AMANIRENA

(WARRIOR QUEEN OF THE KINGDOM OF KUSH)

Ameniras challenged the Romans who took over Egypt after the passing of Cleopatra VII. She reigned from about 40 BCE to 10 BCE. She is one of the most famous kandakes, because of her role leading Kushites armies against the Romans from in a war that lasted five years, from 27 BCE to 22 BCE. After an initial victory when she attacked Roman Egypt, Amanirenas was defeated at Qasr Ibrim by Petronius. She succeeded in negotiating a peace treaty on favourable terms. Amanirenas was described as brave, and blind in one eye. Her husband was King Teriteqas, and she appears to have been a queen consort until his death. Their son was the crown prince Akinidad. When Teriteqas died at the beginning of the war, either or both of Amanirenas and Akinidad succeeded to the throne.

When Aelius Gallus, the chief magistrate of Egypt, was absent on a campaign in Arabia in 24 BC, the Kushites launched an attack on Egypt. Amanirenas, and her son the crown prince Akinidad, defeated Roman forces at Syene and Philae, and drove the Jews from Elephantine Island. They returned to Kush with prisoners and loot, including several statues of Emperor Augustus.

Most scholars would dismiss the accounts of Herodotus, Strabo, and Diodorus as compelling evidence to support the existence of women warriors in Africa, although all three ancient writers have proved accurate in the great majority of their testable observations about life in the centuries before Christ.
As time progresses, the evidence supporting the presence of a tradition of African women warriors grows in its persuasiveness.

An impressive series of Nubian warrior queens, queen regents, and queen mothers, known as kentakes (Greek: Candace "Candake"), are only appearing to the light of history through the ongoing deciphering of the Merotic script. They controlled what is now Ethiopia, Sudan, and parts of Egypt. One of the earliest references to the kentakes comes from 332 B.C. when Alexander the Great set his sights on the rich kingdom of Nubia.

The presiding kentakes, known in history as "Black Queen Candace of Nubia," designed a battle plan to counter Alexander's advance. She placed her armies and waited on a war elephant for the Macedonian conqueror to appear for battle. Alexander approached the field from a low ridge, but when he saw the Black Queen's army displayed in a brilliant military formation before him, he stopped. After studying the array of warriors waiting with such deadly precision and realizing that to challenge the kentakes could quite possibly be fatal, he turned his armies away from Nubia toward a successful campaign in Egypt.

Bas-reliefs dated to about 170 B.C. reveal kentakes Shanakdakheto, dressed in armour and wielding a spear in battle. She did not rule as queen regent or queen mother but as a fully independent ruler. Her husband was her consort. In bas-reliefs found in the ruins of building projects she commissioned, Shanakdakheto is portrayed alone as well as with her husband and son, who would inherit the throne by her passing. The following African queens were known to the Greco-Roman world as the "Candace's": Amanishakhete, Amanitore, Amanirenas, Nawidemak, and Malegereabar.