

B.C.

35,000 B.C.–2501 B.C.

Venus figurines—small statues of faceless pregnant women, with greatly exaggerated breasts and buttocks—were among the small carvings (*mobilier*, or portable art) created in Eurasia and Africa (from ca. 35,000 B.C. or earlier). Some have taken these as evidence of fertility cults, and of early goddess worship.

Both women and men were employed as professional dancers, attached to Egyptian temples (as early as 3000 B.C.).

Techniques of raising silkworms and spinning silk thread were developed in China; in ancient China, discoveries were traditionally credited to the emperor, at this time Huang Ti, but silk making (as well as weaving) was credited to the emperor's chief wife, Lei-tzu (ca. 2600 B.C.), popularly called Si Ling-chi (Lady of the Silkworm). She is supposed to have discovered the art after picking up a silkworm's cocoon in her mulberry garden and idly pulling it apart. China would keep silk making techniques secret for millennia.

2500 B.C.–2001 B.C.

Ritual dances involving sophisticated acting by professional performers, both women and men, seem to have been important in Egypt's religious observance (by 2500 B.C.). By that time, Egyptian records also suggest a dancing tradition outside Egypt, probably in Ethiopia; certainly professional dancers were employed by royal courts in China and India.

Enheduanna (active ca. 2300 B.C.), Assyrian princess, priestess, and poet, daughter of King Sargon of Akkad; she is the earliest writer, male or female, whose name and work have survived.

2000 B.C.–1501 B.C.

Oldest references to contraception found in Egyptian manuscripts (ca. 1900 B.C.), though how widely it was used, and how effective or harmful, is unclear.

The law code of the Middle Assyrian empire (ca. 1750 B.C.) was the first known regulation requiring women to be veiled, including daughters, wives, widows, concubines, and sacred prostitutes,

Early Priestesses

In the second and third millennia B.C. in Mesopotamia, daughters of kings were, like Enheduanna, appointed to be moon-priestesses of Inanna-Ishtar, wearing special garments, living in and managing the temple, and performing religious ceremonies. The goddess Ishtar was herself possibly derived from the earlier Egyptian goddess Isis. Priestesses operated in other temples as well; some participated in an annual "Sacred Marriage," related to fertility rites, probably the origin of later "temple prostitution." They generally came from wealthy families, joining the temple when young and bringing to it a dowry. Generally unmarried and forbidden to bear children, they would often adopt daughters, to whom they would leave their dowries, often much increased through their commercial activities. With activities at different levels, a major temple might include several hundred women. Though such worship would gradually decline, priestesses continued to operate in the Mediterranean region for many centuries, perhaps mostly notably the Greeks' powerful Delphic oracle—called Pythia, Dragon Priestess of Earth (always a woman of at least 50)—and the Romans' Vestal virgins, who tended the sacred hearth of Vesta, goddess of the hearth.

even those who later married; common prostitutes, however, were not allowed to wear a veil but were obliged to leave their heads uncovered.

Hatshepsut (1503–1482 B.C.), Egyptian queen, daughter of Thutmose I; wife of her half-brother Thutmose II; regent for her son, Thutmose III; and then herself pharaoh, ruling Egypt for 21 years, one of the most powerful and historically important women of the Bronze Age. Among her accomplishments were the establishment of trading relations with Punt, on the Red Sea, and the commissioning of several massive monuments.

1500 B.C.–1001 B.C.

At least some women studied medicine at the medical school in Heliopolis, Egypt (by ca. 1500 B.C.).

One female physician, Peneshet, became director of physicians; other women are shown preparing drugs. In addition, some women worked as embalmers, especially to handle the bodies of aristocratic women; before the advent of female embalmers, some families would hold women's bodies in the home for several days so they would not be misused by male embalmers, some with necrophiliac tastes.

Secular professional dancers, many of them women, were employed in Egypt, primarily to entertain the nobility (by ca. 1500 B.C.); they were often imported from Africa and India, many probably as slaves.

Nefertiti (active ca. 1379 B.C.), Egyptian queen, wife of King Akhenaton and a supporter of his new religion, worshiping the sun-god Aton.

The oldest books in the Old Testament of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, collectively called the Pentateuch or (among Jews) the Torah—were written (by ca. 1200 B.C.). These introduced the story of Eve, Adam, and the Garden of Eden, which would help shape social attitudes toward women in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and codified various social assumptions about women, including the idea that a wife was her husband's property, as much as were his ox, his ass, and his servants; that a woman had virtually no independent legal standing; and that women's bodily processes were "unclean," with ritual purification required after menstruation, sexual intercourse, and childbirth. These and later books of the Bible also introduced many other women, some of them historical (or historically based) figures. Among those from this shadowy period were:

- Sarah, Abraham's wife, who pretended to be his sister so he would not be killed for her beauty; both Sarah and Abraham were sent away when her true identity was revealed; long childless, she bore Isaac and was later called "mother of the nation."
- Deborah, who as a prophet warned of an impending Canaanite invasion, and then with her general, Barak, led Israeli troops against a Canaanite army; another Israeli woman, Jael, reportedly killed the Canaanite general.
- Ruth, a widow who cared for her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi, and arranged for her welfare, only then herself remarrying, becoming the ancestor of King David. It was to Naomi that Ruth said the famous lines: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16–17)

Agamede (active 12th c. B.C.), Greek physician who, according to Homer, lived before the Trojan War and was skilled in using plants for medicinal purposes.

1000 B.C.–751 B.C.

Jezebel (active ca. 9th c. B.C.), princess of Tyre, who, according to the Old Testament, married Ahab, who became king of Israel; their daughter was Athaliah. A worshiper of the Phoenician gods, Jezebel was murdered by Israeli army commander Jehu.

Troupes of secular dancers, many of them women, worked as independent professionals in Egypt, touring to perform in the major cities (1st millennium B.C.).

Companies of dancers, mimes, acrobats, and jugglers toured Greece (as early as 9th c. B.C.); these included both men and women, though women would be barred from the stage in Greece's classic era.

d. Athaliah (?–ca. 837 B.C.), queen of Judah, daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, king of Israel, and wife of Jeham, king of Judah. According to the Old Testament, she took power after the death of her son, Ahaziah, and ruled for seven years, becoming Judah's only queen. Racine's 1691 play *Athalie* was based on this biblical story.

Sammuramat (Semiramis, active ca. 800 B.C.), possibly mythical queen of Assyria, wife of King Shamsi-Adad V and mother of King Adad-nirari III. Historian Diodorus Siculus identified her as Semiramis, who allegedly ruled alone for decades, founding Babylon.

Dido (active ca. 800 B.C.), princess of Tyre who, according to the *Aeneid*, fled to North Africa, there founding the city of Carthage; archaeological evidence suggests that the Phoenician city was founded between the traditional date (814 B.C.) and the mid-8th century B.C.

750 B.C.–501 B.C.

Early Hindu religious texts criticized prostitution (ca. 8th c. B.C.); women were generally regarded as sources of temptation and pollution, but prostitutes were involved in some religious rituals, notably in fertility cults.

Sappho (active ca. 610 B.C.–ca. 580 B.C.), Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, the best known of all the early Greek women who woe poets, though only fragments of her work survive, most notably *Hymn to Aphrodite*, seeking that goddess's help in seducing a young girl. Women-loving women are named lesbians after her.

Surviving pillars called *Asherahs* suggest that the ancient moon-goddess Ishtar was still worshiped in Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

Theano (active late 6th c. B.C.), Greek philosopher, mathematician, and physician; none of her original writings survive, but some (believed apocryphal) have been ascribed to her; she is thought to have been the wife or daughter of Pythagoras, and possibly to have run the Pythagorean school after his death.

Myrtis (active 6th–5th c. B.C.), Greek poet from Boeotia, said to have been the teacher of the male lyric poet Pindar; her work has been lost, except for paraphrases in Plutarch.

500 B.C.–401 B.C.

With the rise of Buddhism in India (ca. 500 B.C.) came nunneries for women, reportedly in response to a request by Buddha's aunt Mahaprajapati for a nunnery where women could lead an ascetic life of religious study and contemplation, free from family demands. The nuns were not considered equal within the faith, however, being subordinate to monks. Buddhist nuns (*theris*) began to write the poems that would later be collected in the *Therigatha* (ca. 80 B.C.). Though apparently restricted from higher religious learning, some women participated in religious and philosophical discussions in this period, including Gargi and Maitreyi.

Corinna (active 5th c. B.C.), Greek poet from Tanagra, noted for her choral lyric poems, who according to Pausanias (2nd c. B.C.) was considered a rival to her male contemporary Pindar.

Cleopatra (active ca. 5th c. B.C.), a physician, probably of Greek ancestry and possibly working in Alexandria; Hippocrates wrote of a physician named Cleopatra being concerned with the reproductive process.

Diotima of Mantinea (active ca. 5th c. B.C.), Greek philosopher who, according to Plato, was a priestess and a teacher of the philosopher Socrates.

Greek poet Telesilla, noted for her choral poetry, reportedly mobilized the women of Argos to resist invaders from Sparta (494 B.C.).

At the Battle of Marathon (490 B.C.), where the Greeks defeated the far more numerous Persian forces, Artemisia of Halicarnassus, a Greek ally, commanded several ships, according to Herodotus; she is the first female sea captain known by name.

Phaenarate began working as a midwife in Athens. Athenian midwives were required to have delivered children themselves before working as midwives. Phaenarate's son was Socrates (b. ca. 469 B.C.), who would call himself a "midwife to truth."

Aspasia of Miletos (5th c. B.C.), Greek courtesan whose home in Athens became a center for philosophical, artistic, and political discussion, reportedly including both Socrates and Plato, who said she had taught him the theory of love. Aspasia married Athens's powerful ruler Pericles,

who personally and successfully defended her in the city-state's high court against charges of atheism and procuring.

Praxilla (active 5th c. B.C.), Greek poet from Sicyon, noted for her drinking songs and hymns, only fragments of which survive.

In Greek states of the 5th century, women's rights and lives were generally defined by their relationships to men—their fathers, husbands, and sons—with upper-class women often living in some seclusion in isolated women's quarters. Though they could sometimes hold property in their own name, notably as heiresses, women were unable to vote or hold public office. Said Athenian leader Pericles (430 B.C.): "The greatest glory of a woman is to be least talked about by men, whether they are praising you or criticizing you." Women did, however, exercise some public power as priestesses, in 5th-century B.C. Attica alone serving in some 40 cults.

Lysistrata, Aristophanes' comedy, introduced the idea of women using—or, rather, withholding—sex to try to force an end to war (411 B.C.). Ironically, no women appeared in the play; they were barred from the Greek stage, meaning that all the great women's roles of the classic Greek theater, including Antigone, Medea, Clytemnestra, and the rest, were originated by men. Women did, however, perform in touring companies, as dancing mimes, as temple dancers, and as dancer-prostitutes, called *heterae*.

400 B.C.–301 B.C.

Arete of Cyrene (active late 5th-early 4th c. B.C.), Greek philosopher of the Cyrenaic school of hedonism, founded by her father and teacher Aristippus, a student of Socrates; at her father's

Early Midwives

For how many thousands of years no one knows, almost all babies were delivered by midwives; the Latin word *obstetrix* means simply "she who is present." In biblical times, a birthing stool—a semi-circular *obstetrical* chair with the seat open in the middle—was used, though in some cultures the mother sat on the lap of the midwife, who was then able to knead the mother's belly, attempting to hasten birth, often while singing sacred songs. Midwives were generally older women, the main requirements being that she be honest, have a good character, have small hands with well-trimmed and clean nails, and have borne at least one child herself.

Greek midwives (perhaps working with male physicians) developed the technique of podalic version, in which the midwife manipulated a crosswise or feet-down infant in the womb into the proper position for normal headfirst birth. This technique saved the lives of thousands of mothers and infants in the Greek and Roman worlds; but in other parts of the world it was unknown, and in Europe during the Middle Ages it was forgotten, causing many to die in agony. If the child died in the womb, "child-breakers" were called in with knives, hooks, and forceps to remove the body piecemeal. If the mother died first, the child would be cut from the womb—but not while she lived, for the operation in those centuries caused virtually certain death.

Midwives were also often charged with taking the child to the father for acknowledgment; where the father did not accept the child, the midwife "exposed" the child in a public place, where it either died or was adopted by a passerby. Midwives also checked for virginity and fertility in young women, often as part of a sideline in matchmaking. In some places, they were also charged with cutting away parts of a girl's external sexual organs, a procedure called clitoridectomy or female genital mutilation, still performed in some cultures today.

Midwives also assessed whether a pregnancy existed, predicted the due date of the baby, and sometimes acted as abortionists. After the birth, midwives often stayed with the mother for a few weeks, advising on diet and child care. From such activities, some "medical midwives" developed into general medical advisers, often in consultation with male physicians, for women who for reasons of modesty felt unable to consult a male physician directly.

death she became the school's leading teacher, credited with more than 40 works, all now lost. Her son, also named Aristippus, was nicknamed "Mother-taught."

In India, the earlier practice of a bride and groom's families exchanging gifts equally with each other gave way (from ca. 400 B.C.) to the practice of the groom and his family giving the bride *stridhana* (specified maintenance, clothing, and adornments) and *sulka* (a bride price).

Agnodike (active last third of 4th c. B.C.), Greek physician who reportedly disguised herself as a man to study medicine under the physician Herophilus, at a time when Athenian women were barred from practicing medicine. After aiding a woman in labor, who had accepted help only after being assured that the physician was a woman, Agnodike was brought to trial for breaking the law, the penalty being death. But, reportedly, so many women protested that the judge changed the law, not only allowing women to practice medicine, but paying stipends to those who were most skilled.

Hipparchia (Hipparchus, active mid-4th c. B.C.), Greek philosopher of the Cynic school, as were her husband Crates and brother Metrocles; credited with writing philosophical treatises and also tragedies, and noted for wearing male attire, she is the only women to be profiled in Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers* (3rd c. A.D.).

Axiothea of Phlius (active ca. 350 B.C.), Greek philosopher who, dressed in men's clothing, was one of two female pupils of Plato and later of his nephew and successor Speusippus.

Erinna (active 4th c. B.C.?), Greek poet from the island of Telos, best known for her poem *The Distaff*.

Anyte (active 4th c. B.C.), Greek poet noted for her pastoral epigrams.

According to Greek records, Kṛpi assumed power in northwest India after her husband's death, leading resistance to Alexander the Great (ca. 327–326 B.C.).

Nossis (active 4th-3rd c. B.C.), Greek poet from Locri, in southern Italy, noted for her epigrams.

Moero (Myro, active 4th-3rd c. B.C.), Greek poet from Byzantium, noted for her epigrams and lyric poetry.

In the Hellenistic world that survived Alexander the Great's death (ca. 323 B.C.), women had somewhat greater freedom in their personal lives, to move about in society, to act independently in economic and legal affairs, to obtain a divorce, and to become educated.

300 B.C.–201 B.C.

Buddhist hospitals developed a class of trained nurses; most were young men, but elderly women were trained to care for female patients (3rd c. B.C.).

The worship of Isis, dating back to at least 2500 B.C. in Egypt, reached Rome (by 200 B.C.), giving rise to the related worship of Vesta, whose sacred hearth would be tended by Vestal Virgins; these women served from childhood for 30 years, then were given dowries and allowed to marry, though most chose not to do so. If a Vestal Virgin lost her virginity while serving as a priestess, she could be buried alive.

200 B.C.–101 B.C.

Rome's Oppian Law (195 B.C.) attempted to restrict ownership and wearing of clothing and adornments, such as jewelry, that openly displayed wealth; many affluent women publicly protested the law and won its repeal.

Cho (Chuo) Wen-chün (179? B.C.–117? B.C.), Chinese poet; sale of her love poems helped support herself and her husband, poet Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju.

Rome's Voconian law (169 B.C.) prohibited a father, guardian, or husband from making a woman his heir, or from leaving her an amount greater than that of other joint heirs, though the law was often circumvented; before then daughters and sons traditionally were treated equally in a family inheritance.

Hsi-chün (active ca. 105 B.C.), Chinese poet, who wrote in lamentation after being cut off from her culture by a politically arranged marriage with an elderly Central Asian nomad king, K'un Mo, of the Wu-sun.

100 B.C.-51 B.C.

Elephantis (active ca. 1st c. B.C.), Greek physician, probably a courtesan. Pliny wrote of her skills as a midwife and her disagreements with midwife and physician Laïs; Galen noted her ability to cure baldness; possibly they were describing two different people of the same name.

Laïs (active ca. 1st or 2nd c. B.C.), Greek midwife and physician mentioned in Pliny's *Natural History* as disagreeing with the midwife Elephantis on the use of abortive drugs, on the causes of sterility or fertility, and the like; Laïs was said to have developed a treatment for rabies and fevers.

Sotira (active 1st c. B.C.), Greek physician who, according to Pliny, was noted for her remarkable cures; possibly the author of a surviving manuscript, *Gynaecia*.

Metrodora (active 1st or 2nd c. B.C.), Greek midwife whose writings survive in a work titled *Extracts from the Works of Metrodora Concerning the Diseases of Women*.

Salpe (active ca. 1st c. B.C.), Greek midwife from Lemnos whose remedies for various problems were described by Pliny.

Natya-sastra was produced in India (ca. 100 B.C.), outlining the stylized forms and gestures to be used by performers, many of them women, who combined music, drama, and dance in a single art form. Temple dancers called *devadasi* performed in Hindu temples of southern India and at various ceremonies, processions, and rites; they are best known for the Dance of Creation; they also acted as prostitutes in the service of Shiva, god of dance.

With the rise of the Mahayana strain of Buddhism (ca. 100 B.C.-ca. A.D. 100), women—long regarded among Hindus as potential temptresses and polluters—came to be viewed as capable of living spiritually pure religious lives.

Poems by various Buddhist nuns (*theris*), some dating back to the 6th c. B.C., were collected in a work called the *Therigatha* (ca. 80 B.C.), in the first known anthology of women's literature.

d. Berenice II (?-80 B.C.), Greek-Egyptian queen, who survived her husband, Ptolemy XI, to briefly rule Egypt; she was murdered when she resisted Ptolemy Alexander, sent by the Romans to marry her and take power.

b. Cleopatra VII (69 B.C.-30 B.C.), Greek-Egyptian queen.

b. Drusilla Livia (later Julia Augusta, ca. 55 B.C.-A.D. 29), Roman empress and politician.

50 B.C.-1 B.C.

Olympias of Thebes (active 1st c. B.C.), Greek midwife who, according to Pliny, wrote various works, notably on the medicinal properties of various plants that could induce abortion or cure infertility.

Sulpicia (active 1st c. B.C.-1st c. A.D.), Roman poet, six of whose elegies survive.

b. Ban Jieyu (ca. 48 B.C.-ca. 6 B.C.), Chinese poet.

Egyptian forces of Cleopatra VII and her younger brother, Ptolemy, were defeated by Roman forces led by Julius Caesar at the Battle of the Nile (47 B.C.); Cleopatra and Ptolemy XIII remained co-rulers of Egypt under Rome.

Hortensia, daughter of orator Quintus Hortensius, made a public speech protesting the proposed taxing of women's property to support Rome's civil war, on the grounds that women were unable to participate in political life (42 B.C.); the speech itself survived only as described by others.

Roman general Marc Antony met Egyptian queen Cleopatra VII and followed her back to Egypt, beginning their liaison (42 B.C.). After they married (36 B.C.), the Roman Senate revoked all of his powers and ultimately went to war against Egypt (32 B.C.). Antony responded by sending a fleet and army to Greece, quartered near Actium. In a decisive sea battle off Actium, Antony and Cleopatra's forces were defeated by the Romans (31 B.C.), their remaining forces fleeing to Egypt, where their army defected to the Romans (30 B.C.).

d. Cleopatra VII (69 B.C.-30 B.C.), Greek-Egyptian queen, wife of Roman leader Marc Antony. Cleopatra and Antony committed suicide after losing their war with the Romans (31-30 B.C.).

b. Mary (ca. 20 B.C.-?), Jewish woman who became the mother of Jesus Christ, founder of Christianity; over the centuries, Mary herself became the object of great devotion, a female

"role model" in an otherwise male-dominated Christian religion, especially after suppression of many earlier religions with their female deities.

Under Roman emperor Augustus, marriage laws (18 B.C., A.D. 9) required women ages 20 to 50 to marry and bear children, with penalties being imposed for those who did not; previously married women were to remarry 18 months after being divorced or 24 months after being widowed. Wives brought a dowry to the marriage, all or part of which might be returned in case of a divorce, depending on the circumstances. Either wife or husband could obtain a divorce without the consent of the other. Only a woman, however, could be charged with adultery; if she was caught, her husband was obliged to divorce her or himself risk being prosecuted for "pandering." An adulterous woman could be killed by her husband. Rape was considered a crime against the family, represented by a woman's husband or father, and only they had the right to prosecute, an attitude that would persist into the 20th century.

b. Agrippina I (14 B.C.–A.D. 33), Roman noblewoman and politician, granddaughter of the emperor Augustus.

Lienu Zhuan, a collection of biographies of noted Chinese women, was written by Liu Xiang (before 6 B.C.).

A.D.

1-49

b. Agrippina II (15–59), empress of Rome, daughter of Agrippina I and Germanicus.

Agrippina I, granddaughter of the Roman emperor Augustus, accused the new emperor, Tiberius (19), of ordering the death of her husband, Germanicus, his adopted son; she became leader of the opposition to the emperor.

b. Valeria Messalina (22–48), Roman empress, wife of Claudius.

Mary Magdalene (active 1st c.), an early follower of Jesus Christ, according to New Testament accounts, present at key events, including the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Modern biblical scholars find no textual support for the idea that she was a reformed prostitute.

Emperor Tiberius banished opposition leader Agrippina I from Rome (29).

d. Drusilla Livia (later Julia Augusta, ca. 55 B.C.–A.D. 29), Roman empress and politician, wife of the emperor Octavius (later Augustus) and mother of Tiberius; she held great power during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius.

d. Agrippina I (14 B.C.–A.D. 33), Roman noblewoman and politician, granddaughter of the emperor Augustus; after unsuccessfully challenging the emperor Tiberius (19), she was banished from Rome (29), dying in exile.

b. Ban Zhao (Pan Chao, ca. 45–115), Chinese scholar and historian.

d. Valeria Messalina (22–48), Roman empress, wife of Claudius, who ordered her execution for allegedly plotting his overthrow. Her sexual life, in its main outlines rather typical of the male Roman nobility of her time, apparently contributed greatly to her adverse reputation, then and afterward.

Agrippina II married the Roman emperor Claudius (49 B.C.).

50-99

A Jewish women's ascetic monastic community was described as existing outside Alexandria, Egypt, near Lake Mareotis (ca. 50).

Pamphila, a historian working in Greek during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero (r. ca. 54–68), best known for her *Miscellaneous History*, which survives only in summaries by others.

d. Agrippina II (15–59), Roman empress, daughter of Agrippina I and Germanicus, sister of Caligula, wife of emperor Claudius, and mother of Nero, who ultimately ordered her murder.

- d. Boudicca (Boadicea) (?-62), Icenian queen, who reportedly led an insurrection of the Iceni and Trinobantes peoples against Roman rule in southern England, achieving early successes but ultimately being defeated. She has been variously reported as dying in battle and taking poison after defeat.

Ascetic orders of widows apparently existed by the time of Timothy I (64-66) in the New Testament. From this period on, the ascetic life would exert a strong pull, and many other orders would be founded by women who chose sexual abstinence, either before marriage or after it.

100-149

Mary (Maria; Miriam) the Jewess (active 1st or 2nd c.), Alexandrian alchemist, who wrote as a prophet under the name "Miriam, sister of Moses." Her written works, the *Maria Practica*, survive only in fragments, but her practical laboratory inventions laid the basis for later chemistry. Her theories that metals were male and female, and that chemical processes were akin to sexual reproduction, had far less long-term impact.

During the great age of Sanskrit drama in India (ca. 100-ca. 800), women and men shared the stage, sometimes playing roles written for the opposite sex. Women would remain equals on the Indian stage until the arrival of the Muslims (after A.D. 1000), when they would be forced off the stage, until modern times.

Aspasia (active 1st c. or later), Greek physician whose work in obstetrics and gynecology, especially her emphasis on prevention, are known only through fragmentary references in the works of others.

Cecilia (active 2nd or 3rd c.), Roman Christian martyr who became the patron saint of music.

In India, the practice of a groom and his family giving the bride money and gifts gave way (by 2nd c.) to the practice of a bride's family supplying the groom and his family with a dowry. In the same period, divorce (always rare) came to be prohibited, remarriage of widows was discouraged, and women were barred from inheriting property.

d. Ban Zhao (Pan Chao, ca. 45-115), Chinese scholar and historian who completed the great *History of the Han Dynasty* after the successive deaths of the original authors, her father and brother (92). She also published a classic Confucian work on women's behavior, *Nu Chien* (*Advice for Women*), and works of poetry. Skilled in astronomy and mathematics, Ban Zhao was teacher to the young Empress Teng.

b. Anna Galeria Faustina (ca. 125-176), Roman empress, daughter of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius and Faustina (the elder).

150-199

b. Ts'ai Yen (Cai Yen; Cai Wenji, 162?-239?), Chinese poet.

d. Anna Galeria Faustina (ca. 125-176), Roman empress, wife of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whom she accompanied on campaigns (170-174); she died en route to Rome's eastern provinces. He founded the Puellae Faustinanae, a school for poor girls, in her honor.

Alchemy: Women's Work

Alchemy, basically the search for ways to make precious metals out of base ones, was from early times strongly associated with women and was held to have been founded by the goddess Isis. Perhaps the bestknown of the early alchemists, and one of the most notable early scientists, was Mary the Jewess, some of whose laboratory inventions are still used today. These include the three-part still, the *tribikos*, constructed of pottery and copper tubing, probably the world's first distillation device; the *kerotakis*, a device for creating and capturing vapors of metals such as mercury and arsenic; a metal alloy coated with black sulfide, still called Mary's Black; and the *balneum mariae*, also named for her, the prototype of the double boiler or autoclave.

240-249

The semilegendary Jingu ruled a kingdom in Japan (200-270) after the death of her husband, the emperor, according to the Japanese chronicle *Nihon shoki* (720).

- d. Julia Domna (?-217), Roman empress and politician, second wife of the Emperor Septimius Severus, sister of Julia Maesa, and the mother of emperors Geta and Caracalla; during Caracalla's reign she held great power (212-217), taking over many imperial functions during his military campaigns; she was murdered or committed suicide the year he died.
- d. Julia Maesa (?-ca. 226), Roman politician, sister of Julia Domna, mother of Julia Mamaea, and grandmother of emperors Elagabaeus and Alexander Severus. She strongly influenced the accession of each in turn, and held considerable power in Rome, although her daughter Julia Mamaea held far more power during the reign of Alexander Severus.
- d. Julia Mamaea (?-235), Roman politician, daughter of Julia Maesa; she ruled as regent for her son, the emperor Alexander Severus. Both were assassinated by Roman soldiers, the army having blamed them for a Roman defeat in Persia (232).
- d. Ts'ai Yen (Cai Yen; Cai Wenji, 162?-239?), Chinese poet, daughter of scholar-poet Ts'ai I; captured by Central Asian nomads, the Hsiung-nu, she was later ransomed back to China, but was forced to leave two sons behind, experiences about which she wrote in *Lamentations*. Her story was later much retold by others.
- b. Helena (ca. 248-ca. 328), Roman saint.

250-299

In the Christian sect of Montanism, Priscilla and Maximilla were held to be prophets directly transmitting revelations of the Holy Spirit (mid-2nd c.).

Queen Zenobia took control of Palmyra (267), a city within the Roman sphere of influence, first as regent for her son, Vaballathus, then as full ruler, after the murder of her husband, King Odaenathus. Zenobia's forces took Egypt and defeated a Roman army sent against them.

Queen Zenobia's Palmyran forces were defeated by Roman forces under Aurelian at Immae, near Antioch, and at Emesa. After a siege of Palmyra, Zenobia surrendered, with all Palmyra's territories coming under Roman control (271-272).

Palmyra's Queen Zenobia again warred with Rome (272); Aurelian's Roman forces took and sacked Palmyra, taking Zenobia and her son, Vaballathus, to Rome as prisoners.

- d. Zenobia (?-274), queen of Palmyra. After losing finally to the Romans (272), she had been taken to Rome, where she remarried and later died in exile.
- b. Eulalia of Mérida (ca. 291-304), Spanish child martyr and saint.

Himiko, an unmarried priestess, ruled a kingdom in Japan (before 297), according to a Chinese chronicle.

300-349

Nina (Christiana; Christina, early 4th c.), Georgian saint, a slave who is credited with introducing Christianity to Georgia, inducing King Mirian to send for Christian missionaries.

Cleopatra (active 3rd or 4th c.), an alchemist, probably of Greek ancestry, working in Alexandria, described as a follower of the Alexandrian alchemist Mary the Jewess; Cleopatra's manuscript *Chrysopoeia* (*Goldmaking*) survives in a later copy (10th-11th c.).

Theosobeia worked as an alchemist in Alexandria, with her brother Zosimus, author of an encyclopedia of alchemy (ca. 300).

- d. Eulalia of Mérida (ca. 291-304), Spanish child martyr and saint believed to have been burned on a pyre under the anti-Christian edicts of Diocletian (303-304); she became patron saint of Oviedo and Mérida.
- d. Eulalia of Barcelona (?-304), Spanish virgin saint martyred under Diocletian's anti-Christian edicts; patron saint of Barcelona and of sailors.

Lady Wei Shao wrote the first known Chinese treatise on calligraphy (320).