

*Editorial note: this is a draft version of Chapter One and may contain typos and errors that were corrected in the printed version. Page numbering may also differ.*

## **1. THE PROBLEM OF MANETHO'S CHRONOLOGY**

In the third century B.C., an important and influential Egyptian priest named Manetho wrote an account of his country's history. It contained a wealth of information about ancient Egypt and included a chronological record of all Egyptian kings from the beginning of the first dynasty (c. 3100 B.C.) down to the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. Unfortunately, no extant copy of Manetho's original manuscript has yet been found.

We do have three ancient texts—one from the first century Jewish historian Josephus, another from the third century Christian chronographer Africanus, and another from the fourth century Christian historian Eusebius—that claim to be based on Manetho's history, but they are frequently and substantially inconsistent with each other in many respects and all three are often at great odds with the known chronological record for ancient Egypt.

Among the problems found in these accounts are that many of the king names are unrecognizable, a number of kings have reigns that are too long, several dynasties have more kings than actually ruled, in some cases kings appear to be listed out of order, several dynasties have no kings listed at all, many dynasties have durations far in excess of that allowed by the chronological record, and some dynasties seem to be spurious.

Nevertheless, studies of the Manetho texts reveal that Manetho's original chronology must have been based at least in part on accurate chronological accounts from Egyptian records. Manetho, himself, served as a priest at the city of Heliopolis, and legend holds that the temple at

Heliopolis had a picture of a tree with the names of every Egyptian king inscribed on a separate leaf. Until the advent of modern Egyptology the Manetho texts heavily influenced our development of a chronological history of ancient Egypt.

Manetho's history also had a strong influence on biblical studies. His long chronological history provided a potential anchor point around which dates for biblical events could be established, particularly with regard to the chronology of the Exodus from Egypt under Moses and the chronology of civilization after the flood in Noah's time. In fact, Josephus's identification of the Exodus with Manetho's account of the expulsion of the Hyksos kings at the start of what would have been the Eighteenth Dynasty, deeply influenced centuries of biblical scholarship.

We should also note that because much of our development of chronology in the nations outside of Egypt, particularly in Canaan and Mesopotamia, depended upon chronological links to events inside of Egypt, Manetho was an early influence on our development of chronology in those other nations as well.

### **Manetho and the Dynastic Structure**

The present practice of dividing Egyptian dynastic history into a period of 30 or 31 dynasties, from the start of the first dynasty down to Alexander's conquest of Egypt, is known as the Manetho or Manethonian Model. Derived from the Africanus and Eusebius accounts of Manetho's history, it is nearly impossible to discuss Egyptian history without adhering to this Manethonian structure, even though there might be some minor quibbles as to whether the division between certain dynasties should be adjusted up or down by a couple of kings. For example, should the Nineteenth Dynasty begin with Ramesses I, as generally accepted, or with

his predecessor, Horemheb, with whom he shared a coregency. Or, should the Eighteenth Dynasty began with Ahmose, the pharaoh who expelled the Hyksos kings and united Egypt under his own rule, or with the earlier members of Ahmoses's family who ruled from Thebes and initiated the struggle against the Hyksos kings?

On the other hand, it is not thoroughly clear that Manetho, himself, adhered to this thirty-dynasty structure. He does seem to have had occasions where he summarized the lengths of reigns for a group of kings, based on some sort of political context, but may have done so well in excess of thirty occasions. The subsequent redactors of his text may have chosen particular summaries to represent dynastic divisions and ignored others.

Still, the Manethonian Model reflects a reasonably good guide to some broad political divisions within Egyptian history and many of the dynastic divisions seem to be somewhat in accord with Egypt's political history. Within the context of the Manetho Model, though, Egyptologists have, by convention, grouped certain dynasties together to reflect larger political developments. The standard scheme is as follows:

Dynasties I-VI	The Old Kingdom
Dynasties VII-X	First Intermediate Period
Dynasties XI-XII	Middle Kingdom
Dynasties XIII-XVII	Second Intermediate Period
Dynasties XVIII-XX	New Kingdom
Dynasties XXI-XXV	Third Intermediate Period
Dynasties XXVI-XXXI	Late Dynastic

Some Egyptologists have also further subdivided the Old Kingdom, separating out the First and Second Dynasties—more recently, some would also include the Third Dynasty—and referring to them as the Archaic Period.

In addition, some Egyptologists have suggested extending the Middle Kingdom into that part of the Thirteenth Dynasty that ruled Egypt before rival dynasties successfully challenged Thebes for control over all of or portions of Egypt. The chief rivals of Thebes during the Second Intermediate Period were the Hyksos kings, a group of foreigners who successfully established political bases within Egypt, dominated much of the country for almost two centuries, and may have established total control over the entire country for at least a short period of time.

It should be noted that while the term First Intermediate Period encompasses Dynasties VII-X, it may be more accurate to say that it should include part of the Sixth Dynasty and also include that part of the Eleventh Dynasty that preceded the unification of Egypt during the latter part of the Eleventh Dynasty. Some Egyptologists suggest that Dynasties VII and VIII are little more than a continuation of the Sixth Dynasty and others suggest they may never have even existed.

The First, Eleventh and Eighteenth Dynasties each signify a period of unification after a time of division and are placed at the head of the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms. The Three Intermediate Periods reflect times of turmoil and division and are poorly documented, greatly frustrating our efforts to reconstruct the history of these troublesome eras. That Egyptians saw these first three unifications as inaugurating important periods of renewal can be inferred from an inscription from a Nineteenth Dynasty temple inscription joining together the names of these three unifiers, Menes of Dynasty I, Menthotpe of Dynasty XI, and Ahmose of Dynasty XVIII.<sup>1</sup>

In the dynastic outline above, I have avoided mentioning the dates applicable to each of these dynasties and eras as there are differences of opinion regarding many of the applicable dates and I didn't want to clutter this introductory text with numerous alternatives and explanations. I provide a broad overview in the next chapter and present detailed analysis in the subsequent chapters.

### **The Transmission of Manetho**

Manetho's history began with a mythical period ruled by various gods, demigods, spirits, and mythical kings, and continued through an Egyptian historical period beginning with what we now refer to as the First Dynasty and ended with the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great. It is the only known ancient document to have covered such a vast period of Egyptian history with both historical commentary and chronological detail about the various rulers of that nation. He probably wrote in Greek to suit the Greek-speaking Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt.

As noted above, there are three main sources for Manetho's history, Josephus, Africanus, and Eusebius. Differences in content and style suggest how the Manetho history was redacted and transmitted.

#### **Josephus**

The Josephus account, which appears in his book *Against Apion*, covers only a portion of Manetho's history, spanning approximately from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Dynasties. His account appears in narrative form and contains no reference to numbered dynasties or any direct reference to dynastic divisions, although it does describe shifts in control from one political faction to another that is somewhat consistent with the corresponding dynastic divisions. It also includes some sequences of named Egyptian rulers along with lengths of reign and some

collective durations for groups of kings. His recitation of the named kings and their lengths of reign frequently disagree with what we know from the archaeological record. We will discuss these variations and their causes in more detail in subsequent chapters.

He appears to have had at least two versions of Manetho's history to work from and these earlier copies of Manetho already exhibit evidence of inconsistencies in transmission. For example, referring to Manetho's account of a group of kings known as the Hyksos, Josephus says that in one account the definition of Hyksos means "king-shepherds" but that in another version it means "captive shepherds."<sup>2</sup> In another instance, in one place he gives one set of personal names to the Egyptian kings who defeated the Hyksos and elsewhere he gives another set of personal names to these same kings.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the inconsistencies in the Manetho texts seem to have led Josephus to believe that the conflicting accounts described two separate events rather than differing accounts of the same event. As a result, his narrative appears to include both accounts, treating them as if they were part of a single Manetho narrative, but he doesn't tell us that the combined accounts come from separate sources. In one instance, for example, he tells us about a rebellious group of priests. On two separate occasions in the narrative, he tells us that the priest's followers called him Osarseph, but on the second occasion he tells us this as if he had never previously told us what the priest's followers called him.<sup>4</sup>

### **Africanus and Eusebius**

The two later accounts by Africanus and Eusebius are similar to each other in that they both take the form of tabular accounts of the various dynasties in sequential order along with, in most cases, a list of kings within each dynasty and their lengths of reign. And, in most instances, they parallel each other closely as to the sequence of dynasties and kings contained within. Neither

contains much narrative material about the kings although a few very short anecdotes are preserved.

While both seem to draw on similar source materials (Eusebius may have partially drawn on Africanus) and follow the same sequential structure, there are several points where the two lists diverge with respect to the chronological information about particular kings and dynasties. Scholars generally consider Africanus more accurate than Eusebius with regard to the transmission of the Manetho texts, and it is clear that on occasion Eusebius has a more garbled source than does Africanus. Consider, for example, a comparison of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties in the two works.

Where Africanus lists nine kings (although alleging that there were only eight kings)<sup>5</sup> for the Fifth Dynasty and lists six more kings for the Sixth Dynasty, Eusebius says that the Fifth Dynasty had 31 kings but names only one, a king who served in the Sixth Dynasty.<sup>6</sup> And then, for the Sixth Dynasty he lists only the last ruler. It is obvious that Eusebius relied on a confused or confusing transmission of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties that concatenated them into a single continuum. On the other hand, our examination of Manetho's history will show that sometimes Eusebius preserves traces of a better account than does Africanus.

It should be noted here that both the Africanus and Eusebius lists are preserved only in copies written down in later times by other writers, allowing additional opportunities for error in the copying and interpreting process.

The Africanus material comes chiefly from a work by George the Monk, also known as Syncellus, who wrote it down at about the end of the eighth century.

For Eusebius, we have extracts preserved by Syncellus, but we also have an Armenian translation of the whole work made between 500 and 800, and a Latin version made by Jerome

toward the end of the fourth century. There are some differences among these various copies of Eusebius. In Eusebius's Fourteenth Dynasty, for example, Syncellus preserves a duration of 184 years (the same as in Africanus) while the Armenian version has 484 years.

The Africanus and Eusebius lists divided the king-list into a sequence of thirty dynasties down to the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great. Subsequently, one of the redactors tacked on to the end an additional brief dynasty, making thirty-one in all.

### **Other Syncellus Accounts**

Syncellus also preserves some material that he attributes to Manetho as independent of and different from Africanus and Eusebius. Known as *The Book of Sothis*, it appears to be somewhat of an ancient forgery, a pseudo-Manetho that does suggest some familiarity with Manetho. It is a clumsy redaction listing several kings in sequential order without dynastic divisions and with many kings missing from the sequence of rulers.

Syncellus also preserves another document called *The Old Chronicle*, which he believes to have influenced Manetho and led him into error. That document, however, is probably post-Manetho but may have in fact been a fourth independent preservation of Manetho's account. It was concerned primarily with the reigns of the gods and we need not concern ourselves with it at this point.

### **Patterns of Transmission**

The differences in style and content between Josephus and the later versions—Josephus writing in a narrative form with lots of historical content but without numbered dynasties while Africanus and Eusebius have virtually no historical content and present a simple table of numbered dynasties—strongly suggests the manner in which the Manetho texts were transmitted.



With Josephus we see that Manetho originally had substantial narrative accounts about historical events in his nation's history and did not provide a list of numbered dynasties.

(Africanus and Eusebius note that Manetho's history originally encompassed three volumes.<sup>7</sup>)

He did have lists of kings with lengths of reign, but whether these lists were always complete dynasties, portions of dynasties, or concatenations of dynasties we can not say.

In the Josephus text, for instance, the account runs the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties together without any indication of a break between them, and places scattered pieces of chronological information about the Nineteenth Dynasty in different parts of the text, again without indicating any dynastic break between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties.

Africanus and Eusebius partially follow Josephus in attaching portions of the Nineteenth Dynasty to the Eighteenth but they also have a separate listing for the Nineteenth Dynasty. Obviously, at least one redactor between Josephus and Africanus made some new judgments about how to extract and organize data from Manetho's text.

Judging from the references in Josephus that show him using more than one copy of Manetho, we also see that inconsistencies and contradictions had already crept into the transmissions before Josephus prepared his own work. In some instances there were slightly different versions of stories that appeared in the two texts, suggesting that the copiers may have been paraphrasing Manetho rather than precisely copying from his manuscript, and either Josephus or his source appears to have concatenated these alternative accounts as if they were separate sequential events. Josephus's two copies of Manetho even appear to have different names for some of the people who performed the acts in questions.

In the case of the kings who ousted the Hyksos rulers from Egypt, for instance, Josephus in one place gives us one set of names, but in another location that repeats the story of the

expulsion, Josephus's account has erroneously substituted a couple of names from the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty. On both occasions he has the wrong names for these kings while Africanus and Eusebius have the correct name for the victorious king, indicating the multiple independent channels of transmission.

Here, then, we can see that already by Josephus's time, some redactors were having troubling accurately understanding what Manetho wrote and they garbled the historical accounts. Others did better jobs of passing on the information. This might further suggest that Manetho failed to write in a clear and unambiguous manner and that many portions were confusing even to the Greek-speaking redactors reading his Greek account.

With Africanus and Eusebius we see a transformation in the way Manetho's text was transmitted, and one which is many times removed from Manetho's original manuscript. A number of redactors, probably Hellenistic-oriented Jewish scribes and Christian writers interested in comparative biblical chronology, concerned themselves primarily, perhaps exclusively, with Manetho's chronological accounts, and extracted out and reordered what they believed to be his chronological records.

It is among these redactors that we begin to see tabular lists of numbered dynasties with individual rulers and their lengths of reign, along with occasional summaries. And it is from these sources that Africanus and Eusebius must have obtained their accounts.

So, what the various versions show us is that errors were already entering into the transmission of Manetho's text not long after he wrote his original manuscript, and eventually, those interested in what he had to say were concerned almost exclusively with his chronological accounts. Assorted redactors attempted to extract chronological material from the already confusing and contradictory set of manuscripts and compiled lists of rulers in chronological

order. This produced a variety of independent error-ridden sources that found their way into Josephus, Africanus and Eusebius, and it is from the pattern of errors that we will attempt to reconstruct Manetho's original chronology.

### **Some Chronological Concerns**

According to the Africanus and Eusebius texts, Manetho's chronology from the First Dynasty to the last encompassed just under 5,500 years, dating the onset to sometime prior to 5000 B.C. The presently accepted view of Egyptologists is that the First Dynasty began no earlier than about 3100 B.C., give or take 150 years, approximately two millennia shorter than that established by the Manetho sources.

A good deal of this excess can be confined to the Second Intermediate Period, a chaotic era that lasted approximately two hundred years. In Africanus, for example, Dynasties XIII-XVII lasted over 1600 years while Eusebius gives them a duration of almost 1200 years. Josephus doesn't include the entire Second Intermediate Period in his account, but what durations he does give are on the same order of error as in the other two lists. Even if we allow for the now-accepted concurrent dynasties within the Second Intermediate Period, the three sets of Manetho figures are still highly excessive.

Another large erroneous time span can be confined to Manetho's First Intermediate Period, which, in its preserved form, has hundreds of years too many for the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties. Furthermore, the Manetho texts present these two dynasties in sequential order, falling between the Sixth and Eleventh Dynasties, when, in fact, the Ninth and Tenth Dynasties were mostly concurrent with those other dynasties.

It is not uncommon among Egyptologists to dismiss Manetho's error-laden First and Second Intermediate Periods as the result of poor documentation for these eras, a problem which afflicts even modern Egyptologists trying to get an accurate account of these times. Much of the rest of Manetho, they believe, comes closer to the mark. Kenneth Kitchen, for example, has written of the Twenty-First Dynasty, "Here the sequence of 7 kings found in Manetho is fully substantiated by the first-hand monumental evidence . . . Their regnal years can be closely determined from original documents, almost totally agreed-to by Manetho's text (well preserved at this point) . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Even allowing for the poor state of his First and Second Intermediate Periods, several other dynasties also present chronological problems. The 277 years assigned by Africanus to the Fourth Dynasty and the 248 years assigned by him to the Fifth Dynasty are each more than a century in excess of the accepted parameters. Eusebius is in even worse shape when it comes to these two dynasties. Manetho's Third Dynasty is more than twice as long as any accepted durations.

Within that framework it is generally accepted that while there are many errors in Manetho's preserved chronology and often major inconsistencies with other more reliable evidence, the original Manetho chronology does appear to have been based, at least in part, on authentic and reliable source materials. As discoveries emerge and debates proceed, there is still a tendency to compare the conclusions with what appears in Manetho.

## The Subject of This Work

How, then, did the Manetho chronology come to diverge so greatly from what we know to be the more accurate record, and why do the three Manetho texts diverge so substantially from each other in many places?

In the present work I examine the extant copies of Manetho's chronology in Josephus, Africanus, and Eusebius, and attempt to reconstruct the original Manetho chronology before it was redacted and distorted by others. The goal is to show that Manetho had a highly accurate chronology of ancient Egypt that is consistent with the archaeological evidence and mainstream Egyptological opinion. The plan is to use the archaeological evidence to show how redacted copies of Manetho went astray and to trace the logical errors that caused various redactors to transmit erroneous and inconsistent accounts.

Such a study, unless based on sound logical principles, is subject to criticism as nothing more than the juggling of numbers to make them say whatever you want. As the evidence unfolds, however, it will show that the transmission errors were mostly of a specific type. I hope to convincingly demonstrate that there were at least three major errors that infected the Manetho transmissions, to wit:

1. Manetho's redactors failed to accurately account for coregencies;
2. Manetho's redactors frequently confused lines of summation with actual lengths of reign for either a specific king or additional non-existent groups of kings; and
3. Manetho's redactors occasionally concatenated dynasties or counted multiple summation lines as if they signified a single dynasty.

There were, too be sure, other sources of confusion too. For example, in a number of instances several pharaohs in the same dynasty had the same name and the redactors seem to have had trouble sorting them out. The Twelfth Dynasty, for example, had three Senwosres and four Amenemhes and the Eighteenth Dynasty had four Amenhoteps and four Thutmoses. Even when using the same name for more than one pharaoh, the redactors had variations in spelling.

As we go through the chronological evidence we will see how the divergent copies of Manetho incorporated these various errors and show why the different copies of Manetho came to diverge from each other.

To some extent, I see the task as akin to balancing a checkbook, with the archaeological evidence as the bank records and the Manetho redactions as clumsily kept check registers. For example, if the bank shows that a withdrawal was made, and your check register shows your available funds in excess of your bank balance by twice the amount of your withdrawal, one should look to see if the amount of the withdrawal was mistakenly placed in the deposit column instead of the withdrawal column.

Similarly, suppose we had three ancient documents. The first says that a king ruled for 10 years, his successor ruled for 10 years, and the two kings shared a 3-year coregency. The second document says that one of the kings ruled for 7 years and the other for 10 years, while the third document says that the first king ruled for 13 years and the other ruled for 10 years. All three would seem to be based on a common source yet each exhibits a different understanding about how to allot the years of coregency.

The first document is slightly ambiguous, not indicating if the two 10-year reigns were independent of each other and the coregency came in between the two 10-year reigns or the two 10-year reigns overlapped during the coregency. In other words, did each king sit on the throne

for 13 years, in which 3 years of each reign were served concurrently, or did the coregency began in Year 8 of the first king's reign. The author may have been unsure of which was the case, or the author may have been sure of what the situation was but unintentionally expressed it in this slightly ambiguous manner.

On the other hand, the second document, setting forth a 7-year reign followed by a 10-year reign, either takes the position that the coregency began in Year 8 of the first king's reign or the first king only reigned for 7 years, not realizing that there had been a 3-year coregency. The third document, however, attached the 3-year coregency to the end of the 10-year reign of the first king but is unclear if the second king's 10-year reign includes the 3-year coregency or began after the coregency.

It is this kind of confusion in both Manetho's manuscript and the subsequent redacted copies of Manetho that I think contributed substantially to the distortion of his historical account. Using the archaeological record, I believe we can figure out what ambiguities existed and what erroneous interpretations were transmitted, and we can backtrack to get to Manetho's original chronology.

The scope of this work will cover Manetho's chronology from the Fourth Dynasty through the Nineteenth Dynasty. For the first three dynasties of Egypt we have insufficient chronological and archaeological evidence for our purposes. Also, most of the significant debates about Egyptian chronology fall within the targeted period covered herein. If my case can be made for the period in question then there is no need to extend the analysis any further. It will, by implication, resolve or narrow the focus of any remaining debates with regard to the later chronology.

By utilizing Manetho's chronology to fine-tune the Egyptian chronology, we can also use the many cross-references between Egyptian and no-Egyptian events to resolve a number of pending issues regarding Near Eastern and biblical chronology.

### Notes for Chapter 1.

<sup>1</sup> William C. Hayes, "The Middle Kingdom In Egypt: Internal History from the Rise of the Heracleopolitans to the Death of Ammenemes III", in *CAHI:2A*, 3rd Edition, 479. Menthotpe's name appears as Nebhepetre in the inscription. This name was part of the more elaborate titulary adopted by this king.

<sup>2</sup> *Manetho*, 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Manetho*, 87, 101.

<sup>4</sup> *Manetho*, 125, 131.

<sup>5</sup> *Manetho*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Manetho*, 51-53.

<sup>7</sup> *Manetho*, 185, 187.

<sup>8</sup> Kitchen, "The Historical Chronology of Ancient Egypt, A Current Assessment", in K. Randsborg (ed.), *Absolute Chronology, Archaeological Europe 2500-500BC, Acta Archaeologica Supplementa*, I (Copenhagen 1996[1997]), 3, appearing simultaneously as *Acta Archaeologica* 67 (1996[1997]).