

in northeastern Brazil named the large river there the River of the Amazons after the female warriors of the Tupinamba Indians.

The extent to which this gender role was socially accepted in aboriginal cultures is unclear, owing to the lack of attention paid to women in the male-written documents of the early European explorers. It is also unclear to what extent these females were "gender-crossers" who were accepted as men, or as "gender mixers" who combined elements of masculinity and femininity with some other unique traits to become an alternative gender. There was probably variation between tribes and among individuals.

Such females were noted for their masculine interests from early childhood, and as adults they often famed for their bravery as warriors and skill as hunters. In some tribes, parents who had no son would select a daughter to raise as a hunter, and this child would grow up to do all the roles of a man, including the taking of a woman as a wife. The amazon's avoidance of sex with a man would protect her from pregnancy, and thus insure her continued activity as a hunter. Kaska Indians of the western Canadian subarctic explained that if such a female had sex with a man, her luck in finding game would be destroyed. Her sexual affairs and marriage with a woman were the accepted form.

Some tribes, like the Mohave, held the view that the true father of a child was the last person to have sex with the mother before the baby's birth. This meant that an amazon would easily claim paternity to the child of her wife, if this wife had been previously impregnated by a man. Therefore, these marriages between an amazon and a woman were socially recognized with their children as families.

Because of their uniqueness, amazons often had the reputation for spiritual power and a gift of prophesy. This was sometimes shared by another form of female gender variance among Plains tribes, known as Warrior Women. Here, women

would sometimes participate in male occupations on the hunt or in warfare, but this did not imply an alternative gender role since they continued to be defined as women. Still, there were some amazons on the Plains, the most famous of which was Woman Chief, a leader of the Crow Indians in the nineteenth century. She was the third highest ranked warrior in her tribe, and was married to four women.

For those who were socially defined as women, it was more important that they reproduce the population than that they be exclusively heterosexual. Motherhood was highly valued, and a woman's status was usually related to her role as a mother more than as a wife. As long as a woman had children, to whom she was married was of less concern to society. Since the amazon was not seen as feminine, and was not socially defined as a woman, she was able to gain status based on her hunting and military abilities.

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## AMAZONS, CLASSICAL

Greek mythology includes references to a legendary race of female warriors. Homer's *Iliad* offers only scanty indications of them, and the name given to them is *antianeirai*, later interpreted as "man-hating" or "man-like." The main features of the later Greek Amazon legend are as follows. Coming from the east, they founded a commonwealth of women in the northeast of Asia Minor on the Ther-

modon, between Sinope and Trapezus, with Themiskyra as its capital. They honor Ares as their ancestor and Artemis. For breeding purposes they live during two months of the spring with a neighboring people. The male children are killed (or rendered unfit for military service or returned to the fathers). The girls are brought up as warriors; they remain virgins until they have slain three foes. Their weapons are bow and arrow and a sword hanging from a band that runs over the breast; they are mostly mounted. In their genealogies they do not count the father. The major sources of this legend are Didorus Siculus and the geographer Strabo of Alexandria. Herodotus connects the Amazons with the Scythians and makes the Sauromates (Sarmatians) descend from them. There is a pseudo-etymology that derives the name from *a-*privative and *mazos*, "breast," with the explanation that they cut off one of their breasts so as better to aim their arrows; the artistic depictions of them always show both breasts.

The legend is sometimes interpreted as the echo of historic combats with matriarchal Asiatic tribes combined with fairy tale motifs such as the abduction of women. The Amazons were a favorite theme of ancient art and sculpture; particularly renowned were statues of the wounded Amazon by four artists of the fifth century B.C.: Polycleitus, Cresilas, Phidias, Phradmon.

The Amazon legend both tempted and intimidated the explorers of Latin America; societies of Amazons were reported from Brazil, whence the name of the Amazon River; Guiana; the western part of the Peru of the Incas; Colombia; Nicaragua; the Western Antilles; Mexico, Yucatan, and Lower California. Modern scholarship tends to discredit these accounts as reverberations of the classical myth or as fictions invented by the natives to discourage the Europeans from proceeding farther inland. Some lesbian writers of modern times have reinterpreted J. J. Bachofen's conception of matriarchy (1861)

in the direction of a primitive, predominantly female and matrilineal society, but admit that Amazonism and lesbianism are distinct phenomena, however they may coincide in time and space.

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## AMERICAN INDIANS

See Indians, American.

## ANAL SEX

The anus is the posterior opening of the alimentary canal. The actual closing and opening is effected by a muscle known as the sphincter, beyond which lies the rectum, leading to the sigmoid colon. For many in our society, the anus is either a neutral part of the body, or one that can induce pain, through hemorrhoids or other disfunctions. While a majority of the population seems to have experimented in some way with anal stimulation, many decline to practice anal sex regularly, whether heterosexually, homosexually, or autoerotically. It has been asserted that this reluctance reflects deep-seated cultural taboos, which is undoubtedly part of the explanation for avoidance. It is also likely, however, that many people simply find other sexual practices more rewarding.

*Techniques.* For those who derive erotic stimulation from them, anal activities fall into two main categories, external or internal. The former may consist of either digital stimulation or anilingus, that is, tongue-to-anus stimulation, known in street language as "rimming" or "rear French." While it is very ancient, the practice of tonguing the anus has been shown to hold serious risks for hepatitis and parasitic infections. External stimulation of the anus may constitute foreplay, to be followed by some other activity, including anal penetration.

Internal stimulation of the anus may be effected through the insertion of the penis (anal copulation or anal intercourse), the fingers, or through the intro-