

Adea Eurydice the “Warrior Queen”?: Source Bias, Illyrian Gender Norms, and the Political Battlefield of the Diadochi Wars

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines whether or not Adea Eurydice, the teenage Queen of Macedon after the death of Alexander the Great, personally fought in the Battle of Euia. If she did, she would earn the title of ‘Warrior Queen.’ However, only three extant primary sources cover her involvement in this battle: Justin’s Epitome, Diocorus Siculus’ Library of History, and a fragment of Duris of Samos’ writing. These sources are contradictory and subject to Greek and/or Roman bias, necessitating further investigation into Adea Eurydice’s involvement in the Battle of Euia. Thus, I examine Adea Eurydice’s political life leading up to the battle and the historical precedent for elite Macedonian women fighting in wars. Then, I look at her Illyrian heritage on her mother’s side and how it may have affected her choice and ability to fight. This involves critically examining the Greek and Roman literary sources on Illyrian women and ‘Warrior Queens’ as well as their modern reception. To explore their validity, I analyze archaeological evidence of Illyrian women’s higher social status and of other Macedonian ‘Warrior Queens.’ Overall, I argue that Adea Eurydice had the ability, precedent, and willingness to fight at Euia, making her a ‘Warrior Queen.’

KEYWORDS: Adea Eurydice, The Battle of Euia, Macedonian Queens, Macedonia, Illyria, Classics

Introduction

Knowledge of Adea Eurydice, the teenage Macedonian queen who led her army into battle against Alexander the Great's mother, Olympias,¹ is minimal. Named Adea at birth, she took the name Eurydice after she married Philip Arrhidaeus (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.23), her cousin and the brother of the now-late Alexander the Great, who was unable to rule effectively due to health issues (Diodorus, 18.2). Her mother was Cynnane, daughter of Philip II of Macedon and Audata of Illyria, who may have also renamed herself Eurydice (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.22-23), and may have been the daughter of Illyrian King Bardylis.² Adea Eurydice engaged in a battle for the throne at Euia against Olympias (Duris *BNJ*₂ 76 F 52), who sought to ensure that her grandson succeeded the throne that she occupied with her husband at that time.³ After Adea Eurydice's troops deferred to Olympias, which ancient sources such as Diodorus (19.11) attribute to their loyalty to Alexander's mother, she lost. Olympias soon captured her along with her husband and either killed them both (Justin 14.5.10) or killed Philip Arrhidaeus and ordered Adea Eurydice to commit suicide (Diod. 19.11). This article is, in summary, what we know about Adea Eurydice.

In the cases of the more spectacular episodes in the short life of Adea Eurydice, it is especially necessary to critically examine what the sources that talk about her say, and why. Ancient sources that mention Adea Eurydice are largely biased against her in their portrayal. Since the death of Alexander the Great had left the throne without any fully legitimate or capable heir, Hellenistic royal women began to step into increasingly more significant and direct roles within the following Diadochi wars—and Adea Eurydice was no exception. Despite how such fighting and violence was typical of the political scene at that time, the Greek and Roman sources which cover it do so through their own perspectives of gender norms.⁴ Specifically, the Roman and especially Greek belief that women were supposed to live mostly within the private sphere of their home and interact as little as possible with the public sphere.⁵ Thus, any episode of extremely anti-Greek or anti-Roman values, such as Adea Eurydice's battle against Olympias, may have been exaggerated through hyperbole over their irregular or even barbaric nature for a Greek or Roman audience. In short, it is uncertain whether or not Adea Eurydice ever stepped foot on a battlefield, not to mention whether she ever fought on one.

¹ Elizabeth D. Carney, "Transitional royal women: Kleopatra, sister of Alexander the Great, Adea Eurydike, and Phila," in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Elizabeth D. Carney and Sabine Müller (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2020), 325, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429434105>.

² Elizabeth D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 57-58.

³ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 115-116, 121.

⁴ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 116-117.

⁵ Sabine Müller, "Argead Women," in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Elizabeth D. Carney, and Sabine Müller (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2020), 295, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429434105>; Elizabeth D. Carney "Women and War in the Greek World," in *A Companion to Greek Warfare*, ed. W. Heckel, F.S. Naiden, E.E. Garvin, and J. Vanderspoel, (Online Wiley Library: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2021), 341, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119438847.ch25>.

The sources that claim she participated directly in battle attribute her military skills to her mother, Cynnane (Polyaenus, *Stratagems*, 8.60; Duris *BNJ*₂ 76 F 52). In an attempt to explain why Cynnane, who was born and raised in Macedonia,⁶ would train her daughter in the art of war despite traditional Macedonian gender roles,⁷ modern scholars have attributed this to the mother and daughter's Illyrian lineage.⁸ This notion is largely based on the example of Queen Teuta,⁹ an Illyrian queen who waged war against Rome from 231 to 228 BCE,¹⁰ nearly one century after the death of Adea Eurydice in 317 BCE (Diod. 19.11). It is also based on the general consensus among modern scholars that Illyrian women had a higher social status than their Greek counterparts.¹¹ However, this assumption fails to take into account the distinct lack of both information on Illyrian women fighting in battles¹² and unbiased extant information about the Illyrians, especially as no Illyrian written histories have survived.¹³ Overall, the modern assumption that all Illyrian women were trained in the art of war falls prey to the biases of the sources it relies on. This inspires even more uncertainty when examining the sources on Adea Eurydice and whether or not she actually fought in a battle, which would earn her the title of a 'warrior queen.'

This paper will argue that she likely did fight in the battle against Olympias at Euia, making her a 'warrior queen.' The political climate of the Diadochi Wars that Adea Eurydice grew up in, and reigned during, was conducive to royal women wielding more public authority both on and off the battlefield,¹⁴ which established a Macedonian precedent that Adea Eurydice could have followed. Due to her immediate and direct political and military actions after her marriage, that were successful until her troops

deferred from her due to their loyalty to Olympias (Diod. 19.11.2), it seems likely that she did receive military training from Cynnane, as Duris (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52) and Polyaenus (*Strat.* 60.8) allege. Nonetheless, there is no significant literary or archaeological evidence supporting the modern conception that all Illyrian women took part in battle, creating uncertainty in Cynnane's ability and desire to train her daughter in the art of war. It is, however, possible that Illyrian royal women were trained in the art of war due to their comparatively higher social status, which archaeological evidence,¹⁵ as well as less-reliable literary sources (Varro, *De Re Rustica*, 2.10.7 and 9; Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplous*, 21), demonstrate.¹⁶ Overall, this combination of circumstances makes it extremely likely that Adea Eurydice did fight on the battlefield at Euia, earning her the title of 'warrior queen.'

The Political Life of Adea Eurydice

Adea Eurydice's entrance into the Macedonian political scene was through her marriage. Cynnane had devised this marriage after the death of Alexander the Great in an attempt to gain as much power for herself and her daughter as possible, as Philip Arrhidaeus was at that time the most eligible heir to the Macedonian throne.¹⁷ This plan did not go unnoticed. Antipater, one of the foremost successors at that time, tried and failed to stop her from reaching Asia, recognizing the threat that she and her daughter posed if they could integrate themselves even more directly into Alexander's family (Polyaen. *Strat.* 6.80). However, it was Alcetas who murdered Cynnane under the order of his brother Perdikkas—the most powerful man (and successor) in Macedonia during the Diadochi Wars, and regent for Philip Arrhidaeus—before she could succeed in arranging the marriage (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.22-23). Upon Cynnane's death,

⁶ Jens Bartels, "Cynnane 'The Illyrian'? The Perils of Onomastics," *The Classical Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2015): 385, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838814000561>.

⁷ Dolores Miron, "Transmitters and Representatives of Power: Royal Women in Ancient Macedonia," *Ancient Society* 30 (2000): 37-38, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44079805>.

⁸ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 58; Adrienne Mayor, "Warrior Women," in *Women in Antiquity* ed. Stephanie Lynn Budin and Jean MacIntosh Turfa (Abingdon: Routledge, 18 Aug 2016), 975-976, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315621425>; Rolf Strootman, "Warrior Queens of the Hellenistic World," in *The Public Lives of Ancient Women* (500 BCE–650 CE) (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2023), 25, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004534513_004.

⁹ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 69; Strootman, "Warrior Queens," 37-38.

¹⁰ John Wilkes, *The Illyrians* (Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 158-159; Strootman, "Warrior Queens," 38.

¹¹ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 110; Aleksandar Stipčević, *The Illyrians: History and Culture*, trans. Stojana Čulić Burton (New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1977), 168.

¹² I could not find a single ancient source which outwardly states that Illyrian women fought in battles, even about Teuta. I will expand upon this in my section on Illyrian women.

¹³ Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 3; Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 116-117.

¹⁵ Katarzyna Minollari, "Red-Figure Vases from Durres – A Reflection of a Local Culture?" *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 21 (October 1, 2018): 1030, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2016.12.007>.

¹⁶ Danijel Džino, "'Liburni Gens Asiatica': Anatomy Of Classical Stereotype," *Arheološki radovi i rasprave* 18 (2017): 68-72, <https://doi.org/10.21857/ygjjwrc6rzy>.

¹⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 129.

the Macedonian army that she had brought to Asia and led against Alectas revolted. The army was more loyal to Cynnane and her relationship to the Argead family through her late husband, Amnytas (nephew of Philip II),¹⁸ Philip II, and Alexander the Great, than they were to Alectas or Perdiccas (Polyaen. *Strat.* 6.80). Thus, the Macedonian army rallied in favour of Cynnane and Adea Eurydice's marriage, and Perdiccas was forced to allow Adea Eurydice to marry Philip Arrhidaeus to stop the revolts (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.23). Newly on the throne and only a teenager, Adea Eurydice already had more loyalty from the Macedonian army for her lineage than the army had for the powerful successor and regent, Perdiccas.

The next account we have of Adea Eurydice begins after Perdiccas's death and at the beginning of Antipater's time as regent (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.30-32; Diod. 18.1.2). Similar to how Olympias could act on behalf of her infant grandson, Alexander IV, Adea Eurydice was able to act on behalf of Philip Arrhidaeus, due to his health issues.¹⁹ Thus, free from the influence of her husband, Adea Eurydice was able to wield all the authority at her disposal. She quickly began to consolidate and grow her power. She ordered Pithon and Arrhidaeus (not Philip Arrhidaeus), the current guardians of the kings Philip Arrhidaeus and Alexander IV, not to act without her and began garnering popular support among the Macedonians (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.30-31; Diod. 18.1.1-3). When Antipater was unable to pay the Macedonian army, she instigated a revolt against him which nearly killed him (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.32-33). While Adea Eurydice had been unable to set in motion the death of her political rival, as Cynnane did (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60), she too displayed a great ability to gain and use the support of her subjects against the most powerful man in Macedonia, as well as other powerful figures.

It was after the death of Antipater that Adea Eurydice began to display her military prowess in addition to her political prowess. Antipater had appointed Polyperchon as regent before succumbing to illness (Diod. 18.48.4). Polyperchon sought an ally in Olympias, and promised to restore her and her grandson to the throne (Diod. 19.11.2). Thus, two major threats to Adea Eurydice's power were forming

a dangerous united front. In response, Adea Eurydice sought her own alliance with Cassander (Diod. 19.11.1). She promised to make him regent through the authority of her husband, the king, as Cassander felt that his father, Antipater, had slighted him by not declaring him regent (Justin 14.5.3). Unfortunately for her, Cassander was preoccupied with war in the Peloponnese (Justin 14.5.5), and Olympias was already on her way to Macedonia with Polyperchon, Aeacides—King of Epirus and Olympias' cousin—and the Epirote army (Diod. 19.11.1-2).²⁰ With no allies nearby, and a husband unable to act as king on his own, it was necessary for Adea Eurydice, herself, to defend her place on the throne.

The sources that cover the ensuing battle at Euia have differing accounts as to Eurydice's involvement in it. Duris claims that Adea Eurydice led her Macedonian troops wearing traditional Macedonian armour, and even calls this battle "the first war between women" (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52). Justin says that she and her husband "attempted to keep [Olympias] from entering the land" (14.5.9) but that the Macedonian army defected to Olympias out of either humiliation or respect for Philip II and Alexander the Great (14.5.10), and does not expand past that. Diodorus falls somewhere in the middle of these two accounts, and claims that Adea Eurydice led the Macedonian army against their arrival, but that they defected from her as soon as they stood before the opposing army out of respect for Olympias. Thus, there was no battle at all. He is also the only source of these three that says Adea Eurydice fled after her defeat (19.11.2-4), which suggests that she did have a presence on the battlefield at Euia, but only briefly as a military leader, not a fighter.

As a result, only Duris (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52) claims that she fought in a battle like a 'warrior queen'. However, all three sources agree that she was able to successfully order the Macedonian army to fight for her and her husband against the current regent, the grandmother of King Alexander IV, and the King of Epirus with his army. Given how involved Adea Eurydice had been with the Macedonian army since her wedding, this is unsurprising. Adea Eurydice was very public about her political machinations. She started a revolt so dangerous for Antipater that he felt the need to

¹⁶ Danijel Dzino, "Liburni Gens Asiatica": Anatomy Of Classical Stereotype." *Arheološki radovii rasprave* 18 (2017): 68-72, <https://doi.org/10.21857/ygijwrc6rzy>.

¹⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 129.

¹⁸ Elizabeth D. Carney, "The Career of Adea-Eurydike," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 36, no. 4 (1987): 497-498, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4436032>.

¹⁹ Carney, "Career," 499.

²⁰ Carney, "Career," 500.

silence her (Diod. 18.39.4). She garnered such public support that Pithon and Arrhidaeus saw her as a threat to their authority; if Macedonians were so willing to obey her commands, her control over them would be even more potent (Diod. 18.39.1-2; Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.30-31). Although it is easy to see her political prowess and to argue her military prowess relating to her influence within the army, none of this demonstrates whether Adea Eurydice took part in the Battle of Euia as Duris (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52) alleges.²¹

Justin, especially, is outwardly misogynistic toward Adea Eurydice.²² He claims that her motivation for the battle at Euia is “womanly jealousy” (14.5.2) and is also the only source to give any agency to Philip Arrhidaeus, taking away Adea Eurydice’s main justification for acting from the throne so publicly (14.5.2-9). Diodorus, on the other hand, displays less contempt for her. While he describes her participation in the political scene of the Diadochi Wars as interference (18.39.2), he is also the only source to give her a noble death: Adamant about her right to the throne until the end, she stoically took her own life with her girdle rather than with any of the instruments of suicide which her captor, Olympias, provided (19.11.5-7).²³ According to Justin, Olympias simply ordered the execution of Adea Eurydice and Philip Arrhidaeus after the Macedonian troops defected to her (14.5.10). He gives no further details of Adea Eurydice’s death.

Significantly, Diodorus also states that Adea Eurydice’s death led to public discontent within Macedonia due to Olympias’ excessive cruelty toward her prisoners (19.11.5) and that Olympias deserved a cruel death (19.11.7). Therefore, in this passage, Diodorus portrays Adea Eurydice as a noble queen (to a Greek and Roman standard) to make Olympias’ actions seem more reprehensible, which contradicts his depiction of Adea Eurydice making the ignoble choice to flee the battle of Euia (19.11.3). Such an inconsistency is unlike Justin, who depicts Adea Eurydice and Olympias both as overreaching women. While Diodorus argues that one of the reasons for Olympias’ murder was karma for her treatment of Adea Eurydice in captivity (19.11.7), Justin claims that Olympias “did not rule for long either” because she was “[a]cting more like a woman than a monarch”

(14.6.1). Both authors had reason to omit Eurydice’s participation in battle: Justin, due to his staunchly Roman view of a woman’s place (or lack of one) within politics, and Diodorus, due to how it would make her seem less noble to a Greek and Roman audience.²⁴ It is thus necessary to examine whether or not Adea Eurydice would have chosen to lead the Macedonian army herself.

Macedonian Women in Battle

In order to examine if there was precedence for Adea Eurydice to engage in battle, we must look beyond the sources that talk about her. There are two main questions to consider in this section: 1.) Were any other Macedonian women engaging in battle during Adea Eurydice’s life? and 2.) Did Adea Eurydice actually have the skills to lead an army, that is, did Cynnane actually give her military training (Duris *BNJ*₂ 76 F 52; Polyæn. *Strat.* 8.60)? If Cynnane did indeed have military training, as Polyænus and Duris claim, it is significantly more likely that she would have passed them down to her daughter. Furthermore, if Adea Eurydice’s female contemporaries were taking part in battles, the Macedonian political climate would have been much more conducive to Adea Eurydice either joining in or attempting to push the boundaries of a woman’s role in the Diadochi Wars even further.

Similar to their Greek counterparts, non-royal Macedonian women did not partake in battle.²⁵ However, starting in the late fourth century BCE during the reign of Queen Eurydice, the public roles of royal Macedonian women began to greatly expand, even into a military capacity.²⁶ Eurydice—who may also have been Illyrian—was the wife of King Amyntas III and mother of Philip II.²⁷ In the 360s BCE, after the death of Amyntas III, Eurydice successfully aided in the succession of her two sons Perdiccas (not the regent Perdiccas) and Philip II by persuading the Athenian General Iphicrates to force the pretender Pausanias, who had murdered her eldest son Alexander II, off the throne (Aeschines 2.26-29). This is the first known instance of a royal Macedonian woman participating directly in the political and military scene of Macedonia. After this success, she would go on to make public military dedications and may have also funded public infrastructure projects

²¹ Carney, “Transitional royal women,” 326.

²² Waldemar Heckel and Pat Wheatley, commentary on Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus. Volume 2: The Successors to Alexander the Great* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 197.

²³ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 137.

²⁴ Müller, “Argead Women,” 295-296; Carney “Women and War,” 341.

²⁵ Miron, “Transmitters,” 37-38.

²⁶ Strootman, “Warrior Queens,” 20-21.

²⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 41.

such as an Athenian temple to Eucleia Eunomia.²⁸ Eurydice's political and military success and increasingly public role would set the precedent for other royal Macedonian women to act increasingly publicly in a political and military capacity.²⁹

One such woman is Olympias. Similar to Eurydice and Adea Eurydice, Olympias wielded the authority of the throne when the king could not. While Alexander the Great was campaigning in Asia, Olympias oversaw some religious functions in his stead, such as dedicating spoils at Delphi.³⁰ Olympias also had a role in Antipater's loss of the regency, though it is unclear to what extent.³¹ In all, it is clear that she had a significant political role starting from the time of her son's reign.

After the death of Alexander, Olympias acted to ensure the succession of her grandson, Alexander IV during the Diadochi wars, which culminated in her seizing the throne after the Battle of Euia.³² Significantly, Olympias was such an important political player that Polyperchon willingly gave her the throne, and considered this a better alternative than Adea Eurydice remaining on it (Justin 14.5.1-3; Diod. 18.65.1). Olympias was also significant enough to the Macedonian army that they defected to her from the ruling queen (Justin 14.5.10; Diod. 19.11.2). Duris (BNJ₂ 76 F 52) is again the only source which claims that she, herself, fought on the battlefield. However, unlike Adea Eurydice's depictions, all three sources agree that Olympias was at least present on the battlefield, as it was her presence and leadership that caused the Macedonian army to switch sides.³³ While on the throne, exerting her military authority, she ordered the slaughter of 100 of Cassander's followers.³⁴ Thus, Adea Eurydice did have a female contemporary who publicly exerted great political influence and had a military role in the Diadochi Wars during her reign, which established a direct precedent for royal women to assume a role in military leadership. This precedent increases the likelihood that Adea Eurydice would have considered it a possibility for herself.

Furthermore, Cynanne has multiple attestations of her military prowess. Both Duris (BNJ₂ 76 F 52)

and Polyaeus (*Strat.* 8.60) claim that she trained Adea Eurydice in the art of war. This is significant because, unlike Olympias, there are only three surviving sources that depict Cynanne's actions during her life: Arrian, Duris, and Polyaeus. Arrian mentions that Cynanne brought Adea Eurydice to Asia to get married, but Alectas and Perdiccas killed Cynanne before Adea Eurydice could see it happen. Her death then caused the revolts that led to Adea Eurydice's marriage and the war against Perdiccas (BNJ 156 F 9.22-23). In essence, Arrian depicts Cynanne largely as the object of others' actions, the results of which affected those around her.

Polyaeus, on the other hand, not only claims that she was "famous for her military knowledge" (*Strat.* 8.60) but also details some of her military exploits. Cynanne "conducted armies, and in the field charged at the head of them" (*Strat.* 8.60) and even fought against the Illyrians in her father's campaign against them.³⁵ During this campaign, she even slew an Illyrian queen named Caeria. Polyaeus also expands on her passage to Asia with Adea Eurydice. He details how she defeated Antipater—presumably with a group of soldiers or mercenaries which she gathered herself—who tried to stop her from crossing the Strymon, and battled Alectas with the Macedonian troops that she collected and rallied to her cause at the Hellespont. Considering how Cynanne was an extraordinarily successful leader on the battlefield, it is unsurprising that she would be so bold as to take on Antipater, Alectas, and Perdiccas in her goal of regaining and expanding her power and authority (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60).³⁶

Therefore, as this is one of the two sources on Cynanne's actions during her life that does not treat her like an object or a footnote, and given that the other confirms that Cynanne had the capacity to train her daughter in the art of war (Duris BNJ₂ 76 F 52), it is probable that Cynanne did indeed train Adea Eurydice to fight and to lead on the battlefield (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60). In addition, Argead women had been taking part in military affairs since the reign of Queen Eurydice (Aeschines 2.26-29).³⁷ Olympias and Cynanne were both contemporaries of Adea Eurydice who wielded great political influence and

²⁸ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 43-46.

²⁹ Müller, "Argead Women," 299.

³⁰ Miron, "Transmitters," 41; Strootman, "Warrior Queens," 21.

³¹ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 87-88.

³² Miron, "Transmitters," 36-37; Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 120.

³³ Carney, "Women and War," 346.

³⁴ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 122.

³⁵ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 69.

³⁶ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 129-130.

³⁷ Strootman, "Warrior Queens," 20-21.

took on public military roles within the Diadochi Wars, with Cynnane's military participation extending even beyond that. Overall, there was precedence for Adea Eurydice to act militarily in the Diadochi Wars. However, this does not explain why Cynnane would have military capabilities to begin with, as Polyaeus (*Strat.* 8.60) and Duris (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52) allege, nor why she would choose to pass them on to her daughter in a culture where it was not sanctioned for even royal women to fight in battles.³⁸ Some scholars try to explain this by asserting that all Illyrian women were trained to fight in war, a tradition that Cynnane passed on to Adea Eurydice.³⁹

The Modern Concept of Illyrian Warrior Women

The modern conception that all Illyrian women were trained to fight is largely unfounded, but there is evidence that elite Illyrian women could at least hold military leadership roles. This is significant since Adea Eurydice's grandmother, Audata, was likely the daughter of Bardylis, an Illyrian king.⁴⁰ Modern scholarship attributes Cynnane's military ability to her mother, Audata.⁴¹ Both of these claims are not based on explicit textual evidence. There are only two sources that talk about Audata: Arrhidaeus, who mentions her in a list of Philip II's wives and calls her Illyrian (557c), and Arrian, who calls her Eurydice, which is why some scholars believe that she changed her name after her marriage (*BNJ* 156 F 9.22).⁴² Both sources say that she is the mother of Cynnane and wife of Philip II and very little else. The first scholar to argue that Cynnane was well-versed in combat because of her Illyrian ancestry was Grace Harriet Macurdy, a pioneer in the study of Argead women.⁴³ Macurdy said that Cynnane "was of the wild, fierce, fighting type of women who flourished among the Illyrian nobility."⁴⁴ Macurdy also claims that it was an Illyrian custom for princesses to appear on the battlefield.⁴⁵ Although she never directly attributes Cynnane's military education to Audata, the implication is there, as Macurdy believed Audata was the daughter of an Illyrian ruler.⁴⁶

Scholars then expand this argument from it being the custom for Illyrian *princesses* to fight on the battlefield, to *all Illyrian women*⁴⁷—a group that we know extremely little about in modern day.⁴⁸ There are two major problems with this argument: First, it relies only on literary evidence from Greek and Roman authors—all of which is biased against Illyrians,⁴⁹ and none of which explicitly says that all Illyrian women partake in battle. Second, besides Cynnane, Adea Eurydice, and possibly Eurydice,⁵⁰ the only female Illyrians who had a military role, that we know of in modern day, are two queens: Queen Caeria (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60) and Queen Teuta (Polybius 2.4.7-2.12.8).

To expand on the first problem, all information about Illyrians from literary sources suffers from the bias of its Greek or Roman authors.⁵¹ This includes sources that assert Illyrian women's higher, barbaric social status in comparison with their Greek and Roman counterparts (Varro, *De Re Rustica*, 2.10.7 and 9; Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus*, 21),⁵² which are key to this argument. Nevertheless, modern scholars do generally agree that Illyrian women did have a higher social status,⁵³ but it is difficult to determine to what extent this is true due to the great probability that they exaggerate the otherness of the 'barbarian' Illyrians in the face of their own values.⁵⁴ An example of this is Polybius' depiction of the Illyrian Queen Teuta (2.4.7-2.12.8), which is expanded upon in the next paragraph. In all, the idea that all Illyrian women partook in battle, which only relies on literary evidence, is based on biased information from cultures that believed women should have a minimal to non-existent role in public life.⁵⁵

As for the second problem, Queen Caeria (who only appears in Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60) and Queen Teuta⁵⁶ are the only instances of Illyrian women acting in a military capacity that we know of, except for Cynnane and Adea Eurydice. The main source for Queen Teuta is Polybius, who uses her reign to demonstrate the opposite of Roman values and

³⁸ Miron, "Transmitters," 38.

³⁹ For example: Mayor, "Warrior Women," 975-976

⁴⁰ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 57; Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 120.

⁴¹ For example: Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 58; Miron, "Transmitters," 39; Müller, "Argead Women," 300; Mayor, "Warrior Women," 975.

⁴² Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 58.

⁴³ Müller, "Argead Women," 299.

⁴⁴ Grace Harriet Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens: A Study of Woman-Power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt*, ed. David M. Robinson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 48.

⁴⁵ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 232.

⁴⁶ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 25; Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 120.

⁴⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 58; Mayor, "Warrior Women," 975-976; Miron, "Transmitters," 39-40 suggests that it could be either all Illyrian women or only royal ones.

⁴⁸ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 238.

⁴⁹ Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 3; Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 3-4

⁵⁰ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 41.

⁵¹ Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 3; Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 3-4.

⁵² Dzino, "Liburni Gens Asiatica," 68-72.

⁵³ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 110; Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 168.

⁵⁴ Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 3; Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 3-4.

⁵⁵ Müller, "Argead Women," 295; Carney "Women and War," 341.

⁵⁶ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 158-162.

never says that she, personally, fought in a battle (2.4.7-2.12.8).⁵⁷ Similar to Justin, Polybius is overtly misogynistic towards Teuta, and claims that she acted “with a woman’s natural shortness of view” (2.4.8) during her reign and the war against Rome. Similar to Justin, Polybius not mentioning Teuta fighting could be an act of omission—a woman fighting on the battlefield being too barbaric to write about even when in opposition to the nobility of Rome. Nevertheless, Queen Teuta does show some striking similarities to Cynnane and Adea Eurydice. After the death of her husband, King Agron, Teuta acted as regent for her young stepson, Pinnes.⁵⁸ One of her most significant military achievements is that she captured the city of Phoenice (2.5), the most prosperous place in Epirus (2.6.7). She negotiated with foreign powers, such as Epirus (2.6.6, 10-11) and Rome (2.8.7-12).⁵⁹ She also waged war with Rome from 231 to 228 BCE,⁶⁰ after which Rome forced Teuta to hand over the kingdom to Demetrius of Pharos (2.11.15, 2.12.3).⁶¹ During her short reign, Teuta successfully acted as monarch and displayed great military knowledge—especially for someone who had the kingdom thrust upon her by the death of a relative and lack of an heir (2.12.3).

However, this is not sufficient evidence to support the idea that all Illyrian women participated as fighters in war. Looking only at literary evidence, Macurdy’s assertion that all Illyrian female *elite* held military knowledge⁶² seems more accurate (even if flawed) than the broader notion that *all* Illyrian women did. Therefore, at the very least, it seems likely that Audata would have had significant knowledge of how to lead in a military capacity to pass onto Cynnane. This, combined with Polyaeus’ claim that Cynnane was a renowned warrior, both as a military leader and as a fighter (8.60), furthers this argument and suggests that Audata also had knowledge of how to fight, as well. It also lends credence to Duris’ claim that Cynnane taught Adea Eurydice to fight, as well as that Adea Eurydice waged war against Olympias (BNJ₂ 76 F 52). Furthermore, it is very unlikely that a Macedonian such as Philip taught Cynnane to

fight, as no other Macedonian woman had previously engaged in battle as directly as she did, since that was against Macedonian values.⁶³

If Illyrian women had a similar social status to Illyrian men, it is logical to assume that royal Illyrian women such as Audata⁶⁴ also shared more military power, similar to royal Illyrian men. Teuta’s reign and successful military actions support this. However, relying solely on sources such as Polybius, Varro, and Pseudo-Scylax makes for an unconvincing argument, due to the questionable validity of the information that they present.⁶⁵ Thus, one method to explore the validity of these written sources, as well as less obviously biased sources such as Polyaeus, is through archaeological supporting evidence.

Warrior Women and Illyrian Women in Archaeology

During the last few decades, archaeologists have increasingly been examining and re-examining the sex of buried soldiers now that sexing methods such as DNA analysis have become standard.⁶⁶ For example, in 2004, archaeologists re-examined the skeletons in warrior graves on the acropolis at Orbudad, which Soviet archaeologists found in 1926 and assumed to be male. Archaeologists in 2004 found that at least one skeleton was actually a woman who had been buried with her quiver, arrows, and helmet.⁶⁷ Archaeologists have also recently discovered an increasing number of warrior women that sustained physical injury from battle buried across the Eurasian steppes, especially Scythian ones. Warrior women in the steppes were not as rare an occurrence as previously thought: Some cemetery populations are 20 to 37 percent armed women.⁶⁸ The burials of armed women are not only in the steppes, however. In Macedonia, the woman partially cremated in Tomb II from the fourth century BCE was buried with various weapons, armour, and a gold and silver shield—a warrior’s burial. This tomb is the right place and time for the topic of this paper, and Adea Eurydice is one of the possible identities of the

⁵⁷ Amela Bajrić, “Illyrian Queen Teuta and the Illyrians in Polybius’s passage on the Roman mission in Illyria.” *Vjesnik Arheološkog Muzeja u Zagrebu* 46, no.1 (2014): 23-34, <https://hrcak-srce-hr.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/117877>.

⁵⁸ Stipčević, *The Illyrians*, 49.

⁵⁹ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 158-160.

⁶⁰ Strootman, “Warrior Queens,” 38.

⁶¹ Wilkes, *The Illyrians*, 161.

⁶² Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 48.

⁶³ Müller, “Argead Women,” 295.

⁶⁴ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 25.

⁶⁵ Dzino, “‘Liburni Gens Asiatica,’” 68-72; Bajrić, “Illyrian Queen Teuta,” 52-53.

⁶⁶ Mayor, “Warrior Women,” 971. This same examination into the sex of buried warriors has not happened to the same extent in the modern areas that ancient Illyrians used to inhabit, at least not in English. This does not negate the possibility of such research and archaeological evidence existing, but does demonstrate that it is an underexplored area.

⁶⁷ Mayor, “Warrior Women,” 978.

⁶⁸ Mayor, “Warrior Women,” 971-972.

woman buried in this tomb.⁶⁹ However, there is no definitive evidence that it is her, and thus this paper will only use it as an example of how the Greeks and Macedonians were at least aware of the existence of women warriors.

There is also significant archaeological evidence in English that confirms Illyrian women did have a higher social status than their Greek counterparts. Inscriptions in Buthrotum say that Illyrian women could liberate slaves and manage properties.⁷⁰ In Durres, the modern-day site of Epidamnos, a prosperous Greek colony in Southern Illyria that allowed non-Greek people to settle in it,⁷¹ multiple red-figure vases depict women in activities and positions that were not culturally appropriate for mainland Greek women at the time. For example, women are commonly depicted in the presence of nude male athletes, which is uncommon in Greek pottery, suggesting that some Illyrian customs had become integrated into the culture of this Greek colony.⁷² Also found at Durres is an ivory tablet from the second century AD, when the colony was under Roman control and called Dyrrachium. This tablet details the debts owed to the woman who was buried with it, some of which are upwards of 2000 denarii—about ten times the yearly salary of a contemporary Roman soldier. The discovery that this Illyrian woman had control over her own finances has led archaeologist Eduard Shehi to conclude that Illyrian women could perform business transactions, receive inheritance, and own their own property⁷³—similar to the contents of the inscription at Buthrotum.

Conclusion

To conclude, archaeological evidence also suggests that Illyrian women had a higher social status than their Greek counterparts, similar to literary evidence such as Varro, *De Re Rustica* 2.10.7 and 9, Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus* 21, and Polybius's depiction of Queen Teuta's large military role in the reign of her kingdom (2.4.7-2.12.8). Further research is needed to fully explore whether Illyrian warrior women

exist in the archaeological record in order to further examine the modern concept of Illyrian warrior women. Nevertheless, what archaeological evidence does exist furthers the idea that royal Illyrian women participated in battles,⁷⁴ as they, too, would have been privy to a higher social status than their royal Greek counterparts.

Thus, Cynnane's mother Audata, being a royal Illyrian,⁷⁵ would have also been raised to be able to lead militarily just as Queen Teuta did during her reign. This, in turn, explains how Cynnane was able to lead and fight on the battlefield despite having been raised in the Macedonian court.⁷⁶ No Macedonian woman before her is known to have fought on the battlefield, and yet, she excelled there (Polyaen. *Strat.* 8.60). It also explains the parallels between Cynnane and Adea Eurydice's political and military actions; Cynnane very likely did teach her daughter military arts as Duris (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52) and Polyaenus (*Strat.* 60.8) claim. Adea Eurydice was certainly able to watch her mother's actions while she accompanied her to Asia (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.22-23).

Not only was there precedence for Adea Eurydice to choose to fight on the battlefield from her mother and their royal Illyrian ancestry but also a Macedonian one, as elite Argead women such as Eurydice (Aeschines 2.26-29) and Olympias⁷⁷ began to take on a greater political and military role. Olympias even appeared on the battlefield during Adea Eurydice's lifetime.⁷⁸ Adea Eurydice also displayed a level of confidence around the military to the extent that she was able to convince the Macedonian army to fight against the most powerful Macedonian men of the time—*twice* (Arrian *BNJ* 156 F 9.32-33; Diod. 19.11.2-4). Her military capability is apparent, and she certainly was unafraid of taking risks. Overall, she had the ability, the willingness, and the stage to fight on the battlefield as Duris says she did (*BNJ*₂ 76 F 52). Therefore, it is very likely that Adea Eurydice both would have chosen to—and had the ability to—fight in the battle at Euia, which means that despite what ancient sources said or did not say about her, she was in all likelihood a 'warrior queen.'

⁶⁹ Mayor, "Warrior Women," 975.

⁷⁰ Minollari, "Red-Figure Vases," 1030.

⁷¹ Minollari, "Red-Figure Vases," 1025.

⁷² Minollari, "Red-Figure Vases," 1030.

⁷³ April Holloway, "Ancient Ivory Tablets Reveal High Status of Illyrian Women," *Ancient Origins*, September 2, 2014, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/ancient-ivory-tablets-reveal-high-status-illyrian-women-002032>.

⁷⁴ Marurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 48.

⁷⁵ Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 25.

⁷⁶ Bartels, "Cynnane," 385; Miron, "Transmitters," 38.

⁷⁷ Carney, *Women and Monarchy*, 122.

⁷⁸ Carney, "Women and War," 346.

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