metanarrative). This revealed the dynamic nature of the legend as well as the creativity and motivation of each individual author. Although the Amazons themselves had a specific definition as a tribe of female warriors, different pairings of heroes with Amazons or discussions of imagined Amazon societies allowed ancient authors to use them in a variety of ways. Herodotus broke free from the traditional hero-kills-Amazon legend to address their political meaning. Diodorus returned to the heroic legend but utilized embellished stories to position specific heroes as greater than others. Strabo decried embellishments as evidence of poor scholarship and pointed out contradictions between the variations.

Plutarch used specific heroic legends as moral measurements of good leadership. The Amazon legends and these writers' treatment of them are a window upon a changing Greek culture.

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## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The original legends of the Amazons were about encounters between Amazons and Greek heroes, always conquests of one type or another, a battle with an individual woman warrior or the entire people, or perhaps a more personal kidnapping. The Greek hero, be he a demigod or an entire city of male citizens, is always victorious in these legends, as scholars have been correct to point out. But what begins quite simply as a victory develops and ends in unique ways depending on the ancient author, the personality of the hero, or the political needs of the culture that created and used the legend. As this study will show, such a trajectory characterizes the Amazons throughout Greek literature. In particular, four ancient authors whose surviving works speak of the Amazons the most — Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Plutarch — demonstrate the complex uses to which the stories of the Amazons and their heroic foes could be put.

In order to understand how these four authors use the Amazons, we need to first understand the original Amazon legends so we may see how the authors expand upon them. The original heroic legends primarily involved four Greek heroes who reportedly have encounters with Amazons: Bellerophon, Achilles, Heracles, and Theseus. Athens, too, takes on a very heroic role, connected to yet distinct from the Theseus legends. Achilles faces an Amazon opponent during the Trojan War and is victorious. Heracles succeeds in fetching the belt or girdle from

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of the introduction are revisions of an earlier published work: TammyJo Eckhart, "A General Introduction to Amazon Mythology in the Greco-Roman World," *Aeon: A Journal of Myth and Science* IV.2 (1995): 74-79.

The Anglicized form of the Greek names are used throughout this study for the sake of consistency, to make it easier to follow for those not familiar with Greek, and to eliminate any confusion that might arise from variations found in the ancient authors.

the Amazon queen. Bellerophon faces the arrows of an entire Amazon army, but returns in one piece. Theseus steals an Amazon bride for himself. Athens defends itself against an Amazon invasion.

The legends of each hero's Amazon conquest spread throughout the Greek world, though their importance and popularity differed with each author and across the seven centuries this study will investigate. While Heracles's and Theseus's exploits were told far and wide, Achilles is tied to the Trojan War, and Bellerophon quickly disappears from both written and visual sources; Athenian legends rise and fall with the power of the city itself. On the other hand, all five heroic entities have certain elements in common, other than the Amazons. All have origin tales connected to deities where at least one parent qualifies as a god or goddess. All of them face periods of hardship, be it war, personal challenges or the whims of an authority figure. Of course, these common elements are true of most Greek heroes, and indeed of many heroes in legends around the world. But only Greek heroes face the Amazons.

We would be incorrect if we believed that ancient authors and artists always incorporated these heroic tales when describing Amazons, or that they never introduced variations in detail when they did make use of the heroic legends. Our four authors make use of the Amazons in different ways that reflect the overall tone and purpose of their writing. For Herodotus they demonstrate political possibilities, while Diodorus uses them in the original way to promote heroes, but with much added detail. In Plutarch the Amazons are a means by which to discuss the qualities of a good leader, while Strabo uses them to point out the inadequacies of other writers. Before we can narrow our focus to these four authors' use of the Amazons, though, we must briefly discuss the state of the evidence, what types of stories the



Amazons are generally part of, contemporary interpretations of the Amazons, and the theory and method that has driven this investigation.

## Visual Evidence and the Original Legend

Some of our earliest and most numerous accounts of myths and legends take the form of visual representations. This is certainly true of Amazons.<sup>2</sup> The main problem with identifying any visual image is the fact that most of them do not have titles informing us as to the artist's intentions. Thus we must often compare nearby images, look for traits common through time, rely on ancient identifications in such sources as Pausanias, or turn to the written legends for information. Many theories recognize that the material image must correspond to some degree with oral and written accounts, or the audience would not understand what is happening.<sup>3</sup>

Opposed to this textually dependent approach, Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has proposed looking at vase painting as a narrative corpus in its own right, separate from the written evidence.<sup>4</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood and Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell agree that we should not interpret the visual using the written unless that text appears on the visual image itself, because the image will most likely be a frozen

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<sup>2</sup> The most thorough collection of Amazons in Greek Art is Dietrich von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). Even a half century later it is still the largest collection. It does not include Roman art, but in general, Roman images of Amazons appear to be copies of or at least heavily influenced by Greek images, except for Amazons used in the commercial promotion of gladiators. Summaries of what von Bothmer's compilation show are my own drawn from a study of the entire collection.

<sup>3</sup> Mark D. Stansbury-O'Donnell, Pictorial Narratives in Ancient Greek Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 16, 144, 62-65, 74-75, summarizes these earlier theories.

<sup>4</sup> Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Myths in Images: Theseus and Medea as a Case Study," Approaches to Greek Myth, ed. Lowell Edmunds (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 395-445, is one such example. Sourvinou-Inwood's method is not universally accepted, as demonstrated by other studies that still use written text to interpret the visual image, such as Melissa L. Upton, "The death of an Amazon in Greek art and literature," Honors, Wheaton College, 1999.

moment in time, focusing on one action or event, while the written text can and does go into much greater detail.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, material evidence is helpful in demonstrating how old the stories are, and that these stories do change over time just as the written narratives do, indicating that the variations we find in our four authors might partly reflect general changes in the Greek view of Amazons.<sup>6</sup> Before the Classical period, material evidence is our main source of information about Amazons, whom the surviving literature of the period does mention, but only briefly,<sup>7</sup> suggesting that the audience could fill in the gaps from their own knowledge of the story. In the images, Amazons have four stable characteristics that define them as Amazons: they are women, they are warriors, they are part of a group, and they are barbarians. These same traits will remain constant in our four authors as well, but first we must briefly demonstrate these distinctive qualities in the material evidence to lay the general foundation for Amazon legends before Herodotus.

The earliest images of Amazons, from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century, show them in heroic combat against Achilles<sup>8</sup> and Heracles.<sup>9</sup> We identify the male heroes'

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<sup>5</sup> Stansbury-O'Donnell, Pictorial Narratives in Ancient Greek Art 162-65, 74-75, 99.

<sup>6</sup> This study will use von Bothmer's summary of the scholarship behind the visual evidence unless his work has been superseded by later scholarship. For the earliest visual records, however, little has changed. I am neither an art historian nor an archeologist; I cannot claim expertise beyond critical appraisal of the images and detailed understanding of the textual evidence.

<sup>7</sup> Homer *Iliad* 3.189, 6.186; Arctinus *Aethiopsis* ii reference in Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica, trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943) xxxi, 507-09 are the only pre-Classical literary references to Amazons.

<sup>8</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 2-3, I.2; Gudrun Ahlberg-Cornell, Myth and Eros in Early Greek Art: Representation and Interpretation (Jonseed: Paul Astroms forlag, 1992) Figure 103; Josine Blok, The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995) 2a, 2b.

<sup>9</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 1-4, I.1a, I.1b; Karl Schefold, Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966) plate 7b.

opponents as female by virtue of crudely inscribed breasts, a generally female form, and more feminine garments. More scrutiny reveals these female opponents to be Amazons, because they are usually part of a group of opponents, each of them holds weapons and is actively engaged in the combat scene, and they each wear non-Greek clothing or use non-Greek weapons. However, even in these earliest images, the costume and weapons of the Amazons are not identical to each other, suggesting that the local artists were drawing what they believed would represent the Amazons best or what local stories revealed about such matters.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 1 is a drawing of a leather shield strip from Argive in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>11</sup> The scenes are identifiable only in reference to the general theme, which appears to be famous battles of heroes. Under the sphinx at the top we see two warriors. The one on the left is more feminine-shaped and wears a longer garment, while the male appears to be only in helmet and upper armor. The two are fighting, the male figure clearly winning. Beneath this we see a male figure fighting a lion. This is most likely Heracles, since he killed the Nemean lion with his bare hands and his

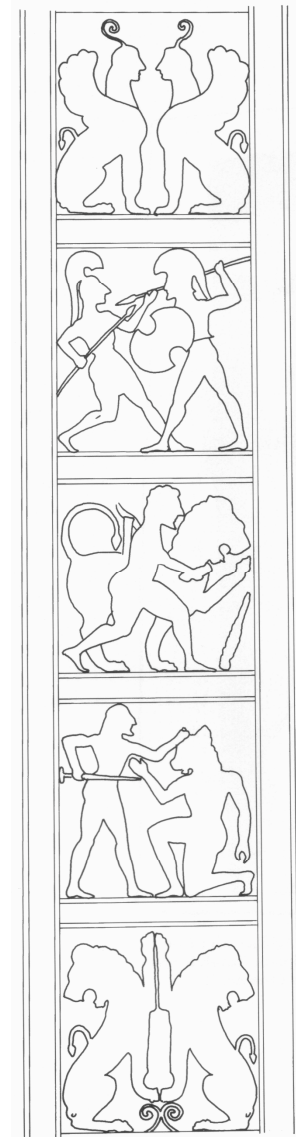


Figure 1

<sup>10</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 3-5.

<sup>11</sup> Blok, Early Amazons Figure 2a. Blok compares this with a similar shield strip (figure 2b in her book) from the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to demonstrate the similar stance and thus more firmly secure an identification. In 2b the female figure is identified as “πεν” perhaps referring to Penthesileia from the later written versions of the legend perhaps as early as Arctinus in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Von Bothmer identifies it as Olympia B 969 though he does not include a plate of it because of its poor quality.

main weapon was a club — both present in this representation. The fourth image down shows a figure killing some half-human creature, perhaps the Minotaur, which would indicate that the human figure is Theseus. Thus I find it probable that the second scene on this strip is indeed Achilles and Penthesileia, since he might easily be one of the most important Greek heroes, and she might easily be as much of a challenge as the lion and the Minotaur. The message of this shield strip may be simply that, like these great heroes defeated their opponents, so too may the bearer of this shield defeat his.

By the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Amazons become popular in Attic black figure painting. In addition to the female traits of the previous period, Amazons now often have lighter skin coloration to mark their gender. The principal legend here involves Heracles,<sup>12</sup> though images also show others fighting the Amazons.<sup>13</sup> Amazons appear as the sole human figure in some paintings.<sup>14</sup> The 69 vases from this quarter of the century are a testament not only to the legend's popularity, as von Bothmer states, but also to the changes that artists are introducing.<sup>15</sup> The clothing varies widely between painters and even within the same groupings. The weapons which the Amazons use also vary, though the spear and bow are becoming common. These images more sharply display the female form of the Amazons, clearly depicting both breasts and hips. With the exception of

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<sup>12</sup> von Bothmer, [Amazons in Greek Art](#) 6-10.

<sup>13</sup> von Bothmer, [Amazons in Greek Art](#) 10-11

<sup>14</sup> von Bothmer, [Amazons in Greek Art](#) 12.

<sup>15</sup> von Bothmer, [Amazons in Greek Art](#) 12-29.



Figure 2

the five vases showing single Amazons, most portray a group facing one or more heroes.

Figure 2<sup>16</sup> is a cleaned-up and laid-flat version of an image on an ovoid neck-amphora from Tarquinia by the Camtar Painter. It identifies Heracles and two of his allies by name as well as the Amazons<sup>17</sup>: Iphito, Heracles, Andromache, Telamon, and Lauke.<sup>18</sup> The three men are identified by their dark skin and facial hair, while the three women have light skin and no beards. Neither side has a uniform style of dress or weapons, though all seem armed with spears and swords. In the battle the men are winning a difficult victory over the women, though Iphito has her opponent

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<sup>16</sup> von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* plate II.1.

<sup>17</sup> Shown in multiple images before now this written legend first explicitly appears in Pindar, Fragment 172.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion on how often such use of inscriptions are at this period, see J. D. Beazley and H. G. Payne, "Attic Black-Figured Fragments from Naucratis," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 49.Part 2 (1929): 253-72, which specifically discusses this amphora.

on the ground.<sup>19</sup> Overall, this image typifies the major trends in vase painting showing Amazons during this period.

Within a generation afterward, the Amazons explode in popularity and in variation, with 200 images attested in von Bothmer.<sup>20</sup> While von Bothmer categorizes these images according to which heroes and cultural details appear, for our purposes it is most noteworthy that Amazons also appear without opposing heroes for the first time, suggesting that viewers are interested in them as a people, not merely as opponents. Again, the Amazons primarily appear in groups and their clothing and weapons all vary but are not Greek. The feature the Amazons seem to have in common in this period is their use of the horse, either as a mount or draft animal. The number of heroes facing the Amazons and the combinations of heroes change as well, also suggesting variations in legends throughout the regions where Attic black figure is being used, though Heracles remains the most frequently featured. Non-Attic black figure elsewhere demonstrates similar traits and variations.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I note that the victorious Amazon is partly turning dark-skinned, while her sisters-in-arms who are about to be captured or die are solidly light-skinned. This could signal masculinization, but on the other side of the same amphora is the Calydonian boar hunt, showing Atalanta as light-skinned, even though she draws first blood. The other identified Camtar Painter amazonomachies do not show this coloration change either. Without more evidence I find it difficult to ascribe a stable gender meaning to this piece.

<sup>20</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 30-110.

<sup>21</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 111-15.

For example, Figure 3<sup>22</sup> shows one side of Hamburg 1927.143(89), a neck-amphora attributed to the Diosphos Painter working in the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE; the inscriptions on this image have not yet been deciphered. Here the subject seems to simply be Amazons harnessing a chariot, and it takes the entire vase to



Figure 3

show. The Amazon who will drive the chariot wears a short chiton, while the ones harnessing and leading the horses wear long body suits with different patterns on them. Once again Amazons do not have a uniform costume or set of weapons, though their femaleness is shown by both their skin lightness, lack of facial hair, and the basic shape of their bodies. This image and others like it demonstrate the growing interest in Amazons outside of the heroic battles in which they originally figured.

Also at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Archaic Attic red figure painting begins to show more consistency in how the Amazons are dressed and a greater focus on their femaleness.<sup>23</sup> First, the Amazons wear necklaces and earrings. Jewelry does not appear on Amazons in earlier paintings, nor is it part of the sculptural tradition, which focuses on active combat scenes.<sup>24</sup> Second, these images do not ignore their militant quality but demonstrate it through more armor over or covering their clothing. The armor and clothing now increasingly has a Scythian or

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<sup>22</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 107-08, Plate LXIV.4b.

<sup>23</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 131-60.

<sup>24</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 116-23.



Figure 4

Thracian quality to it by the end of the Archaic period, with its height of popularity during the tyranny of Peisistratos (fl. c. 560-527 BCE), perhaps reflecting the increased contact between Athens and the East.<sup>25</sup> Interest in the Amazons as a (foreign) people instead of merely fodder for heroes was clearly growing, as is evidenced by the numbers of surviving vases depicting Amazons: 33 include heroes, usually Heracles, but 54 show only Amazons.

Figure 4<sup>26</sup> is another laid-flat and cleaned-up image, this time of a cup or *kantharos* in the late Archaic Attic red figure style, attributed to Douris<sup>27</sup> and dated between 490-480 BCE. Here Heracles fights alone against four opponents, but this does not represent a trend, merely one of the variations of his labor to get the belt of

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<sup>25</sup> H. A. Shapiro, "Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 24.2 (1983): 106-13.

<sup>26</sup> Attic red figure cup (*kantharos*) showing Heracles fighting the Amazons, 490 - 480 BC, painted by Douris. Identified as Mus. Royaux d' Art et d'Hist. A718 in the "Froma I. Zeitlin Image Catalog" at <http://www.princeton.edu/~fiz/images/imgcat.html#amazons>.

<sup>27</sup> This is a rather sober topic for Douris whose drinking cups often times have amusing images including drinking games, satyrs, and even drunken Heracles.



the Amazon queen. By this time, the skin color signifying gender or sex has all but disappeared, as evidenced here. The Amazons do not wear the same clothes, though the variation is minor, with all of them in identical helmets, armor on their skirts, and some type of armor on their upper bodies, though their breasts are also clearly signaled by outline. This more uniform Amazon, though, seems more a product of Douris's art than of a general trend in the art of the period, suggesting that both artist and buyer are influencing the images.

By the Classical period, Attic red figure vases showing Amazons primarily demonstrate the might of Athens over the warrior women, with 102 out of 194 showing either Theseus or Athens itself combating what are clearly female warriors, now with increasingly Persian styles of clothing and weapons.<sup>28</sup> There is little doubt and no disagreement among scholars today that in these cases the Amazon legend is being used as a parallel to the Persian wars and the growth of Athens. The Amazon legend was a strong enough part of Athenian identity by this time that it could appear with three other great mythological and legendary scenes on the Parthenon — the Gigantomachy, the Trojan War, and a Centauromachy — as well as on the shield of Athena inside the temple. Unlike their painted counterparts, however, the Amazons on the west metopes are not dressed as Persians, and their femaleness is more emphasized due to their lack of armor and the shortness of their chiton, as well as at least one bared breast.

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<sup>28</sup> von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* 161-92. Earlier images of the Theseus legend do exist that focus on his abduction of an Amazon bride (von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* 124-30) or with the Athenian king as part of the group aiding Heracles, but this represents a very small number compared to the Classical period.

Even though Athenian connections dominate the Amazon imagery of the Classical period, Amazons were shown in other ways now and then. Amazons oppose other heroes and appear alone or in groups going about their daily, though military-oriented, lives. In these instances the clothing and weapons vary greatly, suggesting that while the legends involving



*Figure 5*

Athens were collectively focused on a Persian interpretation, other legends maintained their cultural flexibility in the eyes of artist and buyer. In sculpture of the Classical period the Amazons seem to have the same cultural vagueness seen on the other metopes of the Parthenon — everyone on these metopes is draped and displayed without overt reference to any particular style of clothing or weapons. This generic style describes the Amazons of the Hephaisteion<sup>29</sup> and the Ephesian Amazon statues, which only survive in Roman copies.<sup>30</sup> Figure 5<sup>31</sup> exemplifies the scenes without Heracles that were most common by this time. This is the interior of a cup (Naples 2613) from the middle of the Classical period. Here again we find Amazons with no consistent uniform or armor. The left figure is wearing more Greek-like clothing and an Attic helmet, while the second figure is wearing more Eastern clothing. Pieces are missing, but this image is interesting simply because it

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<sup>29</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 208.

<sup>30</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art 216-23.

<sup>31</sup> von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art Plate LXXXV a.

does not seem to be telling a specific story. It simply shows Amazons as though they themselves have become worthy of interest in the eye of artist and buyer alike.

Later representations of Amazons reach to the borders of the Roman empire and encompass a greater range of media, including Etruscan tombs, Roman sarcophagi, and sculptures, both copies of classical work and newer Roman work. However, these images do not survive in anywhere near as great numbers as the Amazon images from the late Archaic and Classical periods. Meanwhile, the written accounts of Amazons dramatically increase, as do the lengths of the individual stories. Written sources therefore become the best means by which one can understand how the legends change and are used by Greek culture.

Throughout this material survey we have seen only two things change substantially with regard to the Amazons: their culture's attributes and their association with heroes. The artists, it seems, had to show the Amazons as a nation of barbarian warrior women, but they made various choices about clothing, their armor, their weapons, and their use of horses based on the local tastes and needs of buyers. Heracles is the most prominent hero vying with the Amazons until the Classical period, when he is surpassed by Theseus and Athens. Beginning in the mid-Archaic period, Amazons begin to appear without heroes to fight, suggesting that they were popular enough for there to be a market for images just displaying their lives. The fifth-century appropriation of the Amazon legend to suit contemporary Athenian opponents (the Persians) and needs (self-glorification) shows creative use of a by now well-established Greek cultural icon. Chapters two through five will uncover similar dynamism and flexibility in the use of the Amazons.

## The Meaning of the Amazon

Many modern scholars see Amazon society as the antithesis of Greek society. Some see these cultural legends as functional: they serve to strengthen patriarchy by showing the foolishness or weakness of other forms of society.<sup>32</sup> Often this patriarchal aid is extended beyond Greece and into later cultures' use of the Amazons.<sup>33</sup> A few others see the Amazons as not having a stable meaning but having a creative function, generally one which supports the hero's identity and value.<sup>34</sup> Modern writers have also "validated" their political and social agendas by finding meanings in Amazon legends that remarkably resemble the writer's own leanings, be they communist ideals or lesbian identities.<sup>35</sup> These hero-centered readings tend to use gender as a way to interpret the Amazons.

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<sup>32</sup> Wm. Blake Tyrrell, "A View of the Amazons," The Classical Bulletin 57.1 (1980): 1-5; Wm. Blake Tyrrell, "Amazon Customs and Athenian Patriarchy," Annali della scuola normale superiore di Pisa: Classe di lettere e filosofia (1982) 1213-37; Wm. Blake Tyrrell, Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), all claim that the Amazons' purpose is to show proper gender or sex relationships with males at the top of society. Clearly Tyrrell's work with Amazons focuses almost exclusively on questions of how the legends promote and help maintain patriarchy, especially in but not limited to that in Athens. Amazons are one of the examples of supporting the norm by showing the extreme in P. Walcot, "Greek Attitudes toward Women: The Mythological Evidence," Greece & Rome 31.1 (1984): 37-47. Roger Just, Women in Athenian Law and Life (New York: Routledge, 1989) 241-51, uses Tyrrell and Engles exclusively to argue that Amazons are one of the means by which Athenian women's lives are controlled and limited by making the female into this "savage" other. Andrew Stewart, "Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens," Poetics Today 16.4 (1995): 571-97, focuses on how Athens used the Amazon as a continuation of the Greek patriarchal agenda applied to a new Athenian imperialistic model. A few years later Ken Dowden, "The Amazons: Development and Functions," Rheinisches Museum für Philologie 140.2 (1997): 97-128, accepts the basic ideas behind the patriarchal-promotion function of the legends but applies myth-ritual theory to it.

<sup>33</sup> Helen Diner, Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminine History of Culture, trans. John Philip Lundin (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973); Evelyn Reed, Woman's Evolution: from matriarchal clan to patriarchal family (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975); Page duBois, Centaurs & Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Abby Wettan Kleinbaum, The War Against the Amazons (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Lorna Hardwick, "Ancient Amazons — Heroes, Outsiders or Women?" Greece & Rome 37 (1990): 16-17.

<sup>35</sup> J. J. Bachofen, Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Emanuel Kanter, The Amazons: A Marxian Study (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1926); William J. Fielding, Woman the Warrior: Amazons have had their Counterparts in Every Age (Girard: Haldeman-Julius Publications, 1928); Manfred Hammes, Die Amazonen: Vom Mutterrecht und der Erfindung des gebarenden Mannes (Hamburg: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981);

Since modern scholars have seen gender as meaningful to the Amazon legend, we might imagine that it was a fundamental topic for Greek authors, but in fact no surviving author directly compares a patriarchal Greek society with a matriarchal Amazon society. Lacking this direct comparison, perhaps Greek authors compared the societies indirectly. Because Amazon matriarchy differed so radically from the Greek patriarchal communities, it might be expected that most legends would focus on the differences between women and men as rulers, or on how a female-dominated society could even exist. However, ancient authors rarely ask those questions and instead ask the same questions about the Amazons that they ask about all barbarians: Where do they live? What are their social mores and norms? What are their religious practices? How do they treat each other? How do they treat strangers? In short, unlike what much previous scholarship suggests, the gender question was not nearly so intriguing to the Greeks as to moderns.

The general problem with most of these studies is not that they are incorrect but that they are either incomplete, choosing to focus only on specific passages; or that they are chronologically collapsed, using evidence from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE alongside examples from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE without context or acknowledgement that change has occurred, even though there are examples of variations within the texts cited. Writers and scholars who use a static notion of Greek culture to interpret the Amazon legends often ignore these changes within the narratives. Most sources have adopted this ahistorical approach, so that in almost any mythology or history

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Genevieve Pastre, Les Amazons: Du Mythe à l'Histoire (Paris: Editions Genevieve Pastre, 1996); Martha Mattson, Amazons: The Forgotten Tribe (San Diego: Amazon Press, 1997).

textbook, even studies on women in ancient Greece, the Amazon is generally shown as a unified legend with a definitive meaning.

A better approach was signaled over a decade ago by Lorna Hardwick, who pointed out that portraying the Amazon legend as static and monolithic was not factual.<sup>36</sup> While she herself could have carried out a chronological study of the legends to research her article,<sup>37</sup> she did not present and has not presented such a study. But Hardwick has influenced my own investigations into the legends, and this current project represents, among other things, a step toward building said chronological study.

This study will examine Amazon legends by author in chronological order and within their cultural context. This author-centered approach assumes that individual writers each treat the legend in unique ways, preserve their contemporary versions of the legend, or both. Examining the legends in this fashion requires studying the individual author, his place in the literature and society of his day, and how his work was similar to or different from that of others writing about the same topics. This study will use this author-centered approach in a way designed to note changes in the legends over time and explain these changes in terms of authorial purpose and cultural needs in hopes of clarifying the meaning of Amazons.

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<sup>36</sup> Hardwick, "Ancient Amazons."

<sup>37</sup> Hardwick, "Ancient Amazons": 23.

## The Approach: Theory and Method

Donald Lateiner in his study on Herodotus makes an important observation which reflects the underlying thesis of this current study.

Every historian, even the first, consciously and unconsciously shapes narrative and judgements so as to communicate a perception of his subject in a persuasive manner .... The historian has the power to distance himself or the reader, or both, from the events recorded, or to invite the audience to observe the researcher at work or to participate in the drama.<sup>38</sup>

This study looks at the Amazon legend, but within the confines of four authors, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo and Plutarch. While I will compare their work to previous and contemporary sources about the Amazons, the texts themselves reveal the perspective of the authors and the information which was familiar to them and which they felt was useful to include in their writing. Lateiner makes clear the various means by which we can determine such information:

On the one hand, the historian's powers of *apodexis* are limited by evidence and ignorance; on the other, sometimes he chooses not to record information, impelled by disinclination to report religious matters, by a judgment of historiographical insignificance or distaste for repetition, or by moral aversion to commemorating a wicked person. Explicit silence on the author's part helps to define what he considers necessary and proper to discuss.<sup>39</sup>

Though Lateiner means to apply this description to Herodotus only, in fact it well describes all four authors in this study and indeed could describe any author. Each of us cannot help being a product of our times, raised with a certain level of education and opportunity that may limit our understanding of the world around us and earlier periods. In the ancient world, where books were hand copied and travel

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<sup>38</sup> Donald Lateiner, The Historical Method of Herodotus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 18.

<sup>39</sup> Lateiner, The Historical Method of Herodotus 59.

was more difficult, we should not necessarily expect that any one author will be familiar with all of the information that has been created before him.

Emilio Gabba has also made a useful point relevant to this study. We in the modern world may often “exaggerate the cultural significance of ‘elevated’ history writing in antiquity,”<sup>40</sup> seeing it as an influence on culture rather than a product of it. It is more logical that what the author creates or includes in his work reflects his society and culture instead of being directly influenced by another’s work. In fact, it can be difficult in the ancient world to decipher the sources for an author’s work unless specific names are mentioned. What is available to someone may be a product of what their culture values, not simply what they themselves value. Those sources which agree with the general consensus may be more available, and those which contradict the standard beliefs are likely to be criticized or rarely available.

This study will examine Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Plutarch’s use of Amazons from three narratological<sup>41</sup> perspectives: narrative, metanarrative, and cultural metanarrative. Two of these perspectives were used by Rosaria Munson in her 2001 study *Telling Wonders: Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus*, where she applies the ideas of narrative and metanarrative to Herodotus’s work.<sup>42</sup> The methods of narratology can be applied to all literature

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<sup>40</sup> Emilio Gabba, “True History and False History in Classical Antiquity,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 71 (1981): 52.

<sup>41</sup> My understanding of narratological theory is drawn from the following sources. Gerald Prince, *Narratology: the Form and Function of Narrative* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1982); *Narratology: An Introduction*, eds. Susana Onega and José Angel García Landa (New York: Longman, 1996); Ansgar Nimming, “Narratology or Narratologies? Taking Stock of Recent Developments, Critiques, and Modest Proposals for Future Usages of the Term,” *What is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, eds. Tom Kindt and Hans-Harold Müller (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 239-75; Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Rosaria Vignolo Munson, *Telling Wonders: Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001) 17-18.



(and culture)<sup>43</sup> and fit well with the idea that the historian's work,<sup>44</sup> too, is a reflection of ability and interest, as well as limitations of available evidence and skill. Since narratology is a complex theory with a unique terminology and I wish to make this study as accessible as possible, I will borrow Munson's two theoretical terms "narrative" and "metanarrative"<sup>45</sup> as applied to Herodotus and extend them to the other three writers.

The narrative theory states that a story or a section of a text can stand on its own as a self-contained unit of information that the author wishes to convey or which the audience interprets. This approach may seem very simple and limited, but it can be difficult to free a passage from those around it as well as from social expectation. As previously mentioned, modern scholars generally see Amazons as a reflection of women's position in Greek society or an embodiment of the non-Greek, regardless of what any particular legend says about women or barbarians, because they consider all of the stories at once. Using narrative theory helps us to see the value of the Amazons on a case-by-case basis.

However, this does not free the individual story from the stories or information around it, because naturally an audience would have had the earlier

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<sup>43</sup> Prince, Narratology: the Form and Function of Narrative 1; Bal, Narratology 220-24, for a general discussion of the use of narratology. For specific applications of the theories of narratology to classical studies or ancient history see: Katherine Clarke, Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 22-39; Averil Cameron, History as Text: the writing of ancient history (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 1-10; Simon Hornblower, "Narratology and Narrative Techniques in Thucydides," Greek Historiography, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 131-66.

<sup>44</sup> In fact, with so many disciplines using narratological theory now, there has been an effort to distinguish between the fields by giving them their own unique names. For history this has been called "historiographic narrative theory" (Nimring, "Narratology or Narratologies? Taking Stock of Recent Developments, Critiques, and Modest Proposals for Future Usages of the Term" 259-62).

<sup>45</sup> Munson, Telling Wonders 17-18.

material to draw upon. Likewise the audience would have had some general understanding of the characters and actions, depending on the commonness of them. In the case of the Amazons this would be the knowledge that these are women warriors who have fought heroes. One must, then, take the reader's knowledge and expectations into account even when looking at the narrative level. This is metanarrative.

The metanarrative theory places the individual story into the greater context of the work in which it appears. For modern writing it is often assumed that any work has overarching themes or is designed to prove a hypothesis. Other scholarship on the four ancient authors I will consider will show that each one does indeed have a unified purpose or design. In the conclusion I will show how the various Amazon stories fit back into the piece as a whole, giving the Amazons a metanarrative meaning.

This study will extend Munson's approach to the general cultural narrative about Amazons.<sup>46</sup> Common passing references to Amazons in literature and the number of visual representations suggest that Amazons are not unique inventions of individual authors but a symbol or a character which is used time and time again. When the narrative itself is compared to the metanarrative of each author, it shows us one level of how the women warriors might be understood. But the audience also had the culture to draw from as it read, and therefore a better understanding of what the Amazon means must be taken in comparison to what came before and

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<sup>46</sup> Munson, *Telling Wonders*; John Marincola, "Greek Historians: Herodotus," *Greece & Rome* 31 (2001): 39-40, also mentions narratology as a good theory to apply to Herodotus because of his unique insertion of himself into the text. However, I think we can assume authorial choices throughout the ancient authors we are examining.

what was available to the reader and the author both. The Amazon, then, moves beyond the hero's opponent to an indicator of individual creativity and cultural change.

Even though the levels on which this study will examine these four authors' Amazon stories are based on narratology, I will not use narratology's rather structuralist approach, which assumes that aspects of the individual story work to maintain itself without much of an examination of what the story means in relationship to other parts of the writing it is in. Thus, narratology would ask questions about every part of the Amazon story including setting and plot to determine how these individual parts create the legend itself. However, strict narratology would not consider how the individual story then supports the system of legends in Greek literature with regard to specific author or cultural context. The focus is on the structure of the story, not on the meaning of the story or the use of a particular character within a greater work or within a culture. Useful in its immediate application, narratology gives us little help in understanding Greek culture and those that create or use it.

Likewise, I am not using a close reading of the text, one part of a theory called "New Criticism," which seems to be the beginning procedure in most classical studies. The theory assumes that the text itself is a part of a long tradition, which I would agree with, but also that each text can stand on its own with individual word choice demonstrating the author's meaning and purpose, which I think is a huge assumption, especially when individual words are taken out of their immediate context. Close reading involves examining a document word by word and finding each word's multiple uses in various texts throughout the ancient world or in similar texts. This procedure has its place, but that place is not in a study that wants

to examine how the Amazon legend is changing. The close-reading method often draws on comparisons outside of the specific period in which the piece studied was created using later meanings of a word or phrase to understand the current meaning. A key point of this study is to show how the legends change, so I will limit myself to comparison with sources prior to and contemporary with the text's creation.<sup>47</sup>

Two further problems arise with using too close a reading of the stories told about the Amazons: audience use and author choice. In the first case we must assume that the intended audience of each story would closely read each word of the text instead of understanding the story as a narrative or part of a metanarrative. There are examples of later generations in antiquity using close reading and interpreting text as New Criticism does, but these are later readers, not contemporary, and therefore not the best reflection of what the work shows us about Amazon legends' development through the centuries.

In the second case we must assume that the author of each text very carefully selected each word. Evidence is lacking for this assumption, and in fact, as an author myself, I can say that sometimes I do very carefully select a word, but most of the time I choose words with connotations and definitions that my audience will, I hope, simply understand and accept. Evidence is lacking that each author was this careful in his word selection, and in the texts I am examining there is no apparent

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<sup>47</sup> The immediate question is determining the time of creation. For these questions I am relying on specialized investigations into the life of the author and their work, because these studies and the arguments they generate have, in the case of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Plutarch, resulted in well accepted chronologies.

evidence for such care, though there are clear indications that authors wrote or summarized others for a variety of reasons.

Using the modified narratological theory and author-centered approach stated above will reveal several interesting facts about the Amazon legend. First, each author must use the Amazon as an Amazon, a female warrior from a barbarian people. No deviation is allowed from this basic definition, though the author may speculate upon other members of Amazon society. Second, the heroes originally associated with Amazons are never completely out of the author's mind. Even if an author does not recount a particular heroic legend, he may reference it in an abbreviated way by naming a well-known hero, event or location. Third, because of their complex definition, authors use Amazons to make political statements, teach moral lessons, promote individuals or communities, and as a test of other authors' skills and trustworthiness. To attempt to find one singular meaning for the Amazon is to ignore the creativity of the ancient Greeks who created and used her.

#### A Note on the Basic Terminology: "Legend"

Whenever a scholar studies the past, she classifies and categorizes it according to the terms and theories of her field of study so that her colleagues and students will understand her. Specialized terminology, peer-reviewed publications, and theoretical schools of thought give the appearance of scientific objectivity to the study of the past. So, too, do these lend authority and expertise to the study of culture, folklore and literature. To some extent, of course, this objectivity is a façade, a fiction created to enable communication and persuasion, a framework that each generation of scholars constantly redefines, defends, and challenges. However, when over a century of scholarship exists about a subject such as Amazons, any

communication of findings or even investigation of the topic must take into account these previous classifications, definitions, and usage. Here we must address the very use of the term “legend” for such stories.

What is a myth? What is a legend? What is a folktale? Scholars have used each of these terms when discussing Amazon stories. Yet these types of story are merely three among a wide variety of genres that survive from the ancient world. Each scholar uses each term in a particular way, even though she may not clearly and explicitly define it. Attempts to create a definitive terminology always find critics and change with each new generation of scholars.<sup>48</sup> In order to be heard, one must either choose an existing set of assumptions and terms or create a new set. Creation of new terminology is beyond the scope of this study, leaving us with a choice among three widely used terms.

The most concise discussion of these three terms may be found in William Bascom’s “The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narrative.”<sup>49</sup> Bascom’s use of the terms is very clear and well illustrated, with charts focusing on issues related to the culture that created and used the narrative in question. This fits well with one of my own goals of determining how Greek narratives involving Amazons changed throughout their history — in other words, how they evolved.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> The best discussion of this phenomenon may be Bruce Lincoln, Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). The best introductory discussion of the variety of folktale types in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds is William F. Hansen, “Folklore,” Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome, ed. Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger, vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> William Bascom, “The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives,” Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 5-29.

<sup>50</sup> I first encountered the idea that myths, legends, and folktales could and did evolve in Theodor H. Gaster, “Myth and Story,” Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 110-36. While Gaster himself uses a myth-ritual approach, this idea that all narratives change reflects my own observations well.

For Bascom, anyone attempting to describe a narrative<sup>51</sup> must address six questions before selecting a term for it: whether its creator culture believes it to be true; whether it begins with a standard opening formula; at what occasions or under what circumstances its culture recounts it; when it is said to have occurred; whether its culture considers it sacred or secular; and whether its main characters are human, as opposed to gods, animals, fantastic creatures, etc. The resulting terms do not attempt to eliminate native descriptions but instead try to provide analytical categories that scholars can use as they share and challenge findings and interpretations.<sup>52</sup> The questions focus on the creator culture and not the modern reader's interpretation of the narrative. For Bascom a legend is believed to be fact, has no standard opening and can be told at any time, has a specific if vague setting in the recent past, may be sacred or secular, and has human main characters.<sup>53</sup>

Bascom's term "legend" fits most neatly with Greek accounts of Amazons and a historian's attempt to understand the Amazons within Greek culture. First, there are no conventional openings or beginning stanzas in surviving narratives that focus on Amazons. There is no firm evidence that the Amazon stories form part of any ritual or that their use was proper only on certain occasions or at particular times of day. Rarely do the gods play a direct role in Amazon tales, though heroes are quite common and may be semi-divine. Greek authors usually portray Amazons as part of the near past, a society that their ancestors had to defend against

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<sup>51</sup> In this section I am using Bascom's term "narrative" and not the narrative as one of the perspectives this study examines. These perspectives are explained below.

<sup>52</sup> Bascom, "Forms of Folklore" 10.

<sup>53</sup> Bascom, "Forms of Folklore" 11. As Bascom makes clear in the following pages of this same article (12-14), the classification of a story may change depending on the culture one is looking at. For us today the Amazon is no longer a legend but a folktale, a story that most of us do not believe refers to actual past events.

or that heroes encountered. Finally, most accounts relay the narrative about Amazons as though it were part of history; a mere handful of authors question the existence of such women unless their story is part of an undeniable historical topic, such as the life of Alexander the Great. Therefore, given how well the Amazon stories fit into Bascom's definition, I have chosen to call them legends.

Beyond the terms of folktale or legend, there are smaller units in folklore theory that I want to quickly dismiss as appropriate for Amazons. Josine Blok calls the Amazons a "motif,"<sup>54</sup> but a motif is merely one small unit of a folktale that remains almost unchangingly intact regardless of the greater story in which it is placed.<sup>55</sup> In fact the Amazons have no matching motif or tale type, a larger unit in folklore, in the two most important resources available to folklorists and mythologists today.<sup>56</sup> This lack of inclusion may reflect the uniqueness of the Amazon as a cultural icon, one that is developed by Greeks and used almost exclusively by Greeks or Hellenized non-Greeks.<sup>57</sup> Amazons are not readily transferable from one culture to another, then, but are very Greek in their origin and their use.

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<sup>54</sup> Blok, Early Amazons ix-x, 349-430, has a detailed discussion of how what she identifies as the Amazon motif developed and changed in the archaic period.

<sup>55</sup> Definitions of motif and tale type are vague at best and routinely debated within folkloric and mythology circles. A good summary of these debates may be found in Alan Dundes, "The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique," Journal of Folklore Research 34.3 (1997): 195-202.

<sup>56</sup> Stith Thompson, Motif-index of folk-literature; a classification of narrative elements in folktales, ballads, myths, fables, mediaeval romances, exempla, fabliaux, jest-books, and local legends 6 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-1958); Antti Aarne, The types of the folktale: a classification and bibliography: Antti Aarne's Verzeichnis der Märchentypen (FF communications no. 3) translated and enl. by Stith Thompson, FF communications; no. 184, 2nd ed. (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961).

<sup>57</sup> The first solid argument I found that Amazons are uniquely Greek and that use of Amazons is a result of Hellenization is Carlos Alonso del Real, Realidad y leyenda de las amazonas (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S. A., 1967). A more recent discussion of this basic idea though applied specifically to German scholarship is Klaus Rainer Röhl, Aufstand der Amazonen: Geschichte einer Legende (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1982).



My reservations about using the term “legend” are twofold. The first problem involves the beliefs of those who told, listened to, and viewed the narratives. Belief that the narrative is true by both narrator and audience is one of the criteria in Bascom’s definition.<sup>58</sup> When we look at the narratives we see different versions of which hero or heroes destroyed the Amazon nation, as did the ancient scholars. Their opinions about Amazons, therefore, are often attempts to understand how Heracles could destroy the Amazons, how the Amazons could then have a war with Athens centuries later that led to their downfall, and yet how they could still be around by the time of Alexander’s empire. However, with the exception of Diodorus Siculus<sup>59</sup> and Strabo,<sup>60</sup> I have not read a statement by any ancient writer claiming that this odd nation of women had never existed. Instead the ancients appear eager to explain the differences while maintaining the legend’s believability. But one cannot jump to the conclusion that, just because a tale is told in a believable way, the narrator and audience absolutely consider it to be true. A good storyteller must make his narrative believable in order to engage the emotions of the audience; it has nothing to do with truth or reality.

Another difficulty with applying the folkloric term “legend” to the Amazons is the fact that narratives involving them fall into two distinct categories: 1) those involving the heroes and heroic city-states, and 2) those depicting the Amazon

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<sup>58</sup> Bascom, “Forms of Folklore” 9.

<sup>59</sup> Diodorus Siculus, “Library of History,” trans. C. H. Oldfather, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), vol. I, 2.46.6. After Diodorus first discusses Amazons, he says that in his day “men considered the ancient stories about the Amazons to be fictitious tales.”

<sup>60</sup> Strabo, “Geography,” trans. Horace Leonard Jones, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), vol. V, 11.5.3, finds it highly doubtful that a nation organized by women could have flourished, let alone survived; however, that a group of people called Amazons existed is consistent with Homer, so therefore Strabo agrees they did exist, just not as reported.

culture itself. The first set clearly fits into the Bascomian definition, but the second set does not, since the narrator need not mention a hero in order to comment on Amazon customs. In fact, this second group of stories does not fit into any previously-defined category of folklore. However, since it is highly likely that the reader of these tales about Amazon culture would know the heroic legends, I believe it is reasonable to consider the cultural component as an extension of the basic tales, perhaps even answering questions that the audience had about these strange people. It seems to me, therefore, that I must establish new terms to deal with these different categories. At this point I would like to identify these as “heroic legends,” legends where Greek heroes were the primary actors, and “cultural legends,” which examined Amazon society independent of heroes.

With these stipulations, I will stick to the term “legend” as I discuss the ancient narratives, popular usage, and previous scholarship. Choosing the term “legend” also suggests that the tales are fluid and reflective of cultural changes, whereas, drawing on Bascom again, a “myth,” being sacred, is static and formal. Stories about Amazons do not rigidly describe them and never have, except in the basic sense of being a particular group of female warriors living beyond the civilized and patriarchal world.

## II. Herodotus: Amazons as a Cultural Explanation and Justification

Even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Herodotus, the “Father of History,”<sup>61</sup> is the subject of numerous studies and a lively debate.<sup>62</sup> Some scholars focus on discovering the man behind the literature, though this approach is primarily out of fashion in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Others continue to test the accuracy of his stories, finding solid historical or ethnographic truths,<sup>63</sup> outright fabrications,<sup>64</sup> or evidence of memory biases and confusion over sources.<sup>65</sup> A few scholars point out the problems inherent in most investigations of “the truth” and urge their colleagues to move on to more fruitful grounds.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, most scholars now look at

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<sup>61</sup> Cicero, *de Legibus* 1.1.5.

<sup>62</sup> Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola, “A Selective Introduction to Herodotean Studies,” *Arethusa* 20.1, 2 (1987): 9-40; Marincola, “Greek Historians: Herodotus”: 19-60. Both are excellent summaries of the past and current state of scholarship concerning Herodotus.

<sup>63</sup> Vivienne Grey, “Short Stories in Herodotus’ Histories,” *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 316-17, calls the digressions, the target of most claims of unreliability in Herodotus, “traditional truths” and says they should be considered separately from historical vignettes. Both Hans van Wees, “Herodotus and the Past,” *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 321-49, and Paul Cartledge and Emily Greenwood, “Herodotus as a Critic: Truth, Fiction, Polarity,” *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 351-71, make similar arguments that Herodotus’s goal was never “historical truth” as we view it today and thus should not be judged by such standards.

<sup>64</sup> Detlev Fehling, *Herodotus and His ‘Sources’: Citation, Invention and Narrative Art*, trans. J. G. Howie, ARCA: Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, ed. Seager Cairns, and Williams (New York: Francis Cairns (Publications) Ltd, 1989) is the most current proponent of the fabrication theory. While his conclusions that Herodotus purposely lies is extreme, his work is an excellent example of *Quellenforschung*, or source-hunting, which was popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and which fuels much modern and non-scholarly work on Amazons and matriarchy even today.

<sup>65</sup> Nino Luraghi, “Local Knowledge in Herodotus’ Histories,” *The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus*, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 138-60, sees the remnants of local traditions in Herodotus but argues these are not the same as author fabrications, a direct comment on Fehling’s work. Rejecting all of these attempts is Hans-Joachim Gehrke, “Myth, History, and Collective Identity: Uses of the Past in Ancient Greece and Beyond,” *The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus*, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 286-313, which argues that all ancient and modern writing creates new legends and myths, thus challenging the very idea of using any secondary source as evidence of historical events.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Hornblower, “Herodotus and His Sources of Information,” *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 373-86.

Herodotus as an example of changes in literature in the fifth century BCE,<sup>67</sup> either as a unique writer<sup>68</sup> or as a reflection of the storytelling<sup>69</sup> and investigative expectations of his day.<sup>70</sup> It would be easy to devote oneself to Herodotean studies and never have the time to focus on anything else, since we logically expect the “Father of History” to provide us with both factual information and new information about a wide variety of subjects, including Amazons.

Among the many studies on Herodotus, the works of Munson and Lateiner stand out as foundations upon which to build this and the three other author-

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<sup>67</sup> A. W. Gomme, The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954); Marincola, “Greek Historians: Herodotus”: 24; and Deborah Boedeker, “Epic Heritage and Mythical Patterns in Herodotus,” Brill’s Companion to Herodotus, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 97-116, say that Herodotus demonstrates a permeable boundary between myth and history in ancient Greek literature.

<sup>68</sup> Henry R. Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus, Philological Monographs, ed. Walton Morris (Cleveland: The American Philological Association, 1966), argues that Herodotus discovered a new type of literature as he attempted to understand the world, a way which was unique from poetry and philosophy. Lateiner, The Historical Method of Herodotus 3, 9, 19, 41, 277, calls Herodotus an innovator in prose writing, the first “historiographer” of all time. Stewart Flory, The Archaic Smile of Herodotus (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987) 157, sees Herodotus as the creator of a new genre, one focused on using either fact or fiction to tell the greater truths about the human world and its complexities. Robert L. Fowler, “Early Histories and Literacy,” The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 115, calls Herodotus’s work a “radical step” in organization, which distinguishes it from the poetic works before it. Egbert J. Bakker, “The Making of History: Herodotus’ *histories apodexis*,” Brill’s Companion to Herodotus, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 3-32, calls Herodotus revolutionary and an attempt to make a science of storytelling.

<sup>69</sup> Philip A. Stadter, “Herodotus and the North Carolina Oral Narrative Tradition,” Histos (1997), vol. 1; Oswyn Murray, “Herodotus and Oral History,” The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 16-44; Oswyn Murray, “Herodotus and Oral History Reconsidered,” The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 314-25; and Rosalind Thomas, “Herodotus’ Histories and the Floating Gap,” The Historian’s Craft in the Age of Herodotus, ed. Nino Luraghi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 198-210, take a textual approach to prove the same opinion that oral tradition played a large role in Herodotus’s sources. None of these claims would surprise Josine Blok, whose study of the earliest Amazons (Early Amazons) argued that it was all initially based on oral traditions created by Greeks, though she did not close the door completely on possible Greek misinterpretations of other peoples and customs.

<sup>70</sup> Marincola, “Greek Historians: Herodotus”: 19-20; W. Kendrick Pritchett, The Liar School of Herodotus (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1993), is one of the most spirited defenders of Herodotus as a product of his time. Wolfgang Rösler, “The Histories and Writing,” Brill’s Companion to Herodotus, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 79-94, argues that Herodotus is merely continuing the goal of preserving his own knowledge and stories for future generations. Furthermore, Kurt A. Raaflaub, “Philosophy, Science, Politics: Herodotus and the Intellectual Trends of His Times,” Brill’s Companion to Herodotus, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 149-86, sees Herodotus as continuing the written traditions of Ionia since the sixth century BCE.

specific chapters.<sup>71</sup> I will look at the narrative, the metanarrative, and the cultural narrative of Amazons in Herodotus's work, which is commonly referred to as the *Histories*.<sup>72</sup> All three of these narrative considerations demonstrate a unique and positive use of the Amazons in his work that builds upon existing heroic treatments of the warrior women.

Herodotus is often cited as a valuable source for the Amazon legends or matriarchies.<sup>73</sup> Yet when we look at how Herodotus uses Amazons and the amount of time he spends on them, we discover that he preserves very little in terms of heroic or cultural legends; they are merely starting points for his cultural and political discussion. Although Herodotus mentions the Amazons, he is primarily interested in linking them to existing peoples, the Sauromatae and the Scythians,<sup>74</sup> and to the existing military conflict between the Greeks and Persians. In Herodotus Amazons serve primarily to demonstrate both alternatives to military conflict and the justifiability of war when diplomatic means are rejected.

### The Amazon Legend in the *Histories*

According to Herodotus, the Amazons are the foremothers of the Sauromatae, and the Scythians call this foreign people "Oiorpata," which he then

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<sup>71</sup> Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus*; Munson, *Telling Wonders*.

<sup>72</sup> As is common for ancient literature, works are known by later references or the beginning of the text, since titles are a later development. I will refer interchangeably between "the *Histories*" and "Herodotus," since this is his only surviving work.

<sup>73</sup> Fielding, *Woman the Warrior*; Diner, *Mothers and Amazons*; duBois, *Centaurs & Amazons*; and Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons*, are just four such general books on Amazons that use Herodotus as a foundational piece for their discussions of Amazons in general.

<sup>74</sup> While I may disagree with his underlying theory, mythoritual seeing myths as references to rituals, I do agree with Dowden's basic statement that Herodotus is not really writing about Amazons so much as he is about the Sauromatae. Dowden, "Amazons": 108.

claims means “killers of men.” This might signal that he will tell the story from the Scythian point of view, yet he seems to narrate more as an omniscient third person, with details about events and insights into the thoughts of both Amazons and Scythians. After a battle in the Amazon homeland that Herodotus does not describe, the Amazons overcome their Greek captors, but, unfamiliar with sailing or the seas, they are unable to navigate their three ships back to their home, landing instead at the home of the “free Scythians.” The Amazons take horses, then start raiding the country.<sup>75</sup>

The Scythians wonder why these newcomers are raiding but cannot talk to them, because their languages are too different. Therefore the groups meet in battle. Herodotus implies that there is only one battle, and after this the Scythians note that their dead enemies are not men but women. The women apparently impress the Scythians, because the latter send their younger warriors to camp near the Amazons, but not to fight them. The number of young men equal the number of warrior women, suggesting careful planning by the Scythians as to their approach, as well as the assumption that the invaders will desire monogamous pair-bonding.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Herodotus 4.110: Σαυροματέων δὲ περὶ ᾧδε λέγεται. ὅτε Ἕλληνας Ἀμαζόσι ἐμαχέσαντο (τὰς δὲ Ἀμαζόνας καλέουσι Σκύθαι Οἰόρπατα, δύναται δὲ τὸ οὖνομα τοῦτο κατὰ Ἑλλάδα γλώσσαν ἀνδροκτόνοι· οἶδρ γὰρ καλέουσι ἄνδρα, τὸ δὲ πατὰ κτείνειν), τότε λόγος τοὺς Ἕλληνας νικήσαντας τῇ ἐπὶ Θερμῶδοντι μάχῃ ἀποπλέειν ἄγοντας τρισὶ πλοίοισι τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ὅσας ἐδυνάετο ζωγρῆσαι, τὰς δὲ ἐν τῷ πελάγει ἐπιθεμένας ἐκκόψαι τοὺς ἄνδρας. πλοῖα δὲ οὐ γινώσκειν αὐτὰς οὐδὲ πηδαλίοισι χρᾶσθαι οὐδὲ ἰστίοισι οὐδὲ εἰρεσίῃ· ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ ἐξέκοψαν τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐφέροντο κατὰ κύμα καὶ ἄνεμον, καὶ ἀπικνέονται τῆς λίμνης τῆς Μαιήτιδος ἐπὶ Κρημνοῦς· οἱ δὲ Κρημνοὶ εἰσὶ γῆς τῆς Σκυθέων τῶν ἐλευθέρων. ἐνθαῦτα ἀποβάσαι ἀπὸ τῶν πλοίων αἱ Ἀμαζόνες ὁδοιπόρουσιν ἐς τὴν οἰκομένην. ἐντυχοῦσαι δὲ πρώτῳ ἵπποφορβίῳ τοῦτο διήρπασαν, καὶ ἐπὶ τούτων ἵπαζόμεναι ἐληίζοντο τὰ τῶν Σκυθέων.

<sup>76</sup> Herodotus 4.111: Οἱ δὲ Σκύθαι οὐκ εἶχον συμβαλέσθαι τὸ πρῆγμα· οὔτε γὰρ φωνὴν οὔτε ἔσθητα οὔτε τὸ ἔθνος ἐγίνωσκον, ἀλλ’ ἐν θώματι ἦσαν ὀκόθεν ἔλθοιεν, ἐδόκεον δ’ αὐτὰς εἶναι ἄνδρας τὴν αὐτὴν ἡλικίαν ἔχοντας, μάχῃ τε δὴ πρὸς αὐτὰς ἐποιεῦντο. ἐκ δὲ τῆς μάχης τῶν νεκρῶν ἐκράτησαν οἱ Σκύθαι, καὶ οὕτω ἔγνωσαν εἶσας γυναῖκας. βουλευόμενοι ὧν αὐτοῖσι ἔδοξε κτείνειν μὲν οὐδενὶ τρῶπι ἔτι αὐτάς, ἐωυτῶν δὲ τοὺς νεωτάτους ἀποπέμψαι ἐς αὐτάς, πλήθος εἰκάσαντας ὅσαι περ ἐκεῖναι ἦσαν, τούτους δὲ στρατοπεδεύεσθαι πλησίον ἐκεινῶν καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ περ ἂν καὶ ἐκεῖναι ποιέωσι· ἦν δὲ αὐτοῦς διώκωσι, μάχεσθαι μὲν μὴ, ὑποφεύγειν δὲ· ἐπεὰν δὲ παύσωνται, ἐλθόντας αὐτῆς πλησίον στρατοπεδεύεσθαι. ταῦτα ἐβουλεύσαντο οἱ Σκύθαι βουλόμενοι ἐξ αὐτέων παῖδας ἐκγενήσεσθαι. ἀποπεμφθέντες δὲ οἱ νεινίσκοι ἐποιεῦν τὰ ἐντεταλμένα.

Both Amazons and Scythian youths then play an interesting game. The camps move closer together and live via hunting and raiding. Herodotus does not describe the Amazons' reasons, but they do not attack the men<sup>77</sup> and seem to separate into pairs or go alone, which makes it easier for the men to approach them. We know from the story thus far that the Amazons are quite capable of surviving and taking care of themselves, so when one youth approaches one woman, she and he get together — a few lines later this is clarified to mean that they have mated or have had sexual intercourse.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, this Amazon then signals that he should bring a friend and return. Within two days each of the young Scythian warriors is mated with an Amazon.<sup>79</sup>

The two camps become one, and the couples live as if they were married. There are internal contradictions in this part of the story, because the focus is on the men having a wife, but theirs is not a traditional Scythian marriage. First, there is a language barrier, and, interestingly, the Amazons are the ones capable of learning

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<sup>77</sup> Herodotus 4.112: Ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔμαθον αὐτοὺς αἱ Ἀμαζόνες ἐπ' οὐδεμῆι δηλήσι ἀπιγμένους, ἔων χαίρειν προσεχώρεον δὲ πλησιατέρω τὸ στρατόπεδον τῷ στρατοπέδῳ ἐπ' ἡμέρη ἑκάστη. εἶχον δὲ οὐδὲν οὐδ' οἱ νεινίσκοι, ὥσπερ αἱ Ἀμαζόνες, εἰ μὴ τὰ ὄπλα καὶ τοὺς ἵππους, ἀλλὰ ζόην ἕζων τὴν αὐτὴν ἐκείνησι, θηρεύοντές τε καὶ ληιζόμενοι.

<sup>78</sup> The term here, ἐκτιλώσαντο, can be translated in a variety of ways. Here, Godley has translated the activity as straightforward sexual encounters between men and women, or intercourse. However, in Frieda S. Brown and Wm. Blake Tyrrell, "Ἐκτιλώσαντο: A Reading of Herodotus' Amazons," *The Classical Journal* 80.4 (1985): 297-302, the authors argue that the term can be interpreted as having cultural connotations of controlling women and thus reflecting Herodotus's discomfort at the idea of Amazons as equals. They contend that Herodotus uses ἐκτιλώσαντο as a way to show male conquest over females via sexual intercourse but do not account for the fact that the Amazons strip the Scythian men of most their power, making most of the decisions about their mating and their formation of a new people. Likewise, Brown and Tyrrell ignore a long tradition in love poetry and magical ritual where the object of desire is referred to in animal terms and the lover's goal is to tame them. Yes, girls were referred to in similar terms, but so were boys. This argument, however, goes beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>79</sup> Herodotus 4.113: Ἐποίησαν δὲ αἱ Ἀμαζόνες ἐς τὴν μεσαμβρίην τοιόνδε: ἐγένοντο σποράδες κατὰ μίαν τε καὶ δύο, πρόσω δὲ ἀπ' ἀλληλέων ἐς εὐμαρείην ἀποσκιδνάμεναι. μαθόντες δὲ καὶ οἱ Σκύθαι ἐποίησαν τὴν αὐτὴν. καὶ τις μουνωθεισῶν τινὶ αὐτέων ἐνεχρίμπετο, καὶ ἡ Ἀμαζὼν οὐκ ἀπωθέετο ἀλλὰ περιεῖδε χρήσασθαι. καὶ φωνῆσαι μὲν οὐκ εἶχε, οὐ γὰρ συνίεσαν ἀλλήλων, τῇ δὲ χειρὶ ἔφραζε ἐς τὴν ὑστεραίην ἐλθεῖν ἐς τὸ χωρίον καὶ ἕτερον ἄγειν, σημαίνουσα δύο γενέσθαι, καὶ αὐτὴ ἑτέριον ἄξειν. ὁ δὲ νεινίσκος, ἐπεὶ ἀπήλθε, ἔλεξε ταῦτα πρὸς τοὺς λοιπούς τῇ δὲ δευτεραίῃ ἦλθε ἐς τὸ χωρίον αὐτός τε οὗτος καὶ ἕτερον ἦγε, καὶ τὴν Ἀμαζόνα εὖρε δευτέριον αὐτὴν ὑπομένουσαν. οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ νεινίσκοι ὡς ἐπύθοντο ταῦτα, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐκτιλώσαντο τὰς λοιπὰς τῶν Ἀμαζόνων.

the men's language. Second, when the men raise the idea of moving back to their homes, the Amazons say no and explain that they cannot live as Scythian women. The fear is not of Scythian men, however, but of animosity that might arise between women. The men agree.<sup>80</sup>

When the men return to the Amazons with their worldly but movable inheritance, the Amazons exercise control over the relationships. The Amazons fear living in this new land because they have pulled apart families and have been raiding the land. The Amazons suggest that they all move to a new land, beyond the river Tanais, where the reader probably assumes there are no free Scythians who would be offended by them.<sup>81</sup>

The Scythian youths again bend to the desires of the Amazons, and they all move three days east and then three days north. This is the land of the Sauromatae, and now Herodotus tells us a bit about Sauromatae customs. The women fight and hunt, with men or without them, and they wear the same clothes as the men.<sup>82</sup> The Sauromatae language is Scythian, but impure, Herodotus says, because the

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<sup>80</sup> Herodotus 4.114: Μετὰ δὲ συμμίξαντες τὰ στρατόπεδα οἴκεον ὁμοῦ, γυναῖκα ἔχων ἕκαστος ταύτην τῇ τὸ πρῶτον συνειμίχθη. τὴν δὲ φωνὴν τὴν μὲν τῶν γυναικῶν οἱ ἄνδρες οὐκ ἐδυνάετο μαθεῖν, τὴν δὲ τῶν ἀνδρῶν αἱ γυναῖκες συνέλαβον. ἐπεὶ δὲ συνῆκαν ἀλλήλων, ἔλεξαν πρὸς τὰς Ἀμαζόνας τάδε οἱ ἄνδρες. “Ἡμῖν εἰσὶ μὲν τοκέες, εἰσὶ δὲ κτήσιες νῦν ὧν μηκέτι πλεῦνα χρόνον ζῶν τοιῖνδε ἔχωμεν, ἀλλ’ ἀπελθόντες ἐς τὸ πλῆθος διαιωθήμεθα. γυναῖκας δὲ ἔξομεν ὑμέας καὶ οὐδαμὰς ἄλλας.” αἶ δὲ πρὸς ταῦτα ἔλεξαν τάδε. “Ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἂν δυναίμεθα οἰκέειν μετὰ τῶν ὑμετερέων γυναικῶν· οὐ γὰρ τὰ αὐτὰ νόμοια ἡμῖν τε κάκεινῃσι ἐστί. ἡμεῖς μὲν τοξεύομεν τε καὶ ἀκοντίζομεν καὶ ἵππαζόμεθα, ἔργα δὲ γυναικίᾳ οὐκ ἐμάθομεν· αἱ δὲ ὑμέτεροι γυναῖκες τούτων μὲν οὐδὲν τῶν ἡμεῖς κατελέξαμεν ποιήσει, ἔργα δὲ γυναικίᾳ ἐργάζονται μένουσαι ἐν τῇσι ἀμάξῃσι, οὐτ’ ἐπὶ θήρην ἰοῦσαι οὔτε ἄλλη οὐδαμῆ. οὐκ ἂν ὧν δυναίμεθα ἐκείνῃσι συμφέρεσθαι. ἀλλ’ εἰ βούλεσθε γυναῖκας ἔχειν ἡμέας καὶ δοκέειν εἶναι δίκαιοι, ἐλθόντες παρὰ τοὺς τοκέας ἀπολάχετε τῶν κτημάτων τὸ μέρος, καὶ ἔπειτα ἐλθόντες οἰκώμεν ἐπὶ ἡμέων αὐτῶν.” ἐπέθοντο καὶ ἐποίησαν ταῦτα οἱ νεινίσκοι.

<sup>81</sup> Herodotus 4.115: Ἐπεῖτε δὲ ἀπολαχόντες τῶν κτημάτων τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἦλθον ὀπίσω παρὰ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας, ἔλεξαν αἱ γυναῖκες πρὸς αὐτοὺς τάδε. “Ἡμέας ἔχει φόβος τε καὶ δέος ὅπως χρή οἰκέειν ἐν τῷδε τῷ χώρῳ, τοῦτο μὲν ὑμέας ἀποστερησάσας πατέρων, τοῦτο δὲ γῆν τὴν ὑμετέρην δηλησαμένας πολλά. ἀλλ’ ἐπεῖτε ἀξιοῦτε ἡμέας γυναῖκας ἔχειν, τάδε ποιέετε ἅμα ἡμῖν· φέρετε ἐξαναστέωμεν ἐκ τῆς γῆς τῆσδε καὶ περήσαντες Τανάιν ποταμὸν οἰκώμεν.”

<sup>82</sup> Herodotus 4.116: Ἐπίθοντο καὶ ταῦτα οἱ νεινίσκοι, διαβάντες δὲ τὸν Τανάιν ὀδοιπόρου πρὸς ἦλον ἀνίσχοντα τριῶν μὲν ἡμερέων ἀπὸ τοῦ Τανάιδος ὁδόν, τριῶν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς λίμνης τῆς Μαιήτιδος πρὸς βορέην ἄνεμον. ἀπικόμενοι δὲ ἐς τοῦτον τὸν χώρον ἐν τῷ νῦν κατοικῆνται, οἴκησαν τοῦτον. καὶ διαίτη ἀπὸ τούτου χρέωνται τῇ παλαιῇ τῶν Σαυροματέων αἱ γυναῖκες, καὶ ἐπὶ θήρην ἐπ’ ἵππων ἐκφοιτῶσαι ἅμα τοῖσι ἀνδράσι καὶ χωρὶς τῶν ἀνδρῶν, καὶ ἐς πόλεμον φοιτῶσαι καὶ στολὴν τὴν αὐτὴν τοῖσι ἀνδράσι φορέουσαι.



Amazons did not learn it perfectly.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, before marriage a virgin woman must kill an enemy, or else remain unmarried her entire life. As far as Herodotus tells us, there is no such rite for men among the Sauromatae.<sup>84</sup>

## The Amazons' Place in Herodotus

In order to assess the value and purpose of Amazons in the *Histories* we must summarize what exactly the purpose of Herodotus's work is in general. Scholars try to find a thesis statement, a hypothesis or theory, or a description of the author's methods when they determine the purpose of any piece of writing. Many have analyzed Herodotus's introductory statements over and over to determine what he is saying that the *Histories* will cover and why he composed or compiled it. Overall, Herodotus seems focused on preserving certain human achievements that he considers worthy, so they are not forgotten. These achievements are customs, religious rites, buildings, and political and military actions, and Herodotus considers them whether the people in question are Greeks or barbarians, and whether they are men or women.

The *Histories* is not a straightforward recounting of events, though; in general the focus is on the rise of Persia and its conflict with the Greeks. Numerous digressions, of which the Sauromatae origin tale is one, occur throughout Herodotus. The most common digressions relate to the differences between the various parties to conflicts. Many scholars now believe that these digressions are

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<sup>83</sup> This seems to be a contradiction with Herodotus 4.114, where the women learn, and indeed master, the men's language.

<sup>84</sup> Herodotus 4.117: Φωνή δὲ οἱ Σαυρομάται νομίζουσι Σκυθικῆ, σολοικίζοντες αὐτῆ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀρχαίου, ἐπεὶ οὐ χρηστῶς ἐξέμαθον αὐτὴν αἱ Ἀμαζόνες. τὰ περὶ γάμων δὲ ᾧδὲ σφι διακέεται· οὐ γαμέεται παρθένος οὐδεμία πρὶν ἂν τῶν πολεμίων ἄνδρα ἀποκτείνῃ· αἱ δὲ τινὲς αὐτέων καὶ τελευτῶσι γηραιαὶ πρὶν γήμασθαι, οὐ δυνάμεναι τὸν νόμον ἐκπλήσαι.

really part of the patterns and themes common to the entire *Histories*,<sup>85</sup> as a way to explain barbarians to his Greek audience,<sup>86</sup> or as a way to show the dangers of continued Athenian political and military growth.<sup>87</sup>

Women show up as actors in the *Histories* in a variety of capacities.<sup>88</sup> While they can be victims, they are often active agents pursuing personal, social and political agendas, with the most active women being non-Greek. Women in Herodotus most commonly help to establish harmony or to defend the values of their society.<sup>89</sup> At first it might seem as if Amazon and Sauromatae women fit into this trend perfectly by defending their way of life. To do so they must turn their new husbands away from their own traditions, thus appearing both defensive and aggressive at the same time. To Herodotus's reader this could feel threatening, since it seems to be an inversion of the *oikos* and therefore all of Greek society.<sup>90</sup> Initially the Amazons seem to have more personal power and are able to get material goods from the Scythians: their sons, their inheritances, and their own land. However,

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<sup>85</sup> Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus*; Flory, *Archaic Smile*; Marincola, "Greek Historians: Herodotus": 28-30; Grey, "Short Stories in Herodotus' Histories."

<sup>86</sup> Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* 88.

<sup>87</sup> Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* 110, sees this as the purpose of Herodotus's entire work but specifically sees the Scythian campaigns as parallel to the Ionian ones, which draw Athens into the Persian war. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* 36, gives it a more generic yet dark twist by saying the *Histories* are a condemnation of "one-man, totalitarian governments." Munson, *Telling Wonders* 107, 23, 26, sees the comparison between Scythians and Athenians in fighting off the invading Persians as one of the many examples in Herodotus of comparisons between Greeks and barbarians.

<sup>88</sup> Marincola, "Greek Historians: Herodotus": 53-54; Carolyn Dewald, "Women and Culture in Herodotus' Histories," *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Helene P. Foley (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1982).

<sup>89</sup> Nick Fisher, "Popular Morality in Herodotus," *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 207-08; Josine Blok, "Women in Herodotus' Histories," *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 225, 27-28.

<sup>90</sup> Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Mythology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 17-19; Sue Blundell, *Women in Classical Athens* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998) 62; Blok, "Women in Herodotus' Histories" 242.

there are limits to Sauromatae women's power, because only they are said to require proof of being worthy for marriage, and nowhere does Herodotus say that Sauromatae men take on a domestic role. Therefore it is not simply an inversion of the *oikos* but the creation of a new people with a synthesis of both Amazon and Scythian traditions.<sup>91</sup>

This Herodotean passage is the earliest surviving textual focus on Amazons as a people, as opposed to actors in the heroic legends. Yet Herodotus explains their culture only indirectly and in comparison to what Scythian women's lives are like, because the point of the story is not the uniqueness of the Amazons but the uniqueness of the Sauromatae. The Sauromatae, in turn, only appear in the *Histories* because they are allied with the Scythians in their resistance against Persian expansion.<sup>92</sup>

The Sauromatae are one of eight neighboring peoples whom the Scythians approach for allies against Darius's forces.<sup>93</sup> Herodotus focuses on what makes each group unique, whether it is their customs or some strange event which has recently occurred in their lives. Only the Sauromatae, though, have a history worth laying out at length.<sup>94</sup> I can think of four reasons for this focus on Sauromatae origins. First, Herodotus has a fondness for origin stories. Within the greater Scythian narrative of which this Amazon episode is a part, four different versions of Scythian

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<sup>91</sup>Herodotus 4.110-17. Elaine Fantham, Helene Peet Foley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy and H.A. Shapiro, "Excursus Amazons: Women in Control," Women in the Classical World: Image and Text (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 133.

<sup>92</sup>Herodotus 4.19.

<sup>93</sup>Herodotus 4.102.

<sup>94</sup>Indeed, the number of lines devoted to the origins of the Sauromatae is greater than the number of lines examining the uniqueness of the other seven Scythian allies.

origins<sup>95</sup> are reported, though Herodotus is inclined toward one over the others.<sup>96</sup> Herodotus often, but not always, includes multiple variations of legends relating to both origins and religious practices. Since there is only one version of the Sauromatae origin, though, there must be another factor at work.

The second explanation for the Sauromatae story may be related to their unique customs of women fighting and hunting both alongside men and in sex-segregated groups, dressing as men, and requiring that each woman be a successful warrior before she can wed.<sup>97</sup> While it has become common in modern scholarship to see this uniqueness as a commentary on Greek society,<sup>98</sup> this section's immediate narrative context makes it clear that Herodotus is simply comparing the Sauromatae to the Scythians and their other seven potential allies. Not only does Herodotus tell us in this section that Scythian women do not fight or hunt, he obliquely references it earlier in the Scythian chapter.<sup>99</sup> In Herodotus, as well as many ancient writers, there is a strong belief that customs, rites, and traditions are one of the most stable facets of a society.<sup>100</sup> In order to explain why Sauromatae women behave so differently from Scythian women, there must be a reason dating back to the origins

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<sup>95</sup>Herodotus 1.5-6, 8-13. These four origins are a Scythian demigod forefather, a Greek demigod forefather (Heracles), and two nomadic tribes fleeing from a stronger force, one purely political in nature and one, told by Aristeas, involving divine possession.

<sup>96</sup> Herodotus is inclined toward the political nomadic explanation of where the Scythians come from because of surviving tribes which correspond to the story and their continuing economic and military relationships. Herodotus 4.11-12.

<sup>97</sup>Herodotus 4.16-17.

<sup>98</sup> Brown and Tyrrell, "ἐκτιλώσαντο: A Reading of Herodotus' Amazons".

<sup>99</sup> Herodotus 4.1. Indeed, gender roles for Scythians are only demonstrated directly via this origin story for the Sauromatae, while the earlier mention is that the men went to war leaving the women behind.

<sup>100</sup> Klaus Karttunen, "The Ethnography of the Fringes," *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 459.

of their culture. Amazons would be familiar enough to the audience and to Herodotus and provide a good explanation for the differences in gender roles.

This leads directly to the third reason that he may include this story at some length. The story of Sauromatae origins is full of details that make it seem very plausible. The two main actors in the story, the Amazons and the Scythians, each have strong connotations as examples of “the Other” for the Greek audience,<sup>101</sup> which would be interested in the story for this reason. As will be discussed in the cultural narrative analysis, the reader and Herodotus would both have a basic understanding of who the Amazons were and what they were known for, so he need not describe them at length. This common knowledge, though, is an excellent way to explain the Sauromatae customs by relating them to something easily recognizable. Herodotus is not interested in merely including stories that are popular; otherwise, the Amazons would surely have had their own chapter. But because there were yet no legends regarding any connection between the Persians and the Amazons, one place these warrior women might have made good sense was as an origin of particular gender roles.

All three of these possibilities are merely that; none can be proven, because Herodotus himself is silent on why he chooses to include various stories. However, because he commonly gives variations, we might assume that this means either that there was only one story Herodotus knew about the Sauromatae’s origins or that he

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<sup>101</sup> Karttunen, “The Ethnography of the Fringes” 472, points out how well the Amazons fit into the general investigation of “otherness” in Herodotus; Hardwick, “Ancient Amazons”: 17-20, cautions us against reading Amazons as a standard symbol for the Greeks while Stewart, “Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens,” basically revisits much of what Hardwick discussed but draws only generic and negative impressions about Amazons. While the list of modern scholarship on the concept of “Otherness” in Greek culture is extensive, I have merely included those articles that most directly affected my thoughts on Herodotus’s demonstration of this concept and its application to the Amazons in particular.

created this origin tale himself.<sup>102</sup> That warrior women might intermingle with Scythians and create a new people where women practice some of the same skills as men must have seemed plausible to Herodotus or to any others who told the tale. Those reading the *Histories* would, by the time they reached the book on the Scythians, be familiar with peoples whose women had personal military or political power, e.g. Zaukes women.<sup>103</sup> Likewise it is not unusual for women to work to preserve their society's cultures, e.g. the Carian captives.<sup>104</sup> Also, individual women such as Tomyris, Artemisia, and Candules's wife are famous for their actions. The Amazons, then, regardless of any other cultural connotations, would not be unbelievable or unique within the overall text of Herodotus's writing.<sup>105</sup>

The fourth reason for the inclusion of the Sauromatae origin story is that it fits neatly into the pattern of conflict and resolution that permeates the *Histories*.<sup>106</sup> Throughout Herodotus peoples compete for land and political or personal power. Reasons for conflicts range from personal honor to defense to desires to extend political power. There are a variety of ways conflicts can be resolved, but in Herodotus the most common one is conquest, one people defending against another or taking power for themselves, as is the case initially with the Scythians and Amazons. The two groups interact violently, but the violence is not unnecessary.

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<sup>102</sup> I actually think Fehling's idea of creativity is indeed possible, since without evidence we are hard pressed to prove influence beyond the author's mind. However, such creativity may not be of a sinister nature but merely an attempt to find some plausible explanation for oddities.

<sup>103</sup> Herodotus 4.193.

<sup>104</sup> Herodotus 1.146.

<sup>105</sup> A solid survey of the roles of women with Herodotus may be found in Dewald, "Women and Culture in Herodotus' Histories."

<sup>106</sup> Grey, "Short Stories in Herodotus' Histories" 299, 303.

The Amazons are stranded in a new area where they are both ignorant and unknown; they raid to survive. The Scythians react as anyone invaded might. Unless the legend was well known, Herodotus's audience might have expected that, as "Others" or barbarians, these two groups would fight and destroy one another, but they do not. Instead they find a mutually satisfying compromise and create a new tribe with unique customs.

Regardless of what they may have expected before reading the *Histories*, the fact that the Scythians should turn to nonviolent means of dealing with the invasion would make sense to Herodotus's readers simply from following his description of them thus far. He shows Scythians to be politically savvy and forward-thinking when the Persians plan to invade. They weigh the odds and decide they need help in resisting this much larger force, so they seek out allies. Herodotus describes several potential allies that the Scythians approach, and after they forge some alliances, the Scythians use a strategy of constantly chipping away at the invaders and keeping themselves at a safe distance so they can survive. Just as the Greek *poleis* had to devise new strategies and work together to fight the Persians, so to must the Scythians and Amazons adapt in order to survive.

These four reasons for the Sauromatae story and the inclusion of the Amazons in them reveal Herodotus's new approach to the Amazons as a people and not merely a heroic prop. Herodotus did not allow himself to be confined to only the existing legends about the Amazons, but, as this study will examine next, Herodotus respected those existing ideas, a large number of which had developed by his lifetime.

## Herodotus's Amazons in Fifth Century BCE Greece

Are the *Histories* a new genre of writing? This has been a question of some debate, but in general scholars today feel that Herodotus is really following in the footsteps of earlier Greek writers, philosophers and storytellers, moving from poetry to prose, focusing on historical events in preference to mythological ones.<sup>107</sup>

Immerwahr argues well that any historian will be part of his own generation's discussion of the events that preceded it and which occur around it.<sup>108</sup> If

Immerwahr is correct, then the Amazons in Herodotus should reflect other fifth-century portrayals or demonstrate continuity with earlier Greek descriptions of the warrior women. If Herodotus is developing a new genre of writing, perhaps his Amazons will be new as well. As this study has shown, Herodotus offers a unique perspective on Amazons as both positive social commentary and continued propaganda for *poleis*, especially Athens. However, as we will now show, the Herodotean Amazons are built on earlier and contemporary works, drawing upon tradition but focusing on different issues.

Before Herodotus the Amazons were primarily actors in heroic legends; the worthy opponents or allies depended on the legend and the variation. Visual images, as discussed in chapter 1, provide the largest collection of references to Amazons for the Archaic period, but there are some written accounts as well which Herodotus may have been aware of and influenced by. Homer only mentions the Amazons in passing as a nation whom the Trojans defeat then befriend, and as their

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<sup>107</sup> Marincola, "Greek Historians: Herodotus": 31-39.

<sup>108</sup> Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus 4.



ally in the war against the Greeks.<sup>109</sup> Herodotus is not concerned with the Trojan War, so there is no need for him to draw directly from Homer, nor is there much for him to draw from, since the Homeric Amazon is vaguely and briefly described.

Other epic poems existed in Archaic Greece which may have told the Amazon legends; however, none of these survive beyond summaries or random quotations. The surviving summary from Proclus's *Chrestomathia* credits the earliest of these epics to Arctinus of Miletus, who flourished around the first Olympiad in 776 BCE. Entitled *Aethiopsis*, it concerned the Trojan War after the period described by Homer.<sup>110</sup> In this summary, the Amazons are represented by one woman, Penthesileia, called the daughter of Ares and the Thracian race, giving her both a traditional heroic parentage by a god and also an ethnic identity. Proclus's summary says that she displayed great prowess in battle but died by the hand of Achilles. Another Greek, Thersites, a rather annoying character who develops over the centuries, accuses Achilles of loving the deceased enemy, resulting in murder, Achaean discord, and ritual purification. Nowhere in the summary are there details about armor or motivation beyond the unsurprising temper of Achilles. The sexual gibe from Thersites may first appear in Arctinus's *Aethiopsis*, but by the fifth century CE the Neo-Platonist Proclus would have multiple variations of the Achilles and Penthesileia legend to draw from. Because he chose only to credit Arctinus's *Aethiopsis*, it seems possible that Proclus believed the sexual component of the legend to be Archaic, even though it is not universal in the Achilles legend. Just as with

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<sup>109</sup>Homer, *Iliad* 3.189-90.

<sup>110</sup> Found in Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* xxxi, 507-09.

Homer, though, Arctinus's Amazons are connected to a war that does not concern Herodotus.

Visual representations of Amazons remained steady over the next several centuries, but by the fifth century BCE, Herodotus's century, these material sources explode in number, and surviving written accounts increase. This is not to suggest that other written or oral legends were not being told; as we shall see, new subjects and details suggest that the Amazon legend remained popular, but that we have only limited extant texts to draw directly upon.

The Theseus legend was so well known that Aeschylus could reference the Hill of Ares as the site of Amazon encampments in his *Eumenides*.<sup>111</sup> Here the Amazons are an example of how the male is superior to the female, the male Athenian army defending their city against the invading female force. But Athens's defeat of the Amazons was not the only well known legend during the fifth century BCE. Pindar's odes mention several heroic encounters with the Amazons, including those of Bellerophon, Heracles, Telamon, Iolaos, and Theseus.<sup>112</sup> In order to honor the athletes, Pindar must have believed that they, their families, and their cities would be familiar with the legends he was casually mentioning.

Additionally, modern scholarship and books on the Amazons often cite Hellanicus as providing a great deal of detail about the Amazon legend; however, he only survives in various later texts, and moreover, when Amazons are the subject, these texts only comment on his work in conjunction with that of others,

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<sup>111</sup> Aeschylus "The Eumenides" 685-90.

<sup>112</sup> Pindar "Olympian Odes" 8.46-48, 13.87-90; Pindar "Nemean Odes" 3.34-39, Fragment #172.

leaving it ambiguous which author made each statement.<sup>113</sup> Strabo in the first century CE, for example, refers to Hellanicus twice when he discusses Amazons, first alongside Ctesias<sup>114</sup> and Herodotus, whom Strabo denigrates for their believability,<sup>115</sup> and again with Herodotus and Eudoxus as fabricators of various names that have simply held sway in usage without evidence.<sup>116</sup> Since Hellanicus is earlier than Herodotus, we might assume that these details — for example, the metals from which Amazon weapons and armor are made — first occur in Hellanicus, but this is uncertain. Herodotus does not seem particularly interested in the Amazons' weapons, except that they might indeed be struggling just to survive after a great war, a story which could just as easily be credited to any of the earlier sources mentioned above.

Perhaps contemporary with Herodotus are two passages from the Hippocratic Corpus that relate directly either to the Amazons or to the Sauromatae. The first, from "Airs, Waters, Places,"<sup>117</sup> discusses the customs of the Sauromatae as Herodotus does, but instead of one enemy, the Corpus says the women must kill three before they may marry and lose their virginity. This text also says that mothers remove the right breast from the infant girls so that they can use their

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<sup>113</sup> Hellanicus Lesbius is not listed neatly in Jacoby but has numerous fragments, several of which do indeed mention Amazons (*FGkHist* 4.106, 4.107, 4.167c, 323a.16b, 323a.17c are fragments primarily from Tzetzes while one 4.186 is from Strabo and four fragments 4.166, 4.167a, 323a.16a and 323a.17a come from Plutarch's "Theseus"; this study will examine both Strabo and Plutarch in later chapters).

<sup>114</sup> One surviving fragment of Ctesias mentions Amazons (Jacoby *FGkHist* 688.8a).

<sup>115</sup> Strabo 11.6.2-3 does not specifically mention the Amazons though it does list the Sauromatae as examples of unbelievable stories. Robert L. Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography I: Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) *Fragmenta* 185, 223-24; Jacoby *FGkHist* 4.186 is a fragment of Hellanicus in Strabo 13.3.21.

<sup>116</sup> Strabo 12.3.21; Fowler, *Early Greek Mythography I: Texts* *Fragmenta* 186, 224.

<sup>117</sup> Hippocrates *Airs, Waters, Places* 17.1-18.

weapons better. The second mention of Amazons is found in “On Joints,”<sup>118</sup> where Amazons are said by some to dislocate the joints (hips and knees) of male infants so that men cannot rebel against the women’s rule. If this is contemporary with Herodotus, it is one of the first times that anything specific about Amazons’ customs survives in written sources, although visual evidence provides examples of weapons, horses, armor and even some military organization in the minds of the artists.

Why, then, do the Hippocratic texts differ so much in terms of detail from the Herodotean account? One answer may be that the authors of each text are relying on different sources.<sup>119</sup> Another may be that they are creating new information to titillate their audience. Still another may be that the Hippocratic pieces are later than Herodotus and demonstrate what this study will show, that there is a steady increase in the variations of the Amazons legends where new details are added over time.<sup>120</sup>

Given the cultural background of Amazon legends and brief mentions, it is not surprising that Herodotus references one of these heroic legends in the second line of his Amazon section. Who are these Greeks who warred against the Amazons at the Thermodon River? One possibility is that this is a reference to the Heracles labor to retrieve the Amazon girdle, a legend told in both visual and written media

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<sup>118</sup> Hippocratic Corpus On Joints 53.1-10.

<sup>119</sup> I disagree with Hornblower, “Herodotus and His Sources of Information” 386, that Herodotus’s source is some “Hippocratic filter” because the differences and tone seem quite significant. The Hippocratic account describes mutilation, Herodotus does not. The horrific idea of this practice will be exploited by later authors, such as Diodorus, but it is not used by Herodotus. Since Herodotus did not shy away from detailing odd customs, it seems more likely that either he did not believe that Amazons broke bones and burned breast tissue or he felt it was irrelevant to this passage, which really is about the Sauromatae.

<sup>120</sup> Munson, Telling Wonders 87, suggests the Hippocratic texts are an attempt to show barbarians as abnormal and pathological, thus giving a justification for their inferiority compared to Greeks.

throughout Greece. By the middle to late fifth century BCE, especially in Athens, there was a spin-off legend concerning Theseus and Athens fighting off an Amazon invasion that was promoted by public funds as well as generally popular in terms of the number of surviving vase images. It is important to consider which legend Herodotus is referencing here.

If this is the Heracles labor, then this is a Greek war, or a war based on circumstances beyond even the demigod's control. In this case it might be argued that the surviving Amazons are victims of the natural flows of history or the whims of Hera in her assault on her husband's bastard son. If, however, the legend is the Athenian victory over the Amazons, then this might lend weight to arguments that Herodotus is making a commentary on the growing might of Athens throughout the *Histories*. If Herodotus's work is a unified approach to discussing the history of events leading up to the Persian war, then his later explicit reference to the Amazons again might shed light on which legend his audience was supposed to understand in book 4.

During a dispute over the right to hold the second wing of the army facing the Persians,<sup>121</sup> the Tegeans and Athenians bring up their past military deeds as a way of claiming victory. Of the five victories the Athenians cite, the fourth is their defense against the Amazon invaders.<sup>122</sup> This is a brief passage, only two lines, suggesting that Herodotus and his audience would be very familiar with the legend. I think, though, to understand this one of five victories as the one that makes the rest of the Greek alliance side with Athens is to read too much into the passage. If we

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<sup>121</sup> Herodotus 9.26.

<sup>122</sup> Herodotus 9.27.

examine the past deeds of the Tegeans we find that they are really discussing one event, the defense of the Peloponnese against the Heraclidae, not the several different events the Athenians cite. Yes, the legend of the Amazons and Athens is important to Athenian claims, but it lies alongside other “historic” military victories.

Instead of demonstrating one legend’s pull over the other, this later reference indicates that the Athenians have merged the Heracles/Theseus/Athens legends into one.<sup>123</sup> This merging and the new focus on the power of the *polis* to defend itself may function to promote Athenian power. It is unsurprising that Herodotus and his readers or audience would see the Amazons as their foes, because this is the same century when massive quantities of vases survive with the warrior women prominently displayed, and when the remodeling of the Acropolis and other public buildings highlight the battle between Athens and Amazons throughout the Athenian world.<sup>124</sup> The reader of Herodotus’s account of the Sauromatae as descendents of the Amazons, then, may be surprised, because up until his account no other legend mentions any Amazons surviving; instead, every account we are aware of today shows their ongoing destruction by a rather steady stream of major and minor heroes.

The relationship between Amazons and other barbarian peoples precedes Herodotus’s account. Some scholars argue that Amazons were really

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<sup>123</sup> Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 5-19; Tyrrell, *Amazons* 1-22.

<sup>124</sup> Hardwick, “Ancient Amazons”: 30-33, discusses the purpose and scope of these representations. A very different interpretation of the meaning of this increase in visual representations of Amazons in Athens may be found in Stewart, “Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens”: 580-90.

misinterpretations of other barbarian peoples ranging from the Cimmerians<sup>125</sup> to the Hittites<sup>126</sup> to unnamed mongoloids.<sup>127</sup> The “misinterpretation” argument relates to material finds of the historic people or to interpretations of fragmentary Greek text combined with linguistic speculation. Focusing on Greek evidence, H.A. Shapiro points out in a very concise and persuasive article that sixth-century vase paintings portrayed two basic types of armor or weapons with Amazons. Melee weapons and armor correspond to Thracian models,<sup>128</sup> while ranged weapons, bows and their accessories, align more with Scythian designs.<sup>129</sup> Therefore the encounter between Scythians and Amazons in Herodotus fits well with visual representations from this earlier period. During his own century the Amazons in art were sporting different clothing again, often Persian,<sup>130</sup> but since the Sauromatae origin tale is set further back in time, it seems logical to draw on earlier representations and associations.<sup>131</sup>

Herodotus is foreshadowing a trend played out more fully in Diodorus Siculus and Strabo: an interest in the Amazons as a people, as an ethnic group, whose purpose as heroic trial never disappears but does recede into the background. By using the Amazons, who attacked Athens, who side with Trojans, and who must be conquered by Heracles, Bellerophon and Theseus, Herodotus makes a powerful

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<sup>125</sup> R. Ghirshman, “Les Cimmeriens et Leurs Amazones,” International Congress of Classical Studies (1984) 49-52.

<sup>126</sup> Mina Zografou, Amazons in Homer and Hesiod (A Historical Reconstruction) (Athens, 1972).

<sup>127</sup> K. A. Bisset, “Who Were the Amazons?” Greece & Rome 18.2 (1971): 150-51.

<sup>128</sup> Shapiro, “Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians”: 107-10.

<sup>129</sup> Shapiro, “Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians”: 110-13.

<sup>130</sup> Shapiro, “Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians”: 113-14.

<sup>131</sup> I am not attempting to claim some planned creativity on Herodotus’s part, merely that there seem to be older existing beliefs about the Scythians beyond both being barbarian peoples at the edge of the known world, which Herodotus was drawing upon.

commentary on conflict resolution. Unlike in heroic times, competing historical people need not fight to the subordination of one side but can find other ways to share resources and territory. There are similarities between the Scythians and the Greeks: both formed alliances to defend against invasions. It is possible to read into the passage a suggestion that the Greeks could find a way to coexist with their invaders,<sup>132</sup> but this ignores the scale of the invasion and where it occurs; it also assumes that an audience could be objective so soon after said invasion.

Amazons in Herodotus, then, are a cultural commentary and an emerging new society that storytellers, artists, and writers will use in a variety of ways. At the very least, they represent a society with new gender relationships that participates in one of many attempts to resist the might of Persia. To his contemporary readers such large-scale resistance, even from the descendents of Athens's ancient enemy, reassured them that opposing Persia's expansion was a worthy cause. Given the strong association of Athens, Greek heroes and Amazons, it is reasonable to assume that readers, descendents of the Greek heroes and heroic Athens itself, would feel an obligation to fight the Persians if the descendents of the Amazons did so.

The use of Amazons as traditional enemies is positively charged as motivation and explanation for Greek resistance to Persian aggression in Herodotus. Amazon as heroic testing ground and enemy remained a strong part of Greek culture. As the world around them and their role in it changed, so too did the details and function of the Amazons change in art, poetry, and prose. However, the social details of Amazon life used by Herodotus will be expanded upon and

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<sup>132</sup> Munson, Telling Wonders 123-26.



negatively charged by authors like Diodorus Siculus until the warrior women are not only there to bolster the greatest heroes but also to demonstrate the superiority of specific heroes and patriarchy.

### III. Diodorus Siculus: Amazons Building Heroes

Compared to their attention to Herodotus and Plutarch, modern scholars have virtually ignored the work of Diodorus Siculus and Strabo. Of these two “ignored authors,” they consider Diodorus a copyist of the poorest quality. Yet his work, *The Historical Library*, survives, whereas those he copied from by and large do not. As we will see in this chapter, even if he is copying others’ works, he is making choices about whom to include, what stories or information to include, and in what order to use the material. He provides us with a valuable look at the variety of Amazon legends that had developed by the first century BCE as well as the degree to which the warrior women’s society was fascinating and frightening new generations of writers and readers.<sup>133</sup> He also purposely promotes individual examples of controlling or conquering Amazons -- Heracles, Dionysus, Athens, and Alexander -- instead of merely recounting all the possible legends.

Scholarship on Diodorus generally treats him as simply a copyist<sup>134</sup> and spends time trying to determine which were the “better” writers he used as sources. Primarily these studies rely on internal notations from Diodorus, but some also

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<sup>133</sup> Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro, “Excursus Amazons: Women in Control” 128-35, is the strongest example of a synthetic interpretation of the Amazons as examples of what Greek culture is not and how Greeks could defend their way of life, often simply by killing those who lived differently. This interpretation of the Amazons has become the standard since Tyrrell, “A View of the Amazons” from 1980. Most of what the “Excursus” cites (violence against children, attacks on other cultures, a strong matriarchal government and society) can be found within Diodorus’s account itself, even though the article ignores his own work in favor of fragments and brief mentions of Amazons. I think this simply demonstrates the degree to which Diodorus’s worth is often ignored in general by modern scholars who grasp for anyone other than Diodorus to credit.

<sup>134</sup> Gerhard Wirth, Diodor und das Ende des Hellenismus : Mutmassungen zu einem fast unbekanntem Historiker Sitzungsberichte / Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, vol. 600 (Wien: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), offers a timeline of this approach to Diodorus; P. J. Stylianou, A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus Book 15 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 4.

compare his work to surviving fragments. This *Quellenforschung* approach began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues through the most current articles about Diodorus.<sup>135</sup> As always, though, this approach works backwards, assuming that Diodorus copied from other sources and then attempting to find large tracts of other writers' work.<sup>136</sup> Often what scholars might call summaries or rephrasings of Cleitarchus, Ephorus, Poseidonius, or Polybius, just to name the most famous writers Diodorus is said to have copied, are simply those sections of this universal history which seem similar to fragments from these authors or which express similar opinions or themes. At times Diodorus names the author he is drawing his information from, though in some cases he adds that he is summarizing their work, not quoting it.

In general, modern scholars consider Diodorus a man of his time, a demonstration of how low Greek authors had fallen and how common it was becoming to write for a popular audience.<sup>137</sup> We can cite Diodorus as our only surviving source for many legends and stories, including several Amazon legends, but his selection is only one of several variations. In short, the majority of modern scholarship sees Diodorus as a collector of previously written materials without a mind of his own. Yet at the same time modern scholars use the stories and versions

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<sup>135</sup> Jonas Palm, Über Sprache und Stil des Diodoros von Sizilien. Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der hellenistischen Prosa. (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1955), examines several sources in Diodorus and attempts to show where his rare originality lies; N. G. L. Hammond, Three Historians of Alexander the Great: The so-called Vulgate authors, Diodorus, Justin and Curtius (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 12-85.

<sup>136</sup> Truesdell S. Brown, "Timaeus and Diodorus' Eleventh Book," The American Journal of Philology 73.4 (1952): 337-55 ; J. M. Bigwood, "Diodorus and Ctesias," Phoenix 34.3 (1980): 195-207; Catherine Rubincam, "Did Diodorus Siculus take over Cross-References from his Sources?" American Journal of Philology 119 (1998): 67-86.

<sup>137</sup> Palm, Über Sprache und Stil des Diodoros von Sizilien. Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der hellenistischen Prosa. shows how much Hellenistic literature survives in Diodorus while Wirth, Diodor und das Ende des Hellenismus : Mutmassungen zu einem fast unbekanntem Historiker, argues that Diodorus's universal history marks the ending point of Hellenistic literature; Stylianou, Commentary Diodorus Book 15, whose critique of Diodorus is quite harsh, concedes that he did have a goal of entertainment and moral education of his audience; he simply sees it as a common goal for the first century BCE.

he collected to prove a multitude of “facts” about historical events and opinions as though the source itself were unproblematic, substituting the earlier sources’ names instead of Diodorus’s as though the works of Ephorus or others survived intact when most often they survive as fragments in the very sources that are being evaluated.

Kenneth Sacks is the most outspoken scholar who looks at Diodorus as a valuable writer and not merely as a source for fragments of earlier authors. Echoing Lateiner’s opinion of Herodotus, Sacks argues that Diodorus’s universal history shows his own beliefs and choices but also reflects those of the first century BCE.<sup>138</sup> Just as most scholars see consistency in Herodotus’s themes and subjects, so too does Sacks find an identifiable historiographic agenda in Diodorus: to promote moral living by showing both moral and immoral behavior on a universal scale.<sup>139</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet suggests another goal: to show that humanity is one entity, regardless of ethnic or national background, by starting with non-Greek prehistory in books 1 and 2.<sup>140</sup>

We are faced with differences then, over how much of Diodorus’s universal history is his own creation, how much is copied and from whom, and what he has summarized from memory. Kenneth Sacks’s interpretation of Diodorus as a valuable writer is the only approach that strips the text down to what is knowable:

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<sup>138</sup> K. S. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Kenneth S. Sacks, “Diodorus and his Sources: Conformity and Creativity,” *Greek Historiography*, ed. Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 213-32; Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* 18, 59.

<sup>139</sup> While Robert Drews earlier claimed that Diodorus had a historiographical agenda in his universal history, he judged it far more harshly than Sacks does, arguing that the agenda itself is responsible for the lack of consistency and confusion over sources in the entire work. Robert Drews, “Diodorus and his Sources,” *The American Journal of Philology* 83.4 (1962): 383-92.

<sup>140</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, “Diodore et Le Vieillard de Crete,” *Diodore de Sicile: Naissance des Dieux et des Hommes* (Paris: Le Belles Lettres, 1991) XXVI-XXVII.

the information in it. Sacks's approach also fits well into the general narratological method this study uses. This study looks at the Amazon legends to see whether the stories follow a thematic pattern, serving some greater purpose as they did in Herodotus, or whether these are merely examples of the degree of variation in the legends which had developed by the first century BCE. Diodorus does not present a solid unified work. Instead books seem grouped together by topic and act to support a goal that is more specific than a general view of humanity: to build up heroes. While the adventures of Heracles, Dionysus, Athens, and Alexander with the Amazons may aim to entertain, as Stylianou suggests is one of Diodorus's goals,<sup>141</sup> they also work to demonstrate the superiority of each demigod, god, polis, and mortal king over those who might be compared to them and the political systems they defend or establish.

### The Multitude of Amazon Legends in Diodorus

Diodorus recounts six different stories about Amazons in his universal history. Diodorus's stories show new details, complicated plots, and a focus on individual characters whose actions and motivations greatly affect the events and outcome of the tales. Since each story is so detailed and complicated, each requires individual analysis, but collectively they work to promote two particular individuals: the hero Heracles and the god Dionysus.

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<sup>141</sup> Stylianou, Commentary Diodorus Book 15, 4-5.

## The Scythian Amazons

Book II of Diodorus's universal history ventures to Asia, where he relates tales about the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, the Indians, the Scythians, the Amazons, the Hyperboreans, Arabia, and the islands south of the region.<sup>142</sup> Diodorus segues nicely between his discussion of the Scythian empire and the Amazons, who are here represented as one group of Scythians. He compares the Amazons to an unnamed female Scythian ruler both in terms of her cruelty and military conquests but also in terms of her aggressive military policies. The Amazons in this introduction are not unusual for their fighting, since Diodorus reports that it is common for both men and women in Scythia to train for war.<sup>143</sup> To fully understand why they are unique at all, Diodorus must go into a long discussion of their culture and their history.

He does not cite his sources for the Scythian legend, but throughout the section on Scythia and India he merely states, "they say," or "in this account." If we look back further in this second book, his most commonly cited source is Ctesias of Cnidus, a Greek physician who lived at the Persian palace from approximately 404 to 398-97 BCE.<sup>144</sup> This Amazon section does have a good deal of geographic and

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<sup>142</sup> Diodorus "Contents of the Second Book of Diodorus."

<sup>143</sup> Diodorus 2.44: Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἀναρχίας γενομένης κατὰ τὴν Σκυθίαν, ἐβασίλευσαν γυναῖκες ἀλκῆ διαφέρουσαι. ἐν τούτοις γὰρ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν αἱ γυναῖκες γυμνάζονται πρὸς πόλεμον παραπλησίως τοῖς ἀνδράσι καὶ ταῖς ἀνδρείαις οὐδὲν λείπονται τῶν ἀνδρῶν. διὸ καὶ γυναικῶν ἐπιφανῶν πολλαὶ καὶ μεγάλαι πράξεις ἐπετελέσθησαν οὐ μόνον κατὰ τὴν Σκυθίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὅμορον ταύτης χώραν. Κύρον μὲν γὰρ τοῦ Περσῶν βασιλέως πλείστον ἰσχύσαντος τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν καὶ στρατεύσαντος ἀξιολόγοις δυνάμεσιν εἰς τὴν Σκυθίαν, ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν Σκυθῶν τό τε στρατόπεδον τῶν Περσῶν κατέκοψε καὶ τὸν Κύρον αἰχμάλωτον γενόμενον ἀνεσταύρωσε· τό τε συσταθὲν ἔθνος τῶν Ἀμαζόνων τοσοῦτον ἀνδρεία διήνεγκεν ὥστε μὴ μόνον πολλὴν χώραν ὅμορον καταδραμεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πολλὴν τῆς Εὐρώπης καὶ τῆς Ἀσίας καταστρέψασθαι. ἡμεῖς δ' ἐπειδὴ περὶ τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων ἐμνήσθημεν, οὐκ ἀνοίκειον εἶναι νομίζομεν διελθεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν, εἰ καὶ διὰ τὴν παραδοξολογίαν μῦθοις ὅμοια φανήσεται τὰ ρηθέντα.

<sup>144</sup> One surviving fragment of Ctesias mentions Amazons (Jacoby FGkHist 688.8a). Diodorus was not alone in using Ctesias, as Jacoby cataloged 74 fragments of his work in a wide variety of authors, both Greek and Latin.

personal information, similar to that included in the attested Ctesias story of Semiramis, Queen of Babylon.<sup>145</sup> It seems reasonable, then, to assume he is Diodorus's source for the following legend.

Diodorus locates the Scythian Amazons along the Thermodon River. Initially it is a somewhat matriarchal society where women hold the highest political power but both men and women are soldiers. An unnamed royal woman changes this system to a harsh division between the sexes. She seems to use a woman-only army, and together they attack their neighbors, conquering lands to the Tanis River. Out of pride she calls herself "Daughter of Ares." She also changes the public, military role of men into a private, purely domestic role via both her attitude and a new legal code. To promote this new social system, children of both sexes are mutilated at birth: the boys' legs and arms are broken so they are not capable of fighting, while the girls have their right breasts destroyed by searing the flesh. Diodorus claims that the name "Amazon" relates to this destroyed tissue and the resulting single-breasted nature of the women. This unnamed queen also founds a city named Themiscyra, where she builds a "famous palace." Finally she dies in some unnamed battle.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Diodorus 2.4.5-2.20.5.

<sup>146</sup> Diodorus 2.45: Παρὰ τὸν Θερωδόντα τοίνυν ποταμὸν ἔθνος κρατοῦντος γυναικοκρατοῦμένου, καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν ὁμοίως τοῖς ἀνδράσι τὰς πολεμικὰς χρεῖας μεταχειριζομένων, φασὶ μίαν ἐξ αὐτῶν βασιλικὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσαν ἀλκῆ καὶ ῥώμῃ διενεγκεῖν· συστησαμένην δὲ γυναικῶν στρατόπεδον γυμνάσαι τε τοῦτο καὶ τινὰς τῶν ὁμόρων αὐξομένης δὲ τῆς περὶ αὐτὴν ἀρετῆς τε καὶ δόξης συνεχῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πλησιόχωρα τῶν ἐθνῶν στρατεύειν, καὶ τῆς τύχης εὐροῦσης φρονήματος ἐμπίμπλασθαι, καὶ θυγατέρα μὲν Ἄρεος αὐτὴν προσαγορεύσαι, τοῖς δ' ἀνδράσι προσνεῖμαι τὰς θαλασιουργίας καὶ τὰς τῶν γυναικῶν κατ' οἴκους ἐργασίας. νόμους τε καταδειξαι, δι' ὧν τὰς μὲν γυναῖκας ἐπὶ τοὺς πολεμικοὺς ἀγῶνας προάγειν, τοῖς δ' ἀνδράσι ταπεινῶσιν καὶ δουλείαν περιάπτειν. τῶν δὲ γεννωμένων τοὺς μὲν ἄρρενας ἐπήρουν τὰ τε σκέλη καὶ τοὺς βραχίονας, ἀχρήστους κατασκευάζοντες πρὸς τὰς πολεμικὰς χρεῖας, τῶν δὲ θηλυτέρων τὸν δεξιὸν μαστὸν ἐπέκαον ἵνα μὴ κατὰ τὰς ἀκμὰς τῶν σωμάτων ἐπαίρομενος ἐνοχλήῃ· ἀφ' ἧς αἰτίας συμβῆναι τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ταύτης τυχεῖν τῆς προσηγορίας. καθόλου δὲ διαφέρουσαν αὐτὴν συνέσει καὶ στρατηγίᾳ πόλιν μὲν κτίσαι μεγάλην παρὰ τὰς ἐκβολὰς τοῦ Θερωδόντος ποταμοῦ, τὸννομα Θεμισκυραν, καὶ βασιλεία κατασκευάσαι περιβόητα κατὰ δὲ τὰς στρατείας ἐπιμελομένην πολὺ τῆς εὐταξίας τὸ μὲν πρῶτον καταπολεμήσαι πάντας τοὺς ὁμόρους

During all of her military and social manipulations, the above queen has a daughter who follows her in rule, though not entirely in character. She expands the military training of girls to lower ages and daily drills. She creates two festivals to the deities Ares and Artemis (called Tauropolus<sup>147</sup>). Using military booty she builds shrines for these two gods. Her people regard her positively, unlike her mother, because of her “kindly rule” and not just her military exploits. She expands on her mother’s military conquests, pushing westward to Thrace and eastward to Syria.<sup>148</sup>

Succeeding women of this same family continue to rule well over the Amazons until their widespread fame draws the unfortunate attention of the Greeks. Eurystheus assigns Heracles the task of taking the girdle of Hippolytê the Amazon. This he does, taking the queen and her girdle captive in a violent campaign that results in the near-destruction of the Amazon army. The neighbors, for the first time called “barbarians,” begin to wage war against the Amazons so that their name does not even exist in the region today, says Diodorus. A few years after Heracles’s campaign, one of the surviving Amazon queens, Penthesileia, flees her country because of a blood debt and becomes an ally of Troy after the death of Hector. Penthesileia fights very well, killing many Greeks until she has a heroic death at the hands of Achilles. No other Amazons are known after her. Eventually

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μέχρι τοῦ Τανάιδος ποταμοῦ. καὶ ταύτην μὲν φασὶ ταύτας τὰς πράξεις ἐπιτελεσαμένην καὶ κατὰ τινα μάχην λαμπρῶς ἀγωνισαμένην ἥρωικῶς τελευτήσαι τὸν βίον.

<sup>147</sup> In this instance “hunting bulls” seems more logical an interpretation than “at Tauris,” since no other city besides Themiscyra has been mentioned yet.

<sup>148</sup> Diodorus 2.46.1-2: Διαδεξαμένην δὲ τὴν ταύτης θυγατέρα τὴν βασιλείαν ζηλωσαὶ μὲν τὴν ἀρετὴν τῆς μητρὸς, ὑπερβαλέσθαι δὲ ταῖς κατὰ μέρος πράξεσι. τὰς μὲν γὰρ παρθένους ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας ἔν τε ταῖς θήραις γυμνάζειν καὶ καθ’ ἡμέραν ἀσκεῖν τὰ πρὸς πόλεμον ἀνήκοντα, καταδείξει δὲ καὶ θυσίας μεγαλοπρεπεῖς Ἄρει τε καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι τῇ προσαγορευομένη Ταυροπόλῳ στρατεύσασαν δ’ εἰς τὴν πέραν τοῦ Τανάιδος ποταμοῦ χώραν καταπολεμήσαι πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὰ συνεχῆ μέχρι τῆς Θράκης ἀνακάμψασαν δὲ μετὰ πολλῶν λαφύρων εἰς τὴν οἰκείαν ναοὺς μεγαλοπρεπεῖς κατασκευάσαι τῶν προειρημένων θεῶν, καὶ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων ἐπιεικῶς ἄρχουσαν ἀποδοχῆς τυγχάνειν τῆς μεγίστης. στρατεῦσαι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ θάτερα μέρη, καὶ πολλὴν τῆς Ἀσίας κατακτήσασθαι, καὶ διατεῖναι τῇ δυνάμει μέχρι τῆς Συρίας.



the Amazons are so weak that unnamed men consider their stories fiction.<sup>149</sup> After the Amazons, Diodorus turns his attention to the Hyperboreans,<sup>150</sup> another “mythological” people.

There are two interesting contradictory trends in the Scythian Amazon narrative. The first is the amount of detail in the story. Beginning as an origin story, it becomes a tale of the military might, expansion, and destruction of a nation. Diodorus describes how the Amazons grow more militant and sexist, oppressing their neighbors and their own population. Their leaders are brave but prideful, touching all aspects of their society from the moment of birth. The motivations and actions of these leaders lead to the downfall of the nation. If we believe Diodorus’s goals in his prologue, then this story shows us ethical and moral lessons on a nationwide scale. Whether one pursues an aggressive military strategy for personal glory or to build sacred monuments, these actions will have consequences. Given the opportunity provided by Greek invaders under Heracles, those whom the Amazons had conquered turn around and eliminate them.

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<sup>149</sup> Diodorus 2.46.3-6: Μετὰ δὲ τὴν ταύτης τελευταίαν αἰὲν τὰς προσηκούσας τῷ γένει διαδεχομένας τὴν βασιλείαν ἄρξαι μὲν ἐπιφανῶς, αὐξῆσαι δὲ τὸ ἔθνος τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων δυνάμει τε καὶ δόξει. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πολλαῖς γενεαῖς ὕστερον, διαβεβοημένης κατὰ πάσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην τῆς περὶ αὐτὰς ἀρετῆς, Ἡρακλέα φασι τὸν ἐξ Ἀλκμήνης καὶ Διὸς ἄθλον λαβεῖν παρ’ Εὐρυσθέως τὸν Ἴππολύτης τῆς Ἀμαζόνος ζωστήρα. διόπερ στρατεῦσαι μὲν αὐτόν, παρατάξει δὲ μεγάλην νικήσαντα τὸ τε στρατόπεδον τῶν Ἀμαζόνων κατακόψαι καὶ τὴν Ἴππολύτην μετὰ τοῦ ζωστήρος ζωγρήσαντα τὸ ἔθνος τοῦτο τελέως συντρίψαι. διόπερ τοὺς περιοικοῦντας βαρβάρους τῆς μὲν ἄσθδνείας αὐτῶν καταφρονήσαντας, τῶν δὲ καθ’ ἑαυτοὺς μνησικακήσαντας, πολεμῆσαι συνεχῶς τὸ ἔθνος ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ὥστε μηδ’ ὄνομα τοῦ γένους τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων ἀπολιπεῖν. μετὰ γὰρ τὴν Ἡρακλέους στρατείαν ὀλίγοις ὕστερον ἔτεσι κατὰ τὸν Τρωικὸν πόλεμον φασι Πενθεσίλειαν τὴν βασιλεύουσαν τῶν ὑπολειμμένων Ἀμαζονίδων, Ἄρεος μὲν οὖσαν θυγατέρα, φόνον δ’ ἐμφύλιον ἐπιτελεσαμένην, φυγεῖν ἐκ τῆς πατρίδος διὰ τὸ μῦθος. συμμαχήσαντας δὲ τοῖς Τρωσὶ μετὰ τὴν Ἐκτορος τελευταίαν πολλοὺς ἀνελεῖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἀριστεύσαντας δ’ αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ παρατάξει καταστρέψαι τὸν βίον ἡρωικῶς ὑπ’ Ἀχιλλέως ἀναιρεθεῖσαν. τῶν μὲν οὖν Ἀμαζονίδων ἐσχάτην ταύτην λέγουσιν ἀνδρεία διενεγκεῖν, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν αἰὲν τὸ ἔθνος ταπεινούμενον ἀσθενῆσαι παντελῶς διὸ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς νεωτέρους καιροὺς, ἐπειδὴν τινες περὶ τῆς αὐτῶν ἀνδρείας διεξίωσι, μύθους ἡγοῦνται πεπλασμένους τὰς περὶ τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων ἀρχαιολογίας.

<sup>150</sup> Diodorus 2.47.

The second trend in this story concerns the exact opposite condition: a strange lack of certain details. Until the attack by Heracles to take Hippolytê's girdle none of the Amazon queens are named. Diodorus includes the names of their cities, the extent of their military reach, and their gods. The lack of names for the first two queens, whom he credits with redesigning their nation, making it into a sexist, aggressive nation, appears very odd. The two unnamed queens demonstrate remarkable motivations and acquire wide-ranging personal powers as they achieve victory after victory. Yet they do not have names, suggesting that they are not what is truly important about these Amazons.

The only Scythian Amazons who have names are those who fall from power, either because of invasion or because of their own actions. These are not unknown names; both Hippolytê and Penthesileia would have been names Diodorus's audience knew from a variety of other sources, since they are connected with two major Greek heroes, Heracles and Achilles. However, Diodorus offers us the largest collection of individual Amazon names found in any ancient source. Naming these warrior women whom Heracles kills may make those kills more important because they are not simply generic women but specific, skilled opponents he overcomes. It may also signal that what is really of value in this section is not how the Amazons live but how they die, and who has enough power to defeat them.<sup>151</sup>

At first it may seem as if there is a deeper connection between the degree of detail Diodorus uses for lesser-known stories and that which he includes in well-

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<sup>151</sup> The idea that the death of the Amazon is the most important aspect of their legends is commonplace in almost all scholarship on Amazons. I have read it in so many different articles and books that I would be hard pressed to determine where I first encountered the idea though the most focused study of this idea that the Amazon's purpose is to die must be Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons*.

known stories. At the end of the Scythian Amazon tale, Diodorus points out that most people would call the history he has recounted a myth, one that very few people know or believe. However, the audience might be expected to already know enough to fill in the gaps for the well-known legends about Heracles and Achilles, given the popularity of those legends by this period, so these stories cannot be the ones that he thinks are unknown or unbelievably. What Diodorus is more likely referring to is the authors he has summarized. Since their work does not survive except in a few citations or summaries found in other authors, it is difficult to gauge how well-known his sources were. If they were not well-known or widely believed, then it is logical that Diodorus chose them because they offered him details that will help him with what appears to be emerging as a prime agenda for him: the promotion of Heracles.

### The Libyan Amazons

Book III of Diodorus looks at three general groups of people in what we today call northern Africa: the Ethiopians, the Libyans, and the Atlantians.<sup>152</sup> The Amazons are, as the preceding book also described them, a subset of another larger group, in this case the Libyans. Immediately before describing the Libyan Amazons, Diodorus tries to explain the phenomenon of windstorms in the desert,<sup>153</sup> something he calls “fitting” in relation to the Amazons, perhaps because both seem mysterious and frightening.

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<sup>152</sup> Diodorus 3.1.3.

<sup>153</sup> Diodorus 3.50.4-51.5.

These Libyan Amazons are older than the Scythian type, having disappeared generations before the Trojan War. Diodorus realizes that his audience will be skeptical because they have not heard of these women, yet he claims earlier poets and historians both discussed them. He will summarize only the work of Dionysius, a writer of mythical romances from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.<sup>154</sup> Diodorus takes a minor detour and discusses another group of people whose women are warriors and leaders, the Gorgons, whom Perseus fought and defeated.<sup>155</sup> So the Amazon political and military arrangements are not unique in Asia or Africa.

Diodorus describes these Libyan Amazons as different from and similar to both their Scythian counterparts and the Gorgons on several levels. They are similar in that women rule the people and that gender roles are reversed from what Greeks in the first century BCE might expect. The reader with the Scythian Amazons in mind will see that these Libyan Amazons differ in the details of how they live. Military service for females is mandatory for a number of years, during which each warrior must remain a virgin. Once they have served their military duty, the women take on the administrative roles of the state, turning to men only for procreation. Their men focus on childrearing and domestic labor and are not involved in public affairs, so there is no temptation to rise up against the women. Infant girls have their breasts seared so that they cannot develop; as with their

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<sup>154</sup>Dionysius appears to be a writer of mythical works with a rather romantic quality in terms of setting and tone, and a composer of fiction not of history, who lived in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Jeffrey S. Rusten, *Dionysius Scytobrachion*, Papyrologica Coloniensia, vol. X (Herstellung: Westerdeutscher Verlag, 1982) 74, 80-82, 90, 106. Jacoby *FGkHist* 32.4, 32.7, and 32.8 all mention Amazons, 7 and 8 are these passages in Diodorus while 4 comes from the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius. Indeed there are only Dionysius fragments from four sources, Diodorus, Apollonius, the Scholium on Apollonius, and Eustathius on Homer.

<sup>155</sup> Diodorus 3.53.4.

Scythian counterparts, this is the reason Diodorus gives for the Greeks' calling these people "Amazons."<sup>156</sup>

The Libyan Amazons live on a large island called Hespera in the Tritonis marsh, located between the earth-surrounding river Ocean and the mountain Atlas. The island has fruit trees aplenty and apparently grasslands as well, because they keep herds of goats and sheep. Agriculture has not been discovered, so everyone on the island lives on a diet of fruit and animal products only.<sup>157</sup>

The Amazons are but one of the people living on the island. Their eagerness for war and their abilities in war have allowed them to conquer all of the other people except for those in a city called Mene, which they do not attack, as it is a sacred city. It is inhabited by the Ethiopian Ichthyophagi,<sup>158</sup> is apparently located near a volcano which once erupted, and stands on land rich with a variety of gemstones. Having conquered Hespera, the Amazons turn to the neighboring

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<sup>156</sup> Diodorus 3.53.1-3: Φασι γὰρ ὑπάρξαι τῆς Λιβύης ἐν τοῖς πρὸς ἑσπέραν μέρεσιν ἐπὶ τοῖς πέρασι τῆς οἰκουμένης ἔθνος γυναικοκρατούμενον καὶ βίον ἐζηλωκὸς οὐχ ὅμοιον τῷ παρ' ἡμῖν. ταῖς μὲν γὰρ γυναῖξιν ἔθος εἶναι διαπονεῖν τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον, καὶ χρόνους ὠρισμένους ὀφείλιν στρατεύεσθαι, διατηρουμένης τῆς παρθενίας διελθόντων δὲ τῶν ἐτῶν τῶν τῆς στρατείας προσιέναι μὲν τοῖς ἀνδράσι παιδοποιίας ἕνεκα, τὰς δ' ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰ κοινὰ διοικεῖν ταύτας ἅπαντα. τοὺς δ' ἄνδρας ὁμοίως ταῖς παρ' ἡμῖν γαμεταῖς τὸν κατοικίδιον ἔχειν βίον, ὑπηρετοῦντας τοῖς ὑπὸ τῶν συνοικουσῶν προσαττομένοις μὴ μετέχειν δ' αὐτοὺς μήτε στρατείας μήτ' ἀρχῆς μήτ' ἄλλης τινὸς ἐν τοῖς κοινοῖς παρρησίας, ἔξ ἧς ἔμελλον φρονηματισθέντες ἐπιθήσεσθαι ταῖς γυναῖξιν. κατὰ δὲ τὰς γενέσεις τῶν τέκνων τὰ μὴν βρέφη παραδίδοσθαι τοῖς ἀνδράσι, καὶ τούτους διατρέφειν αὐτὰ γάλακτι καὶ ἄλλοις τισὶν ἐψήμασιν οἰκείως ταῖς τῶν νηπίων ἡλικίαις εἰ δὲ τύχοι θῆλυ γεννηθέν, ἐπικάεσθαι αὐτοῦ τοὺς μαστοὺς, ἵνα μὴ μετεωρίζωνται κατὰ τοὺς τῆς ἀκμῆς χρόνους ἐμπόδιον γὰρ οὐ τὸ τυχόν εἶναι δοκεῖν πρὸς τὰς στρατείας τοὺς ἐξέχοντας τοῦ σώματος μαστοὺς διὸ καὶ τούτων αὐτὰς ἀπεστερημένας ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἀμαζόνας προσαγορεύεσθαι.

<sup>157</sup> Diodorus 3.53.4-5: Μυθολογοῦσι δ' αὐτὰς ὠκηκέναι νῆσον τὴν ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ πρὸς δυσμὰς ὑπάρχειν αὐτὴν Ἑσπέραν προσαγορευθεῖσαν, κειμένην δ' ἐν τῇ Τριτωνίδι λίμνῃ. ταύτην δὲ πλησίον ὑπάρχειν τοῦ περιέχοντος τὴν γῆν ὠκεανοῦ, προσηγορεῖσθαι δ' ἀπὸ τινος ἐμβάλλοντος εἰς αὐτὴν ποταμοῦ Τρίτωνος· κείσθαι δὲ τὴν λίμνην ταύτην πλησίον Αἰθιοπίας καὶ τοῦ παρὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν ὄρους, ὃ μέγιστον μὲν ὑπάρχειν τῶν ἐν τοῖς τόποις καὶ προσπετωκὸς εἰς τὸν ὠκεανόν, ὀνομάζεσθαι δ' ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων Ἄτλαντα. τὴν δὲ προειρημένην νῆσον ὑπάρχειν μὲν εὐμεγέθη καὶ πλήρη καρπίμων δένδρων παντοδαπῶν, ἀφ' ὧν πορίζεσθαι τὰς τροφὰς τοὺς ἐγχωρίους. ἔχειν δ' αὐτὴν καὶ κτηνῶν πλῆθος, αἰγῶν καὶ προβάτων, ἔξ ὧν γάλα καὶ κρέα πρὸς διατροφήν ὑπάρχειν τοῖς κεκτημένοις· οἴω δὲ τὸ σύνολον μὴ χρῆσθαι τὸ ἔθνος διὰ τὸ μῆπω τοῦ καρποῦ τούτου τὴν χρεῖαν εὑρεθῆναι παρ' αὐτοῖς.

<sup>158</sup> Diodorus uses this term, meaning "fish-eaters," to describe several peoples. Why this would be a particularly interesting feature is unclear in this passage; they are all living on an island in a marsh, after all. Perhaps this implies that only the Ethiopians on Hespera did any fishing.

peoples and the nomadic tribes. The Amazons found a new city called Cherronesus in the Tritonis Marsh, called this because of its shape.<sup>159</sup>

This new city becomes the capital, and from it the Amazons embark on their further conquests, driven by some impulse to invade. The first people they attack are the Atlantians, whom Diodorus says he will discuss in greater detail later. The Atlantians were the most civilized people in the region and had many cities.<sup>160</sup>

Led by their Queen, Myrina, the Amazons amass an army of 30,000 foot soldiers and 3000 cavalry. Their armor is of snakeskin taken from the snakes of Libya, while their weapons are swords and lances, along with bows and arrows, which they shoot during both attacks and retreats. The Amazons attack the city of Cerne and defeat the Atlantian inhabitants in battle, following them into the city, which they capture. Then, desiring to strike terror into all the Atlantians, the Amazons kill all the males from youths to old men and enslave the remaining women and children before razing the city itself. The Atlantians are indeed terrified and offer an unconditional surrender — we must assume they surrender other, intact cities and lands — which queen Myrina honorably accepts. She furthermore establishes a friendship with the Atlantians and refounds the city she just destroyed, naming it after herself, and settles the captives and other natives who desire to live

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<sup>159</sup> Diodorus 3.53.6: Τὰς δ' οὖν Ἀμαζόνας ἀλκῇ διαφερούσας καὶ πρὸς πόλεμον ὠρμημένας τὸ μὲν πρῶτον τὰς ἐν τῇ νήσῳ πόλεις καταστρέφεσθαι πλὴν τῆς ὀνομαζομένης Μήνης, ἱερὰς δ' εἶναι νομιζομένης, ἣν κατοικεῖσθαι μὲν ὑπ' Αἰθιοπίων Ἰχθυοφάγων, ἔχειν δὲ πυρὸς ἐκφυσθήματα μεγάλα καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν πλῆθος τῶν ὀνομαζομένων παρ' Ἑλληνισιν ἀνθράκων καὶ σαρδίων καὶ σμαράγδων· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πολλοὺς τῶν πλησιοχώρων Λιβύων καὶ νομάδων καταπολεμήσαι, καὶ κτίσαι πόλιν μεγάλην ἐντὸς τῆς Τριτωνίδος λίμνης, ἣν ἀπὸ τοῦ σχήματος ὀνομάσαι Χερρόνησον. [Χερρόνησον is the Attic version of Χερσόνησον, meaning peninsula.]

<sup>160</sup> Diodorus 3.54.1: Ἐκ δὲ ταύτης ὀρμωμένης ἐγχειρήσαι μεγάλαις ἐπιβολαῖς, ὀρμῆς αὐταῖς ἐμπεσοῦσης ἐπελθεῖν πολλὰ μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης· ἐπὶ πρῶτους δ' αὐτὰς στρατεῦσαι λέγεται τοὺς Ἀτλαντίους, ἄνδρας, ἡμερωτάτους τῶν ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἐκείνοις καὶ χώραν νεμομένους εὐδαίμονα καὶ πόλεις μεγάλας παρ' οἷς δὴ μυθολογεῖσθαι φασὶ τὴν τῶν θεῶν γένεσιν ὑπάρχει πρὸς τοῖς κατὰ τὸν ὠκεανὸν τόποις, συμφώνως τοῖς παρ' Ἑλλήσι μυθολόγοις, περὶ ὧν τὰ κατὰ μέρος μικρὸν ὕστερον διέξιμεν.

there in it. The Atlantians offer honors and gifts, which Myrina accepts with a promise to treat them with kindness. The Atlantians, however, have another enemy, the Gorgons, because of whom they turn to the Amazons for help. In response the Amazons invade and have initial success, killing some Gorgons and taking 3000 prisoners, unlike with the Atlantians, though Diodorus does not mention the sex or ages of those killed and captured. The Gorgons flee into an unnamed wooded region, where the Amazons cannot find them or burn them out. Myrina gives up on this venture and retires within the borders of the much larger Amazon nation.<sup>161</sup>

The confident Amazons relax their normal prisoner watch and are attacked by the captive women, who fight to their collective deaths. This suggests that the previous unmentioned sex division must have been similar to the way the Amazons treated the Atlantians; perhaps they were unaware of the fact that, like themselves, the Gorgons were matriarchal, though this seems rather unbelievable given that they must have faced primarily female warriors. Regardless, Diodorus continues summarizing that Myrina sets up three funeral pyres for those Amazons slain in this

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<sup>161</sup> Diodorus 3.54.2-7: Τῶν οὖν Ἀμαζόνων λέγεται βασιλεύουσιν Μύριναν συστήσασθαι στρατόπεδον πεζῶν μὲν τρισμυρίων, ἰππέων δὲ τρισχιλίων, ζηλουμένης παρ' αὐταῖς περιττότερον ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἰππέων χρείας, ὅπλοις δὲ χρῆσθαι σκεπαστηρίοις ὄψεων μεγάλων δοραῖς, ἐχούσης τῆς Λιβύης ταῦτα τὰ ζῶα τοῖς μεγέθεσιν ἄπιστα, ἀμυντηρίοις δὲ ξίφεσι καὶ λόγχαις, ἔτι δὲ τόξοις, οἷς μὴ μόνον ἐξ ἐναντίας βάλλειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὰς φυγὰς τοὺς ἐπιδιώκοντας εἰς τοῦπίσω τοξεύειν εὐστόχως. ἐμβαλούσας δ' αὐτὰς εἰς τὴν τῶν Ἀτλαντίων χώραν τοὺς μὲν τὴν Κέρνην καλουμένην οἰκοῦντας παρατάξει νικῆσαι, καὶ συνεισπεσοῦσας τοῖς φεύγουσιν ἐντὸς τῶν τειχῶν κυριεῦσαι τῆς πόλεως· βουλομένης δὲ τῷ φόβῳ καταπλήξασθαι τοὺς περιοίκους ὡμῶς προσενεχθῆναι τοῖς ἀλοῦσι, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας ἡβηδὸν ἀποσφάζει, τέκνα δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἐξανδραποδισαμένης κατασκάψει τὴν πόλιν. τῆς δὲ περὶ τοὺς Κερναίους συμφορᾶς διαδοθείσης εἰς τοὺς ὁμοεθνεῖς, λέγεται τοὺς μὲν Ἀτλαντίους καταπλαγέντας δι' ὁμολογίας παραδοῦναι τὰς πόλεις καὶ πᾶν τὸ προσταχθὲν ποιῆσειν ἐπαγγείλασθαι, τὴν δὲ βασίλισσαν Μύριναν ἐπιεικῶς αὐτοῖς προσενεχθεῖσαν φιλίαν τε συνθέσθαι καὶ πόλιν ἀντὶ τῆς κατασκαφείσης ὁμώνυμον αὐτῆς κτίσαι· κατοικήσει δ' εἰς αὐτὴν τοὺς τε αἰχμαλώτους καὶ τῶν ἐγχωρίων τὸν βουλούμενον. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τῶν Ἀτλαντίων δῶρά τε μεγαλοπρεπῆ δόντων αὐτῇ καὶ τιμὰς ἀξιολόγουσ κοινῇ ψηφισαμένων, ἀποδέξασθαι τε τὴν φιλανθρωπίαν αὐτῶν καὶ προσεπαγγείλασθαι τὸ ἔθνος εὐεργετήσειν. τῶν δ' ἐγχωρίων πεπολεμημένων πολλάκις ὑπὸ τῶν ὀνομαζομένων Γοργόνων, οὐσῶν πλησιοχώρων, καὶ τὸ σύνολον ἔφεδρον ἔχοντων τοῦτο τὸ ἔθνος, φασὶν ἀξιοθεῖσαν τὴν Μύριναν ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀτλαντίων ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν προειρημένων. ἀντιταξαμένων δὲ τῶν Γοργόνων γενέσθαι καρτερὰν μάχην, καὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόννας ἐπὶ τοῦ προτερήματος γενομένης ἀνελεῖν μὲν τῶν ἀντιταχισῶν παμπληθεῖς, ζωγρῆσαι δ' οὐκ ἐλάττους τρισχιλίων· τῶν δ' ἄλλων εἰς τινα δρυμῶδη τόπον συμφυγούσων ἐπιβαλέσθαι μὲν τὴν Μύριναν ἐμπρῆσαι τὴν ὕλην, σπεύδουσιν ἄρδην ἀνελεῖν τὸ ἔθνος, οὐ δυνηθεῖσαν δὲ κρατῆσαι τῆς ἐπιβολῆς ἐπανελθεῖν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὄρους τῆς χώρας·

revolt and buries them in mound tombs called “Amazon Mounds” even in his day. An aside tells us that the Gorgons regain their strength under a queen named Medusa who, along with her people, is later subdued by the hero Perseus. Later still, Heracles destroys those Gorgons that remain, along with the Amazons,<sup>162</sup> because he, in his desire to benefit all humankind, does not want people to be ruled by women. Finally, even the Tritonis Marsh sinks during an earthquake.<sup>163</sup>

After giving us this glimpse ahead, Diodorus returns to the immediate continued adventures of Myrina. The Amazon queen turns from Libya and goes to Egypt, where she and the king, Horus,<sup>164</sup> son of Isis, strike a treaty of friendship. Myrina then continues to war upon the Arabians until she subdues Syria. She does not conquer those who accept her rule without resistance, such as the Cilicians, who give the Amazons gifts and promise to obey them, earning them the title of “Free Cilicians” to Diodorus’s day. Myrina conquers the peoples of the Taurus Mountains and travels through Greater Phrygia to the sea, where she wins over the coastal lands and stops her campaign at the Caicus River. On the coast she establishes another city named for herself and several others named after her most important

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<sup>162</sup> Later in the same book (3.74.3-5) Diodorus states that there are several Heracles and that this one is not the same one who sought the girdle of the Scythian Amazon queen. This, combined with other discussions of variations in legends and myths about other heroes and gods, strongly suggests that Diodorus was well aware of the differences between his sources and that he is attempting to explain these differences as simply different individuals with similar names or different versions of the stories told by different people.

<sup>163</sup> Diodorus 3.55.1-3: Τῶν δ' Ἀμαζόνων νυκτὸς τὰ περὶ τὰς φυλακὰς ῥαθυμουσῶν διὰ τὴν εὐημερίαν, ἐπιθεμένας τὰς αἰχμαλωτίδας, σπασαμένας τὰ ξίφη τῶν δοκουσῶν κεκρατηκέναι πολλὰς ἀνελεῖν· τέλος δὲ τοῦ πλήθους αὐτὰς πανταχόθεν περιχυθέντος εὐγενῶς μαχομένας ἀπάσας κατακοπήναι. τὴν δὲ Μύριναν θάψασαν τὰς ἀναιρεθείσας τῶν συστρατευουσῶν ἐν τρισὶ πυραΐς χωμάτων μεγάλων ἐπιστήσαι τάφους τρεῖς, οὓς μέχρι τοῦ νῦν Ἀμαζόνων σωροὺς ὀνομάζεσθαι. τὰς δὲ Γοργόνας ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον χρόνοις αὐξηθείσας πάλιν ὑπὸ Περσέως τοῦ Διὸς καταπολεμηθῆναι, καθ' ὃν καιρὸν ἐβασίλευεν αὐτῶν Μέδουσα· τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον ὑφ' Ἡρακλέους ἄρδην ἀναιρεθῆναι ταύτας τε καὶ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἔθνος, καθ' ὃν καιρὸν τοὺς πρὸς ἐσπέραν τόπους ἐπελθὼν ἔθετο τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς Λιβύης στήλας, δεινὸν ἠγούμενος, εἰ προελόμενος τὸ γένος κοινῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργετεῖν περιόψεταιί τινα τῶν ἔθνων γυναικοκρατούμενα. λέγεται δὲ καὶ τὴν Τριτωνίδα λίμνην σεισμῶν γενομένων ἀφανισθῆναι, βαγέντων αὐτῆς τῶν πρὸς τὸν ὠκεανὸν μερῶν κεκλιμένων.

<sup>164</sup> Of course, the Pharaoh of Egypt is considered to be the son of or perhaps an incarnation of Horus, so this does nothing to clarify his identity.



female commanders, such as Cymê, Pitana, and Prienê, emphasizing again that the Amazons are a nation of women warriors.<sup>165</sup>

Myrina also establishes more cities in the Near East, but Diodorus does not name them. Then she turns toward the islands of the Mediterranean and seizes some of them; Lesbos, in particular, has a city named Mitylenê, named after her sister who fought with her in the campaign. After Myrina conquers more islands a storm arises, and Myrina must turn to the Mother of the Gods to protect her. Landing on an uninhabited island, she names it Samothrace and makes it sacred to the goddess as per a vision. Diodorus casually mentions that other historians say the island was named Samos and later renamed by the Thracians, though he does not say whether or not these other historians support his Amazon foundation story, leaving the reader to assume they agree about who named the island. When the Amazons return to the continent — whether this refers to Asia or Africa is unclear until the next section — the Mother of the Gods settles new people on Samothrace, including her sons the Corybantēs, whose father's name is a sacred mystery that she created, and decrees the sacred area a place of sanctuary.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Diodorus 3.55.4-6: Τὴν δὲ Μύρινάν φασι τῆς τε Λιβύης τὴν πλείστην ἐπελθεῖν, καὶ παραβαλοῦσαν εἰς Αἴγυπτον πρὸς μὲν Ὀρον τὸν Ἰσιδος βασιλεύοντα τότε τῆς Αἰγύπτου φιλίαν συνθέσθαι, πρὸς δ' Ἄραβας διαπολεμήσασαν καὶ πολλοὺς αὐτῶν ἀνελοῦσαν, τὴν μὲν Συρίαν καταστρέψασθαι, τῶν δὲ Κιλικίων ἀπαντησάντων αὐτῇ μετὰ δῶρων καὶ τὸ κελεύόμενον ποιήσειν ὁμολογούντων, ἐλευθέρους ἀφείναι τοὺς ἐκουσίως προσχωρήσαντας, οὓς ἀπὸ ταύτης τῆς αἰτίας μέχρι τοῦ νῦν Ἐλευθεροκίλικας καλεῖσθαι. καταπολεμησαὶ δ' αὐτὴν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν Ταῦρον ἔθνη, διάφορα ταῖς ἀλκαῖς ὄντα, καὶ διὰ Φρυγίας τῆς μεγάλης ἐπὶ θάλατταν καταβῆναι· ἐξῆς δὲ τὴν παραθαλάττιον χώραν προσαγαγομένην ὄρους θέσθαι τῆς στρατείας τὸν Κάϊκον ποταμόν. τῆς δὲ δορικτῆτος χώρας ἐκλεξαμένην τοὺς εὐθέτους τόπους εἰς πόλεων κτίσεις οἰκοδομήσαι πλείους πόλεις, καὶ τούτων ὁμώνυμον μίαν ἑαυτῇ κτίσαι, τὰς δ' ἄλλας ἀπὸ τῶν τὰς ἡγεμονίας τὰς μεγίστας ἐχουσῶν, Κύμην, Πιτάναν, Πριήνην.

<sup>166</sup> Diodorus 3.55.7-9: Ταύτας μὲν οὖν οἰκίσαι παρὰ θάλατταν, ἄλλας δὲ πλείους ἐν τοῖς πρὸς μεσόγειον ἀνήκουσι τόποις. κατασχέειν δ' αὐτὴν καὶ τῶν νήσων τινὰς, καὶ μάλιστα τὴν Λέσβον, ἐν ἣ κτίσαι πόλιν Μυτιλήνην ὁμώνυμον τῇ μετεχούσῃ τῆς στρατείας ἀδελφῆ. ἔπειτα καὶ τῶν ἄλλων νήσων τινὰς καταστρεφόμενην χειμασθῆναι, καὶ ποιησαμένην τῇ μητρὶ τῶν θεῶν εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας προσενεχθῆναι νήσῳ τινὶ τῶν ἐρήμων· ταύτην δὲ κατὰ τινα ἐν τοῖς ὄνειροις φαντασίαν καθιερώσαι τῇ προειρημένῃ θεῷ καὶ βωμοὺς ἰδρύσασθαι καὶ θυσίας μεγαλοπρεπεῖς ἐπιτελέσαι· ὀνομάσαι δ' αὐτὴν Σαμοθράκην, ὅπερ εἶναι μεθερμηνευόμενον εἰς τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν διάλεκτον ἱερὰν νήσον· ἔνιοι δὲ τῶν ἱστορικῶν λέγουσι τὸ πρὸ τοῦ Σάμον αὐτὴν καλουμένην ὑπὸ τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν αὐτῇ ποτε Θρακῶν Σαμοθράκην

Looking ahead, we can guess that the continent the Amazons have returned to is Asia, because they are attacked in their Near Eastern territories by Mopsus the exiled Thracian and Sipylus the exiled Scythian. In battle the exiles gain the upper hand and kill Myrina and a large part of her army. Over the years, this exile army continues to attack the Amazons until they are forced to withdraw to Libya, where they never again venture out on military campaigns.<sup>167</sup> We know from previous sections on the Libyan Amazons that they will meet their fate at the hands of Heracles just as the Scythian Amazons would.

The Libyan Amazons' power primarily arises and continues through the reign of one queen, Myrina. Diodorus shows her to be a great leader and tactician, using her conquests and treatment of enemies as a means to achieve victory without bloodshed from time to time. The Amazons and their queen are confident and greedy, constantly pushing for new lands until a superior force overcomes them.

While the Scythian Amazons fall because of their fame and their ill treatment of those they conquer, the Libyan Amazons are targeted because of their political system, a matriarchy. Diodorus emphasizes the femaleness of the Amazon army and its leaders several times, drawing the reader back to this detail over and over, building up the importance of this particular oddity in society and government.

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ὀνομασθῆναι. οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἐπανελθουσῶν εἰς τὴν ἠπειρον μυθολογοῦσι τὴν μητέρα τῶν θεῶν εὐαρεστηθεῖσαν τῇ νήσῳ ἄλλου τῆς τινος ἐν αὐτῇ κατοικίσει καὶ τοὺς ἑαυτῆς υἱοὺς τοὺς ὀνομαζομένους Κορύβαντας· ἕξ οὐδ' εἰσι πατρὸς ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ κατὰ τὴν τελετὴν παραδίδοσθαι καταδειξάτω δὲ καὶ τὰ νῦν ἐν αὐτῇ συντελούμενα μυστήρια καὶ τὸ τέμενος ἄσυλον νομοθετῆσαι.

<sup>167</sup> Diodorus 3.55.10-11: Περὶ δὲ τούτους τοὺς χρόνους Μόψον τὸν Θράκα, φυγάδα γενόμενον ὑπὸ Λυκούργου τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Θρακῶν, ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν χώραν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων μετὰ στρατιᾶς τῆς συνεκπεσοῦσης αὐτῷ συστρατεύσει δὲ καὶ Σίπυλον τῷ Μόψῳ τὸν Σκύθην, πεφυγαδευμένον ὁμοίως ἐκ τῆς ὁμόρου τῆς Θράκης Σκυθίας. γενομένης δὲ παρατάξεως, καὶ τῶν περὶ τὸν Σίπυλον καὶ Μόψον προτερησάντων, τὴν τε βασίλισσαν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων Μύριναν ἀναιρεθῆναι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τὰς πλείους. τοῦ δὲ χρόνου προβαίνοντος, καὶ κατὰ τὰς μάχας αἰεὶ τῶν Θρακῶν ἐπικρατούντων, τὸ τελευταῖον τὰς περιλειφθείσας τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἀνακάμψαι πάλιν εἰς Λιβύην. καὶ τὴν μὲν στρατείαν τῶν ἀπὸ Λιβύης Ἀμαζόνων μυθολογοῦσι τοιοῦτο λαβεῖν τὸ πέρας.

Indeed, given that Diodorus describes the Gorgons as a matriarchy and shows their women to be the fighters, it seems reasonable to understand a gender commentary in this section of his work. Male heroes, Perseus and especially Heracles, destroy both peoples, and in both cases it is clearly stated that matriarchy is an unacceptable system in the eyes of Zeus's son. If there is a moral lesson in this story it might be that some forms of government are better than others, not just because of how the government works, but by the mere fact of who rules the people.

Reading in too much gender hatred as a morality lesson, though, ignores the fact that Diodorus clearly states that his Libyan Amazons are a summary of Dionysius's work from the previous century. The importance of the Amazons' gender roles must have been a large factor in Dionysius's story, because it is not such a strong focus in the tale of the Scythian Amazons. The destruction of the Amazons, is not the sole legend that Diodorus recounts and no other legends in his work call attention to the issue of matriarchy in the same way even if at times the tales can be viewed as supporting various forms of patriarchal government.

### The Battle with the Titans

Book III then returns to the history of the Atlantians, which becomes a vehicle for laying out variations on the origins and adventures of many gods. The Amazons play a role in these mythological accounts, and again Diodorus names Dionysius as his major source for the Amazons' participation in the greatest war of all: the battle between the Titans and the Olympian gods.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Diodorus 3.66.5-67.1.

The god Dionysus is the focus of much of book III, and now he becomes the partial reason for the Olympian gods' victory over their elders. Dionysus, hearing that Zeus is losing the war and that Cronus is marching on him at Nysa, gathers Nysian soldiers, 200 of whom are his foster-brothers, as well as Libyans and Amazons, previously mentioned for their courage and military campaigns. Athena is credited with urging the Amazons into the battle because they value manly courage and virginity as she does. This army is divided along sex lines, the men with Dionysus and the women with Athena. Together they fight the Titans, both sides losing many soldiers until Cronus is wounded and a battle-distinguished Dionysus is victorious.<sup>169</sup>

This is a very short story, and, assuming it is drawn from the same Dionysius as the Libyan Amazons were, some observations arise. The war between the Titans and Olympians probably takes place after the fall of Myrina but before the advent of Heracles, because the Amazons are well known, yet they are not portrayed as aggressors as they were under Myrina's rule. The author focuses on their femaleness but uses it here as an example of their unusual courage and as a connection to the goddess Athena, who is answering to the relatively new god, Dionysus. The battle itself is difficult, and the gods only achieve victory with great losses on all sides, so the Amazons' value is not diminished simply because they are

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<sup>169</sup> Diodorus 3.71.3-4: τὸν δὲ Διόνυσον πυθόμενον τὰ τε τοῦ πατρὸς ἐλαττώματα καὶ τὴν τῶν Τιτάνων ἐπ' αὐτὸν συνδρομήν, ἀθροῖσαι στρατιώτας ἐκ τῆς Νύσης, ὧν εἶναι συντρόφους διακοσίους, διαφόρους τῆ τε ἀλκῆ καὶ τῆ πρὸς αὐτὸν εὐνοίᾳ· προσλαβέσθαι δὲ καὶ τῶν πλησιοχώρων τοὺς τε Λίβυας καὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας, περὶ ὧν προειρήκαμεν ὅτι δοκοῦσιν ἀλκῆ διενεγκεῖν, καὶ πρῶτον μὲν στρατείαν ὑπερόριον στείλασθαι, πολλὴν δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης τοῖς ὅποις καταστρέψασθαι. μάλιστα δ' αὐτὰς φασὶ παρορμηθεῖν πρὸς τὴν συμμαχίαν Ἀθηνᾶν διὰ τὸν ὅμοιον τῆς προαιρέσεως ζῆλον, ὡς ἂν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἀντεχομένων ἐπὶ πολὺ τῆς ἀνδρείας καὶ παρθενίας. διηρημένης δὲ τῆς δυνάμεως, καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν στρατηγούντος Διονύσου, τῶν δὲ γυναικῶν τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἐχούσης Ἀθηνᾶς, προσπεσόντας μετὰ τῆς στρατιᾶς τοῖς Τιτᾶσι συνάψαι μάχην. γενομένης δὲ παρατάξεως ἰσχυρᾶς, καὶ πολλῶν παρ' ἀμφοτέρους πεσόντων, τρωθῆναι μὲν τὸν Κρόνον, ἐπικρατῆσαι δὲ τὸν Διόνυσον ἀριστεύσαντα κατὰ τὴν μάχην.

women. It is interesting, though, that Dionysus's army is split along gender lines, each portion commanded by one of the children that Zeus himself "gave birth to" in some fashion. Given that Dionysius the author brought out a gender commentary in the Libyan section it may be that he is continuing that trend in dividing the troops; however, there is no explicit reason for this connection between sex of the leader and the sex of the troops. Likewise the two deities in command may be connected because of their unusual births but that is also not expanded upon in Diodorus.

To someone reading this section on the Amazons' aid in the war against the Titans it might seem odd that they would participate in the army of Dionysus, though perhaps not necessarily that they would fight under the banner of Athena. However, Diodorus has been laying out and discussing several variations of the Greek myths surrounding Dionysus.<sup>170</sup> He spends the bulk of this section about the god Dionysus summarizing the work of the writer Dionysius, in which Amazons and military conflicts seem have to been a primary focus. By including the story of the Amazons during the Titan war, Diodorus might seem to throw his entire chronology into question, except, as he states, these are earlier women warriors living on another continent and not those with whom his audience would be most familiar.

As a moral lesson, the Amazons as warriors in this story seem difficult to assess. The Libyan Amazons in this legend about the Titanomachy lack the arrogance and far-reaching imperial goals they displayed in previous chapters. If they do not lack these ethnic qualities, then the god Dionysus has succeeded in

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<sup>170</sup> Diodorus 3.62-73.

incorporating them into a male-led army as no one else could have. Perhaps the lesson is that only the Olympian gods could curb the desires of the Amazon nation. While this hypothesis may seem contrived at this point in our discussion one of the sons of Zeus, king of the Olympians, will again defeat the Amazons.

### Heracles's War with the Amazons

Book IV continues the discussion of mythology but focuses on individual tales about the gods and heroes from a Greek perspective.<sup>171</sup> There is no systematic reminder of the earlier discussions in the "table of contents" as Diodorus did for earlier books, though Diodorus does make references to these previous sections whenever he revisits the same god or demigod. His attempt to recount and understand the mythology is something that he claims no other writer has had the courage to do because there are so many variations and very few truly ancient documents to draw upon.<sup>172</sup> Since this book centers on Greek mythology he only returns to the Scythian Amazons and ignores those in Libya. Instead of simply repeating what he has said he narrows down the Amazon discussion to two legends: Heracles and the battle with Athens. These he bases on the "most ancient poets and writers of myths,"<sup>173</sup> and the language suggests these are not the same sources from which he drew the earlier Scythian account.

The ninth labor of Heracles calls for the hero to take the girdle from the Amazon queen Hippolytê as mentioned in book II. At the capital of Themiscyra at

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<sup>171</sup> Diodorus 4.5.

<sup>172</sup> Diodorus 4.1-4.

<sup>173</sup> Diodorus 4.8.5, translated by C.H. Oldfather, p. 367.

the mouth of the Thermodon River, Heracles demands the girdle, but the queen refuses, so the son of Zeus and his followers go to war with them. The two armies fight, with the best of the Amazons opposite Heracles himself. The author lists 13 named Amazons, along with some unique detail about each one, but omits the manner of their deaths. Finally Heracles bests the commander of the Amazons, Melanippê, and destroys most of the remaining Amazon army. He gives Antiopê to Theseus and Melanippê her freedom in exchange for her girdle.<sup>174</sup>

Even though this is a short tale, it is rich in details, some of which show the variety in the legends as well as Diodorus's odd combining of them. As with the earlier Scythian Amazon account, the queen of the Amazons who possesses the desired girdle is named Hippolytê, but this is only true at the beginning of this account. Since there is no mention that Heracles fails this labor, we can assume his success when he instead takes the girdle of Melanippê. The only logical explanation is that Diodorus recalled the earlier author's account and began this section from his memory, then, desiring to add detail to the battle, turned to another source, which used a different name for the queen. This particular passage supports the charges

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<sup>174</sup> Diodorus 4.16: Ἡρακλῆς δὲ λαβὼν πρόσταγμα τὸν Ἴππολύτης τῆς Ἀμαζόνος ἐνεγκεῖν ζωστήρα, τὴν ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνων στρατείαν ἐποίησατο. πλεύσας οὖν εἰς τὸν Εὐξείνιον ὑπ' ἐκείνου κληθέντα Πόντον, καὶ καταπλεύσας ἐπὶ τὰς ἐκβολὰς τοῦ Θερμῶδοντος ποταμοῦ πλησίον Θεμισκύρας πόλεως κατεστρατοπέδευσεν, ἐν ἧ τὰ βασιλεία τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ὑπῆρχε. καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἦται παρ' αὐτῶν τὸν προστεταγμένον ζωστήρα ὡς δ' οὐχ ὑπήκουον, συνῆψε μάχην αὐταῖς. τὸ μὲν οὖν ἄλλο πλῆθος αὐτῶν ἀντετάχθη τοῖς πολλοῖς, αἱ δὲ τιμιώταται κατ' αὐτὸν ταχθεῖσαι τὸν Ἡρακλέα μάχην καρτεράν συνεστήσαντο. πρώτη μὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ συνάψασα μάχην Ἄελλα, διὰ τὸ τάχος ταύτης τετευχία τῆς προσηγορίας, ὀξύτερον εὗρεν αὐτῆς τὸν ἀντιταχθέντα. δευτέρα δὲ Φιλίππιδες εὐθὺς ἐκ τῆς πρώτης συστάσεως καιρίῳ πληγῇ περιπεσοῦσα διεφθάρη. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα Προθόη συνῆψε μάχην, ἣν ἐκ προκλήσεως ἔφασαν ἐπτάκις νενικηκέναι τὸν ἀντιταξάμενον. πεσοῦσης δὲ καὶ ταύτης, τετάρτην χειρῶσατο τὴν ὀνομαζομένην Ἐρίβοιαν. αὕτη δὲ διὰ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἀνδραγαθίαν καυχωμένη μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχειν βοήθου ψευδῆ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν ἔσχε κρείττονι περιπεσοῦσα. μετὰ δὲ ταύτας Κελαινὴ καὶ Εὐρυβία καὶ Φοίβη, τῆς Ἀρέμιδος οὖσαι συγκυνηγοὶ καὶ διὰ παντὸς εὐστόχως ἀκοντίζουσαι, τὸν ἕνα στόχον οὐκ ἔτρωσαν, ἀλλ' ἑαυταῖς συνασπίζουσαι τότε πᾶσαι κατεκόπησαν. μετὰ δὲ ταύτας Δηιάνειραν καὶ Ἀστερίαν καὶ Μάρπην, ἔτι δὲ Τέκμησον καὶ Ἀλκίππην ἐχειρώσατο. αὕτη δ' ὁμόσασα παρθένος διαμενεῖν τὸν μὲν ὄρκον ἐφύλαξε, τὸ δὲ ζῆν οὐ διετήρησεν. ἡ δὲ τὴν στρατηγίαν ἔχουσα τῶν Ἀμαζόνων Μελανίππη καὶ θαυμαζομένη μάλιστα δι' ἀνδρείαν ἀπέβαλε τὴν ἡγεμονίαν. Ἡρακλῆς δὲ τὰς ἐπιφανεστάτας τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων ἀνελών καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν πλῆθος φυγεῖν συναναγκάσας, κατέκοψε τὰς πλείστας, ὥστε παντελῶς τὸ ἔθνος αὐτῶν συντριβῆναι. τῶν δ' αἰχμαλωτῶν Ἀντιόπην μὲν ἐδώρησατο Θησεῖ, Μελανίππην δ' ἀπελύτρωσεν ἀντιλαβὼν τὸν ζωστήρα.

against Diodorus that he did not edit what he “copied” or summarized. However, he seems to have chosen individual accounts for an immediate goal: to promote the magnificence of Heracles and Dionysus at a particular point in his writing. If a source he now used did not match earlier sources, Diodorus does not seem to be concerned that his readers might be able to see these contradictions. His heroes are great and therefore is the Olympian structure they represent.

The second thing of note in this passage is that the Amazons are unique while the battle itself is vague, reminiscent of the Scythian Amazon account.<sup>175</sup> Heracles overwhelmingly conquers each opponent, but the author barely mentions his companions other than stating that they were there, so we know the demigod is really the force that the Amazons must face. Some of their names relate to some uniqueness about them, but not their manner of death, and only occasionally their abilities or their reputation.<sup>176</sup> Not all of the Amazons’ names have specific meanings, though, that add to the images in the reader’s mind. The entire passage, then, seems more like an attempt to build up Heracles’s might by making his opponents important enough to name, while he is so powerful that the details of how he kills them are unnecessary. He is Heracles; of course he will be victorious. Given that Diodorus mentions how difficult recounting the hero’s life is,<sup>177</sup> it seems

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<sup>175</sup> Diodorus 2.46.

<sup>176</sup> Some of the names are easy to see a meaning for. Aella is swift, because her name means a “stormy wind,” which would be fierce and rapid. Philippis might be horse-loving, though no cavalry is mentioned in the battle. Prothoë’s name might mean “springing forward.” Eriboea, who is “loud” with her boasting, is bested. Celaeno, Eurybia, and Phoebê are more difficult to understand in connection to Artemis, though clearly we can say that Phoebê is the feminine form of Phoebus, another name for Apollo, Artemis’s brother. Eurybia might be related to εὐροσθενής meaning “far-extended might” perhaps relating to the spears mentioned while Celaeno seems to simply mean “dark or black.” Deianeira, Asteria, Marpê, Tecmessa and Alcippê are quickly overcome Melanippê, the commander and perhaps the queen as well since her girdle is ransomed, might mean washed in black or covered in black.

<sup>177</sup> Diodorus 4.8.1.



that by including so many details he can bolster his claim to be doing something that earlier writers did not attempt. Diodorus also attempts to deflect any criticism of what he recounts by declaring the value of the stories to be greater than any standard of credibility.<sup>178</sup> He therefore believes that readers should value his work with Heracles and the other myths for its grand scheme, for the moral lessons that emerge, and not for accuracy or consistency.<sup>179</sup> Right now the reader should be focused on Heracles's ability to conquer the nation of warrior women and the lesson this may offer about life: survive and protect civilization against all odds.<sup>180</sup>

Heracles is not yet a god, so he must kill the Amazons, because, unlike the full god Dionysus, he cannot control them. Similarly, anyone other than the son of Zeus cannot easily resist the Amazon warriors. In the full accounts of the Scythian and Libyan Amazons, it took entire nations banding together to start undermining Amazon power after they became too far-flung and cruel. Heracles may not be as powerful as a god but he is certainly superior to entire nations of mere mortals. At this point the Amazon legends seem to be less focused on teaching gender roles and more focused on presenting them as mighty opponents for those who can bide their time and seize the opportunity to attack them, or for those who simply have the strength to resist and overthrow them. This setup of the mighty Amazons, then,

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<sup>178</sup> Diodorus 4.8.2-5.

<sup>179</sup> Strabo, as we shall see in the next chapter, considered these accuracy and consistency to be very important, but we should not assume that his opinion reflects the majority of authors and readers.

<sup>180</sup> Unlike the modern hero, Greek heroes are basically revered for their ability to survive all the hardships in their lives. A solid investigation of the hero in several cultures may be found in Otto Rank, Fitzroy Richard Somerset Raglan and Alan Dundes, *In Quest of the Hero*, Mythos (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). A layperson's discussion of the Greek hero may be found in Stephen L. Harris and Gloria Platzner, *Classical Mythology: Images and Insights* (Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998) 228-31.

makes the mere mortal *polis* of Athens even more impressive because it places the city on the same level as Heracles.

## The War on Athens

Into this paradigm of Amazons as mighty opponents will step an important Greek city, Athens. Diodorus continues to relate the remaining labors of Heracles, with side ventures as the demigod brings justice and freedom to lands ranging from Asia Minor to Italy and northern Africa.<sup>181</sup> These adventures take some time, during which the surviving Scythian Amazons gather an army to attack Athens, because Theseus enslaved Antiopê, although other writers say Hippolytê, who was the leader of the Amazons. The Scythians join forces with the Amazons, and together they march from the Thermodon to Attica, where they camp in a place called “the Amazoneum.” Theseus and Antiopê, the mother of his son Hippolytus, fight on the side of the Athenians, who through superior bravery achieve victory. Some of the Amazons are killed, while others are driven from Attica. Antiopê herself dies heroically. The Amazons give up their ancestral lands to live among the Scythians. For Diodorus this is enough information about the Amazons, so he returns to the adventures of Heracles.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Diodorus 4.17-27.

<sup>182</sup> Diodorus 4.28: Τοῦ δ' Ἡρακλέους περὶ ταῦτ' ὄντος φασὶ τὰς ὑπολειφθεῖσας Ἀμαζόνας περὶ τὸν Θερμῶδοντα ποταμὸν ἀθροισθεῖσας πανδημῆι σπεῦσαι τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἀμύνασθαι περὶ ὧν Ἡρακλῆς στρατεύσας διειργάσατο. διαφορώτατα δὲ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἐφιλοτιμοῦντο Κολάσαι διὰ τὸ τὸν Θησέα καταδεδουλώσθαι τὴν ἡγεμόνα τῶν Ἀμαζόνων Ἀντιόπην, ὡς δ' ἔνιοι γράφουσιν, Ἴππολύτην. συστρατεύσαντων δὲ τῶν Σκυθῶν ταῖς Ἀμαζόσι συνέβη δύναμιν ἀξιόλογον ἀθροισθῆναι, μεθ' ἧς αἱ προηγούμεναι τῶν Ἀμαζονίδων περαιωθεῖσαι τὸν Κιμμέριον Βόσπορον προῆγον διὰ τῆς Θράκης. τέλος δὲ πολλὴν τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐπελθοῦσαι κατήντησαν εἰς τὴν Ἀττικὴν, καὶ κατεστρατοπέδευσαν ὅπου νῦν ἐστὶ τὸ καλούμενον ἀπ' ἐκείνων Ἀμαζονεῖον. Θησεὺς δὲ πυθόμενος τὴν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἔφοδον ἐβοήθει ταῖς πολιτικαῖς δυνάμεσιν, ἔχων μεθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὴν Ἀμαζονίδα Ἀντιόπην, ἐξ ἧς ἦν πεπαιδοποιημένος υἱὸν Ἴππόλυτον. συνάψας δὲ μάχην ταῖς Ἀμαζόσι, καὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ὑπερχόντων ταῖς ἀνδραγαθίαις ἐνίκησαν οἱ περὶ τὸν Θησέα, καὶ τῶν ἀντιταχθεῖσων Ἀμαζονίδων ἃς μὲν κατέκοψαν, ἃς δ' ἐκ τῆς Ἀττικῆς ἐξέβαλον. συνέβη δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἀντιόπην συναγωνισαμένην τάνδρι

Judging by word choice, tone, and the different names for the captured Amazon leader, it seems that Diodorus is relying on a different source here than he did in his previous recounting of the ninth labor of Heracles. Diodorus does not specify a new author, but this is not uncommon in ancient writing. The Athenian victory over the Amazons just inside Athenian territory is related to the earlier battle with Heracles but is independent of it in terms of its outcome and cause, suggesting that the source for this legend saw the Athenian-Amazon war as worthy of mention in its own right. The Amazon motivation changes from revenge for Heracles's attack to revenge for Theseus's capture of one of their leaders, again suggesting that the focus has changed from the great demigod to the Theseus legend. Regardless of her name, Antiopê or Hippolytê, this captured Amazon fights with the Athenians against her own people, probably because of her child, yet she has not become like any ordinary woman, since she fights well enough to distinguish herself and die a heroic death.

Much could be made of the cause of the Athenian victory, which is described as ἀνδραγαθείαις. While it is true that this compound word contains “ἀνδρα,” which refers to the qualities of a male human being and not a female or generic human being, this passage does not say that the victory is because the Athenians are men but because they have greater bravery or manly virtue, or perform more brave deeds, in addition to having the help of Antiopê and Theseus, leaders in their own right. Given that the Amazon fighting with the Athenians is as brave as the men of

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θησεῖ, καὶ κατὰ τὴν μάχην ἀριστεύουσαν, ἥρωικῶς καταστρέψαι τὸν βίον. αἱ δ' ὑπολειφθεῖσαι τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἀπογονοῦσαι τὴν πατρώαν γῆν, ἐπανήλθον μετὰ τῶν Σκυθῶν εἰς τὴν Σκυθίαν καὶ μετ' ἐκείνων κατώκησαν.

Ἡμεῖς δ' ἀρκούντως περὶ τούτων διεληλυθότες ἐπάνιμεν πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰς Ἡρακλέους πράξεις.

the *polis*, it seems unlikely that victory is assured merely because of the sex of those fighting. The important message concerns Athens itself.

Athens is the only city in all the legends about Amazons that withstands an Amazon attack. This fact was important for Athenians, as we saw in Herodotus<sup>183</sup> and in the speech of Lysias<sup>184</sup> that it was used to support their political prominence among other Greek *poleis*. Likewise, in this version Diodorus shows the city's citizens as possessing better military qualities than the invaders. Their government system, too, might explain their victory, for even in very patriarchal Athens, Antiope sometimes has authority and power, which men completely lack among the Scythian and Libyan Amazons, according to the earlier sections of Diodorus. Theseus is a great leader, but he does not fight alone; the Athenian warriors and his Amazon captive/wife must aid him to destroy the invaders. This passage is short and direct, hinting at great battles without describing them. Given the detail with which Diodorus tells the Heracles legend and describes the Scythian and Libyan Amazons, the lack of detail here is rather surprising at first. The focus is on Athens's victory over the Amazons, not on another demigod who could compete with Heracles, nor on a victory of men over women or of a hero over an amazing foe. The Athenian legend is important enough to mention, but it cannot outshine the figures of Heracles and Dionysus. Athens is a new category of hero where the citizen-soldier and even some women will defend their *polis* and therefore does not undermine the power and might of the great god and hero. However, there is a

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<sup>183</sup> Herodotus 9.27.

<sup>184</sup> Lysias *Funeral Oration* 4-6.

mere mortal whose exploits might challenge Dionysus or Heracles because he deals with the Amazons on the individual level: Alexander.

### Alexander and the Amazon Queen

Diodorus turns from the mythological to the historical as he continues his universal history, and thus leaves behind the Amazons, until he recounts the life of Alexander, Macedonian king and conqueror of the Near East and Egypt, in books 16 to 17 of his work. Among several unique and strange encounters, the king has one that involves the Amazons again. Most scholars believe Diodorus relied heavily on Cleitarchus, who may have been one of the Macedonian's own historians, for his Alexander section, and although Hammond argues for two separate sources,<sup>185</sup> he agrees that Cleitarchus is the source for the Amazon story.

In book 17 we get the story of a meeting between the Macedonian king and the Amazon queen Thallestris.<sup>186</sup> In short, the Amazon queen and Alexander mate with the goal of creating a child of superior military and leadership skills. It is a logical goal, one that has nothing to do with gods or challenges from others, as is the case in the heroic legends. Diodorus makes several details of this procreative adventure clear.

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<sup>185</sup> Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander* 12-85.

<sup>186</sup> Diodorus 17.77.1-3: Ἐπανελθόντος δ' αὐτοῦ πάλιν εἰς τὴν Ἰγκανίαν ἦκεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡ βασίλισσα τῶν Ἀμαζόνων, ὄνομα μὲν Θάλληστρις, βασιλεύουσα δὲ τῆς μεταξὺ τοῦ Φάσιδος καὶ Θερωμόδοντος χώρας. ἦν δὲ τῷ τε κάλλει καὶ τῇ τοῦ σώματος ῥώμῃ διαφέρουσα καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ὁμοεθνεῖσι θαυματομένη κατ' ἀνδρείαν, καὶ τὸ μὲν πλῆθος τῆς στρατιᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρων τῆς Ἰγκανίας ἀπολελοιπυῖα, μετὰ δὲ τριακοσίων Ἀμαζονίδων κεκοσμημένων πολεμικοῖς ὄπλοις παραγενομένη. τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως θαυμάζοντος τό τε παράδοξον τῆς παρουσίας καὶ τὸ ἀξίωμα τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τὴν Θάλληστριν ἐρομένου τίνα χρεῖαν ἔχουσα πάρεστιν, ἀπεφαίνετο παιδοποιίας ἕνεκεν ἦκειν. ἐκείνον μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀνδρῶν διὰ τὰς πράξεις ἄριστον ὑπάρχειν, αὐτὴν δὲ τῶν γυναικῶν ἀλκὴ τε καὶ ἀνδρεία διαφέρειν· εἰκὸς οὖν τὸ γεννηθὲν ἐκ δυεῖν γονέων πρωτευόντων ὑπερέξειν ἀρετῇ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων. καὶ πέρας ἡσθεῖς ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ προσδεχάμενος τὴν ἔντευξιν αὐτῆς καὶ συμπεριενεχθεὶς ἡμέρας τρεισκαίδεκα τιμήσας τε ἀξιολόγοις δώροις ἐξαπέστειλεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν.

According to Diodorus, it is the Amazons who initiate contact with Alexander and his army. He describes Thallestris in physical terms of strength and appearance; her name may be related to ΘΑΛΛΩ, a term referring to fertility, youth or growing, which makes sense given her motherly goals in the story. However, while Diodorus simply states that she is quite beautiful, he describes her bravery only from the Amazons' point of view and the Queen's statement to Alexander that she is the best of her people. Alexander does not require any more proof than her claim of leadership and the presence of her 300 female warriors. Her flattery of him probably also plays a role, but not as big a role as we might expect since he seems initially impressed by these female warriors coming to him.<sup>187</sup> The goal to produce the best of all offspring seems to appeal to Alexander as well as Thallestris, who may still be the leader of a vibrant people.

The Macedonian is near the region of Scythia, and Diodorus hopes his readers will recall that the Amazons retired here after the Athenian victory in the previous legend,<sup>188</sup> so while the queen could come to visit with her entire army, she leaves most of it behind, as she enters the army camp with only three hundred women, dressed in full armor. The number of Amazon warriors who accompany their queen, the mention that far more are left behind, and their use of armor create an image of a still impressively strong nation.

Alexander in this account is pleased and flattered by the queen's request. After accepting, he becomes the more active party, for he determines the number of

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<sup>187</sup> I have previously discussed how other Asian and Near Eastern rulers tried to use the Amazons to impress Alexander. TammyJo Eckhart, "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis," *Aeon: A Journal of Myth and Science* IV.4 (1996).

<sup>188</sup> Diodorus 4.28.

days they give to the mating, 13, though Diodorus attributes no particular importance to this number, and sends her away with gifts. Alexander is, of course, the focus of this tale, because the queen praises his skills as being greater than all other men's, and because the king makes the decisions after agreeing to mate with her. By the end of the passage, Thallestris simply follows his orders and leaves.

Alexander, then, has experienced the only peaceful encounter with the Amazons in all of Diodorus's history. He does not seek them out, nor do they come to conquer; instead they come to enrich their own people with the blood, or, as we might say, the genes, of a great king. Aside from the fact that the reader might be surprised even to find Amazons still extant, Diodorus represents this story simply as one of the many things that happened to the Macedonian king. He does not question it, nor does he offer any alternative versions. Therefore, either his sources for the life of Alexander<sup>189</sup> must all agree on this event, or he must be using only one source. Moreover, Diodorus himself considers this group to be an offshoot of the survivors of the Amazons' battles with Heracles and Athens. Perhaps Thallestris has learned to bow to the greater political power, Alexander, without sacrificing her people's lives.

The Amazons, then, can be used to bolster the power and might of a great mortal ruler such as Alexander. They do not, however, place him in a position superior to the demigod, the god, or the *polis* for a few reasons. First, unlike Heracles or Theseus, who actively seek out Amazons and conquer them, Alexander

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<sup>189</sup> How many sources Diodorus used for his history of Alexander is debated by scholars today. Hammond argues as soundly as a modern scholar can that Cleitarchus is the source for the Amazon passage. Hammond, Three Historians of Alexander 59, 79.

is much more passive. This may suggest that he is more worthy of their admiration, as Dionysus was, or simply that the times have changed and that these Amazons must play into the existing political and military power in order to survive. Similarly, Alexander gets almost nothing from this encounter other than a brief legend, whereas Heracles fulfills one of his labors, Theseus gets a mate and son, Athens gets a mighty victory usable as political clout, and Dionysus gets a military unit with which to defeat the Titans. So this deed of Alexander seems to pale beside the previous encounters, but it certainly adds to his overall position among the greatest mortal leaders via a unique experience.

### How Do the Amazons Fit into *The Historical Library*?

While Herodotus offered his readers numerous stories about the people who lived in the shadow of the Persian army, he always returned to the discussion of the war itself and the Greek role in it. If one looks for such a focal point in Diodorus, one will be disappointed. But one can still find some structure to his universal historical library. The first six books of Diodorus might be called the “mythology” section, because they deal with legends about peoples and the lives of gods. Beginning in book 6 and continuing through book 8, Diodorus turns his attention to cosmology and questions of philosophy about human nature. Beginning with book 9 the subjects become firmly historical, with sidelines into legendary figures from time to time.<sup>190</sup> By the time he gets to Alexander, a clearly historical figure,

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<sup>190</sup> Division between the subjects of Diodorus’s work are commonly accepted by different scholars, though how they subdivide them varies; Diodorus 4.6-7 provides us with an overview of his entire work. For Sacks the division is between the “cultural progress” of books 1-8 and the “history” proper for the rest of the universal work (Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* 55-116). Stylianou, following Diodorus’s own overview more closely, makes three divisions: those leading up to the Trojan War (books 1-6), from the Trojan



Diodorus's account has changed from myths to history, but a history where mythological characters can still build up men's reputations.<sup>191</sup> Diodorus divides the Amazons neatly into geographical and subject sections: Scythia, then Libya, followed by their connection to two different sons of Zeus and their role in some of the major events covered in Diodorus's first four books. The Amazons thus fit well into the general flow and topic of each chapter they appear in.

In Herodotus, I argued earlier, Amazons not only offer alternatives to how competing people could interact but also help justify Greek involvement in the Persian war. The overall theme in Herodotus seems to be to display the variety of people whom, regardless of differences in institutions and beliefs, are affected by the Persian empire; most of these people fight back with varying degrees of success. However, in Diodorus's universal history, as Kenneth Sacks argues, there are several overarching themes, including morality, fortune, progress, philanthropy, and the universality of the human condition.<sup>192</sup> If Sacks is correct in seeing these general themes, should we not see them played out in the Amazon stories' selection, placement, and treatment? Diodorus tells us in his introduction that he is teaching moral lessons to help his reader lead a better life, though he does not specify these

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War to the death of Alexander (books 7-17) and from Alexander to Caesar's Gallic War (books 17-40). Stylianou, Commentary Diodorus Book 15 17.

<sup>191</sup> Sacks suggests that Diodorus purposely wrote to make both Alexander and Caesar "god-men" thus comparing them to the gods of the first five chapters. Sacks, Diodorus Siculus and the First Century 172, 79. Eckhart, "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis": 87-104, was one of my first attempts to investigate the Amazon legend and Alexander the Great. Much of what I said in this article I still consider quite valid though a bit introductory.

<sup>192</sup> Sacks, Diodorus Siculus and the First Century 23-25, 36-40, 205. Other scholars disagree and see Diodorus's work as two separate projects. The first looks at religious issues while the second half attempts to recount "history." Among those in disagreement with Sacks are Walter Spoerri, Späthellenistische Berichte über Welt, Kultur und Götter. (Basel: Friederich Reinhardt, 1959), and Michel Casevitz, Diodore De Sicile: Naissance des Dieux et des Hommes (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991).

themes as Sacks does.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, Diodorus makes use of summaries before each book that may offer us insight into any general moral lessons he is trying to teach. The Amazons do not seem to fit neatly into the moral lessons beyond heroic veneration.

Diodorus's use of summaries at the beginning of each book encourages his reader to interpret the tales in that book as a coherent part of his cumulative universal history. These summaries are a continuation of a common practice among historians preceding Diodorus, who liked to set out their histories in easily handled bookrolls.<sup>194</sup> This practice helped readers remember earlier stories and any "historiographic principle" the author wished to focus on,<sup>195</sup> which could be especially useful in cases where readers could not read the books of a work in one sitting or even in the correct sequence. The fact that Diodorus's summaries mention the Amazons numerous times strongly suggests that he expected his reader to see some connection between the nation of women warriors, the heroes they encounter, and his own agenda as the author, which he claims is to teach moral lessons.

Clearly one can attempt to read grand moral lessons into these stories about appropriate government or even correct gender relationships, as Diodorus blatantly stated in the tales about the Libyan Amazons, who are driven to conquer everyone around them until Heracles destroys their matriarchy. However, the lessons are not consistent. Antiopê fights bravely to defend Athens — an Amazon defending a

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<sup>193</sup> Diodorus 1.3.

<sup>194</sup> Catherine Rubincam, "How Many Books did Diodorus Siculus Originally Intend to Write?" The Classical Quarterly 48.1 (1998): 230.

<sup>195</sup> Rubincam, "How Many Books did Diodorus Siculus Originally Intend to Write?" 232.

patriarchy rather than promoting a violent matriarchy. Perhaps, then, the Amazons themselves do not teach a single moral lesson about gender roles or government but instead serve as examples of the might of various heroes, both historical and mythological; these heroes then offer lessons that a reader could use to lead a more moral life.

Part of the universal nature of Diodorus is the fact that he includes not just historical events but also mythological ones, as Herodotus did, and Amazons certainly fit into any mythological period because they primarily lived during the age of heroes. However, he does not only organize the myths according to which people believe them, but also by where the events and characters from the myths are occurring. In Diodorus, Amazons appear in three separate locations: Asia, Africa, and Europe, even though there is no surviving evidence that the Amazons are in reality anything other than a Greek legend. Amazons also appear in the myths and legends about Heracles, Dionysus, Athens, and Alexander. The result seems a bit confused, as we return repeatedly to the legend of Heracles but with different tones and details for each encounter. Diodorus's goal is not to present a single authoritative version of the legend but to promote Heracles as a demigod and hero, someone his reader can learn from to lead a more moral life.

The Amazons repeatedly build up the reputations of others in Diodorus by either being the great horror that must be conquered or the mighty force that can be used by the hero. The Scythian Amazons terrorize half their own population (males) as well as those they conquer. The Libyan Amazons are even worse, as they conquer other legendary peoples using brute force and psychological warfare. Their violent lives turn outward and inward as they mutilate themselves and expand their holdings. It seems so easy to see a lesson here about how a nation can risk falling so

low that it destroys itself internally and allows its enemies to attack from outside. On the reader's scale the example might be how not to behave or how to challenge those who use their might to force their will onto others.

However, the section concerning the god Dionysus changes the view of the Amazons in Diodorus. Amazons are not necessarily imperial, they do not have to fall, and they do not have to be destroyed, if there exists someone powerful enough to utilize them in a better way. The god Dionysus uses them in what is arguably the greatest war of all time, but he uses them by understanding their form of government and deciding to put Athena in charge of them. At first it may seem like this entire battle of the Titans is out of place in Diodorus until we realize whom Dionysus uses as his troops. All of those mythological peoples who have had their moments previously now fight on the side of the Olympians under the new god's command. In the Dionysus section, then, these legendary peoples become more powerful and more important to the reader, a reader who lives in the world made possible by the victory of the Olympians. These legendary peoples, though, only aid the new gods because the newest among them has the ability to unite them. This makes Dionysus quite powerful indeed in terms of creating a political system at the cosmic level, and the Amazons are a part of establishing this. Amazons have always been associated with great heroes, and after their usefulness to the Olympians, an unacculturated reader might expect them to change and become agents supporting the Olympian world.

Amazons continue to uphold this world order in the sections about Heracles and Athens. Diodorus specifically mentions that Heracles is saving the world from

matriarchy and even mentions Perseus's conquest of the Gorgons in the same passage, suggesting a similar feat has been performed.<sup>196</sup> While the earlier Diodoran sections show how powerful the Amazon nation was, Heracles slaughters them with little effort. However, he does not replace the old government with a new one but simply destroys it. Athens, with strong leadership from both a man and a woman (though she had been a captive), demonstrates the power of the *polis* form of government in resisting invasion. We might also see the further destruction of matriarchy with not only the fall of the Amazons but the death of Antiopê and the claims that men have more of those qualities which make them better warriors. But the focus is not on maleness or femaleness but on how the *polis* pulls together to achieve victory. If there is a moral lesson, then, it is that even an Amazon will defend the patriarchal world order if she is afforded some power and authority, in this case as king's wife. When the political structure changes, Amazons also change.

In the Alexander section the queen of the Amazons, Thallestris, behaves reasonably given the new political order that Alexander is creating. While various kings and tribal leaders offer him their daughters, the queen has enough power and authority to offer him herself. However, being an Amazon, the idea that she might join his harem or settle down seems unlikely. Alexander routinely has no interest in exercising direct control over the peoples he conquers but uses their existing political structure and customs with additional Macedonian and Greek oversight, so

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<sup>196</sup> Diodorus 3.55.3.

it is also perfectly logical that he would mate and then let Thallestris return to her homeland.<sup>197</sup>

Amazons, then, work to promote Dionysus, Heracles, Athens and Alexander. Each of these heroes establishes or defends some form of patriarchy. Dionysus helps to establish the Olympian variation where goddesses have specific realms of authority and will fight to maintain the rule of Zeus. Heracles may merely weaken the matriarchy of the Amazons, but Diodorus takes the opportunity to call this a great favor to all the world. Athens, while arguably not offering women as much authority or power as the Olympians, gives Antiopê enough to make it worth her while to fight and die for the *polis*. Finally Alexander, by respecting some of the local customs and political systems, takes the opportunity to incorporate the Amazons into his empire in a non-violent fashion. Diodorus used his sources in a way that builds up to a vision of the Amazons as part of the world, a world now dominated by another empire: Rome.

How much of a patriarchal interpretation for the Amazon legends is reasonable? It is true that all of the historical forms of government that the Greeks and Romans had could at some level be seen as forms of patriarchy. However, only in the final section about the Libyan Amazons does Diodorus emphasize that matriarchy is one of the problems with the Amazons. He does not repeat this charge of inappropriate government form, nor does he directly support patriarchy at any

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<sup>197</sup> Elizabeth Baynham suggests that Cleitarchus is actually attempting to show reconciliation between Greeks and barbarians which would make this legend similar to the motive driving Herodotus's use of the Amazons and Scythians. Elizabeth Baynham, "Alexander and the Amazons," Classical Quarterly 51.1 (2001): 115-26.

other point in his entire work. I think, then, that reading a pro-patriarchal agenda into Diodorus betrays more about those seeing it than about Diodorus's goals.

In order to find the legends that supported his heroes, Diodorus had to use Amazon legends as they had developed since the time of Homer. These legends survive primarily in brief passages, the exception being those previously discussed chapters of Herodotus. Diodorus's Amazons are quite different from Herodotus's, but they also differ greatly in detail and tone from other surviving Amazon legends, suggesting that Diodorus chose only those authors who could add to his goal of promoting heroes and the social and political systems they champion.

### The Amazon Legend by the First Century BCE

Perhaps Diodorus Siculus was little more than a copyist, but his work includes such detailed legends about the Amazons that he gives us vital evidence of how the legend had developed since Herodotus. Diodorus's legends about the Amazons contain more detail about their life on every level than any other surviving source from the ancient world. Had Diodorus been lost over the centuries, most descriptions of Amazons would be little more than the list of heroes they battled. If Diodorus is more than merely a copyist, then he must have chosen to use particular authors over others to help him show Heracles, Dionysus, Athens and Alexander as more powerful by overcoming or using a very powerful nation: the Amazons. In order to see just how unusual these details and this representation is, we need to look at what other sources were saying about Amazons by Diodorus's time.

While scholars often dismiss Diodorus's work for its poor quality, it might be best to understand him as a preserver of what he considered to be the best legends, histories, biographies, and studies of the past.<sup>198</sup> Stefan Rebenich makes a strong argument that, rather than a sign of the decay of Hellenistic literature, Diodorus is a good example of the "tragic style," whose goal was to present the events in a graphical way so that the reader could picture and feel them.<sup>199</sup> This fits well with the notion that Diodorus is choosing those Amazon legends that will increase the greatness of Dionysus, Heracles, Athens and Alexander.

The identified sources for Diodorus's Amazon passages stretch from Ctesias in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries to Dionysius in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. This suggests that Diodorus had access to variations of the legend spanning several centuries and his own discussion of his research confirms this.<sup>200</sup> His Amazons, then, are not a first century BCE variation but a reflection of what was still available by his lifetime. As we shall see, he chose the most detailed and intense variations to help him promote himself and his heroes who encountered or used the Amazons.

Most surviving Amazons appear in literature as minor side notes, just as they began in Homer.<sup>201</sup> In Aeschylus, Isocrates, Pindar, Lycophron, Apollonius, and the Hippocratic Corpus, they are mentioned as mothers, enemies, or just interesting

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<sup>198</sup> Diodorus 1.1-4 claims he has spent 30 years researching for his universal history using those sources he thought was best to help him make something useful to his readers.

<sup>199</sup> Stefan Rebenich, "Historical Prose," Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. - A.D. 400, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Brill, 1997) 287, 91-92.

<sup>200</sup> Diodorus 1.4.1-5.

<sup>201</sup> Homer *Iliad* 3.189, 6.186.



ethnic groups.<sup>202</sup> Details are brief, probably because the audience was expected to be familiar with the stories involving this people. Diodorus's long, detailed sections about Amazons are evidence that while brief Amazon notes survive in abundance, they do not represent how fully the legends had developed. As they developed, the Amazons were presented with different customs and different motivations.

The Amazon legends that Diodorus uses portray the nation of women warriors in the most aggressive manner possible in the case of the Libyan and Scythian Amazons, the earliest sections about the warrior women. They are imperial and vicious in their rule over conquered peoples as well as practicing mutilation of their own offspring and rigid gender roles. Some earlier authors agreed with this assessment but did so with fewer details in the case of the Athenian war against the Amazons<sup>203</sup> or in relation to Heracles's victories.<sup>204</sup> In each case, pride and greed drive the Amazons, but these are mere statements, unsupported by details of their actions. These details were in the sources that Diodorus used, and by using them he gives us a very full image of the warrior women that does not survive elsewhere.

Earlier Greek texts often portray the general motivation of the Amazons as blatant aggressiveness.<sup>205</sup> These texts contain comments stating that the Amazons

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<sup>202</sup> Aeschylus *Eumenides* 685-690, *Prometheus Bound* 415, 719-730, and *Suppliants* 287; Isocrates *Panegyricus* 68-70 & *Panathenaicus* 193-194; Pindar, *Fragment 172*, *Olympian* 8.46-48, 13.87-90, and *Nemean* 3.34-39; Lycophron *Alexandra* 993-1008; Apollonius *The Argonautica* 2.911-918, 965-7, 980-88; Hippocratic Corpus "On Joints" 53.1-10 and "Airs, Waters, Places" 17.1-18; Arctinus *Aethiopsis* 2.

<sup>203</sup> Aeschylus *Eumenides* 685-690; Lysias *Funeral Oration* 4-6; Isocrates *Panegyricus* 68-70 & *Panathenaicus* 193-194.

<sup>204</sup> Pindar, *Fragment 172*; Herodotus 4.110; Lycophron *Alexandra* 993-1008; Apollonius *The Argonautica* 2.911-918, 965-7.

<sup>205</sup> Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 719-730; Hippocratic Corpus "On Joints" 53.1-10; Lysias *Funeral Oration* 4-6; Isocrates *Panegyricus* 68-70; Apollonius *The Argonautica* 2.980-88.

invade territory because they love war or are the daughters of Ares, because they lack a sense of justice or hate men, or because they desire to control more lands and more people. Diodorus's choice of Ctesias and Dionysius for his Scythian and Libyan Amazons is therefore a great expansion on this standard Amazon character, for in his summary of these sources we see them with a detailed history of military aggression against their neighbors. Diodorus and his sources did not create a new motivation but emphasized Amazons' traditional belligerence with long detailed stories.

There were still other choices Diodorus could have made. The reasons for Amazons' behavior are not always aggressive in other writers. Sometimes they relate to the wrongs that they have suffered at the hands of Greek heroes.<sup>206</sup> At other times it is a matter of mere survival.<sup>207</sup> The oldest reason for the Amazons' actions is merely that it is part of their nature to be fearless, brave, and good in battle.<sup>208</sup> Diodorus and his sources include some references to these motivations in their work, but overall the driving pride and military focus of the Amazons overshadows all of them, making them appear to be an even greater enemy for Heracles to conquer, Dionysus to command, Athens to defeat and Alexander to incorporate into his empire. In turn these heroes then become greater by virtue of the difficulty of each victory.

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<sup>206</sup> Aeschylus *Eumenides* 685-690; Isocrates *Panathenaicus* 193-194.

<sup>207</sup> Herodotus 4.110-117.

<sup>208</sup> Homer *Iliad* 3.189, 6.186; Arctinus *Aethiopsis* 2; Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 415; Pindar, *Olympian* 8.46-48, 13.87-90; Pindar *Nemean* 3.34-39.

There are also clear statements of what modern people would call sexist reasons for the hero to conquer the Amazons in both the Scythian and Libyan legends that Diodorus uses. Diodorus and his sources were using gender in their descriptions of the Libyan Amazons in a way similar to Lysias in his *Funeral Oration*, where the Athenians defeat the Amazons in part because of their femaleness, which must yield to maleness.<sup>209</sup> However, by and large, Greek authors by the first century BCE seem to have just mentioned the fact that Amazons were female rather than dwelling on it or using the fact to explain their losses to the heroes. Therefore Diodorus and his sources appear to value the gender question more than other authors did yet gender is not the primary reason that heroes fight or encounter Amazons in Diodorus. Amazons represent one more powerful enemy that must be confronted in some fashion during the course of the hero's life but it is not the defining moment of his life.

Diodorus's promotion of the vicious Amazons is further reflected in the sources he chooses in terms of the etymology of their name. The term Amazon was the subject of some debate as Greek authors tried to understand the meaning of this non-Greek term.<sup>210</sup> This allows the Greek writer to make his etymology fit the character of the Amazons he is using. Michael Tichit's article about this phenomenon breaks down these etymologies into three groups based primarily on fragmentary and brief pieces of evidence: names related to their bodies, names from

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<sup>209</sup> Lysias *Funeral Oration* 4-6.

<sup>210</sup> Michel Tichit, "Le Nom des Amazones: Etymologie, Eponymie et Mythologie," *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes* 65.1 (1991): 229-42. Discussion of the etymology of "amazon" is widespread and repetitive in scholarship thus I will not reproduce it here when Tichit offers an excellent summary.

other cultures, and names related to how they live or behave.<sup>211</sup> The Amazons in Diodorus are so aggressive in their behavior that they mutilate their own bodies, and their name reflects this idea, thus Diodoran Amazons have a name related to both their bodies and to their culture, crossing two of Tichit's categories. This is the opposite of what Herodotus did when he explained that their neighbors called the Amazons by the Scythian word "Oiorpata" which he claims means "killers of men."<sup>212</sup> Herodotus hoped to demonstrate that his source is knowledgeable about the events he is recounting, but he also shows what the Amazons were known for among the Scythians: killing. Diodorus sticks closely to the familiar terms, never once mentioning what their neighbors called them nor what they called themselves, because he is less interested in proving the validity of his sources and more focused on building up an extremely violent image of the Amazons so that when the hero comes his victory will be greater.

The idea that some barbarians practiced mutilation was not new in the first century BCE. Hippocrates mentions this mutilation of the infant female breast among Scythians, not Amazons, but he does not credit it to their vicious nature, ascribing it instead to the desire for the women to hunt and fight with men.<sup>213</sup> Diodorus's sources probably drew from this same idea, combined with the Hippocratic report that the Amazons mutilate their male babies,<sup>214</sup> to recreate the term Amazon so as to focus on the female mutilation. Diodorus can use both these

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<sup>211</sup> Tichit, "Le Nom des Amazones: Etymologie, Eponymie et Mythologie": 230-31.

<sup>212</sup> Herodotus 4.110.

<sup>213</sup> Hippocratic Corpus "Airs, Waters, Places" 17.1-18.

<sup>214</sup> Hippocratic Corpus "On Joints" 53.1-10.

accounts, then, to create a fairly solid image of the Amazons as a violent people who take out their military hunger on the bodies of their young, both male and female.

The image of the extremely violent Amazon, then, was drawn from various ideas in circulation by the time Diodorus's sources were writing. Diodorus, therefore, may have chosen these versions because of the quality of the details they provided about the Scythian and Libyan Amazons that Heracles conquered. If so, this implies that for the Dionysus, Athens, and Alexander legends as well he chose the most detailed accounts he could find. The details, then, are what were important to Diodorus when collecting material for his universal history. By positioning the two national stories about the Scythian and Libyan Amazons first, Diodorus must have assumed his readers would recall these details and thus use the earlier image to evaluate the later encounters with others.

It seems reasonable, then, that Diodorus chooses Ctesias, Dionysius, and Cleitarchus as his sources because they include great details about everyone and everything they mention. These details create grand pictures in the readers' minds, for the first time collected together and presented in a unique order so as to build from one hero to the next. Each successive story helps each new hero appear greater because of the ones preceding it, leading neatly up to Alexander, who overshadows all other mortal rulers by not destroying or controlling the Amazons but by making an alliance with them in one of the ways they can uniquely do as women: through reproduction.

Diodorus, unlike Herodotus, is not giving us new interpretations of the Amazons by valuing them as individuals or as a people with neutral or positive qualities. There does not seem to be a single great moral lesson wrapped into the legends that his readers could grasp easily. Even claims that Diodorus contains

themes of the superiority of patriarchy over matriarchy or of men over women are based on little direct evidence, much assumption, and isolated examination of only certain stories.<sup>215</sup> Diodorus has remained true to the origins of the Amazons, as glorifiers for the heroes, be they gods, demigods, mighty cities, or great kings. Diodorus uses the greatest amount of detail he can find to build up the Amazons as aggressive, powerful people who validate the hero's own position by being destroyed, being controlled, or seeking out a connection to him. A mere copyist he is not, but a selective writer who preserves some of the greatest variations about Amazons, other legendary figures and historical events from Greek literature.

As Diodorus says in the first few chapters of his universal historical library, his goal was to present his readers with models of good or bad behavior so they might use that knowledge to lead better lives. He claimed that he used the best sources, but as we have seen he also chose them for details that would help promote certain heroes. This may be an admirable goal, but not one that other ancient authors shared. While Herodotus and Plutarch used Amazons to demonstrate good or bad qualities and options for their readers, Strabo – as we shall see – uses them for self promotion.

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<sup>215</sup> Blundell, *Women in Classical Athens* 62; Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro, "Excursus Amazons: Women in Control" 131-34; Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 1-3; Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Mythology* 19-20, are examples of this common interpretation.

## IV. Strabo: Amazons Becoming Fiction

Strabo was born into a changing Roman world in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE<sup>216</sup> and seems to have written his only surviving work, the *Geography*, as one single unrevised draft between 18 and 24 CE.<sup>217</sup> Rome controlled the Greek world and was rushing toward an imperial system of government when Strabo was getting his education from several Hellenistic scholars.<sup>218</sup> His education was fairly typical of his time, and his work on the world he lived in reflected his broad education in a variety of disciplines and his knowledge of the work of both Greek and Roman authors.<sup>219</sup>

Strabo constantly compares himself and his opinions to other geographers as well as historians and philosophers, frequently correcting their work, and a few of the corrections he makes in the course of the *Geography* involve the Amazons. Unlike Herodotus, who uses the Amazons as a primary example of diplomatic possibilities, and Diodorus, who promotes an ultra-violent Amazon nation as a heroic device, Strabo is only interested in Amazons as a tool to promote his own version of *Geography*.

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<sup>216</sup> Daniela Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia: A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (New York: Routledge, 2000) 2; Sarah Potheary, "The Expression 'Our Times' in Strabo's *Geography*," *Classical Philology* 92.3 (1997): 235-36, 45-46.

<sup>217</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 146-51, 66-68.

<sup>218</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 8-11, 15.

<sup>219</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 12-13, 92-96, 130-44; Katherine Clarke, "In Search of the Author of Strabo's *Geography*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997): 93.

Strabo's earlier work of history does not survive but suggests that his literary identity was first as a historian.<sup>220</sup> One of his claims is that he traveled far more than any previous writer had done.<sup>221</sup> Daniela Dueck argues that even if this were true, the number of sites and cities Strabo visited is quite limited.<sup>222</sup> The language and flow of the *Geography* make it difficult to separate what Strabo claims he has done from what he has merely read.<sup>223</sup> However, his own travels are not his chief pieces of support for promoting Homer or critiquing other authors.

Learning about Strabo as a man and a writer is a recurring problem for many surviving texts because autobiographical information is commonly fragmentary.<sup>224</sup> Earlier scholars argue over the details of his life and even place his lifetime and the period of the *Geography* as far apart as 50 years. All this disagreement reflects the fact that much of the personal information in Strabo is sporadic and spread out among all his books. His work, too, appears not to have had wide popularity during his life or for a few centuries after. Likewise, attempts to find imperial posts he held or Pontic court service produce nothing other than what is found in the *Geography*. Our only source for information about Strabo is Strabo.<sup>225</sup> Again, he does mention

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<sup>220</sup> Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 193-94.

<sup>221</sup> Strabo 2.5.11.

<sup>222</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 15-30; Maria Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 147; Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 240-42.

<sup>223</sup> Sarah Potheary, "Kolossourgia. 'A colossal statue of a work,'" *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 16-20.

<sup>224</sup> Clarke, "In Search of the Author of Strabo's Geography": 96-97, 100.

<sup>225</sup> Clarke, "In Search of the Author of Strabo's Geography": 109.



his own experience and background from time to time, but it is not his primary reason for dismissing other writers' work.

Modern scholars have also debated the quality of the *Geography*. Many scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries viewed him negatively. The same criticisms that plagued Diodorus's work were also leveled at Strabo. Ronald Syme flatly says that Strabo "has no style, and his opinions matter very little," because he is nothing but a hasty copyist whose work was little read and not even published within his lifetime.<sup>226</sup> His view summarizes much of the earlier opinion on Strabo. As we will see from just the sections that mention Amazons, Strabo often focuses on contradictions between earlier authors instead of giving his reader specific information about a region or a people.

Recent scholarship in the growing field of Strabonian studies takes a more positive approach toward the author and his surviving work. Some scholars take direct aim at claims that Strabo was ignorant of certain facts<sup>227</sup> or that he failed to provide accurate geographical descriptions of the world.<sup>228</sup> Earlier criticisms of the *Geography*, according to these defenders, ignore the cultural and intellectual context as well as Strabo's goals, which are not so much to create accurate maps of the world as to help those elite men who are his target audience learn about the world they

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<sup>226</sup> Ronald Syme, *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo*, ed. Anthony Birley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 356-57, 61.

<sup>227</sup> Sarah Potheary, "Strabo, Polybios, and the Stade," *Phoenix* 49.1 (1995): 49-67.

<sup>228</sup> Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth"; Sarah Potheary, "The European provinces: Strabo as evidence," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 161-79; Silvia Panichi, "Cappadocia through Strabo's eyes," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 200-15.

now rule and how they can rule it better.<sup>229</sup> These are telling points. Cultural and intellectual context, as we have seen in the cases of both Herodotus and Diodorus, and will see in this chapter concerning Strabo, is very important for understanding why an author uses the Amazons at all and what role they play in his work.

Others see Strabo as a focused and philosophical writer. Those who primarily hold this view are scholars who examine the *Geography* for overall meaning and look for any logical flow from the *Prolegomena*, the first two chapters of the *Geography*, into the rest of the work, which his introduction claims will be a useful text. The philosophical school most often associated with Strabo is the Stoic, in which practical knowledge and moderation were important.<sup>230</sup> Other scholars note how Strabo uses different philosophical techniques and praises as well as criticizes a wide range of philosophers.<sup>231</sup> Philosophical theories, though, fail to recognize how focused Strabo is on the problems in other authors and in countering any attacks on Homer's work.

Others see Strabo as a good example of the debates happening in the literary and scholarly circles of the early imperial period.<sup>232</sup> One debate concerned the validity of various sources and the appropriate forms of knowledge an active citizen needed, as well as the quality of the logic and beauty of the language used. Strabo

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<sup>229</sup> Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 2-3, 18-22, 25-26, 65.

<sup>230</sup> Patrick Thollard, *Barbarie et Civilisation Chez Strabon: Etude Critique des Livres III et IV de la Geographie*, Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne, vol. 77 (Paris: Le Belles Lettres, 1987) 22-26, 29-39.

<sup>231</sup> Christina Horst Roseman, "Reflections of philosophy: Strabo and geographical sources," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 27-41.

<sup>232</sup> Potheary, "Kolossourgia" 24; Roseman, "Reflections of philosophy: Strabo and geographical sources" 31.

also constantly criticizes authors on their logic and consistency, perhaps indicating that these concerns were widely discussed. As mentioned in both the Herodotus and Diodorus chapters, these authors both claimed they were consistent and used logic to choose between sources, so Strabo's concern is far from unique, and information about Amazons is one of many corrections he makes in the course of the *Geography*. Strabo's work might also be an attempt to promote Greece and Greek culture in his defense of Homer in a world increasingly Romanized,<sup>233</sup> but while this sounds like a plausible goal, such Hellenism turns out not to be a major factor in his criticisms about portrayals of Amazons. Though he does mention far more Greek writers than Latin, he does not judge Latin authors more harshly than Greek.

Some other modern scholars and writers use Strabo as a "cultural geographer"<sup>234</sup> whose information about places and people can be used as an example of what Romans and Greeks believed about other people, accurate or not. While it is certainly true that Strabo reveals much about others' writing and his opinions of them, he himself is very concerned with errors and contradictory claims about the Amazons. The problem with approaching Strabo in this same manner is that often he merely criticizes others and does not directly state his own opinion about how a people lived, where they lived, and how they participated in the events he discusses. This leaves the reader not so much with a coherent Strabonian geography and history as what is left when everything else has been discredited.

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<sup>233</sup> Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth" 145-46; Jane L. Lightfoot, "Hellenized Greeks and Hellenized Romans: Later Greek Literature," Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective, ed. Oliver Taplin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 272-73.

<sup>234</sup> Potheary, "Kolossourgia" 6, 17.

Pointing out errors in Strabo and making harsh judgments of his work, which characterized the older scholarship, may reflect a miscomparison between him and others that ignores the important questions of the author's goals and the intellectual and cultural milieu in which he wrote,<sup>235</sup> a context this study plans to use to understand how the icon of the Amazon is being utilized in the first century BCE. Strabo's criticisms of other authors' stories about Amazons reveals an active literary debate over one topic as well as disagreement over the value of Homer in relation to this topic. It seems likely that what is evidenced when narrowing our view down to the Amazon legends would be similar to all of his other criticisms on other topics.

### Strabo's Amazon Legends and Confusions

In book 11, chapter 5, Strabo focuses on the Amazons as one of many nations in the Caucasus region and in Armenia that he is listing and discussing. He does not immediately associate them with any hero; rather, he represents them as a historically debated people whose location varies among authors. However, he does give us some cultural information about them, including a unique reproductive connection to another nation that does not appear in other surviving accounts.

Strabo cites several sources for the Amazon stories about the region near the Caucasian Mountains. Theophanes,<sup>236</sup> who traveled with Pompey, said the Amazons lived to the north in the mountains above Albania, a region he previously

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<sup>235</sup> Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth" 144, 52; Potheary, "The European provinces: Strabo as evidence" 161, 78-79; David Braund, "Greek geography and Roman empire: the transformation of tradition in Strabo's Euxine," Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 218-21, 23-25.

<sup>236</sup> The only fragment from Theophanes Mytilenensis to mention Amazons comes from this passage in Strabo (Jacoby *FGkHist* 188.4).

discussed positively in some detail,<sup>237</sup> while two Scythian tribes, the Gelae and the Legae, lived to the south. Besides the mountains, the river Merdalis formed a natural boundary between the Albanians and the Amazons. Other writers, among them Metrodorus of Scepsis<sup>238</sup> and Hypsicrates,<sup>239</sup> who are not unacquainted with the region, specify that the Amazons live in the Ceraunian part of the Caucasian Mountains on the borders of the Gargarians. The Amazons in these authors are not the warlike women we would expect. Strabo reports that they claim that the Amazons spend the majority of their year engaging in agriculture, herding, and training horses, while only the bravest hunt and practice the art of warfare. The idea that they sear off the right breasts of all newborn females is repeated here, though the reason is to use a different weapon, a javelin, while the bow, the traditionally cited Amazon weapon of choice, and a single-edged weapon called a “sagaris” are given secondary status. Shield, clothes, helmet, and girdles are all made from the skins of wild animals, even though they are herders. For two months each year in the spring they go to a neighboring mountain and meet with the Gargarians, and, fulfilling an ancient custom, they offer sacrifices together, then engage in random, secret intercourse for the sake of reproduction. The Amazons are sent away when they become pregnant, and if the offspring is female, she joins their nation, while

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<sup>237</sup> Strabo 11.4.

<sup>238</sup> Metrodorus of Scepsis is Jacoby *FGkHist* 184, but none of these fragments outside of one from Strabo himself (*FGkHist* 184, 7) mention Amazons.

<sup>239</sup> The only fragment of Hypsicrates Amisenus that mentions Amazons is that credited from this very passage in Strabo (Jacoby *FGkHist* 190.3).

male infants are given to the Gargarians, who adopt the sons as their own, even though they cannot know who the biological father is.<sup>240</sup>

The passage portrays a very different type of Amazon than the ones promoted in either Herodotus or Diodorus. They are a stable people, living in the region for some time, engaging in civilized pursuits that support their people, and dealing with their neighbors in a mutually beneficial manner. They are exclusively female, the male offspring given away to their fathers. The Amazons are also seen in a more submissive manner; the Gargarians send them away when they are pregnant, and the agreement seems mutual until one reads the next section. However, we the modern reader need to keep in mind that this entire Gargarian section is not Strabo's opinion or statement of facts but his repeating of what others have written, such as Metrodorus and Hypsicrates, and he is dismissing them as inaccurate and unreliable sources for this information. Throughout this part of the chapter we will see that most claims of error in Strabo, at least in relation to Amazons, stem from ignoring the context of the passages.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Strabo 11.5.1: Ἐν δὲ τοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀλβανίας ὄρεσι καὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας οἰκεῖν φασί. Θεοφάνης μὲν οὖν ὁ συστρατεύσας τῷ Πομπηίῳ καὶ γενόμενος ἐν τοῖς Ἀλβανοῖς, μεταξὺ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων καὶ τῶν Ἀλβανῶν φησὶ Γήλας οἰκεῖν καὶ Λήγας Σκύθας, καὶ ῥεῖν ἐνταῦθα τὸν Μερμάδαλιν ποταμὸν τούτων τε καὶ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ἀνὰ μέσον. ἄλλοι δέ, ὧν καὶ ὁ Σκήψιος Μητρόδωρος καὶ Ὑψικράτης, οὐδὲ αὐτοὶ ἄπειροι τῶν τόπων γεγονότες, Γαργαρεῦσιν ὁμόρους αὐτὰς οἰκεῖν φασὶν ἐν ταῖς ὑπωρείαις ταῖς πρὸς ἄρκτον τῶν Καυκασίων ὄρων ἃ καλεῖται Κεραῦνια· τὸν μὲν ἄλλον χρόνον καθ' αὐτὰς αὐτουργοῦσας ἕκαστα, τὰ τε πρὸς ἄροτον καὶ φυτουργίαν καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὰς νομάς, καὶ μάλιστα τῶν ἵππων, τὰς δ' ἀλκιμωτάτας ἐφ' ἵππων κυνηγεσίαις πλεονάζειν καὶ τὰ πολέμια ἀσκεῖν· ἀπάσας δ' ἐπικεκαῦσθαι τὸν δεξιὸν μαστὸν ἐκ νηπίων, ὥστε εὐπετῶς χρῆσθαι τῷ βραχίονι πρὸς ἐκάστην χρεῖαν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς πρώτοις πρὸς ἀκοντισμὸν· χρῆσθαι δὲ καὶ τόξῳ καὶ σαγάρῳ καὶ πέλτῃ, δορὰς δὲ θηρίων ποιῆσθαι περικρανὰ τε καὶ σκεπάσματα καὶ διαζώματα· δύο δὲ μῆνας ἐξαιρέτους ἔχειν τοῦ ἔαρος, καθ' οὓς ἀναβαίνουσιν εἰς τὸ πλησίον ὄρος τὸ διόριζον αὐτὰς τε καὶ τοὺς Γαργαρέας. ἀναβαίνουσι δὲ κάκεινοι κατὰ ἔθος τι παλαιόν, συνθύσοντές τε καὶ συνεσόμενοι ταῖς γυναιξὶ τεκνοποιίας χάριν, ἀφανῶς τε καὶ ἐν σκότει, ὁ τυχὼν τῇ τυχούσῃ, ἐγκύμονας δὲ ποιήσαντες ἀποπέμπουσιν· αἱ δ' ὅ τι μὲν ἂν θήλυ τέκωσι κατέχουσιν αὐταῖ, τὰ δ' ἄρρενα κομίζουσιν ἐκείνοις ἐκτρέφειν· ὡκείωται δ' ἕκαστος πρὸς ἕκαστον, νομίζων υἱὸν διὰ τὴν ἀγνοίαν.

<sup>241</sup> This reflects what other scholars have claimed is happening in Strabo as they counter charges that he is a copyist. Panichi, "Cappadocia through Strabo's eyes"; Potheary, "The European provinces: Strabo as evidence"; and Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth" look at other sections in the *Geography* but reach similar conclusions.

The Mermados<sup>242</sup> cuts through the mountains and the Amazons' country, through the Siracenê, and into Lake Maeotis. Both the Gargarians and Amazons traveled here from Themiscyra, the region more commonly mentioned in our earlier sources as the Amazons' home, but once they were there the Gargarians, Thracians, and Euboeans revolted and warred against them. The war ended with the establishment of the aforementioned mating rituals and sacrifices and the agreement that the different people should live independently from each other.<sup>243</sup> Here, then, is a hint of the warlike Amazons that Diodorus focuses on, though now they are not destroyed but have found a way to live peacefully alongside those they once controlled. This peaceful solution may remind us of Herodotus's account of Scythians and Amazons as well as Diodorus's Alexander story where the Macedonian king establishes the time frame for mating with the Amazon Queen. But, as we shall see, unlike those earlier authors Strabo's mating narrative is presented as an example of the fiction that has arisen around the warrior women and how foolish anyone is who believe or repeats these tales as history.

The next section,<sup>244</sup> gives us a very rare insight into an ancient writer's opinions about the differences between genres of writing as well as the criteria for history, as opposed to mythology or legends. Strabo himself can be very harsh, but as we find, regardless of his opinions, he continues to discuss Amazons throughout

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<sup>242</sup> This probably the Mermadalis as in the previous chapter as suggested in the translation notes from Horace Leonard Jones, *Strabo Geography*, vol. V (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 234, note 1. Again this is Strabo repeating what others have said.

<sup>243</sup> Strabo 11.5.2: Ὁ δὲ Μερμόδας, καταράττων ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρῶν διὰ τῆς τῶν Ἀμαζόνων καὶ τῆς Σιρακηνῆς καὶ ὄση μεταξὺ ἔρημος, εἰς τὴν Μαιῶτιν ἐκδίδωσι. τοὺς δὲ Γαργαρέας συναναβῆναι μὲν ἐκ Θεμισκύρας φασὶ ταῖς Ἀμαζόνισιν εἰς τοῦσδε τοὺς τόπους, εἴτ' ἀποστάντας αὐτῶν πολεμεῖν μετὰ Θρακῶν καὶ Εὐβοέων τινῶν πλανηθέντων μέχρι δεῦρο πρὸς αὐτάς, ὕστερον δὲ καταλυσαμένους τὸν πρὸς αὐτάς πόλεμον ἐπὶ τοῖς λεχθεῖσι ποιήσασθαι συμβάσεις, ὥστε τέκνων συγκοινωνεῖν μόνον, ζῆν δὲ καθ' αὐτοὺς ἑκατέρους.

<sup>244</sup> Strabo 11.5.3.

this work. He gives us a window into the historical and theoretical debates of his time that were taking place within the sources he had access to; not everyone in the ancient world accepted Amazons as real. However, because he does reference several legends, Strabo believes his readers will be familiar enough with them that they do not need all the variations recounted.

Strabo claims that with Amazons the distinction between myth and history (τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ τὸ ἱστορικὸν) has been blurred, unlike with other peoples. Here he is likely referring to writers of both Greek and Latin; in later sections he will focus again on particular authors he wishes to praise or criticize. Myths, according to Strabo, are ancient and false and contain monstrous elements, while histories are truthful and have no monstrous elements regardless of whether they are ancient or recent events. The Amazons' legends are, in Strabo's opinion, exactly the same as the ones told in early times, even though they are beyond belief because women could not possibly live without men, let alone conquer other people as far away as Ionia and Attica; it is a sex inversion that Strabo sees as ridiculous.<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, ancient authors tell the same stories about the Amazons, and these only intensify the idea that women could live and conquer without men as well as the belief in the ancient accounts over the more recent ones.<sup>246</sup> The existence of Amazons is not in

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<sup>245</sup> Because Strabo is primarily criticizing other's portrayal of the Amazon culture and not giving us more details about what he thinks, we will return to the idea of Amazons in Strabo as a commentary on sex and gender in the conclusion of this study.

<sup>246</sup> Strabo 11.5.3: Ἴδιον δέ τι συμβέβηκε τῷ λόγῳ περὶ τῶν ἀμαζόνων· οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοι τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ τὸ ἱστορικὸν διωρισμένον ἔχουσι· τὰ γὰρ παλαιὰ καὶ ψευδῆ καὶ τερατώδη μῦθοι καλοῦνται, ἢ δ' ἱστορία βούλεται τάληθές, ἅν τε παλαιὸν ἂν τε νέον, καὶ τὸ τερατώδες ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἢ σπάνιον· περὶ δὲ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων τὰ αὐτὰ λέγεται καὶ νῦν καὶ πάλαι, τερατώδη τε ὄντα καὶ πίστεως πόρρω. τίς γὰρ ἂν πιστεύσειεν ὡς γυναικῶν στρατός ἢ πόλις ἢ ἔθνος συσταῖν ἂν ποτε χωρὶς ἀνδρῶν; καὶ οὐ μόνον γε συσταῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐφόδους ποιήσαιτο ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλλοτρίαν καὶ κρατήσειεν οὐ τῶν ἐγγύς μόνον, ὥστε καὶ μέχρι τῆς νῦν Ἰωνίας προελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαπόντιον στείλαιτο στρατείαν μέχρι τῆς Ἀττικῆς; τοῦτο γὰρ ὅμοιον, ὡς ἂν εἴ τις λέγοι, τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας γυναῖκας γεγονέναι τοὺς τότε, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ἄνδρας. ἀλλὰ μὴν ταῦτά γε αὐτὰ καὶ νῦν λέγεται περὶ αὐτῶν, ἐπιτείνει δὲ τὴν ἰδιότητα καὶ τὸ πιστεῦσθαι τὰ παλαιὰ μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ νῦν.



question in Strabo, but the details about them are, or, to paraphrase Katherine Clarke, legends about Amazons change too much for Strabo to consider them useful history.<sup>247</sup>

The legend Strabo relates about the Gargarians and the Amazons' mating ritual fits well into the idea that authors of his era were trying to represent a more realistic story about the Amazons. It also reinforces the traditional idea that women need men and pushes to the side those stories about great Amazon conquests, leaving a reader with the feeling that although the Amazons might be real, they are not much like what the great ancient legends describe. However, as we have seen, men are present among the Amazons in both Herodotus and Diodorus; the first surviving appearance of the idea that Amazons do not have men in their society is in Strabo. He uses this idea that women need men to prove that all of these attempts to make the Amazons more real by explaining their culture, in this case the mating ritual, are merely fictions.

Having dismissed the fantasies about Amazon society, Strabo moves on quickly to more strictly geographical references. Amazons, according to Strabo's sources, founded such cities as Ephesus, Smyrna, Cymê, and Myrinê, as well as various tombs and monuments. These alluded to but unnamed writers also agree that the Amazons once ruled Themiscyra and the Thermodon plains and mountains but were driven from these places. A few writers claim without proof that the Amazons are still alive. One such claim refers to Thalestria, queen of the Amazons, with whom Alexander allegedly associated for the sake of offspring, although Strabo

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<sup>247</sup> Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 249-50.

says that this story is not generally accepted. He states that numerous historians who care the most about the truth and who are the most trustworthy do not mention this event, and that those writers who do mention it do not agree in their statements. Throughout this section, Strabo names only one such author — Cleitarchus, whom Diodorus also used — who says that Thalestria set out from the Caspian Gates and Thermodon to visit Alexander.<sup>248</sup> Strabo finds this distance, more than 6000 stadia, to be unbelievable for such a journey.<sup>249</sup> Strabo explains why these writers report the Amazon encounter with Alexander at all: it is meant to glorify the Macedonian and is merely one of several purposeful errors they make in this attempt.<sup>250</sup>

By turning the discussion of Amazons to one of geography, Strabo at first seems accepting of other people's associations and the reasons for the names of places. However, this simply foreshadows his later criticisms of how confused other writers are about where Amazons lived. While it seems odd to continue this section by jumping to a specific legend, it balances somewhat with his earlier statements that the ancient myths about the Amazons hold sway over even more recent history. Alexander the Great was the topic of many histories in his own right and as part of

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<sup>248</sup> Jacoby's only fragments of Cleitarchus that mention Amazons at all come from this passage in Strabo (*FGkHist* 137.16) and from the Plutarch passage discussed in the next chapter (*FGkHist* 137.15). With so little evidence outside of the authors this study covers and the almost identical nature of these two passages, it is difficult for a modern scholar to objectively say what Cleitarchus wrote about Amazons. Given that Diodorus relies so heavily on him for other information but not specifically for Amazons, it seems logical that Cleitarchus's interests focused on the Macedonian king and not the nation of female warriors or other legends about them.

<sup>249</sup> Strabo 11.5.4: Κτίσεις γοῦν πόλεων καὶ ἐπωνυμίας λέγονται, καθάπερ Ἐφέσου καὶ Σμύρνης καὶ Κύμης καὶ Μυρίνης, καὶ τάφοι καὶ ἄλλα ὑπομνήματα· τὴν δὲ Θεμισκυραν καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν Θερμῶδοντα πεδία καὶ τὰ ὑπερκείμενα ὄρη ἅπαντες Ἀμαζόνων καλοῦσι, καὶ φασιν ἐξελαθῆναι αὐτὰς ἐνθένδε. ὅπου δὲ νῦν εἰσὶν, ὀλίγοι τε καὶ ἀναποδείκτως καὶ ἀπίστως ἀποφαίνονται· καθάπερ καὶ περὶ Θαληστρίας, ἣν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ συμμίζαί φασιν ἐν τῇ Ἰγκανία καὶ συγγενέσθαι τεκνοποιίας χάριν, δυναστεύουσαν τῶν Ἀμαζόνων· οὐ γὰρ ὁμολογεῖται τοῦτο· ἀλλὰ τῶν συγγραφέων τοσούτων ὄντων, οἱ μάλιστα τῆς ἀληθείας φροντίσαντες οὐκ εἰρήκασιν, οὐδ' οἱ πιστευόμενοι μάλιστα οὐδενὸς μέμνηται τοιοῦτου, οὐδ' οἱ εἰπόντες τὰ αὐτὰ εἰρήκασιν· Κλείταρχος δὲ φησὶ τὴν Θαληστρίαν ἀπὸ Κασπίων πυλῶν καὶ Θερμῶδοντος ὄρηθεῖσαν ἐλθεῖν πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον, εἰσὶ δ' ἀπὸ Κασπίας εἰς Θερμῶδοντα στάδιοι πλείους ἑξακισχιλίων.

<sup>250</sup> Strabo 11.5.5: Καὶ τὰ πρὸς τὸ ἔνδοξον θρυληθέντα οὐκ ἀνωμολόγηται παρὰ πάντων, οἱ δὲ πλάσαντες ἦσαν οἱ κολακείας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθείας φροντίζοντες·

the general history of the Greeks or of the world. Strabo explicitly refers to the Amazon encounter Diodorus preserves as a lie told to flatter the Macedonian king.

By specifically naming Cleitarchus, though, Strabo is criticizing the author who may be the source for the Alexander-Amazon legend, rather than Diodorus, who perhaps Strabo felt was a mere copyist, as some modern scholars would agree. However, his criticism is vague and seems related to the travel distance. Surely, Alexander himself traveled far more than these 6000 stadia in the course of his conquests, yet that Amazons would travel this distance to mate seems odd enough to Strabo that he singles this fact out. It cannot be that this journey is so unbelievable merely because of the distance, nor because of the speed at which they traveled, because he states nothing about travel time, so the reason why this fact is emphasized must be related to the Amazons themselves or to the goal of the journey. Given that Strabo immediately criticizes other authors for using tales to flatter the Macedonian,<sup>251</sup> he may indeed be suggesting that Alexander could not inspire a great journey.

However, the criticism may also relate to an idea that the Amazons in Strabo's account live without men and would therefore be unable to travel this distance alone let alone even have a thriving community.<sup>252</sup> Since Strabo puts in the detail about the distance first and a critique of promotion of Alexander second, it is difficult to distinguish which offends Strabo most: Cleitarchus flattery of a dead ruler or his ignorance of geography and how women need men to survive. Later dismissals of other authors seem to show that these problems with geographic,

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<sup>251</sup> Strabo 11.5.5.

<sup>252</sup> Strabo 11.5.3.

historic, and gender/sex relationships are interconnected and not easily separated from each other since each mistake only builds a greater case that earlier authors are wrong.

In the previous section the location of the Amazons represents one of several corrections Strabo makes to earlier geographic and historical works. He harshly criticizes incorrect associations and the writers who made them, and he continues this criticism in the next book, in which he targets specific authors to show how their understanding of geography, history, and the Amazons are all interconnected and therefore incorrect.

Strabo quotes Herodotus, whose mentioned passage does not survive even in Jacoby, claiming he has confused the Syrians with the Cappadocians. Then Strabo quotes Pindar<sup>253</sup> as saying that the Amazons encountered a Syrian army in Themiscyra, where instead, Strabo corrects, the Amiseni live in the White Syrians' territory.<sup>254</sup> Strabo makes very subtle distinctions between people, labeling them with different adjectives and even claiming new titles for people whom earlier

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<sup>253</sup> Jacoby lists no fragments for Pindar, though collections of Pindar's work do included what are called fragments. None of the texts previously discussed in this study are what Strabo claims to be quoting: *Olympian* 8.46-48 and 13.87-90, *Nemean* 3.34-39, and fragment 172.

<sup>254</sup> Strabo 12.3.9: Τοὺς δὲ Παφλαγῶνας πρὸς ἕω μὲν ὀρίζει ὁ Ἄλυς ποταμός, ὃς ῥέων ἀπὸ μεσημβρίας μεταξὺ Σύρων τε καὶ Παφλαγῶνων ἐξίησι κατὰ τὸν Ἡρόδοτον εἰς τὸν Εὐχρινὸν καλεόμενον πόντον, Σύρους λέγοντα τοὺς Καππάδοκας καὶ γὰρ ἔτι καὶ νῦν Λευκόσυροι καλοῦνται, Σύρων καὶ τῶν ἔξω τοῦ Ταύρου λεγομένων κατὰ δὲ τὴν πρὸς τοὺς ἐντὸς τοῦ Ταύρου σύγκρισιν, ἐκείνων ἐπικεκαυμένων τὴν χροάν, τούτων δὲ μή, τοιαύτην τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν γενέσθαι συνέβη· καὶ Πίνδαρός φησιν, ὅτι αἱ Ἀμαζόνες Σύριον εὐρυαίχμαν δίεπον στρατόν, τὴν ἐν τῇ Θεμισκύρᾳ κατοικίαν οὕτω δηλῶν. ἡ δὲ Θεμισκύρα ἐστὶν τῶν Ἀμισηνῶν, αὕτη δὲ Λευκοσύρων τῶν μετὰ τὸν Ἄλυν. πρὸς ἕω μὲν τοίνυν ὁ Ἄλυς ὄριον τῶν Παφλαγῶνων, πρὸς νότον δὲ Φρύγες καὶ οἱ ἐποικήσαντες Γαλάται, πρὸς δύσιν δὲ Βιθυνοὶ καὶ Μαριανδυνοὶ (τὸ γὰρ τῶν Καυκῶνων γένος ἐξέφθαρται τελέως πάντοθεν), πρὸς ἄρκτον δὲ ὁ Εὐξεινός ἐστι. τῆς δὲ χώρας ταύτης διηρημένης εἰς τε τὴν μεσόγειαν καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ, διατείνουσιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἄλυος μέχρι Βιθυνίας ἑκατέραν, τὴν μὲν παραλίαν ἕως τῆς Ἡρακλείας εἶχεν ὁ Εὐπάτωρ, τῆς δὲ μεσογαίας τὴν μὲν ἐγγυτάτω ἔσχεν, ἥς τινὰ καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἄλυος διέτεινε· καὶ μέχρι δεῦρο τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις ἡ Ποντικὴ ἐπαρχία ἀφώρισται· τὰ λοιπὰ δ' ἦν ὑπὸ δυνάσταις καὶ μετὰ τὴν Μιθριδάτου κατάλυσιν. περὶ μὲν δὴ τῶν ἐν τῇ μεσογαίᾳ Παφλαγῶνων ἐροῦμεν ὕστερον τῶν μὴ ὑπὸ τῷ Μιθριδάτῃ, νῦν δὲ πρόκειται τὴν ὑπ' ἐκείνῳ χώραν, κληθεῖσαν δὲ Πόντον, διελθεῖν.

authors have mentioned by other names. The goal seems very much to attempt to place his own terminology above others so that his reader will accept his descriptions.

However, as one continues reading, one finds Strabo stating again that the Amazons live in Themiscyra, this time without questioning the correct identification of the location or of the inhabitants.<sup>255</sup> Strabo then does not seem to criticize either Pindar or Herodotus on the location of the Amazons but merely on their knowledge of the people who lived in the area. Strabo's audience will associate the region of Themiscyra with the Amazons, and nowhere does Strabo directly say that Amazons do not live there, so therefore it is a quick way to reference the location of a now well-organized Roman territory that is near his home, Amaseia.<sup>256</sup>

It is easy and common for the names of peoples and places to be confused, as Strabo demonstrates over and over in his work. This has happened with the Amazons as well. He reports that there has been a literary debate about the peoples whom Homer called the Halizoni and where they are from.<sup>257</sup> Several writers change the names in Homer from "Alybê" to "Chalybê" and variations on the two. These variations shifted over the centuries into "Alazones" or "Amazons" for the people and "Alopê" or "Alobê" for the location. Strabo mentions to his audience

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<sup>255</sup> Strabo 12.3.14.

<sup>256</sup> Strabo 12.3.15.

<sup>257</sup> Strabo 12.3.20. This is one of many examples of his defense of Homer throughout the *Geography*, an argument made in general in Anna Maria Biraschi, "Strabo and Homer: a chapter in cultural history," Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 73-85, though she does not cite this specific example.

four authors who have promoted these incorrect terms: Hellanicus,<sup>258</sup> Herodotus, Eudoxus,<sup>259</sup> and Ephorus,<sup>260</sup> and he focuses on Ephorus for associating the Amazons with his own native city of Cymê.<sup>261</sup>

Ephorus's attempts to address these problems only lead to further misinformation, says Strabo, when he connects the Amazons with two named leaders, Odius and Epistrophus, and this Alope, which is not in the region. Strabo states that Ephorus's changes are rash and unclear when one looks at earlier manuscripts. Another writer called the Scepsian<sup>262</sup> rejects Ephorus's opinions because he sides with Hecataeus of Miletus,<sup>263</sup> Menecrates of Elaea,<sup>264</sup> and Palaephatus<sup>265</sup> that nomads would not have traveled to help the Trojans. Hecataeus states that the inhabitants of the region are called Alazones, while Menecrates calls

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<sup>258</sup> Given the number of fragments that specifically mention Amazons, it seems odd that Hellanicus would confuse other peoples with the warrior women; however, without a more specific citation from Strabo it is difficult to access the first century writer's criticism. (Jacoby *FGkHist* 4.106, 4.107, 4.166, 4.167a, 4.167c, 4.186, 323a.16a, 323a.16b, 323a.17a, 323a.17c.)

<sup>259</sup> Eudoxus Rhodius's surviving fragments do not mention Amazons at all (Jacoby *FGkHist* 79).

<sup>260</sup> Ephorus Cumaesus's work on Amazons survives in six fragments, most of these from Stephanus Byzantinus (Jacoby *FGkHist* 70.60a and b, 70.114a and b, 70.160a, 70.166).

<sup>261</sup> Strabo 12.3.21: Οἱ μὲν μεταγράφουσιν Ἀλαζώνων, οἱ δ' Ἀμαζώνων ποιῶντες, τὸ δ' ἐξ Ἀλύβης ἐξ Ἀλόπης ἢ ἐξ Ἀλόβης, τοὺς μὲν Σκύθας Ἀλαζώνας φάσκοντες ὑπὲρ τὸν Βορυσθένη καὶ Καλλιπίδας καὶ ἄλλα ὀνόματα, ἅπερ Ἑλλάνικός τε καὶ Ἡρόδοτος καὶ Εὐδόξος κατεφλυάρισαν ἡμῶν, τὰς δ' Ἀμαζώνας μεταξὺ Μυσίας καὶ Καρίας καὶ Λυδίας, καθάπερ Ἐφωρος νομίζει, πλησίον Κυμῆς τῆς πατρίδος αὐτοῦ· καὶ τοῦτο μὲν ἔχεταιί τινος λόγου τυχὸν ἴσως εἶη γὰρ ἂν λέγων τὴν ὑπὸ τῶν Αἰολέων καὶ Ἰώνων οἰκισθεῖσαν ὕστερον, πρότερον δ' ὑπὸ Ἀμαζόνων· καὶ ἐπωνύμους πόλεις τινὰς εἶναί φασι, καὶ γὰρ Ἐφεσον καὶ Σμύρναν καὶ Κύμην καὶ Μύριναν. ἢ δὲ Ἀλύβη ἢ, ὡς τινες, Ἀλόπη ἢ Ἀλόβη πῶς ἂν ἐν τοῖς τόποις τούτοις ἐξητάζετο; πῶς δὲ τηλόθεν; πῶς δ' ἢ τοῦ ἀργύρου γενέθλη;

<sup>262</sup> Metrodorus of Scepsis is Jacoby *FGkHist* 184, but none of these fragments outside of one from Strabo himself (*FGkHist* 184, 7) mention Amazons.

<sup>263</sup> Strabo may mean Hecataeus of Miletus, from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, who did indeed write about Amazons, though none of them mention the Trojan War (Jacoby *FGkHist* 1.3, 33, 34, and 226), and only 226 mentions a location for the Amazons, which has lost most of its context.

<sup>264</sup> Jacoby credits only two fragments to Menecrates of Elaea, only one of which mentions Amazons, but this is from a passage in Plutarch that this study will examine in a later chapter (*FGkHist* 701.1). Thus it is impossible for us to assess Strabo's criticisms, as it is in most cases with Strabo's treatment of other authors.

<sup>265</sup> Palaephatus's only surviving mention of Amazons comes from this very passage (Jacoby *FGkHist* 44.4).

them Halizones, and Palaephatus uses the term Amazons and again associates them with his Odius and Epistrophus's expedition to help Troy. Strabo expresses disbelief that anyone could believe any of these opinions because they disagree with Homer's text and they cannot demonstrate the natural resources mentioned (specifically, silver) in the Poet's work. Strabo cites another writer, Demetrius, who states that anyone saying the Amazons live near Ephesus is talking nonsense.<sup>266</sup> Indeed, Demetrius says that other writers sometimes insert random phrases into their texts without thought, though unlike Strabo he lacks evidence of this fact. Strabo's evidence is grounded in the lack of mineral wealth in a region as mentioned by Homer and questions about distance.<sup>267</sup>

This entire section of Strabo is confusing to read. The number of previous authors he mentions and their variations are intertwined and confused, adding to his own opinion that earlier geographers, historians, and writers were not as knowledgeable as him. By using them all in such a quick and dense fashion, Strabo encourages his reader to feel as if earlier accounts about the Amazons and where they lived must be highly contradictory and therefore unreliable. If one reads

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<sup>266</sup> Strabo 12.3.22: Ταῦτα μὲν ἀπολύεται τῇ μεταγραφῇ· γράφει γὰρ οὕτως

αὐτὰρ Ἀμαζόνων Ὀδῖος καὶ Ἐπίστροφος ἦρχον,  
ἐλθόντ' ἐξ Ἀλόπης, ὅθ' Ἀμαζονίδων γένος ἐστί.

ταῦτα δ' ἀπολυσάμενος εἰς ἄλλο ἐμπέπτωκε πλάσμα· οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ ἐνθάδε εὐρίσκεται Ἀλόπη, καὶ ἡ μεταγραφὴ δὲ παρὰ τὴν τῶν ἀντιγράφων τῶν ἀρχαίων πίστιν καινοτομουμένη ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον σχεδιασμῷ ἔοικεν. ... ὁ δὲ Παλαίφατος φησιν, ἐξ Ἀμαζόνων τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἀλόπῃ οἰκούντων, νῦν δ' ἐν Ζελεΐᾳ, τὸν Ὀδῖον καὶ τὸν Ἐπίστροφον στρατεῦσαι. τί οὖν ἄξιον ἐπαινεῖν τὰς τούτων δόξας; χωρὶς γὰρ τοῦ τὴν ἀρχαίαν γραφὴν καὶ τούτους κινεῖν οὔτε τὰ ἀργυρεῖα δεικνύουσιν, οὔτε ποῦ τῆς Μυρλεάτιδος Ἀλόπη ἐστίν, οὔτε πῶς οἱ ἐνθένδε ἀφιγμένοι εἰς Ἴλιον τηλόθεν ἦσαν, εἰ καὶ δοθεῖν Ἀλόπην τινὰ γεγονέναι ἢ Ἀλαζίαν· πολὺ γὰρ δὴ ταῦτα ἐγγυτέρω ἐστί τῇ Τρωάδι ἢ τὰ περὶ Ἐφεσον. ἀλλ' ὅμως τοὺς περὶ Πύγελα λέγοντας τοὺς Ἀμαζῶνας μεταξὺ Ἐφέσου καὶ Μαγνησίας καὶ Πριήνης φλυαρεῖν φησὶν ὁ Δημήτριος· τὸ γὰρ τηλόθεν οὐκ ἐφαρμόττειν τῷ τόπῳ. ὁπόσω οὖν μᾶλλον οὐκ ἐφαρμόττει τῷ περὶ Μυσίαν καὶ Τευθρανίαν;

<sup>267</sup> Strabo 12.3.23. For all of the various Demetriuses whom Jacoby catalogs, none of them have fragments that mention Amazons, either specifically or indirectly.

carefully, though, it is clear that Strabo associates specific errors with individual authors but that he has chosen to string them together to intensify this feeling of confusion where Amazons are concerned.

Strabo seems especially annoyed at the errors he finds in a work of Apollodorus that he cites. Having discussed the various claims that different allies of the Trojans traveled from various locations, Strabo turns to Apollodorus because his work, *Marshalling of the Trojan Forces*, concerns the same subject.<sup>268</sup> It is full of errors, some of which Strabo has already pointed out.<sup>269</sup> Again one problem is location, the idea that no allies from beyond the Halys River would aid Troy. There is also, then, the question of how people who clearly lived beyond the Halys could be Troy's allies, as Apollodorus claims. Amazons, Treres, and Cimmerians all lived beyond the Halys, yet are mentioned by Apollodorus as allies, according to Strabo. The errors, though, are beyond mere geography. Citing Homer again, Strabo counters that since Priam fought against the Amazons, they would not fight for him when there were so many neighboring people who could aid Troy.<sup>270</sup> Strabo is

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<sup>268</sup> Unfortunately, while the Apollodorus whose library of mythology does survive and several other Jacoby fragments of other Apollodoruses are attested and collected (*FGkHist* 244, 422, 661, 779, and 803), only Apollodorus of Athens seems to suit Strabo's polemic (*FGkHist* 244, 157b and 171b). A survey of the other fragments credited to an Apollodorus do not reveal any other mentions of Amazons, nor is the title Strabo uses present in any of the other ancient authors, who do use an Apollodorus. The surviving *Library* itself does include a few references to Amazons, in 2.3.2 and 2.9, as does the *Epitome* 1.16-18 and 5.1; these references were written later than Strabo, however, and cannot be the author he is criticizing above.

<sup>269</sup> Strabo 7.3.6, 12.3.24-27.

<sup>270</sup> Strabo 12.3.24: Πρὸς Ἀπολλόδωρον δὲ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ Τρωικῷ διακόσμῳ διαλεγόμενον πολλὰ μὲν εἴρηται πρότερον, καὶ νῦν δὲ λεκτέον. οὐ γὰρ οἶεται δεῖν δέχεσθαι τοὺς Ἀλιζῶνους ἐκτὸς τοῦ Ἄλυος· μηδεμίαν γὰρ συμμαχίαν ἀφίχθαι τοῖς Τρωσὶν ἐκ τῆς περαιοῦς τοῦ Ἄλυος, πρῶτον τοίνυν ἀπαιτήσομεν αὐτόν, τίνες εἰσὶν οἱ ἐντὸς τοῦ Ἄλυος Ἀλιζῶνοι, οἱ καὶ

τηλόθεν ἐξ Ἀλύβης, ὅθεν ἀργύρου ἐστὶ γενέθλι·

οὐ γὰρ ἔξει λέγειν· ἔπειτα τὴν αἰτίαν, δι' ἣν οὐ συγχωρεῖ καὶ ἐκ τῆς περαιοῦς ἀφίχθαι τινὰ συμμαχίαν· καὶ γὰρ εἰ τὰς ἄλλας ἐντὸς εἶναι τοῦ ποταμοῦ πάσας συμβαίνει πλὴν τῶν Θρακῶν, μίαν γε ταύτην οὐδὲν ἐκώλυε πέραθεν ἀφίχθαι ἐκ τῆς ἐπέκεινα τῶν Λευκοσῦρων.



making what he believes to be a strong logical argument to undermine perhaps not only Apollodorus but anyone claiming the Amazons allied with Troy.

The reasons for the Trojan War, in Strabo's opinion, relate to the fertility of the land, while the variations on who participated and where they were from result from generations of confusion and miscitation of names resulting from continuous warfare in the region.<sup>271</sup> The legends of the Amazons here confirm the valuable nature of the region. Even they, women, so desired the land that they fought both Priam and Bellerophon over it. Several cities are named after Amazons, and even the Batieia plain is called the tomb of Myrina by Homer,<sup>272</sup> which Strabo says was named for a chariot-driving Amazon.<sup>273</sup> This region continued to be a focus for war and for migrations, adding to the confusion among writers.<sup>274</sup>

Strabo continues his discussion of Asia Minor and his corrections of earlier works in book 13, focusing on the Trojan and Aeolian coasts and the time of the Trojan War in chapter 3. The Amazons appear only once, and he repeats his previous notes that cities were named after Amazons, in this case Cymê, and that Myrina is buried in the Trojan plain called Batieia. This mention, though, allows

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<sup>271</sup> Strabo 12.8.4.

<sup>272</sup> Homer *Iliad* 2.813.

<sup>273</sup> Strabo 12.8.6: Ἄλλα τό γε ἄθλον προκεῖσθαι κοινὸν τὴν ἀρετὴν τῆς χώρας, ἣς λέγω, τοῖς ἰσχύουσιν ἐκ πολλῶν βεβαιοῦνται καὶ μετὰ τὰ Τρωικὰ ὅπου καὶ Ἀμαζόνες κατεθάρρησαν αὐτῆς, ἐφ' ἃς ὁ τε Πρίαμος στρατεῦσαι λέγεται καὶ ὁ Βελλεροφόντης πόλεις τε παλαιαὶ ὁμολογοῦνται ἐπώνυμοι αὐτῶν· ἐν δὲ τῷ Ἰλιακῷ πεδίῳ κολώνη τις ἐστίν,

ἦν ἦτοι ἄνδρες Βατίειαν κικλήσκουσιν,  
ἀθάνατοι δὲ τε σῆμα πολυσκάρθμοιο Μυρίνης

ἦν ἱστοροῦσι μίαν εἶναι τῶν Ἀμαζόνων, ἐκ τοῦ ἐπιθέτου τεκμαιρόμενοι· εὐσκάρθμους γὰρ ἵππους λέγεσθαι διὰ τὸ τάχος· κάκεινὴν οὖν πολυσκάρθμον διὰ τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς ἠνιοχείας τάχος· καὶ ἡ Μύρινα οὖν ἐπώνυμος ταύτης λέγεται. καὶ αἱ ἐγγὺς δὲ νῆσοι ταῦτ' ἔπαθον διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν, ὧν Ῥόδος καὶ Κῶς ὅτι πρὸ τῶν Τρωικῶν ἤδη ὑφ' Ἑλλήνων ὤκοῦντο, καὶ ὑφ' Ὀμήρου σαφῶς ἐκμαρτυρεῖται.

<sup>274</sup> Strabo 12.8.7.

Strabo to get in another attack on Ephorus as an author, because, he says, Ephorus was a native of Cymê, yet did not know enough about its history to get the names and order of events correct.<sup>275</sup>

Strabo's use of the Amazons is part of his correction of previous writers' mistakes about the names of locations and the people who live in them, which was a very important goal to Strabo. The Amazons are not the most important error, but they represent a portion of the errors that allow him to build a case against other authors. This helps reveal Strabo's purpose not only for including Amazons but for his entire *Geography* and lends more weight to scholars who argue that he is more than a copyist.

## Amazons and Strabo's Agenda

Modern scholars have found many ways to judge Strabo's *Geography*, but if we concentrate on what the author himself states he is going to do in the *Prolegomena*, we can find his goals and understand them within the context of the very early imperial period of Rome. Strabo in his *Prolegomena* claims that the study of geography is part philosophy, in which he includes knowledge about the natural world presented in a practical and useful way.<sup>276</sup> As such it must be massive and

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<sup>275</sup> Strabo 13.3.6: τὸ δ' ὄνομα ἀπὸ Ἀμαζόνος τῆ πόλει τεθεισθαι, καθάπερ καὶ τῆ Μυρίνη ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν τῷ Τρωικῷ πεδίῳ κειμένης ὑπὸ τῆ Βατιεία·

τὴν ἦτοι ἄνδρες Βατίειαν κικλήσκουσιν,  
ἀθάνατοι δέ τε σῆμα πολυσκάρθμοιο Μυρίνης.

σκώπεται δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἔφορος, διότι τῆς πατρίδος ἔργα οὐκ ἔχων φράζειν ἐν τῇ διαριθμίσει τῶν ἄλλων πράξεων, οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ἀμνημόνευτον αὐτὴν εἶναι θέλων, οὕτως ἐπιφωνεῖ: "Κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν κυμαῖοι τὰς ἡσυχίας ἤγον."

<sup>276</sup> Strabo 1.1.1, 1.1.16-20.

must include a wide range of information.<sup>277</sup> His method is to examine what previous credible authors have said about the world and to correct their errors using his superior ability in the study of geography.<sup>278</sup> Geography is not history, even though Strabo often includes historical information in the *Geography*; some speculation about his lost work of history strongly suggests he saw a difference, even though the division appears blurred.<sup>279</sup> Modern criticisms of Strabo's facts as history or as geography seem justified if we ignore his real agenda: to correct others, promote himself, and defend Homer.

Strabo names the authors in need of correction regularly and frequently in the *Geography*. His criteria for judging whether or not an author has given correct or incorrect evidence are fairly complicated. First, there is the motivation of the piece. The purpose of traditional myths is to communicate important ideas to the illiterate and to children, so they are formed to create pleasure for the listener; if the motivation is to please while representing a larger truth, then small details are ignorable.<sup>280</sup> Second, contradictions in these traditional myths are evidence of local variations and not necessarily evidence of dishonesty on the part of the myth teller.<sup>281</sup> An author or storyteller may be reflecting his local versions of an event or myth without claiming universal or historical accuracy. Finally, silence should not

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<sup>277</sup> Strabo 1.1.12, 1.1.19-20; Potheary, "Kolossourgia. 'A colossal statue of a work'" 6-9.

<sup>278</sup> Strabo 1.2.1.

<sup>279</sup> Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 2, 75; Clarke, "In Search of the Author of Strabo's *Geography*": 96, 98.

<sup>280</sup> Strabo 1.2.8.

<sup>281</sup> Strabo 1.2.13-14.

be used to judge the writer as uninformed, especially when it is a matter of well-known facts or unimportant information.<sup>282</sup>

Strabo was apparently involved in an active debate about legends and their truthfulness, using these three rules to defend Homer against ancient writers who laid all of these criticisms at the Poet's feet.<sup>283</sup> As happens often in Strabo, if he finds it in Homer, he does not criticize it,<sup>284</sup> but any other writer is open for him to correct. Homer is the starting point for much of what Strabo corrects in other authors; anything beyond what Homer says must be fiction.<sup>285</sup> Strabo partly defends Homer by updating his information, explaining what contemporary terms match the Poet's, but refuses to grant other authors the same latitude.<sup>286</sup>

Strabo's defense of Homer and his own promotion seem to be his primary motivations for the entire *Geography*. When scholars such as Claudia Ciancaglini<sup>287</sup> focus on the confusions within Strabo over the names of people and places and ignore the context of these "mistakes," they easily miss the fact that his goal in these passages is to criticize others, not to give his own opinion of the correct location or name. Strabo has no interest in what local peoples call themselves, nor is he interested in most local histories; his work is designed to show how well he can see

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<sup>282</sup> Strabo 1.2.30.

<sup>283</sup> Strabo 1.2.22; 1.3.16.

<sup>284</sup> Strabo 12.3.27, 12.8.6

<sup>285</sup> G. C. Richards, "Strabo. The Anatolian Who Failed of Roman Recognition," *Greece & Rome* 10.29 (1941): 87; Biraschi, "Strabo and Homer: a chapter in cultural history" 73-85.

<sup>286</sup> Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth" 150; Braund, "Greek geography and Roman empire: the transformation of tradition in Strabo's Euxine" 228; Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 248-49.

<sup>287</sup> Claudia A. Ciancaglini, "Scii, iranici, nomadi: Problemi di etnonimia in Strabone," *Studi Sull' XI Libro dei Geographika di Strabone*, ed. Giusto Traina, vol. 6, Studi di Filologia e Letteratura (Galatina: Università di Lecce, 2001) 11-83.

the errors in the work of other writers, primarily other Greek authors. Perhaps his work would have been more widely used during his life if he had spent more time on local names and beliefs about the areas he was covering and pursued his agenda less. He is not creating realistic, physical maps for his readers to follow; instead, he is focused on the idea that location is important for his readers to understand for their governing decisions<sup>288</sup> and on critiquing various sources with whom his reader may be familiar.

At the turn of the era, then, Strabo's rather cynical work *Geography* seems to be an attempt to update and correct a geographical and a human view of the world in which he lived.<sup>289</sup> His commentaries are often biting as he critiques the opinions of previous and contemporary scholars. He does not provide an interesting variety of Amazon legends, perhaps because his intended audience, educated men who were well-read and needed information about the world they governed and did business in,<sup>290</sup> found such stories uninteresting because, since the Amazons were not real people, the readers could not have had the need to deal politically or economically with them. However, those whom these elite men would encounter had knowledge of the legends, and therefore it makes some sense that Strabo would include and correct those he felt were most misleading. Strabo seems to paint the new emperors (Augustus and Tiberius) in a positive light, perhaps reflecting the

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<sup>288</sup> F. Lukermann, "The Concept of Location in Classical Geography," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 51.2 (1961): 194, 96, 202, 06-07.

<sup>289</sup> Dueck, Strabo of Amasia 45, 154-62.

<sup>290</sup> Dueck, Strabo of Amasia 54, 162-65; Johannes Engels, "'Ανδρες ἐνδοξοί or 'men of high reputation' in Strabo's Geography," Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 129-43.

authority and power that the new imperial system wielded and with which his intended audience, and he himself, would have to contend.<sup>291</sup>

Early in his writing, Strabo discusses those he will correct in his *Geography*. All of his predecessors, named or not, are targets of his corrections, but Eratosthenes of Cyrene is corrected more than the others.<sup>292</sup> Throughout his entire work, Strabo only seems to reflect Stoic philosophy in having as a goal the creation of a useful geography.<sup>293</sup> Frankly, his practical goal fails, since he concentrates on showing the weaknesses in other writers and not on presenting useful images of the world or demonstrating a clear moral compass for his reader to follow. Likewise, instead of consistently promoting Stoic thinkers, he praises a wide range of authors and philosophies, though none escape his criticism except for Homer, who is not a Stoic.<sup>294</sup> Strabo, then, does not seem to really be much of a Stoic, nor does he seem to be promoting Stoicism as much as defending Homer.

Strabo's focus on his predecessors' accuracy does not influence his defense of Homer, whom others, specifically Apollodorus, have challenged as being ignorant. Instead of proving Homer accurate, he routinely claims that the Poet was only relating those things which stood out to him and which connected directly to the story he was telling.<sup>295</sup> Homer only mentions Amazons twice in the *Iliad*: first when

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<sup>291</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 96-129.

<sup>292</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 56-62.

<sup>293</sup> Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia* 62-69, 74.

<sup>294</sup> Roseman, "Reflections of philosophy: Strabo and geographical sources" discusses several philosophies and philosophers Strabo critiques. This may counter the earlier claims from Thollard that Strabo has an consistent Stoic philosophy throughout the *Geography*, Thollard, *Barbarie et Civilisation Chez Strabon: Etude Critique des Livres III et IV de la Geographie* 22-26, 29-39.

<sup>295</sup> Strabo 12.3.36-27.

Priam encounters them as part of an army in Phrygia<sup>296</sup> and second in a brief mention of the deeds of Bellerophon.<sup>297</sup> Thus, as regards Amazons, while Homer might have mentioned them and others, those he left out should not be used as a reason to judge him false; only a false statement would prove him so.<sup>298</sup> However, Strabo has said earlier that the Amazons cannot have been a nation of only female warriors, but here, with Homer, he lets this pass without criticism. Strabo and his readers may have held Homer in too high esteem; these foundational works that all Greek children and most Roman children learned were out of reach of his criticism if he wished for an audience to look favorably upon him.<sup>299</sup> More likely, since Homer does not go into details about who the Amazons are, Strabo can simply dismiss extra information as fiction created by later authors.<sup>300</sup>

Purposely choosing specific legends to critique gives Strabo the evidence he needs to discredit those who are creating the tales about Amazons. Indeed, Ronald Syme points this out not only for the Amazons but also for other legends that Strabo corrects, especially those associated with Alexander the Great.<sup>301</sup> Clearly, Homer could know little of the world which Alexander conquered, so Strabo's goals had to be greater than merely defending the Poet and point to Strabo's own promotion of his correct view of the world. Alexander needs to be focused on because he is much

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<sup>296</sup> Homer *Iliad* 3.189.

<sup>297</sup> Homer *Iliad* 6.186.

<sup>298</sup> Strabo 12.3.27.

<sup>299</sup> Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* 14-16, 25-26.

<sup>300</sup> Blok, *Early Amazons* 145-193, has a detailed discussion of what the Homeric phrase Ἀμαζόνες ἀντιανειραὶ means, arguing quite strongly that it means that Amazons are women who fight like men. However, that still does not mean that they were a tribe of only women, which was Strabo's objection in 11.5.3.

<sup>301</sup> Syme, *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo* 27, 70-71, 90.

nearer in time than the majority of Amazon legends. Someone believing the legends about Alexander's encounter with Amazons might not have the information they need to manage or work in the eastern part of the empire. Furthermore, as this section has shown, Strabo reveals to the modern reader that there was diversity in not just the details of legends but also in opinions about the warrior women in the early imperial period, as several scholars point out in their research.<sup>302</sup>

Summing up, we see that Strabo is writing for those men of Rome he wished to impress who made decisions and helped the new imperial world function. His *Geography*, then, is less a series of world maps designed to help someone navigate the terrain and more a collection of correct and corrected information to help them think about a world of which Rome was the focal point.<sup>303</sup> In his opinion it was a world where they would not be encountering Amazons and therefore would not need the various legends delving into their culture. However, as the next chapter on Plutarch will touch upon, the legends of the Amazons continued to affect how Romans and their allies interpreted the people and the territory they controlled.

## Amazons in the Early Imperial Period

It is obvious from his tone and criticisms that Strabo does not want his readers to view him as they would any of those other historians and writers who believe foolish or incorrect variations of the Amazon legends. Strabo's primarily

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<sup>302</sup> Lightfoot, "Hellenized Greeks and Hellenized Romans: Later Greek Literature"; Potheary, "Strabo, Polybios, and the Stade"; Potheary, "Kolossourgia. 'A colossal statue of a work'"; Pretzler, "Comparing Strabo with Pausanias: Greece in context vs. Greece in depth"; Roseman, "Reflections of philosophy: Strabo and geographical sources".

<sup>303</sup> While several scholarly articles and books as well as the *Geography* itself helped lead me to this conclusion, it is most clearly and completely expressed by Katherine Clarke. Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 204,10-28.



Roman audience could easily compare Strabo's criticism with those other Amazon legends they might be familiar with and, hopefully agreeing with his veneration of Homer, would be inclined to agree with his analysis and rejection of the Amazons as subjects for a proper in-depth geography of the imperial world.<sup>304</sup> That he must counter their legends and correct their geographic associations may reflect the degree to which the warrior women had entered the general knowledge of his audience in written sources. As the chapter on Herodotus and Diodorus showed, each writer had access to several different variations of the Amazons before and during their lifetimes. Strabo's named sources provide evidence that the stories continued to develop and grow.

If we return to the various studies of the sources that Strabo uses, we find that his sources range across the centuries and include both Latin and Greek authors, though he cites far more Greek sources than Latin. A logical assumption is that his readers would also have had access to this much information, yet Strabo only uses specific legends and confusions that support his goal of demonstrating how incorrect other writers are and how correct he and Homer are. Previous sections of this chapter have dealt with those Strabo chose to name and use, so now let us turn to some surviving evidence of Amazons from his era that he does not mention and the possible reasons why.

Diodorus offers us several enticing legends about the Amazons, but Strabo never mentions him directly in relation to the Amazons; instead Strabo focuses on Cleitarchus, one of the sources that Diodorus also draws upon. Cleitarchus claims

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<sup>304</sup> Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 19, 205.

to be writing a biography of Alexander, but Diodorus's work is a very different sort of writing. It is not strictly history, and it is certainly not an attempt to explain the geographical world in a physical or cultural sense. Therefore, Strabo may believe that he does not need to specifically include Diodorus, because they are not targeting the same audience. Cleitarchus, though, by writing a biography, would be claiming some historical accuracy about the life of a man who also controlled much of the world that Rome now found under its power. True, Strabo's readers might have been familiar with Diodorus, though there is little evidence of this, but they would have read Diodorus and Strabo for different reasons: moral discussion and fantastical stories versus practical guide to the imperial world.

This may not be the only reason that Strabo ignores Diodorus. Strabo has two main problems with the current state of Amazon legends. The first is the idea that the Amazons are a purely female nation, and the second is that their location moves around without explanation. Diodorus cannot provide him with examples of either misapprehension. Diodorus divided the Amazons geographically, some in Scythia and some in Libya, and for each he chronicled a series of expansions and defeats that changed the location of their territory. There is no confusion of where the Amazons live in what Diodorus has preserved, only a nicely laid out "history" of the people. That "history" includes mentions of Amazon men as well as women. That could not work with Strabo's claim that the idea that Amazons were only women demonstrated how foolish the legends had become. Therefore, using Diodorus for the Amazons would only have undermined Strabo's condemnation of the Amazon stories as more fiction than fact. Of course this is all speculation, since the majority of Strabo's named sources exist today only in fragments and cannot be evaluated as Diodorus's work can.

Lacking the sources that Strabo mentions, we might gain a better understanding of why he felt the need to use Amazons in his corrections by examining what other written information about Amazons was in circulation at about the same time as Strabo. Four surviving Roman writers, Horace (65 – 8 BCE), Propertius (c. 50 – 2 BCE), Ovid (43 BCE – CE 7), and Hyginus (c. 64 BCE – CE 17), mention Amazons in the first centuries during or immediately following Strabo's lifetime, which can give us insight into what information was available to him about the Amazons. Again, none of them would help Strabo's argument that the Amazon legends have become false over the centuries, because they do not show the Amazons as solely female, nor do they focus on their location. They do, however, prove that the Amazons had solidly moved into the Roman culture and were being used by them. Ignoring the topic of Amazons altogether might seem odd to his readers, who would expect Strabo to at least mention them.

Quintus Horace Flaccus was the freeborn son of a freedman in Apulia. Educated in Rome, he had the usual military career until he deserted Brutus after Philippi in 42 BCE. He was pardoned and soon was introduced into the highest literary circle of Maecenas, where he met his patron Augustus. He wrote a large number of books, ranging from satires to choral odes.<sup>305</sup> He mentions Amazons once<sup>306</sup> as simply associated with a type of battle-axe that the Vindelici carried in their battle against Drusus. Cynthia Damon argues convincingly that the depiction of the Vindelici weapon is not historical but merely symbolic, the weapon of a

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<sup>305</sup> Charles Oscar Brink, Horace on Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); R.O.A.M. Lyne, The Latin Love Poets: from Catullus to Horace (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); R.O.A.M. Lyne, Horace: behind the public poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>306</sup> Horace *Odes* 4.4.17-22.

people whom the Romans conquered just as the Greeks conquered the Amazons.<sup>307</sup> Horace's brief mention of Amazons is not enough to attract Strabo's attention, and in any case the event is contemporary, not really involving Amazons at all.

Sextus Propertius was a survivor of an Umbrian equestrian family whose estates were confiscated in 41 – 40 BCE. After receiving a traditional education he turned to poetry instead of politics and published four books of elegies while he lived in Rome. He traveled in the literary retinue of Maecenas, so he was well known among the Roman elites and other writers.<sup>308</sup> Propertius uses Amazons on three occasions, twice in his third book of elegies and once in his fourth. In two of these he specifically references two heroic legends:<sup>309</sup> Achilles and Penthesileia<sup>310</sup> and Theseus and Hippolytê.<sup>311</sup> His details do not seem particularly new, simply drawing on the images available in written and visual forms. His use of the feminine voice of a Roman matron named Arethusa, seeing herself as a Hippolytê, demonstrates a positive, active vision of the warrior women, though in defense of

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<sup>307</sup> Cynthia Damon, "Ab Inferis: Historiography in Horace's Odes," Clio and the Poets: Augustan Poetry and the Traditions of Ancient Historiography, ed. D.S. Levene and D.P. Nelis (Boston: Brill, 2002).

<sup>308</sup> Jasper Griffin, Latin Poets and Roman Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Margaret Hubbard, Propertius (London: Bristol Classical, 2001); Lyne, The Latin Love Poets: from Catullus to Horace; Jeri Blair Debrohun, Roman Propertius and the reinvention of Elegy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Brian Arkins, In Interpretation of the Poetry of Propertius (c. 5-15 B.C.) (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005); Micaela Janan, The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>309</sup> William R. Nethercut, "Propertius 3.11," American Philological Association (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), vol. 102 of Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association, 411-43; James H. Dee, "Arethusa to Lycotas: Propertius 4.3," American Philological Association (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), vol. 104 of Transactions of the American Philological Association, 81-96; Debrohun, Roman Propertius and the reinvention of Elegy 189-92.

<sup>310</sup> Propertius *Elegies* 3.11.14-16.

<sup>311</sup> Propertius *Elegies* 4.3.43-48.

the family and state.<sup>312</sup> His third use of the Amazons is as an adjective of sorts, one that describes an active woman, in this case a Spartan exercising.<sup>313</sup> These references could be interpreted as representing conflicts between war and love,<sup>314</sup> but when one reads Greek and Roman love or erotic poetry this interweaving of military matters and love seems quite common. Inversions of male and female roles, whether using Amazons or not, are also very common in such poetry.<sup>315</sup>

None of Propertius' uses of the Amazons, though, claim a location or an absence of men, so they are not something Strabo could use to argue against. Instead Propertius is an example of why Strabo is mentioning the Amazons at all: they have become so well known that even a love poet can reference them with ease and use them without concern for historical fact but instead as an erotic vision. Strabo wants his work to be seen as offering useful and correct information.

Publius Ovidius Naso was also from an equestrian family. He, too, turned from politics to literary pursuits, becoming one of the most popular authors in Rome until his exile in 8 CE.<sup>316</sup> Amazons appear not only in his "love manuals" but also in his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* written during his exile. Ovid mentions Amazons only six times in his numerous publications. He uses the Penthesileia and the

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<sup>312</sup> Debrouhun, *Roman Propertius and the reinvention of Elegy* 189-92; Janan, *The Politics of Desire: Propertius IV* 53-69.

<sup>313</sup> Propertius 3.14.11-14.

<sup>314</sup> Arkins, *In Interpretation of the Poetry of Propertius (c. 5-15 B.C.)* 2-17, 61-64.

<sup>315</sup> Ellen Greene, *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>316</sup> Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets: from Catullus to Horace*; Sir Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); L.P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2005); Harry B. Evans, *Publica Carmina: Ovid's Books from Exile* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Phillip DeLacy, "Philosophical Doctrine and Poetic Technique in Ovid," *The Classical Journal* 43.3 (1947).

Hippolytê legends again, but this time the erotic component is highlighted.<sup>317</sup> The female objects or subjects of his manuals on love are rarely called Amazons, armed for the pursuit of sexual pleasure where the female will “fall” to the male, but only after the correct process has been followed by both sexes in this game. Similar to Propertius, Ovid puts the comparison of self to Amazon in the mouth of a woman, this time Cydippe, who is talking to Acontius and telling him that she is not an Amazon to be conquered.<sup>318</sup> The erotic takes center stage, and the Amazons are merely one way of seeing women as erotic beings, objects or subjects.

Yet Amazons can be more than simply erotic in Ovid. Ovid compares his wife to an Amazon, pleading with her to do her duty and work for his return from exile.<sup>319</sup> While he does not return to the image of the Amazon as her husband’s defender, his plea here is similar to his other attempts to get intervention from his wife on his behalf.<sup>320</sup> Here as with Propertius the Amazon can be a defender of family and not merely a target for male conquest. Strabo, however, is uninterested in these erotic or modern uses of the Amazons beyond those stories that claim to be telling the truth about a people whom he believes existed because Homer mentioned them.

Homer and other literary and philosophical writers are important to both Strabo and Ovid. While different scholars have tried to find one or two schools of

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<sup>317</sup> Ovid *The Art of Love* 2.739-744, 3.1-6; *The Remedies of Love* 675-676; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15. 497-499, 551-552 does not fit into these categories but seems to be a mere reference to surprise that he and his readers may understand.

<sup>318</sup> Ovid *The Heroides* 21.16-20.

<sup>319</sup> Ovid *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.95-96.

<sup>320</sup> Ovid *Epistulae ex Ponto* 3.1, *Tristia* 4.3 & 5.2.

philosophy or a few writers who most strongly influenced each, Phillip DeLacy's 1947 study rings true for both Augustan authors: they use philosophy to help them touch their audience.<sup>321</sup> For Strabo the use of other writers and philosophical techniques is a means to promote Homer and himself. In Ovid's pre-exile work, philosophy, legend, and other writers' ideas become the way to make his views more interesting to his audience. The exiled Ovid uses the same references to argue for his friends and family to work for his return to Rome by encouraging them to be like or unlike the various figures he describes, icons they would know from their own Hellenically inspired educations.

Hyginus, a Spaniard by birth and Roman by virtue of his status as a freedman, is more difficult to grasp than either Ovid or Propertius. Exactly what he wrote is debatable, but scholarship credits the *Fabulae* or *Genealogiae* to him as well as work on astronomy, *Astronomica*.<sup>322</sup> The *Fabulae* is a long but simple catalog of various relationships in Greco-Roman mythology, beginning with the creation and ending with a list of "first inventors," who are various gods. The Amazons are mentioned in this catalog eight times. The Amazons are the opponents or objects of the Greek heroes Achilles, Heracles, and Theseus.<sup>323</sup> Hyginus also credits them with the building of the Temple of Diana at Ephesus.<sup>324</sup> Antiope is mentioned as the

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<sup>321</sup> DeLacy, "Philosophical Doctrine and Poetic Technique in Ovid": 153-61.

<sup>322</sup> The Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History, ed. Graham Speake (New York: Penguin Books, Ltd, 1994) 325; Hyginus, The Myths of Hyginus, trans. Mary Grant, Publications in Humanistic Studies, vol. 34 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1960); Hyginus, Hygini Fabulae edited by Peter K. Marshall, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Stuttgartiae: Teubner, 1993); Star myths of the Greeks and Romans : a sourcebook containing the Constellations of Pseudo-Eratosthenes and the Poetic astronomy of Hyginus, trans. Theony Condos (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1997).

<sup>323</sup> Hyginus *Fabulae* XIV.30, XXX.10, CXII.4, CCXLI.

<sup>324</sup> Hyginus *Fabulae* CCXXIII, CCXXV.

mother of the ill-fated Hippolytus, who died after being cursed by his father.<sup>325</sup>

Hyginus also lists the names of fifteen Amazons,<sup>326</sup> most of them differing from those in the list of Diodorus 4.16.

A mere catalog of mythological events and characters is not something that concerns Strabo. Hyginus is simply repeating some of what he's learned or read, but he does indicate that there were a range of Amazon legends circulating by the time of Augustus. This range suggests further that Strabo carefully chooses which legends and authors to criticize and that his goal is not to set forth the legends or myths themselves but to criticize those that contain too many fictionalizations or are cloaked in the guise of history or geography.

Finally, one ought to mention the revisionist Dictys of Crete, whose work only survives in a fourth-century Latin version by Septimius. Very little is known or written about Dictys, but Bowersock classifies him as a Neronian writer.<sup>327</sup> Dictys is one of those anti-Homeric authors that Strabo may have been countering in his own work by defending Homer. In Dictys's version of the Trojan War the Amazon Penthesileia does not die heroically at the hands of Achilles but is instead drowned in the Scamander River for joining with Troy.<sup>328</sup> Even the great legendary battle between the hero of the Greeks and the Amazon is stripped of its valor and grandeur as Achilles wounds her first with a thrown spear before facing her in hand-to-hand combat. Strabo ignores Dictys either because he is unaware of him or

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<sup>325</sup> Hyginus *Fabulae* CCL.

<sup>326</sup> Hyginus *Fabulae* CLXIII.

<sup>327</sup> G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 11, 23-24.

<sup>328</sup> Septimius 4.3.



because our information about him is incorrect, since he only survives in Septimius's version. Dictys's complaints seem to reflect the fact that in the centuries following Homer other heroes fought the Amazons in literature and the visual arts, including Heracles, Theseus, and the city of Athens, while stories of Alexander's meeting with an Amazon circulated in some histories and biographies.

Strabo's refusal to criticize most of these Amazon meetings with the heroes does not reflect his ignorance of the heroes themselves. Strabo mentions Heracles's deeds and travels on at least 50 occasions in the *Geography*, beginning in book six and throughout each book thereafter through book 14. Likewise Strabo mentions Theseus approximately seven times, never in connection with the Amazons. Athens, too, never crosses paths with the warrior women, even though they appear over thirty times in Strabo. In the case of Alexander, Strabo mentions the Amazons only to criticize the story, not for the idea that their queen might wish to meet with the Macedonian king but that she could travel what Strabo considers an outrageous distance. In each case, Strabo mentions the hero when he is focusing on a location and pointing out discrepancies between various accounts, the foolishness of his predecessors' and contemporaries' understanding of geography, or merely as a marker of the location, a feature that is prominent and related to the legend.

Few of the heroic legends mention whether or not the Amazons as a people include both men and women, because the focus is on the war, and in the legends only Amazon women are warriors. Furthermore, there seems to be no disagreement over where the heroes encountered the Amazons. Thus there is little in the heroic legends that Strabo may use to demonstrate his superiority over those who are wrong about the Amazons.

During Augustus's reign there was an attempt to promote traditional Roman values and culture through building projects, legal changes, and literary patronage. Indeed, the foundation legends of Rome itself were being promoted partly through a connection to the Greek world.<sup>329</sup> This association was not always positive, as we see in authors like Livy who trace the foundation of Rome back to Aeneas, a Trojan and a survivor of the great war between the Greeks and the Trojans. Most Roman legends focus on historical heroes fighting for the great city and the foundation of its family and social hierarchy; attempts to draw in the Greek heroes are tied to politics, education, and entertainment. The Romans had been exposed to Greek culture for more than two centuries at this point,<sup>330</sup> but they use these Greek stories and settings in other ways to further their agendas, whether it is Caesar's claim to divinity through Aeneas or the references to Amazons in the four Latin authors we just briefly examined. They do not at this time in the early Imperial period seem to be retelling the Greek stories so much as using them to stir up an image in their audience's minds, changing them only as much as they need to further their political or professional goals.<sup>331</sup> Greek authors and orators do that as well, but they are also revising and critiquing the legends. Strabo is clearly attempting to do this in addition to promoting himself; a similar motivation drives Plutarch's writing, as the next chapter will discuss. By not declaring the Amazons a fictional people, labeling only the details about them beyond Homer as creations of later authors, Strabo

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<sup>329</sup> Clarke, Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World 321-22.

<sup>330</sup> Matthew Leigh, "Primitivism and Power: the beginnings of Latin literature," Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective, ed. Oliver Taplin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 288-310.

<sup>331</sup> Matthew Leigh, "Oblique politics: Epic of the imperial period," Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective, ed. Oliver Taplin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 468-91.

shows that he understood that Homer remained important to both the Romans and Greeks.<sup>332</sup>

Was Strabo successful in promoting Homer and himself? Anna Maria Biraschi suggests he failed in part because his promotion of this most Greek of Greek authors, Homer, excludes most Latin authors.<sup>333</sup> His audience would have been familiar with both groups of writers, so his ignoring them may have made Strabo's own knowledge appear lacking or, worse, too ethnocentric. Biraschi's main evidence for Strabo's failure is the same as most scholars: his name is rarely mentioned, nor is his work widely used by later writers.

It is true that other authors rarely mention Strabo by name.<sup>334</sup> The greatest use of his work is in Josephus,<sup>335</sup> who wrote not long after Strabo's own lifetime. Yet this only testifies that his work remained available for the decades following its publication. We know little about him, suggesting that he was not important enough to be remembered by successive generations of writers and orators. However, his work did survive, whereas most of those he corrects and criticizes in his *Geography* do not. But the mere survival of a text cannot equal success or even

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<sup>332</sup> Francesco Trotta, "The foundation of Greek colonies and their main features in Strabo: a portrayal lacking homogeneity?" *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 126.

<sup>333</sup> Biraschi, "Strabo and Homer: a chapter in cultural history" 84-85; A detailed study of Strabo's poetic sources reveals primarily Greek authors in Daniela Dueck, "Strabo's use of poetry," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 86-107; Engels, "'Ανδρες ἔνδοξοι or 'men of high reputation' in Strabo's *Geography*" 130-31. Her belief that Strabo was unsuccessful follows standard views since at least the introductory biography by E. G. Sihler, "Strabo of Amaseia: His Personality and His Works," *The American Journal of Philology* 44.2 (1923): 134-44.

<sup>334</sup> Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* 194.

<sup>335</sup> Richards, "Strabo. The Anatolian Who Failed of Roman Recognition": 85; Yuval Shahar, "Josephus' hidden dialogue with Strabo," *Strabo's Cultural Geography: The Making of Kolossourgia*, ed. Lindsay Dueck, & Potheary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 235-49.

popularity, of course; there are too many variables in why and how any text passes from one generation to the next. Homer, of course, still serves as the foundation of Greek literature and perhaps western literature as well, so his defenders and his work won out over his critics, and in that sense Strabo was on the winning side.

Focusing on the Amazons has provided more examples of what the recent defenders of Strabo call his cultural value as evidence of the variety and creativity of literary debates in the first century BCE. Ronald Syme was a brilliant scholar, but in the case of Strabo<sup>336</sup> his devaluation is overly harsh, ignoring Strabo's agenda. No one claims that Strabo is one of the most eloquent Greek authors nor the most creative, but he certainly offers a strong testament to the value of geography and history in the early imperial world of Rome and the range of different sources available.

While Strabo's use of the Amazons to criticize other authors was innovative, as the next chapter will show, he was not the only Roman-era Greek author who was correcting legends about the Amazons. Plutarch also called into question details about the warrior women and authors' motivations for telling certain tales.

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<sup>336</sup> Syme, Anatolica: Studies in Strabo 356-57, 61.

## V. Plutarch: Amazons as Details

In Herodotus the Amazons were political; they could justify a *polis*'s claims or represent an alternative to hostile military action. In Diodorus the Amazons were philosophical — a way to build up the reputation of hero and god. In Strabo the Amazons are intellectual; the inconsistencies in their legends provide logical ammunition to reduce or increase the reputation of an author. However, in Plutarch, the Amazons act mainly as details about any event or life that he looks at; they serve a unique function in each instance in which they appear. At the beginning of the second century, the prolific Greek writer and scholar Plutarch wrote a series of *Lives*, biographical comparisons between great Greek and Roman men. Modern scholars debate the purpose of these works. Some view the *Lives* as an attempt to explain Romans to his Greek countrymen and promote the importance of Hellenic culture to Romans.<sup>337</sup> Still others see in the *Lives* an educational purpose either for his students, his friends, or himself.<sup>338</sup> No one debates that the *Lives* are primarily a moral study and not a proper history, though they do debate whether he was promoting any particular philosophical school.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> S. C. R. Swain, "Hellenic Culture and the Roman Heroes of Plutarch," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 110 (1990): 128-29,45; Philip A. Stadter, "Introduction," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greeks Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter & Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 2-3.

<sup>338</sup> Modern scholars vary in their interpretation of Plutarch *Aemilius* 1, where he describes the *Lives* as an educational project for his friends which he continued for himself. C.P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 106-09; Alan Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London: Elek Books Limited, 1974) 19, 36-48; R. H. Barrow, *Plutarch and his times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967) 52-57, 62; Robert Lamberton, *Plutarch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 145; Stadter, "Introduction" 5-6; Aurelio Pérez Jiménez, "Exemplum: The Paradigmatic Education of the Ruler in the Lives of Plutarch," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter & Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 105-11.

<sup>339</sup> George Boys-Stones, "Thyrsus-Bearer of the Academy or Enthusiast for Plato?" *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essays on Plutarch*, ed. Judith Mossman (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd, 1997) 41-58;

Throughout his *Lives* Plutarch wove in commentary on the likelihood of the events he describes as well as discussions of what other scholars and writers had said about the person or occurrence he was discussing. This provides us with a list of over 200 scholars and writers, most of them Greek, a good deal of material for modern scholars to use.<sup>340</sup> Few of the sources Plutarch mentions survive to our day, and most scholars have given up the *Quellenforschung* focus of the 19<sup>th</sup> century where Plutarch is concerned.<sup>341</sup> Later scholars have used this list in a debate over Plutarch's education, his research and even his skill in Latin, which, he writes, he studied late in life.<sup>342</sup> Plutarch certainly may have used his Roman friends as sources for information,<sup>343</sup> but these need not negate his own abilities in Latin and may only indicate a lower esteem for Roman works or fewer available materials on his subjects.<sup>344</sup>

Born into a wealthy Chaeronean family, he had ample opportunities for education and travel, and even held a variety of political positions, as well as citizenship in three cities: his hometown, Athens and Rome.<sup>345</sup> It seems unlikely,

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Ewen Bowie, "Plutarch and Literary Activity in Achaia: A.D. 107-117," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter & Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 42-50; Jackson P. Hershbell, "Plutarch's Political Philosophy: Peripatetic and Platonic," *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Plutarch Society*, eds. Lukas de Blois, Jeroen bons ton Kessels and Dirk M. Schenkeveld (Boston: Brill, 2004) 151-62.

<sup>340</sup> Philip A. Stadter, "Introduction," *Plutarch and the historical tradition*, ed. Philip A. Stadter (New York: Routledge, 1992) 8; Hubert M. Martin, "Plutarch," *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. - A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Brill, 1997) 716.

<sup>341</sup> Lamberton, *Plutarch* 13-19.

<sup>342</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Demosthenes* 2. Plutarch, "Demosthenes," trans. Bernadotte Perrin, *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), vol. 99.

<sup>343</sup> Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 81-87.

<sup>344</sup> Barrow, *Plutarch and his times* 150-53, 60-61; Lamberton, *Plutarch* 13, 19-21.

<sup>345</sup> Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 8-11; Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* 2; Barrow, *Plutarch and his times* 15-16; Martin, "Plutarch" 715-16; Lamberton, *Plutarch* 1-2, 44; John Dillon, "The Social Role of the Philosopher in the

then, that Plutarch's Latin could be so poor that he could not consult Roman authors when he thought they provided reliable information or were too widely known to be ignored. As this examination of the Amazons in the *Lives* will show, reliability of a source is one of the criteria Plutarch used when judging a variation to be more or less believable. Indeed, since most scholars see a pro-Roman bias<sup>346</sup> in the *Lives*, it would be very odd if Plutarch did not use at least some Latin sources.

A few scholars believe Plutarch had a plan from the beginning to write the entire series of *Lives*, but most see them as individual pairs.<sup>347</sup> Some of the pairs, such as Theseus and Romulus or Alexander and Caesar, are tightly written and almost parallel in structure, while later *Lives* seem less structured with weaker comparisons.<sup>348</sup> It seems that Plutarch finished each pairing with a *synkrisis*, or comparison, where he laid out the characters of each man in a direct fashion so he could see which was the better;<sup>349</sup> however, not all of these *synkrisis* survive. Since Plutarch makes no explicit comparisons between the two men within the biographies themselves, the *synkrisis* are the surest means of understanding what character traits Plutarch was interested in exploring. The motivations for each great man's behavior and decisions, the treatment of those under his authority, and the

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Second Century C.E.: Some Remarks," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter & Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 33.

<sup>346</sup> Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 93, 102; John Dillon, "Plutarch and the end of History," *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essays on Plutarch*, ed. Judith Mossman (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd, 1997) 233-40.

<sup>347</sup> Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* 104; Lambertson, *Plutarch* 22-23.

<sup>348</sup> Lambertson, *Plutarch* 64-65, 99, 108.

<sup>349</sup> Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* 3; Martin, "Plutarch" 724-28; Paolo Desideri, "Lycurgus: The Spartan Ideal in the Age of Trajan," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, ed. Philip A. Stadter & Luc Van der Stockt (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002) 315.

consequences of his choices on the rest of his society are all aspects Plutarch examines in the *synkrisis*. In these areas Amazons could provide insight to a great man's character. However, while Amazons appear in three *Lives*, Plutarch only uses them to display a man's character in the *Life of Theseus*; in the other two, they are only one of many details.

## The Amazons in the Lives of Three Great Men

### The Life of Theseus:

Plutarch focuses on great Greek and Roman men of the past. Some of these may seem more legendary than historic, but each of them made a valuable political or military contribution to their society. As we saw in Strabo, the Amazon legends stirred debate among different scholars, poets, and authors. Plutarch often discusses different opinions of various events, motivations and details, which are sometimes the only evidence we have of particular variations on a historical, mythical, or legendary person or event. As Frank J. Frost explains in his own article on the *Life of Theseus*, Plutarch's moral agenda and his desire to use historical figures to achieve this necessitated including mythological matters that were so well-known and accepted that he could not ignore them.<sup>350</sup> Events involving Amazons are among these diverse accounts that he must deal with and he chooses to examine several different accounts to find the most likely version.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Frank J. Frost, "Plutarch and Theseus," *Politics and the Athenians: Essays on Athenian History and Historiography* (Toronto: Edgar Kent, Publishers Inc., 2005) 70-77.

<sup>351</sup> This is an approach he uses throughout the *Lives*, and not just within *Theseus* or for Amazons.



We see Plutarch's method for evaluating variations when he discusses the legend concerning Theseus's meeting with Amazons. Philochorus<sup>352</sup> and a few unnamed authors claim that Theseus was Heracles's companion and earned an Amazon bride for his courage and skill. A majority of writers, including Pherecydes,<sup>353</sup> Hellanicus,<sup>354</sup> and Herodorus,<sup>355</sup> tell of a solo voyage.<sup>356</sup> Plutarch sides with the latter story, calling it more trustworthy (πιθανώτερα) and adds details from Bion<sup>357</sup> about how the Amazons responded to Theseus: Theseus uses his charm and his cunning to take a bride.<sup>358</sup>

In his biography of Theseus, Plutarch gives us citations for works mentioning the Amazon legend that no longer survive, in this case, Menecrates. Plutarch's

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<sup>352</sup> Philochorus Atheniensis's only fragment to mention Amazons is from this Plutarch passage itself (Jacoby *FGkHist* 328.110).

<sup>353</sup> Most likely this is Pherecydes Atheniensis (Jacoby *FGkHist* 3.15a), whose only Amazon fragments come from the *Argonautica* of Apollonius.

<sup>354</sup> Hellanicus Lesbios is not listed neatly in Jacoby but has numerous fragments, several of which do indeed mention Amazons (*FGkHist* 4.106, 4.107, 14.66, 4.167a, 4.167c, 4.186, 323a.16a, 323a.16b, 323a.17a, and 323a.17c).

<sup>355</sup> Most likely this is Herodorus Heracleota (Jacoby *FGkHist* 31.25a and 25b), who mentions Amazons in only three fragments: this passage from Plutarch and two others, mentioned in two different Tzetzes works.

<sup>356</sup> All three of these named authors probably wrote in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Hellanicus's fragments were discussed previously. Pherecydes was an Athenian logographer. William Smith, ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1967) 257. This particular Herodorus may be the mythographer who focused on promoting the worship of Heracles. Smith, ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* 430-31.

<sup>357</sup> Bion is much more difficult to identify given the limited information in Plutarch. Bion Proconnesis is Plutarch's source, according to Jacoby (*FGkHist* 14.2), but the only mention of Amazons in his surviving fragments are straight from this passage in Plutarch. The other possible Bion would be Jacoby #89, but there is no mention of Amazons in these fragments.

<sup>358</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 26.1-2: Εἰς δὲ τὸν πόντον ἔπλευσε τὸν Εὐξείνιον, ὡς μὲν Φιλόχορος καὶ τινες ἄλλοι λέγουσι, μεθ' Ἡρακλέους ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας συστρατεύσας, καὶ γέρας Ἀντιόπην ἔλαβεν· οἱ δὲ πλείους, ὧν ἔστι καὶ Φερεκύδης καὶ Ἑλλάνικος καὶ Ἡρόδωρος, ὕστερόν φασι τὸν Ἡρακλέους ἰδιόστολον πλεῦσαι τὸν Θησέα καὶ τὴν Ἀμαζόνα λαβεῖν αἰχμάλωτον, πιθανώτερα λέγοντες. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἄλλος ἰστόρηται τῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ στρατευσάντων Ἀμαζόνα λαβεῖν αἰχμάλωτον. Βίων δὲ καὶ ταύτην παρακρουσάμενον οἴχεσθαι λαβόντα· φύσει γὰρ οὐσας τὰς Ἀμαζόνας φιλάνδρους οὔτε φυγεῖν τὸν Θησέα προσβάλλοντα τῇ χώρᾳ, ἀλλὰ καὶ ξένια πέμπειν· τὸν δὲ τὴν κομίζουσαν ἐμβῆναι παρακαλεῖν εἰς τὸ πλοῖον· ἐμβάσης δὲ ἀναχθῆναι.

Μενεκράτης δὲ τις, ἱστορίαν περὶ Νικαίας τῆς ἐν Βιθυνίᾳ πόλεως ἐκδεδωκώς, Θησέα φησὶ τὴν Ἀντιόπην ἔχοντα διατρίψαι περὶ τούτους τοὺς τόπους

account, though, seems to look less at how this “marriage” between the king and the Amazon Antiope occurs and more at where they travel and how they interact with those they meet. The captive Amazon does not seem upset with her situation; Plutarch credits her with gentleness, sexual loyalty, and political discretion, as well as a sexual appeal that results in the suicide of one interested Athenian man. Aside from the suicide, which is not directly Antiope’s fault, the Amazon seems to show many of the same positive qualities any Greek might expect from any good wife or mate.<sup>359</sup>

Presumably Theseus and Antiope settle down in Athens. After some unspecified time, the Amazons attack Athens to reclaim their stolen sister. Plutarch uses Cleidemus<sup>360</sup> as his source for this story, saying approvingly that the author wished to set forth all the details of the battle precisely (ἐξακριβοῦν τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα). Neither side seems to have greater skill or luck for three months, until “Hippolytē” steps in and negotiates a treaty.<sup>361</sup> Until this point, Theseus’s Amazon “bride” is

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<sup>359</sup> Plutarch “Life of Theseus” 26.3-5: τυγχάνειν δὲ συστρατεύοντας αὐτῷ τρεῖς νεανίσκους ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν ἀδελφοὺς ἀλλήλων, Εὐνεων καὶ Θόαντα καὶ Σολόεντα. τοῦτον οὖν ἐρώντα τῆς Ἀντιόπης καὶ λανθάνοντα τοὺς ἄλλους ἐξεπεῖν πρὸς ἓνα τῶν συνήθων· ἐκείνου δὲ περὶ τούτων ἐντυχόντος τῇ Ἀντιόπῃ, τὴν μὲν πείραν ἰσχυρῶς ἀποτρίψασθαι, τὸ δὲ πρᾶγμα σωφρόνως ἅμα καὶ πράως ἐνεγκεῖν καὶ πρὸς τὸν Θησέα μὴ κατηγορήσαι. τοῦ δὲ Σολόεντος ὡς ἀπέγνω ῥίψαντος ἑαυτὸν εἰς ποταμὸν τινα καὶ διαφθαρέντος, ἡσθημένον τότε τὴν αἰτίαν καὶ τὸ πάθος τοῦ νεανίσκου τὸν Θησέα βαρῶς ἐνεγκεῖν, καὶ δυσφοροῦντα λόγιόν τι πυθόχρηστον ἀνενεγκεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτόν· εἶναι γὰρ αὐτῷ προστεταγμένον ἐν Δελφοῖς ὑπὸ τῆς Πυθίας, ὅταν ἐπὶ ξένης ἀνιαθῆ ἡ μάλιστα καὶ περίλυπος γένηται, πόλιν ἐκεῖ κτίσαι καὶ τῶν ἀμφ’ αὐτὸν τινας ἡγεμόνας καταλιπεῖν. ἐκ δὲ τούτου τὴν μὲν πόλιν, ἣν ἔκτισεν, ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ Πυθόπολιν προσαγορευοῦσαι, Σολόεντα δὲ τὸν πλησίον ποταμὸν ἐπὶ τιμῇ τοῦ νεανίσκου. καταλιπεῖν δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ, οἷον ἐπιστάτας καὶ νομοθέτας, καὶ σὺν αὐτοῖς Ἑρμόν ἄνδρα τῶν Ἀθήνησιν εὐπατριδῶν· ἀφ’ οὗ καὶ τόπον Ἑρμοῦ καλεῖν οἰκίαν τοὺς Πυθοπολίτας, οὐκ ὀρθῶς τὴν δευτέραν συλλαβὴν περισπώνοντας καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἐπὶ θεὸν ἀπὸ ἥρωος μετατιθέντας.

<sup>360</sup> Of the fragments in Jacoby, only one mentions Amazons, and it is from this passage in Plutarch (*FGkHist* 323.18). Cleidemus was a fourth century BCE Athenian author. William Smith, ed., *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1967) 782; John William Donaldson, *A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece; from the foundation of the Socratic schools to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks*, vol. I, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker and Son, West Strand, 1858) 230-32.

<sup>361</sup> Plutarch “Life of Theseus” 27.2-4: εἰ μὲν οὖν, ὡς Ἑλλάνικος ἰστόρηκε, τῷ Κιμμέρικῳ Βοσπόρῳ παγέντι διαβᾶσαι περιήλθον, ἔργον ἐστὶ πιστεῦσαι· τὸ δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει σχεδὸν αὐτὰς ἐνστρατοπεδεῦσαι μαρτυρεῖται καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι τῶν τόπων καὶ ταῖς θήκαις τῶν πεσόντων.

Πολὺν δὲ χρόνον ὄκνος ἦν καὶ μέλλησις ἀμφοτέροις τῆς ἐπιχειρήσεως τέλος δὲ Θησεὺς κατὰ τι λόγιον τῷ Φόβῳ

called Antiope in the story. The name Hippolytê is associated with two different heroic legends: those of Heracles and Theseus. This name is known to Roman audiences well enough that by the turn of the eras Propertius can make a reference to her.<sup>362</sup> By clearly stating that he is using another author's account, Plutarch can deflect claims that he is not keeping the Amazons straight, something that Strabo would have exploited in his own work to demonstrate the inferiority of other writers.

Plutarch makes it clear that he has further reasons to choose Cleidemus's version. Other accounts, authors unnamed, say that the battle ended with death for the kidnapped Amazon or for her sisters. While these versions have some evidence in the form of memorial buildings, Plutarch chooses the version supported not only by a monument, the Horcomosium, but also by a sacrifice to the Amazons during the festival of Theseus. Likewise, Plutarch finds the number of graves between Athens and Thermodon to be evidence of the fact that the women returned to their homeland but had to fight their way there.<sup>363</sup> The unspoken assumption seems to be

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σφαιγιασάμενος συνήψεν αὐταῖς. ἡ μὲν οὖν μάχη Βοηδρομιῶνος ἐγένετο μηνὸς ἐφ' ἣ τὰ Βοηδρόμια μέχρι νῦν Ἀθηναῖοι θύουσιν. ἰστορεῖ δὲ Κλειδήμος, ἐξακριβοῦν τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα βουλόμενος, τὸ μὲν εὐώνυμον τῶν Ἀμαζόνων κέρα ἐπιστρέφειν πρὸς τὸ νῦν καλούμενον Ἀμαζόνειον, τῷ δὲ δεξιῷ πρὸς τὴν Πνύκα κατὰ τὴν Χρῦσαν ἦκειν. μάχεσθαι δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἀπὸ τοῦ Μουσείου ταῖς Ἀμαζόσι συμπεσόντας, καὶ τάφους τῶν πεσόντων περὶ τὴν πλατεῖαν εἶναι τὴν φέρουσαν ἐπὶ τὰς πύλας παρὰ τὸ Χαλκῶδοντος ἡρώων, ἃς νῦν Πειραϊκὰς ὀνομάζουσι. καὶ ταῦτη μὲν ἐκβιασθῆναι μέχρι τῶν Εὐμενίδων καὶ ὑποχωρῆσαι ταῖς γυναιξίν, ἀπὸ δὲ Παλλαδίου καὶ Ἀρδηττοῦ καὶ Λυκαίου προσβαλόντας ὤσασθαι τὸ δεξιὸν αὐτῶν ἄχρι τοῦ στρατοπέδου καὶ πολλὰς καταβαλεῖν. τετάρτῳ δὲ μηνὶ συνθήκας γενέσθαι διὰ τῆς Ἴππολύτης Ἴππολύτην γὰρ οὗτος ὀνομάζει τὴν τῷ Θησεῖ συνοικοῦσαν, οὐκ Ἀντιόπην.

Ἔνιοι δὲ φασὶ μετὰ τοῦ Θησεῶς μαχομένην πεσεῖν τὴν ἄνθρωπον ὑπὸ Μολπαδίας ἀκοντισθεῖσαν, καὶ τὴν στήλην τὴν παρὰ τὸ τῆς Ὀλυμπίας ἱερὸν ἐπὶ ταύτῃ κεῖσθαι.

<sup>362</sup> Propertius *Elegies* 4.3.43-44.

<sup>363</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 27.4-6: καὶ ταῦτη μὲν ἐκβιασθῆναι μέχρι τῶν Εὐμενίδων καὶ ὑποχωρῆσαι ταῖς γυναιξίν, ἀπὸ δὲ Παλλαδίου καὶ Ἀρδηττοῦ καὶ Λυκαίου προσβαλόντας ὤσασθαι τὸ δεξιὸν αὐτῶν ἄχρι τοῦ στρατοπέδου καὶ πολλὰς καταβαλεῖν. τετάρτῳ δὲ μηνὶ συωθήκας γενέσθαι διὰ τῆς Ἴππολύτης Ἴππολύτην γὰρ οὗτος ὀνομάζει τὴν τῷ Θησεῖ συνοικοῦσαν, οὐκ Ἀντιόπην.

Ἔνιοι δὲ φασὶ μετὰ τοῦ Θησεῶς μαχομένην πεσεῖν τὴν ἄνθρωπον ὑπὸ Μολπαδίας ἀκοντισθεῖσαν, καὶ τὴν στήλην τὴν παρὰ τὸ τῆς Ὀλυμπίας ἱερὸν ἐπὶ ταύτῃ κεῖσθαι. καὶ θαυμαστὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπὶ πράγμασιν οὕτω παλαιοῖς πλαναῖσθαι τὴν ἰστορίαν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰς τετρωμένας φασὶ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων ὑπ' Ἀντιόπης εἰς Χαλκίδα λάθρα διαπεμφθεῖσας

that if the Amazons had been defeated they could not have returned home and fought, but under a treaty they would have been armed and would have had enough troops to fight multiple battles on the way home. In all this Plutarch seems focused on choosing the most reliable tradition, and not on following a false historical path (as he puts it himself, *πλανᾶσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν*, 27.5). Most of his sources, like those in Herodotus, Diodorus, and Strabo, do not survive, so we cannot determine the quality of Plutarch's judgments of his sources as more or less reliable.

Plutarch goes on to dismiss other versions of the Theseus/ Amazon encounter. Specifically he targets the *Theseid*, which is credited to an Athenian author named Xenophon.<sup>364</sup> That version confuses two of the many women who help or hinder Theseus: Phaedra is declared an Amazon, even though all other sources say that she married Theseus later and was stepmother to the Amazon's son by Theseus. Plutarch once more advances reasons of accuracy for choosing a version of the tale; in this case, it is the sole account that contradicts other sources' almost universal agreement with another version.<sup>365</sup>

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τυγχάνειν ἐπιμελείας, καὶ ταφῆναί τινας ἐκεῖ περὶ τὸ νῦν Ἀμαζόνειον καλούμενον. ἀλλὰ τοῦ γε τὸν πόλεμον εἰς σπονδὰς τελευτῆσαι μαρτύριόν ἐστιν ἢ τε τοῦ τόπου κλήσις τοῦ παρὰ τὸ Θησεῖον, ὄνπερ Ὀρκωμόσιον καλοῦσιν, ἢ τε γινομένη πάλαι θυσία ταῖς Ἀμαζόσι πρὸ τῶν Θησεῖων. δεικνύουσι δὲ καὶ Μεγαρεῖς Ἀμαζόνων θήκην παρ' αὐτοῖς, ἐπὶ τὸν καλούμενον Ῥοῦν βαδίζουσιν ἐξ ἀγορᾶς, ὅπου τὸ Ῥομβοειδές. λέγεται δὲ καὶ περὶ Χαϊρώνειαν ἑτέρας ἀποθανεῖν, καὶ ταφῆναι παρὰ τὸ ρευμάτιον ὃ πάλαι μὲν, ὡς ἔοικε, Θερωμῶδων, Αἴμων δὲ νῦν καλεῖται· περὶ ὧν ἐν τῷ Δημοσθένους βίῳ γέγραπται. φαίνονται δὲ μηδὲ Θεσσαλίαν ἀπραγμόνως αἱ Ἀμαζόνες διελθοῦσαι· τάφοι γὰρ αὐτῶν ἔτι καὶ νῦν δεῖκνυνται περὶ τὴν Σκοτουσαίαν καὶ τὰς Κυνὸς κεφαλᾶς.

<sup>364</sup> *Anthologia Palatina* 7.98 is rather unclear on who this author is, but it is not the 5<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Socratic philosopher and mercenary whose works include *Anabasis*, *Oeconomicus*, and *Symposium*. The single fragment in Jacoby (*FGkHist* 24.1) is certainly not from any *Theseid* and does not mention Amazons or Theseus.

<sup>365</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 28: Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἄξια μνήμης περὶ τῶν Ἀμαζόνων. ἦν γὰρ ὁ τῆς Θησηίδος ποιητῆς Ἀμαζόνων ἐπανάστασιν γέγραφε, Θησεῖ γαμοῦντι Φαίδραν τῆς Ἀντιόπης ἐπιτιθεμένης καὶ τῶν μετ' αὐτῆς Ἀμαζόνων ἀμυνομένων καὶ κτείνοντος αὐτὰς Ἡρακλέους, περιφανῶς ἔοικε μύθῳ καὶ πλάσματι. τῆς δὲ Ἀντιόπης ἀποθανούσης ἔγημε Φαίδραν, ἔχων υἱὸν Ἰππόλυτον ἐξ Ἀντιόπης, ὡς δὲ Πίνδαρός φησι, Δημοφῶντα. τὰς δὲ περὶ ταύτην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ δυστυχίας, ἐπεὶ μηδὲν ἀντιπίπτει παρὰ τῶν ἱστορικῶν τοῖς τραγικοῖς, οὕτως ἔχειν θετέον ὡς ἐκεῖνοι πεποιήκασιν ἅπαντες.

Plutarch uses a rather sophisticated process of source selection in discussing the Amazons. It requires not only knowledge about the story he is telling at the moment but also familiarity with multiple versions. Plutarch discredits them not to promote himself, as Strabo did, but to give his reader what Plutarch considers as historically accurate a picture of the events as he can. That he felt it necessary to even mention these other versions at all suggests that these were active and well-known versions that Plutarch felt he must address in order to best serve his audience, likely elite Greek and Romans.<sup>366</sup>

An ancient reader would be armed with his own knowledge of the legends of Theseus, so Plutarch's reasoning must overcome other variations, even those he does not explicitly address, such as visual images and dramatic presentations. Ancient readers would also have been aware that Plutarch was a moralist and would have expected his *Lives* to demonstrate aspects of good and bad character; indeed, Plutarch repeatedly states this throughout all the *Lives*. One familiar with all the exploits of Theseus might see the Amazon story as one of many times that the Athenian king acquires women by illegal or military means and as a result brings problems to himself and Athens. The end of Theseus's life is a result of one such event: the kidnapping of Helen of Sparta.<sup>367</sup> Although there is no direct moral discussion in the *Life*, an expectant reader could see the Amazons as an implicit sign of Theseus's lack of sexual control and his arrogance in ignoring the rights of other

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<sup>366</sup> Philip A. Stadter, "Plutarch's Lives and Their Roman Readers," Greek Romans and Roman Greeks: Studies in Cultural Interaction, ed. Erik Nis Ostenfeld (Oakville: Aarhus University Press, 2002) 123-33.

<sup>367</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 30-35.

men or peoples over the women he desires. Plutarch will be explicit about this, however, in his comparison of Theseus and Romulus, discussed below.

### The Life of Pompey:

Pompey never encounters the Amazons, and ancient readers would be surprised if he had, because up to this point in time the Amazons have been a thoroughly Greek story, associated primarily with Greek heroes and gods. However, the Amazons appear quite suddenly in Pompey's account and with no reported variations or suggestions from Plutarch that they are fictional additions from anyone. The reason is simple: This is not an encounter as much as an interpretation of events. The Amazons' appearance demonstrates how widespread was the knowledge, even during the first century BCE, of where the female warriors were supposed to have lived.

Pompey is in the Pontus region dealing with Mithridates and various minor groups when the Albanians, called "Barbarians" after their initial identification, rebel; Plutarch does not give this particular battle any other identification, suggesting it was just one of many minor skirmishes in the war against Mithridates. Among the deceased, Plutarch reports, Pompey's men find Amazon weapons and boots, but no female bodies. Plutarch then states that the Amazons live in this region and meet with two local tribes for two months each year before returning home.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Plutarch "Life of Pompey": 35.3-4: οὗτος ἐν χερσὶ τῆς μάχης γενομένης ἐπὶ τὸν Πομπήϊον ὀρμήσας αὐτὸν ἔβαλεν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ θώρακος ἐπιπτυχὴν ἀκοντίσματος, Πομπήϊος δὲ ἐκείνον ἐκ χειρὸς διελάσας ἀνεΐλεν.

Ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ μάχῃ λέγονται καὶ Ἀμαζόνες συναγωνίσασθαι τοῖς βαρβάροις, ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ τὸν Θερμῶδοντα ποταμὸν ὄρων καταβάσαι. μετὰ γὰρ τὴν μάχην σκυλεύοντες οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τοὺς βαρβάρους πέλταις Ἀμαζονικαῖς καὶ κοθόρνοις ἐνετύγχανον, σῶμα δὲ οὐδὲν ὄφθη γυναικεῖον. νέμονται δὲ τοῦ Καυκάσον τὰ καθήκοντα πρὸς τὴν Ὑρκανίαν θάλασσαν, οὐχ ὁμοροῦσαι τοῖς Ἀλβανοῖς, ἀλλὰ Γέλαι καὶ Λήγες οἰκοῦσι διὰ μέσου· καὶ τούτοις ἔτους ἐκάστου δύο μῆνας εἰς ταῦτο φοιτῶσαι περὶ τὸν Θερμῶδοντα ποταμὸν ὀμιλοῦσιν, εἶτα καθ' αὐτὰς ἀπαλλαγεῖσαι βιοτεύουσιν.

As short as this passage is, it highlights a few interesting things about the Roman soldiers and their leaders, those who reported the events, and Plutarch. First, given Plutarch's demonstrated method of choosing sources and laying out areas of conflict between them, we can conclude that there are no variations or reports that disagree that the troops found boots and weapons associated with Amazons. Lacking disagreement, Plutarch merely repeats it.

Likewise, the details about where the Amazons live and how they conduct their lives with their neighbors is reminiscent of the story Strabo attacks.<sup>369</sup> The tribal names are quite different in Strabo as opposed to Plutarch, suggesting that Plutarch here is not referring to other tales but to the reports, again, of the discovery of Amazon gear. Plutarch must be unaware of Strabo's version or of other versions of these Amazons' mating rituals, or, again, lacking differences in the reported discovery, he feels no need to investigate further. Of course, this raises the entire question of why he includes this minor and odd interpretation of enemy boots and weapons at all, and it simply seems that the Amazons here are just one of the many details Plutarch can use to create an image in the minds of his readers about the role of Greek culture in Roman life. Even the average soldier in Pompey's army will recognize Amazon equipment in an area he knows they may be found.

#### The Life of Alexander:

The Amazons in Alexander's biography further reflect Plutarch's method for choosing sources but also his overall goal to demonstrate the moral characters of those great men who populate his *Lives*. If Plutarch wished merely to display good

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<sup>369</sup> Strabo 11.5.1.

and bad moral qualities or compare the Macedonian king to the greatest heroes of the Greek world, the Amazons could serve that purpose, and did in other authors.<sup>370</sup> However, Plutarch rejects the legend of Alexander and the Queen of the Amazons because less reliable sources include it while others discredit it or fail to mention it. Moral lessons, then, are best based on accurate historical accounts in the *Lives*.

As Plutarch is recounting Alexander's campaign across Scythian territory, he pauses to include a chapter on the legend of the Macedonian's encounter with an Amazon queen. Just as he did in the case of Theseus, Plutarch compares the various accounts of this legend, judges their reliability, and also includes other evidence to support his final verdict on which aspects of the events are correct.

The first criterion is which authors report the variations — in this case there are only two versions: either Alexander met with the Amazon queen, or he did not. Five named authors write that Alexander and the Amazon queen met: Cleitarchus, Polycleitus, Onesicritus, Antigeneis, and Ister. Nine authors who claim this encounter did not happen: Aristobulus, Chares, Ptolemy, Anticleides, Philo the Theban, Philip of Theangela, Hecataeus of Eretria, Philip the Chalcidian and Duris of Samos.<sup>371</sup> Missing from these two lists are two authors covered in this study whose stories of Alexander precede Plutarch: Diodorus claims there was an actual meeting between Amazon and king,<sup>372</sup> while Strabo calls the event an outright fiction.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> See my article: Eckhart, "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis."

<sup>371</sup> Plutarch "Life of Alexander" 46.1: Ἐνταῦθα δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀφικέσθαι τὴν Ἀμαζόνα οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, ὧν καὶ Κλεΐταρχός ἐστι καὶ Πολύκλειτος καὶ Ὀνησίκριτος καὶ Ἀντιγένης καὶ Ἴστρος Ἀριστόβουλος δὲ καὶ Χάρης ὁ εἰσαγγελεὺς καὶ Πτολεμαῖος καὶ Ἀντικλείδης καὶ Φίλων ὁ Θηβαῖος καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Θεαγγελεὺς, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις Ἐκαταῖος ὁ Ἐρετριεὺς καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ Χαλκιδεὺς καὶ Δοῦρις ὁ Σάμιος πλάσμα φασὶ γεγονέναι τοῦτο.

<sup>372</sup> Diodorus 17.77.1-3.

<sup>373</sup> Strabo 10.4.



Clearly there was disagreement in the ancient histories and literature about whether or not the Macedonian met any Amazons.

Simply listing the numbers of other authors, though, are not enough for Plutarch. Modern scholars may note the professions and centuries in the listed sources; however, Plutarch himself does not focus on their access to the king beyond Chares's job title. Perhaps he expected his audience to know who these men are, but sadly, today we cannot be certain about some of them. Some of the authors simply do not survive;<sup>374</sup> other author fragments which mention Amazons only survive in Plutarch himself;<sup>375</sup> some fragments of others do survive that mention Amazons;<sup>376</sup> and others do not mention Amazons at all in their surviving fragments,<sup>377</sup> let alone any encounters with Alexander. While in an interesting exercise in fragmentary authors, such a dearth of evidence from the cited authors themselves requires that we judge Plutarch's own standards of source selection by his explicit and implied methods not by evaluating his references.

Plutarch also mentions two other pieces of evidence that lead him to reject the reliability of the first group of believers in Alexander's Amazon encounter. First, he

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<sup>374</sup> Hecataeus of Eretria would be from Euboea; his works do not survive, though the Amazon images from Eretria (von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* 125-26, VIII.1, plate LXVII.I) makes it possible that he may have mentioned the female warriors. Philip the Chalcidian's work also does not survive.

<sup>375</sup> Anticleides of Athens (Jacoby *FGkHist* 140.12); Antigenes (Jacoby *FGkHist* 141.1); Aristobulus Cassandreu (Jacoby *FGkHist* 139.21); Chares (Jacoby *FGkHist* 125.12); Duris Saminus (Jacoby *FGkHist* 76.38 and 76.46); Onesicritus Astypaleius primarily speaks about the Indian campaigns in his surviving fragments: the only fragment that mentions Amazons at all is from this passage in Plutarch, while the next two of Onesicritus's fragments mention a vague encounter for reproductive purposes with unspecified parties (Jacoby *FGkHist* 134.1); Polyclietus Larissaeus (Jacoby *FGkHist* 128.8); Istrus Cyrenaeanus (Jacoby *FGkHist* 334.26); Philip Theangelus (Jacoby *FGkHist* 741.4).

<sup>376</sup> Cleitarchus's Amazons are specifically tied to the Alexander legend and are attested in only two Jacoby fragments (*FGkHist* 137.15 and 16), one from this passage in Plutarch and one from Strabo.

<sup>377</sup> The Ptolemy here is most like the immediate successor to Alexander, but the single fragment in Jacoby (*FGkHist* 199) does not mention Amazons. Philo the Theban has only two surviving fragments (Jacoby *FGkHist* 670), but neither mention Amazons.

notes a letter from Alexander himself to Antipater, where the event was not mentioned, even though it would have been written during the time in question; this, of course, would be a primary account, though one could ask whether an event not being mentioned is good evidence of its never occurring. Second, Plutarch mentions that there is a piece of hearsay that one of Alexander's generals, Lysimachus, heard this legend and commented, "And where was I at the time?" ("Καὶ που," φάναι, "τότε ἤμην ἐγώ;" *Alexander* 46.2)

Plutarch dismisses the legend as something that does not require his statement of belief or disbelief. He hints that he agrees with Strabo that the story was created to build up the Macedonian's image, though frankly this was unnecessary in Plutarch's opinion.<sup>378</sup> The Amazons, then, are one of the details that ancient authors disagreed about, but they are not something which Plutarch feels will reveal any lessons about Alexander's character as a man or a leader.

## Comparisons and The Role of the Amazons in Plutarch's *Lives*

### Theseus and Romulus

Plutarch's use of and analysis of the Amazon legends seems the most objective to the modern mind, because he looks for evidence and judges the quality of the evidence without the personal attacks of Strabo, the promotion of heroic myths in Diodorus, or the anonymous nature of Herodotus's sources.<sup>379</sup> In the cases

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<sup>378</sup> Plutarch "Life of Alexander" 46.2: καὶ μαρτυρεῖν αὐτοῖς ἔοικεν Ἀλέξανδρος. Ἀντιπάτρῳ γὰρ ἅπαντα γράφων ἀκριβῶς τὸν μὲν Σκύθην αὐτῷ φησι διδόναι τὴν θυγατέρα πρὸς γάμον, Ἀμαζόνος δὲ οὐ μνημονεύει. λέγεται δὲ πολλοῖς χρόνοις Ὀνησίκριτος ὕστερον ἤδη βασιλεύοντι Λυσιμάχῳ τῶν βιβλίων τὸ τέταρτον ἀναγινώσκειν, ἐν ᾧ γέγραπται περὶ τῆς Ἀμαζόνος τὸν οὖν Λυσίμαχον ἀτρέμα μειδιάσαντα "Καὶ που," φάναι, "τότε ἤμην ἐγώ;" ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἄν τις οὔτε ἀπιστῶν ἦττον οὔτε πιστεύων μᾶλλον Ἀλέξανδρον θαυμάσειε.

<sup>379</sup> Scholar Stefan Rebenich's discussion of the different types of historical prose beginning in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE was useful in highlighting some of these differences without specific reference to each of these

where a comparison or *synkrisis* of the paired great men survive, we should see most clearly why Plutarch included the Amazons and what value they had in each biography. If the Amazons serve an important role in Plutarch's purposeful project, demonstrating the character of each man so he may be judged as a leader,<sup>380</sup> the Amazons will be featured; when they are merely details, the *synkrisis* will ignore them.

Indeed, Amazons serve Plutarch's moral agenda in the *Comparison of Theseus and Romulus*. In the *synkrisis* Amazons are given deeper value in relation to the life of Romulus, though they are still only one of the pieces of evidence that Plutarch uses to draw parallels between the men. The variations in the Amazon bride and the Amazon war stories in *Theseus* are quickly judged according to the reliability of the writers and other evidence such as monuments, festivals, and folktales. Narratively the legends are just part of the entire *Life*, though a careful reader aware of Plutarch's purpose might see trends in Theseus's behavior. If Plutarch wants to communicate to his entire audience, he must lay out his evidence in the comparisons, or some may not understand which of the two men is judged the most moral leader.

Plutarch explains seven points of similarity that allowed him to pair up the king of Athens with the founder of Rome in the *Life of Theseus*.<sup>381</sup> These points include uncertain parentage with claims of demigodhood, being a wise warrior,

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authors. Plutarch has a "pragmatic style," while Strabo falls into the "rhetorical style," and Diodorus has more of the qualities of "tragic style." Herodotus's approach is, of course, too early to be in Rebenich's study, and does not neatly fall into any of his categories. Rebenich, "Historical Prose" 287-88.

<sup>380</sup> David H. J. Larmour, "Plutarch's Compositional Methods in the *Theseus* and *Romulus*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988): 361-75.

<sup>381</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 2.1-2.

transforming or founding an important city, illegal relationships with women, family conflicts, and citizen conflicts. Amazons figure explicitly into two of these areas of comparison: war and women.

Three events in Theseus's life seem to Plutarch comparable to the battles Romulus faced while founding Rome. Theseus battled against the Centaurs on behalf of the Lapiths,<sup>382</sup> then joined the battle between Athens and the Amazons,<sup>383</sup> and most importantly Theseus freed Athens from the Cretan tribute.<sup>384</sup> These battles may be comparable, but they are not as many, as widespread, nor as impressive as those of Romulus.<sup>385</sup> In other words, although the Amazons do not make Theseus as great a man as Romulus, they do make the comparison possible.

The Amazons also serve as an example of Theseus's illicit sexual behavior with women in Plutarch.<sup>386</sup> However, in the *Life of Theseus* there is no explicit violence or hostility between Theseus and his Amazon mate; indeed, some versions of the legends say she was loyal to him both in the face of other men and against her own people.<sup>387</sup> A version that Plutarch dismisses claims that Theseus's Amazon fought against him, not because of her kidnapping, but because he left her for another woman, Phaedra.<sup>388</sup> Theseus's Amazon bride, then, maybe an example of

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<sup>382</sup> Plutarch "Theseus" 30.3-4; Plutarch "Comparison of Theseus and Romulus" 1.3.

<sup>383</sup> Plutarch "Theseus" 27-28.1; Plutarch "Comparison of Theseus and Romulus" 1.3.

<sup>384</sup> Plutarch "Theseus" 15-20; Plutarch "Comparison of Theseus and Romulus" 1.4.

<sup>385</sup> Plutarch "Comparison of Theseus and Romulus" 4.

<sup>386</sup> Plutarch "Comparison of Theseus and Romulus" 6.1.

<sup>387</sup> Plutarch "Theseus" 26.3-4.

<sup>388</sup> Plutarch "Theseus" 28.

what Karin Blomquist has labeled a “supportive woman” in Plutarch.<sup>389</sup> As supportive as she may be, she still demonstrates his lack of sexual control.

The Amazons join a list of many women whom Theseus used improperly,<sup>390</sup> beginning with Perigune, the daughter of Sinis, whom Theseus killed;<sup>391</sup> continuing with Ariadne, princess of Crete;<sup>392</sup> and ending with a rather long list of his sexual exploits, ending with Helen of Sparta.<sup>393</sup> Plutarch points out that while Romulus may have planned and led the kidnapping of the Sabine women, he himself had only one wife, and the Romans treated the Sabines as legal wives.<sup>394</sup> Sexual relationships, though, are not the sole criterion for Plutarch’s judgment that Romulus exercised more control over his lust than Theseus. He also considers how these exploits affected their people and how their mothers and families fared.<sup>395</sup> In all of these, Plutarch judges Theseus to be inferior to Romulus as a great king, and the Amazon legends help him establish the contrast.

### Agesilaus and Pompey:

Amazons do not appear in Plutarch’s *Comparison of Agesilaus and Pompey*; the reason becomes clear. Plutarch draws out several aspects of the men’s lives to determine which of them has the greater moral character and which was a better

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<sup>389</sup> Karin Blomquist, “From Olympias to Aretaphilia: women in politics in Plutarch,” *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essays on Plutarch*, ed. Judith Mossman (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd, 1997) 82-87, 90.

<sup>390</sup> Larmour, “Plutarch’s Compositional Methods in the Theseus and Romulus”: 373-74.

<sup>391</sup> Plutarch “Theseus” 8.3.

<sup>392</sup> Plutarch “Theseus” 19.1, 3, 7; 20.

<sup>393</sup> Plutarch “Theseus” 29.1-2; 31; Plutarch “Comparison of Theseus and Romulus” 6.1.

<sup>394</sup> Plutarch “Life of Romulus” 24-25; Plutarch “Comparison of Theseus and Romulus” 6.2-4.

<sup>395</sup> Plutarch “Comparison of Theseus and Romulus” 6.4-5; Larmour, “Plutarch’s Compositional Methods in the Theseus and Romulus”: 374-75.

ruler. He writes less clearly than in his comparisons between other leaders, including Theseus and Romulus, but the *synkrisis* works similarly in many ways. Plutarch compares the two in terms of their personality and choices, both in their private and their public lives. Pompey seems to be a more moral man in his personal life and public management,<sup>396</sup> but cannot match Agesilaus in terms of military independence.<sup>397</sup> Women do not factor into this comparison at all, and indeed, aside from some personal issues with women in both men's lives, women are not a factor in their public administration or their military might.<sup>398</sup>

There are no reports that either encountered actual Amazons, and such an encounter would hardly fit into the overall flow of Plutarch's character studies, which intend to focus on the most probable historical events and exclude those which are false or less reliable. This raises a serious question: why does Plutarch mention in the *Life of Pompey* that Pompey's men find Amazon weapons and boots when they put down an Albanian revolt?

Clearly the sources Plutarch used to recount Pompey's wars in the east mention this odd discovery. We might expect Plutarch to use only those reports that strongly attest to his subjects' characters, as he claims repeatedly in his work, but frankly that is not the case. Throughout all of the *Lives* there are various sections that seem to be nothing more than descriptive details that do not vary in the sources Plutarch is drawing from. For example, Plutarch might include social or

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<sup>396</sup> Plutarch "Comparison of Agesilaus and Pompey" 1-3.2; 5.

<sup>397</sup> Plutarch "Comparison of Agesilaus and Pompey" 3.3-4.

<sup>398</sup> Castellani goes further in his article on women in Plutarch, saying that Plutarch purposely belittled the role of women in the Roman biographies in an attempt to make them more Hellenic or submissive. Victor Castellani, "Plutarch's 'Roman' Women," Greek Romans and Roman Greeks: Studies in Cultural Interaction, ed. Erik Nis Ostenfeld (Oakville: Aarhus University Press, 2002) 142-55.

geographical information that does not specifically relate to the major events he is recounting.<sup>399</sup> Another example of Plutarch's use of Amazons as pure detail, completely separated from any actions or attitudes of the biography's subject, appears in the *Life of Demosthenes*: Durius, the tyrant of Samos from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, infers the location of the Thermodon River from a statue, dug up by a soldier, of a figure carrying an Amazon and inscribed to the god of the Thermodon.<sup>400</sup> These sections of details, unconnected to the moral comparisons, are not numerous, suggesting that they are not so much filler as an attempt to demonstrate some other information about Greek or Roman society not directly related to the character of the leader himself.

While some modern scholars tend to praise Plutarch's abilities as a prolific writer and a philosopher,<sup>401</sup> and he deserves such praise, this does not mean that he never simply includes detail for detail's sake. If the Albanian revolt section was supposed to comment on Pompey or his men, Plutarch would draw attention to it, either in the individual *Life* or in the comparisons, as he demonstrates time and again in his *Lives*, including the Amazons section in *Theseus*. But he does not use the Amazons in the Agesilaus and Pompey *synkrisis*; at best, this section is evidence that knowledge about Amazons and their location and customs, both military and social,

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<sup>399</sup> For example the information about the Temple of Apollo Tegyraeus in "Life of Pelopidas" 16.3-5.

<sup>400</sup> Plutarch "Life of Demosthenes" 19.3 and Jacoby *FGKHist* 76.38.

<sup>401</sup> I'll simply mention a few scholars here for their survey nature of Plutarch's works; most of the scholars cited in this chapter may argue about Plutarch's goals, but none deny that he was an excellent, prolific writer whose skills and ideas helped him travel in the most important intellectual circles of his day. Martin, "Plutarch" 715-18 discusses Plutarch's volume of work while Lamberton, *Plutarch* 22-23, 145 sees a decay in Plutarch's style late in his life when writing these *Lives* so he can conform to the standards of biographical writing as a way to teach rhetoric, implying that his previous work was well written. George Boys-Stones, "Thyrsus-Bearer of the Academy or Enthusiast for Plato?" *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essay on Plutarch*, ed. Judith Mossman (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1997) 41-58 is a good survey of the debates about Plutarch's philosophical agenda and his skill as a philosopher.

was widespread or applied to historical peoples. It is also evidence that Greek cultural icons such as the Amazons were well known to the Romans.<sup>402</sup> But this is not anything that Plutarch himself draws his reader's attention to.

#### Alexander and Caesar:

The story of an encounter of some type between Alexander and Amazons was also widespread by the time Plutarch wrote the Macedonian conqueror's biography. We will discuss exactly where Plutarch fits into this tradition later in this chapter, but for now it is evident that the stories were popular enough that, even though he clearly dismisses them, he feels he must address them.

The criteria he uses to judge the Alexander variations are similar to those he uses in the case of Theseus, with one exception: Alexander is much closer in time to Plutarch, and therefore he believes he can judge the authors more critically. Almost none of the sources that Plutarch mentions in his list of those who report or deny these Amazon encounters survive to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a recurring problem in the field of ancient studies, of course, but given the use of *Quellenforschung* in much scholarship on ancient writers, our limitations need to be accepted and understood. When we cannot independently judge the quality of a source, we can only determine Plutarch's stated and implied criteria for rejecting or using that source by looking at his works.

Since the legends of Amazons meeting Alexander are untrue as far as Plutarch is concerned, it does not require further comment. For the most part, Alexander has respectable and respectful relationships with the women he

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<sup>402</sup> Lightfoot, "Hellenized Greeks and Hellenized Romans: Later Greek Literature" 258.



encounters, ranging from his mother to Darius's women to his bride Roxanne. The story we have of Alexander's encounter with Amazons would fit into this category; indeed, all of the variations of Alexander's mating with the Amazon queen show him as respectful of and desired by these powerful women.<sup>403</sup> However, even though this is undoubtedly a philosophical study of the lives of great men,<sup>404</sup> Plutarch does not use details directly related to the subject of his biography merely because they fit with his moral study, but also because he believes they pass the tests of reliability.

Plutarch's comparison between Theseus and Romulus helped us understand the role of women and Amazons in their lives, but no such comparison survives for the pairing of Caesar and Alexander. However, Plutarch selects the details he will relate in both military leaders' lives using the same criteria he used in Theseus and Romulus. Plutarch, then, only mentions women, including Amazons, when they satisfy his tests of reliable information, criteria similar to those used by historians,<sup>405</sup> and when they help point to a test of his subject's character or soul,<sup>406</sup> as we have seen in the previously discussed biographies.

As we noted in the *Life of Pompey*, Amazons can be nothing but interesting details. In the *Life of Theseus* variations may be plentiful, but they are not of equal quality, even if they do demonstrate some fact about the great man's character.

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<sup>403</sup> Eckhart, "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis".

<sup>404</sup> Plutarch "Life of Alexander" 1.

<sup>405</sup> Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* 153, 61-68.

<sup>406</sup> H.G. Ingenkamp, "How to Present a Statesman," *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Conference of the International Plutarch Society*, eds. Lukas de Blois, Jeroen bons ton Kessels and Dirk M. Schenkeveld (Boston: Brill, 2004) 74-81.

Comparing this to the lack of any reliable Amazon story in Alexander, it seems logical that Plutarch is as concerned with accuracy as he is with moral examples. Herodotus, Diodorus, and Strabo all used the Amazons in specific ways, either to tell a story or to judge other writers, or often both, but Plutarch is treating the Amazons as merely another piece of information that he will or will not use to provide his readers with the fullest and most accurate account.

### Amazons by the Time of Plutarch

A survey of references to Amazons in the authors writing in the century between Strabo and Plutarch will help us understand Plutarch's use of them. Amazons continued to be a recurring part of various legends and histories in the Greek world. As the Republic became a firmly-established imperial system, Hellenism also became firmly established in the literary world and educational system of Rome.<sup>407</sup> It is not surprising then that Amazons, too, spread into the works of Latin authors though how they might use or portray the warrior women may logically reflect Roman society and not that of the legends' creators, the Greeks. Plutarch's use of Amazons reflects an interest in reliable sources and information while using such trustworthy facts to discover the nature of a man's character. Overall, Plutarch's biographies continue the standards of biographical writing by his time.<sup>408</sup> Amazons do not appear often in these biographies, and indeed only four authors reference and use Amazon legends between Strabo and Plutarch.

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<sup>407</sup> Leigh, "Primitivism and Power: the beginnings of Latin literature" 293.

<sup>408</sup> Richard A. Burridge, "Biography," Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period (330 B.C. - A.D. 400), ed. Stanley Porter (New York: E.J. Brill, 1997) 382-86.

Seneca the Younger, writing in the first century, references two heroic encounters that involve Amazons: that of Heracles<sup>409</sup> and that of Theseus.<sup>410</sup> Both of these use the Amazons as examples of the character of each hero and the resulting tragic consequences of that hero's character, a nicely Stoic use of any event in a hero's life. In *Hercules* the chorus indirectly refers to a nation among the Scythian nomads who do not know fathers' homes, on the shore of an unnamed sea where "Sarmatae" roam.<sup>411</sup> It could be a reference to Amazons, and this identity seems confirmed in line 542: "*illic quae viduis gentibus imperat,*" which indicates that a female rules over those who lack a *gens* or tribal identity, something formed in Rome through marriage. Here the chorus's attention to Hercules' victories foreshadows the future tragedy he is about to face at his home and in his own family; the Amazons are part of these victories, and we might even understand them as being more powerful, because their lack of family will soon be the Greek hero's own fate.

In *Phaedra* the Amazon references are more explicit, both in direct reference to the warrior women and to the tragedy coming into Theseus's house. Phaedra's nurse points out to her mistress that Hippolytus's negative attitude toward sex and the opposite sex is a result of his *gens Amazonium*, his Amazon tribe or family.<sup>412</sup> Yet the nurse uses this heritage in an attempt to get Hippolytus to change his negative view of women by declaring his very birth a testament to the Amazons' bending to

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<sup>409</sup> Seneca "Hercules" 533-546.

<sup>410</sup> Seneca "Phaedra" 226-233, 574-577.

<sup>411</sup> This is very similar to the Sauromatae in Herodotus 4.110-117.

<sup>412</sup> Seneca "Phaedra" 226-233.

Venus's yoke of sexual desire.<sup>413</sup> Instead, in the next two lines, Hippolytus uses his mother's death as another reason for his hatred of women.

While Plutarch does not mention Seneca's work, it could be argued that, since Plutarch's Amazons in Theseus are signs of the Athenian king's lack of morals and control vis-à-vis women, his philosophical agenda is similar to Seneca's. Seneca's use of the Amazon is more of a signal of forthcoming tragedy, perhaps an explanation of that tragedy based on the choices which Heracles and Theseus both made that affected their families. It seems like a perfect fit, yet Plutarch ignores Seneca. If we consider why Plutarch mentions various authors, we can reason that he ignores Seneca because he is not the most reliable source: he is writing tragedy, not histories or biographies, and is thus not as important a source as those he used for the *Life of Theseus*.

Pliny the Elder merely mentions Amazons as the creators of the battleaxe in his *Natural History*, dedicated to Titus in 77 CE.<sup>414</sup> Plutarch is not interested in such firsts and founders, unless they are one of the great men in his *Lives*. However, Pliny's mention of the Amazons as creators of something without question indicates that they had become an accepted part of history for the Romans, perhaps helping to explain why particular types of weapons and armor would be seen as Amazonian by those fighting alongside Pompey. It shows a similar cultural role for Amazons as fighters whom Greeks and Romans can identify by certain weapons, though in the case of Plutarch's reference, not the same weapons.

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<sup>413</sup> Seneca "Phaedra" 575-577: *regna maternal aspice: illae feroces sentient Veneris iugum; testaris istud unicus gentis puer.*

<sup>414</sup> Pliny the Elder "Natural History" 7.66.2.5.

One might expect a philosophical agenda from Dio Chrysostom, writing at the end of the first century, and indeed, in his *Discourses* he mentions the Amazons as examples of what Homer was incorrect about and complains that Greek authors do not spend enough time on the warrior women.<sup>415</sup> Chrysostom is exactly the type of writer that Strabo was trying to counter in the previous century, or we might read Chrysostom as countering authors such as Strabo, who continued to defend earlier poets. For Chrysostom the Amazons themselves were interesting: their aid to Troy, their battles, and even the battle between Penthesileia and Achilles are worth attention that Homer does not give them. Chrysostom further explains that the reason why Homer ignores the warrior women is either that the poet did not know what was important or that he was purposely lying.<sup>416</sup> While Chrysostom is certainly quite revealing about the value of Amazons for some writers in the Roman world,<sup>417</sup> his purpose is not to reveal historical facts but to criticize previous writers; therefore, it is only logical that Plutarch would ignore him. Amazons may be exciting and important to those agreeing with Chrysostom, but in Plutarch they are merely details in the more important lives of great men.

The last author before Plutarch to mention Amazons was first century author Quintus Curtius, who focused on Alexander. Curtius mentions two “encounters”

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<sup>415</sup> Dio Chrysostom “Discourses” 11.31-33, 11.114.

<sup>416</sup> Dio Chrysostom “Discourses” 11.11, 11.33. Why Homer would lie is unclear, but Chrysostom’s charges are exactly like the ones Strabo was defending Homer against, a trend in Roman authors to discredit the greatest Greek poet.

<sup>417</sup> Other authors continued the discrediting of Homer and the expansion of the story of the Amazons at Troy. Dares the Phrygian may have written his *The History of the Fall of Troy* by the second century, but only a 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century Latin version survives. In it, Achilles is displaced by his son Neoptolemus, who fights and defeats Penthesilea (Dares 36). By the fourth century, Quintus Smyrnaeus would memorialize the Amazon aid to Troy in his *The Fall of Troy* book 1, where he gives great details about the Amazon troops, their dress and customs, their personalities, and the specifics on the battles they fought for Troy.

between Alexander and Amazons. The first was an attempt by Atropates, satrap of Media, to impress the Macedonian king with his control over the surviving Amazons.<sup>418</sup> The second is a detailed account of the mating between Alexander and the Amazon queen, Thallestris, who approaches the king in order to conceive a powerful child without regard for Alexander's military or traditional needs.<sup>419</sup> In another study, I investigated the purpose of these Amazon legends in the biographies and histories of Alexander. That investigation suggested very strongly that the reason for the account was to help place Alexander into the same category as the heroes of past centuries and, indeed, to make the king stand out above the other heroes, because neither were his actions in the account violent, nor did they lead to any violence.<sup>420</sup>

In this study, the question is not the role of the Amazons in any particular heroic legend but how individual authors use and analyze the female warriors in their writing. Plutarch is clearly mentioning Amazons not as a way to promote or denigrate the great men he is writing about but because the warrior women played some role in the legends surrounding a few of these men or are undebated details about other important events in their lives. In terms of Alexander, Plutarch states that the legend serves no purpose in building up or tearing down the Macedonian's character, so therefore he will not list out the details of the unnecessary story. Likewise, he does not mention Curtius because he does not feel he is as important as

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<sup>418</sup> Curtius 10.4.3.

<sup>419</sup> Curtius 6.3.15-32.

<sup>420</sup> Eckhart, "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis".

those he briefly lists as authors writing about Alexander's life, or because Plutarch simply is unfamiliar with Curtius' contemporary work.

That Plutarch leaves out Diodorus, Strabo, and Curtius might appear a bit odd to us, because in all only six biographies of any form survive about Alexander. While Diodorus, Strabo, and Curtius are valuable sources to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, they are not worthy of Plutarch's use for a reason he mentions when he discusses the Theseus legends: they are minor writers.<sup>421</sup> Indeed, as has been discussed, both Diodorus and Strabo are, by and large, collecting and quoting or paraphrasing large sections of others' work. Plutarch may have skipped over the compilers and focused his lists on those whose accounts are more important and original or closer to the events by virtue of their relationship to Alexander or to the period in which he lived.<sup>422</sup> However, this is speculation, because Plutarch does not lay out all of his criteria for each author he mentions.

Curtius's absence is more difficult to explain in Plutarch. Plutarch may not have considered Curtius, as a Latin author, to be as reliable as Greek sources, or Plutarch may simply have been unaware of this work. Curtius's account of Alexander's Amazon encounter is quite different from accounts that preceded his. He has two versions. In one, the "Amazons" are shown by the local rulers to gain favor from Alexander; these women are not Amazons, however, but merely

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<sup>421</sup> I disagree with Hammond's assertion that Plutarch only cites non-standard sources or sources which differ from the traditional story. This is clearly not the case for any of the *Lives* studied here. The mere fact that a source does not survive to our day does not mean that it was not a standard source in the second half of the first century. Plutarch's own criteria for seeing a source as reliable or not, his weighing of various opinions, suggests that he was not simply choosing those which supported his philosophical agenda. N. G. L. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great: an Analysis of Plutarch Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou* (New York: University of Cambridge, 1993) 151-52, 55.

<sup>422</sup> This is not to say that Plutarch is perfectly consistent in his use of previous authors but simply that he uses these criteria consistently in relation to the Amazons. R. B. Steele, "Plutarch's "Alexander" and Arrian's "Alexander"," *Classical Philology* 11.4 (1916): 422.

imposters in an attempt to trick the conqueror into believing the local rulers have enough power to control a nation whom even the greatest Greek heroes struggled against.<sup>423</sup>

The other, more detailed encounter in Curtius is one where the Amazon queen purposely seeks out the Macedonian to father an exceptional child.<sup>424</sup> This version of the queen's mating with Alexander could be seen as a testimony to the Macedonian's character, and if so Plutarch could use it. Curtius is unmentioned, then, because he is either unknown or not important enough to Plutarch to even be listed as reliable or not. Given that Curtius's biography of Alexander is one of the most detailed surviving accounts, it seems unlikely it would be unknown in the Latin world, but it is quite possible that it wasn't as detailed as others or that Plutarch valued it less than Greek authors.

In his own century, Plutarch's work is one of two that mention Amazons. The other author was the Roman Suetonius, whose early 2<sup>nd</sup> century biographies *Illustrious Writers* and *The Twelve Caesars* survive, sometimes in fragments.<sup>425</sup> The Amazons are mentioned twice in *The Twelve Caesars*, first in the biography of Julius Caesar<sup>426</sup> and then in the reign of Nero.<sup>427</sup> Both of these references come in reported speeches. In Caesar's case it is an example of how the great general and politician could turn a witty phrase as a way to deflect criticisms from others; if they will

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<sup>423</sup> Curtius "History of Alexander" 10.4.3.

<sup>424</sup> Curtius "History of Alexander" 6.3.15-17, 6.5.18-32.

<sup>425</sup> Robert Graves, *Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus: The Twelve Caesars* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius: the Scholar and his Caesars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>426</sup> Suetonius "Life of Caesar" 22.

<sup>427</sup> Suetonius "Life of Nero" 44.



compare him to a woman, then he will mention the bravest military women of all. Nero's plan to dress up his own women — it is not specified further who exactly these women were — as Amazons during a military campaign seems to simply show how ill-prepared and foolish he was. Suetonius's brief references to Amazons, then, are part of the background for his Roman emperors, something they can reference because their listeners would understand their meaning. This is similar to the brief mention of Amazons in Plutarch's *Pompey*, where those on campaign interpret weapons and boots in a particular way. For some Romans, then, the Amazons are an icon they can use in rhetoric and to understand the world around them, but they have a far less active role in their history or legends.

In the Greek world the Amazons are part of history, so Plutarch can recount Theseus's Amazon bride and the resulting war. Nevertheless, he does not do it without careful consideration of the variations and the reliability of their creators or reporters. Indeed, this careful evaluation makes sense when we consider his complaint within this *Life* that many geographers and other writers include misinformation and that he wishes to stick as closely as he can to credible stories.<sup>428</sup> When he applies these tests to Alexander, the legend fails. Amazons in Plutarch are simply pieces of evidence that can and should be addressed only when they are reliable or widespread enough to demand some attention.

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<sup>428</sup> Plutarch "Life of Theseus" 1.

## VI: The Amazons in the Greek World

Inspired by the work of Lorna Hardwick, Donald Lateiner, Emilio Gabba, and Rosaria Munson,<sup>429</sup> this study has applied some aspects of narratology to specific authors and their individual use of the Amazons. This author-centered approach has revealed that the Amazons were a cultural icon that four different Greek authors used in very different ways to support their goals, whether it was to demonstrate political possibilities, support heroes, criticize other authors, or reveal the moral character of their subjects. Within ancient sources there was no true consensus for who or what the Amazons were nor how they must be interpreted by the author and his audience.

This chapter will first briefly summarize how Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo and Plutarch utilized the Amazons. Next I will compare this author-centered approach to modern studies of the Amazon legend to clarify how theory, method and assumptions change the interpretation and representation of Amazons and the Greek culture which created them. Finally I will describe the value of examining individual authors instead of attempting a wide survey of stories or a close reading of an isolated text. By placing the Amazon tales in a narrative, metanarrative and cultural metanarrative framework, this study has revealed the creativity and complexity of Greek culture across seven centuries.

For Herodotus the Amazons provide political possibilities and justifications. Herodotus in part legitimizes the Persian war and Athens's role in it through the

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<sup>429</sup> Hardwick, "Ancient Amazons"; Lateiner, The Historical Method of Herodotus; Gabba, "True History and False History in Classical Antiquity"; Munson, Telling Wonders.

Amazons' alliance with the Scythians, who are also fighting off Persian imperialism. Herodotus utilizes the Amazons' unique standing as both women and formidable warriors to discuss the various means by which different groups may interact while demonstrating that warfare is sometimes necessary when diplomatic means fail. These more fully developed Amazons seem realistic enough to be the true descendents of the Sauromatae, who he says lived during the time of the Persian wars. If the descendents of the Amazons were resisting the Persians, it was to be expected that the Athenians whose ancestors counted their victory over the warrior women as one of their greatest military achievements would do even more and lead their Greek brethren in defending against another invader.

While Herodotus was looking into social possibilities Diodorus expanded upon the original<sup>430</sup> use of the Amazons as enemies for great heroes to bolster the fame of Heracles, Dionysius, Athens, and Alexander. By purposely choosing only those authors whose work included details that portrayed the Amazons as aggressive and powerful enemies living and conquering in their traditional Black Sea region as well as in northern Africa, he increased the power of the heroes who conquered, controlled or attracted them. That they are women is important but not as important as the threat their nation posed to those around them. Diodorus offers us wonderful examples of how far the original legend, hero versus Amazon, had developed in the hands of skilled authors and other writers who created different

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<sup>430</sup> See early heroic stories from Homer, *Iliad* 3.189, 6.186; Arctinus, *Aethiopsis* ii; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 685-690; Pindar, *Olympian* 13.87-90, *Nemean* 3.34-39, Fragment 172; Tzetzes, citation of Hellanicus in *PostHomeric* 8. Earliest images of Amazons confirm the heroic use of the legend. The best compilation is still von Bothmer, Amazons in Greek Art.

stories about Amazons as a people to advance their own goals, whether the promotion of a god or just telling a good tale.

According to Strabo, these variations between authors are part of the problem that had afflicted works claiming to be histories or geographies: prioritizing stories over truth. In Strabo the Amazons are examples of other writers' confusion and outright fictions. Never does he question whether a group called Amazons existed — Homer briefly mentions them, and Strabo is partly defending Homer — but he does point out the contradictions between authors who have each created legends to explain how a group of women warriors might live. Like Diodorus, regardless of what we may think of Strabo as a skilled or accurate author, he preserves undeniable evidence that Greek authors were constantly reimagining the Amazons in a variety of types of literature.

Plutarch marries Diodorus's and Herotodus's uses of the Amazons as a more fully developed society and Strabo's concern for consistent details and reliable authors. By only using detailed stories about the Amazons involved with Theseus and Athens while rejecting stories about Alexander, Plutarch demonstrates that he is fully aware of the variations in the legends but deeply concerned about using what he considers the best accounts for his models of appropriate leadership. The female gender of the Amazons allows for the initial kidnapping whose purpose was a foreign bride for Theseus but these is merely one example of how Theseus mistreats or neglects women. Amazons also by virtue of being a nation react by declaring resulting war on Athens for the kidnapping are thus one example of Theseus' poor decisions affecting the entire *polis*. When the Amazons merely add detail in that he finds no reason to reject in other *Lives*, he uses them without comment, as have other authors throughout the seven centuries this study covers.

Thus, each of our Greek authors (and the few Latin authors more briefly mentioned) may manipulate the Amazons for their individual agendas, but this use always reflected existing ideas about a nation of women warriors living in a specific geographical area and interacting with a set of heroes. This study has revealed that Amazons were cultural icons that ancient authors drew from, and their uniqueness in terms of being a nation of female warriors allowed ancient authors to use them as women, barbarians, and a mighty people all at the same time. Their femaleness, though, was never the real concern of these four, but merely one more piece of information they could use to describe the past and the world around them.

### Approaching Amazons: Modern Studies

Having comprehensively surveyed the roles played by Amazons in literary works from the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, we are in a better position to evaluate modern treatments of them. Amazons are very popular topics for both academics and laypeople — so popular, in fact, that texts and treatises that discuss them are almost too numerous to count. Often these are side-notes or footnotes on issues of gender or sexuality. Other works haul out Amazons as an example of female power, female threat, or male anxiety. And any work discussing mythology of the classical world will mention Amazons.

Unfortunately, many of these studies do not consider Amazons in the fullness of their roles but instead use them as a convenient example of whatever theory, agenda, or concept the piece is promoting. A prime example is J.J. Bachofen's groundbreaking use of social evolutionary theory in his work "Mother Right,"

written in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>431</sup> Using dramatic texts and ancient historical narratives, Bachofen found examples of strong women who challenged male authority and met violent ends; the Amazons dutifully appear as one of these matriarchal examples. He built upon these examples to theorize how patriarchy resulted from the overthrow of out-of-control female dominance. It was rather convenient for his own society that he concluded that patriarchal systems were the height of sociopolitical evolution.

Most studies of mythology and explorations of possible matriarchy assume that there is one accepted interpretation of the Amazon legends and use this to support their arguments, but, in fact, as this study has shown, there is no consensus even among ancient Greek authors about Amazons. Therefore, such studies share a fundamentally flawed methodology. It would be pointless to go through each of the myriad studies that briefly utilize the Amazons in this way.

Instead, I want to evaluate several seminal works, articles, chapters, and monographs of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that have studied Amazons almost exclusively. These are the direct ancestors of this current project, either as positive examples of scholarship with intriguing theories or as negative but often popular accounts that found widespread citation. Anyone reading this study is therefore likely to compare it to them. While each of these earlier works has influenced me I do not think that any of them has fully considered the context in which each individual legend is seated. Despite their strengths, these previous works tend to view things ahistorically, attempt to find one unified function or definition for Amazons, or are

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<sup>431</sup> Bachofen, Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen.

actually far more interested in modern uses of the Amazon legend than its ancient facets. These older investigations, then, provide us with a cultural analysis of ourselves, and not of antiquity or the authors who are responsible for the surviving legends. They generally fall into categories of religious, psychological, or political approaches.

### The Religious Meaning of Amazons

It was very common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for folklorists to search for a religious ritual behind every story. Anything that could otherwise be explained as economic or political they could easily account for by appealing to unknown rites and beliefs. Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this basic myth-ritual theory, that myths or legends must have a religious meaning, has continued to be the foundation for several studies on Amazons. Many scholars and modern writers will toss out arbitrary claims about which gods or goddesses the Amazons worshipped, but a few have found deeper meaning by weaving details in the legends into a religious narrative that generally sees Amazons as priestesses or interprets the legends as steps of a ritual the initiate must follow in order to join a cult.

The first such study was Florence Mary Bennett's *Religious Cults Associated with the Amazons*. Published in 1912, this is a very short study of why Greeks and Romans associated various gods and goddesses with the Amazons. There is no doubt in Bennett's work that the Amazons are a creation of the Greeks and that their religion is one of many details that the Greeks used to make the warrior women a more complete people from which the Greeks could discuss the world around

them.<sup>432</sup> Bennett's work is unique in its examination of how those who told the stories viewed possible relationships between peoples and deities.<sup>433</sup> Even though Bennett did not examine these religious connections in an author-specific manner; her overall conclusion that Amazons were a means for the Greeks to discuss the world and not a historical fact foreshadowed what many later scholars assumed when they began looking at the legends. Looking at how each author viewed religion would have revealed even more about both Greeks and Amazons, but for her generation Bennett was remarkable for freeing herself from the myth-ritual theory and the search for historical evidence of social evolution.

Ken Dowden's 1997 article, "The Amazons: Development and Functions," uses myth-ritual theory to interpret the Amazon legends. Dowden's initial division between what he calls "epic" and "ethnographic" legends<sup>434</sup> involving Amazons reveals that he is well aware of the full range of written legends. Dowden focuses on where the Amazons lived and possible rituals connected to these locations that have to do with gender or aging matters. He is very interested in reported burial sites as well, citing rituals at other tombs in support of the idea that Amazon burials might have included similar rituals. He uses Herodotus 4.116 and Diodorus 2.46 as two of his best examples of Amazons' connection to rites of passage, but the marriage requirement for women mentioned in Herodotus 4.117 is not for Greeks,

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<sup>432</sup> Florence Mary Bennett, Religious Cults Associated with the Amazons (New Rochelle: Caratzas Publishing Company, 1987) 6-7, 13, 16.

<sup>433</sup> Most scholars use her work merely as evidence for which deities were associated with Amazons, for example duBois, Centaurs & Amazons 34 and Tyrrell, Amazons 55. Works that are not produced by classicists or historians mistakenly use Bennett as evidence for actual historical rituals, for example Merlin Stone, Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood: A Treasury of Goddess and Heroine Lore from Around the World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990) 183-89, 98-209.

<sup>434</sup> Dowden, "Amazons": 98, 103.



but for the Sauromatae.<sup>435</sup> Dowden also investigates the Alexander and Theseus legends, but these do not have the direct claim of rite of passage that the Herodotus section did.<sup>436</sup> Ultimately what Dowden describes seems to be some sort of sexual identity conflict where the female must progress beyond her Amazon phase into the role of wife and mother, a role that involves a “death.”<sup>437</sup> What is most unpersuasive about Dowden’s article is that he looks to the Amazon legends to find proof of cult practices<sup>438</sup> instead of first finding evidence of a cult and then the development of the legends to support it.

These studies, which search for a religious function or focus for Amazons, work with great selectivity, pulling details out of their greater context and comparing sources with little regard for not just the century but also the purpose and genre of the literature. Moreover, there is no discussion of religion among the Amazons in Herodotus, Strabo or Plutarch. What brief mention Diodorus makes involves the identification of the first Scythian Amazons as the children of Ares<sup>439</sup> or merely raises one example of the festivals and temples associated with various queens’ accomplishments.<sup>440</sup> Ancient discussions of religion do not mention

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<sup>435</sup> Dowden, “Amazons”: 107-08, 13-14.

<sup>436</sup> Dowden, “Amazons”: 114.

<sup>437</sup> Dowden, “Amazons”: 127-28. I found it very odd that Dowden ignored the wedding songs and their “burial-like” and mourning quality to support this interesting connection. I think those Greek rites would be far more valuable in finding evidence for religious reenactments. But they do not, as far as I know, mention Amazons.

<sup>438</sup> Dowden uses the opposite process that is identified in C. Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks*, trans. H. J. Rose (Southampton: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 9-11. According to Kerényi the cult develops first, then calls upon legends, often changing them, to support the cult.

<sup>439</sup> Diodorus 2.45.2. Similarly, he calls Penthesileia the daughter of Ares in 2.46.5, but this was a commonly used epithet for her.

<sup>440</sup> Diodorus 2.46.2 and 3.55.8 mention shrines and altars, but the only deity mentioned is the Great Mother, who is credited with rescuing Myrina, queen of the Libyan Amazons.

Amazons or their legends; no source hints that a mystery cult incorporated these tales. In sum, these attempts to find religious meaning seem to be locked into 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century folkloric methods and take insufficient account of the actual ancient testimony — or lack thereof — about religion among the legendary Amazons.

### The Psychological Meaning of Amazons

When Guy Cadogan Rothery's *The Amazons* appeared in 1910 it presented the first substantial and well circulated argument for the idea that Amazons represent some fear deep within the human mind, or in Rothery's case the primitive Greek mind.<sup>441</sup> It is clear that Rothery had only a cursory knowledge of the ancient authors he used; for example, he claims that Strabo is merely reporting what others say, though he does grant both him and Herodotus some measure of selectivity in their work.<sup>442</sup>

Batya Weinbaum in *Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities* seeks to uncover the "psychological needs" which each culture or historical period used tales of Amazons and isolated islands of women to satisfy.<sup>443</sup> Most of her study looks at modern accounts or uses of Amazons, but she does focus two chapters on the ancient world's Amazons. She assumes that the legends reveal a historical people, even though this current study has shown that at least four Greek

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<sup>441</sup> Guy Cadogan Rothery, *The Amazons* (London: Senate, 1995) 1-22.

<sup>442</sup> Rothery, *Amazons* 55-56.

<sup>443</sup> Batya Weinbaum, *Islands of Women and Amazons: Representations and Realities* (Austin: University of Texas, 1999) ix. An excellent example of a psychoanalytical approach can be found in the Richard Caldwell, "The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Greek Myth," *Approaches to Greek Myth*, ed. Lowell Edmunds (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 344-89.

writers freely manipulate the stories and provide evidence of broad variations in the details about Amazons. Weinbaum connects the ancient tales to a hypothetical ancient discussion of matriarchy as an inferior yet dangerous governmental and social form.<sup>444</sup> Amazons function as objects for heroes to conquer,<sup>445</sup> and indeed in Diodorus and Plutarch the Amazon legend is directly connected to the trials of Greek heroes. If Amazons can function as warnings against matriarchy and as heroic targets, only the greatest of heroes can overcome them, Weinbaum claims.<sup>446</sup> Diodorus certainly uses the might of the Amazons to demonstrate the might of the heroes who conquer or control them, but that is not the Amazons' only function in Herodotus, Strabo or Plutarch.

Rothery's idea that Greeks were primitives who were afraid of anything different certainly does not seem to reflect the creativity and purposeful use of sources in Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo or Plutarch. The Greeks may have seen other peoples as interesting, whether they were imaginary or real, but they also saw them as complex, one barbarian people differing from others just as much as they differed from the Greek authors, who each in turn had differences. As this study has demonstrated, each of these four authors had criteria by which they judged their sources to be reliable and useful for their individual purposes. These criteria in the case of Amazon stories seem to be consistent — or, in the case of Strabo, at least consistently used to bolster his claim of the superiority of his own work. Such a

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<sup>444</sup> Weinbaum, Islands of Women and Amazons 79-82.

<sup>445</sup> Weinbaum, Islands of Women and Amazons 80.

<sup>446</sup> Weinbaum, Islands of Women and Amazons 82-83.

framework for judging sources and their application is certainly not a sign of a primitive mind.

Both Rothery and Weinbaum see sexist uses of the Amazons. However, neither Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, nor Plutarch explicitly espouses sexist ideas beyond what we might expect in Greek and Roman literature. Indeed, Amazons go beyond the limits of their sex not because they are monsters so much as because they are impressive foes on a par with other enemies Greeks or Romans might face, be they Persians, Scythians or any of a host of imaginary creatures. Their femaleness opens the door to encounters between the Amazons and others that a male enemy could not, be it the emergence of a new people in Herodotus, Theseus's kidnapping in Plutarch, or Alexander's mating with an Amazon queen in Diodorus. It does not logically follow, though, that conquest of Amazons is evidence of fear of femaleness, because Amazons are more than women, they are also great warriors and a foreign people. To single out one trait, their sex, is to ignore the complexity of the legends and the variety of ways in which Greek authors used them. The mere femaleness of a figure in Greek legend does not necessarily imply that her death equals a victory of men over women or one political system over another, though many other scholars have seen such a purpose to the stories.

### The Political Meaning of Amazons

Beginning with Bachofen there have been a multitude of attempts to find the political and historical reality behind the legend of the Amazons. Most of these attempts fall into three categories: tracts in support of patriarchy, tracts in support of matriarchy or the separation of the sexes, and tracts in support of egalitarian political or economic systems.

Patriarchy:

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bachofen's ideas that Amazons were an example of failed matriarchy and the superiority of patriarchy was taken up by several writers, the first of whom may have been Guy Cadogan Rothery. Beyond his attempt to explain the primitive Greek mind, Rothery believed that tales about Amazons reflected a change in the relationship between the sexes as humans advanced from a primitive to a civilized society.<sup>447</sup> Rothery completely accepts the theory that there was a matriarchal stage of human civilization, a stage that he considers inferior given his choice of terms and phrases, even if he claims not to.

Manfred Hammes<sup>448</sup> traces the study of Amazons, especially among German scholars, to a modern attempt to promote patriarchy by portraying the Amazons as matriarchal resistance. Though Hammes does not mention Rothery, Rothery's attitudes about the Amazons' meaning is very much like the German scholarship on Amazons. The assumption in all of these pro-patriarchy studies is that the evolution of society is a fact and that one system, patriarchy, replaces another inferior system, matriarchy. There is certainly no such claim in Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, or Plutarch, nor in any of the other ancient authors this study has mentioned. Use of Amazons to promote and maintain patriarchy, then, seems to stem from the modern imagination rather than any ancient function.

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<sup>447</sup> Rothery, Amazons 7, 11, 178, 86-88.

<sup>448</sup> Hammes, Die Amazonen: Vom Mutterrecht und der Erfindung des gebarenden Mannes, shows how scholars, primarily German scholars, have used the Amazons to promote patriarchy yet sees in them the resistance of matriarchy against patriarchy. However, he does not argue for or against any political structure, nor that religion is the only way to find evidence of this, and thus he does not fit neatly into the categories of this chapter.

## Matriarchy

Almost no book or essay that uses Amazons to argue for a matriarchy belongs in a serious academic discussion, simply because there is no attempt to portray the work as more than a philosophical treatise associated primarily with militant or lesbian feminism. While these can be illuminating sources for discovering the use of Amazons today, they offer almost nothing in terms of understanding Amazons in the Greek world.

The sole exception is the work of Genevieve Pastre, which since the 1950s has focused on discovering lesbian identities in the ancient world and promoting equal rights and responsibilities for all sexual orientations in contemporary France. *Les amazons: du mythe à l'histoire* is a collection of her studies of Amazons and lesbianism in the ancient world. While her work is not well known outside of France and alternative-sexuality communities, these essays are a good example of how an activist trained in classical studies can use her skills to investigate questions of sexuality in the ancient world. Given that studies of homosexuality in the ancient world tend to focus on men, her focus on women is groundbreaking. However, though she does use Herodotus, Diodorus, and Strabo in her articles to discuss male homosexuality, they are not part of her evidence for Amazons as lesbians. Given that all three authors relate specific legends that mention men having sexual relationships with Amazons, Pastre has wisely not used them to build her case. Unfortunately, this leaves her with no real evidence at all, so she merely makes assumptions and reads much into some visual representations of Amazons getting

ready for battle or bathing.<sup>449</sup> While Pastre's claims may be excellent for modern lesbian uses of the Amazons,<sup>450</sup> building a case on lack of evidence is hardly good history.

### Egalitarian Societies

In 1926 Emanuel Kanter's *The Amazons: A Marxian Study* took the same evidence of women in powerful positions as Bachofen and turned it around to promote unabashedly a modern egalitarian proletarian culture.<sup>451</sup> Kanter straightforwardly uses the Amazons as heroines from "primitive history" as an argument for political change today. Kanter cites sources without concern for their period or purpose, for example raising Diodorus from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE in the same paragraph as discussions about the royal bodyguard in Dohemy during the African slave trade of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>452</sup> Anyone disagreeing with his interpretations are dismissed as bourgeois.<sup>453</sup> Kanter makes some outrageous claims in the course of his study, but at least he is up front about his political agenda, which

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<sup>449</sup> A twist on Pastre's theory is the pro-pederastic interpretation of the god Dionysus found in Tom Stevenson, "The Death of Penthesilea by Exekias: A New Look at MBC Vases B210," *The Ancient World* 30.2 (1999): 141-53.

<sup>450</sup> An essay tracing the use of Amazons in modern lesbian identity can be found in Mattson, *Amazons: The Forgotten Tribe* 9-19. Other examples of modern lesbian identity connected to Amazons may be found in Phyllis Birkby's edited anthology, *Amazon expedition: a lesbian feminist anthology* (Washington, N.J.: Times Change Press, 1973).

<sup>451</sup> Kanter, *The Amazons: A Marxian Study* 6-8.

<sup>452</sup> Kanter, *The Amazons: A Marxian Study* 19-20. For information about the Dohemy "Amazons" I recommend these sources: Boniface I. Obichere, "Women and Slavery in the Kingdom of Dahomey," *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* LXV.238 (1978); Helene d'Almeida-Topor, *Les Amazones: Une armée des femmes dans l'Afrique précoloniale* (Paris: Editions Rochevigne, 1984); Stanley B. Alpern, *Amazons of Black Sparta: The Women Warriors of Dahomey* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), and Edna G. Bay, *Wives of the Leopard: Gender, Politics, and Culture in the Kingdom of Dahomey* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

<sup>453</sup> Kanter, *The Amazons: A Marxian Study* 7-13.

is rather unusual given that most Amazon studies with agendas hide under a veneer of supposed objectivity.

While Kanter's call for an egalitarian state had Marxist roots, Helen Diner's *Mothers and Amazons* used capitalism to urge women to stand up and embrace their Amazon heritage in 1932.<sup>454</sup> Amazons are quite real to Diner, and the legends that survive around the world, she claims, only demonstrate how the fledging patriarchy feared being shown up as an inferior system which negated the natural role of mother and child.<sup>455</sup> Like others searching for historical Amazons, Diner takes any example of women living apart from men, religious rituals divided by sex, and any story about women as fighters as examples of historical Amazons. As we saw in Diodorus, though, the Amazons were not unique simply for being female warriors or even as practitioners of matriarchy; Gorgons could easily lay claim to those traits. Amazons were a unique people in Greek culture and should be treated uniquely by anyone claiming to study them today if they wish to prove they understand even the basics about the legends.

To use the Amazon accounts in Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo or Plutarch as grand examples of patriarchy or matriarchy is to mislead by removing the Amazon legends from the context of their writing. It requires a good deal of selectivity and creative reasoning to argue that Diodorus's heroes represent some single patriarchal model that all people must follow; his heroes and gods are great because they can destroy or control the Amazons, but that power does not extend to any other male

<sup>454</sup> Diner, *Mothers and Amazons* 111, 227-32.

<sup>455</sup> Diner, *Mothers and Amazons* 59, 213.



or male society in general. Likewise, it is much more reasonable to view Strabo's comment about how a nation of women could not survive alone as nothing more than a general dismissal of a unique legend using what would be common attitudes in his time about gender and sex: that men and women have specific roles, roles that complement each other but which do not overlap, therefore making men and women necessary parts of any society. To see the Theseus legend as men's victory over women is to ignore Plutarch's version, in which the Amazon whom Theseus kidnaps is an example of a good woman who honors her role as "wife" as a counter to the moral problems of the ancient king of Athens, whose lack of self-control leads to actions with political consequences for his people.

Claims that the Amazons marked potential egalitarian relationships between the sexes are certainly less extreme and perhaps more attractive to modern political ideals, but they too misrepresent the ancient legends. Even in Herodotus, where the Amazons are the descendents of the Sauromatae, whose society seemed to have some flexibility in its gender roles, the Amazons are not presented as the example of how to live but merely one example of how people will change their customs to survive and thrive. One could certainly call upon the image of an Amazonian woman to support the notion that women can be independent, but then there is also the fact that in most accounts these same warriors are defeated by heroes. Any use of the Amazons as role models for women's lives today is full of contradictions and, some would say, quite unnecessary.<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> An excellent discussion of this issue may be found in Cynthia Eller, *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past Won't Give Women a Future* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

Regardless of whether the Amazons support a particular political or social system, each of the above approaches is based upon an unproven “fact” that the Amazons were a historical people. A few studies have attempted to find historical Amazons without a political agenda, but so far they all fall far short of solid evidence.<sup>457</sup> In the mid- and late 1990s, those looking for proof of the existence of Amazons were thrilled when Jeannine Davis-Kimball uncovered hard evidence of ancient warrior women in the Black Sea region.<sup>458</sup> She discovered kurgans, burial mounds, in which both male and female skeletons were found buried with weapons, arrow heads and daggers; others then touted this as evidence of Amazons. While this is intriguing, the graves could be identified as belonging either Scythian, Sauromatian, or Sarmatian nomads living in the region between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. This was indeed evidence of women fighting or hunting but it is not evidence of a unique society we might call Amazons.

A simple search of archived newspapers and magazines, ranging from political to entertainment to scholarly, shows a flood of news stories and articles proclaiming that she had found either the source of the Amazon legend or the real-life Amazons.<sup>459</sup> Even before it was released to the general public, Davis-Kimball’s work was being used as evidence for the historical reality of the legends.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Zografou, Amazons in Homer and Hesiod (A Historical Reconstruction), Ghirshman, “Les Cimmeriens et Leurs Amazones” 47-52, and Shapiro, “Amazons, Thracians, and Scythians” are the most successful attempts, but they certainly do not have direct evidence of any Amazon society and merely attempt to show that the Greeks were confused over the names of tribes.

<sup>458</sup> Her book, Jeannine Davis-Kimball and Mona Behan, Warrior Women: An Archaeologist’s Search for History’s Hidden Heroines (New York: Warner Books, 2002), offers a first-person account of her discovery on the plains of Kazakhstan and her later exploration of other examples of female warriors around the world.

<sup>459</sup> Lawrence Osborne, “The Women Warriors: Life before Patriarchy,” Lingua Franca (1998): 50-57.

<sup>460</sup> Paul Faure, “Les Amazones ont-elles vraiment existe?” L’Histoire 139 (1990): 18-23.

However, in all of these accounts, Davis-Kimball never claimed that she had found Amazons,<sup>461</sup> though she was quite willing to discuss the legends from a variety of ancient authors when asked about them. However, it is clear that Davis-Kimball's knowledge about the Greek legends came from secondary modern sources. In her 2002 book, *Warrior Women: An Archaeologist's Search for History's Hidden Heroines*,<sup>462</sup> she cites none of the ancient sources directly and cites very few scholars, and most of those she does cite are not scholars of antiquity. Even though she herself may not claim she found the Amazons of Greek legend, her digs, books, and lecture series, and others' discoveries about women in the past who did not fit the traditional "female role" fuel continued interest in "Amazons" and ideas about alternative social structures.<sup>463</sup>

## The Gender Meaning of the Amazon

Other scholarly approaches to the Amazons often cite ideas about the naturalness of masculine and feminine traits and the proper roles of men and women or evidence of changes between political and religious power for men and women. While we might make charges that sexist attitudes were coloring their interpretation of ancient literature, it was not until after the second wave of

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<sup>461</sup> Jeannine Davis-Kimball, "Warrior Women of the Eurasian Steppes," *Archaeology* (1997): 44–48. Davis-Kimball and Behan, *Warrior Women* 121.

<sup>462</sup> Davis-Kimball and Behan, *Warrior Women*. This is also true for her 1997 article and her series of lectures based on the History Channel series "History's Mysteries: Amazons Women" from 1999.

<sup>463</sup> Stephanie West, "Scythians," *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong and Hans van Wees (Boston: Brill, 2002) 437–56 discusses some of the effects Scythian digs and investigations coupled with Herodotus's Sauromatae origin story have had in helping spur the search for Amazons anew.

feminism<sup>464</sup> that modern studies focused on the Amazon as an example of ancient misogyny. Women's studies began in American scholarship in the 1960s, with the first degree-granting program established in 1970 at San Diego State College. The purpose was to look at the lives of women, not only the lives of men, and in history and classics this meant asking questions about the meaning of gender and sex roles in the past. While turning the lens away from the elite male and onto others in society can reveal greater information about a society, it can also narrow down the view so much that it ignores the limitations of evidence or the context in which that evidence was created, something this study has tried to correct in the case of Amazons in Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Plutarch. As we will see below, the 1980s proved to be fertile ground for gender theories and classical studies.

Page duBois's *Centaurs & Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* in 1982 was the first widely published study that attempted to trace the rise and use of Amazon legends to the decay of women's power that had been assumed in the political approaches. DuBois limits her study to the literary discourse of the fifth century and the philosophical treatises of the fourth.<sup>465</sup> She sees in these sources several important comparisons between Amazons, other legendary or mythological beings, and the categorization of humans and animals. DuBois explicitly compares the position of Amazons in Greek minds to that of centaurs, animals, barbarians, and then back to women. All of these categories threaten boundaries between the ideal, the Greek man, and his subordinates.

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<sup>464</sup> Jane F. Gerhad, *Desiring revolution : second-wave feminism and the rewriting of American sexual thought, 1920 to 1982.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), is an excellent discussion of development in the feminist movement in America.

<sup>465</sup> duBois, *Centaurs & Amazons* 2.

According to duBois, Greek authors used Amazons both to express this constant threat to the ideal and reaffirm the integrity of Greek patriarchy.<sup>466</sup> Of the four ancient authors this study has examined, only Herodotus fits within her narrow framework. DuBois sees the passages in Herodotus about the surviving Amazons as mere reversals of gender roles among the Greeks,<sup>467</sup> something that, while it may have some validity, fails to fully grasp of how Herodotus is using the Amazons. DuBois only looks at the passages in book IV of Herodotus and ignores the greater context of the Persian war and the Athenian role in it, while heavily relying on Simon Pembroke's theory of role reversals throughout Greek literature<sup>468</sup> to support her general claims. The result is that duBois sees a trend in Western thought that is "the celebration of the philosopher, the master, the male; the subordination of the body, the female, the slave," beginning with Greek literature, specifically the Amazons.

The following year Abby Wettan Kleinbaum's *The War Against the Amazons* took the ideas in duBois and expanded them to find a Western fear and hatred of femaleness. She can claim no extensive treatment of the legends for any particular period, and in fact Greek legends only account for the first 18 pages of the entire study, yet she does mention the four ancient authors this study covers. Kleinbaum sees the Amazons in Herodotus as a means to explain foreign customs; she does not go further into any general political or social meaning this might have, other than

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<sup>466</sup> duBois, *Centaurs & Amazons* 121. A similar interpretation is promoted in Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Princess Ida and the Amazons," *Women in Greek Mythology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 15-29.

<sup>467</sup> duBois, *Centaurs & Amazons* 36-37.

<sup>468</sup> Simon Pembroke, "Women in Charge: The Function of Alternatives in Early Greek Tradition and the Ancient Idea of Matriarchy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 1-35.

the fact that the 5<sup>th</sup>-century BCE audience would accept his placing the Amazons in this particular location.<sup>469</sup> Kleinbaum sees Plutarch's account of Athens's defeating the Amazons as one example of her general thesis: that the Greeks used the Amazons to promote men and male dominated society.<sup>470</sup> Kleinbaum scratches beneath the surface of Strabo to understand that he did not believe everything others had written about them, though she stretches this to mean that he doubts they existed<sup>471</sup> when he could not doubt that and simultaneously defend Homer, who mentioned them. Diodorus contains a story about Alexander, and I would agree with Kleinbaum here that it serves to promote the Macedonian king.<sup>472</sup> By not looking at these four authors in depth, however, Kleinbaum has ignored the full meaning of the Amazons in each source. Furthermore, by covering over a thousand years of Greek and Roman use of the Amazons in one small chapter, she cannot fully describe or explain the range of opinions about Amazons that even our four authors have displayed. The result is a condensed and flawed view of one of the most popular figures in Greek culture.

Female scholars have not been the only ones to see a gender function in the Amazon legends. Building on two earlier articles,<sup>473</sup> William Blake Tyrrell took his examination of the Amazon legend one step further in 1984 with the publication of *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*, which argued that the myths were

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<sup>469</sup> Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 5-8.

<sup>470</sup> Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 11.

<sup>471</sup> Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 21.

<sup>472</sup> Kleinbaum, *The War Against the Amazons* 19-20.

<sup>473</sup> Tyrrell, "A View of the Amazons"; Tyrrell, "Amazon Customs and Athenian Patriarchy".

purposeful creations of a patriarchy that was trying to maintain and justify its existence. The foundation of this social system was the monogamous marriage of just-post-pubescent women with older men. Therefore, Tyrrell ties the study of Amazons to myths and realities of marriage in Athens.<sup>474</sup> The first chapter is well grounded in how different political leaders, authors, and artists used the legends to promote Athenian culture in the classical period. Indeed, we saw hints of this in Herodotus's claim that Athenians used their defense of the *polis* against the Amazons as one reason for their leadership now against Persia. However, after this solid initial argument, Tyrrell begins to use a larger number of sources ahistorically, for example Diodorus and Strabo, as evidence of what classical Athenians believed without their own cultural context or the fact that the legends had undergone multiple variations over the centuries. His conclusion that the Amazons "functioned to explain the imperative that daughters must be given away and received into the house, whatever the suffering or dangers such exchanges entailed" is built not on examples of Amazons as brides<sup>475</sup> but on other myths, legends, and rituals in Classical Athens. Tyrrell goes so far as to claim "that apart from Athenian patriarchy, the Amazon has no substance,"<sup>476</sup> yet Diodorus's Amazon passages make no mention at all of Athens, nor does Strabo seem concerned about the Theseus legend, which is not in Homer. Amazons did thrive in stories that had nothing to do with Athenians and which seem to offer no direct support for

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<sup>474</sup> Tyrrell, *Amazons* xiii-xvii.

<sup>475</sup> With the exception of the Theseus story or Herodotus's ancestry of the Sauromatae they are not portrayed this way.

<sup>476</sup> Tyrrell, *Amazons* 45.

patriarchy in general, so the idea that we cannot understand Amazons without Athens is false.

## The Value of an Author-Centered Approach

As we have seen, most previous scholarship has looked for one definition or function of the Amazons by ignoring the goals and styles of individual authors. Even when they briefly discuss the author-specific context of the sources they used, modern authors have tended to allow their own agendas to influence their interpretation of the ancient legends. Of course, many modern investigations of the Amazon tales have either been ahistorical, combining different variations into one massive narrative, or have attempted to use the Amazons as an example of a historical people. None of these previous studies have done justice to the creativity and intellectual achievements we have seen in the writing of Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo or Plutarch.

Examining the Amazons in the author-centered light of this study has freed them from our own modern ideas of sex, gender, heroes, and even generalities about Greek culture and literature that ignore chronological order. Even when responsible scholars like Blundell<sup>477</sup> or Fantham<sup>478</sup> note that the legends did change, they are restricted by the number of pages they can use to discuss Amazons and end up choosing one or two ideas about what the stories mean instead of reflecting on the variety that survives. The latest mythology handbooks I have used in classes<sup>479</sup> now

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<sup>477</sup> Blundell, Women in Classical Athens 58-62.

<sup>478</sup> Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro, "Excursus Amazons: Women in Control".

<sup>479</sup> Harris and Platzner, Classical Mythology: Images and Insights and Barry B. Powell, Classical Mythology (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998).



offer a text-based approach that allows students to see the various Amazon legends, but usually without comments as to why different authors include or exclude certain details.

This study has demonstrated that Greek and Latin authors were complex writers whose culture encouraged a dynamic interaction with even some of the oldest characters in their common cultural heritage. Yet each author had to build upon the previous variations in the legends and be aware of what their readers might be familiar with. Modern introductory texts and general articles do not have the time or space to fully lay out the variety, but they could, like those mentioned immediately above, make some effort to indicate that there is variation. As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, Lorne Hardwick's brief article in 1990<sup>480</sup> tackled but did not succeed in fully addressing this creativity and variety. I hope this study will provide one step toward a fuller understanding of Amazons in the Greek world.

Sometimes ancient authors named earlier sources either to lay claim to their greatness or to discredit them; all four of the authors in this study did both, though not consistently. There may always be those engaged in *Quellenforschung*, attempting to isolate each reference and verify its status as a fragment, but this study has also offered a good example of relying upon the context of the individual author's work and judging it by the standards he sets forth for himself. In each case this study has first looked at what the individual author stated he was going to do in his work, whether it was to provide historical truths for Herodotus, Diodorus, or

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<sup>480</sup> Hardwick, "Ancient Amazons".

Strabo, or moral examples in the case of Plutarch. From these author-identified goals this study then could examine specific passages within the context of the entire work they appear in before comparing each author to the information he had available to him. Perhaps by charging ourselves to stick to the text first and foremost, we can better grasp what these legends meant to the ancient reader, thus giving us a firmer understanding of Greek culture and the people who created and maintained it. For the Greeks and Romans, Amazon legends were not a single motif that could be placed within the story of any hero or people; only the greatest kings, gods, demigods and *poleis* could interact with them and survive.

This author-centered study has shown that the Amazons are not the product of one great mind, but a living example of ancient Greek uniqueness and greatness that lives on in the modern world. While the initial written evidence may have begun with Homer, in the seven centuries this study covers it grew to support not only Achilles and the Trojan War but also Heracles, Bellerophon, Theseus, Athens, and even Alexander of Macedon in the work of Greek and Latin authors and artists. Each ancient author, as this study has demonstrated, used what he needed, discarded what he did not, discredited those who would disagree with him, and added to the Amazon legends. Just as Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo and Plutarch used them, so too have men and women continued to investigate, recreate, and use the Amazons in their own work, be it written or visual, fiction or scholarly.<sup>481</sup> In

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<sup>481</sup> Several studies previously mentioned have traced the Amazon legend throughout the Western and even some of the Eastern world, though these Eastern examples are very rare. See "Egyptians and Amazons," trans. Miriam Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), vol. III and Carmel Berkson, The Amazon and the Goddess: Cognates of Artistic Form (New Delhi: Somaiya Publications PVT LTD, 1987) for these rare Eastern examples. Relatively new books examining Amazons across time and culture remain popular and include Lyn Webster Wilde, On the Trail of the Women Warriors: The Amazons in Myth and History, 1st ed. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2000) and Merina

doing so, they have made the Amazon a Western cultural icon as well as a Greco-Roman one.

This Western icon, the Amazon, changed over time in the ancient world, a fact that this study has emphasized, not only by narrowing its focus to four authors, but also by looking at how others in their cultures used and portrayed Amazons. This study has also revealed four elements that always appear in the Amazon legends, whether they are written or material. First, the Amazons are always warriors. This allows heroes to conquer them, but it also allows other nations to form alliances with them and deities to draw upon their strength. Their skill in warfare can be a negative or positive force in the world around them — they might conquer other people or defend the Olympian gods — but they are always fighters of the highest quality. Second, the Amazons are always women. As individuals who fight or as leaders of their societies, their femaleness is clearly evident in visual images and is at least mentioned in the written sources. The degree to which their gender and sex figure into the story varies greatly. Third, the Amazons are always a people with their own customs and history. Beginning in the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, vase paintings begin to show Amazons without heroic opponents but usually in groups of two to three women. In the written legends, when a lone Amazon is mentioned, she is always named to differentiate her from others, and she may be a positive example, such as Antiope in Plutarch, or a negative one, such as Myrina in Diodorus. Likewise, the entire people can be included in a story as a positive or negative force; both instances appear in Diodorus, for example. Finally,

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Valasca, [The Amazons: The mysterious world of the warrior women](#) (Hod Hasharon: Astrolog Publishing House, 2005).

the Amazons are always barbarians, in contrast with Greeks, and later Romans. The clothing and weapons shown in the material evidence changes from a wide range of styles to specific cultural references to Scythians, Thracians, or Persians, depending on the period. Written legends rarely mention clothing and weapons, but they display the barbarianness of the Amazons through their location and their customs.

These four qualities are what makes an Amazon an Amazon, a unique icon that authors used widely in the ancient world and which has been transmitted down to the modern world intact. These qualities give enough information to keep the icon well-defined and prevent too many changes — for example, Amazon males do not fight — while offering flexibility for use in many genres of literature ranging from poetry to histories.

My limited use of narratology, coupled with a focus on authors, their work and their world, is one more approach toward gaining a better understanding of Amazons, but it is not limited to looking only at Amazons. One could use this approach to investigate any legend or event in any author's work,<sup>482</sup> regardless of genre or time period. Every writer is a product of her time, yet she sees the world through her own eyes; an author-centered approach allows us to gain a firmer grasp of what she was trying to say. Every scholar builds upon the studies of the past, yet she cannot merely repeat what others have said, or if she does so she uses criteria to select sources that reveal her intentions; an author-centered approach requires us to delve into the writer's knowledge and any explicit goals she may have to fully understand her work. If this study has done nothing more than encourage others to

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<sup>482</sup> I believe a similar technique might be used on material evidence as well when the artist is known and we have several pieces of his work to examine.

think differently about how individual authors treat the same subject, then I have accomplished my own goal. I hope this study is an opening to further author-centered research that will add to the evidence of how vibrant and complex Greek culture was so that we can not only gain a full appreciation of individual stories but increase our wonder and excitement about the ancient world.

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### Education

- 2007 Ph.D., Ancient History, Indiana University  
Dissertation: "An Author Centered Approach to Understanding Amazons in the Ancient World"; Committee: Eric Robinson, David Brakke, Leah Shopkow, and Edward Watts
- Major Field: Ancient History, Greece  
Minors: Women's History, Folklore
- Examination Fields: Written  
Political and Legal Developments in Ancient Greece  
Alexander and His Successors  
Cultural and Social History in Ancient Greece
- Examination Fields: Oral  
Ancient Greece  
Women's History  
Folklore
- 1994 M.A., Ancient History, Columbia University
- 1992 B.A., Ancient Greek & Roman Cultures, Summa Cum Laude, College Honors, Drake University

### Teaching Experience

- 2007 Instructor, Indiana University, X101 "Learning Strategies for History" Fall 2007, two sections taught
- 2007 Instructor, Indiana University, X101 "Learning Strategies for History" Spring 2007, two sections taught
- 2006 Instructor, Indiana University, X101 "Learning Strategies for History" Fall 2006, two sections taught; redesigned the entire course to be more inclusive of all history classes
- 2005 Instructor, Indiana University, L320 "The History of Erotic Literature" Fall 2005
- 2005 Visiting Lecturer – History Department, Indiana University, C300 "History of the Ancient Near East" Summer I 2005
- 2004 Fellow – History Department, Indiana University/Purdue University in Indianapolis; H113 "History of Western Civilization I" and C388/H509 "Roman History" Spring 2004
- 2003 Fellow – History Department, Indiana University/Purdue University in Indianapolis; H113 & H114 "History of Western Civilization I & II" Fall 2003
- 2003 Visiting Lecturer – History Department, Indiana University, C300 "Exploring Ancient Egypt" Summer II 2003

- 2002-3 Facilitator – Student Academic Center, Indiana University, designed and conducted workshops open to all undergraduates on campus  
 “Succeeding Academically in the University”  
 “Some Ways to Get More Out of Studying”  
 “Listening Skills for Large Lectures”  
 “Managing School, Work, and Leisure”  
 “But I Always Got A’s in History: High School versus College”
- 2002 Visiting Lecturer – History Department, Indiana University, C300 “Ancient History Detective” Summer II. 2002
- 2002 Instructor -- “Ancient World: Modern Fiction,” the People’s University, Summer I 2002
- 2002 Instructor – History Department & Student Academic Center, Indiana University, X101/X152 “Learning Strategies for History” one full-semester & one 8 weeks course, Spring 2002
- 2000 Instructor – Indiana University, L220 “Sexuality in Ancient Greece” Fall 2000.
- 2000 Instructor – Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis, C205 “Classical Mythology” Summer I 2000
- 1998 Guest Instructor -- Indiana University, Professor Nancy Demand’s J450 “Golden Age of Athens” and J400 “Women in Antiquity” courses, Spring.

### Teaching Assistantships

- 2005 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, Edward Watts, C390 “Fall and Decline of the Roman Empire” Spring 2005
- 2004 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, Edward Watts, H205 “Ancient History Survey” Fall 2004
- 2003 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, Edward Watts, C388 “Roman History” Spring 2003
- 2002 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, Edward Watts, H205 “Ancient History Survey” Fall 2002
- 2001 Associate Instructor – History Department, Indiana University, Kevin Callahan, H103 “Europe: Renaissance to Napoleon” Fall 2001
- 2001 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, John Efron, B323 “History of the Holocaust” Spring 2001
- 2000 Associate Instructor – History Department, Indiana University, Arthur Field, H103 “Europe: Renaissance to Napoleon” Fall 2000
- 2000 Course Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, Leah Shopkow, H206 “Medieval Civilization” Spring 2000
- 1999 Associate Instructor -- History Department, Indiana University, Irving Katz, H105 A200 “American History I” Fall 1999
- 1999 Course Assistant -- History Department, Indiana University, James Madison, A200 “WWII: The Peoples” Spring 1999
- 1998 Course Assistant -- History Department at Indiana University, Nick Cullather, A351 “The United States in World War II” Fall 1998
- 1992-3 Teaching Assistant -- History Department, Columbia University, Elizabeth Blackmar, Women’s and US History.

## Publications & Research

- 2008 Poster session summary published in *Sharing New Findings: Spring Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Exposition, April 20, 2007, Indiana University*. Internal publication for the SOTL program of Indiana University. Forthcoming.
- 2007 Review of Matthew B. Roller's *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status*. IRIS: The Newsletter of the Lambda Classical Caucus. Forthcoming.
- 2007 "Arena by Karen Hancock," "Christ Clone Trilogy by James BeauSeigneur," "The Seal of Gaia by Marlin Maddoux," and "The Singer Trilogy by Calvin Miller" articles in Masterplots II: Christian Literature. Pasadena: Salem Press, Inc., 2007, pp. 96-98, 275-279, 1564-1567, 1627-1630.
- 2006 "Ancient History" chapter in *History Highway: A 21st Guide to Internet Resources*. Edited by Dennis A. Trinkle and Scott A. Merriman. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006, pp. 65-77.
- 2005 "Challenges, Taboos, and Sacred Cows: How to Have Honest Discussions with Undergraduates about Men in the Ancient World" on DIOTIMA a peer reviewed website focused on the study of women and gender in the ancient Mediterranean world.
- 2004 Review of Joshel, Malamud, & McGuire's *Imperial Projections: Ancient Rome in Modern Popular Culture*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 32, Number 2, Fall 2004, pp.34-35.
- 2002 Review of Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Lisa Auanger's *Among Women: From the Homosocial to the Homoerotic in the Ancient World*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 31, Number 1, Fall 2002, pp 36-37.
- 2002 Review of Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel's *Women & Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 30, Number 2, Spring 2002, pp 42-43.
- 2002 "Ancient History" chapter in *The History Highway 3.0: A Guide to Internet Resources*. Edited by Dennis A. Trinkle and Scott A. Merriman. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2002. Copies of this chapter also published in *The World History Highway: A Guide to Internet Resources*.
- 2001 "Alcman," "Anyte of Tegea," "Archytas of Tarentum," "Errina," "Zeno of Elea," "Sumerian Culture," and "Quintus Smyrneaus" articles in *Encyclopedia of the Ancient World*. Pasadena: Salem Press, Inc., Fall 2001
- 2001 Review of Marjorie Garber's *Academic Instincts*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 30, Number 1, Fall 2001, p. 34.
- 2001 Review of Anne Curzon and Lisa Damour's *First Day to Final Grade*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 30, Number 1, Fall 2001, pp. 38-39.
- 2001 Review Essay on Ann Olga Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons' *Naked Truths: Women, sexuality, and gender in classical art and archaeology*, and James I. Porter's *Constructions of the Classical Body*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 29, Number 2, Spring 2001, pp 43-44.
- 2000 Review of Susan Deacy and Karen F. Pierce's *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter. Volume 29, Number 1, Fall 2000, p 35.
- 1999 Review of Sonja Michel and Robyn Muncy's *Engendering American: A Documentary History 1865 to the Present*. Cloelia: Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter Volume 28, Number 1, Fall 1999, and pp. 27-28.
- 1998 Review of Judith Evans Grubbs' *Law and Family in Late Antiquity* Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter Volume 26, Fall 1998, pp. 28-30.

- 1997 Review of Josine Blok's *The Early Amazons*. Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter Volume 26, Spring 1997, pp. 22-26.
- 1996 Review of Ellen Frye's *Amazon Story Bones*. Women's Classical Caucus Newsletter Volume 24, Spring 1996, pp. 29-31.
- 1996 "Alexander and the Amazons: Ancient Belief and Modern Analysis." Aeon: A Journal of Myth and Science. Ames. Vol. IV, No. 4, April 1996, pp. 87-104.
- 1995 "A General Introduction to Amazon Mythology in the Greco-Roman World." Aeon: A Journal of Myth and Science. Ames. Vol. IV, No. 2, August 1995, pp. 74-79.
- 1993-4 Research Assistant -- History Department, Columbia University, Richard Billows, Ancient History.

### Conferences

- 2008 Presenter at Feminism & Classics V. May 7-11, 2008, The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Paper: "Diodorus and the Fear of Matriarchy," Forthcoming.
- 2007 Presenter at Celebration of Teaching and Learning History Department Retreat, August 24, 2007, Indiana University. Title of Presentation: "Collecting Information about our Students"
- 2006 Contributor at the Feminism and Pedagogy Conference, Indiana University, September 29, 2006
- 2004 Panelist at Future Faculty Teaching Fellows Summer Institute 2004.
- 2004 Workshop co-organizer with Batya Weinbaum. The topic: "Gendering the Classroom" at Feminism & Classics IV 3:00-4:30 p.m. on Friday, May 28, 2004, Phoenix, Arizona.
- 2004 Presenter of "You, The Professor: Two Different Teaching Opportunities in the IU System" for the fourth panel "Teaching Opportunities and Resources." Indiana University's 9th Annual Preparing Future Faculty Student Conference 3:00-4:00pm on Friday, February 27, 2004, Bloomington, Indiana.
- 2002 Moderator of "Black, White, and Read All Over" panel at "Borderlands" conference at the Annual Indiana University HGSA History Symposium. April 6, 2002.
- 2001 Presenter "Teaching about Greek Men: Beyond the Confines of Traditional Academic Thought" at CAAS (Classical Association of the Atlantic States) Fall 2001 panel "Tradition and Innovations in Teaching of Classical Culture"; Baltimore, October 12-13, 2001.
- 2000 Moderator of "Sexuality" panel at "Culture, Identity, Power: National and Transnational Stories in a New Age" conference at the Annual Indiana University HGSA History Symposium. March 25, 2000.

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

- 2007 Poster "Spontaneous Assumption of Roles in Student Groups and the Effect on Learning to Use Evidence in History". SOTL Teaching and Learning Poster Session, April 20, 2007.
- 2006-7 Associate Researcher "History Learning Project" with the History department at Indiana University under the direction of David Pace, Arlene Diaz, Leah Shopkow, and Joan Middendorf.
- 2002 Research Assistant – History Department, Indiana University, David Pace. Summer library work to help him on a new article reviewing previous scholarship on teaching and learning.

### Ancient Studies Luncheon Conferences

- 2007 Glenn Bowersock
- 2006 Christopher Gil
- 2006 Brent Shaw
- 2006 Josiah Osgood
- 2005 Maud Gleason

### Academic Consultations

- 2003-4 Blackwell Publishing Company, reviewed book proposals on the subjects of gender and sexuality in the ancient world upon their request

### Honors and Awards:

- 2003 Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship, Indiana University and Purdue University in Indianapolis, Fall 2003.
- 2003 Departmental Dissertation Fellowship, History Department, Indiana University
- 2003 AbleMedia Bronze Chalice salute for the submission of "Teaching about Greek Men: Beyond the Confines of Traditional Academic Thought" to the Classics Technology Center on the Web (CTCWeb)  
<http://ablemedia.com/ctcweb/consortium/eckhart1.html>
- 2002 Finalist for the John J. Winkler Memorial Prize for my paper "Women as Slave Owner in Ancient Greece: Power and Economics on an Individual Level"
- 2002 Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship, Indiana University and Purdue University in Indianapolis, for the 2002-3 academic year
- 2002 Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship, Indiana University Northwest (declined)
- 2002 Hill Fellowship, Indiana University at Bloomington
- 1998-9 Scholarships to attend "Cornelius O'Brien Conference on Historic Preservation
- 1993-5 Lydia C. Roberts Fellowships at Columbia University
- 1992 Phi Beta Kappa, National Honor Society
- 1989 Phi Eta Sigma, National Honor Society

### Professional Service Activities

- 2007 Breakfast Host and Usher to the Ancient Studies conference "The End of Everything: Catastrophe and Community in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Worlds," October 12-13, 2007, IU Memorial Union, Indiana University.
- 2007 Welcome Table at the Celebration of Teaching and Learning History Department Retreat, August 24, 2007, Indiana University.
- 2005 "Teaching Opportunities for Graduate Students"; Speaker, Preparing Future Faculty Workshops sponsored by the History Department, Indiana University, Bloomington
- 2004 Participant, Student Academic Center and History Department reevaluating the Linked courses. April 23, 2004; Indiana University in Bloomington.



- 2003-4 Survey Instructors Group, History department at IUPUI. Formed to discuss problems and possible solutions to teaching large survey courses; possible revisions of departmental requirements for such courses.
- 2002-3 History Graduate Student Association Representative to the Preparing Future Faculty Conference
- 2002 "How the Job Search Works," October; Speaker, Preparing Future Faculty Workshops sponsored by the History Department, Indiana University, Bloomington
- 2002 "How to Propose a Course"; Speaker, Preparing Future Faculty Workshops sponsored by the History Department, Indiana University, Bloomington
- 2002 Participant, Student Academic Center evaluation and revisions of history-linked courses at Indiana University, Bloomington, Spring Semester
- 2001-2 Graduate Student Representative on search committee for professor of the "Ancient Roman World" for the History Department at Indiana University, Bloomington; candidate research, interviewing and hosting responsibilities both in Bloomington at APA/AIA conference.
- 2000-1 Ancient and Medieval History Graduate Student Representative for the Internal and External Reviews of the History Department at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Honor and Professional Organizations (Year First Joined)

- 2002 American Historical Association
- 2002 The Historical Society
- 2001 American Association of University Professors
- 1997 Association of Ancient Historians
- 1997 American Philological Association
- 1995 Women's Classical Caucus