



RELIGIOUS CULTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AMAZONS

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times, and here there were stories of their having borne arms for their country. There were similar tales at Argos and in Arcadia, and at the Olympian Heraeum there was a footrace of maidens in honour of Hippodamia.³⁶⁵ These are doubtless vestiges of the matriarchate of the pre-Hellenic inhabitants of Greece. They suggest many comparisons with the Amazon tradition. The legend of Atalanta offers similar parallels to the story of the Amazons in its pleasing aspect. Its darker side, which the older Greeks emphasised, is reflected in the tale of the Lemnian women who murdered their husbands.³⁶⁶ These were Myrina's children and descendants of Dionysus. The energy of this ancient matriarchal organisation is shown in the idea of confusion of sex which belonged to the cults of Cybele and Ephesian Artemis in historical times. The idea is prominent in the legends of the Amazons, as they touch religion. At Ephesus they were connected with Dionysus and Heracles, to both of whom an effeminate character belonged. Their place in state cult at Athens has the same implications.

We may believe then that the tradition of the Amazons preserves memories of a time when women held the important place in state and religion in Aegean lands, and that they reflect the goddess of this civilisation. It is noteworthy that the earliest writings of the Greeks concerning them show them in that part of Asia Minor where the rites of the Mother throughout ancient times menaced the reason of her worshippers. The troop of maenads who followed Dionysus were like the Amazons, but the clue to their kinship was easily lost.³⁶⁷ The relationship between the Amazons and the Anatolian cults was practically obliterated, whereas maenads were introduced into Greek religion after many generations had altered the first form of orgiastic worship. Moreover, the deity of the maenads, who was earlier only the *paredros* of the Woman, had become an Olympian.

Greek travellers of the age of Herodotus naturally inferred that they had discovered the Amazons in the regions of Scythia and Libya where armed women were said to fight in the ranks with men. Even before this time the traditional home of the race had been placed further and further eastward,

³⁶⁵ Paus. 5. 16, 1 ff.

³⁶⁶ Apollod. 1. 9, 3. At Lemnos there were Corybantic rites of Bendis (Strabo, p. 466).

³⁶⁷ The germ of the thought is in R. Y. Tyrrell's Preface to his edition of the *Bacchae* of Euripides. V. p. LXXXIII (ed. 1906).

