



The Nile Journal will be a prominent feature of the website of Dr. Charles Finch. Each month there will be a short essay authored by Dr. Finch and published in the Nile Journal. Some of these will be stand-alone essays/articles, others will be multiple-part, each part published in successive months. The first essay, *Nile Chronology and the Double Great Year*, is a two part-essay excerpted from a work in progress, Volume I of the forthcoming **TEXTBOOK OF AFRICAN CIVILIZATION: 11,000 BC TO 1591 AD**, estimated publication date – 2010. *Nile Chronology and the Double Great Year* Part 1 is to be found below; the second and concluding part will be available in the Nile Journal in April, 2008. Please be advised that all textual material found in the Nile Journal is copyrighted and cannot be copied and distributed without prior permission from the author.

Thank you

NILE VALLEY CHRONOLOGY AND THE DOUBLE GREAT YEAR

...they [the Egyptians] saw their cosmic environment

(the sky, the Milky Way, the sun and the stars, the moon and the planets, and all their cycles) as being bound together in perfect duality with their earthly environment (their land and the Nile, their living king and his ancestors, and the cycles of the seasons and epochs).

–Hancock and Bauval, **The Message of the Sphinx**, p. 132.

...history is the blueprint of the future; whatever happened then is likely to occur again.

–Robert M. Schoch, **Voices of the Rocks**, p. 4

A major factor bearing on the complexities of early Nile Valley chronology is that of the calendar. Since the author has treated this question at length elsewhere, we can dispense with an extended discussion of all the different facets of this matter.¹ We can say, however, that from the point of view of historically-attested dynastic history, the earliest identifiable calendar date we have is 4,241 BC from Egypt's famed Sothic calendar, the one still in use today. The existence of such a sophisticated calendar, a seamless calendric interdigitation of the movements of the sun and Sirius (the 'Dog Star'), presupposes an equally sophisticated culture creating it. The civilization of dynastic Kemit cannot have begun any later than this date of 4,241 BC.

Having said that, it is yet pertinent to re-engage the engrossing subject of the precessional Great Year(s). It is to be admitted that, when treating the subject of the Great Year, one is leaving the normal and accepted boundaries of academic history-writing. Only a handful of present-day Egyptologists or antiquarians acknowledge that the ancient Egyptians knew anything about the precession, let alone that their history may

1 ¹Finch, CS, **Echoes of the Old Dark Land: Themes from the African Eden**, Decatur: Khenti Publications, Inc., 1991, pp. 115-27.

have been tied to it. Still, that 'handful' represents a quantum increase over the state of matter a generation ago, so it can be said that progress has not been entirely lacking.

It is pertinent to quote R.T. Rundle Clark on the matter of the significance of the pole in the cosmic life of ancient Egypt:

No other ancient people was so deeply affected by the eternal circuit of the stars around a point in the northern sky. Here must be the node of the universe, the center of regulation, able to be located but invisible—for in antiquity the Pole star was not in its present position. The celestial pole is 'that place' or 'great city.' Sometimes the pole is regarded as a tree with the circumpolar stars—as souls—perching on its branches; at others, it is a tower or pole with guide-ropes.²

Clark, at least, seems to tacitly recognize—without coming right out and saying it—the critical role of the polar precession in the cultural history of the Nile Valley. The Egyptian sense of Destiny—personal, national, and cosmic—was indissolubly linked to the Precession and the idea of the Great Year. To review: the earth experiences three motions - a rotation around its axis, a revolution around the sun, and a gyration of its pole around the pole of the ecliptic. This latter motion, caused by the 23½° tilt of the earth's pole from vertical due to the gravitational pull of the sun and the moon, results in a 'wobble' of the magnetic pole backwards around the vertical pole—the 'pole of the ecliptic'—that takes 25,900 years to complete. This motion is the precession and there are two ways to track it: (1) mark the succession of constellations in the band of the zodiac that rise heliacally (before the sun) at the spring equinox or (2) follow the movement of

2 Rundle Clark RT, **Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt**, London: Thames & Hudson, (1959), 1978, p.58

the circumpolar constellations that transit to (and through) the magnetic pole. The ancient Egyptians's description of the polar axis of the earth is revealed by Budge who says,

There was a northern support called *UPT-TA*...
like a tent pole. The moon and sun moved
under the plate but the stars were hung in it
like a lamp and the stars were called 'lamps.'³

Now *upt-ta* translates literally as 'top of the earth' and so is the Egyptian term for the pole. The stars that were hung on the plate 'like a lamp' were the circumpolar stars. The Egyptian name for the circumpolar stars was *akhemu seku*, 'the never-setting stars,' or the 'imperishable stars.'

In the so-called **Old Chronicle** of Manetho, dating from about 200 AD–440 years after Manetho wrote his celebrated **History of Egypt**—and representing a redacted and corrupted version of the original *Epitome* of Manetho's **History**, there is recorded a 'super time-cycle' (or 'Super Great Year') of 36,525 years that encompasses ancient Egypt's 'legendary' plus her dynastic history. The **Old Chronicle** writer points out that this super-cycle of 36,525 years contains exactly 25 Sothic Years, each Sothic Year being equal to 1,461 calendar years. Thus $36,525 = 1,461 \times 25$. What is noteworthy about this figure of 36,525 years is that when it is added to the year 331 BC, when Manetho's **History** ends, it takes this 'super period' back to **36,856 BC**. As will be seen later, the beginning of the current cycle of the zodiacal Great Year began 10,909 BC meaning that the previous zodiacal Great Year began **36,809 BC** ($10,909 + 25,900 = 36,809$). Thus,

3 ³Budge EAW, **From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt**, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, p. 239.

these two datings fall within 47 years of one another. Such a close correspondence cannot possibly be coincidental and as the author has said in an earlier work⁴, it means that the **Old Chronicle**, attributed to Manetho, was making a reference to the precessional Great Year. In fact, Syncellus, the 9th century Christian writer reporting this information, makes a more categorical statement in this regard a few pages afterward:

If this total [36,525 years] is broken up, or divided, 25 times into periods of 1461 years, it reveals the periodic return of the Zodiac which is commonly referred to in Egyptian and Greek books, that is its revolution from one point back to that same point again, namely the first minute of the first degree of the equinoctial sign of the Zodiac, the Ram as it is called by them, according to the account given in *The General Discourses of Hermes* and in the *Cyranides*.⁵

What deserves special notice from this quotation is that the writers of late antiquity *knew* that the ancient Egyptians had discovered, tracked, and tied their historical chronology to the precessional Great Year.

The zodiacal constellations number 12 and each of these constellations rises heliacally at the spring or vernal equinox for 2,158 years before yielding to the constellation in front of it (the precessional motion is retrograde). The ‘yielding’ is caused by the gradual, ever-later rising of the established vernal heliacal constellation because of the precessional motion until it can no longer be seen because it is visually blotted out by the dawning sunlight. The constellation that will follow it then begins to

4 ⁴ Vid., Finch, op. cit., p. 123.

5 ⁵ Waddell WG, translator, **Manetho**, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1940) 1980, p. 231.

rise heliacally, that is, just early enough before sunrise not to be visually blocked out by the morning light. This equinoctal rising period of 2,158 years constitutes an 'Age' in the zodiacal precession, meaning that there are 12 Ages in the Zodiacal Great Year. On the other hand, the circumpolar constellations number seven (7) and each of these constellations inhabits the magnetic north pole for 3,703 years before yielding to the next constellation moving toward the pole. This 3,703-year period constitutes an Age in the Polar Great Year and there are seven such Ages. It should be noted that the two Great Years are the product of the same phenomenon and both last 25,900 years. This phenomenon must have been known for a very long time, considering the way the ancient Egyptians interwove it into their history. In fact, since it may have been discovered no later than 40,000 years ago (if not earlier), knowledge of the precessional phenomenon in ancient Africa would pre-date the existence of historical Egypt itself.⁶ No self-respecting Africanist, Egyptologist, or Antiquities scholar is prepared to admit any such thing. Still, it is becoming harder to avoid the presumption that, at the very least, the Great Year calendar was in place and active no later than about 11,000 BC. The work of West and Schoch on the re-dating the Sphinx, discussed earlier, points ineluctably in that direction.

Below, are tables of the two precessional Great Years:

6 ⁶Cf., Finch, op. cit., p. 125.

POLAR CONSTELLATION-SIGNS DEFINING EACH AGE (3,703 YEARS)	PRESENT NAMES OF CONSTELLATIONS	DATES (APPROX.) FOR BEGINNING OF THE AGES (-) = BC (+) = AD
<i>Shu, the Kneeler</i> (incl. the star Vega) that later became <i>Hercules, the Kneeler</i>	Hercules	(-) 12,762
<i>Ploughman, the Vinegrower—the earliest figure of Osiris</i> (incl. parts of Ursa Major)	Boötes	(-) 9,059
<i>Ta-Urt, Hippopotamus Goddess</i> that became the <i>Celestial Serpent</i> later	Draco (Celestial Serpent)	(-) 5,356
<i>Wep-wat, Divine Jackal in Egypt</i> but 'Little Bear' in Greece	Ursa Minor (Little Bear)	(-) 1,653*
<i>Kaf, Ape of Thoth</i> that became the <i>Cosmic Ethiopian King</i> afterward	Cepheus (Ethiopian King)	(+) 2,050*
<i>Nekhebit, Vulture Goddess in Egypt</i> who became the <i>Celestial Swan</i> later	Cygnus (Swan)	(+) 5,753
<i>Apesh, the Ancient Tortoise</i> that furnished the shell to string the <i>Lyre</i>	Lyra (Lyre)	(+) 9,456

(* The Dates in **bold** indicate the beginning and the end of the current Polar Age.)

ZODIACAL CONSTELLATION-SIGNS DEFINING EACH AGE (2,158 YEARS)	PRESENT NAMES OF CONSTELLATIONS	DATES (APPROX.) FOR BEGINNING OF THE AGES (-) = BC (+) = AD
<i>Atum, the Lion-Power/Cosmic Man</i>	Leo	(-) 10,909
<i>Khepera, the Scarab Beetle</i>	Cancer	(-) 8,751
<i>Set/Horus, the Twins</i>	Gemini	(-) 6,593
<i>Ptah-Apis (Osiris), the Bull</i>	Taurus	(-) 4,435
<i>Amon, the Ram</i>	Aries	(-) 2,277
<i>Ant & Abtu, the Two Fishes of the Boat of Ra</i>	Pisces	(-) 119
<i>Hathor-Nut, Great Mother of the Waters</i>	Aquarius (Aquaria?)	(+) 2,039
<i>Menu, the Divine Goat</i>	Capricorn	(+) 4,197
<i>Shu (or Set), the Divine Archer</i>	Sagittarius	(+) 6,355
<i>Serqet, the Scorpion Goddess</i>	Scorpio	(+) 8,513
<i>Ma'at, the Scales</i>	Libra	(+) 10,671
<i>Isis, Virgin Mother (of Horus)</i>	Virgo	(+) 12,829

(* The Dates in **bold** indicate the beginning and the end of the current Zodiacal Age.)