



Tryphiodorus

The Taking of Ilios

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The Taking of Ilios by
TRYPHIODORUS

(fl. 3rd or 4th century AD)



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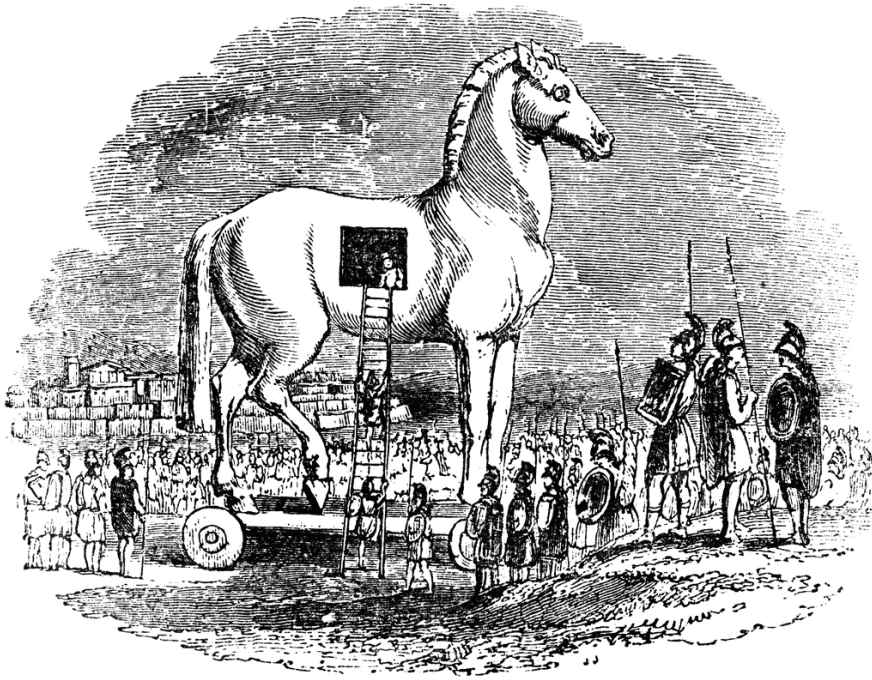
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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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Version 1

The Complete Works of
TRYPHIODORUS OF PANOPOLIS



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The Taking of Ilios by Tryphiodorus



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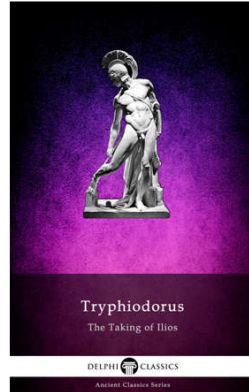
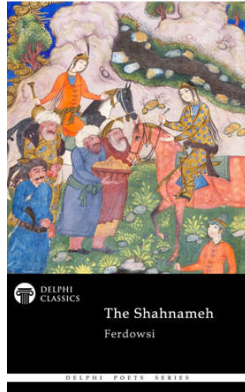
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The Translation

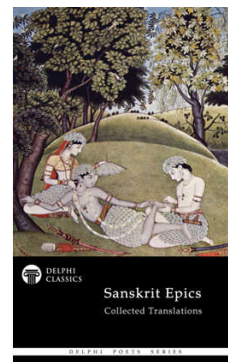
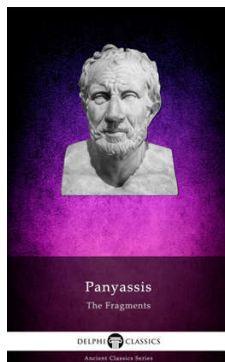


Ancient ruins at Panopoli, in modern day Akhmim, Egypt — Tryphiodorus' birthplace

EPIC POETS



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The Taking of Ilios



Translated by A. W. Mair, Loeb Classical Library, 1928

An epic poet from Panopolis, Tryphiodorus flourished in the third or fourth century AD. His name means “gift of Triphis”, a local god of his Egyptian homeland. Very little is known about Tryphiodorus’ life, except for two entries in the *Suda*, the Byzantine encyclopaedia, which are thought to refer to the same individual. It states his place of birth and that he was a grammarian and epic poet, but there is no information regarding when he lived. Traditionally, he was dated to the fifth century, as he was believed to be an associate of Nonnus of Panopolis, who wrote the long epic poem *Dionysiaca*. In his turn, Tryphiodorus was imitated by Coluthus, who lived under emperor Anastasius I. However, the publication in the 1970’s of a fragment of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. 41.2946), containing lines 391-402 of *The Taking of Ilios* has been dated to the third or early fourth century, causing most scholars to place him in the third century. His pagan name is not necessarily proof that he was a pagan and there is no reference in his poem that encourages us to call him a Christian.

Tryphiodorus’ sole extant work is *The Taking of Ilios*, a 691-verse epic poem, narrating events from the capture of the Trojan seer Helenus to the sailing of the Greek troops after the sacking of Troy. The text opens with an invocation to Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry. The narrative is introduced with a summary of the calamitous situation of the Greek and Trojan troops, as both forces are exhausted by years of fighting and heavy casualties. Then the Greeks manage to seize the Trojan seer and following his advice they call Neoptolemus (the son of Achilles) to join their lines and steal the Palladion from Troy. The construction of the Trojan Horse follows, as Odysseus convinces the bravest fighters to hide with him in the horse and the rest of the troops to pretend they are fleeing from Troy, while preparing to come back the following night. In the morning the Trojans discover the disappearance of the Achaean army, inspect their camp and admire the Wooden Horse...

This poem can be considered as part of a late antique vogue for mythological epic, which includes the *Posthomeric* by Quintus of Smyrna (third century), the *Dionysiaca* by Nonnus = (mid fifth century), the *Rape of Helen* by Coluthus and the *Description of the Statues in the Terms of Zeuxippus* by Christodorus (early sixth century). *The Taking of Ilios* reveals a thorough understanding of Homer and the grammatical tradition and interpretation of the Homeric poems. Tryphiodorus also borrows from Hesiod (especially *Triph.* 136–8, after *Hes. Op.* 57–8) and Pindar (*Triph.* 643, after *Pi. N.* 7.42), Hellenistic poetry (e.g. *Triph.* 318–35, after *AR* 1.362–90). His portrayal of Cassandra is reminiscent of Aeschylus in the drama *Agamemnon* and Euripides’ presentation of the princess in *Trojan Women*.

As well as *The Taking of Ilios*, the *Suda* attributes two more poems to Tryphiodorus: *Marathoniaca* (Μαραθωνιακά), most likely narrating how Theseus defeated the bull of Marathon; a *Story of Hippodamea* (Τὰ κατὰ Ἴπποδάμειαν), on one of the females of this name (e.g. the daughter of King Oenomaus, who killed all her suitors in a chariot race until Pelops defeated him). The *Suda* also mentions two grammatical works: the *Lipogrammatic Odyssey* (likely a re-writing of the *Odyssey* suppressing a letter in each of the books: α in book 1, β in book 2 and so on) and a

Paraphrase of *Homer's Comparisons* (Παράφρασις τῶν Ὁμήρου παραβόλων), a study of the long comparisons in the Homeric poems.



The Mykonos Vase, Archaeological Museum of Mykonos, c. 670 BC — it depicts one of the earliest known renditions of the Trojan Horse



Detail from the 'The Mykonos Vase'

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"Cassandra and Ajax" as depicted on a terracotta amphora, c. 450 BC



Sinon as a captive in front of the walls of Troy, 'Vergilius Romanus', fifth century AD

THE TAKING OF ILIOS



[1] THE LONG delayed end of the laborious war and the ambush, even the horse¹ fashioned of Argive Athena, straightway to me in my haste do thou tell, O Calliopeia, remitting copious speech; and the ancient strife of men, in that war now decided, do thou resolve with speedy song.

[6] Already the tenth year was rolling on and old had grown the strain of war, insatiate of blood, for Trojans and Danaans. With slaying of men the spears were weary, the menace of the swords died, quenched was the din of breastplate, rent and perishing the coiled fabric of shield-carrying baldricks; the shield endured no more to abide the hurtling of javelins, unstrung was the bent bow, the swift arrows decayed. And the horse — some apart at the idle manger, with heads bowed piteously, bewailed their fellow horses, some mourned to miss their perished charioteers.

[17] Low lay the son of Peleus and with him his comrade² dead: over his young son Antilochus old Nestor mourned: Aias with self-dealt wound had unstrung his mighty form, and bathed his foeman's sword³ in the rain of frenzied blood. The Trojans, lamenting over the shameful dragging of Hector, had not only their domestic pain, but groaning for the woes of men of alien speech they wept in turn for their many-tongued allies. The Lycians wept for Sarpedon⁴ whom his mother, glorying in the bed of Zeus, had sent to Troy; howbeit he fell by the spear of Patroclus, son of Menoetius, and there was shed about him by his sire a mist that wept tears of blood. The Thracians wailed for Rhesus⁵ that in the guileful night was fettered by an evil sleep. And for the fate of Memnon⁶ Eos, his mother, hung aloft a cloud in heaven and stole away the light of shamefast day. The women from⁷ Thermodon dear to Ares, beating the unripe, unsucked circle of their breasts, mourned the warlike maiden Penthesileia, who came unto the dance of war, that war of many guests, and with her woman's hand scattered the cloud of men back to their ships beside the sea; only Achilles withstood her with his ashen spear and slew and despoiled her and gave her funeral.

[40] And still all Ilios stood, by reason of her god-built towers, established upon unshaken foundations, and at the tedious delay the people of the Achaeans chafed. And now Athena, unwearying though she be, would have shrunk from her latest labour and all her sweat had been in vain, had not the seer⁸ turned from the bride-stealing lust of Deiphobus, and come from Ilios as guest of the Danaans, and, as doing a favour to Menelaus in his travail, prophesied the late-fulfilled ruin of his own fatherland. And at the prophesying of jealous Helenus they straightway prepared an end of their long toil. From Scyros, too, leaving that city of fair maidens, came the son⁹ of Achilles and august Deidameia; who, albeit he mantled not yet on his goodly temples the down of manhood, showed the prowess of his sire, young warrior though he was. Came, too, Athena to the Danaans with her holy image¹⁰; the prey of war but a helper to her friends.

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