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Argos Io's Guard

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Abstract

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In ancient Greek mythology, Aragos was a giant creature that was assigned by goddess Hera to guard

Io the priestess of Hera¹ whom Zeus² raped. This article aimed to highlight the role of Aragos in protecting Io and how he was honored by Hera after his death. Moreover, the reason of choosing the cow as the animal to whom Zeus transferred Io to in order to protect her from his wife Hera is going to be discussed³.

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Introduction

Aragos, who was also known as Panoptes, was a giant creature in Greek mythology. He is referred to as "All-seeing" (Panoptes) because he is shown as a giant with many eyes dispersed throughout his body. Because of his special ability to simultaneously watch everything around him, he was thought to be the perfect protector.

Aragos Panoptes (Ἄργος βνόπτης) was Arestor's son who was assigned by Hera to track the heifer-nymph Io⁴.

¹ The Romans identified Hera with their own Juno. In ancient Greek religion, Hera was a daughter of the Titans Cronus and Rhea, sister-wife of Zeus, and queen of the Olympian gods. She was revered throughout the Greek world and played a significant role in Greek literature, most often as Zeus's envious and irate wife who pursued his beloved heroines with vindictive hatred. For more information see, Britanica, Hera in Greek Mythology.

² The youngest of the Titans Kronos (Cronus) and Rhea's children, Zeus survived Kronos's practice of devouring all of his offspring at birth when his mother spirited him away and gave the Titan a stone replacement wrapped in swaddling linen, for more information see *Theoi Greek Mythology*, "Zeus Greek God of the Sky, Father of the Gods", accessed in March 2025.

³ OVID, (Met. 1.568–747).

⁴ After being raped by her husband Zeus.

Origin of Aragos

Asclepiades⁵ mentioned that Aragos (Panoptes) was the son of Inachus, whereas Cercops claimed that he was the son of Aragos and Asopus's daughter Ismene. Moreover according to Acusilaus, he was born of Gaia⁶ and was earth-born (autochthon)⁷.

Depictions in Art and Literature

Aragos's striking look and position in the tale have made him a famous subject in art and literature throughout history. He is frequently shown with several eyeballs covering his body, perhaps even on his back and limbs⁸.

Hermes⁹ slaying Aragos Panoptes, Athenian red-figure vase C5th B.C., Kunsthistorisches Museum



⁵For further information see: R., Graves, R. 1955, *The Greek Myths*. Penguin Books.

⁶ The Greek goddess Gaea represents the Earth. She was the mother of the other Titans, the Gigantes, the Erinyes, and the Cyclopes (see gigantic; furies; cyclops), and the wife of Uranus (Heaven), from whom she was divorced by the Titan Cronus, his lastborn child. For more information see Britannica the Mythological goddess Gaea.

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Argus-Greek-mythology>, access on 26 January 2025.

⁸ Apollodorus. *The Library*. Translated by Sir James George Frazer. Loeb Classical Library Volumes 121 & 122. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921 .

⁹ *Hermes, Greek god, son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia; often identified with the Roman Mercury and with Casmilus or Cadmilus, one of the Cabeiri. His name is probably derived from herma (see herm), the Greek word for a heap of stones, such as was used in the country to indicate boundaries.* For more information see Britannica, Hermes the mythological god.



a frontal side of Amphora dates back to the archaic period 490 BC carried catalogue number Hamburg 1966.34 Archive no, 352495, depicted the famous scene of Hermes while slaying Aragos in front of Io in form of a cow. Painted by Eucharides

Who is Io¹⁰

- 1- Io, is thought to have been born to Aragos and Ismene¹¹, daughter of Asopus¹², and their son Iasus¹³.
- 2- However, several of the tragedians and the annalist assert by Hesiod that Io was Inachus's daughter.
- 3- Acusilaus claim that she was Piren's¹⁴ daughter.

Several Opinions about Io's Role

According to Apollodorus, he mentioned that she was a priestess of Hera Moreover Ovid ignored this fact and mentioned that she was the daughter of Inachus¹⁵.

The Story of Io¹⁶

She was a son of Inachus (who imagines her daughter nowhere because he can't locate her anywhere¹⁷, and his heart dread death more than anything else)¹⁸ and Aragos and Ismene,

¹⁰ Apollodorus. The Library. Translated by Sir James George Frazer. Loeb Classical Library Volumes 121 & 122. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921 .

¹¹ Oedipus was guided by Antigone and her sister Ismene in Antigone ...father, who accompanied him from Thebes into exile until his passing close to Athens. They went back to Thebes and tried to patch things up between their fighting brothers, Polyneices, who was attacking Thebes, and Eteocles, who was protecting the city and his crown. Both brothers, however, were killed,...

¹² was a River-God of Sikyon in the Peloponnese and Boiotia in central Greece. His twenty beautiful daughters were abducted by gods and became the Naiad-nymphs of the springs of a host of Boiotian, Korinthian, Sikyonian, Argive and island towns. When Asopus tried to recover his stolen daughter Aigina (Aegina) from Zeus, the god drove him back with a thunderbolt.

¹³ King of Aragos and the son of Ismene and Aragus, and the father of Io.

¹⁴ In Greek mythology, **Piren** or Peiren (Πειρήνης) may refer to the following personages: **Piren**, a king Aragos and the father of Io.

¹⁵ Metamorphoses" by Ovid.

¹⁶ For further reading about the story see Metamorphoses" by Ovid.

¹⁷ K., DOWDEN, *The Uses of Greek Mythology*, "Myths of Transformation", Chapter 4, Routledge, 1992.

daughter of Asopus; nevertheless, according to Acusilaus, he was born on Earth¹⁹. Io was bound by Zeus to the olive tree in the woods. Suddenly Hera caught Zeus with Io who transferred the girl immediately to a white cow²⁰. However, Hera assigned Aragos to watch Io²¹, and after that Zeus gave Hermes the command to steal the cow. Since Hermes was unable to carry out the plan covertly due to Hierax's blabbering, he murdered Aragos with a stone²², getting the name Argiphontes²³. The cow then arrived to what is known as the Ionian gulf when Hera sent a gadfly to infest it²⁴.

.It is Time to kill the Guard

According to Ovid it was mentioned that Mercury (Hermes) was sent to slay or kill the guard of his mistress Io, so Zeus sent Hermes with his reed pipe to play on it charming melodies to make him sleep and to be easy to slaughter him²⁵.

Saturnia²⁶ removed his eyes, inserted them into her own bird's plumage²⁷, and embellished the tail with gems that resembled stars. She was instantly filled with rage and did not suppress its effects²⁸.

Importance of the Cow and the Peacock in ancient Greek Mythology

The cow was the sacred animal of Hera as she was the goddess of maternity, motherhood and joy, while the peacock was her sacred bird as it was the sign of luxury, welfare, fertility and vigilance²⁹.

Conclusion

1- From the previous study some points were noted as followed:

- Isis, Hathor, and Io all have intriguing relationships and similarities in Greek mythology. Despite their disparate mythological backgrounds, they have themes and elements in common. Hathor and Isis Ancient Egyptian mythology included two goddesses: Isis and Hathor. Isis is frequently portrayed as a mother goddess who is

¹⁸ L., CURTIS, *Ovid's Io and the Aetiology of Lament*, Vol. 71, No. 3/4 (Fall-Winter/automne-hiver 2017), pp. 301-320 (20 pages), Published By: Classical Association of Canada.

¹⁹ Apollodorus. *The Library*. Translated by Sir James George Frazer. Loeb Classical Library Volumes 121 & 122. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1921 .

²⁰ Apollodorus, *Ibid*.

²¹ J., DOE, *JSTORE*, "Io and Zeus".

²² K., DOWDEN, *The Uses of Greek Mythology*, "Myths of Transformation", Chapter 4, Routledge, 1992.

²³ HERODUTES, *Histories*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Oxford, 2008.

²⁴ ARTEMIS, LIMC, 1981-1999; T.H., CARPENTER, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*, Chapter 4, Thames & Hudson, 1991.

²⁵ AESCHYLUS, *Prometheus Bound*, Chicago, 1991, p. 561. For more information see (The Story of Syrinx and Pan).

²⁶ An epithet for Juno, daughter of Saturn.

²⁷ Epaphus, sometimes known as Apis or Munantius, was a king of Egypt and the son of the Greek god Zeus in Greek mythology.

²⁸ AESCHYLUS, *Prometheus Bound*, Chicago, 1991, p. 561. For more information see (The Story of Syrinx and Pan).

²⁹ Bulfinch, T., (1855). *Greek and Roman Mythology*.

connected to protection, fertility, and magic. Conversely, Hathor is usually portrayed as a fertility, dance, music, and love goddess.

- Similar Qualities
 - A. Feminine strength: Isis and Hathor are both admired for their protective and maternal natures and represent feminine strength.
 - B. Fertility: Both goddesses are linked to fertility, which ensures the pharaohs' wealth and the natural cycles.
 - C. Magical Powers: Known for her magical skills, Isis in particular uses them to heal and protect

2- Greek mythology's Io Relationships to Hathor and Isis

- A. Transformation tale: The Egyptian tale of Hathor, who is occasionally portrayed as a cow or with cow-like traits, is comparable to Io's metamorphosis into a cow.
- B. Feminine Suffering: Io's tale, like that of Isis and Hathor, emphasizes the hardships and anguish that mythological women endure.
- C. Association with Fertility: Like Isis and Hathor in their respective mythology, Io is associated with fertility as a cow.
- Syncretism and Intercultural Communication
Ancient civilizations' syncretism and cultural interchange may be the cause of the relationships between Isis, Hathor, and Io. Greek and Egyptian cultures interacted significantly during the Hellenistic era, which resulted in the merging of legendary beliefs.
- Isis became part of Greek mythology and was connected to the goddess Demeter. Cultural exchange of legendary themes and motifs was made possible by this syncretism.

The vast cultural interaction and syncretism that took place across ancient civilizations is illustrated by the relationships between Isis, Hathor, and Io. These similarities draw attention to universal human themes and experiences that cut across cultural divides.

- Isis became part of Greek mythology and was connected to the goddess Demeter. Cultural exchange of legendary themes and motifs was made possible by this syncretism.
The vast cultural interaction and syncretism that took place across ancient civilizations is illustrated by the relationships between Isis, Hathor, and Io. These similarities draw attention to universal human themes and experiences that cut across cultural divides.
- 3- Zeus transferred Io into a cow in order to deceive Hera as if the cow is her sacred animal, and the reason maybe to protect Io from Hera's wrath as it is very hard to slaughter her sacred animal except in the special events³⁰.
- 4- Hera chose the peacock for several different reasons, first the peacock was considered as symbol of vigilance, as she wanted to keep her eyes all the time on Io and these eyes are going to fulfill this mission³¹. Moreover the peacock had 100 eyes and Aragos had the same number of eyes as number 100 in Greek mythology refers to the completion or the perfection. However, Keeping Aragos eyes by Hera was not accidently done but it was assuring that his soul would continuously live even after

³⁰ Bulfinch, 1855, p. 156.

³¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.722-723).

his death, because the eyes were considered the windows communicating between the deceased and the outer living³².



The inscription makes it clear that this cow represents Isis, the mother of the gods and the Lady of Heaven, who appears here in the form of a cow as a symbol of motherhood and holiness. This scene, which adorned the coffin of a woman of the 22nd Dynasty, offers a unique insight into the ancient Egyptian relationship with his spiritual world³³.



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الملخص

معلومات المقالة

في الأساطير اليونانية القديمة، كان أراجوس مخلوقاً عملاقاً كلفته الإلهة هيرا بالحراسة آيو كاهنة هيرا التي اغتصبها زيوس. هدف هذا المقال إلى تسليط الضوء على دور أراجوس في حراسة آيو وكيف تم تكريمه من قبل هيرا بعد وفاته. علاوة على ذلك، سيتم مناقشة سبب اختيار البقرة لتكون الحيوان الذي نقل إليه زيوس آيو لحمايتها من زوجته هيرا والعلاقة بين آيو و ايزيس و حتحور . كان أراجوس، المعروف أيضاً باسم بانوبتس، مخلوقاً عملاقاً في الأساطير اليونانية. يشار إليه باسم "كل شيء (Panoptes)" "لأنه يظهر على أنه عملاق بعيون كثيرة منتشرة في جميع أنحاء جسده. بسبب قدرته الخاصة على مراقبة كل شيء من حوله في نفس الوقت، كان يُعتقد أنه الحامي المثالي أراجوس بانوبتس (Ἄργος βρόπτης) كان ابن أريستور الذي تم تعيينه من قبل هيرا لتتبع الحورية البقرة آيو ذات الرقبة البيضاء. ذكر أسكليبياديس أن أراجوس (بانوبتس) هو ابن إيناكوس، بينما ادعى سيركوبس أنه ابن أراجوس وإسمين ابنة أسوبوس. علاوة على ذلك، وفقاً لأكوسيلوس، فقد ولد من غايا وكان مولوداً على الأرض (authochthon).

الكلمات المفتاحية

اناخوس؛
البقرة البيضاء؛
التركيز؛
عماق بمائة عين.

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³² Graves, 1955, p. 213; Eaverly, 1989, p. 15.

³³ <https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/detail-from-a-coffin-depicting-the-goddess-hathor-in-her-news-photo/152198934>