

#NAME

Europe Named After An African Princess!

Europa: The African Woman Behind the Name of Europe



Many people are surprised to learn that the name of the continent Europe actually comes from a woman's name, and even more surprisingly, that this woman, Europa, came from Africa.

Who Was Europa?
Europa was a Phoenician princess, born in the ancient city of Tyre, which was located in what is now modern-day Lebanon. At that time, this region was part of the wider Phoenician civilization, which had strong cultural and trade connections to North Africa, especially Egypt and Carthage (modern-day Tunisia).

Some historical interpretations, especially Afrocentric perspectives, argue that because the Phoenicians were a Semitic people with African and Middle Eastern roots, Europa herself can be considered of African origin, particularly North African. This is also supported by how Greek mythology often places important mythological events in Egypt or the wider African world.

The Myth of Europa and Zeus
According to Greek mythology, Europa was a beautiful young woman who caught the attention of Zeus, the king of the gods. Zeus transformed himself into a majestic white bull and approached her while she was gathering flowers. When Europa climbed onto his back, Zeus swam across the Mediterranean Sea and



The burial site at Nong Ratchawat.

• Verna Mohon

Piper betel leaf, the areca nut, limestone paste, tobacco and bark filaments are often combined to get a high. Scientists analyzed preserved dental plaque from a woman at a 4,000-year-old burial site and said that they found evidence of betel nut use.

From South Asia to the Pacific islands, people chew betel nut. When munched by habitual users, the seed of the areca palm fruit stains the teeth. And the practice, which typically involves the nut being chewed inside a betel pepper leaf with lime, has reported psychoactive effects, including increased alertness and euphoria. However, due to its high association with oral cancers, the practice has steadily gone out of fashion. Government intervention measures have also dissuaded use. In the 1940s, the government in Thailand, for example, launched a campaign to cut down on betel nut chewing. India, too, has promoted campaigns to discourage the traditional practice. Now, a new study, published this week in the journal *Frontiers in Environmental Archaeology*, aims to shed light on the history of betel nut

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By providing the first direct biochemical evidence of chewing, dating back 4,000 years in Southeast Asia, the study helps reinforce that betel nut consumption is a repeated practice that has been done for centuries. Piyawit Moonkham, an anthropological archaeologist at Chiang Mai University in Thailand and study co-author, grew up watching his grandparents chew betel nut. He says that although the plant has undeniable health consequences, chewing may have been done through history for those seeking health benefits, including possibly for stress relief and treatment for mental illness. Moonkham hopes that by using archaeology to better understand the longstanding history



The red liquid produced after chewing betel nut.

People In Thailand Were Chewing Betel Nuts 4,000 Years Ago?



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#HABITS



Researchers uncovered 4,000-year-old chemical traces of betel nut chewing in ancient Thai dental plaque.

ry of betel nut use, people are able to see the plant from a more nuanced perspective. In order to test whether the remains showed evidence of betel nut consumption, researchers analyzed 36 samples of dental calculus from six individuals at the Nong Ratchawat burial site in Thailand. Picture the calcified plaque that's scraped from your teeth when you get a deep cleaning at the dentist. Roger Forshaw, a biological anthropologist at the University of Manchester in England, who was not involved in the study, says that dental calculus is like an archaeological time capsule, because it doesn't deteriorate and can preserve microscopic evidence from a person's life such as the diet they may have consumed. In the study, researchers identified arecoline and arecaidine as the main determining compounds of betel nut chewing residue. The compounds were identified in a sample

made to mimic betel nut consumption, using a combination of dried betel nut fruit, pink limestone paste, betel leaves and saliva. Scientists were then able to find the compounds in three of the 36 samples, all associated with a single female burial from 4,000 years ago. According to Shannon Tushingham, an anthropologist at the California Academy of Sciences and study co-author, this doesn't necessarily mean that the other individuals in the burial site did not consume betel nuts. Though this specific individual may have been special to her community, a variety of other factors, including the extent of individuals' betel nut use and the conditions of their preservation, may have also affected the researchers' ability to detect consumption. For Tushingham, one of the most intriguing aspects of this study was the fact that though the individual held biochemical evidence of betel nut consumption in

her dental calculus, the burial site lacked the traditional markers of betel nut use, such as the signature stained teeth or betel nutshells. According to Moonkham, while other archaeological sites have contained remnants of the plants, including at a 9,000-year-old burial site in the Spirit Cave in northwest Thailand, or stained teeth, other studies have not proved direct consumption. Yet, Miriam Stark, an archaeologist at the University of Huelva at Manoa, who was not involved in the new study, says that it's still too soon for the researchers to claim that they've found the earliest evidence of betel nut chewing in Southeast Asia. Stark says that the Nong Ratchawat site, the researchers took samples from, has not been well documented in comparison with other sites in the region, specifically noting that more radiocarbon dating needs to be conducted to better verify the site's age.



Piper betel leaf, the areca nut, limestone paste, tobacco and bark filaments are often combined to get a high.

For Stark, the study's finding represents a start: the potential to use dental calculus as a technique to further study betel nut consumption, which has historically been difficult to research. "It looks like a really good technique, and I hope that it can be applied to a bunch of well-documented sites," she says. paper published in *Economic Botany*, Castillo outlined some of the challenges with identifying betel nut use in Southeast Asia. Among these is the fact that the betel nut belongs to the genus *Areca*, of which there are 51 different species. According to Castillo, it's still unclear whether arecoline and arecaidine, which the researchers used to identify betel nut consumption, are only found in betel nuts. Other species from the same genus may share the betel nut's biochemical signature. Moreover, Castillo says that how the betel nut was able to travel to Thailand as early as 4,000 years ago still isn't evident. The plant is believed to be native to Malaysia or the Philippines. While Forshaw says that dental calculus can be used to solve even more longstanding historical mysteries that may be invisible to the naked eye, Castillo says that archaeologists shouldn't rely on biochemical evidence alone to draw historical conclusions. "I find that all new sciences that are based only on a single source of evidence without a physical side, for example, plant remnants," Castillo says, "should actually be strengthened with more evidence."

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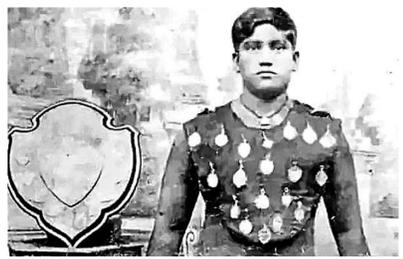
Thai burial tooth.

#HAMIDA BANU

She Was Class Apart

India's First Female Professional Wrestler Who Defied All Odds

In the annals of Indian sports history, few names shine as boldly as Hamida Banu, a woman who shattered gender barriers and redefined the limits of physical strength and determination. Widely recognised as India's first female professional wrestler, Hamida Banu rose to prominence during the 1940s and 1950s, a time when wrestling was almost exclusively dominated by men. Her life was a blend of glory, grit, and mystery, as she achieved global fame before fading from the public eye.



Early Life and Beginnings
Hamida Banu was born in or around Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, though the exact details of her early life remain uncertain. Some sources trace her roots to Mirzapur, while others suggest she hailed from a wrestling family in Aligarh. Her father, Nader Pahalwan, is believed to have introduced her to the sport, and she later trained under the guidance of Salam Pahalwan, a reputed wrestling coach.

From an early age, Hamida demonstrated exceptional strength and courage, refusing to be confined by the gender expectations of her time. Her passion for wrestling, coupled with intense physical training, laid the foundation for her remarkable career.

Breaking Barriers in the Wrestling Arena
In the mid-20th century, when Indian women were expected to stay away from public sporting events, Hamida Banu made headlines by challenging men in the wrestling ring. Her confidence was legendary, she even declared that any man who could defeat her would win her hand in marriage.

In 1954, she issued a public challenge to male wrestlers across India, and soon after, she defeated two prominent contenders, one from Patiala and another from Kolkata. Her most famous victory came on May 4, 1954, in Vadodra (then Baroda), where she faced Baba Pahalwan after his teammate, Chhote Gama Pahalwan, refused to fight a woman. Hamida won the bout in just 1 minute and 34 seconds, a feat

that earned her national acclaim. Throughout her career, she claimed to have won over 300 matches, both against male and female opponents. She also fought internationally, reportedly defeating Vera Chistilin, a Russian wrestler nicknamed 'the female bear', in Mumbai. At one point, she planned to travel to Europe for a wrestling tour, an ambition that, unfortunately, never materialised.

A Larger-Than-Life Persona
Hamida Banu's physical prowess was matched only by her charismatic personality. Standing at 5 feet 3 inches and weighing around 108 kilograms, she was often described as the 'Amazon of Aligarh.' Newspapers of the time sensationalised her diet, consisting of several litres of milk and fruit juice, dozens of eggs, plates of biryani, and generous portions of butter and meat, portraying her as both extraordinary and intimidating.

But Hamida was more than a spectacle. She was a symbol of defiance, courage, and female empowerment at a time when women's participation in sports was considered inappropriate. Her victories inspired many and challenged the patriarchal notions deeply rooted in Indian society.

Controversies and Challenges
Despite her fame, Hamida Banu's career was not without controversy. Her mixed-gender bouts attracted criticism from conservative circles and even

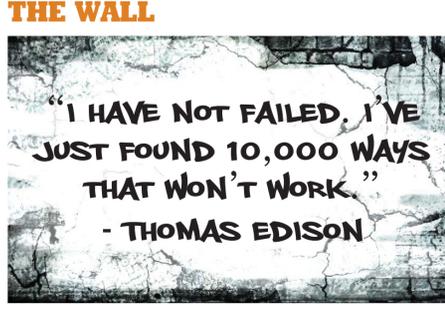
political figures. Reports suggest that then-Maharashtra Chief Minister Morarji Desai intervened after complaints that her matches were being staged for publicity. During one bout in Kolhapur, she faced hostility from spectators who threw stones at her for defeating a male opponent. Yet, she continued to wrestle fearlessly, undeterred by the backlash.

However, her most tragic battles occurred outside the ring. According to her grandson Feroz Shaikh, Hamida's mentor and alleged husband, Salam Pahalwan, violently opposed her plans to compete internationally. In a fit of rage, he reportedly beat her severely, breaking her hands and legs, leaving her unable to walk without support for years. This assault effectively ended her wrestling career and forced her into a life of obscurity.

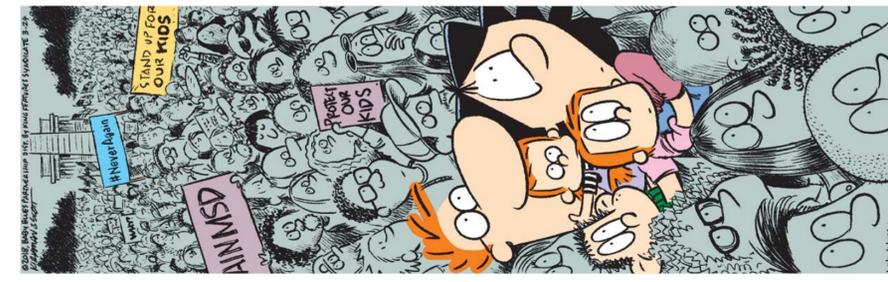
Life After Wrestling and Disappearance
Following her injuries, Hamida Banu withdrew from wrestling altogether. She lived a quiet life in Kalyan, Maharashtra, where she supported herself by selling milk, renting out property, and preparing snacks for locals. Despite her once-celebrated fame, she died in relative obscurity in 1986, leaving behind little more than memories and newspaper clippings of her glory days.

Her disappearance from the wrestling scene remains one of the great unsolved mysteries of Indian sports. Some attribute it to the lack of institutional support for female athletes; others point to the trauma she endured at the hands of those close to her.

Rediscovery and Legacy
For decades, Hamida Banu's story remained largely forgotten, until recent years, when historians and journalists began rediscovering her achievements. On May 4, 2024, Google commemorated her with a special Google Doodle, honouring her 1954 victory over Baba Pahalwan and recognising her as India's first professional female wrestler. Today, Hamida Banu is remembered not just for her wrestling triumphs, but also for her indomitable spirit. She represents the countless women who fought, often silently, against societal constraints to carve out a place for themselves in history.



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman