

**AMAZON WARRIOR WOMEN, BREAKTHROUGH SECRETS OF THE DEAD
EPISODE THAT USED DNA ANALYSIS TO UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT
THE FABLED FIGHTERS OF GREEK LORE, ENCORES DECEMBER 13 ON
PBS**

The myth of the Amazons, a tribe of bloodthirsty blonde women thundering across arid battlefields to the horror of their male foes, has lingered for centuries. Their fantastic exploits seized the imagination of the Greek scribes Homer, Hippocrates and Herodotus. But proof of their existence had always been lacking. Now, a 2,500-year-old mystery may just be solved, cracked by an American scientist whose 10-year odyssey led her tens of thousands of miles in pursuit of the truth. After unearthing a culture of ancient warrior women in the Russian steppes, Dr. Jeannine Davis-Kimball followed a trail of artifacts to a remote village in Mongolia, where her quest for a living link to a long-imagined tribe ended with a startling discovery.

SECRETS OF THE DEAD: Amazon Warrior Women encores Wednesday, December 13 at 8 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). The film is a production of Story House Productions for Thirteen/WNET New York in association with National Geographic Channels International and ZDF. The one-hour documentary is directed and produced by Jens Afflerbach and Carsten Oblaender, and co-produced by Antje Boehmert. Narration is provided by actor Liev Schreiber.

"I think I finally found the basis for the Amazonian myth," says Davis-Kimball. "It's so

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amazing to serendipitously find a warrior priestess in an excavation, and then to find the genetic link is absolutely phenomenal. I don't think anybody could ever be so lucky again."

SECRETS OF THE DEAD captures all the drama and excitement of Davis-Kimball's journey. For centuries, those who searched for proof of the Amazons' existence did so in vain. But in newly unearthed burial mounds in the steppes of southern Russia, Davis-Kimball and Russian anthropologist Leonid Yablonsky discover the most significant find of their distinguished careers: the 2,300-year-old skeletal remains of a nomadic woman buried with the weapons of a warrior, a cache of more than 100 iron arrowheads. Other artifacts the archaeologists find - gold pieces, a patina mirror, and an Egyptian alabaster drinking vessel - indicate to Davis-Kimball that the woman was of extremely high status. She could very well have been a warrior priestess.

Davis-Kimball's unearthing of the priestess warrior is historic, but it is only the most recent in a string of amazing discoveries she has made in the steppe region since she began digging there in 1994. In one grave she found a bent arrowhead among the weapons lying next to a female skeleton, suggesting the woman died in battle. She found another female skeleton buried with one leg straight and the other bent at the knee - the attack pose of a warrior. It all adds up to the fact that a culture of warrior women roamed the steppes in the 1st century B.C. Could these women have been the inspiration for the Amazons of legend?

SECRETS OF THE DEAD: Amazon Warrior Women follows Davis-Kimball to a genetics laboratory in Samara, Southern Russia, where she and German forensic anthropologist Joachim Burger engage in a groundbreaking experiment. Until now, no scientist has ever used DNA analysis to determine the true story of the Amazons. Relying on Burger's evidence, Davis-Kimball tests her theory that the nomads buried in the steppes gave rise to such a myth. Hoping that viable genetic material has survived deep within, Burger carefully saws into their fragile remains in search of useable DNA. What clues will the brittle bones yield?

As she waits for the DNA results, Davis-Kimball travels to the Munich Antiquities Collection to view one of the world's most important collections of ancient artifacts, including pottery from 500 B.C. depicting the Amazon Queen Penthesilea in a deadly fight with the Greek hero Achilles in the Trojan War. She also consults the first historical account of the Amazons' exploits, a collection of priceless documents written by the Greek writer Herodotus, often referred to as the "father of history." Herodotus places the descendants of the Amazons somewhere northeast of the Black Sea - the very site of Davis-Kimball's excavations of the warrior women. With justification for her theory that these women inspired the legend of the Amazons, Davis-Kimball tackles her next challenge - finding their modern descendants.

Like the Amazons, the world of the steppe nomads has vanished, except for in remote pockets of land thousands of miles east of the excavation sites, in Mongolia. There, Davis-Kimball's search for the lost culture of the warrior women comes full circle - among the black-eyed Mongols, she finds a blonde child, a 9-year-old girl named Meiramgul. Her face bears the startling stamp of the Amazons. But if a genetic link really exists between Meiramgul and the ancient female warriors, the proof lies in Burger's DNA lab.

When he phones Davis-Kimball in Mongolia, he delivers the news she has been hoping for. "It's almost unbelievable what we found," Burger says in ***SECRETS OF THE DEAD: Amazon Warrior Women***. "The DNA sequences of the warrior woman and those from the girl of Mongolia are identical!"

The truth is revealed. As Davis-Kimball watches Meiramgul ride toward her in the film's closing moments, she says, "Even for a scientist, it is a moving moment to see this girl racing down the steppes as a re-enactment of the ancient nomads, of the warrior women of the past. It's almost unbelievable."

SECRETS OF THE DEAD: Amazon Warrior Women is a production of Story House

Productions for Thirteen/WNET New York in association with National Geographic Channels International and ZDF. At Thirteen, Jared Lipworth is executive producer and William R. Grant is executive in charge.

Visit the ***SECRETS OF THE DEAD*** Web site at pbs.org for more information. In previous seasons, the award-winning strand has devoted episodes to such topics as the Salem witch trials, the tomb of Christ, the Titanic, the black plague, the Allied hunt for Nazi scientists, D-Day, and the ill-fated South Pole expedition of Robert F. Scott. The series has received six CINE Golden Eagle Awards, among numerous other honors.

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