Alexandria endures in our imagination as the first model of cultural interaction – of cosmopolitanism, to use both classical and contemporary terminology – and as the cultural and intellectual capital of the ancient world. The intermingling of races and beliefs, and the exchange of ideas, undoubtedly produced the knowledge that modern scholarship still celebrates.

This book is a testimony that the value embodied by Alexandria and its Library continue to inspire noble minded scholars whose pursuit for knowledge transcends boundaries and time. The breadth and scope of the papers presented do credit to the spirit of Alexandria – its multiculturalism, and its passion for science and scholarship. The book in our hands confirm that the multiculturalism of the Ancient World, rippling out from Alexandria to extend throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, is as valid now as it was then – perhaps more so today, when globalization has given a new meaning to the internationalism envisioned by Alexander the Great centuries ago. Now, with the "clash of civilizations" dominating our discourse, it is pertinent to remember the lesson Alexandria ad Aegyptum taught us: that the interaction between cultures can only lead to the betterment of the human condition and carry us to heights unimagined.

Ismail Serageldin
Librarian of Alexandria

The excellent contributions gathered in this book dedicated to the city of books, Alexandria, are undoubtedly traced along the lines of Amr and John’s dialogue. Intolerance, which is borne almost always out of ignorance, threatens continuously the peaceful meeting and coexistence of peoples and cultures nowadays. Alexandria, its people and books remind us that the search for dialogue, the reflection on the forms of unity in diversity are at the same time our greatest heritage and the most dramatically pressing agenda.

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MANETHO AND THE HISTORY OF EGYPT

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Abstract: Under the royal commission by Ptolemy II, Manetho – an Egyptian priest in the temple of Re in Heliopolis – wrote in Greek a history of Egypt (Aegyptiaca). This original text has been lost but its quotations by posterior authors such as Flavius Josephus (1st century), Julius Africanus (2nd-3rd centuries), Eusebius of Caesarea (3rd-4th centuries) and George Syncellus (8th century) help us to understand the historiographical work undergone by the ancient Egyptian scholar who, in many ways, paved the way for modern Egyptologists.

MANETHO AND THE HISTORY OF EGYPT

We owe to the Egyptian priest and scholar Manetho, contemporary of the first Ptolemaic kings, the dynastic periodization of pharaonic Egypt in thirty dynasties, still in use by Egyptologists1. Manetho was born in Sebennytos (hellenized form of the Egyptian city Tebnetjer or Tjebnetj, or even Tjebnutjer, in Coptic Djemenuti, today Samannud), located at the Central Delta, where the 30th Dynasty began, the last of the long Egyptian history. Sebennytos was also the capital of the 12th province of Lower Egypt. Manetho studied at the renowned temple of Re, in Heliopolis, and collaborated in the introduction of the Sarapis cult in Alexandria, which intended to merge both Greek and Egyptian beliefs. According to Plutarch, Manetho was an adviser of the king Ptolemy I (305-285 B.C.), the Macedonian

founder of the Lagid Dynasty and by request of Ptolemy II himself (285-246 B.C.) he wrote a history of Egypt.

Several literary works are ascribed to this scholar from Sebennytos, but only one of them is surely attributed to him: his history of Egypt (*Aegyptiaca*), whose original text has been lost, but from which we have reasonable knowledge thanks to the quotations of posterior authors: Flavius Josephus (1st century), and Christian writers such as Julius Africanus (2nd-3rd centuries), Eusebius of Caesarea (3rd-4th centuries) and George Syncellus (8th century).

Although adopting a proselytist biased perspective, the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus seems to have been able to read the works of Manetho from the original itself. He used Manetho’s text as a source to write his arguments as to prove the ancientness of the Jews, having recorded:

> I will begin with Egyptian documents. These I cannot indeed set before you in their ancient form; but in Manetho we have a native Egyptian who was manifestly imbued with Greek culture. He wrote in Greek the history of his nation, translated, as he himself tells us, from sacred tablets; and on many points of the Egyptian history he convicts Herodotus of having erred through ignorance.²

Flavius Josephus coincides with other pieces of information which attest that Manetho was a Hellenized Egyptian scholar who wrote in Greek his nation’s history, based on the many facts he learned from the «sacred texts». To perform that huge task he would naturally had to be learned in the hieroglyphic writing (certainly seeking information in hieratic and demotic texts), as well as in the Greek language.

Sometimes the compilers of Manetho disagree among themselves in the composition of the royal lists and in the comments on the succession – monotonous at times – of kings’ names and facts allegedly occurred in several reigns, as we shall see. On the other hand, the original Manetho’s text only mentioned 30 dynasties, with the 30th Dynasty ending his 3rd book, the last one of his *Aegyptiaca*, but later on a 31st Dynasty was added, regarding the period of the Second Persian Domination, and then removed upon the arrival of Alexander.

The truth is that no one knows which material is from the Egyptian writer himself and which belongs to the work of his posterior compilers³. Flavius Josephus attempted to adjust the manethonian text to his intentions, in order to extolle the history of his people. The version of Africanus, condensed in five books written during the reign of Heliogabalus (218-222), apparently derives not directly from Manetho but from a version that appeared soon after the publication of the original text by the Sebennytos historian. Africanus’s purpose

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² WADDELL, 1980: 77-79.
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