

EL-MOALLA TO EL-DEIR

من المعلا الي الدير

Colleen Manassa

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El-Moalla bis el-Deir

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The 3rd nome of Upper Egypt possessed several regional power centers during Pharaonic history, including its nome capital (Nekhen/Elkab) in the south and the urban centers of Hefat and Gebelein near the northern border of the nome. Several important sites occupy the area between el-Moalla and el-Deir, including necropolises, settlement areas, and an ancient road leading into the Eastern Desert. Textual evidence, particularly the autobiography of Ankhthifi, combined with archaeological material enables a preliminary reconstruction of the political history, social character, and cult topography of this regional unit.

لقد حاز الإقليم الثالث لمصر العليا (صعيد مصر) علي العديد من مراكز القوى الإقليمية خلال التاريخ الفرعوني، بما في ذلك عاصمته نخن/الكاب في الجنوب، ومراكز حيفا والجبلين بالقرب من الحدود الشمالية للإقليم. كما يوجد العديد من المواقع الهامة بالمنطقة الواقعة ما بين المعلا والدير، بما في ذلك من جبانات ومناطق سكنية، والطريق القديم المؤدي إلى الصحراء الشرقية. وبناءً على الأدلة النصية، وخاصة السيرة الذاتية لعنخ تيفي، وأيضاً على المواد الأثرية، يمكن إعادة تخيل مبدئي للتاريخ السياسي، والطابع الاجتماعي، وسمات العبادة بهذه الوحدة الإقليمية.

The east bank of the Nile between el-Moalla in the north and el-Deir in the south is a small portion of the area of the 3rd Upper Egyptian nome and a region of restricted agricultural output, the cliffs of the Eastern Desert extending close to the bank of the Nile (fig. 1). Despite its seemingly disadvantageous topography, this part of the 3rd nome was a significant regional node of political power, a “secondary center” (Escobedo 1997), whose importance emerges from artificial and natural factors. The northern and southern boundaries of this area contain necropolises: a large cemetery at el-Moalla and another at Zurghani (M08-09/S1). Adjacent to the latter necropolis is most likely a town-site, the location of which was dictated by both the availability of agricultural land and access to Eastern Desert



Figure 1. View (looking east) of the narrow cultivation next to the necropolis of el-Moalla.

trade routes; additional ancient habitation areas in the region may await discovery, although modern activity may have obliterated

most substantial remains. The area between el-Moalla and el-Deir is an attractive testing ground for a regional archaeological approach that incorporates aspects of landscape archaeology (David and Thomas 2008; Kantner 2008), which—combined with textual data and additional survey and excavation—may enable a reconstruction of the political and social history of a regional unit throughout the Pharaonic period.

Etymology

The modern Arabic name el-Moalla refers to the “elevated area”—an allusion to the abutting of *gebels* and Nile that forms such a striking contrast in this region. Although the ancient toponym Hefat is often equated with the necropolis of el-Moalla, this and other previously suggested locations rest on slim evidence at best; topographical lists and archaeological evidence may, however, suggest more plausible alternatives (see below *Location and Layout of Sites*). The name Hefat, “city of the serpent,” derives from a term that commonly designates a serpent in general, rather than denoting a specific type thereof (Sauneron 1989). A male god Hefau appears in Coffin Text Spell 649 as a protector of an otherworldly doorway (de Buck 1956: 272a), and the toponym Hefat may derive from the city’s eponymous *agathos daimon* (“good spirit”). The one Middle Kingdom attestation of Hefat in Coffin Text Spell 717 (de Buck 1956: 346) is a dangerous goddess, but such negative aspects are often found among otherwise protective deities (Meurer 2002).

Topographical lists name Agny as an east bank settlement south of Hefat (see below *Location and Layout of Sites*). No common noun appears to correspond to the root of the toponym Agny (although note the loan word in Hoch 1994: 82), which is often determined with a striding cow. Since the city possessed a temple dedicated to Hathor, the name Agny probably refers to a hypostasis of that goddess.

Location and Layout of Sites

Much of the area between el-Moalla and el-



Figure 2. Wadi Falaj al-Hunud.

Deir, a 17 kilometer stretch of the Nile valley, remains unsurveyed, and the present overview will certainly become obsolete after further archaeological work. Geologically, this region is bounded to the north by the quarries of Dababiya (Klemm and Klemm 2008: 136 - 139) and to the south by the Wadi el-Deir. Branching off northeast of the mouth of the Wadi el-Deir is the Wadi Falaj el-Hunud, the first accessible east-west wadi south of el-Moalla (fig. 2). On the east bank of the Nile, from el-Moalla south to Nag el-Hamidat, the cliffs of the Eastern Desert descend nearly to the banks of the Nile River, limiting agricultural production as well as blocking all easy access to the Eastern Desert and its thoroughfares.

Topographical lists, including the Ramesseum Onomasticon, Onomasticon of Amenope, and the Abydos procession of Hapi deities, provide a consistent south to north progression of towns within the 3rd nome (table 1; Gardiner 1947: XXIV). Additional towns such as *ʿst-ngn* and *Hr-mr* appear prominently in the autobiography of Ankhtifi (Gomaà 1986: 72 - 73; Vandier 1950: 221), but their locations remain unknown. The fragmentary entry in l. 196 of the Ramesseum Onomasticon suggests that Iatnegen may have been situated between Esna and Agny (Gardiner 1947: 12*); a list of deities in Esna places Hor-mer between Agny and Hut-[Sneferu] (Sauneron 1963: 126). Ptolemaic temple reliefs include additional, albeit occasionally slightly divergent, data. Between Esna (*ʿwnyt*) and Gebelein (*Pr-Hwt-Hr*), only the town of Hut-Sneferu (*Hwt-Snfrw*) can be confidently located on the basis of archaeological remains, which then provides

Egyptian Name	Location (E/W Bank)	Ramesseum Onomasticon	Onomasticon Amenope	Abydos	Edfu	Modern Name
<i>Twnyt</i>	W Bank	1. 195	1. 323	10	Ø	Esna
<i>Tst-[n]gn</i>	unknown	1. 196	Ø	Ø	Ø	unknown
<i>ʿgny</i>	E Bank	Ø	1. 324	11	XXVI	Zurghani (M08-09/S1)
<i>Hwt-Snfrw</i>	W Bank	Ø	1. 325	12	XXVIII	Asfun el-Matana (or slightly south)
<i>Hfst</i>	E Bank	1. 197	1. 326	13	XXVII	Most likely between Nag el-Hamidat and Nag el-Hanadi
<i>Pr-Hwt-Hr /Intt</i>	W Bank	1. 198	1. 327	14	XXIX	Gebelein

Table 1: Topographical lists detailing towns in the northern part of the 3rd nome. (After Gardiner 1947; Abydos list after Kitchen 1979: 545; Edfu list after Chassinat 1931: 232 - 233.)

an anchoring point for further topographical analysis. Modern Asfun el-Matana appears to derive its name from Hut-Sneferu, later Hesfen (Gardiner 1947: 14* - 15*; Gomaà 1986: 69 - 70; Meeks 1972: 85; Timm 1984: 703 - 708), although the relative dearth of Pharaonic material at the site may suggest a migration of that toponym from a nearby original location. In addition to a few objects of Second Intermediate Period (Bakry 1968; Helck 2002: 36 no. 41) and New Kingdom (Weigall 1908) date, ancient remains at Asfun el-Matana include a Late Period necropolis (Bakry 1968, 1969) and a temple from the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods (Farid 1986; Maspero 1906; Weigall 1907b).

The topographical lists and local geography suggest that both Agny and Hefat should be sought between Nag el-Hanadi and the east bank of the Nile opposite Esna. The textual evidence indicates that Agny is more specifically south of Hut-Sneferu/Asfun el-Matana. One possible location for the ancient settlement of Agny is in the area adjacent to the necropolis of Zurghani (M08-09/S1) between el-Matana and el-Deir (for a description of this site, see below *Necropolis of Zurghani*). An inscribed funerary cone from the Zurghani necropolis mentions a “temple of Hathor, Mistress of Agny” (Sayce 1905: 164), which in the absence of additional epigraphic evidence strongly suggests that the necropolis was attached to the settlement of Agny (cf. Gardiner 1947: 12* - 14*). Consequently, Hefat should be located north of el-Matana.

Based on the location of Ankhthifi’s tomb and the information from geographical lists,

Hefat has been equated with the area of el-Moalla (Gauthier 1927: 27 - 28; Montet 1961: 49 - 50; Vandier 1950: 5 - 13). The only textual evidence for the identification of el-Moalla as Hefat is an inscribed block of Nectanebo I that mentions “Hemen, Lord of Hefat,” discovered during the excavation of a canal about 600 meters north of the tomb of Ankhthifi (Gabra 1974); since the block is of moderate size (90 x 44 x 28 cm) and no other Nectanebid remains have been recorded in that area, the block was probably moved from its original location. Two additional blocks (Sotheby’s 1985: nos. 133 - 134) may belong to the same monument (reference courtesy of Neal Spencer, August 2011). Surveys of the necropolis area have revealed no Pharaonic settlement remains, and the topography between el-Moalla and the north edge of the Wadi Falaj el-Hunud makes the existence of a large settlement in that area unlikely. Based on the topographical lists, Hefat should be sought on the east bank of the Nile north of Asfun el-Matana. A location south of el-Matana has also been proposed for Hefat (Legrain 1916; Vikentiev 1930: 72; Wild 1954: 193 - 195; with corrections in Meeks 1972: 85 - 86), but evidence is lacking, other than a procession of deities at Edfu Temple that reverses the order of Hefat and Hut-Sneferu (Chassinat 1931: 232). Intensive survey in this area, particularly around Nag el-Hanadi and Nag el-Hamidat, will hopefully reveal evidence of the location of ancient Hefat.

Despite the remaining uncertainties, the towns of Hefat, Hut-Sneferu, and Agny together formed a closely related group of settlements, and several texts affirm a particularly close connection between Hefat



Figure 3. View (looking southeast) of the conical hill containing the tombs of Ankhtifi, Sobekhotep, and other First Intermediate Period tombs.

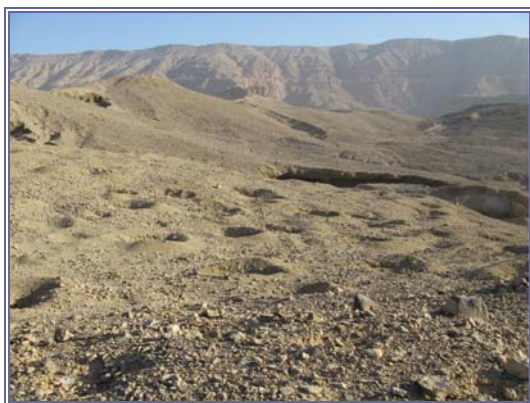


Figure 4. Large concentration of tombs north of the tomb of Ankhtifi, most of which belonged to individuals of lower socio-economic levels. Modern quarry activity is visible in the middle right of the image.

and Hut-Sneferu. The god Hemen possessed a cult center in both cities (see further below *Significance and Historical Context*), and a statue of Sobekhotep IV (Louvre A 17) describes the king as *mry Hmn m Hwt-Snfrw nt Hfzt*, “beloved of Hemen in Hut-Sneferu of Hefat” (Helck 2002: 36, no. 41; contra Gomaà 1986: 71 - 72). In the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, the two towns belonged to a domain of Horus of the east and west, indicating their joint economic and religious associations (see below).

El-Moalla Necropolis

At el-Moalla, a series of eminences, including one free-standing conical hill with the tombs of Ankhtifi, Sobekhotep, and others (el-Masry 2008; Vandier 1950), provide an ideal location

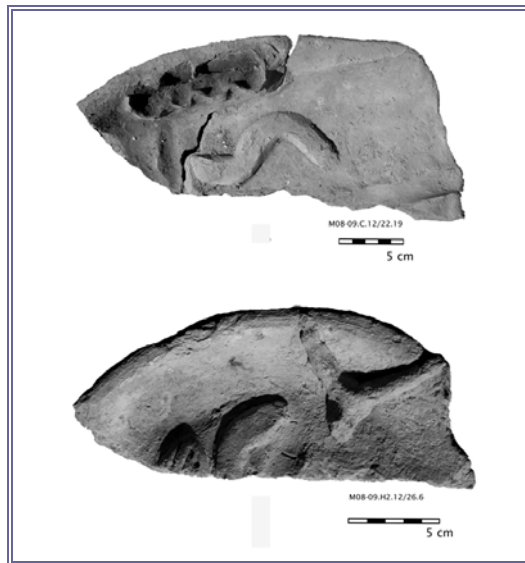


Figure 5. Two examples of fragmentary offering platters from the el-Moalla necropolis.

for a variety of elaborate rock-cut tombs and more modest single-chambered shaft tombs (fig. 3). Egyptian activity began at the site during the late Predynastic Period (Manassa 2009: 60 - 61), but the archaeological evidence for this period is as yet too limited to determine whether the site was already a necropolis or served as a small habitation area. The tombs within the necropolis range in date from the Old Kingdom through the New Kingdom, with material from the 5th/6th, 11th/12th, and 18th Dynasties predominating on the surface.

The owners of the tombs at el-Moalla range from the highest elite of the area—the nomarch Ankhtifi and his family—to the lower social classes (fig. 4). A feature that distinguishes the elite tombs from the poorer sepulchers is the existence of structures outside the tombs, including funerary chapels (el-Masry 2008: 120) and other architectural elements such as causeways. Lacking external funerary chapels, poorer tombs were provided with inexpensive ceramic offering platters related to the more developed “soul houses,” both of which appear throughout Upper Egypt during the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom (Hölzl 2002: 52 - 53; Leclère 2001; Niwinski 1975; Slater 1974:

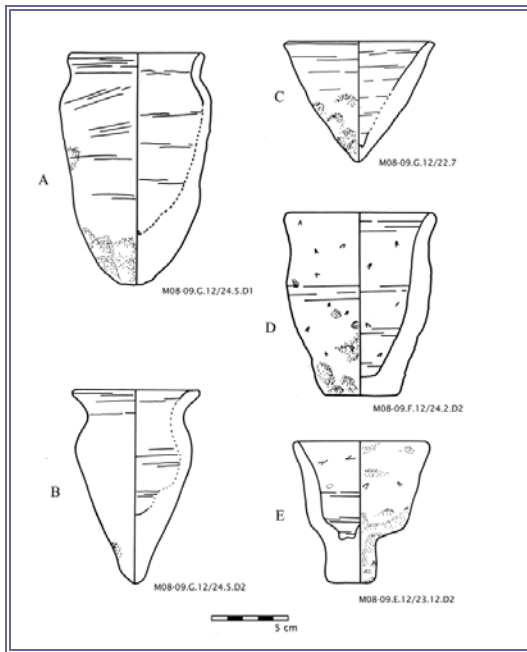


Figure 6. Types of small, partly handmade vessels from the el-Moalla necropolis.

301 - 315). Fragmentary ceramic offering platters (fig. 5) occur throughout the el-Moalla necropolis alongside small roughly-made vessels (fig. 6) that may have together formed part of the funerary/mortuary rituals outside of tombs that otherwise lacked funerary chapels.

The autobiography of Ankhtifi remains the most significant epigraphic evidence from the el-Moalla necropolis, with its uniquely detailed description of the nomarch's militaristic and humanitarian efforts from the 1st to the 4th nomes of Upper Egypt (Coulon 1997; Darnell 1997; Doret 1994; Morenz 2005; Willems 1990). Two additional tombs near the tomb of Ankhtifi and two tombs at the far northern end of the necropolis also contain fragments of painted or inscribed decoration (see below), although no lengthy texts are preserved. Additional inscribed material from the el-Moalla necropolis is limited, but future excavations may expand the corpus. A stela, possibly from el-Moalla, appears to predate the tomb of Ankhtifi and may be one of the oldest texts thus far known from the site (Louvre E 26904; Strudwick 2005: 345). Several First Intermediate Period/early



Figure 7. View (looking southeast) of the pan-grave cemetery at el-Moalla.



Figure 8. Decorated sherds from the pan-grave cemetery at el-Moalla.

Middle Kingdom coffins from el-Moalla represent only a fraction of the coffins that were once present in this provincial cemetery (el-Masry 2008; Lapp 1993: 187). 13th Dynasty material includes a cylinder-seal of king Amenemhat-senebef (Ryholt 1997: 209) and a stela of a private individual named Khunes (*PM V*: 170). A few late New Kingdom/early Third Intermediate Period coffins are reported to come from el-Moalla (Málek 1982: 434, n. 25), probably evidence of the reuse of earlier tombs in the area.

A low spur of the gebel that runs east-west into a wadi just north of a concentration of 18th Dynasty tombs contains a pan-grave cemetery (Manassa 2009: 66 - 68), which probably included at least two dozen tombs of adults and children (fig. 7; on the historical

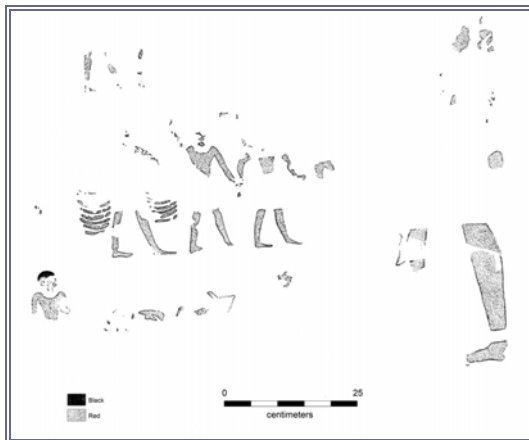


Figure 9. Scene from tomb M08-09.L/T1 showing a procession of offering bearers presenting cuts of meat to the tomb owner, with sacrificial cattle in the lower register.

implications of this cemetery, see below *Significance and Historical Context*). The tombs reveal an assemblage typical of pan-grave burials, including decorated and polished bowls (fig. 8) and leather goods; associated Egyptian pottery indicates that the cemetery dates between the late 13th and late 17th Dynasties. Pan-grave cemeteries at el-Deir (Sayce 1905: 163), Esna (Downes 1974: 31), Elkab (Weigall 1907a: pls. 76 - 77), and Hierakonpolis (Giuliani 2001: 40 - 44) provide comparative material, which may ultimately allow for a refined understanding of regional variations in the pan-grave populations of Upper Egypt.

Two decorated, multi-chambered tombs dating to the First Intermediate Period (M08-09.L/T1 and M08-09.L/T2) are located at the northern extent of the necropolis. The painted decoration has sustained heavy damage, and the tomb owners are unknown. Preserved images in M08-09.L/T1 include the tomb owner and his wife and a procession of offering bearers with cuts of meat (cf. Vandier 1950: pl. XXVIII) and sacrificial cattle (east wall; fig. 9); another scene includes a fragmentary offering figure in front of the tomb owner, a juxtaposition that finds numerous parallels in First Intermediate Period funerary stela and tomb decoration (Donadoni Roveri et al. 1994: 50, fig. 56; cf.



Figure 10. Nautical scene from tomb M08-09.L/T2. The photograph is reinforced to emphasize the outlines of the preserved images.

Peck 1958: 10, 29, pls. 2 and 5; Vandier 1950: pls. XIV and XL). The decoration of the east wall of Tomb 1 also resembles the west wall of the 9th Dynasty tomb of Meru at Naga el-Deir (N3737; Peck 1958: 110 - 112). On the south wall of M08-09.L/T1, a Nile vessel with a narrow hull and low profile is piloted by a squatting figure (Jaroš-Deckert 1984: pl. 14, 1b2; Vandier 1950: pls. XL and XLI).

A single scene survives in tomb M08-09.L/T2: a riverine tableaux on the east wall of the tomb (fig. 10). Two boats sail over a waterway, and the leftmost vessel contains a large standing figure that may be the tomb owner. A bipartite mast on the boat to the right indicates a pre-Middle Kingdom date for the decoration of the tomb (Fabre 2004: 114 - 115).

Late Roman Site (M10-11/S1)

The site M10-11/S1 is within a roughly northeast-southwest wadi cutting through the high desert in the eastern cliffs overlooking el-Moalla; the mouth of the wadi debouches into the large Wadi Dababiya, containing New Kingdom through Ptolemaic and Roman quarries. Within a kilometer-long stretch of this offshoot of the Wadi Dababiya are several concentrations of dry-stone structures, situated along the lower slopes of the sides of the wadi, with a few simple structures built in the wadi bottom. A variety of ground plans appear at the site, from single room animal



Figure 11. View (looking east) of the settlement site M08-09/S1.

pens and storage areas to multi-chambered complex buildings; many of the structures are constructed around large natural boulders and incorporate the boulders into the walls of the building. The architecture of the structures in M10-11/S1 is comparable to late Roman sites in the Eastern Desert, such as the mining settlement of Bir Umm Fawakhir (Meyer et al. 2001; Sidebotham et al. 2008: 221 - 222) and smaller settlements of uncertain purpose (Sidebotham et al. 2002; Sidebotham et al. 2008: 247 - 249). The predominant ceramic forms at M10-11/S1 are Egyptian amphorae, including Late Roman Type 7 and two types from the Aswan region (cf. Aston 2007). The fine tablewares and cooking pots from M10-11/S1 suggest that the main use of the site can be dated approximately to the fifth and sixth centuries CE (cf. Faiers 2005)—comparative ceramic corpora appear at the nearby sites of Tod (Pierrat 1996) and Armant (Mond and Myers 1934).

Necropolis of Zurghani (M08-09/S1)

Survey of the area between el-Matana and el-Deir has revealed the existence of a necropolis approximately eleven kilometers south of el-Moalla. The site is unmarked on modern maps, but is called “Zurghani” by the local inhabitants and was designated M08-09/S1 by the Mo’alla Survey Project (fig. 11). The ancient remains at the site exist atop and within a terrace of wadi-deposited gravel, much of which has been removed in the

course of cultivation activity. The Zurghani necropolis appears to be identical with a necropolis that Sayce partially excavated in 1905 (Sayce 1905). The earliest ceramics at Zurghani (M08-09/S1) include late Predynastic/Early Dynastic storage jars and utilitarian wares; Maidum bowls indicate Old Kingdom activity, and there are also ceramic forms typical of the First Intermediate Period. Activity at the site continued through the New Kingdom; material of later periods is also present, albeit not in overwhelming abundance. Ceramic material of Nubian manufacture, probably of Early Dynastic or Old Kingdom date (cf. Gratien 1995), is sparse but noteworthy. Architectural remains visible on the surface include a mud-brick tomb vault, matching Sayce’s report (Manassa 2009: 71 - 73; Sayce 1905). The rediscovery of the necropolis allows one to assign a definite location to the funerary cone of the priest of “Hathor, Mistress of Agny” (see above *Location and Layout of Sites*). Most likely, the necropolis of Zurghani (M08-09/S1) was adjacent to the Agny settlement, and hopefully additional survey will reveal habitation remains in the area.

Wadi Falaj el-Hunud Road

The necropolis of Zurghani (M08-09/S1), and thus probably ancient Agny, was located at the mouth of the Wadi Falaj el-Hunud, through which a desert road leads out from the site into the Eastern Desert (Manassa 2009: 73 - 74). Ceramic remains along the road indicate use throughout the Pharaonic period; a late Predynastic stopping point with abundant Nile C and Marl A1 pottery provides evidence contemporary with the earliest remains at the settlement site (fig. 12). About twelve kilometers east of the Nile terminus of the road is a small rock inscription tableau, including three bovids with iconographic features characteristic of Early and Middle Nubian cultures. Although the Wadi Falaj el-Hunud Road has only been partially mapped, the track most likely intersects with important north-south roads, such as that connecting Elkab with Medamud (Darnell 1995: 93 - 94), and may ultimately



Figure 12. Late Predynastic stopping point along the Wadi Falaj al-Hunud Road.

connect with the Wadi Hammamat Road.

Significance and Historical Context

The area between el-Moalla and el-Deir presents the urban and funerary landscape of a regional center that attained particular importance during a period of internal conflict, the First Intermediate Period. The autobiography of Ankhtifi enables a rare glimpse into a specific regional history and the mechanism by which a local ruler could expand his military and economic influence into neighboring nomes. The historical situation may in turn explain some of the features and layout of sites within the northern portion of the 3rd nome.

Prior to the rule of Ankhtifi as nomarch, little is known of the history of the region between el-Moalla and el-Deir. Predynastic through Early Dynastic evidence in this region is sparse, consisting of late Predynastic ceramic material from the surface of the el-Moalla necropolis (Manassa 2009), a Protodynastic stone vessel with relief decoration of a warrior and two boats (Berlin ÄGM 15084) probably from Nag el-Hanadi (Krauss 1995), and late Predynastic pottery and Early Dynastic graves from the region of el-Matana (Manassa 2009; Mortensen 1991: 24 - 25, 32; Sayce 1905; Weigall 1907b: 49 - 50). Old Kingdom ceramic evidence is more abundant at both the el-Moalla necropolis and the area of Zurghani (M08-09/S1). The political capital of the 3rd nome during the

Old Kingdom is uncertain, since the inscribed material from Elkab, the later nome capital, does not contain any nomarchic titles (Gomaà 1980: 21 - 22; Moreno García 2005: 105). Instead, at the end of the 6th Dynasty the 3rd nome was under the jurisdiction of the “overseer of commissions in the nine nomes” (Jones 2000: 101; Kanawati 1980: 69 - 73). This larger administrative unit probably ceased to operate after the death of Pepy II, which may have led to the creation of a nomarch for the 3rd nome (*ḥrj-tp ʕ n Nḥn*). The predecessors of Ankhtifi in this office are uncertain, but Ankhtifi’s autobiography gives his father Hetep a nomarchic title and describes the important advisory position his father played in Ankhtifi’s administration (el-Masry 2008: 132 - 133; Favry 2004: 13 - 15; Kanawati 1980: 91; Vandier 1950: 186).

During Ankhtifi’s tenure as nomarch, the city of Hefat became his base of operations (Vandier 1950: 206; Willems 1990: 27 - 54), and his autobiographical text states several times that the main army of the nome was recruited from Hefat (Vandier 1950: 185, 198, 242). Ankhtifi’s administration of his own nome and military mobilization enabled him to effect the annexation of the 2nd nome to his own governorate, an act he characterized as a rescue from the ineffective rule of the “house of Khuu” (Vandier 1950: 163; on the inundation imagery, see Darnell 1997). This takeover justifies Ankhtifi’s use of the title “nomarch of the 2nd and 3rd nomes” (*ḥrj-tp ʕ n Wts-Ḥr Nḥn*; Vandier 1950: 162, 185). Ankhtifi’s force also sought battle near the fortresses of Armant—an area called “Segasemekhsen”—but the combined army of Thebes and Coptos refused to engage with the invaders (Vandier 1950: 202 - 203). A fragmentary text describes another battle in which Ankhtifi’s army and allied troops from Edfu attacked an unspecified location that appears to be south of Edfu (Vandier 1950: 252 - 252; contra Morenz 2005); if the target of the attack was the 1st nome of Upper Egypt, this could clarify Ankhtifi’s otherwise inexplicable claim to have been “one who is courageous (lit. “joined of heart”) on the day of uniting three nomes” (Vandier 1950: 171).

In addition to his military exploits, Ankhtifi's tomb also commemorates the nomarch's piety towards his local god Hemen, a falcon-headed deity and avatar of Horus, who possessed cult centers at Hefat and Hut-Sneferu; the west wall of the tomb depicts a hippopotamus hunt and other ritual events that took place during the "navigation of Hemen" (Vandier 1950: 148 - 159; Willems 1990: 43 - 46).

The location of Ankhtifi's tomb at the far northern border of the 3rd nome is worthy of note, particularly if Hefat, his nomarchic seat, was located several kilometers to the south (see above). The motivation behind the placement of the el-Moalla cemetery may be sought in a parallel situation in the 5th Upper Egyptian nome. User and Tjauti ruled as successive nomarchs of the 5th nome during the same period of internecine strife as Ankhtifi in the 3rd nome, and all three nomarchs shared a common enemy—the ruling nomarchs of the 4th nome. The capital of the 5th nome was Coptos, but the funerary monuments of User and Tjauti (their false doors) were found further south at Khozam, at the northern edge of the boundary between the 4th and 5th nomes (Fischer 1964: 39 - 48). As Tjauti's road-building inscription from Gebel Tjauti attests (Darnell 2002: 30 - 37), the Coptite nomarchs understood the strategic importance of desert routes, and their burial at Khozam was opposite the Alamat Tal Road, which ascends the plateau at Gebel Tjauti. Despite the ongoing war with the Theban nome, User and Tjauti chose the southern border of their nome as their final resting place. Ankhtifi probably had the same political motivation as his northern compatriots and likewise chose a necropolis location based on an ideology of power.

The towns of Hefat and Hor-mer, along with neighboring Iat-negen and the "Domain of Elephantine," were at the center of Ankhtifi's grain distribution plans, although his grain reached as far south as Wawat (Lower Nubia) and as far north as the Abydene nome (Vandier 1950: 220 - 221, 239). The stela of Ity (CG 20001), a contemporary of Ankhtifi from the 4th nome,

similarly refers to directing grain to Armant and Imyotru, near the southern border of the Theban nome (Gomaà 1986: 122 - 125, 132 - 135), as well as to Hefat (Lange and Schäfer 1902: 2; Lichtheim 1988: 31 - 32). Ity may have sent supplies to Hefat as recompense for Ankhtifi's military aid against the Theban and Coptite nomes (Vandier 1950: 196). Ankhtifi's effective administration appears to have changed the trajectory of a region that might otherwise have languished during the difficulties of the First Intermediate Period. The consolidation of the southernmost nomes under Ankhtifi may have ultimately contributed to the success of the Theban unification of Upper Egypt, enabling the military victories of the 11th Dynasty to translate rapidly into an administratively centralized region whose economic base would catapult the Theban governors to the rule of a reunited Egypt.

The establishment of the 12th Dynasty signaled the return of the area of el-Moalla to the status of a local center within the 3rd nome, rather than a regional capital; textual evidence for this period is sparse. From the reign of Nebhepetra Mentuhotep II at the latest, Nekheb was the capital of the 3rd nome (Gomaà 1986: 53 - 55). Only one Middle Kingdom nomarch, Horhotep, appears in extant monuments, and no details are known about his tenure in the position (Favry 2004: 46). Ceramic evidence suggests that the necropolis of el-Moalla continued to be used, and further exploration in the area should illuminate the history of the region during the high Middle Kingdom.

The history of el-Moalla and its surroundings during the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom is equally murky. Near the end of the 13th Dynasty, Sobekhotep IV commissioned two colossal statues, the epithet of which—"beloved of Hemen in Hut-Sneferu of Hefat"—illuminates the particularly close theological connection between the two cities (see above). Some of the only epigraphic evidence for the late Second Intermediate Period in the area are two blocks from nearby Gebelein that contain

inscriptions with the cartouches of Seuserenra Khayan and Ausererra Apepi. Although previously interpreted as being part of a Hyksos-controlled outpost at Gebelein, the small size of the stones and the lack of any other 15th Dynasty material in the area suggest that they were likely moved from another location, probably much further north (Polz 2006). With the reinterpretation of the Hyksos blocks as Theban spoils of war or later dismantling and reuse, all evidence for a Hyksos military zone in the 3rd nome disappears. A newly discovered pan-grave cemetery with associated 17th Dynasty ceramics suggests that the northern part of the 3rd nome was within the domain of the Theban realm, as is to be expected (Manassa 2009); the cemetery may represent a burial ground for Medjay auxiliaries stationed near el-Moalla to patrol the southern border of the Theban nome and desert routes such as the Wadi Falaj el-Hunud Road. In the 18th Dynasty, Egyptian tombs were dug near the pan-grave cemetery, and contemporaneous ceramic evidence is present at the site M08-09/S1. The mention of Hefat as the hometown for workmen at Deir el-Bahri (Hayes 1960: 34) remains one of the few New Kingdom textual references to this area.

For the post-New Kingdom periods, most of the evidence involves the religious landscape of the 3rd nome. In Taharqo's sixth regnal year, a stela was erected in honor of Hemen, Lord of Hefat, to commemorate a particularly abundant inundation and its resulting bounty (Vikentiev 1930); although the provenance of the stela is uncertain, Asfun el-Matana on the west bank or the region of el-Matana on the east bank are the most likely candidates. At least one construction during the reign of Nectanebo I also mentions the important local god Hemen, Lord of Hefat (Gabra 1974). As early as the First Intermediate Period, festival processions were held in honor of Hemen, and at least one Third Intermediate Period papyrus records an oracle of Hemen of Hefat (Parker 1962: 50). Hefat and Hut-Sneferu shared in worship of the god Hemen (Vikentiev 1930: 70 - 72), and by the

Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, the area of Hefat and Hut-Sneferu together formed a "domain of Horus" on the east and west banks of the Nile (Chassinat 1931: 43, ll. 2, 5 and n. 43; Sauneron 1963: 126). At the Temple of Edfu, Amun also appears as a deity at home in Hefat and Hesfen (Hut-Sneferu; Guermeur 2005: 349 - 350). At Agny, the goddess Hathor possessed a cult center as early as the Middle Kingdom (see above). A Third Intermediate Period priest named Nesamun held priestly titles (*hm-ntr*) for both Hemen of Hut-Sneferu and Hathor of Agny (Cairo CG 42221; Jansen-Winkel 1985, Vol. 1: 183 - 193, Vol. 2: 536 - 541). During the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, the northern part of the 3rd nome possessed multiple interdependent cult centers whose deities appear within other major temples, such as Esna and Edfu. In conclusion, no better summary of the cult-topography of the northern portion of the 3rd nome and southern 4th nome exists than the itinerary of a Buchis bull from the reign of Ptolemy VI (Grenier 2009). As Bucheum Stela no. 9 records, the bull was born north of el-Moalla, and as the newly recognized avatar of Montu, he traveled south to Hefat, then across the bank to Hut-Sneferu, and on to the religious center at Esna—thus paying homage to the major cults of the northern part of the 3rd nome. From Esna, the young bull journeyed to the southern portion of the 4th nome, the area of Armant, before continuing to Thebes. After a royal visit by Ptolemy VI Philometor, the bull finally took up his residence at Armant.

Excavation/Research History

Some of the first reports of archaeological material in the area of el-Moalla focused on post-Pharaonic remains: prominent Byzantine and early Islamic tomb clusters in the area (Daressy 1895; Floyer 1895; Schweinfurth 1922: 276 - 280). The tomb of Ankhtifi, discovered during quarrying activity in 1928, was published—along with the nearby tomb of Sobekhotep—by Jacques Vandier in 1950. The sole excavation in the environs of el-Deir was Sayce's brief season in 1905. These

publications have represented the sum of archaeological work in the region between el-Moalla and el-Deir in the past century. Fortunately, in the last decade additional conservation and epigraphic work has been carried out by a University of Liverpool mission (directed by Mark Collier) in the

tomb of Ankhtifi. The Yale University Mo'alla Survey Project (directed by Colleen Manassa) began in 2008 and is in the process of surveying the northern extension of the el-Moalla necropolis and sites between el-Moalla and el-Deir, including Eastern Desert tracks entering the region.

Bibliographic Notes

The chief publication on el-Moalla remains Vandier (1950), with the additional material in Gabra (1974) and el-Masry (2008). The region of el-Deir remains mostly unexplored, with the only previously reported material in Sayce (1905). Summaries of the Mo'alla Survey Project are available at http://www.yale.edu/egyptology/ae_moalla.htm.

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External Links

Mo'alla Survey Project

The Yale University Mo'alla Survey Project. (Internet resource:
http://www.yale.edu/egyptology/ae_moalla.htm. Accession date: January 2011.)

Image Credits

- Figure 1. View (looking east) of the narrow cultivation next to the necropolis of el-Moalla. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 2. Wadi Falaj al-Hunud. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 3. View (looking southeast) of the conical hill containing the tombs of Ankhtifi, Sobekhotep, and other First Intermediate Period tombs. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 4. Large concentration of tombs north of the tomb of Ankhtifi, most of which belonged to individuals of lower socio-economic levels. Modern quarry activity is visible in the middle right of the image. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 5. Two examples of fragmentary offering platters from the el-Moalla necropolis. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 6. Types of small, partly handmade vessels from the el-Moalla necropolis. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 7. View (looking southeast) of the pan-grave cemetery at el-Moalla. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 8. Decorated sherds from the pan-grave cemetery at el-Moalla. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 9. Scene from tomb M08-09.L/T1 showing a procession of offering bearers presenting cuts of meat to the tomb owner, with sacrificial cattle in the lower register. Drawing by Eric Stegmaier.
- Figure 10. Nautical scene from tomb M08-09.L/T2. The photograph is reinforced to emphasize the outlines of the preserved images. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 11. View (looking east) of the settlement site M08-09/S1. Photograph by the author.
- Figure 12. Late Predynastic stopping point along the Wadi Falaj al-Hunud Road. Photograph by the author.