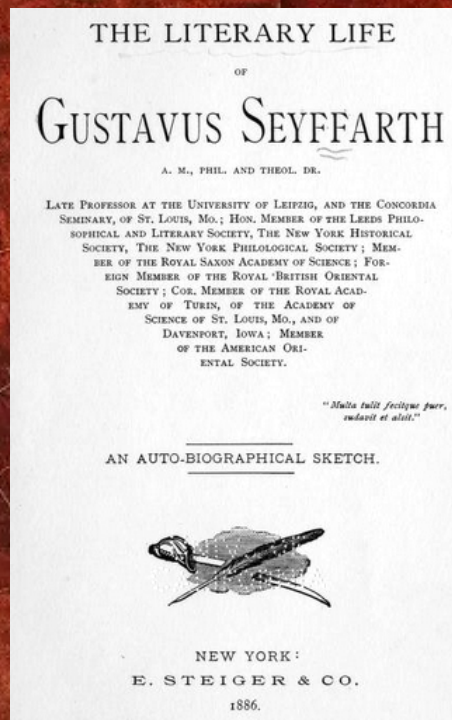


# The origin of Manetho's Egyptian History

Gustav Seyffarth



# Seyffarth 1886

## Abstract

*From Seyffarth's autobiography, 60 years later, and he still resented Champollion for creating a hieroglyphic decoding system that proved his own to be nonsense.*

English original.

## Source

Seyffarth, Gustav, 1886. *The literary life of Gustavus Seyffarth*. New York: Steiger. 20-21.

## Autobiography and Letters

In 1826, the author, after having convinced himself that the literary remains of ancient Egypt could not be translated without studying the principal papyri and inscriptions, asked and obtained permission to visit the libraries and museums of several European countries. The Saxon Government aided him by a donation of 400 thalers. During this time and subsequently many very important Egyptian antiquities were brought to light.

### 1. *The origin of Manetho's Egyptian History, written in Hieratic characters.*

The Egyptian museum of Turin preserved a huge box with at least half a million of papyrus fragments, of which the largest were three inches long and two inches broad. I perceived at a glance, that some of these fragments once formed part of a historical papyrus, like Manetho's "Catalogue of Egyptian Dynasties."

I devoted six weeks to a close examination of each of the fragments, and put them together as far as was possible. The papyrus I thus obtained, was eight feet long and one foot high, and it corresponds in all respects to our Greek Manetho, as preserved by Josephus Julius Africanus, Eusebius and others. It commences with the enumeration of the seven great gods, the planets and the twelve gods of the second class, the so-called Zodiac gods. Next are enumerated the dynasties of Tanis, Heracleapolis, Memphis, Thebes, etc., and the years and months during which each dynasty and king reigned. The Hyksos, the Canaan Shepherd Kings, correspond to Josephus's Shepherd Kings, the Israelites. The hieratic characters of this papyrus belong to the age of Lagides. As numberless names contain corrections, consisting of very small pieces fastened with gum arabic on the original letters, it cannot be the work of a copyist, but must have been done by the compiler of the royal names himself. I do not hesitate to state that this papyrus scroll, which was the second bilingual monument discovered after the Rosette Stone, was written by Manetho himself. It is a great misfortune that this important papyrus is very imperfect.

The same box had been examined by Champollion two years before, and after having selected one fragment of the same papyrus he authoritatively ordered the custos, Signor Cantu, while the Director of the Museum, Cavaliere St. Quintino, was in London, to put the rest of the papyrus into the privy! Signor Cantu told me that thus at least two-thirds of the papyrus was lost forever. So we owe to Champollion's rashness the loss of the most important relic of Egyptian antiquity. The papyrus, when sent from Cairo to Turin, was complete, but in consequence of imperfect packing it crumbled into fragments. It must have contained about 200 royal names, like the Greek Manetho.