

Chapter 2 The Patriarchal Age

The Patriarchs in Context

Fundamental Uncertainty

In the last chapter we developed a provisional revised dynastic history of the 2nd millennium B.C. We provided dates for Egyptian dynasties 5-11 and a scattering of dates for key 12th, 17th, and 18th dynasty kings as those king's names appear on the Berlin stela. The observant reader will have noticed immediately that the tentative chronologies for the first and second halves of the millennium were developed using entirely different methodologies. The dates from the time of Mentuhotep II (1509-1458) forward through to the end of millennium were based on the Berlin stela, and are assumed to be accurate to within fifteen or twenty years. On the other hand, the dates for the 11th dynasty kings who preceded Mentuhotep II, and for all dynasties earlier than the 11th, were otherwise obtained by simply reducing the traditional dates for these kings and dynasties by 551 years, the duration which separates the traditional and revised dates for Mentuhotep II (see Table 2). It follows that the reliability of the dynasty 5 -11 chronology outlined in Figures 4 and 6 depends entirely on the accuracy with which Egyptologists have determined the duration of these earlier dynasties. Unfortunately, that determination may be seriously in error. Primarily for that reason we will curtail our discussion in this chapter related to those earlier years. For that reason also much of what is said should be treated with caution. Our confidence regarding dates beginning with the reign of Mentuhotep II, who initiated what Egyptologists call the Middle Kingdom of Egypt, does not extend backward to the 1st intermediate period (dynasties 7 through to the early 11th) and in particular to the Old Kingdom (dynasties 3-6).

When we question the reliability of the traditional dates for dynasties 3-10, which we will do throughout this chapter, we are in good company. A wide variety of dates are assigned them by Egyptologists, a fact which calls into question the interpretation of the documents on which these

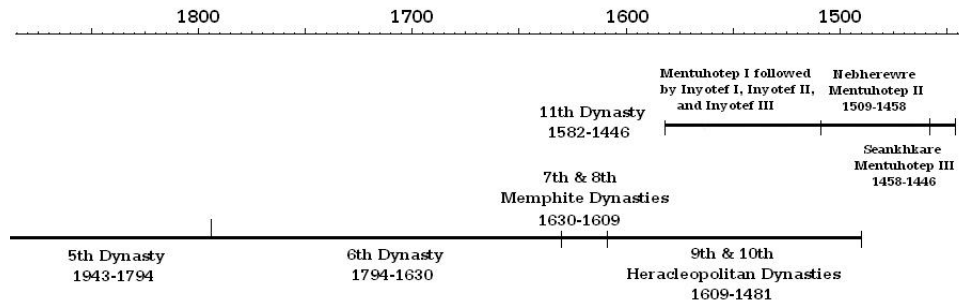
dates depend. These primary source documents, which include the king lists of Saqqara and Abydos, the Turin canon, and Manetho as interpreted by Africanus and Eusebius, are at times widely divergent in their understanding of which kings ruled during the various epochs, much less on the duration of their reigns.

Tentative Chronology 2135-1481 B.C.

Having stated the uncertainty which underlies our results, we proceed to extend our second millennium timeline from the last chapter to include the 3rd and 4th dynasties. We will then attempt to modify this timeline to accommodate the data forthcoming from the monuments of Egypt. At minimum the results will provide a basis for further research and should suggest the direction that research might take.

We begin by reproducing in figure 7 below the timeline for dynasties 5-11 developed in the last chapter (cf. figure 4).

Figure 7: Provisional Revised Chronology 1900-1446



Earlier this timeline was sufficient to span most of the 2nd millennium, the proposed limits of our enquiry for this book. But momentarily we will be compelled to make significant changes to the length of dynasty three through six. It is therefore important to include in our chart the 3rd and 4th dynasties, since they will soon move from the late 3rd into the early to mid 2nd millennium.

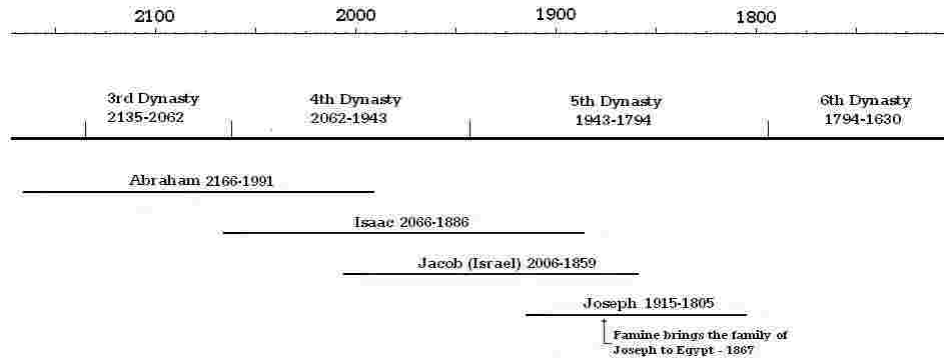
We begin listing the dates for the 3rd and 4th dynasties, as summarized in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, just as we did earlier in table 2 for dynasties 5-10. We then reduce these dates by 551 years, as we did earlier, to produce provisional revised dynastic dates for these two additional dynasties. The results for all dynasties 3-10 are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3: Dynasties 3-10 (Traditional & Revised Dates)

Dynasty	Traditional History	Revised History
3rd	2686-2613	2135-2062
4th	2613-2498	2062-1943
5th	2494-2345	1943-1794
6th	2345-2181	1794-1630
7th	2181-2173	1630-1622
8th	2173-2160	1622-1609
9th	2160-2130	1609-1579
10th	2130-2040	1579-1481

The dates for the Jewish patriarchs (provided in the last chapter) are now added to the dynastic dates provided in Table 3 to provide an Egyptian/patriarchal timeline which will serve as a basis for the discussion which follows.. The results are displayed below in Figure 8. We have omitted from our timeline the revised chronology of dynasties 7-11. This was done deliberately. While there are errors in the dates provided earlier for these dynasties, those errors are marginal compared with those related to dynasties 3-6. For the time being they will be left intact.

Figure 8: Timeline – the Patriarchal Age



It is time to modify the dynastic structure presented in Figure 7 above. The changes will be substantial, but they are entirely consistent with the numbers provided by the various Egyptian king-lists and the data preserved on the monuments. At present dynasties 3 through 6 lie in the time frame 2135-1630 B.C. When our revision is complete they will be compressed between the dates 1900-1590. Thus the Egyptian Old Kingdom will be removed entirely from its traditional 3rd millennium context (2686-2160) to lie entirely within the first half of the 2nd millennium.

Fine Tuning the Old Kingdom Timeline

Even if we were unaware of problems inherent in the length of dynasties 3 through 6, we would question the legitimacy of their sequencing by modern day scholars. Many times in our lengthy historical revision we have had cause to argue that Egyptologists have wrongly placed the reigns of kings in sequence when in fact the pharaohs under consideration jointly ruled various districts of the country for long stretches of time. It is a mistake in principal for scholars to take the individual reign lengths of kings provided by the various king-lists or suggested by documentary evidence, and simply add up the numbers to find the length of a dynasty. We are therefore immediately suspicious when confronted with eight consecutive dynasties in the Early Dynastic (dynasties 1 & 2) and Old

Kingdom (dynasties 3 – 6) periods wherein, if we believe the experts, one king dutifully followed his predecessor in sequence, each regarded as the uncontested ruler of the country. Only when we arrive at dynasties 9-11 do we find a division of power within Egypt, apparently arising out of nowhere. Is it possible that the scholars are wrong and that the reigns of kings in dynasties 3 through 6 overlapped each other to some significant extent? We begin our enquiry by examining the Egyptian sixth dynasty, slowly working our way backward to the third.

6th Dynasty Revision

In chapter one we determined, based entirely on the word of Egyptologists, that the six kings of the sixth dynasty ruled Egypt for a combined 164 years. And accepting for the moment that the dynasty ended in 1630 B.C. we determined that it spanned the years 1794-1630 B.C. But on what basis are these numbers determined by Egyptologists.

According to Manetho the 6th dynasty consisted of six kings of Memphis named Othoes, Phios, Methusuphis, Phiops, Methusuphis, and Nitocris, assigned in order 30, 53, 7, 99, 1 and 12 years, thus 202 years in total. The Abydos king list also records six kings, five of whom agree with Manetho. It renames Manetho's first king Teti, inserts an additional king Userkare, unknown to Manetho, and then resumes Manetho's listing with Merire (Piopi I), Merenre, Neferkare (Piopi II), and Merenre-Antyemzaef. Nitocris does not appear in this list. The Sakkara king list names only the first four of Manetho's kings, thus – Teti, Piopi, Merenre, and Neferkare. No dates are supplied for any of the Abydos or Sakkara kings, either in the 6th dynasty or elsewhere. The Turin Canon preserves the names of Manetho's second through fifth kings, Meryre, Merenre, Neferkare, and Merenre-Antyemzaef, assigning them reign lengths of 20, 44?, 90+, and 1 year, the ambiguity attributable in part to the fragmentary nature of the badly damaged document. The format of the Canon also confirms that two kings preceded Meryre (undoubtedly Teti and Userkare) and eight kings followed Merenre-Antyemzaef. Of the eight kings only four names are preserved, one of which is Nitokerty, Manetho's sixth pharaoh. More will be said later concerning this female pharaoh. Her name in the Turin Canon occurs as either the seventh or eight king of the dynasty.

Apparently she was a wife of Piopi II. Reign lengths of from one to four years are preserved for four of these additional kings. Fortunately, the Turin Canon does record the overall length of the dynasty – 181 years.

The first five kings of the 6th dynasty, following the Abydos listing, are known from the monuments by various combinations of their Horus names, Re names (prenomen), or nomen. The similarity of the names on the monuments to those preserved by the king lists and by Manetho attests the overall reliability of these sources. In the discussion which follows we will use exclusively the prenomen and/or the nomen of each king. Thus the first five kings will be referred to as Teti, Userkare, Merire Piopi (Pepi I), Merenre, and Neferkare Piopi (Pepi II).

The reigns of these first five kings occupied all but about a dozen years of the dynasty, this according to Manetho, consistent with the Turin Canon. Since Egyptologists assign roughly 164 years to the dynasty, it follows that approximately 152 years are assigned to these five kings. The second king, Userkare, known only from the Abydos list (and assumed for the missing second spot in the Turin Canon) and two cylinder seals, is accordingly credited with a very brief reign, a single year by most scholars. And since Piopi II ruled for almost a full century [99 – x years], it follows that Egyptologists assign [52 + x] years to Teti, Merire (Piopi I), and Merenre combined. For every year that the reign of Piopi II is reduced, the combined reigns of the three kings may be increased. Is there a problem with these numbers? The answer is an emphatic yes. We cite the following reasons.

1) Gardiner argues convincingly that the reign of Merire Piopi lasted at least 52 years, citing among other things the notoriety of this king, the dating of one of his expeditions in “the year of the twenty-fifth cattle count” (a biennial event which suggests that this was his 52nd year), and an inscription recording his first Sed-festival, possibly celebrated in his 30th year. If Piopi I ruled for 52 year, then the “x” in the listing above must be zero. Piopi II must have ruled for 99 years. How likely is that scenario?

2) Even if the reign length of Piopi I is reduced to 30 to 40 years, as claimed by many Egyptologists, it can be argued that the combined reign

lengths of Teti, Meryre Piopi I, and Merenre cannot possibly total 52 years. That conclusion follows from the well known autobiographical tomb inscription of Weni, a 6th dynasty notable who “held minor office already in the reign of Teti”, and rose in rank under Piopi I to chamberlain and sandal-bearer of the king, not to mention commander of the king’s army in multiple excursions into the Sinai and southern Palestine. Finally under Merenre he rose in rank to “governor of Upper Egypt” and then to vizier¹, citing an impressive list of accomplishments. The fact that Weni’s career spans the reigns of three kings, including the lengthy reign of Piopi I, constitutes “a serious problem” to the reckoning of Egyptologists, this according to Alan Gardiner his classic *Egypt of the Pharaohs*. The only solution proposed by Gardiner is that the reigns of these three kings cannot have been successive. Thus he writes:

On the assumption that Merenre succeeded to the throne only after his father’s death, Weni will have been well over 60 when he passed into the service of a new royal master. Under Merere, however, further strenuous tasks awaited him – tasks which it is hard to believe were imposed upon a man so advanced in age. This difficulty would be mitigated, even if not completely overcome, if it turned out that Piopi associated Merenre with himself as king a number of years earlier, so that royal commands could be issued in either name, *and for such an association definite, although somewhat slender evidence has actually been discovered.* EP 97 (italics added)

With that comment Gardiner moves on to other considerations. The “serious problem” is left unresolved since elsewhere Gardiner credits Merenre with only ten years of rule. These ten years apparently include his joint rule with his father, thus minimizing the extent of the overlapping kingships. A few years of joint rule hardly constitutes a solution to a serious problem. And the problem is more serious than Gardiner’s language suggests. In the first place Weni’s autobiography begins by telling us that he began his governmental career under king Teti, whose reign, according to Manetho, was apparently lengthy.

[I was a child] who fastened on the girdle under the majesty of Teti; my office was that of supervisor or [____] and I filled the office of inferior custodian of the domain of Pharaoh. BAR I:294

¹ The fact that Weni ultimately became a vizier was only recently discovered.

The fastening on of the girdle seems to refer to some inauguration ritual. Weni may have been a child when ushered into office, but the next line of his inscription implies an extended passage of time. When Pepi I assumed office Weni was no longer young, he boasts (or complains) that he was the eldest in his office, probably at least in his thirties.

[I was] eldest of the [___] chamber under the majesty of Pepi. His majesty appointed me to the rank of companion and inferior prophet of his pyramid-city.

Pepi probably began the construction of his pyramid tomb at Saqqara near the beginning of his reign. If Pepi reigned for over fifty years, then Weni would have been over 80 when the reign of Merenre began, not 60 as Gardiner claims. And the accomplishments and prestigious appointments gained under Merenre suggest that the 44 year reign length for this king, suggested by the Turin Canon, may be much more accurate than the 7 years suggested by Manetho. Small wonder that Gardiner suggested joint rule as the only viable solution to the problem of Weni's age. But any such joint rule must have been of considerable length.

3) It is known that Merenre and Piopi II, the successors of Piopi I, were half-brothers, sons of Piopi I by two wives who were themselves sisters. Again we listen to Gardiner describe the situation. Speaking about Piopi I he states:

An unpretentious outlook seems indicated by his marriages, doubtless consecutively, to two daughters of a local hereditary prince named Khui, whose home appears to have been in Abydos; both daughters were accorded the same name Meryre-ankh-nas, and *if we may believe the inscription* recording this fact, the one became the mother of Piopi I's successor Merenre and the other of his second successor Piopi II, their brother Djau securing the high office of vizier. This connexion with the provinces seems quite in accordance with the spirit of the times. EP 94 (italics added)

We note a little scepticism in Gardiner's tone regarding the reliability of the inscription. We are not surprised. He is inclined to discredit the information provided, and we understand why. Taken at face value it presents an unanswerable objection to the "consecutive pharaoh"

hypothesis. But Gardiner fails to articulate the problem, stating only in passing that the marriages were “doubtless” consecutive. The matter deserves looking into.

One aspect of the problem, hinted at by Gardiner’s final remark, concerns the fact that Piopi I, whether successively or not, married wives from Upper Egypt, suggestive of a fact we are about to argue, namely, that this king was primarily associated with the south of the country, at least early in his career.

4) The other aspect of the problem of Merire Piopi’s marriages to the sisters Merireankhnes², and the births of Merenre and Piopi II which followed, concerns the timing of these events. The situation demands a lengthy co-regency between Piopi I and Merenre and a very short reign of Merenre after the death of his father. The reasoning is two fold. One aspect of the problem is discussed here; the other in the following paragraph. Here we are concerned with Piopi’s age. Even if he was born in the final year of his father’s life, and the reign of Merenre lasted only an additional 7 years (following Manetho rather than the Turin Canon), Neferkare must have been at least eight years old when he began his alleged ninety year plus long reign. What is the likelihood of a 100 year old pharaoh ruling in Egypt? And we have already suggested that the reign of Merenre very likely lasted closer to the 44 years registered by the Turin Canon, than the 7 years alleged by Manetho. Every additional year that Merenre ruled beyond the death of his father must be added to the lifespan and reign of his half-brother. And what is the likelihood that Neferkare was born in the last year of the 53 year long kingship of Piopi I, who must have been at least in his seventies at the time. No doubt Gardiner took this into consideration when recommending an association of Merire Piopi and his son Merenre in ruling Egypt.

5) The final comments preceding serve to introduce a second problem related to the careers of Piopi I and his two sons. There is always the presumption, when considering succession to the throne in Egypt, that the eldest son of the pharaoh inherited the throne, and that on the death of the eldest the kingship fell to the second oldest son. Assuming that this

² Earlier Egyptologists preferred to reorder the elements of the name, referring to these ladies as Ankh-nes-Merire.

situation prevailed during the 6th dynasty, we would expect that Merenre and Neferkare were born to the sisters Merireankhnes early in Piopi's reign, not in the last twenty years of his life as assumed in the discussion above. Even if we assume that Merenre was born very early in Merire's reign, and was thus his firstborn son, what happened to all the male children born in the lengthy interval which followed until Neferkare was born extremely late in that same kingship. Merenre's birth can safely be moved backward in time. Not so the birth of Neferkare, if he is to begin his ninety year kingship only after the death of his father and half-brother. But the fact that the brothers were born to sisters, and were apparently the first born of those sisters, all but demands that both were born early in the career of their father.

6) It is clear that momentarily we are going to suggest more than the brief co-regency between Piopi I and his son Merenre suggested by Gardiner. We will propose instead a series of lengthy co-regencies involving all of the kings of this dynasty. It is important to note, therefore, that such a situation was commonplace around this time in history. While we have avoided discussion of dynasties 7 and 8, which immediately follow the reign of Piopi II, they are instructive and deserve at least passing mention.

According to Manetho the 7th dynasty consisted of "seventy kings of Memphis, who reigned for 70 days", a datum which prompts Gardiner to conclude that "this dynasty appears to be wholly spurious." But Manetho cannot be so easily discounted. His opinions are apparently based throughout on documentary sources. And momentarily we will discuss the chaotic conditions which prevailed at the end of the 6th dynasty, resulting in part at least from the rising power of the "nobility" and the weakening authority of the aging Piopi II. The latter condition is attested to by the fact that fully eight dynasty 6 kings ruled during the final decade, this according to the Turin Canon. We surmise, therefore, that the death of Piopi II removed the last vestige of centralized authority within Egypt and precipitated what amounted to a civil war, as nomarchs and opportunists alike contested to control limited domains. Egypt was fragmented into a feudal state almost overnight. We must discount Manetho's suggestion that there was some unification of power manifest in Memphis. More than that we cannot say.

Out of the short lived chaos there emerged leaders sufficiently charismatic or geographically well situated to coalesce local nomarchs into larger regional powers. A semblance of Pharaonic rule was rekindled in multiple regions of the country. Manetho views this time of more centralized government as a distinct dynasty, his 8th, and according to him it consisted of “twenty-seven kings of Memphis, who reigned for 146 years. He provides no names. The Abydos list names 18 successors of Piopi II which Egyptologists assign to this epoch. They believe that this chaotic condition prevailed for only about twenty years, a reasonable assumption if Manetho is merely adding up the reign lengths of regional pharaohs whose reigns largely overlapped. In the concluding section of this chapter we will argue that the absolute dates for this ‘dynasty’ can be compressed from twenty one years to only eight. All of these 18 or 27 kings ruled simultaneously and for only a brief period of time.

The point we make in this lengthy discussion should not be overlooked. If Egypt could be fragmented into dozens of regional states during the final years of the rule of Piopi II, and more so immediately following his death, we should not discount the likelihood that division of leadership may have been necessary earlier in the dynasty. In particular, considering the 500 mile displacement and geographical and cultural diversity that existed between Upper and Lower Egypt, we should expect that 6th dynasty pharaohs might have shared leadership over Upper and Lower Egypt with one or more of their sons. We argue therefore that co-regencies throughout the 6th dynasty were not the exception to the rule. They were the norm.

7) We conclude our argument by defending the conclusion just made. The fact that the southern and northern regions of Egypt were separately governed during the 6th dynasty has not gone unnoticed. Multiple documents attest to this division of power in many branches of the governmental structure. Gardiner spends three pages of his exhaustive treatment of Egypt’s past by documenting this puzzling governmental duplication of services, a phenomenon particularly evident during the 6th dynasty. He notes that there existed a duality in all facets of the governmental structure, however mundane. Thus there existed two centralized granaries, two “chambers of the king’s adornment, two magistracies, a “governor of Upper Egypt” for which there is assumed to

exist a corresponding “governor of Lower Egypt”, and even two viziers. Incredibly there were even two “high priests of Memphis”. There is even evidence that this division in governmental institutions increased as the dynasty ran its course and the country became more fragmented. Speaking of the fact that there existed multiple viziers in later dynasties, Gardiner relates how

“the funerary temple of Piopi II brought to light representations appearing to reveal the same state of affairs for the end of Dyn. VI, and further study has disclosed the existence of so many holders of the title that it is now assumed that besides the two viziers for Valley and Delta there were others who were given or assumed the title in a purely honorary capacity. The evidence is confusing, and the last word on this subject has not yet been said.”³

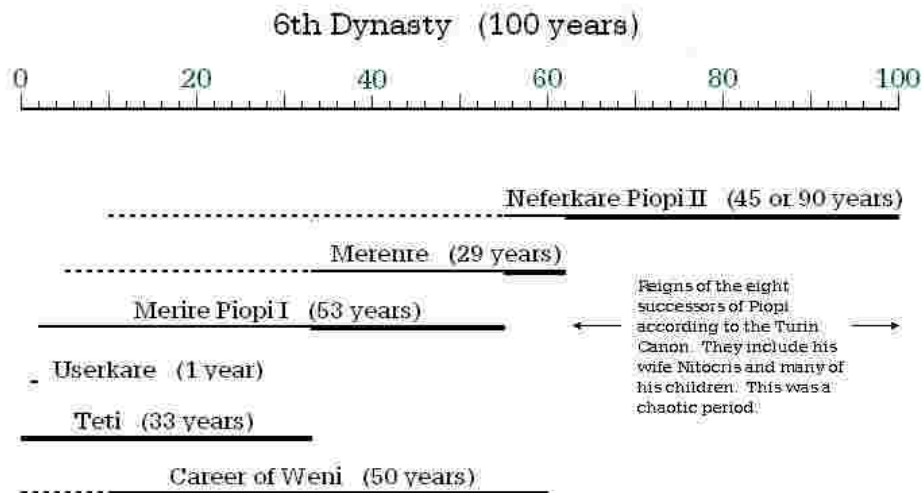
Our previous conclusion follows. If for every governmental function in Lower Egypt there existed a corresponding agency or agent in Upper Egypt, there should be no objection to our argument that the pharaoh in Memphis would want his own family representative in Abydos or Thebes; perhaps even elsewhere, where, to use Gardiner’s words quoted earlier, “royal commands could be issued in either name”.

With that we rest our case.

³ Egypt of the Pharaohs, p. 104

In figure 9 below we propose a restructuring of the reigns of the kings of dynasty 6, one which takes into consideration the six objections raised previously. A brief explanation follows.

Figure 9: The 6th Dynasty Restructured



We assume for most of this revised 6th dynasty timeline that the reigns lengths provided by Manetho and by the Turin Canon are reasonably accurate. They are not contradictory, as they appear to be at times. The apparent discrepancies between the two authorities result from the fact that Egypt, throughout the length of the dynasty, was ruled always by at least two pharaohs, the primary king ruling in Memphis, and his eldest son acting in his stead in the south of the country. Merire, Merenre, and Neferkare in consequence have two distinct phases in their kingships – an early one where they rule in the south in association with their father (narrower solid line), and one where they become the primary pharaoh and very likely move to the north (wider solid line). Usually Manetho registers the combined numbers for both phases of the king's reign. The Turin Canon, on the other hand, records only the duration of the king's rule in Memphis (heavy solid line). This explains why the numbers

preserved by Manetho are typically much larger than those preserved by the Turin Canon. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule.

We have credited Teti with the 33 years assigned him by Manetho. In the first year of his reign he probably began construction of his pyramid in the Saqqara plain. At the same time he elevated Userkare, who may or may not have been his son, to assist him in ruling the south of the country. When this king died prematurely he was replaced by Merire, Teti's eldest living son. Merire Piopi almost immediately began raising a family and constructing a pyramid. Among others he selected as wives the two daughters of Khui. They almost certainly belonged to the harem at the same time. From them came his firstborn and second sons, Merenre and Neferkare. We assume as a working hypothesis that the two were born around years 5 and 10 of the dynasty. The dotted lines represent their lives as princes. When Teti died Merire elevated Merenre to replace himself in the south. Likewise when Merire died Merenre elevated his half brother Neferkare to replace himself in the south. Such was the likely leadership pattern for the dynasty. In the case of Neferkare posterity seems to have confused his life span and his time in office, crediting all of his ninety years to his kingship. Perhaps this was because his life spanned almost the entire duration of the dynasty. His age at the conclusion of his reign became legendary. But he certainly did not function as pharaoh for ninety years. Hardly any artifacts of this king have been found.

By the time Merenre died the dynasty was beginning to self destruct. Piopi was not a strong leader, even if he was long lived. There emerged a struggle among the offspring and near relatives of Neferkare to see who replaced Merenre. Eight pharaohs filled the 38 years which remained following the death of Merenre till the death of Piopi around the century mark in the dynasty. The first was likely the king known by the name Merenre-Antyemzaef in several of the king lists. He ruled for barely a year. There followed, in all likelihood, an unnamed brother or brother-in-law of Piopi, who may have ruled for a considerable time. He was followed by Manetho's sixth king, the female pharaoh Nitocris, Nitokerty in the Turin list. We don't know how long she ruled, but her later notoriety suggests it was for some duration. It is said by Herodotus that she committed suicide "after taking vengeance on certain Egyptians

who had slain her brother in order to put her in his place.”⁴ Of the five kings with which the Turin Canon closes the dynasty, four are given reign lengths which combined total only 9 years and 4 months. The fifth was likely a child of Piopi named Neferka. Egyptologist affix these nefarious kings to the end of the dynasty, increasing its length unnecessarily. They belong instead to the south of Egypt where they ruled in association with Neferkare Piopi II.

In the revised chronology this century long dynasty belongs to the years 1730-1630 B.C. Momentarily we will lower these dates slightly to accommodate the changes to dynasties 7 and 8 discussed earlier.

4th/5th Dynasty Revision

We will treat these two dynasties together. In the traditional history they are assigned roughly 160 and 140 years respectively, 300 years in total. In the revised history their combined length will be closer to half that amount. Our explanation will be brief.

We begin by listing the names of the kings of the two dynasties as accepted by the present generation of Egyptologists.⁵ There follows a timeline showing the revised placement of the kings in the two dynasties, with explanation following.

⁴ The primary reference is to Herodotus 2:100 but we quote here from Gardiner EP 102.

⁵ We omit for these two dynasties the precise listing of kings found in Manetho, the Abydos and Sakkara king lists, and the Turin Canon. There are simply too many variations to make such a listing practical.

Table 4: Kings of Dynasties 4 & 5

DYNASTY 4	Manetho	Turin Canon		DYNASTY 5	Manetho	Turin Canon
Snofru	29	24		Userkaf	28	7
Khufwey (Cheops)	63	23		Sahure	13	12
Radjedef		8		Neferirkare	20	lost
Khafre (Chefren)	66	lost		Shepseskare Izi	7	7
Hardjedef		lost		Raneferef	20	x + 1
Rabaef				Niuserre Iny	44	11
Menkaure (Mycerinus)	63	18		Menkauhor	9	8
Ratoises	25	4		Djedkare Izozi	44	28
Bicheris	22	2		Unis	33	30
Sebercheres	7					
Thamphthis	9					
Shepseskaf						
TOTALS	277	79+			248	104+

As was the case with the 6th dynasty, it is possible to position these kings sequentially, maintaining the numbers preserved by Manetho and the Turin Canon, while still reducing the accepted lengths of the two dynasties substantially. Critical to our revision are the dual assumptions on which we relied for our 6th dynasty revisions, namely that:

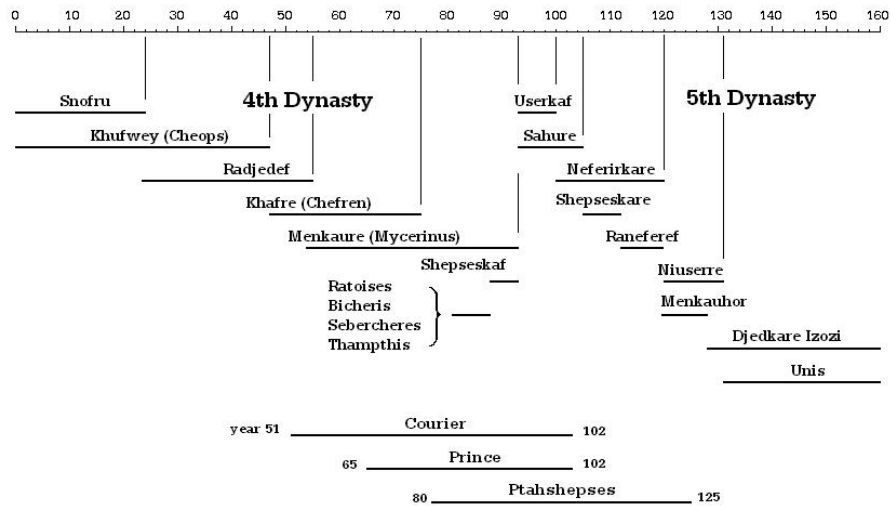
- 1) at all times Egypt was ruled by at least two kings, the primary ruler with residence in Memphis, and his eldest son ruling in the south of the country, and
- 2) in cases where a king ruled both as an associate in Upper Egypt, and as the primary pharaoh in Memphis, Manetho has preserved the total of

both phases, while the Turin Canon preserves only the years of reign in Memphis. Where a subordinate king does not outlive his father, both Manetho and the Turin Canon record the length of reign in the south.

Only thus can sense be made of the disparate numbers of the two king lists, with Manetho's numbers consistently much higher than those of the Turin Canon.

It follows from these assumptions that the Turin Canon alone provides an upper limit to the length of the dynasty. Manetho's numbers cannot be used to support the exaggerated dynastic lengths accepted by the current generation of Egyptologists. The two principles have been used to create the timeline for dynasties 4 & 5 reproduced in Figure 9 below. A defence of the timeline follows.

Figure 10: Revised 4th & 5th Dynasty Timeline



We do not have to go into great detail in defence of this schema. It is based on precisely the same principles which were operative in dynasty 6 earlier, where the timeline was supported by multiple arguments,

including the fact that the time in office of a dignitary named Weni spanned the reigns of three kings, to whom Manetho assigned a combined 90 years. Without the application of our operative assumptions, no sense could be made of the numbers. A similar situation prevails here. But here the problem involves the lives of *three* officials. We let Gardiner introduce two of the three.

The present tendency is to assign to Dyn. IV a duration of no more than 160 years and to Dyn. V no more than 140. These figures are small in view of the great works accomplished, but apparently will have to be still further reduced, for there seems no reason to doubt the veracity of a courtier who claimed to have been honoured by six kings from Redjedef to Sahure, or of a royal prince who enjoyed similar favour, but starting only with Redjedef's successor Chephren. EP 89

This is somewhat of an understatement. Even assuming that these dignitaries began their terms in office in the last year of the first named king, and ended their careers in the first year of the last named king (an unlikely event to say the least), for us to interpret the numbers provided by Manetho in the traditional way we must assume that the *working lives* of the courtier and the prince lasted 220 and 154 years respectively (see Table 4). And these numbers ignore the reigns of Hardjedef, Rabaef, and Shepseskaf, for whom Manetho provides no data. When Gardiner suggests that the traditional dynastic lengths "will have to be still further reduced" he is marginalizing the problem. The numbers need to be drastically altered. And Gardiner is merely suggesting the need for such revision. These statements are pure academic rhetoric. Egyptologists have done nothing in the interim to change their interpretation of the data supplied by Manetho and the Turin Canon. The lengths of the two dynasties reproduced in the textbooks have not changed appreciatively in well over a hundred years. And the courtier and the prince do not stand alone in contradicting the traditional timeline.

"From a false door in his mastaba, discovered at Sakkara by Mariette" well over a century ago, a 4th/5th dynasty priest of Ptah, serving as a priest in Nuserre's sun temple during the 5th dynasty, claims to have been educated among the children of the royal harems of kings Menkaure and Shepseskaf of the 4th dynasty. His inscription originally named four other kings spanning the interval between Shepseskaf and Nuserre.

Unfortunately those names were part of a damaged section of the inscription. Breasted, whom we quoted above, supplies the likely missing names – Userkaf, Sahure, Neferirkare, and Neferefre (Raneferef).⁶ Egyptologists have tried to explain this lengthy lifespan by suggesting that the inscription was written by the priest Ptahshepses when he was an extremely old man. But even if true, Manetho has kings with reign lengths totalling 151 years between the last year of Mycerinus (Menkaure) and the first year of Niuserre Iny, again neglecting the reign of Shepseskaf. And there is nothing in the inscription to suggest that Ptahshepses was old. He is conceivably in his forties, since dignitaries like himself typically began building their mastabas relatively early in their careers, in anticipation of death. He is still actively engaged in his priestly duties, self-described as the “beloved of his lord, revered of Ptah, doing that which the god desires of him, pleasing every artificer under the king.”⁷ Once again the numbers do not add up.

The problem is not just that Manetho’s numbers are unrealistically high. In all three instances cited, the dignitaries suggest that their terms in office, or their lifespan to date in the case of Ptahshepses, spanned the reigns of about six kings, where Manetho actually names from eight to eleven kings in the respective time intervals. These documents demand that we assume the existence of minor kings and of overlapping reigns as represented in our timeline.

It should be noted that our Figure 10 takes into account all the data provided by Manetho and the Turin Canon, and it assumes the general reliability of both source documents. The reign of each successive king in a dynasty appears in sequence as we proceed downward. The solid line for the first king represents his reign in Memphis. For each successive king the line represent the combined reign in association with the father and the reign in Memphis beyond the death of the father, where such exists. For the Memphite portion of the reign we have relied solely on the data provided by the Turin Canon. The sole exceptions to this procedure, as stated earlier, are the instances where the father outlived his eldest son, and elevated a second son to replace the first. We also find exceptions to the rule in the first and last reigns of each dynasty. In the

⁶ BAR I 254-255

⁷ BAR I 262.

reign of the last Memphite king there occurs the expected multiplication of kings as the dynasty begins to self-destruct.

It is important to note that the revised timeline provides answers to the most problematic features of the 4th and 5th dynasty records. On the one hand it explains the glaring discrepancy between the numbers provided by Manetho and those preserved by the Turin Canon. Secondly, it reconciles the regnal numbers with the data provided by the courier and the prince mentioned by Gardiner, and with the lifespan of the priest Ptahshepses. Solid lines representing the respective terms in office and lifespan of the three individuals are included in the diagram, and are clearly of a realistic length. There is no reason to doubt the integrity of these officials. Last, but not least, our timeline answers the one question most likely to be raised by the critics. How do we account for the unparalleled accomplishments of the 4th and 5th dynasty kings in such a relatively short duration of time? A word of explanation is in order.

Already Gardiner has alluded to the one reason why Egyptologists are reluctant to reduce the length of the combined 4th and 5th dynasties. When he recounted the numbers 160 and 140 years for the lengths of the two dynasties he added the observation that “these figures are small in view of the great works accomplished.” The reader is doubtless fully aware of the fact that the pharaoh Snofru, the first king of the 4th dynasty, is credited with construction (or completion of) the Bent and Red pyramids at Dahshur. The dynasty continued with the reigns of the builders of the three great pyramids at Giza - Khufwey (Cheops), Khafre (Chefren), and Menkaure (Mycerinus). The 5th dynasty kings built massive sun temples in the same general area, and constructed multiple pyramids, including the three at Abusir credited to Sahure, Neferirkare and Niuserre. These were colossal building enterprises that demanded considerable construction time. The reign lengths for these kings suggested by the Turin Canon are insufficient to account for the great works accomplished. No wonder that Egyptologists are inclined to favor Manetho’s much larger numbers and are reluctant to reduce the dynastic lengths below the existing 160 and 140 years, in spite of conflicts with the inscriptions previously noted. The critic is sure to protest that our reduction of the lengths of these two dynasties by close to 40% is inconceivable. But such protest is unwarranted. Our diagram preserves

for each of these kings ample time in which to accomplish the works credited to them. We assume that all of these monumental constructions was begun near the beginning of the reign or co-regency of the respective kings, for whom we have maintained, with few exceptions, Manetho's expanded reign lengths. The revised timeline may be half the length proposed by Egyptologists, but the regnal lengths of most of the kings is actually increased over the values espoused by the traditional history. The critic has no grounds for complaint.

With that we turn our attention to the 3rd dynasty.

3rd Dynasty Revision

In our initial reconstruction of dynasties 3-6 we suggested that the 3rd dynasty, which in the traditional history belongs in the time frame 2686-2613 B.C., should be moved to the years 2135-2062 B.C. The 73 year length was based on the data supplied by the *Cambridge Ancient History*.⁸ Momentarily we will lower the dates still further. For the time being our concern is with the length of the dynasty, not with its placement in time.

Manetho believed the dynasty consisted of "nine kings of Memphis" to whom he assigns reign lengths totalling 214 years. The Abydos and Sakkara king lists name four kings each, as does the Turin Canon. They agree on the number of kings, but not their names, save for the fact that the dynasty began with a king named Netjrikhe Djoser, the famed builder of the step pyramid and funerary complex at Sakkara, opposite Memphis. According to the Canon, Djoser, and the three kings who followed him ruled for 19, 6, 6, and 24 years respectively. Gardiner sums up the facts:

If Dyn. III be taken as beginning with Djoser, it will have comprised only four, or at most five, rulers covering, according to the Turin Canon, a span of no more than fifty-five years. The nineteen years allotted to Djoser seem an absurdly short time for the completion of so stupendous a monument as his. The twenty-nine years given by Maetho might be accepted the more readily were it not that his Dyn.

⁸ Gardiner suggests 80 years for this dynasty, and dates it tentatively in the years 2700-2620 B.C.

III counts nine kings, all of them except Tosorthros (Djoser) with unidentifiable names and having 214 years as the total of their reigns. The Abydos and Sakkara king-lists support the Turin Canon's figure of four rulers, but there are disturbing discrepancies in the names that they give. EP 75

Our approach to this data is predictable. Once again we assume that the Turin numbers provide the upper limit for the length of the dynasty, though in this instance we accept the reliability of Manetho's 27 years for Djoser, consistent with our acceptance of his numbers for the initial kings of dynasties 4-6. We also assume that there were overlapping reigns. The monuments appear to know only two of the four kings named in the Turin Canon, - Djoser, the first in the dynasty, and Huni, the last. We assume they were the only Memphite kings. If Djoser ruled for 27 years (based on Manetho) and Huni ruled for 24 years, based on the Canon, then the dynasty cannot have lasted more than 51 years. For convenience we round the number off to 50. The dynasty length would be shorter by the amount of any overlap between Djoser and Huni. For the moment we assume there was none. The second and third kings in the Turin list, and most of the rulers named by Manetho, must have been secondary co-rulers, with reigns overlapping those of Djoser and Huni. There are no inscriptions to assist in refining this interpretation.

We omit at this time any timeline diagram for this data. The 3rd dynasty will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter when we examine the life of the Jewish patriarch Joseph. For now we are content to leave its length as 50 years, with Djoser ruling for the initial 27 years. At this we are not in any great disagreement with the traditional history which believes it lasted around 80 years with Djoser as pharaoh for the first several decades.

We have thus determined approximate lengths for the Old Kingdom of Egypt, crediting the 3rd dynasty with 50 years, the 4th and 5th combined with 160 years, and the 6th with 100 years. We are almost ready to reconstruct our Old Kingdom timeline. But first we need to revisit the 7th/8th dynasties, if only momentarily.

7th/8th Dynasty Revision

Earlier we argued that the 7th and 8th dynasty cannot have lasted more than seven or eight years, not the twenty odd years assigned by the traditional history. By degrees power must have consolidated in both the north and south of the country, consolidating the 27 nomarchs into two competing dynasties, the Heracleopolitan kings in Lower Egypt and the 11th dynasty kings in Upper Egypt.

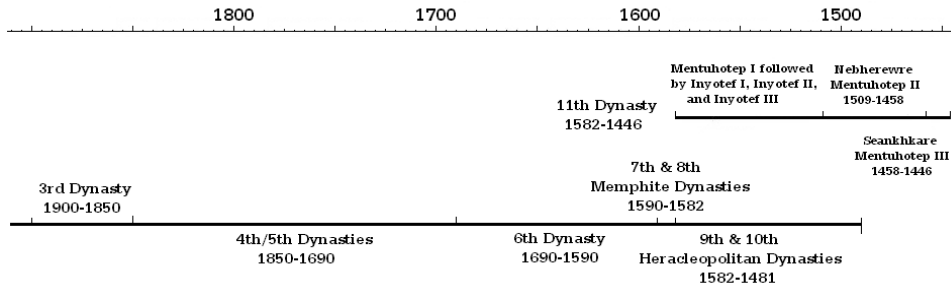
If this scenario is even remotely factual, we cannot be far wrong in assuming that the 8th dynasty of petty monarchs was followed immediately the competing 9th and 11th dynasties. There seems to be no good reason for assuming, with the traditional history, that the 9th dynasty preceded the emergence of the 11th by almost three decades.

Revised Old Kingdom Timeline

Based on our analysis to this point we are now able to assign revised absolute dates to the 1st Intermediate Period and to the Old Kingdom of Egypt. If the 9th and 11th dynasties began at the same time we need to revise the dates for the Heracleopolitan dynasties downward from 1609-1481 to 1582-1481. The 11th dynasty dates remain unchanged at 1582-1446. Reducing the length of the 7th/8th dynasties from 21 to 8 years places those “dynasties” in the time frame 1590-1582. The 4th/5th and 6th dynasties, 160 and 100 years in length respectively, must now be dated 1850-1690 and 1690-1590 B.C. And finally, the 50 year long 3rd dynasty must have occupied the years 1900-1850 B.C.

These dates are incorporated into a revised figure 7, diagrammed below as figure 11.

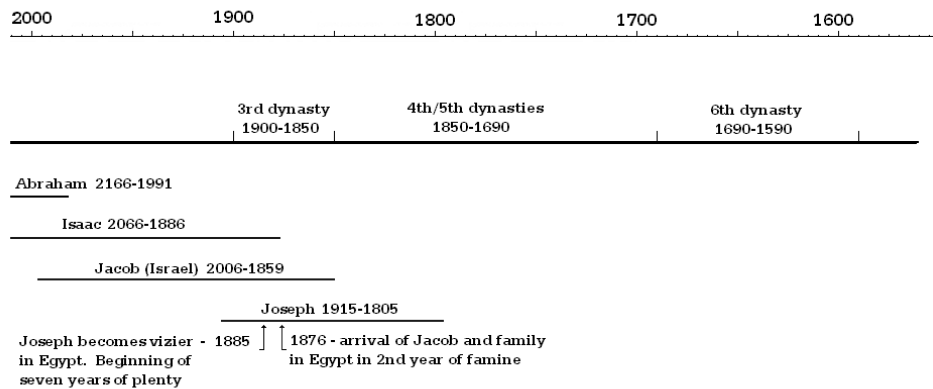
Figure 11: Old Kingdom and 1st Intermediate Period Revised Dates



The Patriarchs in an Old Kingdom Context

At long last we can reintroduce the Jewish patriarchs. Since Joseph, the last of them, died in the year 1805, we need include only the Old Kingdom dynasties in our timeline. The results are diagrammed in figure 12.

Figure 12: Patriarchs In An Old Kingdom Context



From the timeline in figure 12 we make the following four observations:

1) In the traditional history the famed Egyptian 4th dynasty, which included the great pyramid builders Cheops, Chephren, and Mycerinus, preceded the Jewish patriarchs by 500 years. We find instead that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died years before the pyramids were built. Only Joseph lived to see their construction. In the next chapter we will argue that he was likely their architect. We should read the Old Testament stories of the patriarchs in a new light, if indeed their lives were lived out in the context of the early dynasties of Egypt.

2) Our chapter one and chapter two displacements of dynasties 3-6 has brought them forward, so to speak, into the “light of day” vis-à-vis the history of the Ancient Near East. Where formerly it was believed, at least by Egyptologists, that human civilization developed foremost, if not first, in Egypt, around the year 2500 B.C., we must now argue to the contrary. Scholars typically begin their discussion of Egyptian culture and history with the 3rd dynasty, acknowledging therein that they have precious little knowledge of the earlier two dynasties, and even less of the prehistory of the country. The revised chronology places this 3rd dynasty flout of cultural development several hundreds of years following, rather than several hundreds of years preceding, similar developments in the Mesopotamian delta. It follows from our chart that Sumerian culture long preceded, rather than distantly followed, 3rd dynasty developments in Egypt. It can now be argued, for example, that the cuneiform script of the Euphrates valley preceded the development of hieroglyphic writing along the Nile by hundreds of years. The Egyptians apparently borrowed heavily from their Mesopotamian cousins. Accordingly, the revised chronology suggests a myriad of subjects for ethnographic, linguistic, literary, archaeological and historical research, particularly as those studies lie in the cross-cultural domain.

3) We notice in our timeline that the elevation of Joseph to the position of vizier in Egypt, dated in our first chapter to the year 1885, corresponds to the 15th year of the pharaoh Djoser of the 3rd dynasty. The seven years of plenty which preceded the great famine in Egypt, dated 1885-1878, lie entirely within Djoser’s reign. It cannot be a coincidence therefore, that the most notorious instance of famine in the land of Egypt, recorded in an

inscription on a rock facing on the island of Sehel, near Elephantine in the extreme south of Egypt, took place in the reign of Djoser, and was of seven years duration. This leads to our final comment.

4) The deliverance of Egypt at the time of Djoser's flood is credited by the Sehel inscription to a vizier of Djoser by the name of Imhotep. The reader will not have to go far afield to find dozens of scholars who point out the many similarities between the biblical Joseph and the famed Egyptian vizier Imhotep. These similarities are so remarkable that, in spite of the fact that the traditional history dates the 3rd dynasty vizier to the mid 3rd millennium while the biblical history places Joseph in the early 2nd millennium, many argue strenuously that the two individuals are likely one and the same person. In the following chapter we will take up the argument, with one notable difference. We do not equate Joseph and Imhotep simply because of the many parallels between their lives. We equate them because our timeline compels us to do so.