

# DATING THE TOMBS OF THE EGYPTIAN OLD KINGDOM

**Joyce Swinton**

**Archaeopress Egyptology 2**

# Archaeopress

Gordon House  
276 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 7ED

[www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

ISBN 978 1 905739 82 0

© Archaeopress and J Swinton 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed in England by CMP (UK) Ltd Oxford

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

*For Leonie*

A friend indeed



## Acknowledgements

For almost a quarter of a century I have had the privilege of studying Egyptology at Macquarie University. Working in such a supportive environment has put me in debt to generous scholars, among them: Associate Professor Boyo Ockinga, Susanne Binder, Linda Evans, Beth Thompson and Alex Woods.

In particular I have Professor Naguib Kanawati to thank for tolerance and intellectual support as I battled my way through three degrees in the subject, one of which provided the foundation for the present publication.

As always my husband, Stuart, accepted with generosity and good humour a domestic regime built around a wife's constant abstraction to ancient times.

Most of all I am in debt to Leonie Donovan, a very good friend, for the many long hours she has spent formatting and preparing this and a previous work for publication. Without Leonie's formidable computer expertise neither volume would have seen the light of day. In addition, when 'my batteries were low' she quietly and tactfully used her specialised knowledge in Egyptology to alert me to errors in the manuscript and check doubtful references. Needless to say, any remaining errors are all my own work.

Sydney, Australia



# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		i
TABLE OF CONTENTS		iii
PREFACE		vii
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1–8</b>
1.1	The need to date private tombs	1
1.1.1	Chronological confusion	2
1.2	The proposed dating system	3
1.3	Defining the end of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period	3
1.3.1	Dating criteria for the end of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period	4
1.4	Methodology used in this study: establishing dating criteria	4
1.4.1	Two groups of tombs	5
1.4.2	Categories of tombs	5
1.4.3	Time scale to be used	5
1.5	Stages in the development of the dating system	6
1.6	The dating of provincial tombs	6
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>PROSOPOGRAPHY FOR TOMB GROUPS A AND B</b>	<b>9–48</b>
2.1	Data from Giza	9
2.2	Data from Saqqara	10
2.3	Data from tombs of Upper Egypt	11
2.4	The use of personal relationships	12
2.5	Dating for the prosopography	12
2.6	Prosopography (Groups A and B)	14
2.7	Group A and B officials	44
2.7.1	Explanatory notes to the Catalogue of Officials	44
2.7.2	Catalogue of Officials according to their prosopography number and group	45
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>ESTABLISHING DATING CRITERIA</b>	<b>49–96</b>
3.1	Dress of the male tomb owner (CRITERIA 1–8)	49
3.1.1.	The flared kilt	49
3.1.2	The short, tight-fitting kilt	50
3.1.3	Choice of kilt	50
3.1.4	Kilt styles and dating criteria	54
3.1.5	Horizontal buckle and stiff tag	54
3.1.6	Criteria based upon kilt styles	55
3.2	Adornment of the tomb owner (CRITERIA 9–12)	55
3.2.1	The beaded collar	55
3.2.2	The amulet	56
3.2.3	Wigs	56
3.2.4	Criteria based upon male adornment	56
3.3	The ‘animal skin’ garment (CRITERIA 13–24)	57
3.3.1	The long robe depicting an animal skin worn by males and females	57
3.3.2	The animal skin worn over the kilt	57
3.3.3	Criteria based upon the animal skin	58

3.4	Tomb owner at the offering table (CRITERIA 25–30)	59
3.4.1	Dress of the male at the offering table	60
3.4.2	Posture of the male seated at the offering table	60
3.4.3	Criteria based upon the tomb owner at the offering table	61
3.5	Bread and reeds on offering table (CRITERIA 31–38)	62
3.5.1	Height of half loaves	62
3.5.2	Reeds on the offering table	62
3.5.3	Orientation of half loaves and reeds	62
3.5.4	Criteria based upon bread and reeds on the offering table	63
3.6	Lists and offerings associated with table (CRITERIA 39–50)	64
3.6.1	The offering lists	64
3.6.2	The pictorial display of food	64
3.6.3	The <i>h3</i> list	65
3.6.4	Ewer and basin	65
3.6.5	Criteria based upon offerings and lists	66
3.7	Priestly figures performing rites (CRITERIA 51–59)	67
3.7.1	Individual funerary priests	67
3.7.2	Row of funerary priests	67
3.7.3	Criteria based upon priestly figures performing rites	67
3.8	The offering table (CRITERIA 60–63)	68
3.8.1	Height of offering table	68
3.8.2	Offering table pedestal	68
3.8.3	Lipped rim of table	68
3.8.4	Criteria based upon the offering table	68
3.9	The female figure (CRITERIA 64–72)	68
3.9.1	The wife of the deceased at the offering table	69
3.9.2	The pose of the female	69
3.9.3	Reduction of the size of the standing wife	70
3.9.4	Female adornment	70
3.9.5	Criteria based upon the female figure	71
3.10	The banquet scene (CRITERIA 73–78)	72
3.10.1	Appearance of the banquet	72
3.10.2	The flywhisk	72
3.10.3	The high backed armchair	73
3.10.4	The lotus	73
3.10.5	Criteria based upon the banquet scene	74
3.11	Stools and chairs (CRITERIA 79 – 93)	74
3.11.1	The armchair	74
3.11.2	The stool and chair with low back	75
3.11.3	Chair legs and feet	75
3.11.4	Tomb owner’s stool or chair	75
3.11.5	Chair leg supports	75
3.11.6	Mat or platform beneath the tomb owner’s chair and feet	76
3.11.7	Criteria based upon the tomb owner’s chair	76
3.12	Marsh scenes (CRITERIA 94–104)	77
3.12.1	‘Papyrus pulling’ scenes	77
3.12.2	The ‘pleasure cruise’ scene	78
3.12.3	The tomb owner fishing and fowling	78
3.12.4	Family members accompanying the tomb owner	78
3.12.5	Criteria based upon marsh scenes	79



3.13	Figures and description of Criteria 1-104	80–95
3.14	Tables to establish dating criteria	96–135
	Criteria Table 1: Criteria 1–24	96
	Criteria Table 2: Criteria 25–50	106
	Criteria Table 3: Criteria 51–78	116
	Criteria Table 4: Criteria 79–104	126
3.14.1	Explanatory notes to the tables	136
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>TESTING THE CRITERIA</b>	<b>137–168</b>
4.1	Giza Tombs	137
4.2	Saqqara Tombs	141
4.3	Provincial Tombs	143
4.3.1	The tombs of Naga ed-Der	144
4.3.2	The tombs of the Northern Cliff, Deir el-Gabrawi	145
4.4	Testing the Criteria: Charts A to G-G	147
4.4.1	Explanatory note to the charts	168
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>CONCLUDING COMMENTS</b>	<b>169–172</b>
5.1	The validity of the criteria	169
5.2	Reliability of the system	170
5.3	Question of archaising tombs	170
5.4	Need for more criteria	171
5.5	A time lag between cemeteries?	171
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		<b>173</b>



## Preface

This work, a system for dating the tombs of officials of the Old Kingdom, is based on criteria drawn from a typological study of the iconography of 114 dated tomb chapels. To avoid circular reasoning, these monuments, which provide the basic data for the system, had to be dated by evidence that does not derive from wall scenes. From this typological study 104 features have been identified as having a 'life span' that lies wholly or partly within the Old Kingdom. These features are accepted as dating criteria and are supported by Tables of their occurrence in the 114 tombs used to establish criteria.

To test the reliability of the criteria and the validity of the system as a dating tool, the criteria have been applied to tombs which either are very broadly or contentiously dated, or have been recently dated by scholars using the latest techniques and knowledge. The resulting 'criteria profiles', submitted as CHARTS A to G-G, show the criteria and system to be both reliable and valid inasmuch

as the testing produced few discrepant results. The dates provided by this method were then compared with the dates assigned to the same tombs by other methods. While there was considerable agreement with the most recently dated tombs, the dating of other tombs tended to support earlier rather than later dates. While testing showed up some weaknesses in the system, which cannot provide secure dating for tombs in the first half of Dynasty 4 or the last half of Dynasty 6, the system appears valid and reliable for the dating of tombs in the second half of Dynasty 4, Dynasty 5 and the first half of Dynasty 6.

This work was originally presented in 2002 as an M.A. Honours thesis. Since then, reports of a number of important Old Kingdom tombs have been published. Taking these monuments into consideration has required updating the work and amending many important details, although the principles on which the system is based have not changed.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

---

### 1.1 The need to date private tombs

The cemeteries of the Old Kingdom are witness to the earliest society in which administration and policy-making by a unified government and a complex 'theology' extended well beyond the reaches of a city-state. This society was not a static system. There are many indications of change. Between early Dynasty 4 and late Dynasty 6 for example, there were reductions in the size of pyramids and in the quality of their construction. The architecture and decoration of private tombs was also subject to a series of modifications. All these significant changes may have been the result of economic and social pressures but they also may have been influenced by developing beliefs about the afterlife. Economic and social pressures possibly contributed to a fluctuation of the relative powers of the king and the central administration, culminating in competing claims and royal family feuds. A situation of this nature may have led to the change from Dynasty 4 when the highest administrative and priestly positions were occupied by important members of the royal family, to Dynasty 5 when members of the royal family appear to have been deliberately excluded from political and administrative power. 'New' men who had, as far as we can tell, no traceable royal blood, were appointed to many high positions and the practice was initiated of bestowing the titles 's3 nswt' ('king's son') and 's3 nswt n ht.f' ('king's son of his body') on high or favoured members of the official classes who do not appear to have been members of the royal family. Yet much of this is speculative as evidence of the historical dynamic of the Old Kingdom is at best fragmentary.

While inscribed and decorated tombs of the Old Kingdom cemeteries of Giza and Saqqara offer an almost continuous record for the period, they seem to throw little light on historical developments. The reason lies partly in the kind of data that the tombs provide; inscriptions largely comprise repetitive religious/magical formulae, lists of titles,<sup>1</sup> formularized statements such as the 'appeal to the living', brief captions labelling a scene or the plain speech of working people. These inscriptions rarely anchor the structure in precise time. Rather than well-dated events, depictions of scenes usually present standard features such as the 'offering scene' and aspects of 'daily life'. Once a theme was added to the pictorial

repertoire, apart from variation and development of detail, it presented an apparently unchanging picture of 'everyday life'.<sup>2</sup>

As few tombs provide evidence on which they may be dated it is difficult to place the data they provide in chronological order. The typology of tomb architecture shows a number of major changes, but does not offer a secure dating system. The many variations and individual modifications in tomb design, as well as long periods of overlapping of styles make it difficult to date tombs according to architectural features and patterns.

Yet tucked away in these cemeteries is a wealth of historical data about the men on whom the governance of Egypt depended for over 400 years. They were true bureaucrats whose life's work was the maintenance of an orderly society. They measured success by royal recognition and, seemingly, a hierarchy of ponderous titles. Their funerary inscriptions rarely descend to the vainglorious recollection of battle and bloodlust; rather they suggest that the height of endeavour for this class was administrative service, and its reward the approval of the king they served. Judging from the way these officials had themselves and their families depicted, the culmination of a successful life was a benign and prosperous old age with the satisfaction of seeing dutiful sons succeed them. Occasionally the monuments reflect something of the officials' individual lives, of their values and moral code, affections, hopes and fears, even the policies they administered and perhaps initiated to meet changing conditions. Yet this information is subtly conveyed on the tacit expectation that the visitor to the tomb understood the assumptions of the worldview on which their society rested. The introduction of new titles only hints at administrative and religious developments. There may have been power struggles at the pinnacle of the country's administration. Obscure comments like those of *Wnj*<sup>3</sup> who claimed to have enjoyed accelerated promotion and presided in camera over a case against a queen, and the deliberate defacement of the name and face of important officials such as occurred in the tomb of the vizier, *R<sup>c</sup>-wr* [63]<sup>4</sup>, raise this possibility.

---

<sup>1</sup> The power and duties of holders of many of these titles are barely understood. Even the manner of holding titles is obscure. Strudwick raises the question of whether strings of titles inscribed in tombs represent 'the accumulation of a lifetime' (Baer [1960] 35) or whether they merely were a list of titles held by the tomb owner at the time the tomb was decorated. He is, however, unable to answer the question with any certainty. Strudwick (1985) 174.

<sup>2</sup> Kent Weeks notes that these 'unchanging' pictures may reflect changes in the Egyptian worldview which we do not easily detect and that there has been little rigorous assessment of significant attributes of various classes of scenes: Weeks (1979). The possibility that, over a period of more than 400 years, the significance of such attributes may change also needs to be considered. It may be misleading to judge the meaning of Dynasty 5 funerary art in terms appropriate to Dynasty 4.

<sup>3</sup> Sethe (1933) *Urk.* I, 98-110.

<sup>4</sup> El Fikey (1980) pls. 1, 2, 5, 9; Kanawati (1981a) 1.

Scholars of the Old Kingdom appear reluctant to extract broad ‘non-funerary’ inferences from the mass of funerary data, perhaps because the exposition of wide ranging hypotheses, of necessity based on limited and contentious data, will expose them to scholarly criticism.<sup>5</sup> In particular, significant developments may have occurred towards the end of Dynasty 5. The emaciated figures on the Causeway of Unis may be ‘sand-dwellers’ but their depiction on this royal construction may represent a significant situation for the Old Kingdom state. After the construction of the pyramid of Neuserre at Abusir, the location for the king’s burial place changed to Saqqara, where it remained for the rest of the Old Kingdom, and kings stopped building sun temples. In the second half of Dynasty 5 before the reign of Unis, the name of Osiris was introduced into the offering formulae in private tombs. In the reign of Unis, last king of Dynasty 5, the recording of religious texts inside the pyramids was adopted. In the following reign of Teti, there appears to have been an important change in the ranking and status of priestly titles of royal pyramids.<sup>6</sup> Very few customary themes were ever dropped from the pictorial repertoire of private tombs, but the *ssš w3d* (‘pulling papyrus’) scene may, in fact, disappear from tombs of males at this time.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the steady impoverishment of Memphite funerary architecture from the end of Teti’s reign on suggests that a growing economic problem challenged the late Old Kingdom state.

Such a cluster of changes hints at political, economic and religious development, yet this cannot be adequately hypothesized without placing the data in a more precise chronological framework. The tombs of Old Kingdom officials constitute a large proportion of the available source material from which a history of this period might be derived. Without an acceptable chronological ordering of the basic data, however, the full potential of this rich body of historical evidence will not be accessible.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.1 Chronological confusion

Yvonne Harpur comments that there is surprisingly little disagreement on the dating of Old Kingdom tombs, many of which can be dated with ‘reasonable accuracy’.<sup>9</sup> The

present level of dating may be adequate for certain types of studies, but assigning many monuments to ‘the second half of Dynasty 4’ or merely to ‘Dynasty 6’ does not provide the chronological precision needed to act as a framework for the investigation of historical change. Moreover, when scholars begin using the evidence offered by private tombs to research into the period, a basic lack of agreement in dating monuments tends to emerge.<sup>10</sup> Very few Old Kingdom tombs, stelae and coffins contain uncontroversial evidence of their date. Consequently, when factors such as inscribed statements or personal relationships recorded in or inferred from inscriptions fail to provide a secure date, these monuments may be dated according to a variety of techniques of relative dating or merely scholarly judgements. The assorted dating systems in use are derived from architectural, iconographic and epigraphic style changes and from key occurrences such as the introduction of the name of Osiris into funerary invocations. Dating a monument may entail selecting factors drawn from a number of dating systems, some of which are themselves based on a chronology of monuments that has no *proven* validity. Furthermore the dates provided by these systems are often of necessity based on minor changes of style, which are only credible as dating criteria if they are part of a well based typology, as old and new features and styles frequently overlap for a considerable length of time. In addition, the archaeological context of Egyptian tombs, as well as the archaeological methods used, rarely provides a clear stratification either for remains of the tomb itself or for any artefacts it may contain, which have usually suffered disturbance before being excavated.

All this makes any refinement of the dating of Old Kingdom monuments hazardous. Studies such as Nigel Strudwick’s ordering of false doors according to stylistic features,<sup>11</sup> Yvonne Harpur’s researches into decorative developments<sup>12</sup> and H.G. Fischer’s identification of iconographic and epigraphic changes each provide a chronology.<sup>13</sup> These works provide valuable insights into the changing world of the Old Kingdom but conclusions drawn from such studies may contradict one another, while the bases on which these systems assign dates are sometimes unclear, creating further problems.

Attempts to get beyond the chronological confusion include Klaus Baer’s study of variable title sequences<sup>14</sup>, based where possible on securely dated monuments. However, the complexity of his method and the quantity of data he used has made it time consuming to rework the evidence and check Baer’s steps. Strudwick has aptly pointed out that Baer’s time divisions are uncomfortably

<sup>5</sup> Works such as Strudwick’s enquiry into role and powers of high officials (Strudwick [1985]) and Kanawati’s examination of tombs as an economic product (Kanawati [1977]) make use of available date to offer inferences about the historical dynamic of the Old Kingdom. However, they need updating as they depend on the chronological sequencing of tombs.

<sup>6</sup> Baer (1960) 245-58.

<sup>7</sup> Harpur (1987), providing a list of tombs with the major figure (male) active in marsh scenes, shows few Dynasty 6 tombs with this scene (Table 6.18 pp. 335-339). Although Harpur assigns a conventionally accepted Dynasty 6 date to some of the tombs, it is unlikely that a *ssš w3d* scene occurs in a tomb that dates beyond the reign of Unas. All of the ‘Dynasty 6’ instances (*J3sn* [3], *Snb* (PM 101), *K3j-m-nh* (PM 132), *Ftk-t3* (PM 351), *Nj-nh-Ppjj* of Zawyet el-Amwat) are probably to be dated to Dynasty 5.

<sup>8</sup> Roth provides a good example of how the architectural evidence provides insights into the historical dynamic and how such interpretations can only be strengthened by establishing a chronological order for that evidence. Roth (1995) 23-47.

<sup>9</sup> Harpur (1987) 2.

<sup>10</sup> Harpur provides a comprehensive summary of dating criteria in current use. Its eclectic nature helps to explain the level of scholarly disagreement over the dating of many monuments. Harpur (1987) 35-36.

<sup>11</sup> Strudwick (1985) 35-52.

<sup>12</sup> Harpur (1987) *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Fischer (1959) 244-48.

<sup>14</sup> Baer (1960) *passim*.

precise.<sup>15</sup> In particular, Baer's system for dating Dynasty 6 monuments has concerned scholars, for his conclusions are often at variance with dates arrived at by other methods, particularly with regard to provincial tombs.<sup>16</sup> Dynasty 6 is an especially difficult area in which to apply a system such as Baer's, and he clearly needed a greater number of securely dated monuments than the dynasty provides. However, Baer's use of titles to provide dating criteria has rich potential. Perhaps a simpler approach would have yielded more accessible results.

A more recent study, which sets out to avoid the logical circularity that sometimes besets methods of relative dating, is presented by Cherpion,<sup>17</sup> who makes use of royal cartouches to establish dating criteria but uses a sophisticated logic to avoid bare reliance on their occurrence in a tomb. Instead, the presence of cartouches provides earliest and latest dates for her criteria. Her system, however, also has its methodological difficulties,<sup>18</sup> while a few of her criteria rest on too small a quantity of data to provide secure conclusions.<sup>19</sup> The most serious problem with Cherpion's system is that reliance on cartouches tends to set too early a time limit for some criteria. Offices in royal funerary establishments outlasted the king in question sometimes by hundreds of years. This provided office holders in the king's funerary establishment with the opportunity to inscribe the king's cartouche in their tomb perhaps two or three hundred years or more after the death of that king. When this is the latest cartouche present in a number of tombs, the system tends to skew results by providing dates that are too early.

Other methods of dating depend on the recognition of changes in tomb architecture, in the false door, in the depiction of standard iconographic features such as furniture and personal adornment, and epigraphic variations, some of which show progressive change. Although these features appear to have a dating capability, their perceived 'life span' rests either on the conventionally accepted dates of monuments on which the depictions are found or on a system that is not fully researched or explained. When these criteria are used to date a monument, a combination of 'proofs' is frequently drawn from a number of uncalibrated dating systems, while contradictory data is merely acknowledged or even ignored. Without a clear and unequivocal method of establishing the 'life span' of architectural, iconographic and palaeographic styles and changes, the value of these features as dating criteria is questionable.

## 1.2 The proposed dating system

This study proposes to establish earliest and latest dates for the adoption and discard of certain features in style and content of the depictions of the tomb owner and related scenes. These features, which can be shown to

have a 'life span' or part of a 'life-span' within the Old Kingdom, are then classed as 'dating criteria', and can be applied to date other monuments. To avoid the problem of circular reasoning which sometimes affects typological studies, the duration of these features is established by means that are independent of any other system of relative dating. The defining dates for each criterion, that is the base data on which the system rests, have not been drawn from any other 'relative' criteria of the same kind.

The system offers 104 criteria but a 'bank' of some hundreds of established criteria is needed if it is to be applied to a variety of tombs. Dating criteria derived from stylistic changes often have a long life span; in the context of the Old Kingdom they may cover a number of reigns. Consequently, when only a few such criteria are applied to a monument they may not give an exact date. (See CHAPTER 4: TESTING THE CRITERIA and CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING COMMENTS). Furthermore, using this method to assign a date to a monument will gain substantial acceptance only if the dating is confirmed by as many criteria as possible.<sup>20</sup> This system should not be applied mechanically. Some criteria will carry more weight and conviction than others. Chronological gaps in the supporting evidence for each criterion need to be taken into account. Inferences drawn from chapel decoration may not apply to coffins, stelae or burial chambers.

It may never be possible to date some Old Kingdom monuments more precisely than within one or two generations. Yet, even these limits will enable a systematic order to be applied. A sufficiently precise chronological ordering of monuments and the evidence they offer should then be available to support further investigation into the historical dynamic of the Old Kingdom. Evidence from dated monuments should make possible the delineation of historical processes such as the growth of social conscience and responsibility as witnessed, for example, in the development of 'ideal biographies'. It should become possible to track the emergence of new features like the introduction of Osiris into the funerary formulae, and administrative and technological change.

It is the aim of the present study to contribute to the development of a system of dating Old Kingdom monuments by establishing dating criteria which can be applied to a majority of private tombs and applying these criteria to certain monuments with broad or contentious dating.

## 1.3 Defining the end of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period

Two major features of the First Intermediate Period are the breakdown of administrative unity centred on

<sup>15</sup> Strudwick (1985) 4.

<sup>16</sup> Baer (1960) 274-95.

<sup>17</sup> Cherpion (1989) 23.

<sup>18</sup> Baud deals with these problems in detail. Baud (1997) 51-96.

<sup>19</sup> Critères 51, 62, 63 and 64 have less than five supporting occurrences. Cherpion (1989) 196, 204-5.

<sup>20</sup> Increases to the 'bank' of criteria would be possible with the inclusion of epigraphic and palaeographic criteria, and there are many more pictorial criteria to be identified. Further extension is beyond the scope of the present study but may be feasible in the future.

Memphis and the economic decline. While these two features were roughly parallel in time they may not have been precisely coeval. Moreover, although there was conflict, the entire First Intermediate Period probably was not a time of constant dissension. Certain parts of the country may have experienced intervals of peace.

From the death of Pepy II to the return of unity (about Year 38 of the reign of Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II) is sometimes accepted as the First Intermediate Period, although there is no broad agreement as to when the First Intermediate Period began. Manetho<sup>21</sup> includes Dynasties 7 to 10 in his First Intermediate Period. To judge by the evidence of the cramped mastabas of the high officials of the later years of Pepi II,<sup>22</sup> severe economic hardship may have overtaken the country towards the end of that long reign, possibly exacerbated by an aging king's feebleness. Moreover, Manetho's date does not seem to be the most appropriate division of time. Pepy II's reign was followed by a diminished, although not ineffective, form of kingship. The collapse of central power may have been progressive, beginning with the assertion of provincial initiative, but still with notional acknowledgement of the central power. This may be the significance of the proactive policies of Ankhtifi while claiming to have been posted to Mo'alla by 'Horus'.<sup>23</sup> The description, 'end of the Old Kingdom', is therefore reserved for the political changes, that is, the ultimate breakdown of central Memphite authority.

### 1.3.1 Dating criteria for the end of the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period?

It is accepted that the classical style of art, epitomized by the canon of proportion for the human body, degenerated in the late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period. However, aspects of this breakdown cannot be used uncritically as criteria for dating. Departures from the canon occurred for other reasons and at other times.<sup>24</sup> Provincial work sometimes shows a clumsiness at a much earlier period. In her doctoral dissertation on the Cusite Nome, Gillam states that enlarged eyes are an indicator of late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period art.<sup>25</sup> Yet *Jsj* [11] of Edfu<sup>26</sup> and *Krrj* [98] of El Hawawish,<sup>27</sup> both securely dated to early Dynasty 6, show this feature. While isolation from the capital and a dearth of craftsmen skilled in the Memphite crafts may account for these early occurrences of artistic variation, some changes of style in the representation of the human figure may be related to the so-called 'Second Style'.<sup>28</sup>

There may have been a time-lag of some generations between the decline in prosperity and the actual breakdown of administrative unity. To judge by their tombs, declining prosperity appears to have been affecting even the highest class in the capital by the reign of Pepy I.<sup>29</sup> Whether there was political upheaval or not, this development would have brought about cultural change which could have been reflected in standards of craftsmanship.

The national picture of social and cultural change may have been quite complex. It is conceivable that the capital, drawing on the produce of many provinces, would reflect a reduction in the total wealth and productivity of the country at an earlier date than would some individual, well managed or better endowed provinces. With a drop in production, some provincial administrators may have decided to retain a greater proportion of agricultural produce in their province depriving the capital of its usual income. The national economic picture, then, would be very uneven; a drop in affluence in the capital and some provinces, with other provinces maintaining earlier Old Kingdom levels of affluence for a longer time. Such a time-lag may have produced a lack of uniformity in standards of craftsmanship across the provinces of Egypt. These remarks, merely supposition, are intended to stress that the evidence from the decline in standards of craftsmanship may be expected to reflect a complex pattern of change affecting capital and individual provinces at different times.

This bears on the usefulness of late Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period monuments to provide valid dating criteria. Ideally, monuments of this period should be studied province by province. The above considerations and the absence of an adequate number of securely dated monuments from either the capital or the provinces from the end of the Old Kingdom and from the First Intermediate Period, however, make it impossible to use the proposed dating system beyond the reign of Pepy II.

### 1.4 Methodology used in this study: establishing dating criteria

In order to maximise data from which dating criteria are drawn, the study is largely confined to the most frequently occurring iconographic features in private tombs and on Dynasty 4 tomb stelae. These include the representation of the male tomb owner wearing differing styles of clothing and collars of different widths, both as a standing and seated figure. The pose and adornment of the major female figure and her size in relation to the tomb owner have also been used, as have elements of certain scenes: the offering table, banquet and marsh scenes.

<sup>21</sup> Waddell (1971) 57-73.

<sup>22</sup> Jequier (1929) *passim*.

<sup>23</sup> "For Horus wished to reestablish it, because he brought me to reestablish it." Lichtheim (1988) 25.

<sup>24</sup> This leads to the question of whether changes in the representation of the human figure and features were due to artistic 'degeneration' or the introduction of the 'Second Style'. Russmann (1995) 269-279, Brovanski (2008) 49-90.

<sup>25</sup> Gillam (1991) 136, footnote 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ziegler (1990) No. 9, pp. 78, 79, 81.

<sup>27</sup> Kanawati VI (1986) fig. 22a.

<sup>28</sup> Russmann (1995) 269-279 and Brovanski (2008) 49-90.

<sup>29</sup> Kanawati (2003) *passim*



### 1.4.1 Two groups of tombs

Tombs providing evidence to establish criteria are divided into two groups:

Group “A” consists of monuments that are essentially self dating and usually refer by pertinent inscription to the king(s) served by the tomb owner. By itself, this group is neither large enough nor sufficiently well distributed in time to support acceptable dating criteria. The number of Old Kingdom tombs securely dated by inscription to a particular reign is relatively small, especially in Dynasties 4 and 5 when such precision usually depends on an exceptional situation. Thus, the majority of tombs do not provide evidence of the reign in which the tomb owner lived. Consequently, a second group of monuments was established.

Group “B” consists of monuments whose date is established by inference. To avoid circular argument, the tombs in this list are restricted to those where evidence of their date does not derive from decorative elements of a tomb. Instead, three kinds of data have been relied on to date a monument: location (the position of tombs vis à vis royal monuments and tombs of other, well dated officials), personal relationships and archaeological evidence such as workmen’s graffiti and order of construction. As these dating results may be less certain, the tombs in this list have been given a date that is broad enough in time to encompass a span of reasonable dating possibilities. This has not proved an insuperable obstacle to the dating system proposed in this study as the method of dating depends on the coincidence of the maximum number of criteria that can be applied to the decoration of an individual tomb (see Charts A to G-G and ‘Concluding Comments’).

Ideally, a tomb in Group B should offer evidence from all three categories and an absence of contra-evidence, but such a situation is rare. Consequently, evidence in two categories, together with an absence of contra-evidence, have been made the yardstick for Group B. Occasionally, particularly strong evidence from just one category is accepted. Ultimately, however, in the choice of Group B monuments there is a degree of subjectivity with which the writer is unhappy, but cannot avoid.

Other tombs with one or more cartouches have been used as a further check on the dating of Group B. The date for the final appearance of a criterion, established from Group B, has been checked against tombs bearing the cartouche of a king later than the criterion’s final date. If the criterion was found on one of these monuments, it clearly extended the final date of the criterion.

Group B extends the number and chronological range of monuments used.<sup>30</sup> As some monuments in this group may have wrongly inferred dates, the principle followed

is that the defining dates for a criterion must conform with all relevant Group A monuments and with most of Group B. Where a small number of Group B tombs provide conflicting evidence, each anomaly was investigated to judge whether it should be discounted as wrongly dated or required the chronological extension of the criterion in question, or destroyed the criterion’s validity. These judgements are included in the study.

### 1.4.2 Categories of tombs

Monuments included on Groups A and B are categorized according to their original location and cemetery. The purpose in establishing location is to check whether iconographic features show a variation from one location to another. For example, do features emerge later and last longer in the provinces than at the capital? There is a further question of whether new features first appear in the chapels of the highest officials. Strudwick finds different dates for the introduction of features of the false door between Giza and Saqqara and between officials of different status.<sup>31</sup> However, in this study, attempting to class chapels according to the status group of their owner as well as location, fragments the group of chapels into categories that are too small to provide useful subgroups of individual criteria.

Most dating criteria have an existence which spans a number of reigns. To assign a precise date to a chapel with a number of scenes requires a ‘bank’ of many established criteria. Rarely does the application of a few criteria with a long ‘life span’ provide a precise date for a monument.

### 1.4.3 Time scale to be used

The time scale used is that of dynasties and reigns rather than years, because monuments in Groups A and B can be assigned to a reign but rarely to a year within the reign. Ephemeral rulers, such as Nebka/Wehemka of Dynasty 4 and Userkare of Dynasty 6, are not included. The outcome of this study is not materially affected either by the existence of kings who may have come to the throne for a year or so or by the exact number of years for more substantial reigns. However, whether a king reigned for 10 or 30 years is significant, as some of the tombs in Group B are dated by inferences concerning generations of family members.

The chronology for the Old Kingdom in terms of length of reigns and dynasties is beset with difficulties. The two basic sources, the Turin Canon and sources based on Manetho, do not always agree and contain some important lacunae. For this study the most significant problems occur in late Dynasty 5 and Dynasty 6. The length of reigns for Unis, Teti and Pepy I given by the Turin Canon and Manetho have recently been questioned by von Beckerath, who suggests a reign length of 20 years for Unis, as opposed to the 30 and 33 years given

<sup>30</sup> Refer to CHAPTER 2, 2.6 PROSOPOGRAPHY (GROUPS A AND B), pp. 14–44 and 2.7.2 CATALOGUE OF OFFICIALS ACCORDING TO THEIR PROSOPOGRAPHY NUMBER AND GROUP, pp. 45–47.

<sup>31</sup> Strudwick (1985) 9–52.

by the Turin Canon and Manetho.<sup>32</sup> Kanawati proposes a further reduction to 15 years for Unis. By accepting that the *h3t-sp* took place every year rather than every two years, he proposes the further reduction of the reigns of Teti and Pepy I to 11 and 25 years respectively.<sup>33</sup> The reduction of the reign of Unis to 20 years, as proposed by von Beckerath, and the reductions of the reigns of Teti and Pepy I are acceptable. The further reduction of Unis' reign to 15 years and the drastic reduction of the reign of Pepy II to 33+ years may be too great. A reign of 60 years for Pepy II, taking in his childhood, would allow for him to be succeeded by a son of perhaps 50 years of age and allow for two *hb-sd* festivals which could have been 30 years apart.

A twenty year generation span has been used to take into account both an early marriage age and a high incidence of youthful mortality, which would mean that the eldest son did not always survive to succeed his father in office or estate.

This study establishes earliest and latest dated occurrences of the adoption and abandonment of certain features in style and content of the depictions of the tomb owner and related scenes, thus providing each feature with a 'life span' or part of a 'life span' within the Old Kingdom. It is not possible to judge whether or for how long the iconographic features selected as dating criteria continue beyond the reign of Pepy II. Consequently dating tables (see TABLES 1–4 ) showing criteria lasting well into Pepy II's reign do not indicate that this was the final occurrence of these criteria but that beyond this date there are no securely dated monuments to show how long each feature survived.

### 1.5 Stages in the development of the dating system<sup>34</sup>

*Stage 1: Identification of the dated tombs that provide the basis for the system*

See CHAPTER 2: 2.7.2 CATALOGUE OF OFFICIALS ACCORDING TO THEIR PROSOPOGRAPHY NUMBER AND GROUP for a complete list of tombs (pp. 45-47).

*Stage 2: Establishing the categories of monuments to be used*

Monuments in Groups A and B are categorized according to their original location and date. See CHAPTER 2: 2.6 PROSOPOGRAPHY (GROUPS A AND B) and CHAPTER 3: TABLES 1–4 (pp. 96–137) for individual entries.

Stelae, apart from those from Dynasty 4 tombs, and all coffins are omitted from Groups A and B as they present

further dating difficulties. It has yet to be established that these two categories of monuments present either the same stylistic changes or the same range of dates for these changes either in relation to each other or to the depictions on chapel walls.

*Stage 3: Identification and dating of criteria*

A search of the published reports of tombs in Groups A and B was made to identify iconographic features whose life spans could be established. This was achieved by plotting the occurrence of these features on TABLES 1–4 to establish their earliest and latest attested appearances.

Images on Dynasty 4 stelae are also used because they were once embedded in the tomb's structure.<sup>35</sup> Altogether, 104 iconographic features with an existence that spans more than one reign were accepted as criteria. .

*Stage 4: Testing the system*

The validity and reliability of the proposed system was tested by applying it to tombs that were either contentiously or very broadly dated, or had been recently dated by scholars using up-to-date knowledge and techniques. See CHARTS A to G-G. The first tomb to be tested, however, was that of *Tjj*.<sup>36</sup> Although this tomb is generally accepted as later Dynasty 5, it contains both 'old' and 'new' iconographic features and styles that present a considerable challenge for testing the validity of this type of dating system.

*Stage 5: Drawing conclusions*

Conclusions regarding the reliability of the criteria life-spans and the validity of the system were drawn from CHARTS A to G-G. See CHAPTERS 4 and 5.

### 1.6 The dating of provincial tombs

Few provincial monuments are self-dating as only a small number of tombs of provincial officials provide evidence such as the name of the king whom the tomb owner served. These monuments are located in the provinces of Upper Egypt where other means of dating, by kinship or location for example, are often not accessible. As a result, the principle of dating has traditionally been to assign most of these undated tombs, particularly where depictions of major figures depart from the customary Memphite canon and style, to the end of the Old Kingdom or later. For Dynasty 6, the only exceptions were the self-dating tombs of *Jbj* [8], *Dsw:Sm3j* and *Dsw* [114] on the southern cliff of Deir el-Gebrawi, *Jsj* [11] and *K3r* [96] of Edfu and *Krrj* [98] of el Hawawish. Nearly all the important tombs in the most fertile region of Upper Egypt (Meir, Akhmim, Deir el-Gebrawi and Naga ed-Der) were thus traditionally dated to the end of Dynasty 6 or later. This late dating of the monuments inevitably shaped the interpretation of the historical evidence they offered.

<sup>32</sup> von Beckerath (1997)148-55.

<sup>33</sup> The highest known count for Teti is 11: Kanawati-Abder-Raziq (2000) 41, pl. 19. The highest confirmed count for Pepy I is 25. The reduction of lengths of reigns to these *h3t-sp* figures allows the careers of a number of officials to have a more realistic timespan. Kanawati-Abder-Raziq (2000) 22-23.

<sup>34</sup> See in CHAPTER 2: 2.6 PROSOPOGRAPHY FOR (GROUPS A AND B), pp. 9–13, for the stages required by epigraphic and palaeographic criteria.

<sup>35</sup> Manuelian (2003) xxxi.

<sup>36</sup> See CHART R. This tomb was decorated by a master craftsman who was not afraid to introduce new features and details into scenes. Épron-Daumas (1939); Wild II (1953); Wild III (1966).

Between 1980 and 1990 Naguib Kanawati of Macquarie University, Sydney and his team excavated the neglected site of el Hawawish, the cemetery for Akhmim and province of Upper Egypt 9.<sup>37</sup> The first monuments to be investigated were the important tombs of *K3.j-hp:Ttj-jkr* [109], *Hnj:Špsj-pw-Mnw* [80] and *K3.j-hp:Ttj* [108], governors of the province.<sup>38</sup> It was generally accepted by most scholars that these tombs dated to the end of the dynasty or later but features of the monuments led Kanawati to date them to a somewhat earlier period.<sup>39</sup> This was confirmed when two inscribed pieces of a stone block, one from the Louvre and the other from Chicago, were shown to be part of a whole and much of the inscription could be read. The provenance of the block proved to be the tomb of one of the three governors, *K3.j-hp:Ttj* who recorded his appointment to Upper Egypt 9 by Merenre.<sup>40</sup> A further feature associated the tombs of *Hnj:Špsj-pw-Mnw* [80] and *K3.j-hp:Ttj-jkr* [109] with that of *K3.j-hp:Ttj* [108]: the tombs on the escarpment at el Hawawish from the second half of Dynasty 5 to late Dynasty 6 follow each other up the side of the cliff in chronological order. As the important, well decorated tombs of *Hnj:Špsj-pw-Mnw* and *K3.j-hp:Ttj-jkr* and a neighbouring tomb of a woman named *Nbt* [51] were located on a level not far above that of *K3.j-hp:Ttj*, now firmly dated to mid Dynasty 6, their earlier dating by

Kanawati was strengthened. This situation allows the tomb of *K3.j-hp:Ttj* to be added to Group A and the other three tombs to Group B.<sup>41</sup>

As Old Kingdom scholars reluctantly absorbed this new el Hawawish chronology, Kanawati began applying earlier dating to other provincial cemeteries.<sup>42</sup> While the redating of *K3.j-hp:Ttj*, *Hnj:Špsj-pw-Mnw*, *K3.j-hp:Ttj-jkr* and *Nbt* of el Hawawish is well supported, the new dating for tombs elsewhere in Upper Egypt rests on a more circumstantial base and needs further investigation. With these four new tombs supporting Groups A and B, the present system has been used to date other provincial tombs.

*Other additions to the list of tombs used in this study*

Since the present work was first presented in 2001 a significant number of tomb reports have been published, some of which contain inscriptions or features that provide a date for the construction of the monument and thus have been added to the present study. These tombs, now added to the tables establishing the life spans of criteria, are: [*M*]rrj r/u *Mrjj-Nbtj* [37] (A group), *Jn.w-Mn.w* [7] (A Group), *Rmnj:Mrwj* [68] (B group), *Špsj-pw-Pth* [94] (A group), *Jsj* (Edfu) [11] (A group) and *K3r* [97] (Edfu) (A group).<sup>43</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Kanawati (1980-1992) *El Hawawish*, vols I–X.

<sup>38</sup> Kanawati (1980-1982) *El Hawawish*, vols I–III.

<sup>39</sup> Kanawati I (1980) 13-14; Kanawati II (1981) 11-14.

<sup>40</sup> Kanawati III (1982) 7-32; Kanawati VI (1986) 61, Fig. 11; McFarlane (1987) 63-70, pl. 1.

<sup>41</sup> See prosopographical entries for further detail regarding the dating of these tombs in 2.6: PROSOPOGRAPHY (GROUPS A AND B), 14–44

<sup>42</sup> Kanawati *GM* III (1989); Kanawati *GM* 121 (1991); Kanawati *Hagarsa* I (1993); Kanawati–McFarlane (1993); Kanawati *Hagarsa* III (1995).

<sup>43</sup> See prosopographical entries for these additional tombs in 2.6: PROSOPOGRAPHY (GROUPS A AND B): 24, 16, 33, 39, 17 and 39 resp.

