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David E. Jones. *Women Warriors: A History.* Washington, D.C., and London: Brassey's, 1997. xv + 279 pp. $24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57488-106-6.

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Martial Women

First, the good news. Casting a net wider than his title might suggest, David E. Jones has found examples of women proving themselves just as able as men to head governments, command armies, fight battles, and commit mayhem. And he brings in a large haul. Although *Women Warriors* leaves plenty of gaps, it still covers a great deal of ground with a narrative spanning Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas, from prehistory to the present. I know of nothing comparable, at least in narrative form.

Jones drew his inspiration for *Women Warriors* not from his primary career as an anthropologist–he holds a doctorate from the University of Oklahoma and now teaches anthropology at the University of Central Florida–but chiefly from his parallel career as student and teacher of Japanese martial arts, in several of which he holds black belts. Observing in class that women more often than men seemed to mistrust their bodies, he wondered if part of the problem derived from women's ignorance of their martial heritage. Learning what other women had done in war and warlike activities, he surmised, might bolster confidence in their own physical abilities.

A summary of the book's contents will suggest just how widely Jones ranged in search of his lessons. The first chapter is a brief introduction, the thirteenth an even briefer epilogue. Each of the eleven substantive chapters in between, which vary in length from 7 to 56 pages, centers on a broadly defined geographical area.

Chapter 2 covers Arabia, from the first millennium B.C. to the time of Muhammed. The subject of chapter 3 is Asia, with sections on China from the Shang dynasty to Mao, the women of Genghiz Khan, a late nineteenth-century elite women's corps in Siam, Vietnam from the first century to the twentieth, and Japan from ancient times to the seventeenth century. Chapter 4 surveys India from the Aryan invasions to twentieth-century banditry.

In chapter 5, Jones turns to martial women in the British Isles from the Celts to World War II. Following this relatively extended excursion westward, he returns to the non-Western world for the next four chapters. A tour of Africa in chapter 6 skips around the continent from ancient North African Amazons to the twentieth-century East African Mau Mau. Chapter 7 skims Latin America from the Incas to Castro. Female rulers of Egypt from Nitocris to Cleopatra provide the subject of chapter 8. Chapter 9 does the Middle East from Deborah through Islam to Palmach.

Europe and North America provide the setting for the final three chapters. Chapter 10 addresses a kind of Greater Eastern Europe that begins with ancient Greece and extends through World War II, but also includes Byzantium, Armenia, and Georgia. Chapter 11 examines Western Europe, terminating, like chapter 10, with World War II but starting with ancient Rome. The subject of chapter 12 is North America, covering Indians and Indian-fighters, pirates, and western outlaws as well as American wars from the eighteenth century to the Persian Gulf.

The book's global reach is rather more modest than its chapter lineup might suggest. Although seven of the substantive eleven chapters deal with the world beyond the West, they account for only half as many pages as those in the four chapters on Europe and North America (75 versus 152; even counting the chapter on Eastern Europe as non-Western still leaves the West ahead 129 to 98). That said, *Women Warriors* still offers a uniquely wide-ranging narrative.

Unfortunately, it's not very good, and that's the bad news. Whatever organizing principle may be ordering these chapters I find myself wholly unable to discern. Within chapters broadly geographical and roughly chronological, Jones does little more than assemble brief (often only a sentence or two) anecdotes about famous and not so famous women–mythical, legendary, and

historical–who somehow participated in war or violent acts or who headed states at war.

Although Jones is an anthropologist, little of this professional background informs *Women Warriors*. Nor, despite the book's subtitle, is it even remotely a work of history. Repeatedly jumping great intervals of space and time from one episode to the next, Jones provides virtually no bridges between subjects, nor does he pay any real attention to cultural environment, social setting, institutional framework, or anything else that might put individual episodes into some kind of context.

Devoid of analysis or evaluation, the book displays the purest sort of unrestrained, uncritical fact gathering, with many of the "facts" at least questionable. It rests on a modest (and not very critically chosen) range of secondary and tertiary sources, primarily encyclopedias and broad surveys, sometimes followed very closely. Besides omitting numerous relevant works, the source notes contain far too many errors. Specific page citations, in particular; if included at all are too often incorrect. Cliché-ridden and stilted writing completes the picture of a book neither notably scholarly nor particularly readable. A suitably cautious reader may nonetheless find items of value in a book of such historical stretch and global reach.

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