



# Historically Speaking

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## Hera

**H**ERA (Hêra or Hêrê), probably identical with kera, mistress, just as her husband, Zeus, was called erros in the Aeolian dialect. Hera is a purely Greek divinity, and one of the few who, according to Herodotus, were not introduced into Greece from Egypt. Hera was, according to some accounts, the eldest daughter of Kronos and Rhea, and a sister of Zeus. According to the Homeric poems, she was brought up by Oceanus and Thetys, as Zeus had usurped the throne of Kronos; and afterwards she became the wife of Zeus, without the knowledge of her parents. This simple account is variously modified in other traditions.

Being a daughter of Kronos, she, like his other children, was swallowed by her father, but afterwards released, and, according to an Arcadian tradition, she was brought up by Temenus, the son of Pelasgus. The Argives, on the other hand, related that she had been brought up by Euboea, Prosymna, and Acraea, the three daughters of the river Asterion; and according to Olen, the Horae were her nurses. Several parts of Greece also claimed

the honour of being her birthplace; among them are two, Argos and Samos, which were the principal seats of her worship. All of these variations further demonstrate that there is much in Greek mythology that is uncertain as each bard could modify the stories to fit their audience which usually varied in location and politic.

Her marriage with Zeus also offered ample scope for poetical invention, and several places in Greece claimed the honour of having been the scene of the marriage, such as Euboea, Samos, Knossus in Crete, and Mount Thornax, in the south of Argolis. This marriage acts a prominent part in the worship of Hera under the name of hieros gamos; on that occasion all the gods honoured the bride with presents, and Ge presented to

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The books I am writing now are only available directly from me or from Ouranian Publishing. The book that is a collection of my poetry, *A PALETTE OF VERSE*, is available from Amazon, as is my first novel, *THE PHOENIX GIFT*. That novel is a contemporary story based in Spokane around 1996. The rest of what I am writing in novels have been and will probably continue to be historical novels based in ancient Greece, Egypt and generally in the Mediterranean region. I am beginning a non-fiction book tentatively entitled *TO TEACH*, which is intended to be a hybrid; part memoir and part treatise on the art and science of teaching and learning.

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her a tree with golden apples, which was watched by the Hesperides in the garden of Hera, at the foot of the Hyperborean Atlas.

The Homeric poems know nothing of all this, and we only hear, that after the marriage with Zeus, she was treated by the Olympian gods with the same reverence as her husband. Zeus himself, according to Homer, listened to her counsels, and communicated his secrets to her rather than to other gods. Hera also thinks herself justified in censuring Zeus when he consults others without her knowing it; but she is far inferior to him in power; she must obey him unconditionally, and, like the other gods, she is chastised by him when she has offended him. Hera therefore is not, like Zeus, the queen of gods and men, but simply the wife of the supreme god. The idea of her being the queen of heaven, with regal wealth and power, is of a much later date.

Her character, as described by Homer, is not of a very amiable kind, and its main features are jealousy, obstinacy, and a quarrelling disposition, which sometimes makes her own husband tremble. Hence there arise frequent disputes between Hera and Zeus; and on one occasion Hera, in conjunction with Poseidon and Athena, contemplated putting Zeus into chains. Zeus, in such cases, not only threatens, but beats her; and once he even hung her up in the clouds, her hands chained, and with two anvils suspended from her feet. Consequently, she is frightened by his threats, and gives way when he is angry; and when she is unable to gain her ends in any other way, she depends on cunning and intrigues. Thus she borrowed from Aphrodite the girdle, the giver of charm and fascination, to excite the love of Zeus. By Zeus she was the mother of Ares, Hebe, and Hephaestus.

Properly speaking, Hera was the only really married goddess among the Olympians, therefore she is the goddess of marriage and of the birth of children. Her attire is described in the Iliad; she rode in a chariot drawn by two horses. Her favourite places on earth were Argos, Sparta, and Mycenae.

Owing to the judgment of Paris, she was hostile towards the Trojans, and in the Trojan war she accordingly sided with the Greeks. In the Iliad she appears as an enemy of Heracles, but is wounded by his arrows, and in the Odyssey she is described as the supporter of Jason.

Hera had sanctuaries, and was worshipped in many parts of Greece, often in common with Zeus. The principal place of her worship was Argos. Her most celebrated sanctuary was situated between Argos and Mycenae, at the foot of Mount Euboea. The sitting colossal statue of Hera in this temple, made of gold and ivory, was the work of Polycletus. Her worship was very ancient also at Corinth, in Samos, at Sicyon, Epidaurus, Heraea in Arcadia, and many other places.



Respecting the real significance of Hera, some regarded her as the personification of the atmosphere, others as the queen of heaven or the goddess of the stars, or as the goddess of the moon, and she is even confounded with Ceres, Diana, and Proserpina. The Romans identified their goddess Juno with the Greek Hera

The noblest image of Hera, and which was afterwards looked upon as the ideal of the goddess, was the statue by Polycletus. She was usually represented as a majestic woman at a mature age, with a beautiful forehead, large and widely opened eyes, and with a grave expression commanding reverence. Her hair was adorned with a crown or a diadem. A veil frequently hangs down the back of her head, to characterise her as the bride of Zeus, and, in fact, the diadem, veil, sceptre, and peacock are her ordinary attributes.