

Ancient Egyptian Chronology and the Book of Genesis

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Abstract

One of the most popular topics among young earth creationists and apologists is the relationship of the Bible with Ancient Egyptian chronology. Whether it concerns who the pharaoh of the Exodus was, the background of Joseph, or the identity of Shishak, many Christians (and non-Christians) have wondered how these two topics fit together. This paper deals with the question, "How does ancient Egyptian chronology correlate with the book of Genesis?" In answering this question it begins with an analysis of every Egyptian dynasty starting with the 12th Dynasty (this is where David Down places Moses) and goes back all the way to the so called "Dynasty 0." After all the data is presented, this paper will look at the different possibilities that can be constructed concerning how long each of these dynasties lasted and how they relate to the biblical dates of the Great Flood, the Tower of Babel, and the Patriarchs.

Keywords: Egypt, pharaoh, Patriarchs, chronology, Abraham, Joseph

Introduction

During the past century some scholars have proposed new ways of dating the events of ancient history before c.700BC.¹ In 1991 a book entitled *Centuries of Darkness* by Peter James and four of his colleagues shook the very foundations of ancient chronology. They proposed a 250-year reduction of the dates in the Near East and Mediterranean before c. 700BC and this has resulted in new interpretations for ancient history and the Bible.² The Conquest has been placed in new archaeological strata and so have the events and periods of the Exodus, the Judges, and the United Monarchy. However, not as much research has been done on how the book of Genesis fits into all of this. This paper will not only consider the question of when the Patriarchs entered and lived in Egypt but also will consider if the chronology of certain periods of early Egyptian history (Early Dynastic, Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period, and the Middle

Kingdom) need to be revised. This is important when considering the relationship between Egyptian history and the Tower of Babel. The traditional dating of Ancient Egyptian chronology places its earliest dynasties before the biblical dates of the Flood and confusion of the languages at Babel. This paper will examine if and how these early dynasties correlate with these events in Scripture. This paper begins with the assumption that David Down's placement of the Exodus in the late Middle Kingdom and Amenemhat III as Moses' father-in-law is correct (Down 2001).³ It will begin with the 12th Dynasty and work itself back to the earliest rulers.

The Chronology of the Twelfth Dynasty of Egypt

In his research David Down places the birth of Moses in the reign of Amenemhat III, who was the sixth king of the 12th Dynasty (Ashton and Down

¹ See for instance, Courville 1971; James et al 1991; Rohl 1995; Velikovsky 1952.

² Rohl has proposed a 350-year reduction and Down, Courville, and Velikovsky about 500 years but all put the Exodus around the same time (12/13th Dynasties).

³ A short summary for placing the Exodus in the Middle Kingdom is included for anyone who has never read about this topic. When one accepts that a 250-year downdating of ancient chronology is needed (according to the book *Centuries of Darkness*), the Middle Kingdom naturally is dated to the time period of the Exodus. The standard dates for the 12th Dynasty are 1985–1773 or 1939–1760 and for the 13th Dynasty: 1773–1650 or 1759–1630 (see table 16). When these dynasties are brought down 250 years, they match up with the time of Moses.

- This is interesting because Semitic slaves are present in Egypt from the Late 12th Dynasty through the middle of the 13th Dynasty. These slaves also disappeared suddenly during the mid-13th Dynasty, probably during the reign of Neferhotep I (Down 2001).
- The biblical Ramesses is thought to have been Avaris (Tell el-Daba). Avaris was built up at the end of the 12th and into the 13th Dynasties. Evidence for Asiatics has been found at Avaris during this time (Bourriau 2002, p. 188).
- Amenemhat III had a daughter who seems to have no blood descendant and could be Moses' adoptive mother (see Down 2001 for more).
- Manetho says that the Hyksos conquered Egypt without a battle around the end of the 13th Dynasty. This would make perfect sense since the army of Egypt was drowned in the Red Sea during the Exodus so Egypt would have had no army (or a very small one) to defend itself from invaders (Down 2001).

All of this (although very brief) seems to imply that the Exodus took place during the mid 13th Dynasty. See the works of Down for a more in depth analysis of this.

2006; Down 2001). The exact year is unknown, but since it is unlikely that Moses was chased out of Egypt after the fall of this dynasty we can narrow down to approximately which years he would have been born.⁴ Amenemhat III ruled 46 years according to the archaeological record. His two successors, Amenemhat IV (whose first year is possibly the same as Amenemhat III's 44th year)⁵ and Sobekneferu, ruled about 10 and 4 years respectively (Schneider 2006, pp.173–174). Sobekneferu was the daughter of Amenemhat III and could have possibly been the adoptive mother of Moses (see Down 2001³). It is assumed that Moses fled from Egypt to Midian before the 12th Dynasty ended with Sobekneferu. If we place Moses' birth in Amenemhat III's 13th year this would place Moses' 40th year in Amenemhat IV's year 10.⁶ If we place Moses' birth year in Amenemhat III's first year it would place Moses' 40th year within his reign. It would seem unusual if Sobekneferu tried to kill Moses, her adoptive son. So this narrows down the birth of Moses to Amenemhat III's first to 13th years.

Table 1. Twelfth Dynasty (after Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 35 and Schneider 2006)

	King's Name	Turin Canon	Archaeological Record
1.	Amenemhat I	[X]9	30
2.	Senusret I	45	44
3.	Amenemhat II	10 + or 30 + [X]	35
4.	Senusret II	19	8
5.	Senusret III	30 + [X]	19/30/33/39
6.	Amenemhat III	40 + [X]	45 for sure, probably 46
7.	Amenemhat IV	9 years 3 months 27 days	9 for sure, maybe a year 10
8.	Sobekneferu	3 years 10 months 24 days	Year 3

The next step is to determine the length of the 12th Dynasty prior to Amenemhat III's accession. Table 1 places the kings of the 12th Dynasty into chronological order and gives the reigns of these kings according to the Turin Canon (a papyrus dating from the 19th Dynasty listing Egyptian kings) and the archaeological record (the contemporary evidence). However, there is a debate going on among Egyptologists as to whether or not co-regencies existed during the 12th Dynasty. Before it can be determined how long this dynasty lasted, these possible co-regencies must be examined.

Let's begin with the first two kings, Amenemhat I and Senusret I. The archaeological record indicates 30 and 44 years respectively. However, one of the records (the Stele of Antef) states that Year 30 for Amenemhat I and Year 10 for Senusret I are one and the same (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 37), indicating a co-regency between these two monarchs. This co-regency is also alluded to in the *Instruction of Amenemhat* (Simpson 1956, p. 215). Furthermore, year 24 of Amenemhat I is given as corresponding to a unnamed year of Senusret I in the Stela of Nesu-Montu and this same stela also refers to the kings in the dual at the beginning of the text (Simpson 1956, p. 215). Thomas Schneider also mentions that

an architrave from Matariya... names both kings symmetrically with their titularies and apparently as co-reigning builders; both are designated as *nsw bjt* and *living Horus* (i.e. as reigning king) (Schneider 2006, p. 171).

Adding more, Schneider mentions that

the control marks from Lisht... reveal that it was only in regnal year 10 of [Senusret] I that the construction of his pyramid began, i.e., apparently after the death and burial of [Amenemhat] I in his pyramid complex (Schneider 2006, p. 171).

All of these records strongly suggest that these two kings were co-regents.⁷

Now, for the third king of the 12th Dynasty, Amenemhat II, the archaeological record states 35 years, and he had a co-regency with both his predecessor, Senusret I, and one with his successor, Senusret II (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 38). The Turin Canon entry for Amenemhat II is damaged in the "ones" place but shows that he ruled 30+ years. The Stele of Wepwaweto indicates that his 2nd year was the same as Year 44 of Senusret I and the Stela of Hapu equates Amenemhat's Year 35 with Year 3 for Senusret II, the fourth king of the dynasty (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 38).

For Senusret II, the Turin Canon says 19 years and the archaeological record says eight. Possible evidence for a reign of eight years includes:

1. Extremely limited quarrying activity
2. A restriction of the distribution of monuments
3. Few major officials known from his reign (Simpson 1984)

⁴ It is unlikely that a new dynasty would keep a Semitic prince from a older dynasty.

⁵ Schneider (2006, p. 173) mentions that a rock inscription at Semna (RIS 7) equates Amenemhat IV's first year with that of Amenemhat III's year 44 (or possibly year 46? or 48?). This co-regency is also supported by "representations of two kings from the pyramid complex of [Amenemhat] III in Hawara."

⁶ David Down believes that Moses was Amenemhat IV (Down 2001). However, this writer disagrees with Down on this point since Amenemhat IV clearly continued to rule after the death of Amenemhat III.⁵ If Amenemhat IV was Moses he would have to be co-regent for all ten years not just a couple.

⁷ The Turin Canon is not inconsistent with this interpretation, being damaged for Amenemhat I and listing 45 years for Senusret I. The "tens" place is damaged for the first king but could read "29."

This data seems to point to a short reign but it must be noted that just because the evidence is scanty for his rule does not provide proof that he ruled for only eight years and the Turin Canon's 19 years may be correct (more on this below).

For the fifth king, Senusret III, we have a number of possibilities. The Turin Canon credits him with at least 30 years (the entry being damaged in the "ones" position); however, the highest the archaeological record goes is 19 years. There are, nevertheless, other records that may indicate a longer reign for him. In 1990 a record was discovered that strongly indicates Senusret III reached Year 30, "but the king's name isn't mentioned in the writing, and the argument is based on the context" (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 40). There is also a possible Year 39 marker, but again the name of the pharaoh is not mentioned. However, Josef Wegner has given evidence that Senusret III did in fact reach a Year 39 and that there was a co-regency between him and his successor Amenemhat III. His evidence includes:

1. The Year 39 marker was found in a context that belongs to Senusret III and not in the context of Amenemhat III as some believe. This context was Senusret's mortuary temple and was built to possibly be his burial place. This would be strange if the marker indicated Year 39 for Amenemhat III. Why would Amenemhat build a burial chamber for his father who died nearly 40 years earlier (Wegner 1996, p. 257)?
2. The context of the find was also discovered "deep within a mass of material." This would make the marker intrusive if it didn't belong to Senusret. The deepness of the find makes it improbable that it is from Amenemhat (Wegner 1996, p. 260).
3. The context also includes pottery that is typical of the reign of Senusret III (Wegner 1996, pp. 257–260).
4. Some statues of Senusret III show him as a young man, and some show him as an old man. This finding would be unusual if he reigned only 19 years but would make sense if he reigned almost 40 years (Wegner 1996, pp. 265–266).
5. Other evidence includes co-dated offerings, co-dated monuments, and co-naming in stelae, seals, and small objects. There is also the coronation inscription of Amenemhat III being crowned before a living Senusret III (Wegner 1996, pp. 270–274).

Now the above five points by themselves do not prove a co-regency but, taken together, they seem to imply rather strongly that these two pharaohs ruled at the same time for at least awhile (Year 1 of Amenemhat III equals Year 20 of Senusret III).

Before we move on to the 11th Dynasty some comments must be made concerning the discrepancy between the Turin Canon and the archaeological data regarding the length of Senusret II's reign. The Turin Canon is remarkably close to the archaeological records for five⁸ out of the eight rulers of the 12th Dynasty, and it is probably close for two others.⁹ The only king for whom the Turin Canon has a clear discrepancy with the contemporary data is for Senusret II. Senusret II has only eight years recorded in the archaeological data but 19 years in the Turin Canon. Years 9–19 are not extant in the contemporary records, but that does not mean they did not exist; there is also the possibility that the Turin Canon is wrong here.

In an effort to evaluate the conflicting claims for Senusret II's reign, the archaeological records carry much weight with this writer. The three points made above concerning the limited documentation from Senusret II's reign is strong evidence for a short reign. For Senusret II to have extremely limited quarrying activity, little distribution of monuments, and few officials known from his reign is very odd in a dynasty of kings for whom documentation is generally well preserved. For all three of these to be lacking for one king is strange.

There is a possible explanation to consider for the Turin Canon's reading. Concerning the 19 years recorded for Senusret II in the Turin Canon, the list may be wrong because the large number of co-regencies in the dynasty may have confused the author of the list. The 19 years is how long Senusret III, his successor, ruled by himself and since the Canon has 30+ years for Senusret III on the next line, the writer may have erroneously thought that the 19 belonged to his predecessor, Senusret II. Another reason some ascribe the 19 years to Senusret II is that the *Illahun papyri* indicates that a Year 19 of a king is directly followed by a Year 1 of another king; however, since some scholars do not agree with a co-regency between Senusret III and Amenemhat III, they naturally think that the 19 years must belong to Senusret II (Wegner 1996, p. 267). After reviewing the five points described above in evidence for this co-regency, it seems clear that Senusret III and Amenemhat III did overlap by many years, allowing the "Year 19/Year 1" papyri to apply to them rather than to Senusret II. Thus, while we cannot be dogmatic as to the length of Senusret II's reign, the shorter 8-year reign is strongly supportable.

In conclusion, the evidence is in favor of a number of co-regencies during the 12th Dynasty. It can be seen that the length of this dynasty before Amenemhat III was 121–132 years, depending on whether Senusret II ruled for eight or 19 years. Table 2 (in the last column) indicates this.

⁸ These five kings being Senusret I, Senusret III, Amenemhat III, Amenemhat IV, and Sobekneferu.

⁹ These two kings being Amenemhat I and Amenemhat II.

Table 2. Length of Twelfth Dynasty before Amenemhe III with co-regencies (after Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 40)

	Total Length of Reign	Co-regency with Successor	Total Years Before Start of Successor
Amenemhat I	30	10	20
Senusret I	44 (45?)	2(3?)	42
Amenemhat II	35	3	32
Senusret II	8 or 19		8 or 19
Senusret III	39		19

The Eleventh Dynasty (see Table 3)

Next, as we count back through Egyptian history, we come to the 11th Dynasty. The Turin Canon claims 143 years for this dynasty. This writer for now will assume that this number is correct for a couple of different reasons. First, where the evidence is preserved in the archaeological record for the 11th Dynasty kings, the Turin Canon's data matches up quite nicely. It is, of course, not perfect since the archaeological record is incomplete but where the evidence is available the contemporary records do not contradict the Turin Canon.

Second, one possible piece of evidence can be taken from Manetho. Manetho records 43 years for the 11th Dynasty but “that the ‘hundreds’ figure dropped out in transmission is not an unreasonable resolution of this inconsistency” (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 52). Now this is not, of course, the greatest amount of evidence but it is something that should be considered when determining the length of this dynasty.

One last thing to consider for the 11th Dynasty concerns possible co-regencies. The Turin Canon does not acknowledge the co-regencies of the 12th Dynasty; therefore, if any existed during the eleventh, the list probably would not have acknowledged them either. The current lack of evidence for co-regencies in the 11th Dynasty does not conclusively prove none existed. For now, given the agreement between the Turin Canon and the archeological records, this paper will assign 143 years to the 11th Dynasty.

Table 3. The Eleventh Dynasty

King's Name	Years (in Turin Canon)	Archaeological Data (Seidlmayer 2006b, p. 160)
Mentuhotep I		
Intef I	16	
Intef II	49	Year 50 (probably year of burial)
Intef III	8	
Mentuhotep II	51	Year 46
Mentuhotep III	12	Year 8
Mentuhotep IV ⁱ	7	Year 2
Total	143	106

ⁱ This name does not appear in the Turin Canon but he is known to exist through archaeological evidence.

First Intermediate Period

The 11th Dynasty king Mentuhotep II reunited Egypt sometime during his reign. Before his time Egypt is believed to have consisted of two kingdoms: one in the north (9th and 10th Dynasties) and one in the south (11th Dynasty). The 7th and 8th Dynasties are also included in this era. This period is known as the First Intermediate Period (FIP), thought to be a time of chaos but about which little is actually known.

The FIP's chronology is confusing. Records for the 7th–10th Dynasties and the 11th Dynasty before Mentuhotep II are both scanty and conflicting. There are varying accounts regarding the northern kings, the 9th and 10th Dynasties ruling from Herakleopolis, recorded in the Turin Canon and Manetho's writings. Manetho states that the 9th Dynasty consisted of four kings ruling for 100 years (according to Eusebius' quotations from Manetho) or 19 kings who ruled 409 years (according to Africanus' version of Manetho), these widely discrepant records being unverifiable since Manetho's original writings are not extant.¹⁰ Both Eusebius and Africanus record that Manetho has 19 kings for 185 years for the 10th Dynasty. The Turin Canon has only 18 kings for both the 9th and 10th Dynasties; however, almost all the names and all the reign lengths are missing.

Before the 9th–11th Dynasties, most of the pharaohs, including those of the 7th and 8th Dynasties, ruled from Memphis. For these two earlier dynasties (which are part of the FIP) the Manetho sources are even more confusing: Africanus records that the 7th Dynasty had 70 kings who ruled for 70 days in all and that the 8th Dynasty had 27 kings who reigned for 146 years. Eusebius says that the 7th Dynasty had five kings who ruled for 75 days total and that the 8th Dynasty had five kings who ruled for 100 years.

There are a number of different ways that scholars date the kings of the FIP. The first way is that of most Egyptologists. These scholars have a different layout for this period than does Manetho. As one can see from Table 4, Egyptologists date the northern Herakleopolitans as starting after the 8th Dynasty had ended and start the southern 11th Dynasty about 35–38 years later. However, the archaeological data for the chronology for the 9th and 10th Dynasties is lost, and the c. 35–38 years for the advent of the 11th Dynasty is just a guess. Chronological data for the 7th and 8th Dynasties is also lost for the most part and their chronological relationship to the other dynasties of the FIP is just a guess.

¹⁰ Manetho is preserved in the writings of Julius Africanus, a third century Christian writer; Eusebius, the 4th century “father” of Church history; and Josephus, a 1st century Jewish historian.

Table 4. Traditional chronology for the Sixth–Eleventh Dynasties (through Mentuhotep II); all dates are BC

Dynasties	Shaw 2002, p. 480	Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, p. 491
6th Dynasty	2345–2181	2305–2150
7th and 8th Dynasties	2181–2160	2150–2118
9th and 10th Dynasties	2160–2025	2118–1980
11th Dynasty (before Mentuhotep II)	2125–2055	2080–2009
Mentuhotep II	2055–2004	2009–1959

The 9th and 10th Dynasties are believed to have been contemporary with the 11th Dynasty until Mentuhotep II of the 11th Dynasty united Egypt. Although the exact timing is unknown, he united the northern and southern kingdoms sometime between his 14th and 41st years (Seidlmayer 2006b, pp. 162–163). Therefore, his unification of Egypt occurred sometime between 87 and 114 years after the beginning of the 11th Dynasty.

Prior to the unification of Egypt under the 11th Dynasty, there are several questions that need to be answered. First of all, although it is generally thought that the Herakleopolitan dynasties (9th and 10th) began to rule before the 11th Dynasty started, we need to determine when. Secondly, the placement of the 7th and 8th Dynasties needs to be clarified. For instance, how do scholars come to the conclusion that the 7th and 8th Dynasties ruled for about 21–32 years before the 9th and 10th Dynasties existed? And how is it known that Dynasty 11 came to power about 35–38 years after the Herakleopolitans came to power?

To find these answers, another aspect of this period needs to be examined. There were many local rulers/dynasties ruling in Upper Egypt (the southern Nile region) during the early part of the FIP (that is, before Dynasty 11). In fact, most of the information concerning this time comes from the tombs of these local dynasts. Why do these local rulers matter? Well, it is these local rulers that scholars use to determine the accepted chronology of the early FIP. Seidlmayer (2006b, pp. 166–167) suggests that the period between the 8th and 11th Dynasties must be long because of several generations of local rulers/administrators in each town in Upper Egypt between these dynasties. However, most information for these local rulers is (as mentioned above) from their graves, and nothing says exactly how long the period is. A long time-frame between the end of Dynasty 6 and the beginning of Dynasty 11 is based only on assumptions about average generation lengths and partly on Manetho's 185 years for his 10th Dynasty. Seidlmayer plainly states that

of course, there is no way to be sure about the correctness of Manetho's figure; if one chooses to disregard Manetho's data, however, the length of the Herakleopolitan dynasty becomes entirely a matter of speculation (Seidlmayer 2006b, p. 166).

As mentioned, scholars use average generation lengths to help them determine the length of the period, but do these really help? These do not work as well as many would hope since an average generation can be different throughout history; furthermore, local political and economic circumstances can effect how likely it is for a single king (or governor or other leader) to rule. For instance, during civil war or economic hardship it may be more likely for a country to go through many more rulers than normal, whereas during a time of peace and economic prosperity a ruler would not have as many rivals as during hard times. A royal family's inheritable health issues, for instance, not allowing them to live as long as others (or possibly vice versa) could have an impact on average generation length. An average generation is usually thought to be about 20–40 years depending upon the scholar or ancient source. However, history shows many exceptions. One example is the 13th Dynasty, which according to Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton (2006, p. 492), had 12 rulers in just c. 129 years, an average of 10.75 years per generation. However, the total number of rulers in the 13th Dynasty is actually uncertain. Manetho assigns it 60 kings, and the Turin Canon assigns it almost the same. Most of the reign lengths are lost, but of those that survive, most are very short (2–3 years, some a little more, and some being less than one year, with only a couple being 10 or more years). If this dynasty really did have as many kings as the Turin Canon or Manetho says, then the generation average would be only about 2–3 years for each king. Thus, generating a chronology based on an average generation is not very reliable

What are we then to do when it comes to the chronology of this period if we cannot rely on average generation lengths or Manetho? Could the early FIP have been longer or perhaps shorter? Detlef Franke when discussing the early FIP and its chronology, even admits "yet events can also accelerate, and many things can happen in a relatively short time" (Franke 2001, p. 528). Franke agrees with the idea that this period lasted for a long time and agrees with the use of average generation lengths, yet he even admits that it all could have happened in a shorter timeframe. So, is there another way to determine just how long this period lasted?

Table 5. Sixth–Eighth Dynasty kings at Memphis (after Beckerath 1962, p. 143; Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 147–148 and Ryholt 2000, p. 99)

	King's Name	Manetho Name	Turin Canon	Manetho	High Year Mark	Saqqara King List	Abydos King List
1.	Teti	Othoes	Lost	30	11th count	X	X
2.	Userkare	—	Lost	—	—		X
3.	Pepi I	Phius	20	53	25th cattle count	X	X
4.	Merenre I	Methusuphis	14 or 44	7	Year after fifth cattle count	X	X
5.	Pepi II (Neferkare I)	Phiops	90 + X	94	Year after 31st cattle count	X	X
6.	Merenre II	Menthusuphis	1	1	—		X
7.	Netjerkare (Nitocris) Siptah	Nitocris	Lost	12			X
8.	Menkare	—	—	—	—		X
9.	Neferkare	—	—	—	—		X
10.	Neferkare Neby	—	—	—	—		X
11.	Djedkare Shemai	—	—	—	—		X
12.	Neferkare Khendu	—	—	—	—		X
13.	Merenhor	—	—	—	—		X
14.	Neferkamin	—	—	—	—		X
15.	Nikare	—	—	—	—		X
16.	Neferkare Tereru	—	—	—	—		X
17.	Neferkahor	—	—	—	—		X
18.	Neferkare Pepi-Sonb	—	Lost	—	—		X
19.	Neferkamin Anu	—	Lost	—	—		X
20.	Qakaure Ibi	—	2 years 1 month	—	—		X
21.	Neferkaure	—	4 years 2 months	—	—		X
22.	Neferkauhor Chui (?)	—	2 years 1 month 1 day	—	—		X
23.	Neferirkare II	—	1 year	—	—		X

Table 5 sets forth the kings of the 6th–8th Dynasties as set forth in Manetho, the Turin Canon, the Saqqara King List, and the Abydos King List.¹¹ (These last two lists do not give how many years each king ruled, so the X indicates that the particular pharaoh is in the list.)

The above table illustrates for us an important point. Out of the four lists (Turin Canon, Manetho, Saqqara, and Abydos) we have a completely different listing of kings for this period. Abydos has many more kings than all the others while the Table of Saqqara has only four kings. The Turin Canon agrees with the Abydos list as to a king between Teti and Pepi I while Manetho agrees with the Saqqara list by omitting this king, as if he never existed.

Another observation evident from these lists (not indicated in the table) is that both the Saqqara and the Abydos lists omit all the kings of the Herakleopolitans and all the 11th Dynasty kings before Mentuhotep II, who unified Egypt and brought the FIP to an end. Furthermore, there is no archaeological data to pinpoint when the Memphite kings of the 7th and 8th Dynasties came to an end relative to the ascension of the Herakleopolitian kings. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Shaw 2002, p. 480) gives only 21 years

for the 7th and 8th Dynasties (24 years if we include Nitocris) as does the *Cambridge Ancient History* (Edwards et al 1971, p. 995). Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton (2006, p. 491) give 32 years for this same time period. The 21–32 years are based on little to no evidence and are just a guess.

There have been four ways to interpret the chronology of the FIP. The first is mentioned above and is accepted by most scholars (that is, c. 21–32 year period for the 7th and 8th Dynasties followed by c. 35–38 year period for the 9th and 10th Dynasties prior to the rise of the 11th Dynasty). The second way to interpret the chronology is what is accepted by J. V. Beckerath (1962, pp. 146–147). He believes that the 9th and 10th Dynasties followed the 8th Dynasty but that there was never a time when the Herakleopolitans ruled all of Egypt; instead, he contends that the 11th Dynasty began to rule Upper Egypt at the exact same time as the 9th Dynasty began. A third interpretation is that given by David Down. Down ends Dynasty 6 about halfway between the Middle Kingdom (11th and 12th Dynasties) and he places the 7th–11th Dynasties to the Second Intermediate Period. The fourth way to determine the chronology of this time is based on the arguments of Gary Greenberg. He

¹¹ These two lists (Saqqara and Abydos) were written at about the same time as the Turin Canon.

believes that each king list has its own point of view concerning this period:

While most Egyptologists tend to dismiss the differences among the Turin Canon, Table of [Saqqara], and the Table of Abydos as reflecting the chaotic nature of the First Intermediate Period... a more logical interpretation is that these king lists each presents a different political-theological viewpoint about the legitimacy of various kings. The Egyptians were a very conservative people and did not approve of abrupt changes in the political order. The populous saw the king as a human manifestation of the Egyptian god Horus. A challenge to the legitimate king was the equivalent of a challenge to the Horus. During the First Intermediate Period... there were possibly three rival kingdoms, Memphis, Thebes, and [Herakleopolis]. Only one could be the legitimate center of power. Horus could only rule from one throne. The central theological problem of the First Intermediate Period, then, was: "When did Horus stop ruling in Memphis and when did he begin to rule from another city?" The three king lists, I suggest, present three different viewpoints, each based on political-theological viewpoints (Greenberg 2003–2004, pp. 154–155).

The first list, the Saqqara, according to Greenberg,

Suggests a "plague on all your houses" point of view. Implying that the outbreak of troubles began either during or immediately after the reign of [Pepi] II, the fourth king (in the [Saqqara] and Manetho lists) of the Sixth Dynasty, the [Saqqara] scribe refuses to recognize any legitimate authority until [Mentuhotep II] reunited Egypt (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 155).

Therefore, the Table of Saqqara omits the entire time that there were competing kings in different parts of Egypt. This shows that there would be a short period of overlap between the Memphites and the Herakleopolitans, unlike what most Egyptologists claim. It is also possible that the Herakleopolitans began during the tail end of the reign of Pepi II.

The second king list, the Abydos,

Presents a very different perspective, that of the Memphite loyalist. What we see reflected here is definitive support for the Memphite throne, complete rejection of the Herakleopolitan claims, and some distaste for the Theban upstarts. It is only after the Memphite throne has ceased to exist and [Mentuhotep II] reunited Egypt that the Abydos scribe confers legitimacy on the Theban monarchy. If any Theban kings ruled between the time that the Memphite line ended and [Mentuhotep II] reunited Egypt, the Abydos scribe refuses to recognize their authority (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 155).

Now we come to the Turin Canon. This list is a Theban document, written by a Theban scribe during

a Theban administration. It presents a Theban point of view. Therefore, it begins the Eleventh Dynasty with the founders of the Theban line rather with the later reign of [Mentuhotep II]. But the Thebans can not allow a document to show Memphite kings on the throne at the same time as Theban kings. This would be sacrilege, an affront to Horus in Memphis. This raises the question of whether the Memphite line ended before Thebes came to the throne or after. The Turin Canon, however, only has twelve kings listed where the Abydos list has twenty-two. Since Thebes had an interest in showing a smooth transition from Memphis to Thebes, with no gaps, I suggest that the Turin Canon's Sixth Dynasty ended at exactly the point where it began the Eleventh Dynasty and that the Thebans deliberately omitted the last nine or ten Memphite kings in order to avoid any appearance of conflict. On the other hand, the Turin Canon does show a line of Herakleopolitan kings. This is politically significant. Theban authority stems from its defeat of the Herakleopolitan kings. Therefore the Herakleopolitan kings need to be mentioned. But the inclusion of the Herakleopolitan kings also serves to remind Egyptians that the Memphites couldn't defeat the Herakleopolitans, and that Horus must have abandoned Memphis in favor of those kings who did defeat the Herakleopolitans. If this analysis is correct, we can date the end of the Turin Canon's Sixth Dynasty to the start of the Eleventh Dynasty, and link the Old Kingdom's chronology to that of the Middle Kingdom's (Greenberg 2003–2004, pp. 155–156).

Thus Greenberg believes that the 11th Dynasty started before the Memphite kings came to an end and the Herakleopolitans started to rule right after the reign of Pepi II or even during the last part of his reign. If this is true then Pepi II's reign ended not too long before the 11th Dynasty began.

However, there is a problem with Greenberg's interpretation. There is a chance that the extra rulers in the Abydos List did not come after the seven rulers in the Turin Canon but ruled in between them. The Turin Canon has a six-year lacuna between Nitocris (#7 in Table 5) and Neferkare Pepi-Sonb (#18 in Table 5). Both Ryholt (2000, pp. 96–98) and Beckerath (1962, p. 145) believe that it was in this six-year period that the extra kings in the Abydos List ruled.

The reasons why the Turin Canon left these extra Abydos kings out are unknown, but there are a few possibilities. The first is that these kings were so weak the author of the Turin Canon believed they were an embarrassment to Egypt, thus excluding these kings. A second reason could be that these kings overlapped in some way which would go along with Greenberg's interpretation that the king lists didn't like reporting kings who did not rule all of Egypt or competing kings in different locations throughout Egypt.

There are, however, some important points that Greenberg makes. His analysis that each king list represents a different theological viewpoint is most interesting. This is evident since the Turin Canon includes the Herakleopolitans and the entire 11th Dynasty, and the Saqqara List omits every king between Pepi II and the reunification of Egypt under Mentuhotep II. Clearly, the author of the Saqqara list was dissatisfied with all of the kings in between these two benchmarks, perhaps because many of them never had complete control over all of Egypt. We should not assume that the omission implies that all of these rulers were weak: A few of these rulers either ruled for a long time (Intef II with a 49/50 year rule) or actually began construction of a pyramid complex (Qakaure Ibi—#20 in Table 5). Thus, the idea that every king during this period was short lived or weak is definitely false.

Let us now examine the rulers of the 7th and 8th Dynasties that have chronological data preserved for them. The Turin Canon (see table 5) gives five of these rulers reign lengths but the other three are lost (not including the six-year lacuna). The lengths that are still intact add up to ten years. Some archaeological data from this time has been recovered and according to Spalinger (1994, p.312) five year dates have been assigned to pharaohs from this time. These include:

1. "Year of the Unification of the Two Lands"
2. "Year of the 4th occurrence..."
3. "Year of the Unification of the Two Lands"
4. "Year (2?)¹²"
5. "Year 1"

If all of these are connected to five different pharaohs then we would have at least nine (eight?) years after Pepi II in the archaeological record (notice the year four and the regnal year four in the Turin Canon). The year 4 count shows that rulers during this time could have a length this long, so the three rulers with lost numbers could have reigned for a few years. The time between Pepi II of the 6th Dynasty and the start of the 11th Dynasty could be c. 19 years if the three kings that have lost chronological data are assigned one year a piece.

Before we move on let's go over some potential counter arguments against this reconstruction of the FIP chronology. Some will no doubt argue against the idea that there was an overlap between the 7th and 8th Dynasties and the Herakleopolitans. Franke believes that it would be "impossible" for local dynasties in Upper Egypt to have ruled during the 8th Dynasty (Franke 2001, p. 528). One must ask the obvious: Why is this impossible? In support of this "impossibility,"

Beckerath (1962, p. 144) points to the Coptos Decrees, which indicate a few 8th Dynasty kings ruling over all of Egypt. (The 7th and 8th Dynasty kings were acknowledged by those living in Coptos.)

However, there are some problems with this. First, just because a king claims he ruled over all of Egypt (or someone else claims that he did) does not mean he really did. Intef III of the 11th Dynasty was said to have been King of Upper and Lower Egypt by Prince Ideni of Abydos, but it is known that he ruled only in Upper Egypt (Hayes 1971, p. 478). Second, even Beckerath, (1962, p. 144) when referring to the unified land under the 7th–8th Dynasties, says that the nomarchs during these dynasties were nearly independent (he says "nearly independent" because of his belief in these two dynasties ruling all of Egypt). Why then is it so hard to imagine local rulers in Herakleopolis gaining power locally (for it is uncertain if they ever ruled all of Egypt)? For most of the 7th and 8th Dynasty kings in the Turin Canon and the Abydos King List we have only their names and practically nothing concerning events during their reigns. Thus, there is no evidence that they ruled all of Egypt; local rulers could have carved up Egypt while the kings from Memphis (7th and 8th Dynasties) were ruling a small section of the north. One last thing to consider here is the possibility of shifting geographic spheres of influence: there may have been times when some 7th and 8th Dynasty rulers ruled much of Egypt while the Herakleopolitans ruled only their own city but other times when the power shifted, leaving the 7th and 8th Dynasties to rule only their city while the Herakleopolitans were able to reign over the bulk of Egypt.

It is also possible that some of these local rulers were contemporary with the last part of Pepi II's reign. The last part of the reign of Pepi II is very poorly documented, and, as Greenberg mentioned above, the Table of Saqqara could point to an interpretation that the 9th and 10th Dynasties began at the tail end of the Pepi II's rule.

There is no evidence contradicting the idea of a short period between the end of Pepi II's reign and the start of the 11th Dynasty. Although it cannot be proven true, the king lists seem to imply that this period was shorter than what modern scholars believe.

This revised chronology of the FIP shows about 19 years for the 7th and 8th Dynasties instead of the standard 24–32 years. This chronology also removes the 35–38 years of the 9th–10th Dynasties in the standard chronology. It thus reduces the period by a total of about 40–51 years.

¹² Baud (2006, pp. 157–158) does not have "2."

The Old Kingdom

Now we come to the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 4–6).¹³ Before we proceed we must look at how these kings are dated. The pharaohs of this period used a census to date the years of their reign that is referred to as a cattle count system (like what we saw above with the last Memphite kings before the 11th Dynasty). For example a document may say something like “in the year of the sixth cattle count” or “the year after the eighth cattle count.” As it can be seen this system dates years of and after each census and because of this Sir Alan Gardiner (1945) made the assumption that each census was taken every other year; thus taking the highest known year and doubling it should correspond to how long the pharaoh ruled. Taking the above example “the year of the 6th cattle count” would be the 11th year. It is 11 years and not 12 years because the first cattle count was in year one of a particular king. “The year after the 8th cattle count” would be year 16 of that king. This method has been used every since the time of Gardiner and has been assumed to be valid.

However, a new study shows that the reign lengths of these kings may be inflated and that the cattle count system was more annual/irregular than biennial as previously believed. In his phenomenal paper, *Archaeological Remarks on the 4th and 5th Dynasty Chronology*, Miroslav Verner examines every single cattle count from the 4th and 5th Dynasties and makes the conclusion that they were not regularly biennial and the chronology of the Old Kingdom must therefore be reduced. He shows that “year of the counts” appears about two and a half times more often in the archaeological record than does “year after

the counts.” An example of this would be the reign of Snefru, who ruled in the 4th Dynasty. Records from his reign show that the workers of his pyramids used “year of the counts” much more often than they did “year after the counts” while working on them. If the biennial system was in use, were his builders only working every other year? This may indicate that the census was more often done annually and only occasionally was biennial. We shall now look at every cattle count for each Old Kingdom pharaoh to see how long each ruled. This will allow us to see if the traditional chronology should be reduced.

The Fourth Dynasty (see Table 6)

The 4th Dynasty included the builders of the pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx. When it comes to its chronology there is disagreement between the ancient king lists as to how many kings ruled at this time. The Turin Canon has eight and possibly even nine kings depending on how many of them are placed between Khafra and Menkaure (two of the pyramid builders). The space for this time is badly damaged and some scholars believe that two kings could fit here (Greenberg 2003–2004, p. 185).

The Saqqara List has nine kings but places them in a different order from the Turin Canon. The two kings between Khafra and Menkaure are instead placed after Menkaure with two other minor kings. The Abydos List has only six kings with only one king after Menkaure and no break between Khafra and Menkaure. Manetho has eight kings with no break between Khafra and Menkaure. To make things even worse a discovery in the Wady Hammamat of an inscription about these kings is incomplete but has

Table 6. Chronology of the Fourth Dynasty

King's Name	Modern (Shaw 2002, p. 480)	Turin Canon	Manetho	Highest "Year of The Cattle Count"	Highest "Year after The Cattle Count"	Ratio of Cattle Counts	Ireegular	Biennial
Snefru	24	24	29	24th	18th	12/3	27	46
Khufu	23	23	63	12th	13th	5/1	14	26
Djedefra	8	8	25	11th (10?)	—	2/0	11	21
Khafra	26	Lost	66	13th	5th	6/2	15	25
Hardjedef	—	Lost	—	—	—	—		
Bicheris	—	?	22	—	—	—		
Menkaure	29	18 (28?)	63	11th	11th (?)	2/3	14	22
Shepseskaf	5	4	7	1st	1st	1/1	2	2
Thamphthis	—	2	9	—	—	—		
Queen Khentkaus I	—	—	—	—	—	—		
Total	119	79 (89?) + x	284				83	142

¹³ Many Egyptologists include the 3rd Dynasty as part of the Old Kingdom while some consider it part of the Early Dynastic Period. For this essay it will be considered part of the latter.

two kings after Khafra; however, Menkaure is not one of them (Greenberg 2003–2004, p.185). The 4th Dynasty sequence of kings is in a confusing state, but the dynasty had at least six kings and there may have been three additional kings ruling for only a few days or months (or maybe not at all).

Snefru

Snefru was the founder of the 4th Dynasty. He ruled for 24 years according to the Turin Canon and 29 years according to Manetho. The highest preserved date for him is the year of the 24th count. He has twelve “year of the counts” preserved but only three “year after the counts” (Spalinger 1994, pp.281–283; Verner 2001, pp.365–368; Verner 2006, pp.128–131).¹⁴

As it can be seen there is a great disproportion between the number of “year of the counts” and “year after the counts” for his reign. Verner notes (2001, p.369) that the inscriptions concerning the building of the pyramid at Meidum contain marks that are only “year of the count.” This would imply that the pyramid was worked on every two years if the counts were biennial. Why would the work crews only work on a funerary monument so important to their pharaoh (thought to be a god in human form) every two years? This does not make sense if the cattle counts were taken every other year but if they were irregular then the large amount of “year of the counts” would make perfect sense.

If the counts are irregular then this would mean that Snefru reigned for at least 27 years since there are three “year after the counts” for his reign (note that the Turin Canon has 24 years while Manetho has 29 years). If the counts were biennial he would have ruled 46 years.¹⁵

Khufu

Khufu, the second king, is perhaps one of the most famous rulers in history since he is the builder of the Great Pyramid at Giza. The Turin Canon allots him 23 years while Manetho gives him 63 years. There are five “year of the counts” preserved for his reign¹⁶ with only one “year after the count” (Spalinger 1994, pp.283–285; Verner 2001, pp.372–373; Verner 2006, pp.131–132).¹⁷ The highest count from his reign is the “year after the 13th count” making his reign at least 14 years or 26 years (irregular or biennial respectively).

Djedefra

The third king of this dynasty was Djedefra. He is given eight years and 25 years in the Turin Canon and Manetho respectively. There are two “year of the counts” available from his reign; the highest being the 11th year.¹⁸ However, there are no “year after the counts” known from his reign so this makes his rule at least 11 years or 21 years (Verner 2001, pp.374–375; Verner 2006, p.132).¹⁹

Khafra

Khafra is the next king of this dynasty. He was the builder of the second largest pyramid and the Great Sphinx at Giza. His reign length is lost in the Turin Canon; however, Manetho gives him 66 years. Six “year of the counts” have been discovered with the 13th year as the highest; only two “year after the counts” are known. This would make his reign at least 15 or 25 years long (Spalinger 1994, pp.286–288; Verner 2001, pp.377–379; Verner 2006, pp.133–134).²⁰

¹⁴ “Year of the count”—2nd, 7th, 8th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 23rd, 24th

“Year after the count”—10th, 13th, 18th

¹⁵ It is 46 years and not 47 years since it is known that the “8th count” immediately followed the “7th count.”

¹⁶ Petrie says that he found “a year of the 17th count” but no other scholar has ever seen this. Petrie did not publish the exact location or even a copy of the inscription. Verner (2001, p.373) mentions that “such important written documents as the highest dates of Khufu’s reign would certainly have not remained overlooked and unrecorded.” Verner (2001, p.374) also notes that the 17th count is not present in the earlier versions of Petrie’s book, which were closer to the time of his excavations at Giza from 1880 to 1882 but are found in the later editions (1920s) after he had excavated at Meidum (1891 and 1908) where the 17th count appears with the name of Snefru. Why would he wait so long to mention this?

¹⁷ “Year of the count”—4th, 5th, 8th, 10th, 12th

“Year after the count”—13th

¹⁸ “Year of the count”—1st, 11th (10th?)

“Year after the count”—none

¹⁹ The 11th count could be interpreted to be a marker for Khufu and not Djedefra. The count was found on a roofing block in a boat pit of Khufu (Verner 2001, p.375). Scholars differ as to whom the inscription should be for. Spalinger (1994, pp.284–285) believes that it belongs to Khufu. Those who believe it is Khufu’s think that the stone was brought to the site during the time of Khufu and was already marked but was placed in the pit after Khufu had died (the boat was placed there by Djedefra). The reason for the confusion is because the very first report of the inscriptions in this area missed the mark, and it went unnoticed. Only five out of the 41 blocks were published. Also, the way they were published made it difficult to tell which side of which block the date came from and how it is related to other inscriptions (Verner 2001, p.376). Verner continues that the marks and inscriptions associated with the date “seem to form a coherent collection relating to different stages of the same building project [realized] by Djedefra’s crews,” so this date seems to belong only to Djedefra and not someone else (it also must be mentioned that Djedefra’s name is exclusive in connection with this date).

²⁰ “Year of the count”—1st, 5th, 7th, 10th, 12th, 13th

“Year after the count”—4th, 5th

Hardjedef (?) and Bicheris/Rabaef (?)

The period between Khafra and Menkaure (see below for this king) has been a challenge to Egyptologists. As mentioned above some sources put one or two kings in this place. The names of these possible kings are said to be Hardjedef and Rabaef (Greenberg 2003–2004, p.184). These names are based on the Wadi Hammamat inscription already mentioned but Manetho (who has just one king extra king) gives the name Bicheris. Whether or not the Turin Canon has one or two kings is a matter of debate. Some archaeologists say that one of these kings may have built the Great Pit in Zawiyet el-Aryan but this is one of the least known of all the monuments in the pyramid fields (Verner 2001, p.380). The pit is an unfinished substructure of a pyramid and the king's name associated with it has caused major difficulties in interpretation. Verner (2001, p.380) states that the copies of the inscriptions are unreliable and were hand sketches and not facsimili. Smith (1971, p.176) believes that only a few months are required for this king (if he ruled at all; see below).

One of Egypt's princes, Sekhemkare (Khafra's son), "records that he was honored by [Khafra], [Menkaure], Shepseskaf, Userkaf, and Sahure" (Smith 1971, p.176). This statement omits both of our mystery kings and even Thampthhis (the last king of the 4th Dynasty; see below). Other officials²¹ show no evidence for these three kings (including Thampthhis) as well. Either these three kings ruled very briefly (days, weeks, or a few months) or they never ruled at all. Donald Redford brings some insight into this mystery by arguing that the Egyptians themselves believed that these kings (Hardjedef and Rabaef) ruled because they were sons of Khufu, so there may have been an erroneous belief that all of Khufu's sons (Redford 1986, p.237) ruled.

On the other hand, the name associated with the Great Pit is in a cartouche (Verner 1997, p.241; Verner 2001, pp.380–384), as is the other name between Khafra and Menkaure suggesting they actually did rule. The evidence seems strong that they must have ruled. However, it seems that this is for a very short period, probably a few weeks or months.

Menkaure

Menkaure, the builder of the smallest of the three pyramids at Giza, is our next king to examine. The Turin Canon has 18 or 28 years while Manetho has 63 years. Only two "year of the counts" are known while there are three "year after the counts." The highest count is the "year after the 11th count." This

would make his reign at least 14 years or 22 years (Spalinger 1994, pp.288–291; Verner 2001, p.382; Verner 2006, pp.134–135).²²

Shepseskaf

King Shepseskaf ruled for four or seven years according to the Turin Canon and Manetho respectively. Only two counts have been preserved: the "year of the 1st count" and the "year after the 1st count" making his rule at least two years long (Spalinger 1994, pp.291–292; Verner 2001, p.383; Verner 2006, pp.135–136).

Thampthhis

The last king of the 4th Dynasty is named Thampthhis by Manetho and he gives this king nine years. The name is missing in the Turin Canon, but it gives this king only two years. Verner (2001, pp.384–385) notes no census counts exist for this king. One must remember, though, that the contemporary data mentioned above with the other two mysterious kings do not acknowledge him in any way.

Queen Khentkaus I

A few remarks must be made concerning Queen Khentkaus I. She is someone who Egyptologists debate whether or not who ruled. She was the wife of Shepseskaf, and she held a title that has been translated in two different ways: "Mother of two kings of Upper and Lower Egypt" and "King of Upper and Lower Egypt and Mother of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt" (Verner 1997, p.262). Some data supporting the possibility that she ruled by herself is an image of the queen that shows her with "the vulture diadem, the ritual beard, and the scepter." However, there is more data to suggest that she did not rule. Her name is not written in a cartouche and she is not mentioned at all by contemporary sources (the same data concerning our other mysterious kings above) (Verner 1997, p.264).

The Fifth Dynasty (see Table 7)**Userkaf**

Userkaf was the first king of the 5th Dynasty. He is given seven years in the Turin Canon while Manetho gives 28 years. Only two counts are preserved for him: "year of the 3rd count" and the "year after the 1st count" (Spalinger 1994, pp.294–296; Verner 2001, p.386; Verner 2006, pp.136–137). This gives him a rule of four or five years if the counts are irregular or biennial respectively.

²¹ Such as Netjerpunesut and Ptahshepses.

²² "Year of the count"—2nd, 11th

"Year after the count"—2nd (?), 3rd (?), 11th (?)

Table 7. Chronology of the Fifth Dynasty

King's Name	Modern (Shaw 2002, p. 480)	Turin Canon	Mantheo	Highest "Year of The Cattle Count"	Highest "Year after the Cattle Count?"	Ratio of Cattle Counts	Irregular	Biennial
Userkaf	7	7	28	3rd	1st	1/1	4	5
Sahure	12	12	13	5th	6th	4/3	8	12
Neferirkare	20	Lost	20	5th	—	1/0	5	9
Shepseskare	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	—
Neferefra	3	X+1	20	1st	—	1/0	1	1
Neuserre	24	[X]1	44	7th	2nd	4(?)1	8	13
Menkauhor	7	8	9	—	—	—	—	—
Djedkare	39	28	44	21st (22nd?)	17th	15(?)7(?)	28	41 (43?)
Unas	30	30	33	8th	4th	3/1	9	15
Total	149	105+x	218				63	96 (98?)

Sahure

The second king was Sahure. He is given 12 years in the Turin Canon and 13 years by Manetho. Four “year of the counts” and three “year after” counts have been found for this king and these makes his reign eight or 12 years depending on whether the counts were irregular or biennial (Spalinger 1994, pp.296–297; Verner 2001, p. 391; Verner 2006, pp. 137–138).²³

Neferirkare and Shepseskara

Neferirkare was the third king of the 5th Dynasty. The length of his reign is missing in the Turin Canon and Manetho gives him 20 years. There is only one cattle count remaining from his reign: “year of the 5th count” (Verner 2001, p. 393; Verner 2006, p. 138). This makes his reign five or ten years long.

There are some interesting things to mention concerning Neferirkare and his successor, Shepseskara, and their reign lengths in the Turin Canon. As mentioned in this list the name and the length of reign are missing for Neferirkare. His name is known because of other sources; however, the length of his reign is thought to have been lost. The next line and king (the name is missing) is given seven years and this is given to Shepseskara since this is what he is given in Manetho. He is mentioned in the Saqqara List of kings and is not mentioned at all in the Abydos List.²⁴

Very little contemporaneous sources are attributed to Shepseskara and none of them include year markers. There are also no buildings associated with him except for the possible unfinished platform for a pyramid halfway between Userkaf’s sun temple and Sahura’s pyramid. The state of this unfinished structure shows that work had only begun a few weeks or possibly a month or two earlier (Verner 2001, p.399). This king seems to have ruled only for a few short weeks or months.²⁵

With this in mind it could be possible that Shepseskara was left out of the Turin Canon like he was in the Abydos List. Verner (2001, p.395) believes that this could mean that the 7 years of Shepseskara should be given to Neferirkare instead.

Neferefra

The fifth king of this dynasty was Neferefra. The Turin Canon gives only one year for him while Manetho gives 20 years. Verner states that

the shape of [his] tomb...as well as a number of other archaeological finds clearly indicate that the construction of the king’s funerary monument was interrupted, owing to the unexpectedly early death of the king (Verner 2001, p. 400).

Neither the burial apartment nor the foundation of the mortuary temple was built by the time of the king’s death. There is only one chronological marker from his reign: “year of the 1st count” (Verner 2001, p. 400).

Niuserre

The sixth pharaoh was Niuserre. The Turin Canon gives [X]1 years (the “tens” place is missing) and Manetho gives him 44 years. The cattle counts from his reign include four “year of the counts” and only one “year after the count.”²⁶ According to these counts he ruled 8 or 13 years (Spalinger 1994, p. 298; Verner 2001, p. 402).

Menkauhor

The seventh king is Menkauhor. According to Verner (2001, p.405) “there is no contemporaneous date that can be safely attributed to [him].” The Turin Canon gives eight years while Manetho gives nine years. Given the fact that we know that he completed

²³ “Year of the count”—1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th

“Year after the count”—2nd, 5th, 6th

²⁴ The Saqqara List has him in a different position than the Turin Canon.

²⁵ Interestingly, Verner (2006, p. 128) goes on to mention later that “no clear-cut evidence for this mysterious ruler has yet to surface.”

²⁶ “Year of the count”—1st, 2nd, 5th, 7th

“Year after the count”—2nd

his pyramid complex and that there is plenty of written evidence and other objects from his reign, Verner believes that eight years is a real possibility for this king.

Djedkara

The next king is Djedkara. The Turin Canon gives him 28 years, and Manetho has 44 years. The highest attested count is the 21st count. On a biennial census this would be 41 or 43 years. However, the “year of the counts” are represented twice as much as “year after the count” (Spalinger 1994, pp.299–301; Verner 2001, pp.405–408; Verner 2006, pp.139–142).²⁷ An irregular count would make his reign 28 years, which agrees with the Turin Canon.

Unas

The last king of the 5th Dynasty was Unas. There are three “year of the counts” and only one “year after the count.” This makes his reign nine or 15 years (Spalinger 1994, p.301; Verner 2001, pp.410–411; Verner 2006, pp.142–143).²⁸ The Turin Canon and Manetho give him a long reign of 30 and 33 years respectively.²⁹

Further Remarks for the 4th–5th Dynasty Chronology

Now that the contemporary data and the king lists have been reviewed for the 4th and 5th Dynasties, we can now make some conclusions as to how long these dynasties lasted. First of all, let’s look at the ratio between “year of the counts” and “year after the counts.” The ratio between these is as follows:

4th Dynasty—Ratio: 28:10

5th Dynasty—Ratio: 29:13

Overall—57:23

A look at the data above shows that “year of the count” appears nearly two and a half times more than “year after the count.” Verner (2006, p.126) maintains that the annual count prevailed with some exception during the 4th and 5th Dynasties. This conclusion is evident since many of the counts are from masons’ marks.

These short texts associated with the construction projects of the state are the most frequently preserved dated documents from [Dynasties] 4 and 5. Why should these inscriptions regularly omit every second year from the administrative record?

It is clear that when one looks at this ratio it is quite extraordinary just how many more “year of the counts” there are.

A second thing that we must look at is whether the Turin Canon supports an irregular count or a biennial count (or a little of both). Table 8 illustrates this data for us.

This table shows us some very interesting data. First, the Turin Canon actually has fewer years for two kings (Snefru and Djedefra). This discrepancy could indicate a co-regency or could be an error on the part of the author of the king list. However, there is a problem with the co-regency interpretation. The Turin Canon did not indicate co-regencies for the 12th Dynasty so why would it do so with other dynasties? Second, the list is in agreement in regard to possibly three kings (Neferefra, Menkauhor (?), and Djedkare). Third, the Turin Canon is within two years for possibly two kings (Shepseskaf, Neferirkare [?]) and within 3–4 years for four kings (Menkaure, Userkaf, Sahure, and Neuserre). Fourth, the list is only off by a large margin for two kings (Khufu and Unas). With Khufu the discrepancy is only nine years but with Unas, 21 years. Fifth, there are only two kings (Khafra and Shepseskare) in which the Turin Canon provides no information. (This data, however, is assuming that the seven years usually attributed to Shepseskare actually belongs to Neferirkare and that the eight years the king list gives Menkauhor is correct).

When one looks at this data between the archaeological record and the Turin Canon one will notice that if one accepts the Turin Canon’s record then in seven instances it indicates an irregular count, in three it indicates a biennial count, and in five instances we cannot draw any conclusions either because we have no chronological markers for a particular king or they ruled for such a short period

²⁷ “Year of the count”—1st, 3rd, 4th (?), 5th, 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 21st (or 22nd ?)

“Year after the count”—1st, 3rd, 4th, 7th (?), 10th, 14th, 17th

²⁸ “Year of the count”—3rd, 6th, 8th

“Year after the count”—4th

²⁹ According to Verner (2001, p.412) doubt has risen concerning a long reign for Unas. This is based on written and anthropological evidence concerning an official named Nykau-Izezi who was born or started his career under Djedkara (one of his names was Izezi) and died and was buried during the 11th count of Teti (first king of the 6th Dynasty). According to anthropological examination Nykau-Izezi died when he was 40–45 years old. It has therefore been “concluded that 30 years with which Unas is credited on the basis of the [Turin Canon] would contradict the results of the anthropological examination of [Nykau-Izezi’s] skeletal remains. Consequently Unas should not be credited...with more than 15 years” (Verner 2001, p.412). However, this argument has been countered by Baud (2006, p.154). The major assumption for this argument that Unas ruled no more than 15 years is that Nykau-Izezi was given the name Izezi because he was born or had a career under Djedkara (who had the name Izezi). This is how Nykau-Izezi got his name. “But this explanation is superfluous, since kings were celebrated thus for various reasons, if indeed such names were not simply passed from father to son. Thus the name does not prove that Nykau-Izezi’s career began in [Djedkara’s] reign” (Baud 2006, p.154).

Table 8. Comparison of Cattle Counts with Turin Canon

King's Name	Minimum Reign (Irregular Count)	30Turin Canon	Difference of Turin Canon Years Compared to Irregular Count	Irregular or Biennial?
4th Dynasty				
Snefru	27	24	-3	Irregular
Khufu (Cheops)	14	23	+9	Irregular
Djedefra	11	8	-3	Irregular
Khafra (Chephren)	15	[Lost]	?	?
Menkaure (Mycerinus)	14	18	+4	Irregular
Shepseskaf	2	4	+2	?
5th Dynasty				
Userkaf	4	7	+3	Biennial
Sahure	8	12	+4	Biennial
Neferirkare	5	[Lost]	? (maybe +2 if the 7 years in the Turin canon belongs to him and not Shepseskare—see below)	Irregular
Shepseskare	—	7	?	?
Neferefra	1	X+1	? (probably 0)	?
Neuserre	8	[X]1	? (probably +3 if the number is reconstructed to "11")	Irregular
Menkauhor	8 ⁱⁱ	8	—	?
Djedkare	28 (29?)	28	0 (-1?)	Irregular
Unas	9	30	+21	Biennial

ⁱⁱ This number is taken from the Turin Canon.

Table 9. Revised chronology of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties

4th Dynasty	Length of Reign	Comments
Snefru	27–29 years	the 29 years is taken from Manetho which is only two years more than the archaeological record
Khufu	14–23 years	23 years is included because of the incompleteness of the archaeological record
Djedefra	11 years	
Khafra	15 years	may be more but cannot be certain since Turin Canon is damaged here
Hardjedef	—	
Bicheris	—	
Menkaure	14–18 years	
Shepseskaf	2–4 yedars	
Thamphthis	—	
Queen Khentkaus I	—	
Total	83–100 years	
5th Dynasty		
Userkaf	4–7 years	
Sahure	8–12 years	
Neferirkare	5–7 (?) years	7 years may belong to him (see above)
Shepseskare	—	
Neferefra	1 year	
Neuserre	8–11 years	
Menkauhor	8 years	the 8 years is taken from the Turin Canon
Djedkare	28 years	
Unas	9–30 years	9 years is taken from the irregular count; the 30 years is from the Turin Canon and is included for arguments sake because of the incompleteness of the archaeological record
Total	71–104 years	
Overall Total	154–204 years	

of time it cannot help us indicate whether or not they used an irregular or biennial count.

In Table 9 is shown the chronology of the 4th and 5th Dynasties in their new revised state. Snefru is given 27–29 years depending upon whether or not Manetho’s figure of 29 years (which is only two years more than the 27 years in the contemporary record) is correct. Khufu is given 14–23 years and Djedefra is given 11 years. Khafra reigned about 15 years (as far as we can tell), Menkaure 14–18 years, and Shepseskaf 2–4 years. The mysterious kings, Hardjedef, Bicheris, Thampthhis, and Queen Khentkaus I are not given any years.

For the 5th Dynasty Userkaf is given 4–7 years, Sahure 8–12, and Neferirkare 5–7(?). Shepseskare is included with Hardjedef, Bicheris, and Thampthhis above and Neferefra is given only a year. Neuserre’s reign lasted 8–11 years while Menkauhor ruled eight years. The dynasty ends with Djedkare with 28 years and Unas with 9–30 years.

It should be obvious that the data we have indicates a mostly irregular count for the 4th and 5th Dynasties. When one compares the ranges in Table 9 with the standard chronologies for this period, one will notice a few interesting things. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* has 119 years for the 4th Dynasty and for the 5th Dynasty it has 149 years (Shaw 2002, p. 480). As one can see anywhere from 19–36 years needs to be shaved off of the chronology of the 4th Dynasty, while 45–78 years needs to be removed from the 5th Dynasty. That is a total of 64–114 years that the 4th and 5th Dynasties are being inflated.³⁰

The Sixth Dynasty (see Table 10)

The annals of the 6th Dynasty kings are recorded on the South Saqqara Stone, so one may think that their reigns should be easy to calculate. However, the

South Saqqara Stone was erased before it was reused in ancient times as a sarcophagus lid, and a lot of speculation is used to reconstruct it. Baud writes “that neither the demarcation of the compartments...nor most of the dates are preserved” (Baud 2006, p. 144).

Besides this, the South Saqqara Stone can not be used to reconstruct the chronology of the 6th Dynasty because too many assumptions need to be made for an accurate reconstruction. In order to reconstruct the annals one must make an assumption of whether or not the cattle counts were annual, irregular, or biennial before a reconstruction can even take place. So the stone should not be used for this purpose as we shall see as we analyze the data of each king of this dynasty.

Teti

The first king of the 6th Dynasty was Teti. Dates from his reign are not preserved on the South Saqqara Stone, and not even an estimate can be made concerning its length (Baud 2006, p. 145). Two of each type of count is known for his reign. These cattle counts indicate that he ruled at least 13 years if the counts were irregular or possibly as many as 21 years if the counts were biennial (Baud 2006, p. 146; Spalinger 1994, p. 303).³¹

Userkare

The Turin Canon includes a king named Userkare between Teti and Pepi I. His reign length is missing; he is not mentioned by Manetho and very little has been found concerning him in the archaeological record. Baud (2006, p. 146) mentions this is “mostly seal impressions” and also mentions that “the silence of contemporaneous private biographies is disturbing.” The Abydos King List also includes this king but the Saqqara List (not to be confused with the South

Table 10. Chronology of the Sixth Dynasty.

King’s Name	Modern (Shaw 2002, p. 480)	Turin Canon	Manetho	Highest “Year of The Cattle Count”	Highest “Year after The Cattle Count”	Ratio of Cattle Counts	Irregular	Biennial
Teti	22	Lost	30	11th	6th	2/2	13	21
Userkare	2	Lost	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pepi I	34	20	53	25th	23rd	2/2	27	49
Merenre	9	14 or 44	7	5th	5th	2/2	7	10
Pepi II	94	90 + x	94	31st	31st	5/3	34	62 (65?)
Census counts not datable				12th	5th (unknown year also in existence)	2/2		
Total	161	124–154 + x	184				83–85	142–147

³⁰ It must be admitted though that these numbers are not perfect; one example could be with Khafra since we have no data for him in the Turin Canon.

³¹ “Year of the count”—2nd (?), 11th
 “Year after the count”—1st, 6th

Saqqara Stone) omits him. Smith (1971, p.191) says he “seems to have had an ephemeral reign.”

However, recent research has shown that Userkare may have reigned for a few years. The South Saqqara Stone has a section for him, but practically nothing remains of it. Baud (2006, pp. 146, 156) gives him two to four years, but this is just an estimate based upon speculation. Baud says (2006, pp. 146) that

the available space between the titularies of Teti and Pepi I [on the South Saqqara Stone], when compared to the size of an average year compartment of the latter, indicates that Userkare’s reign must have been brief, from two to four years.

So we see that the reign of Userkare is based upon the assumption that his compartments are the same as Pepi I’s compartments. But we can’t be sure about this.

Pepi I

The third king of the 6th Dynasty was Pepi I. Like Teti, he has two of each type of count preserved from his reign. According to these counts he ruled at least 27 years if the count was irregular but as many as 49 years if it was biennial (Baud 2006, p. 148; Spalinger 1994, pp. 303–304).³² Baud (2006, pp. 147–151) believes that during his reign the count was biennial, but this is based upon theoretical assumptions about the South Saqqara Stone. Almost the entire portion concerning Pepi I is missing on the tablet, but Baud makes assumptions concerning the size of each compartment. He believes that, since both kinds of cattle counts are known from the king’s reign, that each formula (introducing and marking years of the king’s reign on the tablet) must contain a “year of the count” and “year after the count.” However, this is not preserved on the stone and is thus only an assumption. This belief by Baud would assume that every compartment detailing each individual year (or two years) on the South Saqqara Stone would be the same size; however, Baud mentions that some compartments are much larger than others so his conclusion of each formula covering two years (“a year of the count” and “year after the count”) is not certain.

Merenre I

The next king is Merenre. There are only two counts preserved on the annals: the two concerning the first count and year after the first count. The number of compartments for his reign on the annals is not known. “Year of” and the “year after” the fifth count are also preserved in the archaeological record (Baud 2006, pp. 151–152). According to this data, he

ruled anywhere from seven years (irregular count) to ten years (biennial count).

Pepi II

Now we need to examine the reign of Pepi II. Pepi II’s reign is not recorded on the South Saqqara Stone (it was written during his reign). He has five “year of the counts” and three “year after the counts” available for his reign (Baud 2006, pp.152–153; Spalinger 1994, pp.307–308).³³ He ruled at least 34 years if his counts were irregular, but if the counts were biennial then the number could be 62 years. The Turin Canon has him ruling 90+ years and Manetho 94 years.

Other data

There are also cattle counts which are hard to place within the reigns of this dynasty. These include:

1. “Year of the count”—2nd, 12th
2. “Year after the count”—5th, unknown year (Baud 2006, pp. 145, 153)

The above data cannot be securely dated but the 12th count is placed in Pepi II’s reign by Baud (2006, p. 153).

One important piece of information concerning this dynasty that needs to be mentioned is two possible co-regencies. There is evidence that may suggest that Merenre was co-regent with one or both Pepis. For Pepi II we have “a cylinder seal of an official with both of their names enclosed in a double Horus-frame” (Smith 1971, p.193). We also have objects that suggest a co-regency with Pepi I. These include

a gold-skirt-pendant in Cairo which bears the names and titles of the two kings. The other is the Hieraconpolis copper statue-group which shows [Pepi I] with a smaller figure beside him that probably represents Merenre (Smith 1971, p.192).

However, there have been arguments made against this data as referring to co-regencies. For the alleged co-regency between Merenre and Pepi II the seal “is inconclusive, since this piece may simply commemorate the owner’s service under both kings” (Murnane 1977, p.227). As for the evidence for a co-regency between Pepi I and Merenre, the statue-group has been interpreted not to indicate a co-regency. Murnane (1977, p.112) argues that the statues are not a group as once thought. First, the statues “were found not in position but thrown into a pit, the smaller actually stuffed inside the larger.” Second, “the smaller statue is worked differently from the larger” suggesting “that either the two statues are not a proper pair or that the smaller one was converted to royal status sometime after its completion.”

³² “Year of the count”—21st, 25th

“Year after the count”—18th, 23rd

³³ “Year of the count”—2nd, 11th, 14th, 24th (or 33rd?) 31st

“Year after the count”—11th, 22nd, 31st

Although the above data could be interpreted in either way, there are two important pieces of data which may in fact point to the existence of a co-regency between Pepi I and Merenre. The year five count of Merenre records an

occasion when the king received the Nubian chieftains on the southern border. If Merenre had been serving as co-regent with his father, it is unlikely that he would have dated such a monument until after his accession to the throne, although he might well have begun counting the year of his reign from the time when he became co-regent (Smith 1971, p. 193).

This seems to be good evidence that Merenre began his sole rule in “the year after the 5th count” (the fifth count would have most likely been the year that Pepi I died). For him to receive the homage of Nubian chiefs would seem to indicate his coronation year, that is, the year he began to rule solo. However, Baud (2006, p. 150) believes this could be a theoretical date. Baud, however, gives no reason why this could be a theoretical date.

Even if somebody argues against the data concerning the Nubian chieftains, he still has a problem. This problem is that Pepi II is said (according to Manetho) to have been six years old when he became king and he was the son of Pepi I and brother of Merenre. If this is true then a co-regency had to exist because if it did not then Pepi II would have been born a year or so after his father died, which is impossible. This would mean that if there was no co-regency between Pepi I and Merenre then (1) if the cattle counts were irregular (Merenre ruling for seven years) then Pepi II would have been born a few years after his father died, which is impossible; or (2) if the cattle counts were biennial (Merenre ruling for ten years) then that means that Pepi II was born about a half decade after his father died, which is also impossible. If Pepi II was only six years old when he became king of Egypt, then this data can only mean that one or both of the alleged co-regencies had to exist. If, however, Pepi II did not ascend the throne when six years old then this argument loses its force and the evidence concerning the Nubian chieftains is the only evidence for a co-regency. Although there is possible evidence for one or two co-regencies, it must be admitted that the data available to us does not prove or disprove them. When the 6th Dynasty chronology is constructed below both interpretations will be considered.

With the chronological data presented for the 6th Dynasty we can see that the ratio between “year of” and “year after” counts is 10 (11?) to 9. This is the complete opposite from what was seen with the 4th and 5th Dynasties. This could indicate that the counts were more biennial than the previous two dynasties, but before we can firmly decide this we must look at some other data.

This other data is whether the Turin Canon shows an irregular or biennial scheme when compared to the archaeological data. With the 4th and 5th Dynasties the Turin Canon went along with the idea of a mostly irregular count during that time. With the 6th Dynasty it is too difficult to tell. Its data is lost for Teti and Userkare but has 20 and 44 years for Pepi I and Merenre respectively. Ryholt (2000, p. 98) argues that the numbers for these two kings should be switched (44 years for Pepi I and 20 years for Merenre respectively). Either way the Turin Canon is wrong for Merenre and depending on whether or not it gives 20 or 44 years to Pepi I the Turin Canon could be more in line with an irregular count (the 20 years) or a biennial count (the 44 years).

It should also be mentioned that the 20 or 44 years could indicate the existence of a co-regency between Pepi I and Merenre. That is, the reign of Merenre could be included with either the 20 or 44 years. However, one will notice that the total length of the alleged co-regency (5 years) fits better with the 44 years for Pepi I than the 20 years. The 44 years could indicate the years that he ruled by himself and then years 45–49 (assuming the cattle counts were biennial) were counted as part of a co-regency and thus were not included. However, if the 20 years is in fact the correct amount of years that the Turin Canon gave to Pepi I, then the reading should be 22 years (since he ruled 27 years if the counts were irregular), since it would be years 23–27 that would be the years that the co-regency with Merenre would have occurred. This may indicate that Pepi I had a biennial count during his reign. But one could argue that the Turin Canon just miscalculated the reign of Pepi I, and it should have been 22 years instead of 20. However, caution needs to be used for this since one could argue that the Turin Canon just miscalculated the reign lengths because the list does not indicate co-regencies with other kings and dynasties, so one could ask why would it indicate a co-regency here.

So after all the data is looked at, it can be seen that the chronological data could be interpreted to be irregular or biennial. If the cattle counts were irregular, then the 6th Dynasty could have lasted from 74 years to 80 years. If the cattle counts were mostly biennial with Pepi II ruling 62 years, then the 6th Dynasty lasted from 132 years to 138 years. If the cattle counts were biennial and Pepi II ruled 94 years, then this dynasty ruled for 164 years to 170 years. The minimum lengths (74, 132, and 164) are based on no solo years for Userkare, no solo years for Merenre (assuming a co-regency with both Pepi I and II), and not counting the two “year after” counts that are not associated with any king. The maximum lengths (85, 143, and 175) include a couple solo years for Userkare, no co-regencies for Merenre, and the

two years that are associated with no king. However, all of this data is not perfect since other cattle counts may be undiscovered in the archaeological record.

As one can tell the 6th Dynasty is a very difficult period to construct a chronology. The archaeological data can be interpreted to be irregular or biennial and the Turin Canon can go along with either of these.

Early Dynastic Period

The last area to study is the Early Dynastic period which includes Dynasties 1–3 along with Dynasty 0. As we will see this is the most difficult of all periods to study in Ancient Egyptian history when it comes to chronology. Toby Wilkinson says concerning this period, “[t]he source material for the history of the Early Dynastic period is diverse and often fragmentary” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 61).

Two early sources for this period that are used to reconstruct its timeline are the Palermo Stone and the Cairo fragment. However, it is not known when they were written. The data on the Palermo Stone ends during the Fifth Dynasty, so this has led many to accept an Old Kingdom date for its production. However, Wilkinson notes “it is also possible that the stone represents a later copy of an Old Kingdom original” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 64). Both of these sources divide each king’s reign into year-compartments which are signified by one or more significant events.

Ever since the Palermo Stone was discovered many different reconstructions have been made concerning the chronology and length of this period and many of these have assumed that Manetho was correct

for these early dynasties. So each reconstruction usually gives very long reigns to many of these kings. Concerning this Wilkinson says

we may have to admit that a totally convincing reconstruction of the royal annals is not achievable, unless further fragments of the same or similar stones come to light (Wilkinson 2001, p. 66).

Jochem Kahl also mentions “[r]econstructions of the Annals differ widely and must be considered highly speculative” (Kahl 2006, p. 101).

The First Dynasty (Tables 11 and 12)

The 1st Dynasty of Egypt is clearly one of the most debated periods in Ancient Egyptian history. The date in which Menes, the first pharaoh of Egypt, came to power is a question that many would like to have answered. It is especially an important issue for young earth creationists when studying the early periods of history in relation to the Great Flood and Tower of Babel. The two following lists demonstrate the dates in which past scholars have dated Menes (all dates are BC). The first list comes from George Rawlinson:³⁴

- 1. Bockh 5702
- 2. Unger 5613
- 3. Mariette-Bey and Lenormant 5004
- 4. Brugsch-Bey 4455
- 5. Lauth 4157
- 6. Lepsius 3852
- 7. Bunsen 3623 or 3059
- 8. Mr. Reginald Stuart Poole 2717
- 9. Sir Gardner Wilkinson 2691

Table 11. The First Dynasty

King's Name ⁱⁱⁱ	Turin Canon	Manetho (Africanus)	Manetho (Eusebius)	Edwards et al. 1971, p. 994	Shaw 2002, p. 480	Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, p. 486
Narmer (Menes)		62	30 or 60			30 years combined
Aha (Athothis)		57	27			
Djer (Kenkenes)		31	39	47		47
Djet (Ouenephes)		23	42			7
Queen Merneith	—	—	—			—
Den (Ousaphaidos)		20	20	55–60		42
Anedjib (Miebidos)	74	26	26	7		7
Semerkhet (Semempses)	72	18	18	8		8
Qaa (Bienekhes)	63	26	26	25		24
Total for First Dynasty	209 + x	263	228/258	c. 210 years	c. 110 years without Narmer	165

ⁱⁱⁱ Names in parenthesis are from Mantheo

³⁴ It must be noted that a couple of authors are mentioned in both lists but the numbers are slightly different. This could be because Halley rounds the numbers off while Rawlinson does not or that some authors changed their minds throughout their careers.

Concerning this list Rawlinson says, “It is as if the best authorities upon Roman history were to tell us, some of them that the Republic was founded in [BC] 508, and others in [BC] 3508” (Rawlinson 1881, pp.1–2). Henry H. Halley, in his *Halley’s Bible Handbook*, gives the following list for the dating of Menes:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Petrie | 5500 ³⁵ |
| 2. Brugsch | 4500 |
| 3. Lepsius | 3900 |
| 4. Bunsen | 3600 |
| 5. Breasted | 3400 |
| 6. Meyer | 3300 |
| 7. Scharff | 3000 |
| 8. Poole | 2700 |
| 9. G. Rawlinson | 2450 |
| 10. Wilkinson | 2320 |
| 11. Scharpe | 2000 |

Halley makes the comment,

Thus, it may be seen, Petrie and Breasted, two of the most famous Egyptologists, differ by more than 2,000 years as to the beginning point of Egyptian history. These same two men differ by 1000 years on the date of the pyramids, and 700 years on [the] Hyksos period (Halley 1965, p. 91).

The two lists and comments above demonstrate for us that before the mid-twentieth century Egyptologists dated Menes anywhere from 5500 to 2000 BC. Today the average date is 3100 BC but even this is being reduced. The book *Handbook of Ancient Egyptian Chronology* (Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006,

Table 12. Contemporary data on chronology of the First Dynasty (after Kahl 2006, p. 101)

Horus Name	Nsw bjt nb.tj Name	Years Preserved	Comments
Narmer		1	
Aha		7	
Djer		19	
Djet (or “Serpent”)		—	
Merneith		—	
Den	Khasti	20	Celebrated two <i>sed</i> -festivals
Anedjib	Mer-pi-bia	2	Celebrated a <i>sed</i> -festival
Semerket	Iry-netjer and an unreadable name	9 (complete reign)	
Qaa	Sen Sehetep Qaa	2 (perhaps 6 years at least—Sixth Occasion of Inspection)	Celebrated two <i>sed</i> -festivals; two other Horus names associated with his reign: Senefer-ka and “Bird”
At least 60–64 years			

p.486) places Menes around 2900 BC. It seems that over time the dates of Menes are reduced and thus get closer to the date of the Flood.

But why are there so many different dates for just one king? Toby Wilkinson explains one reason:

The duration of the First Dynasty cannot be estimated with any precision, since accurate historical records are, for the most part, absent from this early period. Estimates depend to a large extent on hypothetical reconstructions of the Palermo Stone and its associated fragments, together with a notional figure of twenty-five to thirty years for a generation (Wilkinson 2001, p. 67).

A second reason has to do with the chronologies of later dynasties. The farther back later dynasties are dated the farther back they push the 1st Dynasty.

Menes/Narmer and Aha:

Let us now review the chronological data that is still extant for each one of the 1st Dynasty kings. “One of the most heated and protracted debates in Egyptology has raged over the identification of Menes” says Wilkinson (2001, p. 68). There are a few different theories on exactly who Menes was. These theories equate Menes with Narmer, Aha, both of these figures, or possibly a mythical figure who represents several rulers involved in the process of state formation.

Dependent upon this argument is also the proper placement of Narmer: at the end of so-called “Dynasty 0” or at the beginning of the First Dynasty? (Wilkinson 2001, p. 68).

As one can see there are a number of different theories concerning who Menes actually was.

Beatrix Midant-Reynes writes that Menes could be Narmer, a Predynastic king called Scorpion, both of these two rulers “thus forming a single ruler called Menes-Narmer-Scorpion” or King Aha. She believes (Midant-Reynes 1992, p. 249) that it was Aha because it was during his reign that the first tombs appear at Saqqara near Memphis, and he “was evidently the first to date the years of his reign by the occurrence of outstanding events” (assuming that it did not exist previously). This is important, since according to Manetho, Menes founded Memphis. Also, the ideogram *mn* is associated with King Aha and this has been read as “Menes.”

Midant-Reynes then goes into some other theories concerning the identification of Menes. One of these theories states that there may have been many kings called Menes or that he never existed and that the sign *mn*

[W]as actually an expression used to designate any individual on whose behalf ritual ceremonies were undertaken (i.e. the equivalent of our expression “so-

³⁵ Petrie uses a date of 4777 in another book. See Petrie 1899, p. 27.

and-so” or “Mr. X”). Incapable of reading the names figuring in the ancient lists, the New Kingdom scribes might have replaced these illegible names with the *mn* ideogram (i.e. someone) which then became fixed in the form Meni and which can be found in the New Kingdom king lists (Midant-Reynes 1992, p. 248).

Another theory about Menes equates him with the god Amun. In an 18th Dynasty temple many objects were discovered with the name Meni inscribed on them,

which in this context might be assumed to be a version of the name of the god Amun. Is it not possible that the 18th-Dynasty pharaohs might have conceived of Amun, their most [favored] deity, as the first of all pharaohs, referring to him cryptographically as Meni (Midant-Reynes 1992, p. 248)?

Midant-Reynes does not agree with these two theories and even refers to them as radical.

However, there is some evidence which actually points to Narmer as the ruler who should be identified with Menes. There are two seal impressions that list the kings of the 1st Dynasty in the order that they succeeded each other. One is from the reign of Den (or Anedjib³⁶) and the second is from the reign of Qaa (or Hetepsekhemwy) (Kahl 2006, p. 96).

In the first list the royal names are arranged in order from left to right: Narmer—Aha—Djer—Djet (who is also called “Serpent”)—Merneith—Den (Kahl 2006, p. 97). The second list arranges the kings in order from right to left and omits Merneith (see below for more): Qaa—Semerkhet—Anedjib—Den—Djet (“Serpent”)—Djer—Aha—Narmer (Kahl 2006, p. 97). Notice how Narmer appears at the head of the dynasty according to both of these lists. If Aha was the great founder of the 1st Dynasty then why do the lists put Narmer at the head and not Aha? As for the evidence that Midant-Reynes presents about the first tombs appearing during the time of Aha, could it be that the tombs from the reign of Narmer have not yet been discovered? She also says that Aha “was evidently the first to date the years of his reign by the occurrence of outstanding events”; but this is just an assumption based on the lack of evidence from the reign of Narmer. It seems that the king lists from the 1st Dynasty itself puts Narmer as its founder and not Aha.

As for chronological data for Narmer and Aha only one year is preserved for Narmer on a label while seven years are still extant from the reign of Aha on the Palermo Stone (Kahl 2006, p. 101).

Djer:

Djer, the third king of the 1st Dynasty, has 19 years preserved in the annals and because of this Wilkinson says that Djer “must have reigned for a considerable period” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 71) But one needs to ask why Djer needs to have reigned so long if 19 years are preserved. This seems to be nothing more than Wilkinson using a preconceived notion that some of the 1st Dynasty kings must have ruled for a very long time.

Djet:

No year compartments are preserved for Djet on the Palermo Stone and no contemporary chronological data exists for him. Wilkinson says:

The indications are that Djet did not enjoy a long reign. Sealings from the royal tombs at Abydos suggest that the career of one high official, Amka, began in the reign of Djer, spanned the entire reign of his successor [Djet] and continued into the early part of Den’s reign, when the country was under the regency of Queen Merneith. The implication is that Djet occupied the throne for a comparatively short period, probably less than twenty years (Wilkinson 2001, p. 73).

Again one must ask where Wilkinson got the twenty years from.

Queen Merneith:

Queen Merneith is believed to have been an important figure during the 1st Dynasty because she was buried at Abydos alongside the kings; however, her “name is not written in the customary *serekh*” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 74).

What is known about her is that she was included on Den’s impression concerning the 1st Dynasty kings, and there are also

many sealings of Den found in Merneith’s tomb. Egyptologists surmised that Merneith must have been the king’s mother. This has been confirmed by the recently discovered necropolis sealing from the tomb of Den, which ends with the signs denoting “king’s mother Mer(t)neith” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 74).

Wilkinson says that “Den’s name features prominently on the sealings from her tomb, even those which are thought to date to her own regency” and then concludes, “It seems virtually certain that Merneith acted as regent during Den’s minority; Djet must therefore have died while Den was still a child.”

Chronologically speaking Merneith was co-regent with Den, so her reign (if that is what one wants to call it) is not significant in determining the length of this dynasty.

³⁶ One interpretation states that the first seal “was cut during the reign of Den and altered after his death.” This accounts for the unsymmetrical sequence of kings’ Horus names (written without *serekhs*) and the name of the god Khent-imenty (Kahl 2006, p. 97).

Den:

Den has 20 years known from the Palermo Stone and according to Wilkinson he “seems to have enjoyed a long reign, even taking into account his accession as a child” (Wilkinson 2001, p. 75) The reasons seem to be that Den celebrated two *sed*-Festivals. This “would imply a long reign” according to Wilkinson. A *sed*-festival is believed to be a celebration of a pharaoh ruling 30 years, but there is plenty of evidence against the idea of a *sed*-festival meaning that a pharaoh ruled for at least 30 years.

Erik Hornung (2006, pp.10–11) gives many examples of rulers stating that they had multiple *sed*-festivals when in fact they did not. Thutmose III of the 18th Dynasty is known to have ruled 54 years according to contemporary data but is said to have celebrated a third *sed*-festival, meaning he would have ruled at least 90 years. There is also a mention of a “first” *sed*-festival for Amenhotep I, Shoshenq I, and Psammetichus II³⁷ when in fact these kings are known to have ruled for 21 years (for the two former kings) and six years (for the latter). Ramesses II is also said to have had “multiple repetitions” (implying more than two) of the *sed*-festival but is known to have ruled for 67 years. Niuserre of the 5th Dynasty also celebrated a *sed*-festival but is only documented to have ruled 8–11 years according to the cattle counts and the Turin Canon. Smith (1971, p.185) says concerning this “there are indications that kings with reigns shorter than thirty years celebrated [*sed*]-festivals in the Old Kingdom” so “reliance should not be placed upon” this.

As it can be seen just because a king celebrated a *sed*-festival does not mean that they ruled for a long time. This, of course, does not mean that Den did not rule for a long time (he very well could have) but a *sed*-festival should not be used as evidence for this.

Anedjib:

The sixth king for the 1st Dynasty was Anedjib. Only two years are known for him on the Palermo Stone. “He seems to have enjoyed a relatively long reign” since he had a *sed*-festival (Wilkinson 2001, p. 78). However, see above for *sed*-festivals.

Semerkhhet:

The Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone contains all eight and a half years of his reign making him the only pharaoh of the 1st Dynasty to have his entire reign preserved (Wilkinson 2001, p. 79).

Qaa:

Only two years are known for Qaa, the last king of the 1st Dynasty, on the Palermo Stone. However,

there is a “Sixth Occasion of Inspection” that is also known from his reign. Assuming that each inspection is equal to one year this would mean that Qaa has at least six years preserved in the contemporary record.

Wilkinson (2001, pp.80–81) says that “several large mastabas at North Saqqara are dated to the reign of Qaa, suggesting that it may have been a long one” which is also suggested by the mention of a second *sed*-festival. But like we saw above *sed*-festivals should not be used as evidence for a long reign and neither should several mastabas. Just because there are many officials known from his reign does not mean he ruled for a very long time. Wilkinson also says, “moreover, the different building phases of his tomb at Abydos seem to have been separated by a significant period of time” (Wilkinson 2001, p.81) and “the running of the Apis bull and the festival of Sokar seem to have been celebrated periodically during Qaa’s reign.” First, the intervals that “the running of the Apis bull” and the festival of Sokar take place within a reign are not known and the building phases of Qaa’s tomb are only assumed to have been separated over a long period of time. Kahl when speaking of events like the festival of Sokar, the occasions of inspection, and others says, “it is not known whether these events occurred at regular intervals. Thus they provide only a vague idea of reign length at best” (Kahl 2006, p.100)

One last thing to mention for this dynasty is the possibility of two other kings around the time of Qaa. Kahl says:

The style and content of inscriptions attesting two enigmatic kings (Horus Senefer-ka and Horus “Bird”) date them to the time of [Qaa] or slightly later. Three explanations are possible: (a) Senefer-ka and “Bird” were rivals of [Qaa]. At the beginning of his reign, [Qaa] had the “peaceful” name Sen, “the one who fraternizes.” The change to Sehetep, “the one who pacifies” and to [Qaa] “the one with raised arm” reflect political developments, viz. [Qaa’s] opposition to and eventual victory over two opponents. This alternative is [favored] here. (b) The names Senefer-ka and “Bird” are also names of [Qaa]; that is, he also changed his Horus name in the course of his reign [like he did with his *Nsw bjt nb.tj* name]. (c) The names belong to rulers who reigned after [Qaa] died. The brevity of their reigns did not permit either to arrange for [Qaa]’s burial nor were any seals cut. Seal impressions found in Tomb Q at Umm el-Qaab leave no doubt that [Hetepsekhemwy] buried [Qaa] there (Kahl 2006, p.99).

So in conclusion the length of this dynasty cannot be determined. There is simply not enough evidence to even estimate how long each of these pharaohs ruled (except Semerkhet). As one can see the idea that

³⁷ Kings of the 18th, 21st, and 26th Dynasties respectively.

this dynasty lasted hundreds of years like Manetho stated and like many Egyptologists used to believe is not supported at all by the data available to us today.

The Second Dynasty (see Table 13)

Table 13. The Second Dynasty in ancient sources

King's Name	Turin Canon	Manetho Name	Manetho
Hetepsekhemwy	95	Boethos	38
Reneb		Kaiekhos	39
Nynetjer	95	Binothris	47
Weneg	54	Tlas	17
Sened	70?	Sethenes	41
Aka	8 years 3 months	Khaires	17
Neferkasokar	1 year 8 months 4 days (or 8 years 4 months)	Nepherkheres	25
Khasekhemwy	27 years 2 months 1 day (lifetime being 40+ years)	Sesokhris	48
		Kheneres	30
	350–357 years +		302 years

“There is much less evidence for the kings of the 2nd Dynasty than those of the 1st Dynasty until the last two reigns (Peribsen and Khasekhemwy)” begins Kathryn Bard in her section of the 2nd Dynasty in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Bard 2002, p. 85). Exactly how many kings this dynasty had is a matter of great debate. It is known that the first three kings were Hetepsekhemwy, Reneb, and Nynetjer. Their names are recorded in that order on the back of a statue from this period.³⁸ No contemporary chronological data exists for Hetepsekhemwy and Reneb but data does exist for Nynetjer. Nynetjer has years 6–21 recorded on the Palermo Stone and there is a good possibility that nine other years belong to him on the Cairo Fragment 1 (Kahl 2006, p. 107). This gives him 30 years at least. There is also a “year of the 17th count” recorded for him. In the traditional biennial count this would be year 33; however, there is very little data considering cattle counts during

this early period so it is unknown whether or not they were annual, irregular, or biennial at this time. Data from his reign indicate that he possibly ruled only in the northern region (the Delta) of Egypt (in fact he is not attested outside Memphis except for some stone vessels from his reign reused for the burials of Peribsen and Khasekhemwy at Abydos in the south, rulers of the late 2nd Dynasty).

There is possible evidence to indicate that there was division in Egypt during this dynasty. The Palermo Stone indicates a possible uprising in Year 13(?) of Nynetjer in the north (Wilkinson 2001, p. 85). Since Nynetjer ruled in the north, this shows us that even the northern areas of Egypt could have been divided. However, this division is not set in stone and there could be other interpretations. Regarding the length of Hetepsekhemwy and Reneb’s reigns is the statue that was mentioned above with their names recorded on it (along with Nynetjer’s name). This statue may indicate that the same man oversaw the mortuary cults of all three kings. Since Nynetjer ruled for at least 30 years either (a) the first two kings ruled for a very short time; or (b) these kings ruled for a long time and the overseer of the cult lived a very long life.

The next king is believed to be Weneg. His Horus name is not known, but new research suggests that his Horus name is Reneb. This would make Weneg and Reneb the same king. Kahl says that evidence for this is an inscription that shows the name of Nynetjer facing “the opposite direction from the name [Reneb] and that of his palace” (Kahl 2006, pp. 102–103). Reneb’s name is almost erased and this inscription has the name Nynetjer written over the name of Weneg. This inscription thus shows that he (Nynetjer) succeeded Weneg and not the other way around as generally believed. Considering that Weneg’s Horus name is missing and that the name “Reneb” is a Horus name the possibility that both are names of the same individual is good.

After Nynetjer we have a king named Nubnefer. He is only attested on two stone vessels from the

Table 14. The Second Dynasty in modern sources

Modern King List	Edwards et al. 1971, p. 994	Shaw 2002, p. 480	Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, p. 486.	Palermo Stone (PS)/ Cairo Fragment 1 (CF1)
Hetepsekhemwy			30 years together	
Reneb				
Nynetjer	45–47 (says 38 years on p. 31)		40	Years 6 to 21 on PS; 9? Year cells on CF1
Weneg?	19			
Nubnefer				
Sened			10 years for Peribsen;	
Sekhemib/Peribsen			40 years for Sened and Sekhemib	at least 6 years
Khasekhemwy	21 as Khasekhem; 17 as Khasekhemwi			Years 12 to 18
	2890–2686 BC; 204 years	2890–2686 BC; 204 years	2730–2590 BC; 140 years	At least 54 individual years

³⁸ Other data that supports this order are: (1) Hetepsekhemwy is believed to have succeeded Qaa, last king of the 1st Dynasty, and to have buried him in his tomb (Wilkinson 2001, p. 83); (2) the name of Reneb was found with Hetepsekhemwy in the latter’s tomb in Saqqara possibly suggesting that Reneb buried Hetepsekhemwy (Wilkinson 2001, p. 84).

Step Pyramid built during the 3rd Dynasty (Kahl 2006, p. 103). He is connected in one inscription with a building associated with Nynetjer, so Nubnefer may come close in time to Nynetjer. Kahl (2006, p. 104) and Wilkinson (2001, p. 89) believe that he was an ephemeral ruler that ruled shortly after Nynetjer died.

Sometime after Nynetjer died was a king with an *nswt-bity* name of Sened. Lots of confusion surrounds this ruler because there are no contemporary inscriptions for him (Wilkinson 2001, p. 88). He is attested in later king lists and especially during the 4th Dynasty in a reused vessel in the funerary complex of Khafra. This vessel seems to also have been written later than the 2nd Dynasty then reused during the fourth. Another inscription from the 4th Dynasty is from the tomb of a man named Shery, which indicates that Sened's mortuary cult was celebrated during his (Shery's) time in Saqqara (Wilkinson 2001, p. 88). Shery's titles indicate that there was a connection between Sened's mortuary cult and the cult of Peribsen, a pharaoh who is only attested in Upper Egypt during the 2nd Dynasty. This may indicate that Sened ruled in the north while Peribsen ruled in the south. Sened's tomb has not been found; however, there is mention of him during the Late Period of Ancient Egypt (664–332 BC) so this shows us that he was important enough to the later Egyptians to be remembered even though modern scholars know little about him (Wilkinson 2001, p. 88). No contemporary chronological data exists for him.

It must be mentioned here that there exists a king with the Horus name "Sa" for the 2nd Dynasty (Kahl 2006, pp. 104–105). It is believed by scholars that he may possibly be the same person as either Nubnefer or Sened.

Much controversy surrounds the next king, Peribsen. His name is associated with the god Seth and not the god Horus as is the usual case. Many different interpretations exist for this name, and it is a complete mystery why he did chose this name. His tomb is at Abydos where the 1st Dynasty kings were buried but not the 2nd Dynasty kings between that time and his own. He is only attested in the south when it comes to contemporary records. Chronological data does exist for him: he has at least six years recorded on Cairo Fragment 1 (Kahl 2006, p. 107).

Next is a king named Sekhemib-perenmaat. We have three different interpretations for this king. The first is that he is the same man as Peribsen. The second interpretation believes that this name was Peribsen's before he changed his name to associate with the god Seth (Sekhemib is a Horus name). The third interpretation deals with the fact that seal impressions with Sekhemib's name have been found in Peribsen's

tomb. This means that the third view believes that Sekhemib buried Peribsen and thus succeeded him as king.³⁹ Sekhemib is known from both Upper and Lower Egypt; however, Kahl (2006, p. 105) mentions that this does not mean that he ruled in Memphis (in the north) since the vessels bearing his name under the Step Pyramid could have been brought there after his death. Wilkinson (2001, pp. 90–91) favors the idea that Sekhemib and Peribsen are one and the same person. He mentions that both names have the elements *ib* and *pr* and both have the Egyptian *inw* ("tribute" or "conqueror") associated with their names.

It is known that the last king of the dynasty was Khaskhemwy. He is known from the ancient city of Hierakonpolis as Horus Khasekhem as a victor over northern enemies (his name Khaskhemwy is a Horus-Seth name) and he was buried at Abydos like Peribsen was. He took the Horus-Seth name to show that peace had returned to Egypt because he reunited Egypt (under Khasekhem he ruled only Upper Egypt). He is one of the few pharaohs of this dynasty that has chronological data in existence. This data includes "perhaps years 3–6 and most probably years 12–18 towards the end of his reign" (Kahl 2006, p. 107).

Looking at the above evidence the following list of kings is a good possibility:

Hetepsekhemwy	
Reneb (also known as Weneg)	
Nynetjer	at least 30 years
Nubnefer (possibly Horus Sa?)	
Sened (possibly Horus Sa?)	
Peribsen (also known as Horus Sekhemib-perenmaat?)	at least 6 years
Khaskhemwy	18 years

The last thing to mention concerning this dynasty is the problem of the territories that each of these kings ruled. That is, how many of these kings were only regional rulers. Hetepsekhemwy, Reneb, Nynetjer, and most likely Nubnefer followed each other. Nynetjer and Nubnefer are only known from the north. Peribsen and Khasekhemwy were the last two pharaohs and Peribsen only ruled in the south whereas Khasekhemwy conquered the north. Who knows about the exact nature of Sened since he is not mentioned in any contemporary records and when it comes to Horus Sa and Sekhemib-perenmaat they may be different names for already known kings or maybe additional kings to add to our obscure list. There is good evidence to suggest that Egypt was divided during this dynasty between at least two and possibly even more kings at the same time.

The chronology of the 2nd Dynasty is next to impossible to sort out because of the little data that has been discovered. Many of these pharaohs have no chronological data preserved and the ones that do

³⁹ This interpretation compares this with the fact that Hetepsekhemwy's name was found in Qaa's tomb.²²

Table 15. The Third Dynasty

Westcar papyrus	Turin Canon	Saqqara List	Abydos List	Manetho (Africanus)	Manetho(Eusebius)
Djoser	Nebka (19)	—	X	Nekherophes (28)	Necherochis
	Djoser-It (19)	X	X	Tosorthros (29)	Sesorthos
	Djoser-Ti (6) (missing 6)	X —	X X	Tyreis (7)	Six other kings
Nebka	Huni (24)	Nedka-Re	Nefer-ka-Re	Mesokhris (17)	
		X	—	Souphis (16)	
					Tosertasis (19)
				Akhes (42)	
				Sephouris (30)	
				Kerperes (26)	
	74 years			214 years	197 or 198 years

only a relative reign length can be assigned to them. As shown in Table 14 only 54 individual years can be assigned to any of these kings. However, there is the problem of possible overlaps during this dynasty so these 54 years may not be consecutive. In conclusion, the chronology of the 2nd Dynasty cannot even be estimated.

The Third Dynasty

The 3rd Dynasty was the period when the first pyramid was built (the pyramid of Djoser). When it comes to chronology the Egyptologist is faced with many difficulties. Both Manetho and the Turin Canon have a different number of kings. Manetho has nine kings (or eight, see table 15) that total 214 (or 197/198) years while the Turin Canon has five kings that total 74 years. This is a major difference and it doesn't get any easier since other sources (Saqqara List, Abydos List, Westcar papyrus) just add to the confusion. Before we can determine the chronology of the period we must first go over the problem of how many kings were in the dynasty and what their order was.

The first pharaoh of this dynasty succeeded Khasekhemwy, the last king of the 2nd Dynasty. Another important figure of the late 2nd Dynasty is Queen Nimaathap I. It has been believed that Nebka (the first king of the Turin Canon) was the first king of the 3rd Dynasty, but it is now believed that Djoser, the second king according to the Turin Canon, was the first. Seidlmayer says that

recent excavations at Abydos revealed unequivocal evidence that [Djoser] buried [Khasekhemwy], the last king of [Dynasty] 2, there, making it certain that no reign (and especially, a chronologically significant one as shown in [the Turin Canon]) could have intervened between them (Seidlmayer 2006a, p. 118; see also Wilkinson 2001, p. 95).

There is evidence concerning Queen Nimaathap I

that may conclude that Khasekhemwy was followed by Djoser. She is named as the “mother of the king's children, [Nimaathap]” on a sealing in Khasekhemwy's tomb and is also named “mother of the dual king” on a sealing dated to the reign of Djoser. This has been interpreted as evidence that Djoser was the son of Nimaathap and (because of the phraseology on the sealing in Khasekhemwy's tomb) that Khasekhemwy was his father (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 94).⁴⁰

Concerning Nebka the evidence within the king-lists is interesting. He is mentioned as the first king in the Abydos List and the Turin Canon but a similar name is the penultimate king in the Saqqara List. He also appears after Djoser in the Westcar papyrus written in Hyksos times. In the Abydos List a name similar to Nebka also appears as the last king of the dynasty.

It is now accepted by many scholars that the successor of Djoser was a king named Sekhemkhet. “Evidence for the equation includes the morphological similarity of the two architectural complexes, their geographic proximity and the fact that the Nebti-Name of Sekhemkhet is attested as Djoser(i)-ankh on an ivory plaque from his pyramid” (Seidlmayer 2006a, p. 118; see also Wilkinson 2001, pp. 98–99).

After Sekhemkhet was a king named Khaba. His name is associated with an uncompleted pyramid at Zawiyet el-Aryan.⁴¹ The style of the architecture is similar to that of the pyramids of Djoser and Sekhemkhet and is different to that of the early 4th Dynasty so it is generally believed that Khaba came immediately after Sekhemkhet (Seidlmayer 2006a, pp. 119–120; see also Wilkinson 2001, pp. 100–101).

It is now believed that Nebka was the fourth king of the 3rd Dynasty. A king named either Nebka-Re or Nefer-ka-Re appears in the Saqqara and Abydos Lists respectively towards the end of the dynasty, and it is known that the two names are corruptions of the name Nebka (Seidlmayer 2006a, p. 120).⁴² Nebka is

⁴⁰ If this interpretation is true then the chronological relationship of the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom that is presented by Ashton and Down (2006, 194–211) would be incorrect. They believe that the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties were contemporary. The evidence presented here, however, would place the 3rd after the 2nd.

⁴¹ Seidlmayer (2006a, p. 120) says that Khaba could also be a successor of the owner of this pyramid. This would make the pyramid Nebka's or Huni's.

⁴² Nebka appears twice in the Abydos List. The first entry may be a duplicate (Seidlmayer 2006a, p. 118).

also known as Horus Sanakht. This is because both of these names appear in parallel on a seal impression of the time and are also attested together at various sites, inscriptions, and other seal impressions (Seidlmayer 2006a, pp.120–121).

The last king in the Saqqara List and the Turin Canon is Huni. His tomb is unknown and so is his Horus name. However, a relief slab of a king named Horus Qahedjet is known from Heliopolis and is allegedly from Dahshur (Seidlmayer 2006a, p.121). Seidlmayer continues that this seems to be derived from a 3rd Dynasty royal mortuary complex at Dahshur and the Horus name Qahedjet may be Huni's, however, "the correlation is not absolutely certain." He also mentions (2006a, p.122) that this mortuary complex is of unknown type; that is, it has not yet been found.

So the possible order of kings for this dynasty may be:

Djoser

Sekhemkhet

Khaba

Nebka

Huni

When it comes to the chronology of this dynasty Seidlmayer says this:

data currently available are sufficient neither for determining the length of reigns for each king nor the length of the dynasty as a whole. Nor does contemporaneous evidence exist for estimating a minimum length of reign for any king. (Seidlmayer 2006a, p. 122).

In fact no contemporary chronological data exists for any of the kings for this dynasty.

The Turin Canon gives 74 years for this dynasty, Verner (1997, p.473) suggests c.40 years, and Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton (2006, pp.123 and 490) suggest c.50 years.⁴³ As it can be seen, the chronology of this dynasty is worse off than any other dynasty that has been analyzed so far. The chronology of this dynasty cannot be known in light of the meager evidence at our disposal.

Dynasty 0

Finally, we reach the last period of Egyptian history that we will analyze. The Turin Canon, Manetho, and other later sources all include rulers before Menes. Even the Palermo Stone includes rulers wearing the crown of Egypt before Menes (Wilkinson 2001, pp.65–66).

The following names are known from excavations throughout Egypt:

1. Iry-Hor, at Abydos
2. Sekhen/Ka, at Abydos⁴⁴
3. Ny-Hor, at Tura
4. Hat-Hor, at Tarkhan
5. "Trio" (three circles surmounting vertical strokes), from the eastern Delta, and perhaps also at Tura
6. Pe-Hor (alternatively read Iry-Hor and thus assignable to him), at Qustul
7. Ny-Neit(?), at Helwan
8. "Crocodile," at Tarkhan
9. "Bird and vertical sign", at Tarkhan
10. "Scorpion," at Hierakonpolis
11. a ruler with an obscure name, at Buto (Kahl 2006, pp.95–96)

Kahl continues:

Not included in this list is a group of signs consisting of two falcons on a *serekh* ("Double Falcon"), known from Abydos, Tura, Beda, and the Sinai. Whether it represents a king's name or is symbolic of royal authority per se, remains open. Several groups of signs on labels and in inscriptions on vessels from Tomb U-j at Umm el-Qaab, as well as signs on the Min colossi from Coptos, on the Libya Palette and on some other small finds, have been understood as king's names. But this interpretation is problematic. The groups may be place names and/or the names of gods instead (Kahl 2006, p.96).

Some comments need to be made concerning all of this data. First, Iry-Hor and Sekhen/Ka⁴⁵ are buried at Abydos where Menes/Narmer and the other 1st Dynasty kings are buried. The "archaeological evidence makes Sekhen/Ka the predecessor of [Narmer] thus a successor of Iry-Hor" (Kahl 2006, p.95). Midant-Reynes says this "seems to be corroborated by the architectural evolution of the tombs in Cemetery B at Abydos" (Midant-Reynes 1992, p.248). Andie Byrnes says that Iry-Hor's "name is not associated with a Serekh, so he may not be royal" (Byrnes n.d.), and Midant-Reynes includes that he "is not definitely known to have existed as a ruler" (Midant-Reynes 1992, p.248). Byrnes (n.d.) says that "[t]he horizontal stratigraphy of the royal burials at Abydos and the ceramic evidence... make it fairly certain that Narmer was immediately preceded" by Sekhen/Ka.

Concerning Crocodile, Byrnes (n.d.) says that he may have been a contemporary of Narmer and also says concerning Scorpion that (1) his name is not in a serekh but only a rosette symbol and that "[t]he rosette symbol on the palette of Narmer is associated with a lesser personage than the king"; (2) he may have been a contemporary of Narmer saying that

⁴³ This is based upon highly theoretical and speculative reconstructions of the Palermo Stone which is highly damaged and preserves very little information on this dynasty.

⁴⁴ His name is also found in Israel, the Eastern Delta, and Helwan (Byrnes n.d.).

⁴⁵ Both names are possible renderings.

“the Scorpion Macehead and Palette of Narmer [are] thought to date to the same time, and may even have been produced by the same craftsmen”; and (3) some scholars even believe that Scorpion and Narmer are one and the same.

Regarding the chronological relationship of these rulers, Kahl says:

These “kings”, as well as some others, are presumed to have been local rulers or rulers who opposed the Thinite elite. Information for determining the chronological relationship of these rulers is provided solely by archaeological evidence (Kahl 2006, p.95).

Dynasty 0 is one of the most confusing periods that were studied in this paper. Egyptian chronographers, historians, and the like definitely believed that there were kings who preceded Menes/Narmer and the archaeological record does record many names that predate the unification of Egypt. However, the chronological relationship of these so called “kings,” the extent of their territory, and even how long each ruled his respective land is not known at all and cannot even be guessed at. There is a chance that these early rulers were even sons or grandsons of Mizraim himself, but with such meager evidence we cannot be sure of their relationship with the men recorded in The Table of Nations in Genesis 10.

Summary of Egyptian Chronology Before the Exodus

This paper set out with a few of goals in mind: (1) study the chronology of the dynasties of Ancient Egypt before the Exodus; (2) using that chronological data to determine when the Patriarchs made their visits into Egypt; and (3) see if the chronology of Egypt contradicts the biblical dates of the Great Flood and Tower of Babel. First, a summary of the findings concerning the chronology of Egypt:

1. The 12th Dynasty lasted about 177–188 years when all the co-regencies are accounted for. This would make the period before Amenemhat III (Moses’ father-in-law) 121–132 years.
2. The 11th Dynasty lasted about 143 years according to the Turin Canon and most likely Manetho as well. However, this is not the best of evidence since these king lists (especially Manetho) have known to have been wrong from time to time. However, a comparison between the individual reign lengths in the Turin Canon and the archaeological data match

or come close whenever they can be compared. One thing that one needs to be considered, however, for this dynasty is that there may have been co-regencies that the king lists may not have reported. This would alter the chronology a bit.

3. The period between Pepi II and the rise of the 11th Dynasty needs to be reduced by about 40 years or so. The 11th Dynasty began around the time when the Memphite kings of the 8th Dynasty ended. The 9th–10th Dynasties at Herakleopolis began at the tail end of Pepi II’s reign, immediately after he died, or around the same time that the 11th Dynasty began.
4. The 6th Dynasty is one of the most difficult dynasties to construct a chronology. The archaeological data (cattle counts) can be interpreted to be irregular or biennial and the Turin Canon can go along with either of these. The 6th Dynasty lasted anywhere from about 74–175 years depending on whether the counts were irregular or biennial and how long Pepi II ruled.
5. The 4th and 5th Dynasties clearly need to have a reduction in their chronologies. The 4th Dynasty lasted about 83 to 100 years and the 5th Dynasty around 71–104 years. These ranges are dependant upon whether the Turin Canon is to be considered accurate or whether or not the cattle counts should only be used. Anywhere from 64 to 114 years need to be taken off the length of these two dynasties.
6. The chronology of the 1st–3rd Dynasties cannot be determined at all. There is not enough data to even make an educated guess.
7. The so-called “Dynasty 0” is the most mysterious of all periods examined in this study. Although the archaeological data does show that there were local rulers throughout Egypt before Narmer/Menes brought about the 1st Dynasty, however, exactly how long these “kings” ruled or how extensive their territories were cannot be determined.⁴⁶

Dating the Patriarchs

Now comes the time when the data concluded from this study can be used to determine when the Patriarchs lived in Egypt. There are two different ways to calculate which period the Patriarchs came into Egypt. This paper will use both a 215- and 430-year sojourn to determine the period of the Patriarchs. To see which year Jacob came into Egypt to flee a

⁴⁶ One last thing must be mentioned concerning the chronology of early Egypt. This is the possibility of co-regencies. There is no evidence that says for certain that there were any co-regencies during the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods. There is the possibility of the co-regencies between Merenre and Pepi I and Pepi II mentioned earlier. But as we saw the evidence could be interpreted either in favor or against these two co-regencies. There is also the possibility of a few other co-regencies during the Old Kingdom. Murnane (2001, p.308) mentions that there are names of kings juxtaposed on sealings and/or cylinder seals. The possible co-regencies are: Khafra and Menkaure of the 4th Dynasty; Neferirkare and Neuserre of the 5th Dynasty; and Pepi II and Merenre II of the 6th Dynasty (see table 5). However, Murnane mentions that “it may be more likely that these references are to periods and/or functions within the careers of officials who owned these artifacts.” If they do indicate co-regencies then the first two mentioned would bring up new questions since there is the possibility of two kings ruling between Khafre and Mankare and good evidence for two kings between Neferirkare and Neuserre. What are we to do with these kings if these two co-regencies are true?

severe famine in Canaan we need to count back 350 years (using a 430-year sojourn in Egypt) and 135 years (using a 215-year sojourn) before the birth of Moses. This will give us the date for Jacob's entry into Egypt. For Abraham we shall count back a further 215 years. In the beginning of this paper it was shown that Moses was probably born anywhere from the 1st to the 13th year of Amenemhat III of the 12th Dynasty. The 12th Dynasty before Amenemhat III was shown to be 121–132 years, the 11th Dynasty about 143 years, and the early FIP about 19 years. The length of the 7th–12th Dynasties before Moses is 283–306 years.

430-Year Sojourn

If we take this chronological range and use the minimum length for the 6th Dynasty (74 years) then Jacob journeyed into Egypt during the 8th year of Teti, the first king of the 6th Dynasty. However, there is a problem with this. This would put the first year of the seven years of plenty during the last year of Unas, the last king of the 5th Dynasty. The Bible does not give any indication that a new pharaoh came to the throne during the years of plenty. One must remember though that this can be solved by Merenre ruling for one or two years solo, a year or two for Userkare, or even if the early FIP lasted a year or two longer.⁴⁷ Any of these would fix this problem.

Now if we take the maximum (?) number of years known for the 6th Dynasty (175 years) and the 306 years of the 7th–12th Dynasties then Jacob came into Egypt around the 50th year of Pepi II. In conclusion, for Joseph and Jacob the pharaoh that was involved in the last part of Genesis was a king who ruled during the 6th Dynasty.

For Abraham we shall take the two conclusions above for Jacob and Joseph and use the ranges for the 4th and 5th Dynasties. Abraham came into Egypt around 205–215 years before Jacob did so the first possibility uses the 8th year of Teti and uses the shortest lengths

for the 4th and 5th Dynasties (83 and 71 respectively). These three added together gives us 161 years which is too short. This would mean that Abraham came into Egypt before the 4th Dynasty either during the 3rd Dynasty or even sometime during the 2nd Dynasty depending on how long the 3rd Dynasty lasted.

The next possibility for Abraham would be to use the 9th year of Teti and the longest lengths for the 4th and 5th Dynasties (100 and 104 years). This would put Abraham's stay in Egypt either during the last few years of the 3rd Dynasty or the first part of the reign of Snefru, the first king of the 4th Dynasty.

The third possibility for Abraham uses the 50th year of Pepi II for the starting point. Using this and the shortest lengths for the 4th and 5th Dynasties puts Abraham traveling to Egypt during the reigns of either Khafra or Menkaure of the 4th Dynasty.

The final possibility uses the longest lengths of the 4th and 5th Dynasties along with the dating of Jacob in the reign of Pepi II. This places Abraham in Egypt during the reigns of Sahure or Neferirkare of the 5th Dynasty.

As it can be seen the placement of Jacob and Joseph is much easier to determine than Abraham's. The range for Abraham is difficult to pinpoint because of the fragmentary data available for the earliest dynasties of Egypt.

215-Year Sojourn

Let us now calculate the dating for Abraham and Joseph according to a 215 year sojourn. The 121 years of the 12th Dynasty before Amenemhat III takes most of the 135 years that are between Jacob's entry into Egypt and the birth of Moses. This would place Jacob and Joseph into the late 11th Dynasty (either the reigns of Mentuhotep III or IV).⁴⁸ As for Abraham a 215-year sojourn would place him into the 6th Dynasty. Exactly which pharaoh he came into contact with would be determined by how long the dynasty lasted.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ If co-regencies existed during the 11th Dynasty Jacob's entry into Egypt could be pushed back into the late 5th Dynasty.

⁴⁸ Ashton and Down (2006) place Jacob and Joseph in the early 12th Dynasty. This is a good possibility; however, Ashton and Down will need to figure out a way to get the chronology of the 12th Dynasty to correlate with this placement since the one presented in this paper puts the Patriarchs a bit earlier (this does not mean that this author believes the Egyptian evidence is more important than the Bible because it is not; the data that can be used to date the Patriarchs in Egypt is so generic that it could place the Patriarchs into almost any period in Egyptian history). The placement within the 12th Dynasty is not set in stone, since the evidence for placing them into the 12th Dynasty is not absolute. The evidence for placing Jacob and Joseph here is (1) a famine took place during the reign of Senusret I; (2) there is a canal from this period named "Joseph's Canal"; and (3) there was a powerful vizier during the reign of Senusret I who may have been Joseph. First, in regards to a famine occurring during the reign of Senusret I; there were many other famines recorded during the early period: the reign of Unas, last pharaoh of the 5th Dynasty had a famine (Smith 1971, p. 189), and there were many famines during the early FIP (Hayes 1971, p. 475). Second, nowhere in Scripture does it say that Joseph built a canal in Egypt. This does not mean that he didn't (he very well may have), but this should not be used as "evidence" for placing him here. Third, little information exists concerning viziers during the earliest dynasties. There may have been other powerful men of standing besides the one during Senusret I's reign.

⁴⁹ A few words must be mentioned concerning the views of Ashton and Down (2006). They place Abraham in the reign of Khufu of the 4th Dynasty by using data gleaned from Josephus. Their evidence concerning Abraham is the mention by Josephus that Abraham took arithmetic and the science of astronomy to Egypt (Josephus 1999, book 1, chapter 8, paragraph 2). According to Josephus, Egypt did not have this knowledge before the time of Abraham. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that Abraham did such a thing. Of course, this does not prove that it did not happen, but if one chooses to use this as a synchronism it must be with caution. Josephus, in other places in his histories, exaggerates details that contradict Scripture. Examples being: 1) Solomon ruling 80 years (Josephus 1999, book 8, chapter 7, paragraph 8) and 2) the use of the Septuagint chronology for the sections on Genesis 5 and 11 (Josephus 1999, book 1, chapters 3 and 6, paragraphs 4 and 5 respectively).

Sodom and Gomorrah: A Possible Way to Narrow Down the Time of Abraham?

Although the Egyptian evidence itself provides a broad chronological range to pinpoint Abraham's entry into the country does that mean there is no way to narrow this down? There very well may be and the data concerning Sodom and Gomorrah may help. This is not the time to go into depth on this issue, but Bryant Wood has written an article (see Wood 1999) that shows that there is very good evidence that Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plain have been found and that they were destroyed during the Early Bronze Age III (EB III).⁵⁰ However, Wood dates their destruction at the end of the EB III which is traditionally around the end of the 6th Dynasty or perhaps a little later (Wood 1999, p. 78).⁵¹

However, in this paper it has been shown that Abraham came into Egypt sometime between the 2nd and 6th Dynasties. This seems like a contradiction between the evidence of Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed at the end of EB III and the fact that the conclusion presented here could place their destruction sometime during the beginning or middle of EB III (if a 430-year sojourn is used).

The dating of the Early Bronze Age is as follows: EB I is equated with the late Pre-Dynastic period and the reigns of Narmer and Aha while EB II is contemporary with the time from Djer to Qaa and the 2nd Dynasty kings (Mazar 1992, pp. 106 and 135), while the last king of the 2nd Dynasty, Khaskhemwy, is connected with the beginning of EB III (Ben-Tor 1992, p. 123). There are no synchronisms between EB III in Palestine and Egypt during the Old Kingdom.⁵²

In the interior part of the town of Bab edh-dhra (which is believed to be Sodom) three building phases have been identified during EB III (Schaub 1993, p. 134). The problem with pushing back the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to an earlier part of EB III is that it compresses the length of each of these phases at Babe dh-dhra, and it overlaps the various pottery sequences that archaeologists use to date ancient remains. The last phase contains pottery that is the latest of the EB III pottery series and since other sites in Palestine during this period have a similar pottery sequence it is believed that they all collapsed at the end of EB III (traditionally dated to the time of the 6th Dynasty). But could a city with these later pottery styles come to an end before the others and could certain pottery styles (early EB III, middle EB III, late EB III, etc.) overlap each other? If yes, then there could be a possibility that Bab edh-dhra

developed its pottery styles slightly earlier than the other cities/regions of Palestine and collapsed before the others with similar pottery styles.

John Patrick Holding makes a very good point concerning pottery and archaeological ages (he is writing about Jericho so he speaks about the Middle and Late Bronze Ages):

First, some background information to keep in mind. The conventional chronology for this time period and place is:

- Middle Bronze Age [I] 2150–2000 BC
- [II]A 2000–1750
- [II]B 1750–1550
- Late Bronze Age [I] 1550–1400
- [II]A 1400–1300
- [II]B 1300–1200

Now while it is not often explained in context of such charts, no archaeologist actually asserts that at exactly the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1549 BC, all of the villages and towns of the region suddenly threw out all of their Middle Bronze Age stuff and bought the brand-new, never-before-seen Late Bronze Age stuff. There is bound to be overlap; no doubt some folks kept their Middle Bronze Age stuff around after 1550. So we can't always fix an exact date on ruins, just a general date (Holding n.d.).

Steven Robinson says concerning pottery sequences:

Until quite recently the assumption...was that pottery evolved in a strictly unilinear fashion, and could therefore serve as a fairly precise index for dating the strata in which it was found. There is a growing recognition that the truth is more complex. Diverse styles are found sometimes to have coexisted, overlapping rather than succeeding one another. Far from being everywhere the same, the rate and direction of evolution is seen to have depended on factors such as the extent of trade with other cultures and the stability of social and political conditions...regional variation can be an important factor. Where the base political unit is the tribe or city-state, rather than the nation-state, this may be true even if the geographical differences are small (Robinson 1995, pp. 29–30).

Robinson continues speaking about bichrome ware (a type of pottery that marks the beginning of the Late Bronze Age):

[A] comparison of Tell el-Daba with Tell el-Ajjul, two sites which can be aligned historically, shows that bichrome ware did not appear everywhere at the same time...the time-difference may be as much as 150 years [between the appearances of bichrome ware between the two mentioned sites]. In other

⁵⁰ One must remember that Wood accepts the standard chronology of the ancient world.

⁵¹ Sodom and Gomorrah are said to have been the EBA cities Bab edh-Dhra and Numeira, while Admah and Zeboiim are most likely the cities of Feifa and Khanazir while Zoar is es-Safi.

⁵² The synchronization between Khaskhemwy and Early Bronze III is between Egypt and Byblos not Egypt and Palestine.

words, an [Middle Bronze] stratum which contains no bichrome ware may be later than an [Late Bronze] stratum elsewhere which does contain bichrome ware. Reasons for the apparent non-synchronicity include remoteness from the earliest established trade routes; cultural “backwardness”; excavation of an impoverished quarter; political hostility; and chance (Robinson 1995, p. 46).

Dan Cole also speaks of the dangers of believing in a strict chronological sequence of pottery:

There are a number of differences in the ceramic traditions, indicated both by the types of vessels which are found and by the treatments of form applied to similar vessel types. It is evident that Hazor was exposed to influences during the [Middle Bronze] IIC which did not affect central Palestine. It is also evident that the ceramic forms developing in central Palestine did not spread as far as Hazor (Cole 1984, p. 88).

As it can be seen these authors make some good points. The various phases of pottery do not necessarily appear at every site at the same time and each region and/or city/town/village could have their own variation of pottery during an archaeological age. The alleged contradiction mentioned above between the revised chronology in this paper and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah could easily be explained by the “late” pottery appearing at Bab edh-Dhra and the other sites earlier than other sites in Palestine.

It was shown above that the earliest EB III artifacts appear during the reign of Khaskhemwy of the 2nd Dynasty. Although it may have been during his reign that EB III officially started there is also an equal chance that some EB III aspects began before his reign and overlapped the last part of EB II (as the writers above so stated with later ages). This is important since the earliest dynasty that Abraham was placed in was possibly the 2nd Dynasty.

However, this data about Sodom and Gomorrah could raise some doubts about dating Abraham so early. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah occurred about 14–24 years about he left Egypt and one must remember that Bab edh-Dhra had three building phases during the EB III, so if Abraham really did journey to Egypt this early it would place the

destruction of the cities of the plain most likely during the early part of the 3rd Dynasty. This seems to force the three building phases into a very constricted time frame. Although this is possible it is not known exactly when the EB age started at Bab edh-Dhra or the other cities in this region, so placing their destruction so early does seem to force a very short chronology for the various building phases. The data can be interpreted anyway; although, Sodom and Gomorrah may actually favor a date during the latter part of the chronological spectrum presented here: 4th–6th Dynasties.

Although not conclusive the addition of the archaeological data concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah does make one think more carefully about the data presented on Egyptian chronology in this paper. This author believes that the most likely dynasties for Abraham to have entered Egypt were probably the 4th–6th Dynasties with the 2nd and 3rd Dynasties as only slightly possible. But of course, future research could bring about other interpretations. It must also be mentioned that some scholars may not have any problems with a short chronology on Sodom and Gomorrah, so they may place Abraham in the 2nd or 3rd Dynasties. Neither choice should be held dogmatically.

Egyptian Chronology and the Great Flood and Tower of Babel

The last thing to consider is if the chronology of Egypt contradicts the traditional dating of the Flood and Babel. As it can be seen the chronology of the earliest dynasties (0–3rd) cannot be determined. There is no evidence that Menes (or the earlier kings) came to the throne of Egypt before these two biblical events.

Conclusion

This paper set out with the task of analyzing the chronological data concerning the earliest dynasties of ancient Egypt. It then took the results of this study and applied them towards the events recorded in the Book of Genesis. As it can be seen many different interpretations can be made using the same data. Only future research will give any insight on just how correct (or incorrect) the conclusions made here are (see Table 16 for revised chronology).

Table 16. Comparing chronologies (all dates are approximate)

Dynasties	Shaw 2002, p. 479, 480	Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, p. 490, 492.	Revised Chronology (Short)	Revised Chronology (Long)
0	c. 3200–3000	—	?	?
1–3rd	c. 3000–2613	c. 2900–2544	????–2082	????–2233
4th	2613–2494	2543–2436	2082–1999	2233–2133
5th	2494–2345	2435–2306	1999–1928	2133–2029
6th	2345–2181	2305–2152	1928–1854	2029–1854
7–8th	2181–2160	2150–2118	1854–1835	1854–1835
9–10th	2160–2025	2118–1980	1854 (?)–????	1854–????
11th	2125–1985	2080–1940	1835–1692	1835–1692
12th	1985–1773	1939–1760	1692–1515	1692–1515

Appendix—

Do the Patriarchs Fit into the Early Bronze Age?

There are probably many readers who believe that the cultural and historical data presented in the Patriarchal narratives cannot be correlated with the Early Bronze Age (which is where Abraham was placed; and where Jacob was if a 430-year sojourn is used). Over the years scholars have used certain “evidence” against dating the patriarchs too early: (1) that camels were not domesticated by the time of the Patriarchs (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, p. 37); (2) certain cities and villages that appear in Genesis did not exist during the Early Bronze Age; (3) the personal names that appear in the Joseph narrative do not appear in Egypt before the Late Period; (4) there were no chariots in Egypt before the Hyksos period; (5) the mention of Philistines contradicts the fact that these people did not appear in Palestine until the beginning of the Iron Age; and (6) there are some who may find a discrepancy between the Pharaoh whom Joseph served under and the data recorded in Genesis 47:18–22 (the selling of Egyptian land to Pharaoh). These are just a small handful of examples that are used against the historicity of Genesis.

The common thing about these arguments and others used is that they are all based on the absence of evidence. Concerning camels (see Genesis 12:16 for example), Michael Ripinsky has gathered evidence showing that camels were probably domesticated in Egypt as early as the Early Dynastic Period and the Old Kingdom (Ripinsky 1985, pp. 136–138). He concludes that with some good observations concerning the limitations of archaeology:

The lack of faunal remains should not have led to a casual disregard of the artefactual evidence. It should be remembered that the plant and animal remains, not so long ago, were not ranked highly on the scale of importance among archaeologists concerned primarily with material culture. Consequently, nobody can know the quantities of camel bones, and those of other animals, that were summarily discarded by uninformed excavators before the remains could be properly identified (Ripinsky 1985, pp. 140–141).

He continues:

Egyptian inscriptions inform us that the inhabitants of the Nile Valley were importing myrrh and frankincense (from South Arabia?) in order to meet their ritual needs as early as the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties while expeditions overland had been sent out to the incense country earlier. The use of donkey—rather than camel—caravans for transporting goods across such long distances would have involved considerable hardship, and would have been physically very strenuous to accomplish within a reasonable length of time. Expeditions employing donkeys could

not easily maintain sufficiently high frequencies to sustain any sort of normal trade designed to supply the gargantuan demands of Egyptian temples and shrines. In coastal terrain, of course, seafaring trade would have flourished far better and more economically, but it would have been quite ineffective in ventures into the hinterland. The ability of the camel to withstand both a true desert environment and the strain of long journeys under a heavy load in desert heat made it the ideal vehicle for such operations.

He continues again:

In the Amur-Ussuri Valley, numerous ancient rock drawings can be found carved by the tribal artists. To quote Okladnikov: “Surprisingly, although these ancient tribes lived mainly by fishing, not one picture of a fish has been found in their rock drawings.”

Concerning the evidence of cities during the Patriarchal age, Shechem is believed to have been first occupied as a city with a wall (see Genesis 34:24) during the Middle Bronze Age IIA period (Negev and Gibson 2003, p. 460). This correlates with Jacob living during the 11th Dynasty, but not if he lived during the 6th Dynasty. However, John J. Bimson says something very important to the issue of archaeology and cities:

Archaeology is not, strictly speaking, a science (although it employs scientific tools). One can rarely set up controlled experiments to test whether particular events (biblical or otherwise) actually happened. Rather, the archaeologist is at the mercy of the surviving evidence, and this imposes quite severe limits on what can be deduced with certainty. In the case of the cities of the Ancient Near East, limited time and resources mean that the archaeologist can only excavate a relatively small proportion of a *tell* (the Arabic term for a ruin-mound, in Hebrew spelt *tel*). For example, Yagael Yadin estimated that to excavate every level of the *tell* of Hazor (in northern Galilee) in its entirety would take eight hundred years! This emphasizes the small proportion which can be uncovered in a few seasons. Furthermore, only a limited amount of buried material survives the centuries for the archaeologist to discover it. Archaeology therefore has serious limitations when it comes to answering the kind of question posed in our title [*Exodus and Conquest-Myth or Reality? Can Archaeology Provide the Answer?*]. One cannot guarantee that the appropriate evidence has survived, or (if it has) that the archaeologist will find it (Bimson 1988, p. 27).

Is it possible then that the EBA remains at Shechem have not been discovered due to the limitations of archaeology? It is a good possibility that is so. Bimson also mentions some interesting details about some other sites that appear in the Patriarchal narratives but have no archaeological remains in the Early

Bronze Age (or even other early ages). One example is Beersheba (Genesis 21:30). There are no pre-Iron Age remains at the site calling the Patriarchal narratives into question. However, Bimson (1980, pp. 75–76) mentions that Beersheba does not require settlement during the time of the Patriarchs (this applies to many other sites in Genesis as well).

In regards to the use of the personal names found in Genesis 39–50, some scholars (like Donald Redford) have used these names to date the Joseph account to the first millennium BC, most likely the Saite or Persian periods: 664–332 BC (Hoffmeier 1996, pp. 84–88). These names include: Potiphar, Joseph's master (Genesis 39:1), Asenath, Joseph's wife (Genesis 41:45), Potipherah, Asenath's father (Genesis 41:45), and Zaphenath-paneah, Joseph's Egyptian name (Genesis 41:45). The names Potiphar and Potipherah, for instance, are most popular in the mid-first millennium but do appear earlier in the New Kingdom, although it is in a different pattern. The name may also go back as far as the Middle Kingdom (Hoffmeier 1996, pp. 84–85). Asenath is best attested in the archaeological record in the first millennium, and Joseph's Egyptian name (and its formula) is found most during the period 664–332 BC (Hoffmeier 1996, pp. 85–87). None of these names go back to the Old Kingdom or earlier. Again this argument is based on the absence of evidence. Nothing contradicts the use of these names during the Old Kingdom.

Chariots (Genesis 41:43) are not found in Egypt until the Hyksos period, so the mention of chariots in the Joseph account seems to be a problem. However, it should be noted that there is evidence for chariots in the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia before the Old Kingdom in Egypt (Archer 2007, pp. 188–189). This shows us that chariots were familiar to people during the Patriarchal period. Most likely the evidence of their use in Egypt has been lost. This is once again an argument based on a lack of evidence.

The mention of the Philistines in Genesis (21:34; 26:1) has caused a problem since they do not appear until the Iron Age (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, pp. 37–38). Here is what Richard Abbott says about the problem:

First, we have to consider the possibility that the various Old Testament references to Philistines do not in fact refer to the same ethnic group. There are numerous important differences between the group mentioned in the Genesis accounts, and those mentioned in Judges/Samuel. The Genesis group are friendly, largely well-disposed to Abraham and his household, and for the most part have Semitic names (particularly Abimelech and Ahuzzath, though Phicol is of uncertain derivation). The main city they are mentioned as inhabiting is Gerar. The

later group [is] warlike, hostile and expansionist, and have Hurrian names. Gerar is within their sphere of influence, though a little to the south-east, but the main cities are (from north to south) Ekron, Ashdod, Gath, Ashkelon, and Gaza. Collectively these five are also sometimes called the Philistine Pentapolis. The fact that the region was occupied considerably before the arrival of the group mentioned by Rameses III is shown in that the Ebla tablets (from the second half of the 3rd millennium) mention the towns of Gath and Ashkelon. Hence, someone was living in this area at the right time for Abraham to have met them, and it would be a natural choice for a biblical writer or copyist to have used the term Philistine for them, even if (in modern sociological terms) they are a different ethnic group.

Thus there is strong indication that they are in fact unrelated peoples, linked only by the use of the same name for them by the biblical authors. Assuming they are unrelated, there are two feasible explanations. The one adopted here is that the Semitic group dealt with by Abraham and Isaac [is] earlier occupants of this area. At a later stage the Hurrian group moved in, either assimilating or pushing out the Semites. An alternative explanation is that the Hurrian group [was] over a period of time "Semitised" through contact with other occupants of the area. This would require that the patriarchal accounts were in fact written quite late (in the mid 1st millennium BCE), which then leads to other difficulties of interpretation (Abbott n.d.).

As it can be seen the idea that the Philistines are a problem for the book of Genesis is, in fact, not a problem at all.

Lastly, a concern that some may have with placing Joseph during the late Old Kingdom would be the fact that the people of Egypt gave Pharaoh their land (Genesis 47:18–22) in exchange for food. This could be interpreted as Egypt being decentralized before the time of Joseph, meaning that the Pharaoh did not have complete power over Egypt. Some will argue that this was not the case during the 6th Dynasty; that is, no record of a pharaoh during this period regaining this lost land. However, Alfred Hoerth (1998, p. 135) mentions that towards the end of the Old Kingdom the pharaohs began to lose complete control over Egypt. Thus, one way to explain this alleged discrepancy is that the pharaoh in Joseph's account regained power that past pharaohs (during the late Old Kingdom) had lost. However, there is no mention of this king losing this power, and the pharaoh in Exodus 1 still has power over all of Egypt. This could be explained by the pharaohs who ruled Egypt after Joseph losing complete control, and a still later pharaoh (before Exodus 1 or the king mentioned in that chapter) regaining absolute authority. Genesis

does not imply that all the pharaohs from Joseph to Moses held such power. So there is no problem for a placement of Joseph in the 6th Dynasty.

These are but a small handful of examples of so-called problems for the book of Genesis. These clearly show us that the archaeological evidence is incomplete. Just because there is an absence of evidence does not mean that no evidence existed in the past.

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