



UNWRAPPING THE PHARAOHS

HOW EGYPTIAN ARCHAEOLOGY CONFIRMS THE BIBLICAL TIMELINE



JOHN ASHTON &
DAVID DOWN

UNWRAPPING THE PHARAOHS

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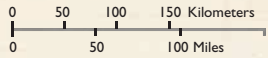
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ANCIENT EGYPT

- ▲ Pyramid
- Major Cities
- River
- Canal



MEDITERRANEAN SEA

CANAAN

LOWER EGYPT

- Tanis
- Horbeit
- Heliopolis
- Cairo
- ▲ Giza
- ▲ Sakkara
- ▲ Dahshur
- ▲ Sedment el-Gebel

SINAI

SAHARA

MIDDLE EGYPT

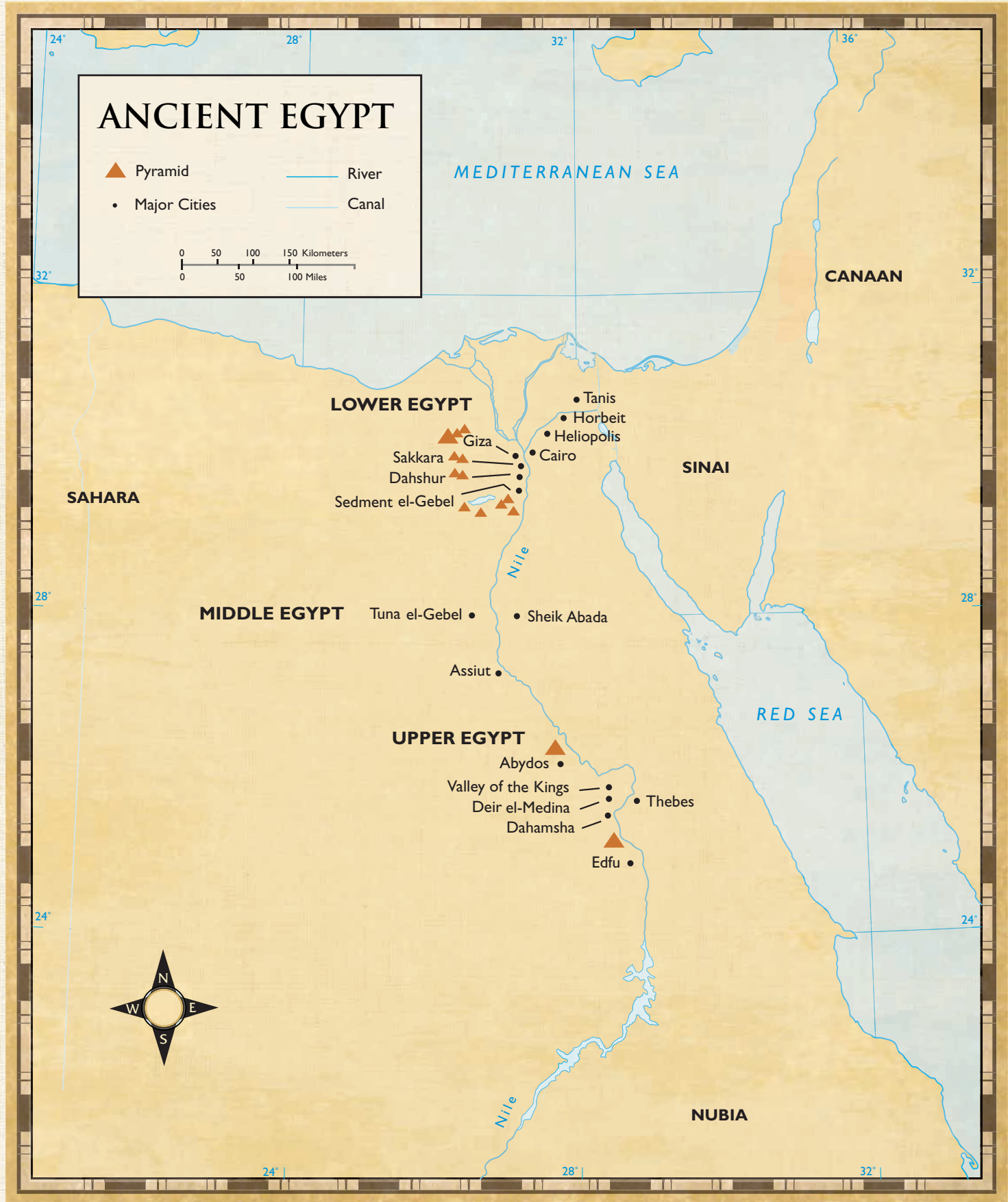
- Tuna el-Gebel
- Sheik Abada
- Assiut

UPPER EGYPT

- ▲ Abydos
- Valley of the Kings
- Deir el-Medina
- Dahamsha
- Thebes
- ▲ Edfu

RED SEA

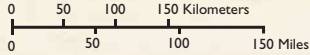
NUBIA



EGYPT TODAY

- International Boundary
- Governorate Boundary
- ★ National Capital
- ⊙ Governorate Capital
- Expressway
- Road
- Railroad
- River
- Canal

Governorates (muhafazat) have the same names as their capitals except where noted.



1. AD DAQAHLIYAH
2. AL BUHAYRAH
3. AL GHARBIYAH
4. AL ISKANDARIYAH
5. AL ISMA'ILIYAH
6. AL MINUFIYAH
7. AL QAHIRAH
8. AL QALYUBIYAH
9. ASH SHARQIYAH
10. BUR SA'ID
11. DUMYAT



INTRODUCTION

THE PYRAMIDS ARE THE OLDEST MONUMENTS OF civilization on the earth. These structures and the relics they contain are the most tangible physical links with our ancient past and provide important clues to our origins. Tracing our roots is something that holds a fascination for most of us, yet there are two diametrically opposing views on how we came to be here.

There is a widely taught historical view which proposes that we humans evolved from lesser life forms over millions of years, resulting in primitive human species about 100,000 years ago, with human skills developing about 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, culminating in the birth of the first civilizations about 5,500 years ago in Sumer and Egypt. The biblical view proposes that humans were created as fully developed, highly intelligent beings about 6,000 years ago, and that there was a destructive worldwide flood about 4,300 years ago with only Noah and his family surviving. The Bible names one of Noah's grandsons as Mizraim, the father of the Egyptians. Thus, Egypt stands out as the oldest continuous civilization according to both world views.

The Hebrew name for Noah's grandson, Egypt, was Mizraim. Genesis 10 lists Noah's descendants. Noah's sons were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. Canaan was the progenitor of the Canaanites, the original inhabitants of Palestine. It is not quite clear who descended from Put — maybe the Ethiopians or the Libyans, but there is no doubt about Cush and Mizraim. Egyptian texts frequently mention the land of Cush, which was Nubia or present-day Sudan. Also, Mizraim is named as the progenitor of the Egyptians. Thus, it is not surprising that the present local name for Egypt is "Misr" which is derived from Mizraim. So today in Egypt we have the Misr Bank, the Misr Insurance Company, and the Misr Travel Agency.

In this book, we look at the archaeological evidence from the stone monuments and other artifacts from ancient Egypt and compare what it tells us with the historical records in the Old Testament books of the Bible. This book has been written using non-scholarly language, so that the average layperson can easily

▼ *The three great pyramids of Dynasty 4 at Giza.*





▲ **1** Sunset over the Nile at Luxor. **2** The great Sphinx of Khafre with the pyramid of Khufu in the background. **3 & 4** Egyptians originally descended from Mizraim, Noah's grandson (Gen. 10:6). The national Egyptian name for Egypt is Misr, derived from Mizraim. **5** On the Rosetta Stone was written the same text in three scripts. The Greek version could be understood and this enabled the Egyptian hieroglyphs to be decoded.

understand it. Technical terms have been omitted or explained, and only the outstanding and interesting features of monuments and history have been included.

Information about the history of Egypt is derived from the ancient historians Herodotus, Manetho, Josephus, and Eusebius, and the Hebrew Bible, which is actually a more reliable source of history than some are willing to acknowledge. Information also comes from inscriptions on statues, temple walls, and papyrus documents. Although archaeological discoveries in Egypt have contributed significantly to our knowledge of history, we believe there have been a number of erroneous conclusions drawn from the data as scholars and their commentators have attempted to make their findings fit the widely taught long-ages world view model.

In this book, beginning with the oldest monuments (pyramids) which remain at the present time, we describe what they are like and explain some of the details that they tell us about life and events in the past. These monuments were built by the kings or pharaohs of Egypt from the earliest dynasties who interacted with the patriarchs and kings named in the Bible. We compare the Bible records about life and events in the past with the Egyptian records and show that there is a remarkable corroboration

between the two. The archaeological remains in Egypt tell us quite a lot about this ancient civilization, but we will notice when we examine the monuments and other remains closely that there is a scarcity of fixed dates and timelines for the events that occurred in each dynasty. On the other hand, the Bible provides a written history of events with an almost unbroken timeline from the Flood onward. The historical accuracy of the biblical record in the latter part of the Old Testament has been confirmed by much archaeological research.¹

On this basis, using historically confirmed dates in later Egyptian history and the years between events recorded in the Bible, it is possible to construct a timeline of the kings of Egypt which dates back to just two centuries after the biblical dating of Noah's flood. The relics of Egypt and the books of the Bible are the two oldest records of human history that we have. If these two independent witnesses agree — surely what that says about our past must be true.



DYNASTY 1

REVISED DATES: 21st C B.C.

TRADITIONAL DATES: 2920–2770 B.C.

KING MENES

GENESIS 10 *Flood*

GENESIS 11 *Babel builders dispersed*

◀ *The pyramids of Khufu (left) and Khafre, the two largest pyramids in the land of Ancient Egypt.*

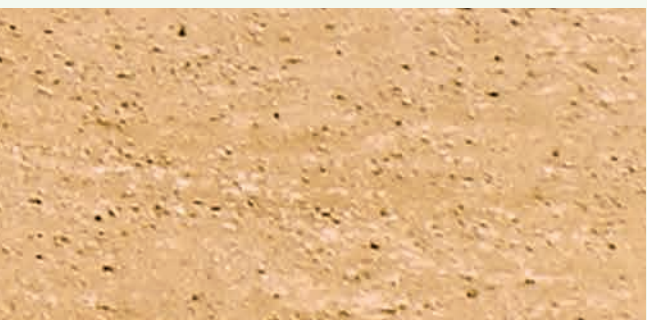
Chapter 1

PYRAMIDS AND MUMMIES



▲ OTHER KINGS AMBIGUOUS

The three great pyramids of Giza, on the outskirts of the city of Cairo, dominate the landscape. They were erected by the kings of Dynasty 4 and are a wonder to scholars and visitors alike. Archaeologists are still not sure how these great mountains of stone were built.



THE PYRAMIDS OF GIZA, AN OUTER SUBURB OF CAIRO, are enormous. You may have read about them, seen pictures of them, or watched documentaries of them, but until you have stood in front of these massive mountains of stone you cannot grasp the immensity of it all.

The largest of these three great pyramids was built for King Khufu, whose Greek name was Cheops. It measures 751 feet (229 m) from one corner to another and was originally 479 feet (146 m) in height. It has been estimated that there are about 2,300,000 blocks of stone in his pyramid and these stones weigh up to 30 tons each. More recent calculations suggest it would be more likely that 3 million stones were used in the construction. If this mass of stone was cut into cubes about a foot square (30 cm x 30 cm x 30 cm) in size, and placed side by side around the coast of Australia, only half the stones would be used. There would be enough left over to circle the borders of the United States of America.

It is not just the volume of stone that impresses; it is the skill and engineering ability that enabled the ancient Egyptians to cut these huge blocks of stone from the quarries and erect them on the plateau in such symmetrical form. Archaeologists are still not sure how this great engineering feat was accomplished in the lifetime of one man. Why did the early Egyptians build these massive monuments of stone? To answer that question we need to understand something of the history of Egypt and the Egyptians' concept of life after death.

The ancient Egyptians were a very religious people. They worshiped many gods and believed in an afterlife. They spent a lot of time and money in preparing for this future life. Most modern religions believe in the existence of a soul or spirit which leaves the body after death. The Egyptians believed there were two entities which left the body at death. The *ka* was supposed to dwell in the tomb of the deceased and could occupy the mummified body. The *ka* partook of the food offerings that were provided by those who cared for the tomb. The *ba* could leave the tomb to travel the Nile or enjoy the outdoor life and then return to the tomb at night. For the *ba* to continue its peaceful and happy existence, there were two necessities — the preservation and security of the body. To preserve the body, it needed to be embalmed or mummified. To guarantee its security, it had to be protected from predators and tomb robbers, hence the elaborate *mastabas* and pyramids in which they were buried.

▼ *The pyramid of Khafre seen from the corner of Khufu's pyramid.*





▲ **1** The kings of Dynasties 1 and 2 were buried beneath mastabas, mud brick structures beneath which were tomb chambers. **2** One Egyptian concept of stellar movements was that a divine scarab beetle pushed the sun in its assumed orbit around the earth. **3** The pyramid of Khufu was originally 479 feet (146 m) in height.

A dynasty is usually regarded as a line of kings descending from father to son. If there were a palace coup, a political upheaval, or a foreign invasion that unseated the reigning monarch, that could begin a new dynasty. The Egyptian priest and historian Manetho, who lived in the third century B.C., divided the history of Egypt's rulers into 30 dynasties, although some of his dynasties began with the same family as the preceding dynasty.

The first king of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt was probably Menes, whom some scholars identify with Narmer, who left a beautiful stone cosmetic palette which was found in 1898 at Hierakonpolis in southern Egypt. This palette seems to have commemorated the unification or establishment of Egypt. The historian Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, who lived during the fourth century A.D., identified Menes as Mestram (or Egypt as in the Greek translation), the grandson of Noah. It is highly significant that the history of Egypt converges with biblical history right back to the time of the establishment of the 1st Dynasty of Egypt.

The kings of the first and second dynasties were buried in monuments for which the Arabic name is mastaba, meaning "bench." They were buildings made of sun-dried mud bricks which were partially or wholly buried. However, in many cases their tops protruded above the desert and the Arabs came to call them mastabas. It is curious that these kings had mastabas at Saqqara, some 19 miles (30 km) south of modern Cairo, and also at Abydos, 311 miles (500 km) farther south. However, as the bodies of these kings have not been found in either place, it is still not known where they were buried. Some have speculated that they were buried at Saqqara, which was the cemetery or necropolis of the capital city Memphis, but they built a monumental burial place at Abydos, which was a sacred city of the dead.

More recently, in 2001, American excavations at Abydos, led by Dr. David O'Connor of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, revealed the first of a possible 14 wooden boats dating to the 1st Dynasty of Egypt. The boats were buried, not in pits like the more famous boats of Giza, but in mud brick buildings more than six miles (ten km) from the Nile. They had been overlooked by archaeologists for so long because, being close to the tomb of Khasekhemwy, the last ruler of the 2nd Dynasty who used monumental stone, the crumbling mud brick ruins were not considered likely to house anything of significance.

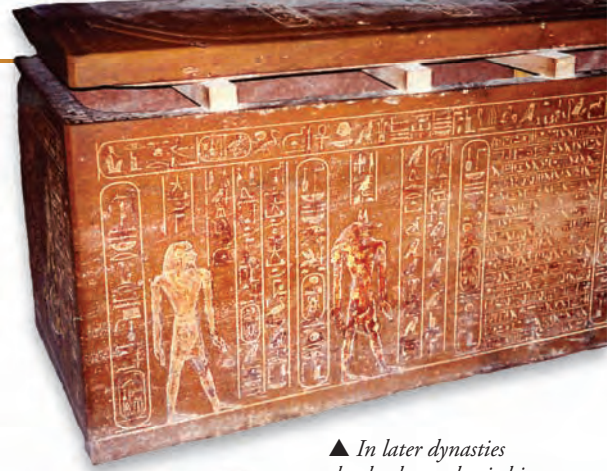
These boats are about 75 feet (23 m) long and up to 10 feet (3 m) wide. When new each ship could have held each 30 rowers in addition to the passengers. Unlike the Giza ships, which were dismantled and stored as a parcel of planks and rope, the Abydos boats were buried complete and intact. All this has fueled fresh speculation that perhaps these early dynasty kings were really buried at Abydos.

In these early dynasties, the bodies were very poorly preserved, and not much more than the skeletons of the dead survived. The best-preserved bodies were actually those of the poor people who were simply buried in the hot dry sand which dehydrated the body and fairly well preserved it. The rich people, however, were buried in baskets, reed coffins, or *sarcophagi* (stone coffins) and their flesh decayed away. The art of embalming was developed later, and by the 18th Dynasty the bodies were well-preserved and had quite a life-like appearance.

There were different methods practiced by the embalmers, but in many cases a hole was drilled through a nostril into the skull, and the brain was scooped out and discarded. A slit was made in the abdomen and the internal organs were removed. The stomach, lungs, intestines,



◀ Cats were regarded as sacred and thousands of cats were mummified. The cat god was called Bubast.



▲ In later dynasties the dead were buried in ornate wooden coffins.



◀ Coffins were interred in stone sarcophagi, which were buried in tombs.

and liver were then interred in canopic jars and buried separately from the body. The body was then immersed in natron powder. This was a salty mineral which was found in the Natrun Valley north of Cairo, hence its name “natron.” This absorbed the fluids in the body and virtually pickled it. The body remained there for 40 days, after which the natron was removed and the body wrapped in lengths of linen bandages. These in turn were smothered in resin, beeswax, and in some cases, with bitumen. The Persian word for bitumen was *mummiya* from which our English word “mummy” is derived.


In the case of the royal burials, costly ornaments were wrapped among the bandages, which explains why tomb robbers stole not only the valuables in the tombs, but the bodies themselves. No complete body of a king has ever been found in a pyramid.

The whole process of embalming took many days and is described by the Greek traveler Herodotus, who visited Egypt in the fifth century B.C. In his book *The Histories*, which is still available from bookshops today, he wrote, “As much as possible of the brain is extracted through the nostrils with an iron hook, and what the hook cannot reach is rinsed out with drugs. Next, the flank is laid open with a flint knife and the whole contents of the abdomen removed. The cavity is then thoroughly cleansed and washed out, first with palm wine and again with an


infusion of pounded spices. After that it is filled with pure bruised myrrh, cassia, and every other aromatic substance with the exception of frankincense, and sewn up again, after which the body is placed in natron, covered over entirely for 70 days — never longer. When this period, which must not be exceeded, is over, the body is washed and then wrapped from head to foot in linen cut into strips and smeared with gum, which is commonly used by the Egyptians instead of glue.”¹

The Hebrew Bible also refers to this practice when it records the death of Jacob in Egypt. “And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days” (Gen. 50:2-3).

In November 1993, Bob Brier, who is chairman of the Philosophy Department at C.W. Post College of Long Island University, New York, was struck with a bright idea. He would embalm a body exactly as the ancient Egyptians used to do it. In January 1994, Brier traveled to Egypt to purchase and ship back to the United States 50 pounds of natron from the Wadi Natrun quarries, the same place from which ancient embalmers procured their natron. From spice bazaars in the back streets of Cairo he purchased frankincense and myrrh. A friend, who was



▼ In later periods wooden coffins were very ornate and frequently gilded with beautiful representations of the dead.



▲ Another ornate wooden coffin, gilded with representations of the dead.

an expert in metallurgy, cast bronze knives for removing the internal organs. These knives were made from 88 percent copper and 12 percent tin, the same alloy that was used during the 18th Dynasty. Brier even went the second mile and procured an obsidian (stone) knife with which to make the initial incision, equivalent to the “sharp Ethiopian stone” mentioned by Herodotus. He tried to plan every detail as it would have been thousands of years ago.

He subsequently wrote a 320-page book called *Egyptian Mummies*.² In a brief paragraph at the end of the book, Brier records that the modern embalming took place privately in November 1994, with only *National Geographic* writers and photographers present. He found that the record that Herodotus left seemed to be quite workable except that he could not scoop out the brain with the iron hook. He had to decimate the brain with the iron instrument and then wash the contents out with water.

The Egyptians not only embalmed their dead relatives, but they also embalmed animals and birds. Monkeys, cats, and ibises were especially revered and virtually thousands of these have been found.

Unfortunately, most of the human mummies have been destroyed. In the early days of exploration and travel in Egypt, mummies were plentiful and were shipped back to Europe in boatloads. They were popularly used in medicines, and thousands were used as fertilizers. When Mark

Twain visited Egypt, he claimed that they were even used as firewood in steam trains. The resins and bitumen used in the mummification burned fiercely.

Over the past 200 years, the archaeological discoveries in Egypt have fascinated both scholars and the general public alike. One of the reasons for this is that the remains of Egyptian civilization provide a tangible link with our past — a link which goes back to within a couple of generations of Noah’s flood. The fact that the very first kings of Egypt had their boats preserved in death may constitute further evidence that they were well aware of the Flood that had wiped out most of mankind just a couple of centuries earlier and were taking precautions. The elaborate tombs that they built and the mummies they left behind remind us that they were highly intelligent people, just like us, living thousands of years ago in a civilization that suddenly appeared. A similar picture of the past is described in the ancient records of the Bible which were preserved by the Israelites who lived in the same region of the world. In the chapters which follow, we will explore more discoveries that provide clues linking the tangible records in Egypt with the written record of the Bible to form a complete tapestry of the chronology of our past.



DYNASTY 3

DYNASTY 2

REVISED DATES: 21st C B.C.

TRADITIONAL DATES: 2649–2573 B.C.

KING NEBKAH



◀ Zoser's Step Pyramid was composed of comparatively small stones which were not cut to a square shape as in later dynasties.

Chapter 2

THE STEP

PYRAMID

Step Pyramid of Zoser built

▲ KING ZOSER

GENESIS 11:24 Terah, father of Abraham born

The Step Pyramid of Saqqara signaled a giant leap forward in burial practices in ancient Egypt. Instead of small brick mastabas, there was a huge mountain of stone beneath which was a maze of passages and a tomb chamber. The form of this pyramid may have been based on the ziggurats (temple towers) of Mesopotamia. Burial practices in the early Egyptian dynasties were similar to those found by Sir Leonard Woolley in the death pits of Ur from where Abraham came.

DYNASTY 3

IT WAS DURING THE REIGN OF THE 3RD DYNASTY kings that a new development in pyramid building occurred. Netjerykhet (later dynasties called him Zoser or Djoser) was the second king of the 3rd Dynasty, and his pyramid, the Step Pyramid of Saqqara, was built of stone blocks rather than mud bricks. His architect was Imhotep, a character who has gone down in history as a great innovator and physician. In later periods, he was worshiped as a deity, with the Greeks identifying him with their god of healing, Aesclepius.

Just why there should have been this new development of using stone instead of mud brick is still debated by scholars. The stone blocks were not very large as compared with the later pyramid of Khufu, and they were not exactly squared, but at least they were stone. Instead of one low brick building surmounting the burial place, there was a huge mass of stone.

The Step Pyramid of Saqqara was first identified as a mastaba, an oblong building faced with lime plaster, below which there was a burial shaft and tomb chamber. There was also a complex series of passages and chambers that appeared to have no purpose. The total length of these tunnels and rooms has been estimated at 3.5 miles (5.7 km). Some scholars have suggested that it replicated in part the king's royal palace at Memphis, but as we do not know what his palace looked like, this remains speculation.

No bodies were found in any of these chambers, though the hip bone of an 18-year-old woman was discovered in one of the rooms. There was also an extraordinary collection of 40,000 stone plates and cups made of alabaster and other semi-precious stones found in one of the galleries.

Whether this mastaba was originally meant to be the end of the structure is not clear. Some say that Imhotep added the later stepped stages as an afterthought, while some think that the final structure was planned that way from the beginning. Whatever the case, four stages were built above the original mastaba and then another two stages were built above that, making six stages or steps all together.

Zoser would have lived around the time of Terah, the father of Abraham of the Bible. According to the Bible, Abraham lived in the ancient city of Ur in Sumer, which was in present-day Iraq. At this site are the remains of a great ziggurat (or stepped pyramid type building). The eminent archaeologist Sir Charles Leonard Woolley, who



▲ *A statue of Zoser for whom the Step Pyramid was built.*

▼ *The form of the ziggurats of Mesopotamia may have been copied by the builders of the Step Pyramid of Saqqara. This ziggurat at Ur where Abraham lived originally consisted of three stages topped by a temple. Only the lowest stage remains.*





▲ Inside this stone chamber on the north side of the Step Pyramid was a statue of Zoser peering out through two holes to the outside world.



▲ The Step Pyramid started out as a single stage mastaba, then four more stages were added and then another two stages. At the northeast corner it can be seen where the final stage was added.

carried out major excavations at the site later, wrote that the diggings had revealed that at the same time as the construction of the great pyramids of Egypt, the Sumerian architects were acquainted with the column, the arch, the vault, and the dome; that is, all the basic forms of architecture. Referring to the ziggurat he goes on to say:

But the surprising thing is that there is not a single straight line in the structure. Each wall, from base to top and horizontally from corner to corner, is a convex curve, a curve so slight as not to be apparent but giving to the eye of the observer an illusion of strength where a straight line might have seemed to sag under the weight of the superstructure. The architect thus employed the principle of entasis, which was to be rediscovered by the builders of the Parthenon at Athens.¹

(The Parthenon was built more than 1,500 years later.)

These and similar findings in Sumer show that the inhabitants of Ur had advanced knowledge of architecture, mathematics, and astronomy. This has led to another theory that the concept of a step pyramid was borrowed from Mesopotamia where there were many temple ziggurats that were used for purposes of worship. The ancient Sumerians and Babylonians had the idea that God was on high, and that the higher you went to worship Him the nearer you got to God. The Babylonians built these stepped ziggurats, on top of which there was a shrine to

their god and steps leading to the top for worshipers to ascend. It is unlikely that Imhotep had ever visited Mesopotamia, but many travelers came from there who could have described these ziggurats, and Imhotep may have decided to adapt the idea to a burial place, but instead of worshipers climbing to the top for worship, a burial chamber was made beneath it for the last resting place of the king.

Circumstantial evidence that supports the idea of communication between Egypt and Mesopotamia is to be found in the almost identical burial customs of both areas. Sir Leonard Woolley excavated at Ur of the Chaldees in Sumer from 1922 to 1934, and unearthed the famed death pits of Ur where up to 80 people accompanied the king into the afterlife.

Woolley wrote, “The royal body was carried down the sloping passage and laid in the chamber, sometimes, perhaps generally, inside a wooden coffin. . . . When the door had been blocked with stone and brick and smoothly plastered over, the first phase of the burial ceremony was complete. The second phase, as best illustrated by the tombs of Shub-ad and her husband, was more dramatic. Down into the open pit, with its mat covered floor and mat-lined walls, empty and unfurnished, there comes a procession of people, the members of the dead ruler’s court, soldiers, men-servants and women, the latter in all their finery of brightly-coloured garments and headdresses of carnelian and lapis lazuli, silver and gold, officers with the insignia of their rank, musicians bearing harps and lyres, and



▲ Woolley found some of the cups from which they drank.

◀ One of the royal tombs of Ur excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley. Outside these tombs were death pits where retainers voluntarily drank poison to accompany their king into the afterlife.

then, driven or backed down the slope, the chariots drawn by oxen or by asses, the drivers in the carts, the grooms holding the heads of the draught animals, and all take up their allotted places at the bottom of the shaft and finally a guard of soldiers forms up at the entrance. Each man and woman brought a little cup of clay or stone or metal, the only equipment needed for the rite that was to follow. There would seem to have been some kind of service down there, at least it is certain that the musicians played up to the last; then each of them drank from their cups a potion which they had brought with them or found prepared for them on the spot — in one case we found in the middle of the pit a great copper pot into which they could have dipped — and then lay down and composed themselves for death.”²

This termination of life seemed to have been quite voluntary. There was no sign of violence. It may have been part of their employment contract to accompany their king into the next life. In any case, it derived from a firm conviction that life in the hereafter would continue as it had been in this life, and that death was merely a transition from this world to the next.

A similar belief seems to have been held in the 3rd Dynasty of Egypt. In the vicinity of the Step Pyramid was a vast cemetery in which attendants of the king were buried, and their deaths apparently occurred at the time of the king’s burial, presumably in the belief that they were simply accompanying their king into the next life.

Other scholars also propose that the culture of Mesopotamia had a considerable influence in Egypt. Jill Kamill in her book *Sakkara: A Guide to the Necropolis and the Site of Memphis* wrote, “Cylinder seals, and certain artistic and architectural motifs in Egypt which have their prototype in Mesopotamia, raise the question of the extent to which the latter civilisation inspired the former.”³ Robert Womack, writing in the magazine *KMT*, volume 5, number 2, wrote concerning an early step pyramid, “It may be important evidence of Mesopotamian influence in early dynastic Egypt.”⁴

However the idea of building pyramid tombs got started, it has to be acknowledged as a tremendous leap forward in ingenuity and engineering skill. The Zoser or Step Pyramid of Saqqara was 410 x 354 feet (125 x 108 m) at its base, and rose to a height of 203 feet (62 m). The entrance was on the north side, though this is off limits to tourists today because there is no artificial lighting beneath the pyramid, and there is danger of collapse. Near this entrance is a small stone shrine in which was a statue of Zoser peeping out through two small holes. Actually, the original statue has been installed in the Cairo Museum and a replica today stands in the shrine.

The entire structure was originally faced with pure white limestone that came from the Tura Quarry near modern Cairo. The whole building must have presented a dazzling appearance. The outer casing has long since disappeared, taken by local builders for their construction

work, and many of the stones have also been removed. Some of these facing stones have been replaced by modern stones to give tourists an idea of what the original structure looked like.

It is a tragedy that so many of Egypt's ancient buildings have been denuded of stone, especially as there may have been some informative inscriptions on some of the stones that have been stolen, but in some cases this has its compensation. Because the outer stones have been removed from the Step Pyramid, archaeologists have been able to study the developmental stages in the construction of the pyramid.

A 34.4 feet (10.5 m) high limestone wall with a total length of over a mile (1,645 m) surrounds the pyramid, and at the southeast corner of the compound there is a funerary temple with fluted alabaster columns. It was customary for burial sites to have a temple where rites and offerings for the welfare of the departed king could be offered. It is hard for Western minds to understand the logic of this concept. It was apparent to those who made the offerings that the food was not eaten by the king's ka. This

did not bother them because to their thinking it was not the food itself that was consumed but the ka of the food. What is hard to understand though is why they could not reason that this would not go on forever.

Zoser's pyramid was not the only step pyramid built, but it was the outstanding structure which undoubtedly gave birth to the idea which was perfected in later pyramids.

▼ *The Step Pyramid consists of six stages. At the base it measures 410 x 354 feet (125 x 108 m) and has a height of 203 feet (62 m).*

