

## Argonauts

The Argonauts is one of the most popular myths of Greek antiquity, holding the same position as the Homeric epics and the labors of Hercules. With this allegorical myth expresses the second great historical colonization of the Greeks in the Black Sea. Apollonius of Rhodes in his book "Αργοναυτικά" refers to this myth. The purpose of the Argonauts was to bring the king Pelias the Golden Fleece from Colchis (Aea), which was located in the Black Sea.

The Golden Fleece came from the ram, which ascended Phrixus to escape from his father, king of Orchomenos in Viotia and his stepmother, who were ready to sacrifice him. Phrixus finally arrived at the court of King Aetes, who received him with honors and gave him his daughter for a wife. When Phrixus sacrificed the ram to Zeus, gave its skin to Aetes, who hung it in an oak, which was located in the grove of Mars and placed a dragon to guard it.

The reason that the Argonauts started their expedition was the following: King Pelias of Locris in Thessaly had received prophecies that he will be killed by a descendant of Aeolus who will be wearing a sandal (monosandalos). When Pelias saw Jason wearing a sandal on his right foot, he ordered him to bring back the Golden Fleece, in an attempt to send him away.

Leader of the expedition was Jason, because when Hercules was asked, who had just carried out the feat of Erymanthos boar, to take leadership, he refused. The ship was built by Argus, Phrixus's son, from which it took its name, Argo. It was made from trees of Mount Pelion, and during construction Argos was led by the goddess Athena. He had fifty oars and in the stern of the ship Athena had placed a piece of the holy speaking oak of Dodona. Argonauts sailed from the Pagases, the port of Iolkos. When the ship arrived in Mysia, Hylas, the companion of Hercules was lost, when he went to bring water and Hercules stayed behind to find him, so the expedition was not continued.

When, after many adventures, they reached the mouth of the river Phasis, in Colchis, King Aetes promised to give them the Golden Fleece, if Jason first sowed the remaining teeth of the dragon, which had not been used by Cadmus at Thebes and managed to tame two oxen that made bonfires of their nostrils and had steel legs. Jason, with the help of Medea, the daughter of Aetes, who had fallen in love with him, he managed to get the golden skin. Together with Medea, they took the road back, but fell into big storm and ended up in Italy. Finally, after many adventures returned to Yolks.

This is the classic version of where the ship Argo went or in which area this adventure took place. But it would be very important to investigate the accuracy

or likelihood of these "other" versions, since we are talking about exploratory trips, i.e. adventures at sea with a geographical object.

Two different versions put Colchis:

1. On the coast of Malabar, in India
2. In the Andes of South America, a view expressed by Henrietta Mertz

The truth is that the Mertz's views are revolutionary, especially regarding to the Argonauts, a journey that has been the subject of much debate since ancient times. Also, to scholars, it is a known fact that although the final arrival station was Colchis, something on which not everyone agrees, the journey of return is completely controversial and has divided historians. In ancient times, especially during the early version of the myth, it was unclear where exactly "Argo" arrived and the destination is not identified with Colchis. These questions about that trip already existed at the time of Herodotus and the fact that Pindar fourth in ode of Pythioniki (462 BC) presents a completely different alternative of the voyage is something that consents to those previously mentioned. Next was to present several alternative versions as to what course or path "Argo" followed in the journey of return. Each theory implies some elements that exceed the reality, results in this trip, although it did happen and there was not a poetic metaphor, to be covered by veils of mystery.

Let's see, briefly, the main "pathways" of "Argo". A version wants the ship to have travelled to the north of the Adriatic Sea, where the Argonauts, having sailed across the Pados, they reached the mouth of the Danube (Ister) river. The Kolchaks on their return founded the city of Poles in Istria peninsula, and - always according to this version - Islands Plaktes, the Scylla and Charyvdis, located in Sicily, where the land of the Sirens is also located, while Colchis was the false name of the city "Kolikaria" in the lower Pados.

The classic version of the expedition to the Black Sea ended with the return of the "Argo" through a path naturally impossible: sailed in Istros (here means the Danube), the Safo and reached the Adriatic. The case was deadlocked, so the only solution was to recreate the route. Now the "Argo" moves very east. As noted by R. Graves, «... they assumed that Argo came through Phase (river), the Caspian Sea and thence to the Indian Ocean, from where it returned through the "Ocean and Tritons's lake." [Ibid vol. 4, 316 para. 2] This version is based on the fact that the Indian Ocean was another Colchis, on the coast of Malabar, as Ptolemy Hephaestion delivers (VIII, 1,10), but this generates enormous questions that concern geographical knowledge of the ancient Greeks, for an area that was supposed to be completely unknown to them, in chronological context of Argo's journey.

However the fact that Colchis did exist on the coast of Malabar is intriguing and it is probably a myth. Can all this contradict about the existence or not of Colchis in that area, and the not normal route, in the sense of the impossible be true- e.g. how could a ship like Argo start from the Caspian and end in the Indian Ocean? - Have been the cause that version was challenged very soon to be replaced with another.

In the myth of the Argonauts the "Ilektrida island" is mentioned, without specifying anything about it. The name itself says a lot for our case and this because amber (in Greek : electro), was something that Greeks sourced from the North Sea, along with tin(in greek: kasiteros). We know that "Kassiterides Islands" were Ireland and Britain, while the main sources of amber were the islands of the Baltic. So the "Ilektrida island" has to be placed there and become accepted that the Argonauts had passed through the area.

Namely in both cases:

- The adventure of "Argo" was true

and

- The journey was a metaphor

The bottom line is that a generation before the Trojan War, the Greeks knew the area of Northern Europe and ultimately this is what matters. The previous report is directly associated with the next version of the journey mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily (Lib. IV, 56-3), which is worth presenting with his own description, as a legacy to the younger.

Initially, the Argonauts starting the journey from Colchis through the Argo, crossed the Tanis river, until they could no longer continue sailing and coming ashore launching the ship to another river, the Volga, a portion of which, called Ntvinas, lead to Ocean. Then they entered the northern ocean and having direction southwards and left the European continent ,they arrived in the Baltic where they met Ilektrida island and immediately after the Gadeira. Then, crossing the Pillars of Hercules arrived in the Mediterranean and specifically in Greece and Pelion.

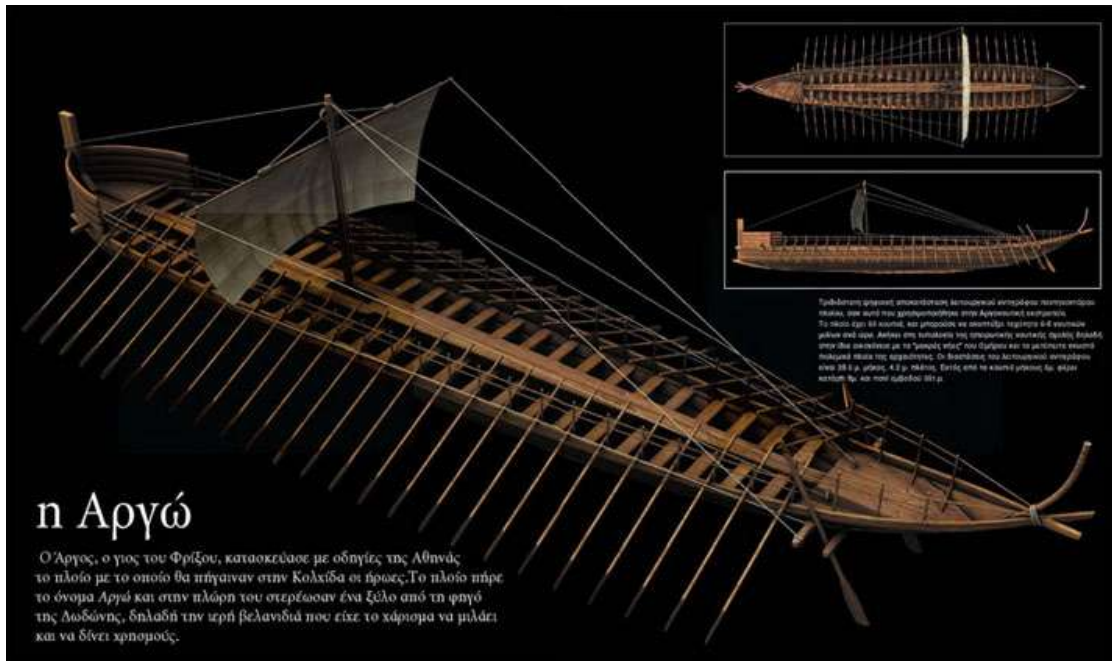
## MAPS OF THE ARGONAUTS







## THE SHIP "ARGO"









THE ARGONAUTS IN THE ARTS





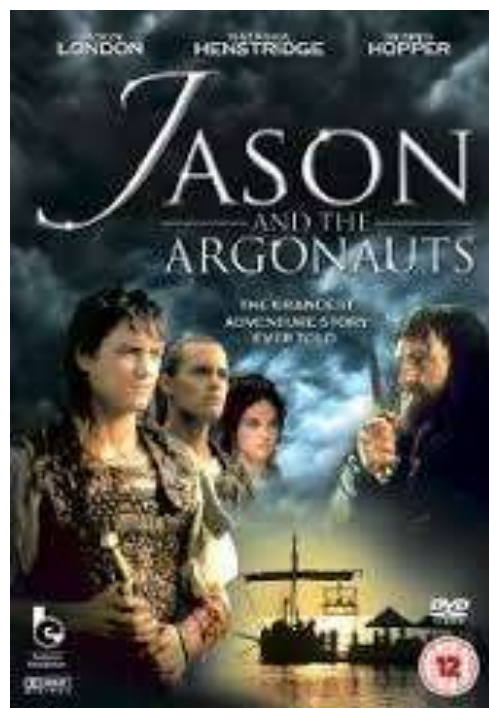
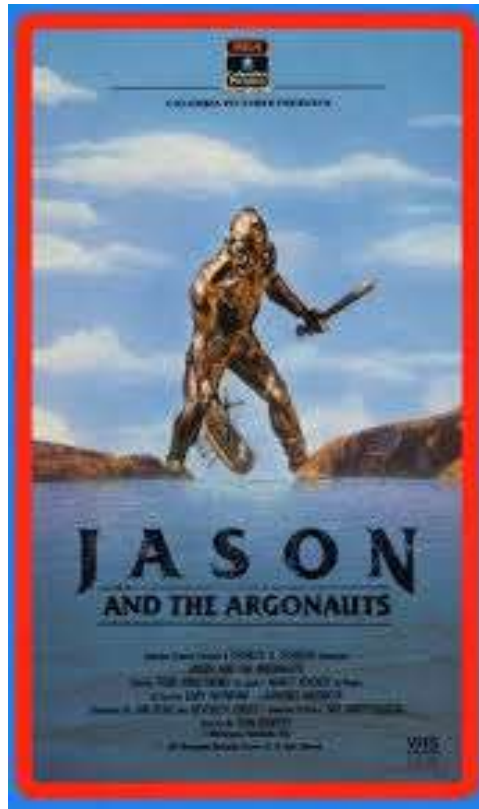














STAMPS WITH THE ARGONAUTS





