

The Proitides

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Agamedes and Trophonios are described by the Homeric poet as 'loved by the deathless gods.' But we do not forget Menander's significant line:

Whom the gods love, dies young¹.

The same euphemistic meaning probably attaches to the peaceful end of Kleobis and Biton. But we need not pursue the subject further, as we are at present concerned to show that Hera was essentially connected with cows. Her Homeric epithet 'cow-eyed', her legendary transformation into a snow-white cow², her image with cow's horns at Samos³, her probable cult-title 'She who is rich in oxen', her sacred herd at Nemea⁴, her numerous votive cattle⁵, the white cow⁶ or the choice heifer offered to her in sacrifice⁷, the Argive festival of the hundred oxen⁸, the white steers that drew her priestess to the Heraion⁹, amount to a conclusive proof that Hera had much to do with cattle, and furnish some support for my conjecture¹⁰ that in Io, the priestess changed by the goddess into a cow, we should recognise an attendant of the animal deity called by her animal name¹¹.

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Confirmation of this view may be sought in the myth of the Proitides or daughters of Proitos, king of Tiryns and the surrounding district. A. Rapp in a careful discussion of their myth has shown that the troubles which befell them were, in different versions, ascribed to Dionysos, to Aphrodite, and to Hera¹². Confining our attention to the Argive goddess, we find that Akousilaos, the logographer of Argos in Boiotia, who lived in the second half of the sixth century B.C. and provided a mythological quarry for Pindar¹³, associated the Proitides with Hera. They went mad, he

¹ Menand. *dis exapaton frag.* 4 (*Frag. com. Gr.* iv. 105 Meineke).

² *Supra* p. 444.

³ *Supra* p. 445.

⁴ *Supra* p. 444 f.

⁵ *Supra* p. 445 f.

⁶ *Supra* p. 446.

⁷ *Supra* p. 446.

⁸ *Supra* p. 446.

⁹ *Supra* p. 446 n. 6.

¹⁰ *Supra* p. 446 ff.

¹¹ *Supra* p. 447 f.

¹² *Supra* p. 441 ff.

¹³ Is this the ultimate significance of Kleobis and Biton acting as oxen to draw the car of the priestess? The schol. Bernens. in *Verg. georg.* 3. 532, who drew from the stores of the fifth-century writers Titus Gallus, Gaudentius, and Junius Philargyrius (M. Schanz *Geschichte der römischen Litteratur*² München 1899 ii. 1. 91), says: 'Sacerdotes Junonis id est Cleobis et Biton currus sollempnibus sacris deducere solebant, verum deficientibus bobus etiam collo sacra portasse dicuntur. Junonis sacris animalia defecerunt, id est, aut Romanorum expleta sunt funera quos illa persecuta est, aut restituta sunt sacra, quae infesta Junone defecerant. It would perhaps be rash to infer from this muddle-headed notice that Kleobis and Biton were themselves priests or priestly attendants.'

¹⁴ A. Rapp in Roscher *Lex. Myth.* iii. 3001 ff.

¹⁵ A. and M. Croiset *Histoire de la littérature grecque* Paris 1890 ii. 539 f.