HORAPOLLON, an intellectual active during the late fifth century. He came from an Egyptian family who owned an ancestral estate at Phenebythis in the nome Panopolis. He was a leading Neoplatonic philosopher and religious figure in Alexandria. Three primary sources provide information about him: Damascius' *Life of Isidore*, composed in the early sixth century, preserves a description of Horapollon's cultural environment; the Syriac *Life of Severus*, written by Zachariah of Mitylene (also known as Zacharia Scholasticus), narrates an outbreak of religious violence around Alexandria in 485 in which Horapollon was a key figure; the third document is a papyrus letter, composed in Greek by Horapollon and found at Kom Ishqaw, which has been translated and studied by J. Maspero (1914).

Horapollon came from a family of long-standing philosophical tradition. He claimed in the Kom Ishqaw letter both that he inherited his profession from his ancestors and that his own father, ASCLEPIADES, who spent a lifetime teaching at the Museon, was his teacher. He called himself a "clarissimus," a rank that would place him among the elite of late Roman society. Zachariah confirmed that Horapollon, whom he calls a grammarian, was known as an outstanding teacher who knew his profession remarkably well. But these virtues, he added, were offset by his admiration for demons and magic. In the *Life of Severus*, Horapollon appears as the most important personality in a group of six Alexandrian Neoplatonists: Horapollon, Heraiscus, Asclepiades, Ammonius, Asclepiodotus, and Isidorus. They were affiliated with the paganism still secretly practiced in outlying communities such as Menouthis, Canopus, and Astu.

Horapollon married his cousin in order to keep the ancestral estate at Phenebythis intact. According to the commentary of Damascius' *On First Principles*, Asclepiades, his father, and Heraiscus, his uncle and father-in-law, were Egyptians who employed Egyptian mythology as a medium for philosophical speculation. Horapollon's grandfather may have been the Horapollon named in the *Suda Lexicon* who also came from Phenebythis and
taught grammar in Alexandria as well as Constantinople under Emperor Theodosius. Regrettably, the Suda does not say whether the Theodosius in question was Theodosius I (379-395) or Theodosius II (408-450).

Horapollon may be the author of a work, originally written in Coptic and later translated into Greek, that attempted to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics by an allegorical rendering of the ideograms. Its title gives the author's name as Horapollo of the Nile. A few fragments from Damascius' *Life of Isidore* show that Horapollon's circle of Alexandrian Neoplatonists employed the type of allegorical interpretation of hieroglyphics that appears in the *Hieroglyphica*, ideas that Heraiscus, Asclepiades, and probably Horapollon were teaching Isidore. One statement so closely parallels a passage from the *Hieroglyphica* that a common source is unquestionable. "The hippopotamus," wrote Damascius, "is a lawless animal, a fact made plain in hieroglyphic symbols, for it kills its own father and violates its mother" (ed. Zintzen, fr. 98, p. 140). Horapollon's statement is essentially the same: the unjust and the ungrateful are represented by two hippopotamus claws turned down. This is so because the hippopotamus will kill its own father if not permitted to mate with its mother (*Hieroglyphica* I.56).

It is evident from this that the author of the *Hieroglyphica* and Horapollon lived in the same intellectual and cultural milieu. Several reasons persuaded Maspero (1914) that the Horapollon of the Alexandrian circle wrote the *Hieroglyphica*: the name is the same; when his circle was studying hieroglyphics, Horapollon was a pagan writing sympathetically on pagan antiquities; he came from a family of grammarians that produced literature on both Greek and Egyptian culture; and the cultural milieu of Egypt in the late fifth century was conducive to a work like the *Hieroglyphica*. While these arguments do not prove that Horapollon was the author, they strongly suggest that he and the author were at least directly related. In the Kom Ishqaw letter, Horapollon spoke of his forefathers, from whom he obtained his inheritance and education. The author of the *Hieroglyphica* could have been one of them, if not Horapollon himself.
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