

Queen Amina

The women of ancient Africa led diverse, yet decisive, roles in their communities. As early as 10,000BC, these women contributed greatly to spiritual, political, and economic developments across the African continent.

Amina was a Hausa warrior queen of Zazzau (now Nigeria).

More recent oral tradition had a series of lively stories about the queen, and these have found their way into popular culture. Amina was a fierce warrior and loved fighting. As a child, her grandmother Marka, the favorite wife of her grandfather Sarkin Nohir, once caught her holding a dagger. Amina holding the dagger did not shock Marka, rather it was held exactly as a warrior would. As a adult, she refused to marry for fear of losing power. She helped Zazzau become the Centre of trade and to gain more land. Her mother, Bakwa, died when Amina was 36 years old, leaving her to rule over Zaria.

<p>Amina chose to hone her military skills from warriors of the Zazzau military. She emerged as a leader of the Zazzua cavalry.</p>	<p>For the rest of her 34 year reign, she continued to fight and expand her kingdom to the greatest in history. The objective for initiating so many battles was to make neighboring rulers her vassal and to permit her traders safe passage.</p>
<p>At one time, Amina controlled the trade routes that connected the western Sudan with Egypt on the east and Mali and the north.</p>	<p>Some historians have credited Amina with originating the Hausa practice of building the military encampments behind fortress walls. A 15 kilometer wall surrounding the modern day city of Zaria dates back to Amina and is known as ganuwar (Amina's wall)</p>

Because her people were talented metal workers, Amina introduced metal armor, including iron helmets and chain mail, to her army.

She refused to marry and never bore children. Instead she took a temporary husband from legions of vanquished foes. She would spend one night with the man and would then order his death the next morning.