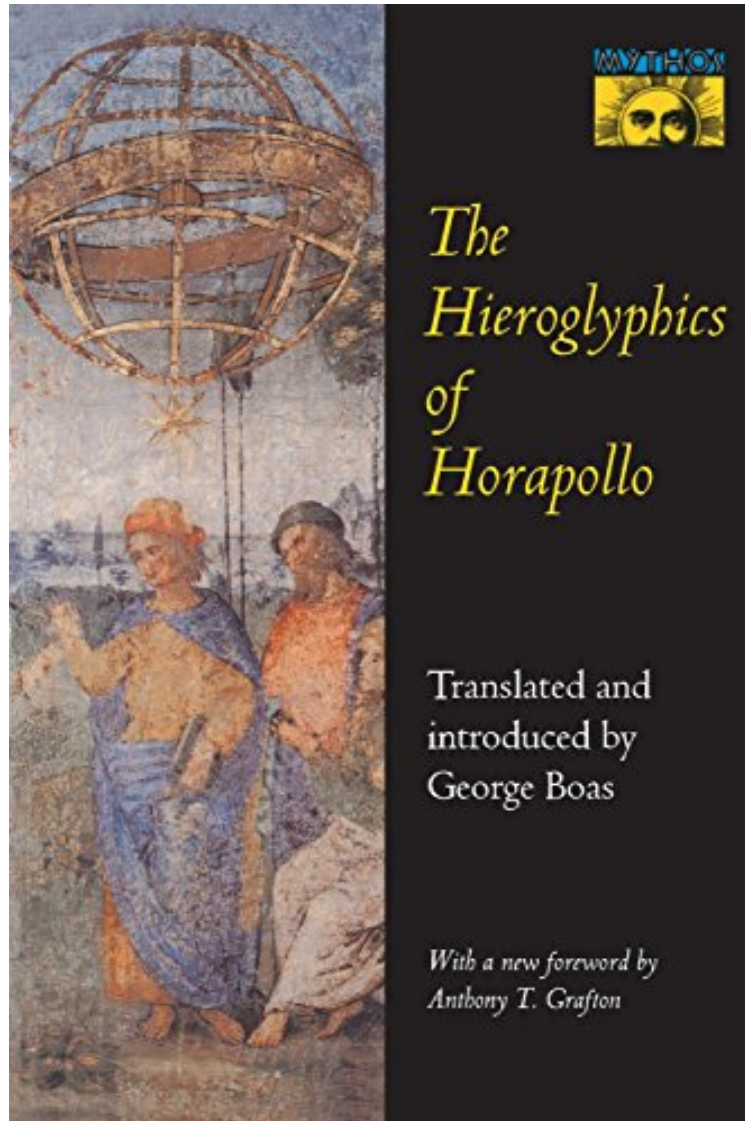


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The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo

Horapollo Niliacus

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Horapollo Niliacus : The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer Good historic text. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The most accessible decent translation, more about the Renaissance influence of Horapollo than the ancient background By DAJ If you have read anything about the decipherment of hieroglyphs in the early 19th century, you will know that Horapollo's book Hieroglyphica misled Europeans into thinking hieroglyphs were an

entirely ideographic script. In 1950, George Boas made the most recent English translation of this infamous book. I'm not entirely satisfied with his edition, but if you want to read the text and don't know another language, your only other option is Alexander Turner Cory's 1840 translation. It's easy to find and read online, but it has even less commentary than Boas and, like many 19th-century texts, it switches into Latin whenever the original text discusses sex, even though Horapollo is hardly explicit about such things. Boas' main interest was the way Horapollo's book influenced Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries, so he based his translation largely on the published Latin version, which is closer to what those people would have read than the earliest extant Greek copies are. His version would be helpful for anyone studying the use in hieroglyphs in early modern times and would probably make a useful companion to *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition*. Boas' commentary also points out where Horapollo's ideas are similar to those of other ancient authors, from Herodotus to Ammianus Marcellinus. Yet the commentary is not very detailed and gives only a limited impression of the context the book came from. Grafton's 1993 foreword helps in fleshing that context out and in providing references to some more recent sources that touch on it. Granted, that context is very murky. The book is traditionally attributed to one of two thoroughly Hellenized Egyptians named Horapollo in the fifth century AD, a grandfather and his grandson. Yet the history of the text before the 15th century seems to be entirely unknown. All we can say for sure is that some of the meanings that the author gave to hieroglyphic symbols were correct, but most were not. Therefore, the text does seem to come from a time when some fragmentary knowledge about the script was still extant. Every accurate passage of the *Hieroglyphica* comes from Book One, which is one of the reasons why Boas says Book Two was probably written by a different author. On top of that, some pieces of the text seem to have been lost, others may have been tacked on to earlier passages, and some passages contradict one another. For a long time, the only extensive commentary on the *Hieroglyphica* and its origins was a French-language one by Baudouin van de Walle and Jozef Vergote in *Chronique d'gypte* in 1943. The *Hieroglyphics of Horapollo Nilous*, by Mark Wildish, seems poised to replace that commentary once it is published next month, but Boas' book will remain the cheaper and more accessible option for a long time.

Written reputedly by an Egyptian magus, Horapollo Niliacus, in the fourth century C.E., *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* is an anthology of nearly two hundred "hieroglyphics," or allegorical emblems, said to have been used by the Pharaonic scribes in describing natural and moral aspects of the world. Translated into Greek in 1505, it informed much of Western iconography from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. This work not only tells how various types of natural phenomena, emotions, virtues, philosophical concepts, and human character-types were symbolized, but also explains why, for example, the universe is represented by a serpent swallowing its tail, filial affection by a stork, education by the heavens dropping dew, and a horoscopist by a person eating an hourglass. In his introduction Boas explores the influence of *The Hieroglyphics* and the causes behind the rebirth of interest in symbolism in the sixteenth century. The illustrations to this edition were drawn by Albrecht Drer on the verso pages of his copy of a Latin translation.

Language Notes
Text: English (translation) Original Language: Greek
From the Back Cover "Lucid language [and] stimulating and provoking thinking . . . are among the merits of this small book that will certainly become an invaluable source for students interested in Renaissance symbolism."--George Mylonas
About the Author At the time of his death George Boas was Professor of History at the Johns Hopkins University.