The mastaba of prince Kawab is situated in the first row of the Eastern Cemetery at Giza1 (fig. 1). It takes the first and best place in the four rows of double mastabas directly behind the queens’ pyramids, that of the queen mother Hetepheres, and that of queen Meretoytes, most probably Kawab’s mother (fig. 2). Therefore, and due to his titles sš-niswt smsw and štj-štfrj’t, “King’s Eldest Son” and “Vizier,” Kawab was regarded by scholars as crown prince and designated successor of Khufu.2 These double mastabas of the descendants of Khufu, sons and daughters, were constructed as double mastabas; only the enormous mastaba of Ankhhaf, almost certainly also a—younger—son of Khufu—not of Sneferu—who became vizier and master builder of Chephren’s pyramid, was built as a single tomb, most probably during the reign of Chephren.3 These double mastabas conceived for the king’s sons and their sister(?)-spouses are an innovation of the court of Sneferu at Meidum. There the princes of primogeniture, Nefermaat and his wife Atet, Rahotep and Nofret, were the first royals in the newly created princely mastaba cemetery to have the status and the benefit of this promotion.4 Not, however, the crown prince.5 For him no tomb was foreseen. 

When he died in the time of his father Sneferu at Meidum, he was given a large single mastaba, M17, near the pyramid, without an annex for an unknown spouse.6 At Dahshur the great mastabas of the first row to the east of the Red Pyramid are too destroyed to allow us to decide whether they were conceived as double mastabas or not. The prince Netjeraperef who had his mastaba tomb in the second row at Dahshur is a king’s son,7 but may be of a secundogeniture, a son of a son of Sneferu, like most probably Iynofer from Dahshur South.8

At Giza the double mastabas of the descendants of Khufu were each built by joining two separate mastabas into one of double size with a continuous casing on the east and west fronts (fig. 3). The cult niches were each cut near the southern corner of the twin mastabas. Thus there is a clear distinction between conventional mastabas, with two niches to the south and to the north, and these twin mastabas. This characteristic architectural feature may well serve as a decisive criterion for the establishment of the genealogy of the early 4th Dynasty. Regrettably it was abandoned in the time of Chephren.

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2 B. Schmitz, Untersuchungen zum Titel S3-NJ SWT “Königsohn” (Bonn, 1976); Reisner, A History of the Giza Necropolis II, compl. and rev. by W. Stevenson Smith (Cambridge, MA, 1955), 1-12; also Simpson, Mastabas of Kawab, Khafkhufu I and II; more reserved M. Römer, Zum Problem von Titulatur und Herkunft bei den ägyptischen Königsöhnen des Alten Reichs (Bonn, 1977) and “Kronprinz,” LA 3, 816.  
4 W.M.F. Petrie, Medum (London, 1892), 11-17.  
5 R. Stadelmann, “Khafkhufu=Chephren. Beiträge zur Geschichte der 4. Dynastie,” SAK 11 (1984), 165–172, and Stadelmann, “Userkaf in Sakkara and Abusir,” Archiv Orientschiene Supplement IX (2000), 532 n. 14. The objections raised by A. Bolshakov in “Princes who became kings: where are their tombs?” GM 146 (1995), 11-22, are not relevant. His main thesis that the tombs of crown princes were abolished and demolished when they had become kings lacks evidence; neither in the row of large mastabas of the descendants of Snefru at Meidum nor at Dahshur are there any empty spaces; and more evidently in the tomb rows of the family of Khufu at the Eastern Cemetery G 7000 at Giza, there is absolutely no empty space that might attest to contemporary relinquished or destroyed mastabas.  
7 N. Alexanian, Das Grab des Prinzen Netjer-aperef: die Mastaba II/1 in Dahschur, Dahschur 2, AV 56 (Mainz, 1999).  
Fig. 1. Giza East Cemetery, G 7000. Photo: M. Haase.

Fig. 2. Giza East Cemetery. Queens' Pyramids and Mastabas.

The general aspect of the destruction of the mastabas of the Eastern Cemetery does not support George Reisner’s interpretation of a dynastic conflict between the sons of Khufu. This demolition is not an act of annihilation or extermination of personalities. For such a motivation, the destruction of the reliefs and the erasure of names would have been absolutely sufficient. It looks most certainly that the looting took place in order to obtain the valuable stone material in the construction of mosques, palaces, and bridges in the Arabic Middle Ages.

Kawab’s mastaba has suffered badly from stone looting in later periods. Not only the exterior chapels with their elaborate decoration, but also most of the casing in the niches and on the outer face, have been cut off and torn off for reuse. The

9 Reisner and Smith, Giza Necropolis II.