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The Administrative and Historical Importance of Merib's titles

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Abstract:

This paper concentrated on the importance of Merib's titles that reflected the administrative and political state at the End of Khufu Reign and the Beginning of Djedefre Reign.

The study is based on the publication of the tomb of Merib in the book of P. Der Manuelian, *Mastabas of Nucleus Cemetery G 2100*, I. *Major Mastabas G 2100-2220*, Boston, 2009. After an introduction on the aims of the study, the article deals with the following points: Firstly, the author concerns with sources, date, location and excavation of Merib's tomb. Secondly, he points out Merib's titles and importance of studying them. Thirdly, the study is devoted to Interpretation of the relation background among Merib's titles into fifth stages according to the supposed order of Merib's titles which took place in his life. Fourthly, it tries to show the royal pedigree relation of Merib and its historic results. Fifthly, it presents an overview of the hypothetical notion about the political relation between Merib together with his coequals and Djedefre. Sixthly, it discusses various aspects of the birth land and the origin of Merib's Family in historical context.

Finally, attention is drawn to sketch the political situation in the light of the culmination of the conflict between the disputed crown princes, and to prove that the royal custom of getting their princesses married with men who did not belong to the royal family, returned to the time of Fourth Dynasty, not only to the Sixth Dynasty as it was known before.

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I- Introduction:

The present paper is based on the book of P. Der Manuelian,¹ which publicized new reconstruction of three compounded nucleus cemetery tombs that belong to Merib (G 2100-I) and his family (his mother: G 2100-II and his daughter: G 2101). In addition to that, Der Manuelian's study gives us inscriptions of these tombs, but without a historical interpretation of the titles of the tombs' owners, my study will concentrate on the more important person of that family, he is Merib. However, my research will try to:

- ▶ Connect Merib's titles with the administrative organization and show their effects on the political condition of the period of the Fourth Dynasty.
- ▶ Give a convincing interpretation and extensive comment on the main titles of Merib.
- ▶ Discuss the opinions of some Egyptologists who suggest that the officialdom had risen in the hierarchy of administrative organization of Ancient Egypt from rank to another progressively, without having efficiency or functional specialization, as well as the opinion of those who believe that the son of any official should be appointed as deputy or future successor of his father in ranks, jobs and titles which their total number in use at the Old Kingdom was at least 1600 titles.²
- ▶ Answer the questions which P. Manuelian has asked: Who were original owners of these nucleus cemetery tombs? Were they members of separate branch of the royal families?³
- ▶ Prove that the royal custom of marrying royal princesses to men who did not belong to the royal family dates back to the

¹ P. der Manuelian, *Mastabas of Nucleus Cemetery G 2100, I. Major Mastabas G 2100-2220*, Boston, 2009.

² K. Baer, *Rank and Title in the Old Kingdom. The Structure of the Egyptian Administration in the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties*, Chicago, 1960, p. 160.

³ P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

period of the Fourth Dynasty, not only to the sixth Dynasty, as was thought before.

II- Sources: a) Merib's tomb: *LG 24 / G 2100(-I)* annexe.

b) Merib's chapel: Berlin Museum n.1107.⁴

III- Date: Reign of King Khufu (Forth Dynasty).

IV- Name of the Tomb owner:  *Mr-ib* "Merib".⁵

V- Location and Excavation of Merib's tomb:

When Khufu ascended to the throne during the period of the Fourth Dynasty, he chose a new location for his pyramid complex at Giza where he constructed the largest pyramid ever built in Egypt, and ordered the erection of rows of tombs which were dedicated to high ranks of officials to the west of his own funeral monument.⁶

Merib's tomb (stone-built mastaba) is located in the Western Cemetery, which was investigated in 1842 by C. R. Lepsius who had numbered it *LG 24*.⁷ In 1905, under G. A. Reisner's direction, the tomb was renumbered *G 2100-I*, and was identified with other separate tombs as core, or nucleus Cemetery.⁸

VI- The Importance of studying Merib's titles:

The site of Giza Necropolis is one of the most well-preserved and systematically planned. During the Fourth Dynasty, it was dedicated to three kings, namely Khufu (Cheops), Khaefre

⁴ It was excavated in this tomb then removed by Lepsius to Berlin Museum, cf. PM. III, p. 71; K.H. Priese, *Die Opferkammer des Merib*, Berlin, 1984, p. 4.

⁵ *PN*, I, 155 (17).

⁶ P. Janosi, "The Tombs of Officials. Houses of Eternity", in J.P. O'Neill (ed.), *Egyptian Art in the age of the Pyramids*, New York, 1999, p. 29.

⁷ *LD*. II, p. 18.

⁸ P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

(Chephren) and Menkawre (Mykerinos). The textual data from Giza tombs, supply us with the names and titles of such officials as Merib whose titles and Scenes show that he was one of the high ranks of officials in the administration of the state.

The study of Merib's titles is the best way to answer the abovementioned questions, to supply tools to solve some historical problems, and to provide really useful information about the administration of Egypt on the whole and clarified interpretations to some social relations between the kings and their officials. This is due to the fact that Merib's tomb has many complete texts that are kept in a good condition than other texts in other tombs of high ranks of officials that date back the end of Khufu Reign and the beginning of Djedefre Reign.

VII- Titles of Merib:

* Merib's titles related to the contemporary King:



rx-nsw

“Known of the King”⁹



sA-nsw n Xt.f

“King's son of his body”¹⁰



mry n nb.f mrr(w) n nb.f

“Beloved of his lord, whom his lord loves”

⁹ There is another expression of this title: “royal acquaintance”, see W. Helck, *Untersuchungen zu den Beamtentiteln des ägyptischen Alten Reiches*, Glückstadt, 1954, p. 28.

¹⁰ B. Schmitz, *Untersuchungen zum Titel sA-njcwT “Königsson”*, Bonn, 1976, p. 44.

* Merib's titles related to the royal palace administration:



sic

smr

“Companion”



xrp aH

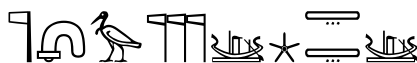
“Inspector of the palace”¹¹

* Titles of vessels administration:



aD-mr wiA

“Administrator of the ship”



xtmw¹²-nĪr BA(w)-nĪrw¹³ _wA-tĀwy

“The seal - bearer of the god of (the ships) Ba-nerjeru and Duwatawy”¹⁴



xtmw-nĪr Nb-rxyt Ba-nĪrw¹⁵

¹¹ M. Barta, “The Title Inspector of the Palace during the Egyptian Old Kingdom”, *Archiv Orientální* 67, 1999, p. 1.

¹² It may be read sDĀwty, which could be translated as “Treasurer”, cf. D. Jones, *A Glossary of Ancient Egyptian Nautical Titles and Terms*, New York, 1988, p. 106; P. Vernus, “Observations sur le titre imy-rĀ xtmt Directeur du trésor”, in S. Allam (ed.), *Grund und Boden in Altägypten. Akten des internationalen Symposions Tübingen 18.-20. Juni 1990*, Tübingen, 1994, p. 251-254.

¹³ B. Schmitz, *op.cit.*, p. 233 (n. 10).

¹⁴ P.-M. Chevereau, “Contribution à la prosopographie des cadres militaires de l’Ancien Empire et de la Première Période Intermédiaire”, *RdE* 40, 1989, p. 6, n. 271.

¹⁵ Or abA-nĪrw, see B. Schmitz, *op.cit.*, p. 233 (n. 11).

“The seal - bearer of the god¹⁶ of (the ships) Neb-rekhyt and Banetrjeru”¹⁷

* Merib's titles related to the central administration:



imy-r kA(w)t nb(w)t (nt) nswt

“Overseer of all construction projects¹⁸ of the king”

* Merib's titles related to the military administration:



imy(y)-r mSa

“Overseer of the army”

* Merib's titles related to the local administration:



wr mD Smaw

“Great one of tens of Upper Egypt”¹⁹

* Merib's titles related to the priesthood:



Xr(y) - Hb

“Lector priest”



snwt(y) Inpw

¹⁶ When this title came in a brief variant , it is transliterated as Der Manuelian suggests xtmty-nlr Haw “seal – bearer of the god of the fleet (or navy)”, see H. Junker, *Giza*, II, Wien, 1934, p. 133; S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza*, II, Cairo, 1936, p. 105, n. 9; K.H. Priese, *op.cit.*, p. 26, 28; P.-M. Chevereau, *op.cit.*, p. 30, n. 503; P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p.75, 83.

¹⁷ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

¹⁸ There is another translation “Overseer of all works of the king”, see W.A. Ward, *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom. With a Glossary of Words and Phrases Used*, Beirut, 1982, p. 51, n. 401.

¹⁹ There is another translation “Magnante of the southern tens”, see *ibid.*, p. 87, n. 721.

“Who belongs to the *snwt*-utensil of Anubis”²⁰



wt Inpw

“Embalmer of Anubis”²¹



Hm-nIr #wfw

“Priest of (King) Khufu”



r(A) P

“Mouth of Pe”²²



wr mAA lwnw

“Great of seers of Heliopolis”²³

VIII- Interpretation of the relation background among Merib's titles:

Firstly: The relation background between the administrative titles of Merib:

According to Ward, the selection of titles in the strings, as preserved in any tomb, makes it impossible to determine the relationship between every title and another;²⁴ but I do not support

²⁰ Evidently, it may be read Hm; wtj (wtw?) Inpw cf. H. Junker, *op.cit.*, p. 133, 189; or Hts Inpw (?) cf. N. Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom. The Highest Titles and their Holders*, London, 1985, p. 90, but the latest reading for this title is *snwt(y)-Inpw* depending on the first sign in this title (after the Anubis animal) resembled the fuller's club. See E. Brovarski, “The Priestly Title of Anubis: $\overline{\text{snwt}}$ ”, in: *Hommages à F. Haikal, BdE* 138, 2003, p. 68, 72-73.

²¹ W. Helck, *LÄ* III, col. 911-3, s. v. “Ut-Priester”.

²² It may be read (wr) P “Great one of (the city of) Pe”, see W. Helck, *Beamtentiteln*, p. 19, 23. In 1886, F. Petrie identified the double ancient city of Pe-Dep with Buoto which is located in the modern village of Tell el-Fara'in which is situated in Disuq within Gharbia, and consists of three mound groups covering a total area of 175 acres, see M.V. Seton-Williams, “The Tell El-Farâ'in Expedition, 1964-1965”, *JEA* 51, 1965, p. 9-10.

²³ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 95.









²⁴ W.A. Ward, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

this opinion depending on rearranging the titles like those of Merib in a logical sequence.

It is noted that the ancient Egyptians had a special features that identified their civilization; among those features are the styles of writing the titles strings of high ranks of officials on the walls of tombs. This implies that there was a fixed sequence of titles in the mind of the scribe of the tomb inscriptions; thus, he made selections and relations between titles for each string he wrote.²⁵ In my opinion these titles were arranged in the strings not only according to ranks, but also according to the fact that the title's owner was allowed to flaunt these titles; so that the scribe would choose among them in order to compose multitude strings of titles which were started by honorary ranks and ended by high ranks specially the most important title that the official had during his life. Apparently, the scribe begins with collecting all the official's titles, and then he conflates them together to form them into strings.

As for Merib, we will analyze his titles strings within the differentiation of his careers into 5 stages as follow:

- **First stage:** Merib was appointed aD-mr wiA “administrator of the Navy”.²⁶ I think that the translation of the word wiA does not indicate “the Navy” as whole, that we can observe the following points:

- 1) The sign  may be read    wiA “boat”.²⁷
- 2)     Haw “fleet”.²⁸
- 3) The reading of this word is singular not plural.

²⁵ K. Baer, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

²⁶ *Wb.* I, 240 (7-9); P.-M. Chevereau, *op.cit.*, p. 30; D. Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 71; id., *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles, Epithets and Phrases of Old Kingdom*, I, Oxford, 2000, p. 356 (n. 1323).

²⁷ *Wb.* I, 271 (8).

²⁸ *Wb.* III, 39 (14).

Therefore, it indicates a specific boat not to the fleet as whole. Hence, we can translate it “administrator of a ship”, which equals “captain” or “officer” according to the opinion of Helck.²⁹

- **Second stage:** Merib get a promotion of a higher important rank of the cadre of Egyptian Navy; that he became xtmw-nlr “The seal-bearer of the god of (four ships in the River Nile)”. According to Chevereau this rank appeared during the Old Kingdom like officer of marine of high rank, who was appointed by the King himself at the head of the nautical or overland expeditions against the nearby countries or toward the mining regions.³⁰ On the other hand, this office had other tasks focused on calculating everything that is to be transported from a place to another by those ships. Concerning Merib, I believe that his ships transported the harvest from fields of temples to its residencies. Certainly, it supports my hypothesis that the names of those ships had a religious pigment. It may further be mentioned that Merib, in his tomb, was depicted while



MAA xtmty in(w)t pr-nsw “Seeing the sealed-valuables, which are brought (to) the King's Palace”,³¹ this caption may refer to the official who oversees products of the king's personal property, or the “overseer of the treasury” who oversees the booty or tribute.³² Accordingly, I think this caption indicated Merib oversaw the valuables, which were brought to the royal palace by these ships. This interpretation may be supported by the title snwt(y) Inpw “(Who belongs to the) snwt–utensil of Anubis”. Concerning this title, Helck thought that the writing with the “pot” probably indicates that the bearers of this title were originally responsible for the provisioning of the royal household.³³ This tasks qualified Merib to be appointed as xrp aH “Inspector of the

²⁹ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

³⁰ P.-M. Chevereau, *op.cit.*, p. 3-4.

³¹ P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

³² cf. P. Vernus, *op.cit.*, p. 251.

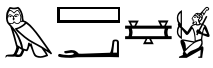
³³ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 51; E. Brovarski, *op.cit.*, p. 71.



Palace”, which indicates that he became a manager of the royal palace.³⁴

- **Third stage:** Merib was appointed *imy-r mSa* which some Egyptologists translated it as “Overseer of the force”,³⁵ or “Overseer of the army”.³⁶

Here, it seems to me that title of Merib “Overseer of the army” did not indicate the whole army, but a specific group of it; this may due to the following reasons:

1) If this title referred to the general of the state army, it must have been joined with the expression *wr* as *imy-r mSa wr* “generalissimo”. However, this did not happen with that title of Merib.

2) The expression  *mSa* indicates singular , not plural .

3) The determinative of this expression indicates watery road  which is not a normal writing of that word:  *mSa*.³⁷

4) D. Jones thought that this title has relation with the constructive works; hence, he translated *imy-r mSa* as “expedition leader”.³⁸

5) H.G. Fischer said that the word “army” seems justified even where *mSa* refers to groups that are not specifically military, for it is sufficiently elastic to be use in a phrase like *mSa n Xrty.w-nIr* “army of stone masons”, and it conveys the basic connotation of the soldier sign which usually appears in the writing of the word, either as ideograph or determinative.³⁹

³⁴ M. Barta, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

³⁵ S. Quirke, “Titles and Bureaux of Egypt 1850-1700 BC”, *Egyptology* 1, 2004, p. 98.

³⁶ P.-M. Chevereau, “Contribution à la prosopographie des cadres militaires du Moyen Empire”, *RdE* 42, 1991, p. 46.

³⁷ *Wb*, II, 155; W.A. Ward, *op.cit.*, p. 29, n. 205.

³⁸ D. JONES, *op.cit.*, p. 142, n. 551.

³⁹ H.G. Fischer, “Scribe of the army in Saqqara Mastaba of the Early Fifth Dynasty”, *JNES* 18, 1959, p. 268.

- 6) The inscriptions of Merib's tomb, in addition to his other titles like “Overseer of all construction projects of the King”, indicate that Merib had a relation with the constructive works.

In my opinion, this title referred to a battalion which had special tasks for constable protection of the ships which were used to transport valuable things like taxes or enormous stones which were needed for erecting the funeral complex of the King. Undoubtedly, Merib had this title because he acquired the royal confidence through his good management of the royal palace, his speciality in transporting, and withal his honesty. A typical feature of the officering of Armed Forces in the Old Kingdom is the fact that an officer may exercise military commands as well as naval.⁴⁰

- **Fourth stage:** Because of the good friendly relation, between him and the people of Upper Egypt, which he established while he was bringing stones and taxes along the River Nile; he was candidated and qualified to get another important rank, it is wr mD Smaw “Great one of tens of Upper Egypt”.⁴¹ Concerning this office, there is good discussion that was made by Fischer who concluded that this office concerns the conscription and supervision of corps of workers.⁴² On the other hand, this office may imply judicial tasks as Helck's View.⁴³ One cannot quarrel with this view as this office maybe has such judicial tasks among the workers themselves. This suggestion could be supported by the other Merib's title such as r(A) P “Mouth of Pe” which indicates judicial tasks too.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ P.-M. Chevereau, “Contribution à la prosopographie des cadres militaires de l'Ancien Empire et de la Première Période Intermédiaire”, *RdE* 40, 1989, p. 36.

⁴¹ W.A. Ward, *op.cit.*, p. 87, n. 721; D. Jones, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles*, p. 388, n. 1437.

⁴² H.G. Fischer, *op.cit.*, p. 266.

⁴³ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

- **Fifth stage:** Certainly, Merib was excelled in his tasks because of his great experience in field of transportation and security; therefore, he was appointed imy-r kA(.w)t nb(.w)t (nt) nswt “Overseer of all construction projects of the King”,⁴⁵ especially in the project of erecting the great pyramid complex. For that reason, he was granted the permission to build a tomb for him in the royal necropolis as a reward.

Now, we can reach an important historical conclusion: The promotion of the officials through the administrative titles and ranks could be related to each other according to the specialization as we have proven by Merib's titles.

Secondly: The relation background of Merib's priestly titles:

Primarily, through the plurality of priestly titles of any official appears the importance of his rank and the extent of his influence in the state. Merib had two groups of high priestly titles:

- ▶ One of them represents priestly titles that related to gods such as wr mAA lwnw “Great of seers of Heliopolis” that related to the god Re. I think that the King Khufu wanted to put Merib at the high rank in the priestly frame; maybe as his eye and ear, who secretly collected and reported information about the political activities of the hierarchy of the Re, the great god of the state. The evidence may support this suggestion is embodied in increasing the new political and mythic influence of Re, the Heliopolitan sun-god, and his hierarchy, on the official affairs and the royal policy. The apparent example was that the Re element had already appeared in several royal names during that time.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Or “Overseer of all works of the King”, see W.A. Ward, *op.cit.*, p. 51, n. 401; D. Jones, *op.cit.*, p. 262, n. 950.

⁴⁶ V.A. Tobin, “Myth and Politics in the Old Kingdom of Egypt”, *BiOr* 49, 1992, p. 626.

- ▶ The other group represents priestly titles of Merib, which were related to the funeral tasks of the deceased King, Khufu, like the mummification process and the other funeral ceremonies of this King. For instance, Hm-nĪr #wfw “Priest of (King) Khufu”, Xr(y)-Hb “lector priest”, wt Inpw “Embalmer of Anubis” or “Embalmer (as) Anubis”, and snwt(y) Inpw “(Who belongs to the) *snwt*-utensil of Anubis”.⁴⁷

IX- Interpretation of the royal pedigree relation of Merib and its result:

According to Janssen, when anyone is called “son of the king of his body”, this indicates purely an honorary title.⁴⁸ This opinion may explain why Helck argued that the tomb G 2100(-I) did not belong to any member of royal family branches.⁴⁹ On the other hand, Schmitz concluded that during the period of the Old Kingdom, the title sA-nswt (or ... n Xt.f and ... smsw) indicated princes by birth, and was not hereditary to the grandchildren of the king.⁵⁰ However, in the case of Merib who bore this title, we must define whether he had it as an honorary or an actually title. For answering on this, it must concentrate on the following points:

First: We should identify the contemporary King of Merib. There are some points can help us to identify him:

- 1) The only royal name which is added to the titles of Merib always indicates the King Khufu, even the name of the elder son of Merib, whose name #wfw-mr(y)-nĪrw

⁴⁷ W. Helck, *op.cit.*, p. 50-51; E. Brovarski, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

⁴⁸ R.M. Janssen, J.J. Janssen, *Getting Old in Ancient Egypt*, London, 1996, p. 122.

⁴⁹ W. Helck, “Zur Entstehung des Westfriedhofs an der Cheops-Pyramide”, *ZÄS* 81, 1956, p. 28.

⁵⁰ B. Schmitz, *op.c it.*, p. 43-45.

“Khufumerntjeru”, was compounded with the name of the same King.

- 2) The priestly titles of Merib were related only to the name of King Khufu, like Hm-nIr #wfw “Priest of (King) Khufu”.
- 3) Concerning the titles which associated with the title “Inspector of the Palace”, Barta observed that there was a major difference in rank between its holders during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties. He demonstrated in detail that most of the holders of this title, during the Fourth Dynasty, belonged to the elite of society. Moreover, they usually hold titles like iri-pat “hereditary noble”,⁵¹ HAty-aA “mayor / local prince”,⁵² tAty tAty sAb “chamberlain, vizier, judge”,⁵³ sDAwty / xtmw-bity “treasurer / seal-bearer of the King of Lower Egypt”,⁵⁴ and sA nswt n Xt.f smsw “King's elder son of his body”.⁵⁵ These titles suddenly disappear from the titularies of Inspectors of the Palace at the outset of the Fifth Dynasty.⁵⁶ Likewise, Merib bore many similar titles of high ranks and central offices; hence, this means that he was nearer the period of the Fourth Dynasty than the Fifth Dynasty.
- 4) Vinson argued that by the Fourth Dynasty, Egypt was a full-fledged nautical power. The shipbuilding skill demonstrable in the funerary boat of Khufu is the eloquent evidence for this.⁵⁷ Furthermore, we could consider Merib's participation in administrating four ships at least as other evidence on flourishing the navy. That may indicate Merib belonged to the period of Fourth Dynasty more than the Fifth Dynasty.

⁵¹ P. Kaplony, *LÄ III*, col. 178, s. v. “iripat”.

⁵² W. Helck, *LÄ II*, col. 1042, s. v. “Hatia”.

⁵³ A. Weil, *Die Weziere des Pharaonenreiches*, Strasburg, 1908, p. 92; H.A. WARD, *op.cit.*, p. 108.

⁵⁴ E. P. Uphill, “The Office sDAwty bity”, *JEA* 61, 1975, p. 250.

⁵⁵ B. Schmitz, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

⁵⁶ M. Barta, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

⁵⁷ S. Vinson, *Egyptian Boats and Ships*, Princes Risborough, 1994, p. 23.

- 5) Barta observed too that the most of the priestly titles that composed of Hm-nIr + god's name occurring in the titularies of “Inspectors of the Palace” are also limited to the period of the Fourth Dynasty. The deities which occur in these titles most frequently are Horus, Seth, Sopdu, Bastet and Anubis.⁵⁸ Likewise, Merib bore some these titles, like wt Inpw “Embalmer of Anubis”, and Hm-nIr #wfw “Priest of (King) Khufu”, which were related to the dead King, Khufu, who was considered at that time as a god, equally in his life or after his death; therefore, he was described as nIr-aA “the great god”.⁵⁹ Accordingly, it is clear that Merib lived during the time of the King Khufu or at the end of his time at most.
- 6) The T-shaped burial shaft was found earlier at Meidum and Dahshur. This style was nowhere else in that tomb. This architectural feature most likely indicates a constructional tradition imported by Khufu or his father Snefru. The transition from the older T-shaped to the newer square burial shafts was seen within that tomb of Merib and its group Cemetery G 2100 itself;⁶⁰ so, the tomb belongs to King Khufu era.
- 7) Merib’s tomb belonged to the cores of Cemetery, consisting of well-laid stone blocks; therefore, they were the oldest among other groups of those tombs that are attributed to the period of Fourth Dynasty.
- 8) Actually, everyone who became powerful enough to leave monuments, whether statues or tombs, was old enough⁶¹. Clearly, it happened at Giza, there were some officials waited a long time before building their tombs, perhaps until they felt that they had reached the peak of their careers,⁶² or they

⁵⁸ M. Barta, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁵⁹ See V.A. Tobin, *op.cit.*, p. 625-626; V. Dobrev, “Considérations sur les titulatures des rois de la 1V^e dynastie égyptienne”, *BIFAO* 93, 1993, p. 200.

⁶⁰ P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁶¹ R.M. Janssen, J.J. Janssen, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

⁶² N. Strudwick, *op.cit.*, p. 8-9.

waited until they had the king's permission to build it in the area of the royal necropolis. Accordingly, the inscriptions of Merib's tomb registered all high and central titles; this means that he had reached the peak of his careers, or he had the king's permission to build it in the area of the royal necropolis. The question is: who is the king who gave him this permission? In my opinion, the tomb owner would register his king's name or depict his figure in the tomb. The only royal name, in our tomb, is for the King Khufu.

- 9) Clearly, Roth dated the large tombs of cemetery 2100 at the period of the Fourth Dynasty.⁶³

Now, it is clear by the previous points that:

- ▶ The expression *nsw*, which was added to the titles of Merib, referred to the King Khufu.
- ▶ Merib had the right to build his tomb when he reached to a very high rank which was *imy-r kA(.w)t nb(.w)t (nt) nswt* "Overseer of all construction projects of the King". This title indicates Merib's participation in building the pyramid of his contemporary king; hence, when Merib was granted the right to build his tomb beside this pyramid honourably, he mentioned the name of his contemporary king in this tomb. The only royal name there was Khufu.

Therefore, I suggest that Merib had lived during the period of the Fourth Dynasty, especially around the End of the reign of Khufu and the Beginning of the reign of Djedefre. Now we have numerous evidences to the contrary of Strudwick's opinion that suggested that Merib belongs to the reign of Menkawre,⁶⁴ or to the end of the

⁶³ A.M. Roth, *A Cemetery of Palace Attendants*, Boston, 1995 = *Giza Mastabas*, VI, p. 1.

⁶⁴ N. Strudwick, *op.cit.*, p. 90, 218.

Fourth Dynasty,⁶⁵ or Junker's architectural view which suggested that Merib belonged to the early Fifth Dynasty.⁶⁶

Second: There were three special titles of Merib, his mother, and his daughter. Now, we will concentrate on them:

- ▶ The title of Merib: “King's son of his body”.
- ▶ The title of Merib's mother, Sedit⁶⁷: “King's daughter of his body”.⁶⁸
- ▶ The title of Merib's daughter, Nensezerkai: “King's daughter”.⁶⁹

Regarding the first notice about the previous titles of those persons, a question may come into the mind: Are they children of the king of his body, really? Furthermore, how they acquired this important rank?

According to Schmitz's view, the mother, Sedit, was bestowed this title honourably; maybe because she was wife of one of high officials.⁷⁰ As for Merib, he was not actual “King's son of his body”, but he was granted this title as a reward; because he was one of high officials who performed many active duties for the King as it was shown clearly by his titles.⁷¹

⁶⁵ LD. II, 22 (c); D. Jones, *Nautical Titles and Terms*, p. 72.

⁶⁶ PM, III, 71; H. Junker, *op.cit.*, p. 121-135. According to Junker, Der Manuelian dated Merib's mastabas at the early of the Fifth Dynasty. He cited that among the architectural Fifth Dynasty features of the tomb there are some. In my opinion, that architectural evidence is very weak; because they affirm that there are others of the Fourth Dynasty of this tomb too, which did not convince them enough to allow a Fourth Dynasty date. In addition to the architecture of the tomb, which maybe present the first beginning of architectural development of these features in the middle of the Fourth Dynasty that evolved in the other sequent tombs of the Fifth Dynasty; therefore, in their attempt, they did not go more than the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty. Cf. Der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

⁶⁷ PN, I, 323 (12): «dit.

⁶⁸ Source: tomb of her son, Merib, see P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

⁶⁹ Source: her tomb G 2101, cf. PM, III, p.72.

⁷⁰ See B. Schmitz, *op.cit.*, p. 70.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 71.

In my opinion, the answer to this question is involved implicitly behind the following notes:

- 1) Merib mentioned the name of his mother, Sedit, without his father's name.
- 2) They assured together this matter by using the expression “of his body”.
- 3) Merib named his son *Khufumerynetrw*⁷² whose name contains the name of King Khufu, and also named his daughter *Sedenit*⁷³ whose name looks like the name of his mother, *Sedit*.
- 4) Chevereau summarized that some royal sons could have the responsibility of naval administration of royal ships.⁷⁴

It could be noted that Merib's father did not have any high ranks or offices. Maybe he was rich man but did not belong to the royal family. Therefore, Merib did not mention his father's name or affiliate to him but to his mother, Sedit who had this important relation to the King. It is thus clear that she was an actual daughter of the King, or she belonged to the royal family at least. Accordingly, Merib was considered a son of the king honourably too. Likewise, the mother was the daughter of the King of his body; hence, the son, Merib, had the title “son of the king of his body”. Certainly, Merib belonged to the royal family without actually being directly the son of the king. More importantly, what support my hypothesis are the following affirmations:

- 1) Merib had the title *rx nsw* “Known of the King”.⁷⁵ In general, Strudwick considered it as an honorary title given usually not

⁷² *PN*, I, 268, (6); II, 381: #wfw-mry-nlrw. Nearly 16 names were relating and composed with the name of the King Khufu, see M.A. Murray, *Index of names and titles of the Old Kingdom*, London, 1908, p. 34.

⁷³ *PN*, I, 323, (13): ꜥdnit.

⁷⁴ P.-M. Chevereau, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

⁷⁵ The best article deals with the hieroglyph \ominus x and its interpretations in detail is: S. CURTO, “Ricerche sulla natura e significato dei caratteri geroglifici di forma circolare”, *Aegyptus* 39, 1959, p. 226-279.

to the princes, but to high ranks of officials (like Merib).⁷⁶ Accordingly, Merib did not belong to the royal family but to the elite of high ranks of officials. Moreover, Quirke thought that title might be given to the officials closer to the king with particular trust.⁷⁷ On the other hand, this title means literally *iri x nsw.t* “the one belonging to the placenta of the King”,⁷⁸ and indicates in general as twin or brother of the King.⁷⁹ Accordingly, such these previous suggestions can be useful, concerning Merib's titles, in trying to demonstrate that there was a close pedigree relation between Merib and his contemporary king when he bore this title.

- 2) Merib had the title *Hm-nlr #wfw* “Priest of (King) Khufu” whose holders were few in that dynasty, and most of them may have been related to the King Khufu.⁸⁰
- 3) The title *ad-mr wiA* “Administrator of a ship” was held by four royal sons during the Old Kingdom.⁸¹ Likewise, Merib held this title like them; it is not strange that Merib was considered one of the King's sons honourably at least.
- 4) The priestly title *snwt(y) Inpw* “(Who belongs to the) *snwt*-utensil of Anubis” which was considered as honorific title and assigned to princes in the Fourth Dynasty as Helck thought.⁸² Moreover, Brovarski demonstrated that the title was held during most of the Old Kingdom by the high-ranking personages, king's sons, viziers, and overseers of Upper Egypt, but only in the later Old Kingdom, it was borne by lesser individuals.⁸³ For instance, in the Fourth Dynasty it

⁷⁶ N. Strudwick, *op.cit.*, p. 224.

⁷⁷ S. Quirke, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ *Wb.* II, 446.

⁷⁹ N.M. Abd el-Halim, “The Problem of the Royal Placenta in Ancient Egypt”, *JFA* (C), *Special Issue. Book of the 50th Anniversary of Archaeological Studies in Cairo University*, III, 1978, p. 89.

⁸⁰ N. Strudwick, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

⁸¹ P.-M. Chevereau, *op.cit.*, p. 30.

⁸² W. Helck, *Beamtentiteln*, p. 50-51.

⁸³ E. Brovarski, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

was held by the prince Kawab, who perhaps served his father, the King Khufu, as vizier.⁸⁴ Likewise, Merib bore the title “(Who belongs to the) *snwt*-utensil of Anubis”, and served his grandfather, the King Khufu, as we knew from his high ranks and offices, like “Overseer of all construction projects of the King”.⁸⁵ Accordingly, this notice indicates that Merib was member of the royal family at least if he was not actually a son of the King.

- 5) Merib bore many high priestly and honorary titles or held actual offices, like “Known of the King”, “companion”, “Beloved of his lord, whom his lord loves”, “Who belongs to the *snwt*-utensil of Anubis”, “Embalmer of Anubis”, “Priest of (King) Khufu”, and “Great of seers of Heliopolis”, which suggested that Merib was one of high ranks of officials, and candidate him to be member of a subordinate class of the royal family at least.

Evidently, Merib wanted to imply that there was a close pedigree relation between him and the royal family; so, he announced, through such previous titles, that he belonged, via his mother Sedit, to a branch of the royal family.

Regarding that case, we can conclude that western tombs of the Great Pyramid at Giza Necropolis were not only given to lesser nobility and members of Khufu's court who were not related to the royal family in contrary to popular believe before,⁸⁶ but also given to high ranks of officials who belonged to a branch of the royal family. Furthermore, we can confirm a historical result that King

⁸⁴ W.K. Simpson, *The Mastabas of Kawab, Khufukhaf I and II*, Boston, 1978, fig. 8; E. Brovarski, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

⁸⁵ Or “Overseer of all works of the King”, see W.A. Ward, *op.cit.*, 51, n. 401; D. JONES, *An Index of Ancient Egyptian Titles*, p. 262, n. 950.

⁸⁶ V. Maragioglio, C. Rinaldi, *L'architettura delle Piramidi Menfite*, IV. *La Grande Piramide di Cheope*, Rapallo, 1965, p. 74-77; K.R. Weeks, *Mastabas of Cemetery G 6000*, Boston, 1994 *Giza Mastabas*, V, p. 1.


Khufu dedicated the high administrative ranks to some of his family members, and allowed them to be buried beside him at the royal necropolis in Giza as gifts of honour to his outstanding retinue.

X: hypothesis for the political relation between Merib together with his coequals and Djedefre:

There are many interpretive opinions concerning the Regnal Succession that happened after the death of Khufu. The lineage of his successor, Djedefre, is highly uncertain, and the best which can be said of him is that he was probably from a secondary branch of the royal family. His succession to the throne was only legitimized by marriage to Hetepheres, widow of the crown prince Kawab who was assassinated by his brother Djedefre (?).⁸⁷ This action did not placate the other competing princes.⁸⁸ In the light of lack of sources, I am unable to provide a substantial evidence for the following suggestion, but there are some notable and convincing pieces of evidence that could be observed:

- 1) Kanwati noted that the high ranks of officials, at the end of Khufu's reign, did not possess the same costly tombs that their equals had early in the same reign.⁸⁹
- 2) The priestly titles of Merib were related only to the name of King Khufu, not Djedefre, the immediate successor of him.
- 3) Merib neither had any ranks in relation to that new King, Djedefre, nor mentioned his name at least in his tomb.

Thus, we can reach to another historical result: After the death of Khufu, there were troubles between the two branches of the royal family of Khufu concerning the succession the throne. At the head

⁸⁷ Cf. G.A. Reisner, *A History of the Giza Necropolis*, I, London, 1942, p. 28; H. Gauthier, "Le roi Zadfré  successeur immédiat de Khoufou-Khéops", *ASAE* 25, 1925, p. 178-180.

⁸⁸ V.A. Tobin, op.cit., p. 626.

⁸⁹ N. Kanawati, *The Egyptian Administration in the Old Kingdom. Evidence on its Economic Decline*, Warminster, 1977, p. 70.

of the main branch was Khaefre, while at the head of the subordinate one was Djedefre, according to the ranks of their royal mothers.

First: Situation of Merib against the King Djedefre:

During the political conflict concerning the accession the throne among the competitors, I think that Merib wanted to avoid announcement his support to any of the two royal branches through abstaining the mention of their names in his tomb inscriptions, except the name of King Khufu who had the legitimate right of the kingship previously.

Second: Reaction of the King Djedefre against Merib and his coequals:

When Djedefre succeeded in accession the throne, Merib (together with some of high ranks of officials?) rejected that usurping of the throne. This rejection reincarnated in non-avowing and non-alignmet to Djedefre. This situation forced the King Djedefre to:

- Avoid the burial at Giza Necropolis near them.
- Seek the burial at new necropolis in Abu-Roash, about five miles from the great pyramid of his father Khufu, where the King Djedefre together with his court men had built their tombs there.⁹⁰
- Connect with the god Re instead of his father the King Khufu; in order to prove that he had the legitimate right of accession the throne within his divine relation with the god Re directly. Evidently, Djedefre, as a usurper, tried to have strong support for his action, which came within the hierarchy of the God Re. The name Djedefre (“Re is his stability”) indicates at the very

⁹⁰ M. Valloggia, “Le complexe funéraire de Radjedef à Abou Roasch: état de la question et perspectives de recherches”, *BSFE* 130, 1994, p. 5- 17.

least the devotion of its holder to Re of Heliopolis, and may also indicate that the Heliopolitan priesthood functioned as a political support for his throne.⁹¹ The convincing evidence on this hypothesis is that Djedefre was the first king who brought Re to the royal titles through the title “son of Re”, and his name which belonged to the god Re, in addition to the blessing phrase such as *anx Dt mi Ra* “may (he) live eternity like Re”.⁹²

That action interprets what Barta observed; that during the Fourth Dynasty, ten holders of the title *xrp aH* “Inspector of the Palace”, were buried at Giza, only two at Abu Roash.⁹³ On the other hand, this observation may help to interpret the political relation between the King and those of the high officials through the burial in the same place or not, according to the prevalent state, whether in disagreement or concord among them.

There was immediate hostile reaction of the King Djedefre against the situation of high ranks of officials, like Merib, who were not among his entourage. It might have happened that the new King, Djedefre, attempted to deprive those dissenters, who belonged to the period of Khufu, from their honorific titles and high ranks or offices that gave them the authority and wealth. He only allowed them to bear only some priestly titles as a limited punitive action that may force them to reconsider their situation toward him.

⁹¹ V.A. Tobin, loc.cit.

⁹² See H.W. Müller, “Der Gute Gott Radjedef, Sohn des Rê”, *ZÄS* 91, 1964, p. 129-133. This footstep was not strange at that time; for example, there was an equation for Khafre with Khaefkhufu (#a.f-#wfw), one of the owners of the mastabas of Cheops's sons. See R. Stadelmann, “Khaefkhufu = Chephren. Beiträge zur Geschichte der 4. Dynastie”, *SAK* 11, 1984, p. 165-172. Therefore, this example indicates that Khafre had previous name related to the legitimate King Khufu; maybe in order to pretend that he who had the right of accession the throne during his struggle against his brother Djedefre. Then Khafre changed his name on assuming the throne by substituting the name of his father for that of the sun-god to satisfy the hierarchy of this god, who had the great religious and political influence at that time.

⁹³ M. Barta, op.cit., p. 9.

I think that although Merib refused this implacable reaction of the King Djedefre, he considered the current conditions intellectually, and then he chose his sacerdotal titles that related to the dead king, Khufu. Maybe his purpose was in order not to establish a clear hostile relation with any of the quarrelling branches of the royal family.


Afterwards, Djedefre replaced those officials, who had the negative situation against him, with other corroboratory officials for him together with the Heliopolitan priesthood who functioned as a political support for his throne; in order to assume and seize the authority in his hand. We can say that the rejection succeeded to end these political troubles quickly by helping in the accession of Khafre the throne legitimately. Logically, Merib died at this time; hence, he did not mention the name of Khafre in his tomb inscriptions, and did not held any high ranks or titles related to the legitimate King, Khafre.







XI- The Birth land and Family of Merib in historical context:

A- Merib's birth land:

There are some evidences that we could interpret in suitable contexts as follows:

1) Merib mentioned his mother's name, Sedit, in his tomb as:


 Hm(t)-nTr(t) Nt mHtt ⁹⁴

⁹⁴  Nt mHtt(y)t inb "Neith, north of wall". cf. P. der Manuelian, *op.cit.*, p. 77 (l.10). Manuelian's reading for  mHtt is dubiety; because it was unknown before the 18th Dynasty, see WB. II, 126 (3). I suggest another reading and interpretation for this expression. My reading is Nt mHtt(y)t, and the ideogram  is only a determinative, according to the similar expression  and , where the ideogram  is too a determinative. cf. Wb. II, 198. Thus, the name of Neith has an epithet "northern" in order to indicate one of the two images of this goddess were during the Old Kingdom: an image of Lower Egypt (north) where its temple in Sais, and the other image of Upper Egypt (south) where its temple in Esna. This matter was certain during the New Kingdom according to monuments of Amenmose (the owner of the =

“Priestess of Neith of the North”

Thus, the mother was priestess of goddess Neith who had been worshipped in the north (Lower Egypt).⁹⁵

- 2) Merib held the office of wr mAA(.w) lwnw “Great of seers of Heliopolis”. This title indicates that Merib was related to the city of Heliopolis which was located at the Lower Egypt area.
- 3) Merib had the honorary rank of rA P “Mouth of Pe”. The city of Pe (Buto) was located at the Lower Egypt area.⁹⁶
- 4) Merib built his tomb at Giza Necropolis of Memphis city; so, this indicates that he lived in Memphis that is considered the first district in the Lower Egypt administratively.⁹⁷

According to what was mentioned previously, Merib had a special social relation with Lower rather than Upper Egypt; so, he mostly originated from Lower Egypt, especially Athribis that maybe was the hometown of him and his father.

B – Merib's Family:

There are some pieces of evidence which could help us to find out some historical facts such as:

- 1) Merib did not flaunt his father, or mention even his name at least in his tomb.
- 2) There is no tomb of Merib’s father beside the tombs of his wife Sedit and his son Merib in the royal Necropolis at Giza.

=Theban Tomb No. 373), which appear to have been particularly devoted to Neith. He himself may have come from Esna. See L. Habachi, “The Royal Scribe Amenmose, Son of Penzerti and Mutemonet: His Monuments in Egypt and Abroad”, in: *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes = SAOC 39*, Chicago, 1977, p. 83-103.

⁹⁵ See C.J. Bleeker, “The Egyptian Goddess Neith”, in: *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday*, Jerusalem, 1967, p. 41-56; R. el-Sayed, “Les rôles attribués à la déesse Neith dans certains des Textes des Cercueils”, *Orientalia* 43, 1974, p. 275-294.

⁹⁶ H. Altenmüller, *LÄ I*, col. 887, s. v. “Buto”.

⁹⁷ C.M. Zivie, *LÄ IV*, col. 25, s. v. “Memphis”.

This could be attributed to the fact that the father of Merib did not belong to the royal family, but to a high or elite class of the society. Logically, He had married princess Sedit who belonged to the royal family; so, Merib mentioned the name and titles of his mother, Sedit, not his father in his tomb.

Therefore, it is clear that the Kings of the Fourth Dynasty allowed the royal princesses to marry men who did not belong to the royal family. This custom was assuring the political support of great local families for the King and his authority. Now, we can conclude that the royal custom of getting their princess married to men who did not belong to the royal family, dates back to the period of Fourth Dynasty, not only to the Sixth Dynasty as it was known before.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Cf. M. Verner, *Baugraffiti der Ptahschepses-Mastaba*, Praha, 1992 = *Abusir*, II, especially the 6th chap.; R. Stadelmann, "König Teti und der Beginn der 6. Dynastie", in: *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, I: *Studes pharaoniques*, Le Caire, 1994, p. 327-335.