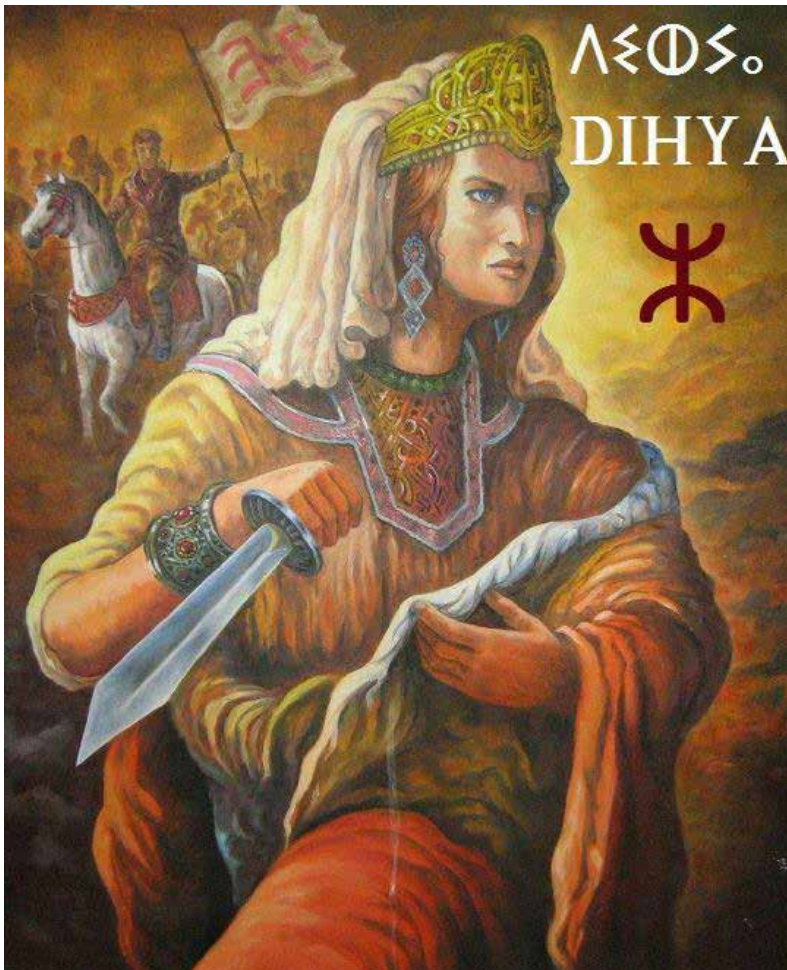


LHOSSINE/CREATIVE COMMONS



NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM / PUBLIC DOMAIN



CREATIVE COMMONS



GUSTAVO JERONIMO/CREATIVE COMMONS



PUBLIC DOMAIN



GEVORK NAZARYAN/CREATIVE COMMONS



INDIA POST

Women in History

Look back through the millennia and you'll find women in power even in humanity's earliest days. Here's a look at seven powerful queens and their accomplishments.

Dihya, Berber Warrior Queen

Dihya was born into the Jarawa Zenata tribe in the 7th century and eventually ruled a free Berber state in north Africa that stretched from the Aures Mountains to the oasis of Gadames.

She is usually described as very tall with a lot of hair, which may mean she wore her hair long and in dreadlocks. The Ancient History Encyclopedia says she was a black, African queen who dressed as royals of ancient Numidia in a loose tunic or robe, sometimes belted, with sandals.

FIGHTING THE ARABS

Dihya was also referred to in Arabic sources as al Kahina, meaning the soothsayer, because of her alleged ability to foresee the future. She fought off the armies of the Umayyad Dynasty, led by Hasan bin al-Nu'man, who marched from Egypt and met her near Meskiana in 698 (modern day Algeria). It's said she beat him so badly that he fled to Libya for five years.

However, Hasan eventually returned and, helped by a captured officer, defeated Dihya near Tabarka in modern Tunisia near the Algerian border. History disagrees on whether she died a warrior's death in battle or took poison to prevent capture, but it likely occurred in the late 690s or early 700s.

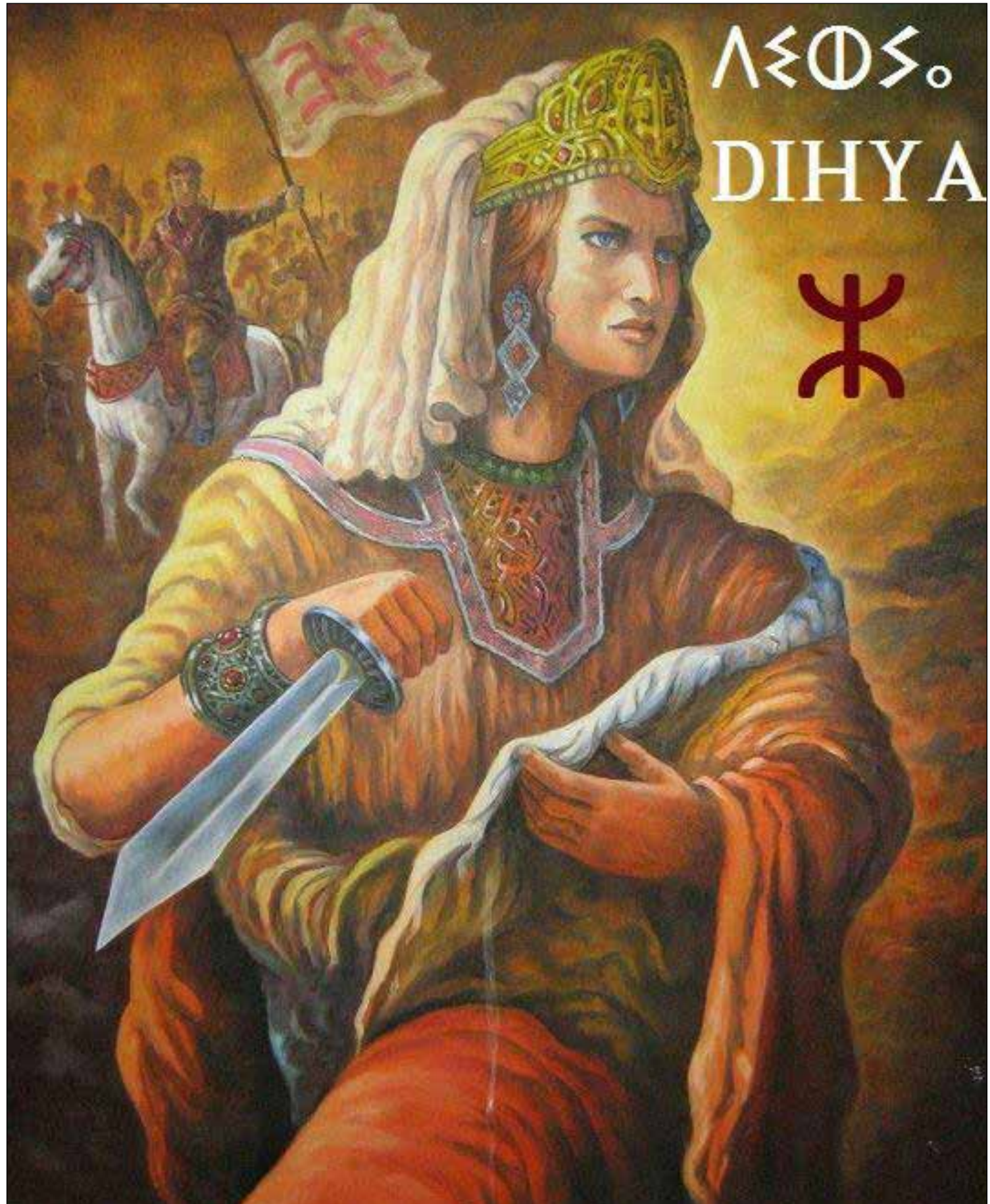
It's said she was 127 years old at the time of her death, although this is almost certainly just a part of her legend.

STORY OF THE KAHINA

Dihya's story has been used over time to promote Berber causes, by French colonials to paint their rule in a positive light, and by North African feminists.

It's important to note that we only know Dihya's story from Arab historians writing about the conquest of North Africa. Some of these sources claim Dihya was a Jewish sorceress, while others say she was a Christian who derived her power from a Christian icon.

Her legend is also frequently entwined with birds. Some sources say she was an early scholar of desert birds, while others claim it was birds who brought her the knowledge of the future, says the Ancient History encyclopedia.



Lady Eveningstar of the Maya

Just as Dihya's life was winding down, on the other side of the world, a girl was born in Calakmul, in the Mayan empire.

She came to Yaxchilan as a secondary wife of Itzamnaaj B'alam II, a Mayan king.

Although a secondary wife, Lady Eveningstar, also called Ik'Skull, bore a son. She may have ruled the kingdom in her own right until the boy, Yaxun B'alam IV, was old enough to rule on his own. She died in 751.

A NEW ROLE

During the 7th and 8th centuries, women shifted roles in the Mayan kingdom from wives and mothers to playing critical roles in spiritual and courtly life. Sculptures found at Naachtun depict both kings and queens as conquering heroes. Archaeologist Kathryn Reese-Taylor from the University of Calgary has identified at least 10 different royal women from four Maya city states, including Calakmul.

"Women are not sidebars," Reese-Taylor says in *Discover* magazine, "but significant actors in their own right."

OTHER MAYAN QUEENS

Lady Yohl Ik'nal took the crown at Palenque in 583 when King B'alam I died and

left no heir. She may have been his daughter or sister, and she ruled for more than 20 years and carried full royal titles, which was uncommon for women.

Lady K'abel, or Lady Waterlily Hand or Lady Snake Lord, was uncovered in 2012 in the ancient royal Maya city of El Peru-Waka. She was etched on a 7th-century stela as dressed in royal clothing and holding a warrior's shield. According to *National Geographic*, she ruled the Wak, or Centipede kingdom, between 672 and 692. She held the title of kaloomte, or supreme warrior, which gave her authority over the king.

Ix Wak Chan Ajaw was the daughter of the king of Dos Pilas in what is now central Guatemala. She arrived in Naranjo, just west of the border with modern Belize, to marry its king. He died shortly thereafter, leaving her in charge. Ix Wak Chan Ajaw launched eight military campaigns in five years, taking war to her enemies and winning.

"Women are not sidebars, but significant actors in their own right."

— *Archaeologist Kathryn Reese-Taylor*



Wu Zeitan, Empress Consort Wu

Wu is the sole officially recognized empress regnant of China. She was also called Wu Zhao, Empress Wu or Tian Hu.

FROM CONCUBINE TO EMPRESS CONSORT

Wu started out as the concubine of Emperor Taizong and, after his death, she married his ninth son and successor, Gaozong, becoming empress consort in 655. She may have been shy in public, but behind the scenes, the Ancient History Encyclopedia calls her the real power.

She was ruthless. She killed enemies, and possibly even her own children in her efforts to accumulate and consolidate her grip on China's throne. When Gaozong had a stroke in 660, Wu became administrator, effectively the emperor's equal. She kept the title until Gaozong's death in 683, when her third son, Li Zhe, assumed the throne as Emperor Zhongzong. His reign lasted a mere six weeks, however, when his misbehavior resulted in Wu deposing him in favor of her youngest son, Li Dan.

Even though he carried the title emperor, it was no secret that Wu still held the power. She dropped the pretense of hiding behind a screen or curtain and issued commands to her son directly in public. Li



NATIONAL PALACE MUSEUM / PUBLIC DOMAIN

Dan, ruling as Emperor Ruizong, never moved into the imperial apartments and did not attend imperial functions

or meetings with officials.

EMPRESS REGNANT

In 690, Wu dropped the cha-



PUBLIC DOMAIN

rade entirely and moved to make herself empress regnant of the new Zhou dynasty. But court life was as fractious as ever, and Wu's reliance on the secret police and romantic affairs would prove to be her undoing. In early 705, Wu battled illness and the warring factions at court. This would eventually result in her removal from power and the restoration of the Tang Dynasty. She died later that year at age 81.

LEGACY

Wu generally receives praise for her effective governance and protection of China, but there's a lot of scorn for the bloody way in which she seized — and kept — power. She reformed the education system and the military. Culturally, her own literary works survived as do the works of her court, which was a focus of literary creativity.

Maharani Ahilyabal Holkar

Ahilyabal was born in 1725 in the village of Chondi, where her father taught her to read and write.

Legend says that Malhar Rao Holkar, lord of the Malwa territory, stopped in her village on the way to Pune. He saw the girl, 8, in the temple and, captivated by her piety, brought her to Holkar territory as a bride for his son, Khanderao Holkar. She married Khanderao in 1733

REIGN

Khanderao was killed in the siege of Kumher in 1754. After the subsequent deaths of Khanderao's father and only son, Ahilyabal became queen in 1767, supported by the Holkar army. She personally lead the army into battle against those who sought to plunder her kingdom or defy her rule.

She also endeared herself to her people by holding daily audiences to hear their troubles.

Ahilyabal established the textile industry in her capital city of Maheshwar, and supported the rise of farmers and merchant classes. She encouraged a flourishing culture of poetry, music and the arts, playing host to the famous Marathi poet Moropant and the Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram.

Ahilyabal ruled peacefully until her death in 1795 at the age of 70. She was succeeded by her military commander, Tukoji Rao Holkar I.



CHARITY

Ahilyabal is known for her humility and her practice of donating her public wealth to charitable works inside and outside of her kingdom. She built dozens of temples, ghats, wells, rest houses, roads and forts. Ahilyabal notably improved Hindu sacred sites at Kashmir, Mathura, Dwarka, Rameshwar and Ayodhya.

LEGACY

The city of Indore named its airport and university after Ahilyabal, as well as an annual award for gallantry. The Republic of India issued a stamp in her honor in 1996. There are also numerous roads, parks and other infrastructure named after her, and many popular movies and books chronicle her life.



Queen Musa of Parthia

She started out as a slave, but ended up a queen. Musa, also known as Thermusa, is one of only three women to rule in Iranian history. She was queen of the Parthian empire from 2 B.C. to 2 A.D.

EARLY LIFE

Musa was a Roman concubine of Phraates IV (37-2 B.C.), a gift from the Roman emperor Augustus after a treaty in which the Parthians acknowledged Roman control of Armenia while the Romans recognized the Euphrates River as the border of its lands.

REIGN

Musa became Phraates IV's favorite wife, and gave birth to a son who would become Phraates V. She convinced Phraates IV to send his other sons, Vonones I, Phraates and Karen, to Rome as hostages. In 2 B.C., in the absence of any other successors, Musa poisoned Phraates V and made herself and Phraates V co-rulers of the Parthian empire.

During their reign, tensions ran high with Rome. Augustus went so far as to send his adopted son, Gaius, to invade Iran. After a tense exchange of correspondence, a second peace treaty was signed, making Phraates V the king of Parthia and returning Phraates IV's sons.

The historian Flavius Josephus alleges that Musa married Phraates V, which angered the Parthian nobility. It's not known how true that is, but the fact is the nobility did rise up against them after only four years. They were deposed and executed or driven into Syria.

LEGACY

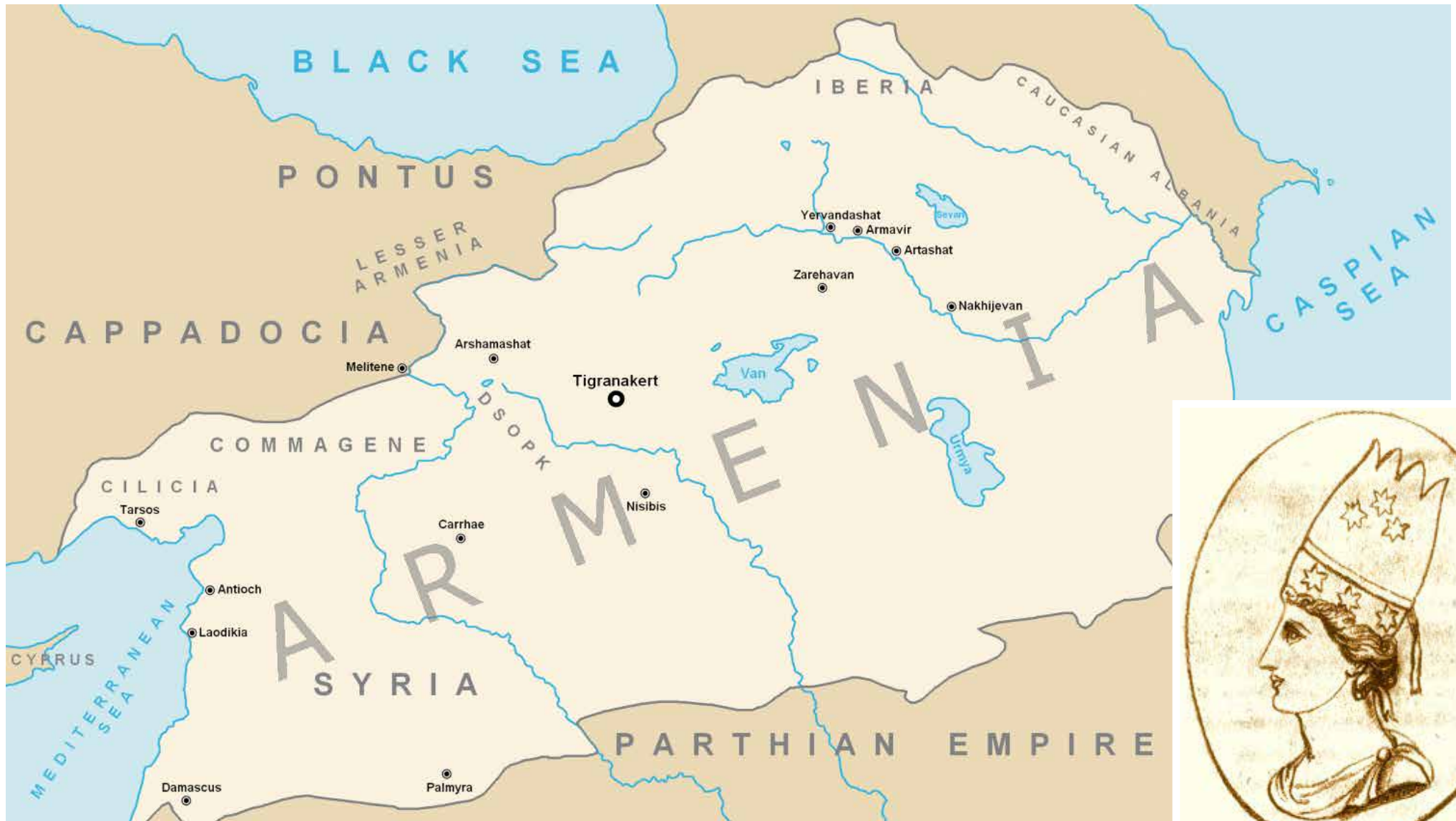
Today, we see Musa mainly on coinage and in conspiracy theories. She appears, along with Phraates V, on the coins of her time, which still exist in museums around the world. Some say she was the daughter of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, who was gotten rid of by being sent to Parthia. Others even claim she's a candidate for Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.



ARAB LEAGUE / PUBLIC DOMAIN



CREATIVE COMMONS



ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA

GEVORK NAZARYAN/
CREATIVE COMMONS

Queen Erato of Armenia

Before Musa was given to Phraates IV in a deal that sealed the fate of Armenia, Queen Erato ruled the land with her brother-husband King Tigranes IV.

Erato would rule as a Roman client queen from 10 B.C. to 2 B.C., and again from 6-12 with the Herodian Prince Tigranes V.

Erato, which is Greek for beautiful, was the daughter of Tigranes III and was born and raised in either Rome or Armenia, depending on the year of her birth. She may be viewed as one of the last hereditary rulers of Armenia.

FIRST REIGN WITH TIGRANES IV

Tigranes III died sometime before 6 B.C. In 10 B.C., the Armenians put Tigranes IV on the throne who, in Hellenistic custom, married his half-sis-

ter Erato to preserve the Artaxiad blood line.

She had a daughter with Tigranes IV who went on to marry King Pharasmanes I of Iberia.

Though they ruled with Roman leave, neither Erato nor Tigranes IV were fans of Rome. The pair instead leaned toward Parthia for support, and Rome and Parthia competed for influence over Armenia.

After Phraates V pulled support for Tigranes IV and

Erato in the face of a full-fledged war with Rome, Tigranes IV and Erato acknowledged Roman rule and were allowed to remain in power by Augustus. Tigranes IV was killed in battle some time about 2 B.C., and Erato abdicated her throne and went into political exile.

SECOND REIGN WITH TIGRANES V

In 6, the Armenians murdered King Artavasdes III and

Augustus installed Tigranes V, a Herodian prince and distant relative of the Artaxiad Dynasty, on the throne. Armenia's nobles later restored Erato back to the throne to co-rule with Tigranes V from the new capital of Artaxata. They may have married, which would have made her queen consort. The pair was overthrown again in 12, after which Augustus put Vonones I, son of Phraates IV of Parthia, on the throne of Armenia.

Queen Margaret I of Denmark

Margaret I was queen consort to King Haakon VI of Norway, queen of Sweden, and later ruled in her own right as Queen of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. She was an adroit ruler who intended to unite Scandinavia.

EARLY LIFE

Margaret was the youngest daughter of King Valdemar IV of Denmark, born in 1353 on Soborg Castle. She was betrothed to King Haakon VI of Norway at age 6, but the Nordic power struggles kept the actual ceremony at bay for four more years until the pair was finally wed in Copenhagen in 1363.

Some time after the wedding, Margaret was taken to Akershus in Oslo Fjord, where she was raised by the noblewoman Merete Ulvsdatter, daughter of Bridget of Sweden.

REIGN

After her father's death in 1375, Margaret sought and won the election of her infant son, Olaf, to the Danish throne. He being too young to rule, Margaret took over as regent. Haakon died in 1380, and Olaf (and Margaret) succeeded him in Norway as well. But Olaf died suddenly in 1387, and Margaret was named regent of



JEBULON / CREATIVE COMMONS

Norway and Denmark the next year. She then turned to Sweden, and was elected sovereign in 1388, cementing her rule with the defeat of Albert of Mecklenburg in 1389.

BOGISLAV, OR ERIC OF POMERANIA

In 1389, Margaret proclaimed her great-nephew and grandson of Henry of Mecklenburg king of Norway,

with Margaret ruling in his stead until he reached the age of majority. Denmark and Sweden followed suit in 1396, and Margaret used it as an opportunity to release the Treaty of Kalmbach, uniting the three countries in an "everlasting union." In fact, this union or its scraps lasted for 400 years.

Eric was crowned king of all three countries in 1397, though

Margaret continued to be the effective ruler until her death in 1412.

IN DEATH

Her sarcophagus, made by Lubeck sculptor Johannes Junge, sits in the Roskilde Cathedral near Copenhagen. Masses for her soul are no longer said regularly, but a special bell is run twice daily in commemoration.



PUBLIC DOMAIN