possibly destructive inundation having dissipated with the first day of the 'going down of the great flood'. This date was truly significant in nature's calendar, whereas the flooding of the fields was of no agricultural importance. Jansen's interpretation of the graffito is plainly wrong and Kitchen is equally misguided to follow it.

What difference does this make to the position of Merenptah's reign in a Sothic chronology? Actually, again, quite a lot! If hrw pn n h3y3 t n p 3 mw r h3y '3 means 'This day of the going down of the waters of the great flood', then the event is a whole month later than the flooding of the fields. The going down of the inundation is thus moved backwards in the civil calendar against its ideal. Another 30-day month represents a further 120 years of slippage in the Sothic chronology.

As a result, the reign of Merenptah is now 240 years adrift of the chronology championed by Kitchen. Far from being an 'atom-bomb' to blow up the New Chronology, Kitchen's 'devastating' piece of evidence has blown up in his own face. There are valid criticisms of the New Chronology – but this is not one of them.

Notes and References
6. Ägyptische und andere Graffiti (Inschriften und Zeichnungen) aus der odenheimischen Nekropole (Heidelberg, 1921).

Absence of Evidence is not Evidence of Absence
David Rohl questions Kenneth Kitchen's methodology

Kenneth Kitchen is often heard to utter the tautological dictum 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' in response to some of the archaeological anomalies raised by New Chronologists. It has become a holy writ - his catch-all get-out clause to avoid confronting anything which does not agree with his own chronological model. So let us analyse what this sacred mantra actually means.

According to Kitchen, just because there is no archaeological evidence of something it should not be assumed that that something did not happen. Let me give you an example. Just because there is not a shred of evidence that Martians built the Great Pyramid does not mean that Martians were not responsible for building the earth's most famous monument. By Kitchen's philosophy, enshrined in his oft chanted mantra, he would have to defend the Martian hypothesis and, in doing so, stand shoulder to shoulder with Eric von Daniken!

The phrase 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' is just another way of saying 'anything goes' in our interpretation of the available archaeological evidence. This is plainly an untenable position for an academic of Kitchen's standing to take and he needs to seriously reconsider his position.

Indeed, any thinking scholar would readily admit that an absence of evidence is evidence of absence. It is not proof of absence - but it certainly amounts to evidence. Moreover, what is an historian to do if he is not permitted to construct histories or chronologies based on the available evidence? Is it not perfectly reasonable to develop an historical model based on what we currently know about the past? Should we forever hold out on publishing our theories because some new fact might just turn up tomorrow, in a hundred years time or at some infinite date in the future? This is the logical consequence of Kitchen's ill considered mantra.
You are 98% rubbish – go away!

An extract from Professor Kitchen’s widely circulated letter

... What he [Rohl] offered the media film-makers is flashy novelty and sensationalism, with a side-kick at the ‘experts’ to knock them off their pedestals. This is fashionable in our time, so it sells – and Mr. Rohl is very adept at selling himself and his ideas to those who know absolutely nothing about the subject. So, ... he gets onto the media.

The tomb of Psusennes I appears to cut into/onto that of Osorkon II. Hence, Rohl argues for Osorkon II preceding Psusennes I. However, there is no proof that the ‘earlier’ tomb was actually built for Osorkon II. It may as easily have been an older, undecorated tomb of (e.g.) Smendes or Amenemnisu (both predecessors of Psusennes I), which was annexed by and for Osorkon II, its bare surfaces then being decorated in his name. There was quite a lot of shifting-around of burials in the royal tombs at Tanis, we already know of. So, this tomb-question is – at best – ambiguous evidence. And it is contradicted by, and must give way to, unambiguous evidence. Thus, Shoshenq I, founder of the 22nd (Libyan) Dynasty dedicated a statue to his immediate predecessor, Psusennes II, last king of the 21st Dynasty! So, the 22nd Dynasty directly follows the 21st, Rohl or no Rohl.

In the second programme, he cited a long genealogy from Wadi Hammamat that is probably totally irrelevant – its Haremlef [a Vizier] may not even be the [Haremlef] of Shoshenq I (the name is common, from the Pyramid Age down to Greek times). And this type of extra-long genealogy is not exempt from omissions – a fact he overlooks. He and his team came up here on 17th May (1995), and they filmed with me for seven hours (10am to 5.15pm, only twenty minute lunch-break), of which a few seconds were used [highly-edited] in the first programme [which I’ve not seen], none in the second and a couple of minutes at most in the third (both of which I’ve seen). I’ve also examined the book. During that visit in Liverpool I pointed out to him that his genealogy (and its similar) could omit links, which didn’t thrill him, and presented him with colour labelled enlargement of several total genealogies from my Third Intermediate Period, in which Part III is wholly devoted to the whole mass of general data from Thebes and Memphis. Incorporating a series of royal names, these prove clearly that the late 21st Dynasty was directly followed by the 22nd. To my astonishment he admitted he had not even looked at that part of the book – this primary evidence was new to him. Needless to say, this evidence was suppressed and not used in his third film. We also have a continuous line of High Priests in Thebes (for Amun) and in Memphis (for Ptah), going through both dynasties. This, too, he has simply ignored, with much else. His anomaly in the great cache of royal reburials near Deir el-Bahr is also a plain fallacy. The burial of the second prophet of Amun, Djedptahafankh, under Shoshenq I was made before the final deposit of the coffins of Seti I, etc., nearer the mouth of the tomb, also under Shoshenq I, so the ‘problem’ of getting the prophet past Seti I’s coffin simply does not arise. Seti and others were deposited in a ‘mansion of eternity’ on the same day that Pinudjem II was buried in the cache-tomb – but the identity of that (temporary) stopping-point for Seti I and company prior to their final burial in the cache-tomb is unknown. And so on. The other anomaly, no Apis-bull burials for the 21st Dynasty, is just ludicrous nonsense. ‘Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence’. Work at the Sarapeum was never completed (and is now being continued); it is far too soon to say there were no Apises of that dynasty and the early 22nd Dynasty. (And Shoshenq I does mention Apis on one monument from Memphis.) We have no Apis burials from the 1st to the mid-18th Dynasties, and precious little data for Apis between Dynasties I and I8 – maybe, by his method of reasoning, we ought to abolish the fifteen centuries from Dynasties 2 to 17, to ‘close the gap’.

As for Egypt and the Near East, I produced not only the three damming maps that got scant attention in his third film, but also coloured charts showing in parallel the Assyrian King-list, the Assyrian eponym-list (including before 911 BC), the Babylonian king-list, and the cuneiform tablets illustrating the Synchronism History and Chronicle P, and links to New Kingdom Egypt and Hatti – plus markers to show which kings of Assyria had successively built in the national shrine at Assur. And referred him to the dateable stratigraphy at Assur. All this was news to him on 17th May!!! And was totally suppressed in the TV films, of course. It is clear, now, that he had most of his filming already in the can by May 17th, and his book virtually ready for press. So, my news about other genealogies in Egypt, about Mesopotamian links, and about one totally damming little text (cf. below) were all very unwelcome last-minute disaster-news from his viewpoint. In the book, a disastrous Appendix E on Mesopotamia was slipped-in at the end, trying the Peter James stunt of either arguing that half the kings of Assyria were really rulers of Haniqalat contemporary with the other half [which ignores the eponym-sequence entirely], or else such a king as Adad-nirari I is merely a doublet of Adad-nirari II (… never mind the differences between Middle-Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian language and script, and a few other subleties of which he knows nothing!). In the EA letters he has overlooked the simple fact that Ashurbanipal I is actually entitled ‘King of Assyria’, at a time when Mitanni/Hanigalbat had its own known rulers (heaven knows what he’d do with those). The Peter James nonsense (based on a slip-up by Boebel) was refuted by Postgate in the joint review of James et al., in the Cambridge Archaeological Journal 1/No. 2 (Oct. 1991), a fact that Rohl conveniently overlooks. The TV films were bad enough, but the fantasies in the book are ultimately even worse.

(Professor Robert) Bianchi is a well-known and [until now!] respected Egyptologist – but is a museum-man and expert in art-history in Egypt – not an expert in Egyptian chronology and its ramifications [and not in Near-East matters]. He was out of his depth, and has made a complete fool of himself in this enterprise. It’s the old Velikovskys
trick: get an expert in field A to comment (or ignorantia) to make non-expert comments in field B, and vice-versa. The whole psychology of the James and Rohl enterprises is still Velikovskian: hatred of gaps in our knowledge, and of apparent dark ages. No credit is given to the simple fact that our knowledge of the past is still very incomplete and uneven. If there is no Queen of Sheba, Hathor is pressed into service. If there are no monuments of Joseph or Solomon, then a Hyksos chief's shattered (and inscriptionless) statue, and a Late Bronze ivory from Megiddo must deputise, even to the point of sheer fantasy.

I mentioned to him one tiny Egyptian text that totally destroys the case for all these would-be revisionists (my atom-bomb, chronologically). At Deir el Medina in Western Thebes, a graffito in Year 1 of King Merenptah, Inundation Season, mentions the workersmen viewing the waters of the actual Nile inundation at that time. This is only possible every fourteen centuries, because the Egyptian calendar (365 days) was 1/4 day too short, and ended a day too early every 4 years. So, its summer months had crept into winter by 730 years, and it only came right again after 1460 years or so. It was right under Merenptah in the 19th century BC, as it was in the 2nd century AD (Censorinus), and had been in the 28th/27th centuries BC but NOT at intervening times. So, dropping 500 years with Velikovsky, or the odd 250/350 years with James is totally and definitively excluded. I told him about this, gave him a copy of the text, but of course it appears in neither the programme nor the book. He warbles on about an inundation-text of Sobekhotep VII, claiming its text dates the king to 1435 BC – but omits to note that (Professor John) Baines finds for 1650 BC! (In an article unmentioned by him.)

I had to self-examine myself quite severely before agreeing to be involved in his TV programmes. The easy way out was simply to say ‘You are 98% rubbish – go away!’ which would be academically justified. But of course, if we all do that, then (i) he gets away scot-free with his rubbish, and (ii) he can accuse us all of having no case to present. So, I finally decided just this once to consent to appear, but giving no ground to his nonsense and in turn presenting him with data that cannot be factually ‘best’ to accommodate his ideas. His response was predictable – rubbish people like (Professor Jean) Yoyotte and myself as nearly as he dare, twist some of what we gave him, and massively censor out all the other hostile factual data. He needn’t expect any further contact or collaboration from me in the light of what we now know to be his methods and procedure. The firm producing the series has invited my comments – and, in due course, they will get them!

David Rohl comments

Professor Kitchen’s letter has been sent to numerous academics and his Christian fundamentalist associates who, in turn, have copied it on to their colleagues (it has even been used as the basis for a negative review of Atest of Time by the Reverend Gary Byers, published by the fundamentalist magazine Bible and Spade, October 1997). As a consequence, this letter has entered the public domain and is therefore published here for information purposes.

Many of the points raised by Kitchen are covered elsewhere in this Journal, and I leave the tone of his letter to speak for itself. I do feel it is necessary to clarify some of the purported ‘facts’ mentioned by the retired Professor of Egyptology at Liverpool University.

First, the statue dedication to Har-Peneses (IT) by Hedj-kheperre Shoshenk ‘I turns out, in fact, to be the work of a newly discovered pharaoh Maatkheperre Shoshenk. Kitchen was well aware of the work of Carl Jansen-Winkeln on this statue (‘Historische Probleme der 3. Zwischenzeit’ in JEA 81 1995, pp. 129-49) but chose to ignore the new first-hand re-reading of the crucial cartouches.

Second, the actual duration of filming (not the total time spent with ‘Kitchen’ was 2 hrs 20 minutes. The normal filming footage to broadcast ratio is about 20 to 1, so the three minutes of Kitchen’s interview which were used equate to one hour of film footage. This is admittedly lower than usual but has a quite different explanation to that offered by the interviewee.

Kitchen employs the word ‘suppressed’ as if to imply that he had some sort of control over the film editing and that process of ‘Pharaohs and Kings’. Anybody who knows anything about TV will realise that this is not the case. Lastly, the presenter dictates the content of a TV programme? I did not suppress anything. The people responsible for the final content were the Director and Producer. They had their own agenda for what was included or excluded, primarily driven by two concepts ‘interesting’ and ‘boring’. I leave the reader to work out which category they felt Kitchen and Yoyotte fell into.

Third, it is completely untrue for Kitchen to state that I had never studied the genealogies published in his TIPPE. What I, in fact, said to Kitchen was that this material still required further study because the New Chronology of the TIPPE had raised numerous issues of identification. Anyone who has looked at Kitchen’s genealogical reconstructions will see that certain crucial royal identifications are based entirely on the conventional chronology (see, for example: Shoshenk ‘I in the Neferamun Genealogy, p. 28; Osorkon ‘the Elder’; and the High Priests of Amun assigned to the unnamed year dates on the stela of the Deir el-Bahri Priests’ Cache). In trying to be fair and honest I had admitted that much work still needs to be done on the TIPPE chronological revision. It is sad that this openness and willingness to discuss the issues has not been and still is not being reciprocated by the grand old man of the discipline.

Finally, Kitchen is again being less than genuine when he states that John Baines is happy with a date of 1650 BC for Sobekhotep VIII. Within the conventional dating scheme, Baines was hard pressed to reconcile the high point of the inundation with such a date. He called the flood-date ‘arbitrarily’ date of 1650 BC was better but nevertheless ‘unusually late’. It is obvious from this that a lower chronology would fit the high flood of Sobekhotep much better.

It is unfortunate that Kitchen’s letter has successfully (for now at least) stifled open discussion of the New Chronology within the academic world. How sad that this episode will inevitably colour history’s judgement of a fine scholar.

PS I would love to know which 2% I did get right.