From Provincial Ruler to Town Mayor

An investigation into the role Senusret III played in provincial Middle Kingdom administration

Statue of Senusret III, British Museum (EA686)

By: Nicole Jansen, s1261630
Adress: Haarlemmerstraat 88B, 2312 GD Leiden
E-mail: nicole_janine_gemma@hotmail.com
Wordcount: 17.182
Masterthesis Classics and Ancient Civilizations University of Leiden
Supervisor: Dr. B. J. J. Haring
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Introduction

During the First Intermediate Period, central government had collapsed in Egypt and former powerful provincial rulers now governed autonomously. When central power was reinstalled by Mentuhotep II in the 11th dynasty, these rulers were still very influential and kept ruling locally, although they officially ruled under the newly reinstalled king. However, by the time the New Kingdom emerged, these rulers and their original spheres of influence had disappeared. Local government had largely transitioned to mayors, who ruled in cities.[1] This change, and the disappearance of the once powerful provincial rulers, is typically attributed to changes in provincial administration that were implemented during the 12th dynasty rule of Senusret III[2] (although some authors are more sceptical on the matter).[3]

To get some more clarity, it is important to analyse from what evidence and arguments the theory that Senusret III was responsible for these administrational changes came to be. Eduard Meyer was the first one to publish this theory,[4] and below a quick summary of his arguments follows. During the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth dynasty, provincial rulers (who Meyer calls nomarchs) built big and elaborate graves for themselves, but these types of nomarchal graves disappeared after the reign of Senusret III. And how Meyer puts it: '*Das Kann kaum Zufall sein; vielmehr drängt dieser Tatbestand zu der Annahme, das unter Sesostris III (1887-1850) eine tiefgreifende Umwandlung durchgeführt oder wenigstens – wenn sie, was nicht unwahrscheinlich ist, in manchen Gauen schon beträchtlich früher eingetreten war – zum Abschluss gelangt und das Gaufürstentum beseitigt worden ist.'*[5] Meyer also notes that the old nomarchal title disappears, and that new titles are given to the elite. And so: '*scheint die Macht und Selbstherrlichkeit des Adels unter Sesostris III und Amenemhat III vollständig gebrochen zu sein*'.[6] These arguments are the base of the theory that a fundamental change in administration took place during the reign of Senusret III.. However, Meyers arguments are based on a Eurocentric view that compares the system of the early Middle Kingdom with European Middle Aged feudalism,[7] and the Egyptian elite with European nobility. Moreover, Meyer published his theory in 1921; since then, much more recent research has been done on the Middle Kingdom administration and elite. This does not necessarily mean that Meyer's theory is wrong, but a thorough re-examination is warranted, especially since despite further research done on the topic (which sometimes points in a different direction), Meyer's view is still mostly accepted as truth by the Egyptological community. This research will attempt to take a fresh look at Meyer's theory that is a century old already this year, and still the cause of much debate. The research question will therefore be: to what extent were changes in provincial administration implemented during the Reign of Senusret III that attributed to the shift of local power from provincial rulers to town mayors?

To help answer this question, the research question will be divided into three sub-questions, that will subsequently form the three chapters of this thesis. The first chapter aims to give more

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[1] W. Helck, 'Landesverwaltung', in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie,* III (Wiesbaden, 1980), p. 920.

[2] See K. Bard, *An Introduction to the Archeology of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2015), p. 185., W. Grajetzki, 'Late Middle Kingdom', in W. Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles, 2018) <https://uee.cdh.ucla.edu/articles/late_middle_kingdom> viewed 21-6-2018., E. Meyer, *Die Ältesten Geschichtlichen Völker und Kulturen bis zum XVI. Jahren: Die Ältere Chronologische Babyloniens, Assyriens und Ägyptens* (Geschichte des Altertums, I; Stuttgart ,1921), 2, p. 276.

[3] See E. Pardey, 'Administration: Provincial Administration', in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, I (New York, 2001), p. 19., R. D. Delia, *A Study of the Reign of Senwosret III* (London, 1980), p. 167-169. L. Gestermann, 'Der Politische und Kulturelle Wandel unter Sesostris III. – Ein entwurf', *Per* Aspera *ad Astra: Wolfgang Schenkel zum Neunundfünfzigsten Geburtstag* (Kassel, 1995), p. 44.

[4] E. Meyer, *Die Ältesten Geschichtlichen* (Stuttgart ,1921), 2.

[5] Idem, p. 276

[6] Idem, p. 276

[7] Idem, p. 273

clarity on what exactly the changes in provincial administration that Senusret III (supposedly) implemented were, based on the existing literature. Therefore, the sub-question will be: what were the changes in provincial administration from the end of the early Middle Kingdom and the late Middle Kingdom? The second chapter will go into how (and if) the changes in provincial administration are reflected in textual evidence. Therefore, the question will be: what textual evidence indicates changes in provincial administration during the reign of Senusret III? In this chapter, administrative texts and titles are discussed. The third chapter will go into how the changes in administration are reflected in the material culture of the time period. The question will be: what material evidence indicates changes in administration during the reign of Senusret III? The graves of the nomarchs and changes in burial custom will be discussed here. In the last part of the thesis, a conclusion will be given to the original research question through the answering of these three sub-questions.

A last note must be given on the name of the king. Through the centuries, it has been written as Senusret, Sesostris, Senwosret, and many other variations. In this thesis, the choice has been made to use 'Senusret', except when it comes to the citation or notation of book and article titles. This choice has been made because Sesostris is the Hellenised form of the name, and Senusret reads more logical than Senwosret for the readers that are not used to the transliteration of hieroglyphs.

1. Changes in Provincial Administration between the Early Middle Kingdom and the Late Middle Kingdom

To understand administration during the Middle Kingdom, one has to go back to the Old Kingdom, when the 'nomes' were created. It is possible to distinguish the different nomes by using ancient sources; the oldest source describing the nomes dates back to the Old Kingdom, but lists of nomes have been recovered from all eras of Ancient Egypt, up to even the Ptolemaic times and Roman rule of Egypt.[8] Nomes were the base of regional administration, and at the head of these administrational units stood the nomarch. There are several theories on how these nomes came to be; some think they evolved from the drainage area of local estates, where others think they evolved from religious centres. The main task of the nome administration was to collect resources and manpower for the central government.[9] The nomarchs were under the supervision of the vizier, the highest executive official of the land. Temples were exempt from the influence of the nomarchs, but they were also economic institutes that had their own resources and personnel. So, there was a separate temple administration. There was a difference in administration between cult temples of local deities and mortuary temples; for example, in the Old Kingdom, the royal residence collected the revenues from the mortuary temple complexes, while it was at least the intention that the king added provisions and building to the cult temples of local deities.[10]

During the end stages of the Old Kingdom, in many cases nomarchs also became the leaders of the local temple administrators, and in some other cases the head of the temple administration also became the head of the local secular administration.[11] So, the two separate offices of administration, of which one used to be heavily influenced by the central state, merged. This gave nomarchs more control, and took control and resources away from the central government. Especially when the central government started to weaken at the end of the sixth dynasty, nomarchs had far-reaching power in their nomes, although they were officially under the control of the local government and the king. Nomarchs could collect taxes and manpower without the interference of the local government, and started to gather their own troops to engage in battle against their neighbouring rivals.[12] Around this time, the central government at Memphis disintegrated and the First Intermediate Period started. Local rulers acted like kings in their own right in their respective areas of influence, until Mentuhotep of the 11th dynasty managed to unite the entirety of Egypt under his rule around 2000 BC.[13] So, at the start of the Middle Kingdom, Egypt was very much divided (although officially reunited) and the provincial rulers were very powerful.

1.1 Changes in provincial administration between the early Middle and late Middle Kingdom

Most Egyptologists consider the early Middle Kingdom to be the period from Mentuhotep II of the 11th dynasty to Senusret II of the 12th dynasty,[14] and consider the late Middle Kingdom to be the period from Senusret III of the 12th dynasty to the end of the 13th dynasty.[15]

Below, the changes in provincial administration between the early and late Middle Kingdom that are reflected in the existing literature will be discussed. It seems like the administration during the late Middle Kingdom was a lot more fragmentized than during the early Middle Kingdom.[16]

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[8] W. Helck, *Die Altägyptischen Gaue* (Wiesbaden, 1974), p 48.
[9] Pardey (2001), p. 17.
[10] B. Haring, 'Temple Administration', in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt,* I (New York, 2001), p. 21.
[11] H. Willems, 'Nomarchs and Local Potentates: The Provincial Administration in the Middle Kingdom', in J. C. M. Garcia (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Administration* (Leiden, 2013), p. 363.
[12] Pardey (2001), p. 18.
[13] W. Grajetzki, *Court Officials of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom* (London, 2009), p. 3.
[14] W. Grajetzki (2018), < https://uee.cdh.ucla.edu/articles/late_middle_kingdom> viewed 21-6-2018.
[15] Idem.
[16] Helck (1980), p. 920.

Where there was a provincial ruler during the early Middle Kingdom that was responsible for the government, jurisdiction, religion and cults,[17] some of these tasks seem to get taken away from the provincial rulers during the late Middle Kingdom. During that period there seem to have been separate officials who handle the jurisdiction, for example.[18] Also, it seems that nomarchs are in charge of smaller areas of influence; one official might have been responsible for the town and another for the fields, whereas this distinction was not there during the early Middle Kingdom. Although later the offices of mayor and head of the field may have merged again, they seem to have been separated after the early Middle Kingdom, which indicates a change in administration.[19] It also seems like there was more control of provincial administration during the late Middle Kingdom. Rulers had to answer to their superior, mayors were under the supervision of the vizier, and the vizier had officials in his service that supervised local administration and reported back to him directly. [20]

There also seems to be a difference in titles in the early and late Middle Kingdom. During the late Middle Kingdom, officials did not bear a string of titles, whereas officials bore multiple titles in the early Middle Kingdom.[21] Titles also became more precise. This could have been because the administration became more refined and advanced, but it could also have been a way to limit the powers of certain individuals. If offices were divided amongst people, then power and resources were divided amongst them as well.[22] Also, the title for the provincial rulers changed from 'overlord of a province' to 'mayor' or 'overseer of priests' during the twelfth dynasty.[23] This change is usually contributed to Senusret III.[24] The disappearance of the title indicates a change in the way the local rulers were viewed. Instead of being an overlord in charge of everything, the local rulers became more integrated into the administrational system. They shared their control with other officials, and therefore could not really be seen as overlords anymore.

In the early Middle Kingdom local officials who fell under the provincial ruler, bore similar titles to the titles that were known in the royal court.[25] This practice seems to disappear in the late Middle Kingdom. There could be several explanations for this; Grajetzki thinks that this happened because the central government was afraid of losing power, and '*it seems that in both (Second Intermediate Period and early Midde Kingdom] periods the king needed the help and support of local governors to rule the country.'* [26] It is a very strong indication of the growing control of the central government over the local officials that these titles were not used any more in provincial administration, but were only reserved for officials of the royal court again in the late Middle Kingdom. Local officials started sending their children to court to help their career,[27] which might imply that the central government had a greater control over the local rulers and their families than they had had before.

Concluding, the biggest changes in provincial administration between the early and late Middle Kingdom typically represented in current literature seem to have been the following: fragmentation and centralisation. More people held offices, which resulted in more people that gained power and resources. However, their power and resources were more modest than before, when only one person would hold multiple offices and gain all the resources. There seemed to have been a higher amount of control on provincial administration; mayors had to answer directly to the

[17] Grajetzki (2009), p. 111.
[18] Helck (1980), p. 920.
[19] Idem, p. 920.
[20] Grajetzki (2009), p. 109.
[21] Idem, p. 109.
[22] Idem, p. 119.
[23] Willems (2013), p.361.
[24] A. Jiménez-Serrano, A. J. Morales, *Middle Kingdom Palace Culture and its Echoes in the Provinces: Regional Perspectives and Realities: 12* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 12.
[25] Grajetzki (2009), p. 112.
[26] Idem, p. 112.
[27] Idem, p. 112.

vizier, and the vizier had his own supervisors who controlled local administration. This all points to a stronger central government, and less powerful local rulers. In the next chapters it will be examined if these changes are reflected in the textual and material sources, and can be attributed to one king, Senusret III.

Chapter 2 : Textual evidence

A lot of knowledge of Ancient Egyptian history stems from written sources. These sources are found in many forms, from literary texts to graffiti left on rocks and mountainsides. In the previous chapter, the changes that supposedly took place during the Middle Kingdom were discussed. In this chapter, it will be examined if these changes are reflected in the textual sources from this time period, and if they can be linked to Senusret III.

Titles, in administrative texts but also on for example graves and burials, can be helpful in trying to reconstruct the mechanisms and layers of administration. It remains difficult to interpret these titles, especially when it is not possible to link a specific title to titles found in administrational texts. Administrational texts provide context, and show that a title was actually linked to a real office. There is no way to know for sure what the real meaning of a title was when it has only been discovered without that context, and to know if it was even linked to an actual office, or if it was just an honorary title. The most relevant administrative titles of the Middle Kingdom will first be shortly explained in this chapter, and then texts on Middle Kingdom administration will be examined, to see in what context these titles appeared.

2.1 Titles and spheres of administration

The Middle Kingdoms titles that were linked to local administration will be shortly discussed here. It is important to keep in mind however, that the reality was probably less clear cut than presented here. It is important to keep in mind that, '*by trying to bring order into the somewhat chaotic sources, scholarship may unwittingly have built interpretative models that are more 'systematic' than the reality may have been.'*[28]

ṯ3ty (vizier): The vizier was the most important official in administration. Most information on the vizier comes from *The Duties of the Vizier*, which will be discussed below. The texts mentions the duties and obligations of the Vizier, but is most likely used to glorify the vizier and emphasize his importance. *'The composition is worded to reinforce the impression of overall control of every sector by the vizier; careful rereading indicates that often the role of the vizier is not to control so much as to double-check.'*[29]

ḥry-tp ꜥ3 (great overlord, nomarch): this title was very common and important for the nomarchs during the late Old Kingdom and early Middle Kingdom, but seems to disappear during the 12th dynasty. The title indicates that the ones who bore it ruled an entire nome. The nomarchs often held additional titles, like ḥ3ty-ꜥ (mayor) and imy-r ḥmw nṯr (overseer of priests), which indicates that the nomarchs were also leaders of the urban and religious centrums of their province.[30] The last known individual to bear this title was Djehutihotep of Deir el-Bersheh, who lived during the reigns of Amenemhat II, Senusret II and Senusret III (see chapter 3.7). The disappearance of this title during the reign of Senusret III has often been used as an argument for his involvement in the disappearance of the nomarchs,[31] but it appears that in most nomes the title already disappeared after the reign of Senusret I (see chapter 3).

ḥ3ty-ꜥ: the correct translation of this title is much debated, but Quirke translates it as a '*leading administrational official in an urban centre'.*[32] Another popular translation is 'mayor', although it may be a bit misleading, since the ḥ3ty-ꜥ of the Egyptians were probably very different from the mayors of modern times. The ḥ3ty-ꜥ title seems to have been used in two distinct ways; standing on its own as a ranking title (often translated as 'count'), or being followed by the name of a town, and being a functional title (meaning that the carrier of the title was the most important

[28] Willems (2013), p. 360.
[29] S. Quirke, *Titles and bureaux of Egypt -1850-1700 BC* (London, 2004), p. 18.
[30] Grajetzki (2019), p. 110.
[31] Jiménez-Serrano, Morales (2021), p. 12.
[32] Quirke (2004), p. 111.

administrational official of the town).[33] Nomarchs often bore this title in combination with imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[34]

imy-r ḥm.w nṯr (overseer of priests): although it seems counterintuitive that a religious title was affiliated with local administration, lots of nomarchs bore this title. Some even only carried this title and not ḥry-tp ᶜ3, mostly in combination with ḥ3ty-ᶜ. When the office ḥry-tp ᶜ3 was created in the 5th dynasty, the imy-r ḥm.w nṯr were his subordinates. However, their power increased significantly when temples became exempt from taxes and other payments; making them equals to the ḥry-tp ᶜ3, and in some nomes (where no ḥry-tp ᶜ3 is attested) even usurping their power.[35] Willems argues that therefore, the imy-r ḥm.w nṯr could also be perceived as being the nomarch of a nome; that is, if the two officials are not both attested in the same nome.[36]

ḳnbty n.w (district councillor): this title is interesting, because it was not attested before the late Middle Kingdom.[37] It is not entirely clear what this post entailed, but it seems to have been linked to the vizier. It seems that the ḳnbty n w was linked to both regional affairs, and to the court. 'He is the one who sends them out, and they report to him the state of their districts'.[38] (He being the vizier and them being the district councillors). Therefore, the ḳnbty n.w seems to have been an official that checked on the affairs in the districts, and reported back to the vizier. Some things remain unclear though; what exactly these 'districts' were, and if the district councillor solely checked these districts, or also had a part in governing them. Since the title only appears in the late Middle Kingdom, it could be that this is a new office, maybe created to be able to keep a closer eye on the regional affairs. This indicates that there was at least an attempt to get a stronger grasp on local administration. It must be said though, that the recovered sources from the early Middle Kingdom are in no way complete, so it is impossible to know if the title ḳnbty n.w really only appeared in the late Middle Kingdom. However, the available evidence does point in that direction.

Linked to the ḳnbty n.w, is the sš n ḳnbty n.w (or sš n ḳnbty), meaning secretary of the district councillor. Evidence that the district councillor might have been connected to a certain town, comes from this title: sš n ḳnbty n.w n ḥwt-k3-ptaḥ (secretary of the district councillor of Memphis.)[39] What is meant by the term 'district' is vague at best, and this muddles the waters a bit more, since apparently the district councillor can also be linked to a town (niwt). This might indicate that in the term 'district', a town and its surrounding lands are entailed, but it might also entail a nome, or maybe even a part of a nome with more than one town.[40] Overall, it is very unclear.

imy-r 3ḫwt (overseer of the fields): this title emerges at the end of the Old Kingdom, and is in use throughout the entire Middle Kingdom. During the early Middle Kingdom it is used on a provincial level, and during the late Middle Kingdom it is used on a national level. There is little known about the function of the holder of this title because of a lack of sources, except that it was linked to field measurement. The title however indicates that the imy-r 3ḫwt was the overseer of fields and had something to do with the organization of labour of the fields. It is also known that workers for the fields had to be requested through the vizier.[41]

nty m srwt (member of the officialdom): this title might be linked to the vizier, since it also appears in the duties of the vizier. The vizier appointed them, and they had to report back to him every four months on what was happening. They seem to have been appointed to Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt, and the Head of the South (see below), so they had larger areas to report about than the aforementioned ḳnbty n w (district counsellors). This title was first attested in the 11th dynasty.[42]

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[33] Willems (2013), p. 372.
[34] Idem, p. 361.
[35] W. Helck, *Zur Verwaltung des Mittleren und Neuen Reichs* (Leiden, 1958), p. 200-201.
[36] Willems (2013), p. 363.
[37] Quirke (2004), p. 113.
[38] From *The Duties of the Vizier* in Quirke (2004), p. 113.
[39] Idem, p. 114.
[40] Idem, p. 114.
[41] Idem, p. 91.
[42] Idem, p, 89.

However, this explanation of the title is not universally accepted; based on the grammar of the title and context, some argue that the designation 'nty m srt' simply means that somebody was a member of the official magistracy, and that it was not a 'separate' functional body.[43] In any case, it appears that the vizier made use of these officials to get a firmer grasp on the matters happening on a more local level.

wr mdw šmᶜ (chief of tens of Upper Egypt): it is very unclear what the exact meaning of this title is. It seems to have been given to high officials with a strong connection to the royal court, like early Middle Kingdom nomarch and vizier Ahanakht I.[44]

imy-r t3-mḥw (overseer of Lower Egypt) and imy-r šmᶜ (overseer of Upper Egypt): these titles are attested, but it is not clear what specific tasks were entailed in these positions (and if it they really were functional titless even, or just honorary titles).[45] The title overseer of Upper Egypt is sparsely recovered in sources from the late Middle Kingdom, and the title overseer of Lower Egypt is found mostly in administrational records pertaining expeditions to the Sinai, in combination with the title overseer of the palace.[46] Quirke proposes the theory that, because of this, *'The title may have been intended to provide a palace official with authority for levies on the way through the area crossed during their commission to procure material from territories outside Egypt.'*[47] This could fit with the records of Sinai expeditions as well, since the expeditions would have been endeavours of the central administration but executed in the provinces, so on a regional scale. The title overseer of the palace is often linked to the overseer of Lower Egypt, but this could simply mean that the overseer was stationed at the palace in ity-t3wy. It would make sense that this title is not found with the overseer of Upper Egypt, since the palace was located in Lower Egypt.

Next to titles, a lot of 'spheres' of administration are mentioned in Middle Egyptian sources. It is still quite unclear what exactly they entail, but a short overview of them will be provided here.

The head of the South was an administrational sphere, apart from Upper and Lower Egypt, created during the Middle Kingdom. It entailed the towns in between the Egyptian border with Nubia (the first cataract) and Abydos.[48] The 'head of the South' seems to have had its own administration, which seems to have been linked in a way to the bureau of the Vizier (although the relation between the two is not entirely clear). '*In practice however, the vizier would be head of both, and the sector of the Head of the South would represent a special concern of the vizerial sphere.'*[49] On provincial administration Grajetzki notes that *'In the first to seventh Upper Egyptian nomes this type of local administration seems to have been eliminated by the Theban kings of the early Eleventh Dynasty and the whole region was perhaps ruled by the central government (although this is not certain), while only single towns had their governors*.'[50] He indicates that the Theban kings eliminated the local administration where a nomarch led a nome in the first seven nomes and placed it under control of the central government. This might have preceded the establishment of the Head of the South.

sp3t (nome): this sphere of administration seems to be clear cut, and to describe one of the nomes. However, during the late Middle Kingdom, the sign for sp3t sometimes turns up, followed by the determinative for niwt.[51] When that is the case, the following name of the 'sp3t' can be different

[43] G. P. F. van den Boorn, *The Duties of the Vizier: Civil Administration in the Early New Kingdom* (London, 1988), p. 209-210.
[44] H. Willems, *Dayr Al-Barsha Volume I: The Rock Tombs of Djehutinakht (NO. 17K74/3), Khnumnakht (NO. 17K74/2), and Iha (NO 17K74/3), With an Essay on the History and Nature of Nomarchal Rule in the Early Middle Kingdom* (Leuven, 2007), p. 104.
[45] Quirke (2004), p. 115.
[46] Idem, p. 115.
[47] Idem, p. 115.
[48] Quirke (2014), p. 116.
[49] Idem, p. 116.
[50] W. Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt: History, Archaeology and Society* (London, 2006), p. 80.
[51] M. Collier, S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Religious, Literary, Legal, Mathematical and Medical* (Oxford, 2004), p. 101, M. Collier, S. Quirke, (2006), p. 57, p. 79.

one than one of the known nomes.[52] So, sp3t was, at least in the late Middle Kingdom, not only used to describe a nome, but also a different sphere of administration. What exactly this sphere was, and what the relation was to the 'nome' sp3t, remains unclear. It might refer to the royal estate since Lahun was a workman's' town, but this is not certain.

w (district): during the late Middle Kingdom, the title imy-r w appears (overseer of the district). What 'w' entails is not clear; however, since imy-r w is used in relation with imy-r šntw (overseer of the policeman) and šntw (policeman),[53] the w might have been a juridical zone. However, w probably also had a different meaning; the aforementioned knbty n.w (district councillor) is never linked to juridical affairs, but to local administration. *'For the moment we are left with the impression that although the word is doubtlessly the same, it is used in two distinct ways: pertaining to a specific area of operation in imy-r w, to a limited rural area otherwise*'.[54]

niwt (town): the niwt was an urban centre, best translated as 'town'.

3ḫwt (fields): Egypt was an agricultural society. With 3ḫwt, fields, the farmable land was described. What farmland exactly is described and how it was organized, is unknown. Little is known about the judicial status of the 3ḫwt, but with the title being used by court officials during the late Middle Kingdom, this could imply that the fields were transferred to central authority during the course of the Middle Kingdom.[55] How and when this would have happened is unclear, if it even happened at all.

2.2 Hieratic texts and other textual sources

There are some hieratic texts on Middle Kingdom administration, but not many. The relevant texts will be discussed here. Unfortunately, almost all of the texts are dated to the late Middle Kingdom, making it impossible to compare them to early Middle Kingdom sources and pinpoint changes.[56] Only the Lahun papyri may contain some earlier documents, which will be touched upon below. While no hieratic documents on early Middle Kingdom administration seem to have survived, some other texts have, such as the autobiography of Ahanakht I at Deir el-Bersheh. These will also be discussed below. While Ahanakhts' tomb will also be discussed in chapter 3.7, I have chosen to include the autobiography in this chapter. This way all administrational texts are presented in one chapter to make it easier to compare them, and this also makes it possible to discuss the autobiography of Ahanakht and the autobiographies from Beni Hasan in the same place. It is important to note that these autobiographies were monumental hieroglyphic texts made for entirely different purposes than administrational texts (namely the remembrance and glorification of the tomb owner), and should be treated differently.

Autobiography of Ahanakht I and other nomarchs

Ahanakht I was a nomarch of the 15th nome of Upper Egypt, the Hare nome. His autobiography is an important source, since it is one of the only early Middle Kingdom sources that gives some insight in the role of the nomarch in provincial administration. It is important to keep in mind though, that the autobiography was commissioned by himself for his own grave, and is consequently not an objective source. No king's name has been recovered in his tomb; therefore he is usually dated in relation to one of his successors Nehri I, whose dating is a highly debated subject.[57] It is now mostly accepted

[52] Collier, Quirke (2004), p. 61. In the deed ir p3y.i prn ty m sp3t ḫwt (as for my house which is in the district of Hut) is mentioned. Lahun is situated in the 20th Upper Egyptian nome, nar.t, not ḫwt …. (part of the name is lost), as the district is called in the deed. So it is clear here that sp3t is not meant to represent the entire 20th nome, but perhaps a smaller part of it.

[53] Van den Boorn (1988), p. 42.

[54] Idem, p. 53.

[55] Quirke (2004), p. 91.

[56] S. Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom: The Hieratic Texts* (Kent, 1990), p. 124.

[57] Brovarski, E. 'Ahanakht of Bersheh and the Hare Nome in the First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom', in W.K. Simpson/W.M. Davis (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Egypt, the Aegean, and the Sudan. Essays in Honor of*

though that Nehri I lived at the end of the 11th and start of the 12th dynasty, which places Ahanakht I at the very start of the Middle Kingdom, in the years of reunification under Mentuhotep II. His autobiography does not elaborate on his role as an administrator much, but where it is discussed, it is done so in a fairly concrete manner. He was 'judge', 'superintendent of the town',[58] and 'one who established the boundary stones that are in the Hare nome', which might refer to Ahanakht demarcating the (fertile) land in the nome.[59] He was also the one 'to whom costly stone came down, the chief of Hatnub', which refers to his involvement in quarrying activities. He organised multiple campaigns to Hatnub (known through graffiti left in the quarries) and used the quarried stone to build 'great monuments' and a sanctuary in the temple of Thoth.[60] In the autobiography of his contemporary Djehutinakht, Ahanakht is also described as the one 'to whom valuables are brought from foreign lands', and he also carried the title imy-r smy.t imnt.t (overseer of the western desert), which implicates that he was in charge of the western desert trade.[61] Ahanakht was the imy-r ḥm.w nṯr (overseer of priests) and head priest in the local temple. He was involved in the daily rituals of the temple and, as said above, the expanding of the temple. He also bore a title that was quite unusual for nomarchs to use (although not in the Hare nome); ṯ3ty (vizier). There is a lot of debate on this title being honorary or functional,[62] so the focus here will be on concrete tasks that Ahanakht claims to have performed in the capacity of vizier. Ahanakht is said to be 'one who separated the nomes of the Two Lands, a measurer of what exist and what does not exist'.[63] This is a bold claim, and it is questionable to what extent Ahanakht actually carried out this task. He may have been responsible in name, or co-responsible. He was also 'one under whose direction Upper Egypt was content, Lower Egypt being under his command'. This indicates that Ahanakht actually had some control outside his own nome, but also sounds less like a concrete task, and more like a glorifying claim that one would expect in an Ancient Egyptian autobiography. He also emphasizes his close ties to the royal court, and calls himself 'advanced of position in the king's house'.[64]

While autobiographies are used to glorify the tomb owner, the administrational and religious tasks named in Ahanakhts' are very concrete, and it seems plausible these were tasks entrusted to a nomarch. It seems exceptional however that Ahanakht also held vizieral responsibilities, and it should be clear that this was not something nomarchs usually were responsible for outside the Hare nome (also, his actual role as vizier is still being debated). Ahanakht seemed to have had very close ties to the royal court during the reunification, which may explain why he and some of his descendants might have been entrusted with such a high office. So while his tasks outside the nome are unusual, the administrational and religious tasks mentioned in Ahanakhts' autobiography may be representable of the tasks entrusted to a nomarch during the early Middle Kingdom.

Dows Dunham on the Occasion of His 90th Birthday, June 1, 1980 (Boston, 1981) p. 14–30, Gestermann, L. 'Die Datierung der Nomarchen von Hermopolis aus dem frühen Mittleren Reich – eine Phantomdebatte?' in *ZÄS* 135 (2008), p. 1-16, Schenkel, W., *Frühmittelägyptische Studien* (Bonn, 1962), p. 84-95, Willems, H., 'The Nomarchs of the Hare Nome and Early Middle Kingdom History', in *JEOL*, vol. 28 (1985), p. 80-102, Willems, H., 'A Middle Kingdom Nomarchal Cemetery: Dayr al-Barshā', in *Historical and Archaeological Aspects of Egyptian Funerary Culture*, vol. 73 (2014), p. 81-87. The Hatnub graffiti that mention Nehri describe a period of social political unrest, famine, and attacks in the Hare nome. This led many scholars to initially believe that Nehri lived during the troubles of the FIP. However, epigraphic and philological research by Schenkel points to a dating during the reign of Amenemhat I; later, the same research method was used by Brovarski to warrant a FIP dating. Willems reanalysed the material and drew the conclusion that Nehri lived during the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th dynasty. This was reinforced by a study by Gestermann, who concluded that Ahanakht I lived during the reign of Mentuhotep II, and Nehri during the reign of Amenemhat I.

[58] P. E. Newberry and F. Ll. Griffith, *El Bersheh* (London, 1895), p. 32.

[59] Willems (2007), p. 88-89.

[60] Idem, p. 90.

[61] Idem, p. 91.

[62] For an in depth description of this debate, see Willems (2007), p. 100-102.

[63] Willems (2007), p. 102.

[64] Griffith (1895), p. 32.

Ahanakht was not the only nomarch to leave an autobiography, and some more information on provincial administration can be gathered from the autobiographies of four of the Middle Kingdom nomarchs of Beni Hasan: Khnumhotep I, Amenemhat, Netjernakht and Khnumhotep II. Concrete tasks described in their autobiographies will be discussed here. Khnumhotep I lived during the reign of Amenemnhat I, and was one who 'organized it [the town], making its great men into officers, its lesser men into servants, disciplining its younger men'.[65] This indicates that Khnumhotep had a big say in appointing men, and in the jurisdiction of his town. Amenemhat, one of his successors who lived during the reign of Senusret I, mentions an annual stock-taking, where he was brought 3000 bulls, which he then brought to the king.[66] Netjernakht, who succeeded Amenemhat, also describes how 'contributions [were] brought to him from his towns in the nome'.[67] This indicates that nomarchs gathered produce, of which they distributed at least a part to the palace. Khnumhotep II lived during the reigns of Amenemhat II and Senusret II. His autobiography is noteworthy and gives a lot of information on territorial organisation. He mentions how his grandfather Khnumhotep I established the landmarks of the town Menat-Chufu, and how he had divided the great river valley.[68] Later it is mentioned that Khnumhotep I had appointed 'the Eastern half [of the river valley]' to another nome, 'that he set right that which he found ruined and that which one town had taken from its sister town',[69] and that 'he set up landmarks: the southern one as his boundary to the Hare nome, his northern one to the Jackal nome'[70] which indicates that he was involved with the establishment of boundaries within and probably also right outside his nome, just like Ahanakht seemed to have been. However, Khnumhotep I never claimed the title of vizier like Ahanakht did, or claimed to be involved in the 'seperation of the nomes of the Two Lands'; this could mean that more nomarchs had some kind of power outside of their nome, and that the establishment of boundaries might have been a nomarchal task rather than a vizieral one (maybe with the vizier supervising). Interestingly, Khnumhotep II mentions how his son was named ḥq3 prince of the Jackal nome, and describes how his son established boundaries there in almost the same way he described Khnumhotep I establishing boundaries in the Oryx nome.[71] He never describes himself establishing boundaries though; maybe this was only done by the first nomarch of a new family. Apart from territorial organisations, Khnumhotep II also mentions appointing a k3-servant and gave him serfs and land,[72] which supports the idea that the nomarch had a big say in the appointment of functions.

Nome list of Senusret I at Karnak

As early as Senusret I, there are signs of territorial reorganization. They can be traced through the nome list at Karnak dated to his reign. There seems to be a small shift in focus, with more emphasis being put on the cities. For example, the town Bubastis is also mentioned on the nome list in Karnak without it being the capital of the nome.[73] This points to changes in provincial administration being made before the reign of Senusret III.

[65] P. E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan, Part I* (London, 1893), p. 8.
[66] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 26.
[67] Newberry, BH II (1893), p. 29.
[68] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 58.
[69] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 59.
[70] Idem, p. 59.
[71] Idem, p. 63.
[72] Idem, p. 61.
[73] E. Lange, 'The So-called Governors' Cemetery at Bubastis and Provincial Elite Tombs in the Nile Delta: State and Perspectives of Research', in G. Miniaci and W. Grajetzki (eds.), *The World of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000-1550 BC)*, Vol 1 (London 2015) p. 199.

P. Boulaq 18

The biggest remaining hieratic document on Middle Kingdom administration is P. Boulaq 18. The date of this document is not precisely known. There are also royal names that appear in the text, but the kings' name is heavily damaged. Most attribute the text to Sobekhotep II, but it is not completely certain that the text originates from his reign.[74] However, it is almost certain that the text can be dated to the late Middle Kingdom, after the reign of Senusret III. P. Boulaq 18 documents the daily amounts of income and expenses at the royal palace in Thebes for twelve days.

While not a lot of information is given on provincial administration, some titles or spheres linked to late Middle Kingdom local titles appear in the text; imy-r 3ḥwt (overseer of fields), srwt (officialdom) and ḳnbty (council). The ṯ3ty (vizier) is also mentioned, and it is clear that he stood above the other administrational officials,[75] however, the vizierate was on a similar level to the priesthood, the treasury, and the military. The imy-r 3ḥwt seemed to be an important official, often appearing in the text after the imy-r mša and the imy-r pr wr, and bearing the honorary title ḫtmty bity.[76] What exactly the function of this imy-r 3ḥwt was is unclear. It is also unclear what the relation with a local imy-r 3ḥwt would have been, or if there even were local imy-r 3ḥwt anymore during the 13th dynasty. Through studying P. Boulaq 18, it becomes clear that there was a very high level of administration and organization during the late Middle Kingdom, but not much else. Based on this text alone, it is not possible to say that Senusret III was responsible for far-reaching changes in provincial administration.

Lahun

Another big source of Middle Kingdom hieratic texts is Lahun. This town lies adjacent to the pyramid complex of Senusret II, and to the temple regarding his funerary cult. Lahun was a workmans' town, meaning that it was founded to house the workers who built the pyramid complex of Senusret II, and to house those who would maintain his funerary cult. The town remained inhabited after having served this purpose. Being founded during the reign of Senusret II and remaining inhabited after, makes this town a perfect source for the time period of interest; right before, during, and after the reign of Senusret III. However, there is also a problematic aspect; since the town was founded by and for Senusret II, it has no historical ties to a nome or nomarch. Changes implemented to curtail the power of a nomarch will not be discovered in this town, since it was never ruled by a nomarch to begin with. However, it might still be possible to learn more about local administration through the texts discovered on an even smaller level than the nome; namely, the town. It is important to keep in mind though, that the way local administration was organised in Lahun might not necessarily be the way it was organised everywhere. Since it was tied so close to central government, it would have been easy for Lahun to be organised exactly the way that the central government wanted it to be organised. The Lahun texts include letters, vestiges of official archives, texts concerning the temple, mathematical texts, worklists and accounts concerning the town. Since there is so little source material remaining, it is not possible to be picky with sources. The following four texts give additional information on the titles and administrative spheres discussed in chapter 2.1 that are so distinctive for the late Middle Kingdom, and are therefore discussed below.

In UC 32157 the overseer of the district is mentioned (imy-r w). This text most likely dates from the reign of Senusret III (since it is written on the back of the hymns to Senusret III), and thus shows that the function of imy-r w existed during his reign.[77] In UC 32055 the overseer of fields (imy-r 3ḥwt) is deputising for the member of the officialdom (nty m srwt) here, and it seems that he functioned like a judge, checking if both parties petitioning were satisfied, and later bearing witness to the agreement. Thus it is possible to deduce that this would be a task that would normally be

[74] Quirke (1990), p. 13.
[75] Idem, p. 58.
[76] Idem, p. 62.
[77] Collier, Quirke (2004), p. 47.

executed by a member of the officialdom, and also that the overseer of fields was fit to sometimes deputise for a member of the officialdom. The mayor (ḥ3ty-ᶜ) is also mentioned, and he is also a witness of the agreement. This is quite interesting, since the members of the officialdom are linked to central government and the mayor is linked to local government, and having both parties be present for legally binding deeds could be pointing to a sort of control mechanism being in place between local and central government. It is unclear if the imy-r 3ḥwt described in this text is a local or a national official. Unfortunately, the regnal year is missing, so the text cannot be dated.[78] UC 32163 records the members of the household of a soldier. It was drawn up in the bureau of fields in the northern sector, in the presence of the chief of tens and estate overseer, and 'sworn' in the bureau of the vizier. The throne name of a king is mentioned, namely sḥm-k3-rᶜ. This means that the text can be dated to the 13th dynasty. This implies several things; during the early 13th dynasty, there were multiple sectors, perhaps with their own bureau. Legal documents could be drawn up in the bureau of fields, and since the head of fields was not mentioned here, it was not necessary that he was present. The chief of tens of Upper Egypt was present, however it is not mentioned in what kind of capacity. Also, the document was later sworn in in the bureau of the vizier; showing that a locally drawn up document was checked by the central government, namely the bureau of the vizier.[79] In UC 32167, the title imy-r niwt, overseer of the town, appears in this text.[80] From a modern perspective, the overseer of a town would probably be seen as being the mayor (Ward even translates imy-r niwt as mayor).[81] However, there were apparently differences between the ḥ3ty-ᶜ and the imy-r niwt, otherwise there would not be two different titles. This shows how little knowledge there actually currently still is on the precise meaning of Middle Kingdom titles.

While the Lahun papyri give useful information on Middle Kingdom titles, they do not give any indication of changes happening in provincial administration during the reign of Senusret III.

Duties of the Vizier

"The duties of the vizier" is the name of a text found in the tomb of Rekhmira. Three other copies of the text have been discovered, all in tombs of New Kingdom viziers, but the one in Rekhmira's tomb is the most complete.[82] Rekhmira lived and had his tomb constructed during the New Kingdom, but the dating of the text is still up for debate, with some believing that it was copied from an original that might have been dated to the end of the 13th dynasty (mostly based on the titles appearing in the text).[83] Others argue for an early NK date,[84] while some believe *The Duties* to be a mix of Middle and New Kingdom elements.[85] In any case, the text gives an interesting view on local administration after the reign of Senusret III, so it is worth looking into; it is important though to keep in mind that the date for the text is still up for debate. The text is about the vizier, and gives a description of his tasks and his responsibilities. Since the vizier was the highest official in administration, second only to the king, it seems safe to equate 'vizier' with 'central government'. It is highly likely that the text gives an idealized view of the vizier, so it is important to not read the text too literally. Even though the focus of the text is on the vizier, a lot of local officials appear in the text, sometimes with more information about them and their connections with each other and the vizier. In line 4, 'the overseer of the district' (imy-r w) is mentioned, and it is said that he reported to the vizier.[86] In line 11, it is

[78] Idem, p. 103.
[79] Idem, p 111.
[80] Idem, p. 119.
[81] 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. 31.
[82] Van den Boorn (1988), p. 11.
[83] Helck (1958), p. 212-218, E. Pardey, "Die Datierung der 'Dienstanweisung für den Wesir' und die Problematik von Tp rsj im Neuen Reich", in N. Kloth, K. Martin, E. Pardey (eds.), *Es Werde Niedergelegt als Schriftstück. Festschrift für Hartwig Altenmüller zum 65. Geburtstag* (BSAK 9; Hamburg, 2003), 323–334.
[84] Van den Boorn (1988), p. 355.
[85] J.M. Kruchten, BiOr 48 (1991), 827–829.
[86] Quirke (2004), p. 19.

said that the viziers' messenger gives instructions to the ḥ3ty-ᶜ and ḥq3w-ḥwwt (officials appointed by the central government who seemed to control central government resources in the nomes),[87] and can summon them.[88] The imy-r 3ḥwt is mentioned in line 18, and it is said that the vizier consulted him about petitions concerning fields.[89] In line 19, it is mentioned that the vizier fetches the knbty n.w (district councilors), that he sends them out, and that they report the state of their district.[90] In line 21, it is said that the vizier appoints the nty m srwt (members of the officialdom), and that they report back to him every four months about the matters accomplished under their charge.[91] In line 25, it is mentioned that the vizier dispatches the district councilors to take care of the waterways,[92] and the mayors and settlement leaders to take care of harvest.[93] It is said that the district records had to be in the office of the vizier, in case there were hearings on fields (3ḥwt),[94] and that the vizier should be informed of the income of the ḥ3ty-ᶜ, and all the conflicts that the imy-r w were involved in.[95]

So from the duties, it seems like the vizier had control over almost all matters of local administration and local officials, but when looking more closely it becomes apparent that his role was more 'checking' the other officials.[96] There is no sign of nomarchs, or the title ḥry-tp ᶜ3, in this text. The officials that might have been comparable the most to a nomarch, seem to be the ḳnbty n.w (district councilors). This title is problematic though, since there is no information on what exactly the 'district' entailed, and if their day to day activities were comparable to those of the nomarchs in any way. From the Duties, it seems that they were at most controlled by, and at the very least, checked by the vizier. The text seems to indicate that at the time of the writing of the Duties of the Vizier there were no more powerful nomarchs, but nomarchs could bear other titles than ḥry-tp ᶜ3 (like ḥ3ty-ᶜ). It is not possible to say if, how and when the nomarchs disappeared from the text, much less to link this disappearance to the reign of Senusret III. So, based on the duties of the Vizier, it is not possible to link the disappearance of the nomarchs to the reign of Senusret III.

2.3 Conclusion

There is some textual evidence that suggest changes in provincial administration took place during the Middle Kingdom. The most important one (pertaining the nomarchs) is the disappearance of the title ḥry-tp ᶜ3, which was last attested during the reign of Senusret III but started to disappear after the reign of Senusret I (see chapter 3). Another important one is the establishment of the 'Head of the South'. This implies that the power of the nomarchs of the first seven nomes was already being curtailed as early as the 11th dynasty, implying that Senusret III was not solely responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs. Some new titles appear, but when and why this happened is not clear. From titles and administrative texts alone, it is not possible to say that these changes took place during the reign of Senusret III and were measures to curtail the power of nomarchs. There is a dire lack of source material, especially administrative texts from the early Middle Kingdom. From the late Middle Kingdom, there are at least the Lahun papyri and P. Boulaq 18 (and maybe the Duties of the Vizier) that show some officials in an administrative context, proving that certain titles were actually functionary and not just honorary. Because there is no body of work to compare it to, it is really difficult to say what exactly changed and when. So, concluding, there is no evidence based on textual sources to say Senusret III was solely responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs, and

[87] Jiménez-Serrano, Morales (2021), p. 8.
[88] Van den Boorn (1988), p. 89.
[89] Idem, p. 147.
[90] Quirke (2004), p. 20.
[91] Van den Boorn (1988)¸p. 208.
[92] Idem, p. 234.
[93] Idem, p. 234.
[94] Quirke (2004), p. 22.
[95] Van den Boorn (1988) p. 287.
[96] Quirke (2004) p. 18.

some evidence (like the establishment of the Head of the South) points to the power of the nomarchs being curtailed long before his reign.

Chapter 3 : The Nomarchal Cemeteries

Even in this day and age, remnants of the power of the elite of the Egyptian Middle Kingdom can be seen through the structures they commissioned to be built, that still stand to this day. These structures do not only remind the world of the power the monarchs held, but also contain valuable information. It may seem strange to examine material culture in a studies of administration, but in Ancient Egypt material culture and society were deeply intertwined with each other. Also, the theory that changes in provincial administration were implemented during the reign of Senusret III was initially based on the sudden absence of nomarchs graves that could be dated to his reign and onwards, so it is unavoidable to examine this claim.

The most important structure for a nomarch was his grave. This would usually have been something he commissioned at an early age, to be built and elaborated upon throughout his lifetime. These are the structures that have been recovered and excavated, and, as said above, have been used to support the theory that Senusret III implemented changes in provincial administration during his reign. It will be examined in this chapter if there really was such a sudden disappearance of graves, and if this sudden disappearance necessarily points to changes in provincial administration implemented by Senusret III. Eight Middle Kingdom necropolises can be examined for this research, and they are discussed below.

3.1 Tell Basta (13th nome of Lower Egypt)

There is a big problem with researching the graves of the nomarchs, and that is the lack of representation, especially from Lower Egypt. There is a substantial lack of knowledge on the Lower Egyptian nomes, so that is why only one Lower Egyptian nome can be examined. Unfortunately, not a lot of sites have been excavated, and even less have been (fully) published. As such, this cemetery is very important.

Tell Basta is the site of the ancient Egyptian town Bubastis. In Bubastis, next to the palace, a Middle Kingdom cemetery including nomarchs' graves was discovered and excavated in 1961 by Shafik Farid. It is very unusual for a cemetery to be next to a palace, and the sheer size of the palace (the uncovered part is over one hectare) shows how powerful the local administrators at Bubastis must have been.[97]

It is difficult to pinpoint the sequence of nomarchs at Bubastis, since there are no kings' names mentioned in relation to the nomarchs (for as far as the published material shows), and no study is done yet on the architecture of the tombs, so there has been no attempt to make a chronology based on stylistic elements. The only nomarch that can be dated with (little) confidence is Kakhaure-Seneb, whose name suggests that he lived during the reign of Senusret III.[98] Also, the nomarch Ma'atiu bore the title rḫ nswt, acquaintance of the king, which has not been seen in combination with ḥ3ty-ᶜ from the reign of Amenemhat II onwards. Thus, it can be deduced that the tomb of Ma'atiu dates to an earlier period of the Middle Kingdom.[99] None of the governors of Bubastis bore the title ḥry tp ᶜ3 n sp3t, instead carrying the titles ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr. Kakhaure-Seneb is the only one who also bore the important ranking title 'r-pᶜ'. On his statue, the Heliopolitan gods are invoked before the ones of Bubastis, maybe indicating that Kakhaure-Seneb did not originate from Bubastis.[100] It is very difficult to say if the governors graves disappeared during or after the reign of Senusret III, since the governors cannot undisputedly be linked to kings, and not all graves have been linked to a governor (for example, Kakhaure-Seneb is only known through his recovered statue, and not through a tomb). It is interesting though that the nomarch with the most important title might have lived during the reign of Senusret III, and may not have been from Bubastis. That may imply that Senusret consciously replaced the local nomarchs with a new one, with

[97] Willems (2013) p. 358.
[98] Lange (2015), p. 195.
[99] Idem, p. 199.
[100] Idem, p. 195.

more links to him than to Bubastis, maybe as to undermine the power of the local elite and gain more control. However, this is all based on very little evidence (the name of Kakhaure-Seneb and the fact that the Heliopolitan gods are mentioned before the gods of Bubastis on a statue of his). There is no evidence to support the theory that Senusret III actively tried to curtail the power of the nomarchs, but there is also no evidence to refute it at Bubastis.

3.2 Qubbet el Hawa (1st nome of Upper Egypt)

Qubbet el Hawa is the cemetery where the nobles of the first Upper Egyptian nome were buried. The Middle Kingdom cemetery is currently being excavated by a Spanish mission, and is very interesting for this research, since evidence points to graves still being constructed during and after the reign of Senusret III. Also, the family of nomarchs can be traced well into the 13th dynasty (fig. 1)[101] through the Heqaib sanctuary. The Heqaib sanctuary was a sanctuary in Elephantine dedicated to 6th dynasty nomarch Heqaib, who was a saint like figure.[102] Not only nomarchs, but even kings left stelas and statues in his sanctuary throughout the course of the Middle Kingdom.[103] No evidence of an earlier First Intermediate Period or Middle Kingdom ruling family has been found, and it has been theorized that the first 7 nomes of Upper Egypt were under direct rule of the central government after the First Intermediate Period (see chapter 2.1).[104]

Sarenput I (QH36) was the first nomarch that ruled Elephantine during the Middle Kingdom. A 133 meter long causeway leads from the riverbank to his tomb, to an open court with a roof supported by six pillars. The first chamber contains four pillars and a corridor, leading to a second chamber with a niche. The tomb was extensively painted and decorated, and outside the tomb there were decorations in sunken relief. The name of Senusret I has been recovered from his tomb, so it can be deduced that he ruled during his reign. Sarenput I's biography also mentions how he has 'been made great in the land by his majesty', implying that he got his position thanks to the king. He also seemed to have been the king's representative in Nubia, and played an important role in importing products from Nubia.[105] He held the titles ḥ3ty-ᶜ, r-pᶜ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḥry tp ᶜ3.[106]

Heqaib I was Sarenput I's son, and was nomarch after his father. His tomb has not been discovered, but he is mentioned in his father's tomb. His titles were ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr. An inscription in his father's tomb describes how Heqaib was '*one who establishes his house whom the king has installed as ruler at the place of his father and has acted as ḥ3ty-ᶜ'.*[107] It seems clear that this ruling family was supported by the king. It is unlikely Heqaib I ruled for long (since his successor ruled during the reign of Senusret I, and his father before him ruled well into the reign of Senusret I).

Ameny followed Heqaib I as nomarch, but was unrelated to his predecessors. His grave remains undiscovered, but he was mentioned in graffiti found near Elephantine. The graffiti dates him to the 43rd year of Senusret I, and mentions his titles, ḥ3ty-ᶜ and r-pᶜ.[108] These titles were carried by all nomarchs in Elephantine; therefore, it seems likely that Ameny was a nomarch. An Ameny is also named in the annals of Amenemhat II found in Memphis, and he was honored with a wooden statue that was to be placed in the funerary complex of Amenemhat II (who would have started his coregency with his father in year 43 of Senusret).[109] If this is indeed the same Ameny, it is clear that he was very close to the central government. He was likely sent as a court official, just like his

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[101] A. Jiménez-Serrano, J. C. Sánchez-León, *Le Premier Nome du sud de l'Égypte au Moyen Empire* (2019), p.vi.
[102] D. Raue, 'The Heqaib Sanctuary' in W. Wendrich (ed.) *the UCLA Encyclopaedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles, 2014), p. 1.
[103] Idem, p. 5-6.
[104] W. Grajetzki (2006), p. 80.
[105] W. K. Simpson, 'Sarenput I', in W. Helck and E. Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie,* V (Wiesbaden, 1984), p. 428–9.
[106] A. Jiménez-Serrano, J. C. Sánchez-León, 'A Forgotten Governor of Elephantine During the Twelfth Dynasty: Ameny', in *JEA,* Vol. 101 (2015), p. 117.
[107] Idem, p. 119.
[108] Idem, p. 122.
[109] Idem, p. 126.

successor Ipi, to serve until Khema (Sarenput I's nephew) was of age.[110] Khema's grave remains undiscovered, but he is known through the Heqaib sanctuary. He also carried the titles ḥ3ty-ᶜ and r-pᶜ.

Sarenput II (QH31) was the son of Khema, and great-grandson of Sarenput I through the female line. He lived during the reigns of Amenemhat II, Senusret II and possibly Senusret III.[111] His tomb is one of the most monumental ones at Qubbet el-Hawa, mostly because of its impressive size and architecture. It consists of a courtyard cut directly into the cliff, a first chamber with six pillars, a corridor with three niches containing statues, and a second chamber with four pillars and another niche. His tomb was sparsely decorated.[112] His titles were r-pᶜ, ḥ3ty-ᶜ, and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[113]

Sarenput II was followed by his son Ankhou, whose tomb has not been discovered. The only representations recovered of him are from Sarenput II's tomb, and his title was ḥ3ty-ᶜ.[114] It is likely Ankhou did not live long, and his death may have resulted in a power vacuum eventually filled by Heqaib II (QH30).[115] Their relation to each other is not clear. He was followed by Heqaib-Ankh (QH33), who was followed by Heqaib III (QH33, C23). After, Ameny-Seneb (QH33) ruled as nomarch. Interestingly, these nomarchs were all buried in the same tomb; QH33. Tomb QH33 was constructed during the late 12th dynasty, during the reign of either Senusret III or Amenemhat III, and was the resting place of three nomarchs: Heqaib-Ankh, Heqaib III and Ameny-Seneb, who ruled during the reign of Amenemhat III. It is the largest tomb of Qubbet el-Hawa, and was constructed for either Heqaib-Ankh or Ameny-Seneb. Heqaib III's relatively simple burial was found in a secondary area (C23), and it consisted of two burial chambers and a shaft.[116] The tomb is very big and encompasses many secondary areas, and many burials from later periods. They, like all nomarchs at Elephantine during the 12th dynasty, carried the titles ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[117]

Ameny-Seneb was followed by Khakaure-Seneb, and later Ankhou II, who ruled during the 13th dynasty. Although their tombs have not been discovered (they may have been buried at the royal necropolis), they left increasingly large *k3* chapels in the Heqaib sanctuary, which shows that their economic means probably did not decrease much.[118] Their titles were ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[119]

The evidence shows that the family of nomarchs, which started with Sarenput I, still ruled *and* constructed tombs during the reign of Senusret III and very possibly Amenemhat III, as tomb QH33 was likely constructed during his reign. Afterwards, tombs may have disappeared, but nomarchs are still attested well into the 13th dynasty. Khakaure-Seneb and Ankhou II may not have had monumental tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa, but they were still nomarchs and had the means to construct increasingly big *k3* chapels. This implies that nomarchs may not have disappeared after Senusret III, but more so that the funerary culture changed during the latter part of the 12th dynasty. However, the situation in the first Upper Egyptian nome seemed to have been quite unique in several ways. The nomarchs were closely connected to the central government, which they emphasize in several inscriptions. Also, Sarenput I was put into power by the king in a nome where

[110] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2019), p. 79.
[111] Idem, p. 42.
[112] Simpson (1984), p. 429.
[113] J. M. Alba Gómez, `The Funerary Chambers of Sarenput II and the Destruction of his Outer Coffin' in A. Jiménez-Serrano, A. J. Morales (eds.) *Middle Kingdom Palace Culture and its Echoes in the Provinces* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 16.
[114] A. Jiménez-Serrano, J. C. Sánchez-León, "'Co-Regencies'' in the First Upper Egyptian Nome during the Twelfth Dynasty' in A. Jiménez-Serrano, A. J. Morales (eds.) *Middle Kingdom Palace Culture and its Echoes in the Provinces* (Leiden; Boston, 2021), p. 244.
[115] Idem, p. 244.
[116] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2019), p. 76.
[117] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2021), p. 243.
[118] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2019), p. 76.
[119] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2021), p. 243.

there was no recent pre-existing powerbase for the nomarchs, making him more dependent on royal support. Unrelated court officials Ameny and Ipi held the office until Khema was old enough to succeed, which shows how much the palace was involved with the nomarchs of Elephantine. Also, Elephantine is the nome that lies on the border with Nubia, which may have increased the need for a nomarch more than in other places. So, while Qubbet el-Hawa does not support the theory that Senusret III was responsible for the disappearance of the graves of the nomarchs, it also does not really refute it, since the situation in the First Upper Egyptian is not exactly comparable to the other nomes.

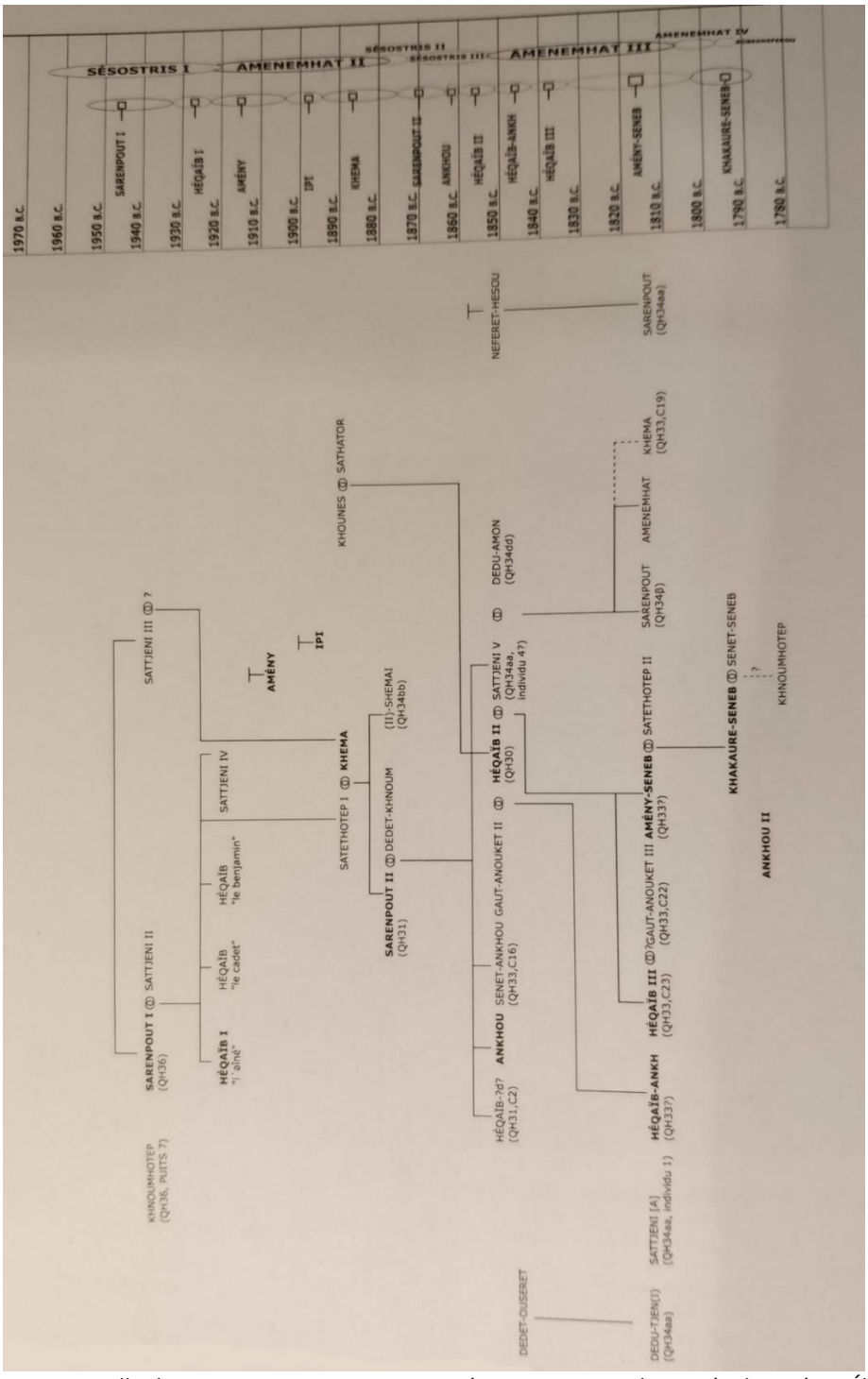

Fig. 1. Famille de Sarenpout I. Auteurs: A. Jiménez-Serrano and J. C. Sánchez-Léon. Élaboration: D. López Muñoz.[120]

[120] Jiménez-Serrano, Sánchez-León (2019), p. 42.

3.3 Qaw el Kebir (10th nome of Upper Egypt)

Four graves of nomarchs have been discovered at Qaw el-Kebir, and three of them are monumental, even resembling royal funerary monuments. Unfortunately, the graves had already been looted before their discovery and were badly preserved. Also, no kings' names have been discovered, making the sequence and dating of the local rulers difficult. Consequently, the dating of the tombs is based on stylistic elements only. Wahka I and Ibu might have been contemporaries of Amenemhat II and Senusret II, and Wahka II of Senusret III[121] or Amenemhat III,[122] but that will be discussed more in-depth below. It is unclear during the reign of which king Sobekhotep, who had the least impressive grave, lived. There is a tendency to place him in the 13th dynasty because the name Sobekhotep was very common then, but it was also common during the 12th dynasty, so there is no definitive answer.[123]

The funerary complex of Wahka I consisted of a portal with a pillared portico, a roofed causeway with relief paintings, a court with six columns, a lower and upper terrace, a large transverse hall, a smaller transverse hall, and two side chambers which descended to the two funerary chambers beneath.[124] On a fragment from a statue found in the tomb, two titles are legible; r-pᶜ, and ḥ3ty-ᶜ,[125] another title found in the tomb is imy-r ḥm.w nṯr. The combination of ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr was often used by nomarchs, and judging by the funerary complex alone, it becomes clear that Wahka I must have been a very powerful and wealthy individual, at a much higher level then only being the 'mayor' of one town, even if there is not a lot of textual evidence left. Based on the style of the funerary complex, which has a lot of Old Kingdom style elements, Wahka I is placed at the beginning of the sequence of nomarchs.[126]

The funerary complex of Ibu is very much like the one of Wahka I, but shows a new development; a massive brick pylon at the upper end of the causeway. The interior is also slightly different, with there only being one burial chamber.[127] Because of the new development and the proximity of the two graves, Ibu is placed directly after Wahka I in the sequence of nomarchs. The same titles that were found in Wahka I's complex have been found in Ibu's.

The funerary complex of Wahka II is set up on an even larger scale; the causeway is five times longer than the earlier ones, in two stretches, with a columned court in between.[128] The causeway leads immediately to the brick pylon. The inside of the complex is set up like Wahka I's funerary complex, but larger. The wall paintings found are typical for tombs constructed during the reigns of Senusret III and Amenemhat III.[129] Wahka II bore the same titles as his predecessors, ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr. Interestingly, Steckeweh dates the tomb of Wahka II to the reign of Amenemhat III, based on a stela that carries both the name of Amenemhat III and Wahka.[130] However, Grajetzki argues that the Wahka mentioned on the stelae is evidently a third Wahka, a successor, as this Wahka was the

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[121] W. Grajetzki, 'Qau el-Kebir' in in W. Wendrich (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles, 2018) <https://uee.cdh.ucla.edu/articles/late_middle_kingdom> viewed 23-9-2020, p. 6.

[122] A. Badaway, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1966), p. 151.

[123] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/qau/bigtombs/sobekhotep.html, University College Londen, 2001 (viewed 21-9-2020). It is uncommon to use a website as a reliable source, however, this website has been developed for the Petrie museum and both Stephen Quirke and Wolfgram Grajetzki, two of the most prominent Egyptologists working on Middle Kingdom administration, have contributed to it. Therefore, I deem it a credible source, however unscientifically looking it may be.

[124] Badaway (1966), p. 152-153.

[125] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/qau/archive/uc14498.jpg (viewed 21-9-2020).

[126] Badaway (1966), p. 152-153.

[127] Idem, p. 153.

[128] Idem, p. 155.

[129] Grajetzki (2018), p. 5.

[130] H. Steckeweh, *Die Fürstengräber von Qaw: Veröffentlichungen der Ernst von Sieglin-Expedition 6* (Leipzig 1936), p. 7.

son of a Nakht, and Whakha II the son of Sobekdedu.[131] So, the stela does not prove that Wahka II lived during the reign of Amenemhat III; it proves a *different* Wahka lived during his reign. This does not necessarily disprove the theory that Wahka II lived during the reign of Amenemhat III, since Amenemhat III had a very long reign of at least 46 years. However, based on stylistic elements of the tomb, Wahka II is usually seen as a contemporary of Senusret III.

The tomb of Sobekhotep is the smallest of the four. There is no causeway, and there are no columned halls. The chronological position of Sobekhotep is uncertain. If he lived during the 13th dynasty, as has been theorized, his grave would have been the last of the nomarchs graves. However, the evidence to date him to the 13th dynasty is flimsy, and hypothetical at best.

The funerary complexes at Qaw el Kebir are very interesting; one of the biggest, most monumental tombs of the local elite was found here (Wahka II's), and it was likely built during the reign of Senusret III. While the tomb could have been built during the early reign of Senusret III, it is also a possibility that it was built later in his reign. Also, it is still possible that Sobekhoteps' tomb was built afterwards, although that is very uncertain. After the disappearance of the tombs, the nomarchs were still attested through seals and stelas.[132] Based on Qaw el-Kebir, there is not enough evidence to hold Senusret III responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs, mostly because the biggest tomb was built during his reign, and there is the possibility that Sobekhoteps' tomb was constructed after his reign. And, while the big graves may have disappeared, evidence of nomarchs was still found through stelas and seals, even after the reign of Senusret III.

3.4 Deir el Rifeh (11th nome of Upper Egypt)

The tombs of the elite of the 11th Egyptian Upper nome were cut in the cliffs at Deir el Rifeh, near the ancient town Sashotep, and were excavated by Petrie in 1907. Petrie dates the tombs to the 12th dynasty based on the style of the pottery found, however, it is not clear to which kings the tombs can be linked.[133] A lot of tombs were reused or expanded during the New Kingdom, or served as a quarry.[134] There is no recent research published on the tombs at Rifeh, except for the 'tomb of the two brothers', whose tomb was the only one that was found similar to its original state (the original tomb was expanded during the reign of Ramses III, but was left mostly intact),[135] and not thoroughly robbed. These two brothers were no nomarchs though, so their tomb is not relevant for this research.

Two tombs can still be identified as belonging to a nomarch; tomb 1 (the tomb of Khnumnefer) and tomb 7 (the tomb of Nakhtankh).[136] Khnumnefer's tomb has been greatly damaged by quarrying, but a big part of the inscriptions of the north and west wall have survived, which show Khnumnefer's impressive string of titles; r-pˁ, ḫ3ty-ˁ, ḥry tp ˁ3 n stḏ, and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[137]

Because of the state of the tombs and the lack of recent research at Deir el Rifeh, no definitive statements can be made on the disappearance of the nomarchs. It is unclear to whose reigns the tombs belonged, and not a lot of information can be deduced about the governors of the 11th nome. There is no evidence to support the theory that Senusret III actively tried to curtail the power of the nomarchs, but there is also no evidence to refute it.

3.5 Asyut (13th nome of Upper Egypt)

The archaeological history of Asyut is far from ideal. Proper documentation of tombs and earlier excavations is lacking, and a lot of information remains unpublished. Also, earlier excavations were not executed properly, and left the site even more damaged (early 20th century 'archaeologists' even

[131] Grajetzki (2018), p. 6.
[132] Idem, p. 7.
[133] W. F. Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh* (London, 1907), p. 11.
[134] Badaway (1966), p. 148.
[135] R. David, *The Two Brothers: Death and the Afterlife in Middle Kingdom Egyot* (Bolton, 2007), p. 22.
[136] S. Darlow, *A Chronological Investigation of the Middle Kingdom Tombs at Meir* (2017), p. 29.
[137] F. Ll. Grifftith, *Siut and Der Rifeh* (Londen, 1889), plate 16.

burned coffins they deemed uninteresting).[138] Recently, a German-Egyptian mission has been working in Asyut, so the site is being researched and documented in a more scientific way. Not all tombs are available for research though, because of a military base being in the vicinity. Thus, some recent information on Asyut is available, but for the unavailable tombs more dated publications will be used.

There are three families of nomarchs that can be distinguished in Asyut; one starting with Khety I in the 10th dynasty and ending with the Theban victory over the Heracleopolitan kings, a second lesser known family that came into power afterwards, of which aAnu (who was still in power at the beginning of the twelfth dynasty) was the last governor,[139] and a third, which started with Djefaihapi II at the beginning of the twelfth dynasty and ended with Djefaihaipi IV. The focus will be on the last family of nomarchs, since they lived and ruled during the 12th dynasty.

Djefaihapi II is the owner of Siut Tomb II (O13.1), and is placed first in the chronological order because of the location (layer 6, with the 11th dynasty graves) and interior of his tomb (simple, with two pillars supporting the roof, following the first intermediate period and early Middle Kingdom ground plan).[140] He held the titles ḥry tp ꜥ3 n 3tf, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr, r-pꜥ and ḫ3ty-ꜥ. Interestingly, in the second family of nomarchs, nobody used the title ḥry tp ꜥ3; Djefaihaipi II was the first to use it again since Khety II, who ruled during the tenth dynasty. While his tomb does not seem to be especially distinctive, Djefaihaipi II's impressive string of titles, and especially the appearance of the title ḥry tp ꜥ3, sets him apart from his less significant predecessors. No kings' name was found in his tomb, but since his possible successor is linked to Senusret I, it is likely that Djefaihaipi I was in power during the reign of either Amenemhat I or Senusret I.

Djefaihaipi I succeeded Djefaihaipi II (although their relation is uncertain). The tomb of Djefaihaipi I (P10.1) is one of the largest non-royal rock-cut tomb in Egypt, with 55 metres still remaining, and being as high as 11 metres. The design was more intricate than that of his predecessor, and adopts the model of the Old Kingdom royal funerary complex.[141] Djefaihaipi I ruled during the reign of Senusret I,[142] and carried the same titles as his predecessor; ḥry tp ꜥ3 n 3tf, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr, r-pꜥ and ḫ3ty-ꜥ. Interestingly, in his tomb inscriptions a lector priest is mentioned who 'gives [to Djefaihaipi I] from the kings' house'.[143] This indicates that Djefaihaipi I had some royal connections, and was supported by the king. The size and intricate design of Djefaihaipi II's tomb and his long title string indicate that he was a very powerful individual and nomarch.

Djefaihaipi III (tomb VII) might have been a descendant and successor of Djefaihaipi I. His tomb was also set up on a big scale, following the example of Djefaihaipi I, although the outer court was not finished completely.[144] He bore the titles r-pꜥ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḫ3ty-ꜥ. The title ḥry tp ꜥ3 seems to be out of use; however, most of the inscriptions were damaged greatly, and not much could be read from them.[145] Moss dates the tomb to Amenemhat II, based on the inscriptions found in the tomb.[146] The tomb is now inaccessible because it is within the perimeter of a military base, so it is not possible to rely on more recent sources. It seems like Djefaihaipi III was still a powerful nomarch; his grave was big and intricate, just like that of his predecessor, and he still had a significant string of titles.

Djefaihaipi IV's grave was situated on the court of Djefaihaipi III's grave, and is also inaccessible. He too carried the titles imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḫ3ty-ꜥ, but not ḥry tp ꜥ3. Djefaihaipi IV

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[138] J. Kahl, 'The Asytut Project: fieldwork season 2004', in *SAK,* 33 (2005), p. 159.

[139] M. El-Khadragy, 'The Nomarchs of Asyut during the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom', in U. Verhoeven, A. Kilian, and J. Kahl (eds.), *Seven Seasons at Asyut. First Results of the Egyptian-German Cooperation in Archaeological Fieldwork* (Wiesbaden, 2012), p. 9.

[140] Idem, p. 7.

[141] Idem, p. 8.

[142] Griffith (1889), 210-16.

[143] M. El-Khadragy, 'The Shrine of the Rock-cut Chapel of Djefaihapi I at Asyut', in *GM,* 212 (2007), p. 47.

[144] R. Moss, 'An Unpublished Rock-Tomb at Asyût', in *JEA,* 19 (1933), p. 33.

[145] Idem.

[146] Idem.

seems to have been the last Middle Kingdom nomarch buried at Asyut.[147] No kings' name seems to have been found in Djefaihaipi IV's tomb. Since he succeeded Djefaihaipi III, who has been dated to the reign of Amenemhat II, it is likely that Djefaihaipi IV lived during the reign of either Amenemhat II or his successor Senusret II.[148]

There are some noteworthy things about the nomarchs of Asyut. The first, is that it seems that around the beginning of the twelfth dynasty a new family of nomarchs came into power. The same happened at Beni Hasan and Meir (see below), and it might point to the first twelfth dynasty king Amenemhat actively trying to replace the old, established nomarchal families with new ones, maybe so they would be more loyal. Djefaihaipi I's tomb mentioned him receiving 'from the kings house', which shows that this family of nomarchs received support from the king. The second is the use of the title ḥry tp ꜥ3; it was used during the tenth dynasty, disappeared, was revived at the beginning of the twelfth dynasty, only to quickly disappear again after the reign of Senusret I. As far as is known to me, this is the only place where the title disappeared during the 11th dynasty, only to appear again in the 12th. It is not clear why this happened. Perhaps the new family in power used the title to help legitimate their rule over the nome. It disappearing again points to something changing in local administration. However, these changes may not necessarily have impeded the power of the nomarchs too much, since Djefaihaipi III was still wealthy enough to build an elaborate burial while not carrying the title. Thirdly, the tombs of the nomarchs' seem to have disappeared around the reign of Senusret II or Senusret III. It is unclear when though, since the dating of the tomb of Djefaihaipi IV is uncertain. There is a possibility that Djefaihaipi III and Djefaihaipi IV both were nomarch during the (long) reign of Amenemhat II; and if this was the case, the nomarchs of Asyut disappeared before the reign of Senusret III. Since the dating of the tomb of Djefaihaipi IV is unclear, it is impossible to say when exactly the nomarchs of Asyut disappeared. Therefore, it is not possible to say if Senusret III was responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs based on the cemetery at Asyut, although there is a strong possibility they disappeared during his reign.

3.6 Meir (14th nome of Upper Egypt)

At Meir, six 12th dynasty nomarchs' tombs have been discovered. Interestingly, no graves of nomarchs have been discovered from the 11th dynasty. The nomarchs of the 12th dynasty all belong to the same family, and their familial relations can be traced through inscriptions. The succession and familial relation of the nomarchs was as follows: Senbi I (tomb B1) was the first nomarch of the family. His father Ukhotep I is mentioned, but his tomb has not been recovered. He was succeeded by his son Ukhotep II (tomb B2), who was succeeded by his son Senbi II (tomb B3). The familial relation between Senbi II and his successor Ukhotep III (tomb B4) is a bit less clear, but Ukhotep III might have been his nephew through Senbi's sister Meri, however, this is not confirmed. Ukhotep III might have been the father of his successor Ukhotep IV (tomb C1), but this is also not certain.[149] Ukhotep IV was the last nomarch that definitely belonged to this family. Tomb C2, belonging to Kha'kheperre-sonb Iy was the last tomb built at Meir. The relation between Kha'kheperre-sonb Iy and Ukhotep IV is uncertain, and he is mostly known from his coffins, since his tomb remained undecorated.[150]

The tombs were a bit smaller than those of their contemporaries, and were less intricate. Tombs B1, B2, and C1 consist of just one rectangular room, and only tombs B3 and B4 have a second chamber. Tomb B2 does contain two pillars, and so stands out from the other one-room tombs.[151] The tomb of Ukhotep IV (C1) seems to have had an overhanging portico and not just an outside court, showing a small development in the architecture of the tombs.[152] The titles found in the tombs

[147] El-Khadragy (2012), p. 8-9.
[148] Idem, p. 8.
[149] Darlow (2017), p. 71-73.
[150] Grajetzki (2009), p. 118.
[151] Darlow (2017), p. 108.
[152] Idem, p. 122.

at Meir are also less elaborate than those found in other cemeteries; only Ukhotep II bore the title ḥry tp ᶜ3, the titles that the other nomarchs bore were r-pᶜ, ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.

It is difficult to date the nomarchs to kings, but fortunately the succession and familial relations of the nomarchs are quite clear at Meir, and approximate dates can be reached. Ukhotep III prominently displayed the name of Amenemhat II in his tomb, so it is clear that he lived during his reign. And while his successor Ukhotep IV did not include a king's name in his tomb, it is very likely that he either ruled during the reign of Amenemhat II or Senusret II, since he was the direct successor of Ukhotep III. Kha'kheperre-sonb Iy seems to have succeeded Ukhotep IV, and therefore probably lived during the reign of Senusret II. This is less certain though, since there is a generation between him and Ukhotep III, of whom we know when he reigned.

There are no rock-cut tombs that can be dated to or after the reign of Senusret III at Meir. No traces of 'later' nomarchs have been found through seals or other evidence either. As in Asyut it is not possible to pinpoint exactly when the tombs disappeared, but it seems to have been around the reign of Senusret III. Therefore, there is a strong possibility they disappeared during his reign.

3.7 Deir el-Bersha (15th nome of Upper Egypt)

Deir el-Bersha was the chief burial site of the Middle Kingdom nomarchs of the fifteenth nome, the Hare nome.[153] Unfortunately, the nomarchs' graves have been heavily disturbed, with some graves being almost completely destroyed because of earthquakes and quarrying activities during the New Kingdom.[154] From 2002 and onwards, the site is being excavated by a Belgium mission.[155] Thus, a lot of recent research has been done and a lot of recent sources are available on this site.

The dating of nomarchs in Deir el-Bersheh is not entirely clear, and only two nomarchs can be definitively linked to the reign of a king; Amenemhat (who ruled during the reign of Senusret I) and Djehutihotep (who ruled during the reigns of Amenemhat II, Senusret II, and Senusret III). However, the sequence of nomarchs is known relatively well (fig. 2).

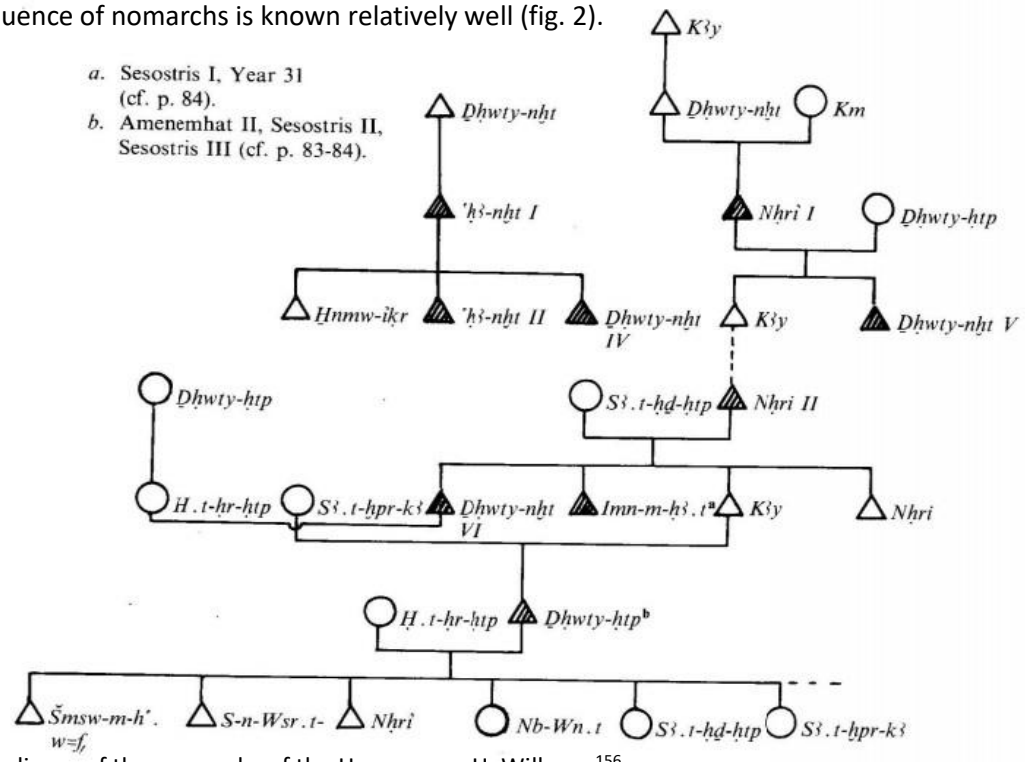

Fig. 2. Pedigree of the nomarchs of the Hare nome. H. Willems.[156]

[153] H. Willems, 'A Middle Kingdom Nomarchal Cemetery: Dayr al-Barshā', in *Historical and Archaeological Aspects of Egyptian Funerary Culture*, vol. 73 (2014), p. 76.
[154] G. Long, 'Gouverneur Nehri I en zijn graf in Deir el-Bersha', in *Ta Mery* 8 (2015-2016), p. 55.
[155] Idem , p. 62.
[156] Willems (1985), p. 102.

The first identifiable Middle Kingdom nomarch at Deir el-Bersheh was Ahanakht I, who has been discussed in chapter 2.2. Some evidence points to his father Djehutinakht having been a nomarch himself,[157] but his tomb remains undiscovered and his titles are not mentioned in Ahanakhts' tomb. Therefore, it is not clear when this family came into power, but it was likely before the start of the Middle Kingdom. His tomb was not very big, but was elaborately decorated. Some of the decoration seems to have been symbolic; '*the depiction of the heraldic plants of the Two Lands in his tomb suggest that at least part of the decoration also illustrates the new situation in the reunited country*'.[158] He carried a multitude of titles; r-pᶜ, ḥ3ty-ᶜ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr, ḥry tp ᶜ3, and, the most striking, ṯ3ty.[159] He was also the imy-r smy.t imnt.t, overseer of the western desert. As said in chapter 2.2, Ahanakht I seemed to have been quite the powerful individual (even though his tomb was relatively small) who did not only rule locally but also played a big part in the central government and maybe even in the organization of the nomes after the reunification (at least, that is what he claimed in his autobiography; see chapter 2.2).

Ahanakht I had three sons, and two were also nomarchs: Djehutinakht IV and Ahanakht II. Djehutinakht IV's tomb has not been discovered, but Willems suggests that Ahanakht II's tomb might be tomb 17K84/I. This tomb lies to the west of Ahanakht I's and is almost completely destroyed, however, there are still indications that this tomb may have belonged to a nomarch (the starry ceiling, the titles that refer to a nomarch that were found on the façade).[160] The quality of the tomb and decorations is much lower compared to the other tombs. Not much is known about the sons of Ahanakht I, and their relation with the first known nomarch following them is also unknown. It seems unlikely that they ruled for very long or were very powerful.

Nehri I followed as a nomarch. The discussion about his dating has been touched upon in chapter 2.2, and it is currently believed that he lived during the end of the 11th and beginning of the 12th dynasty. His tomb has been heavily disturbed because of quarrying activities in the NK, Coptic monks, and badly documented excavations. The tomb consisted of two rooms, each with two burial shafts. The inner room was never decorated, while the outer room was; it was likely added on later.[161] Almost no inscriptions survived in the tomb, but Nehri I's titles were preserved through the inscriptions at Hatnub. He was a r-pᶜ, ḥ3ty-ᶜ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr, ḥry tp ᶜ3 and claimed to also be the ṯ3ty. He also emphasises his ties to the palace.[162] Interestingly, at the same time his son Kay also bore the title ṯ3ty. Willems suggests that there might have been two viziers because of the trying times Nehri I and Kay lived through,[163] while Strudwick explains this as a co-regencey[164] and Obsomer[165] argues that this proves the title of vizier should not be read as a functional title here. In any case, this shows that the nomarchal family was very heavily involved with the central government.

Djehutinakht V followed his father Nehri I as a nomarch. His tomb might be 17 L04/1A, but this is not certain.[166] He is mostly known through the Hatnub graffiti. He carried the titles ḥ3ty-ᶜ and imy-r ḥm.w nṯr.[167] His brother Kay carried the title ṯ3ty, whereas before their father Nehri I carried both. He was followed by his nephew Nehri II,[168] who was followed by Djehutinakht VI, who may

[157] Willems (2014), p. 87-88.
[158] Willems (2007), p. 107.
[159] Idem, p. 105-107.
[160] Willems (2014), p. 90.
[161] Long (2015-2016), p. 55-61.
[162] Willems (2007), p. 105.
[163] Idem, p. 105.
[164] N. Strudwick, *The Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom: the highest titles and their holders* (London, 1985), p. 328.
[165] Obsomer (1995), p. 202.
[166] M. de Meyer and P. Dils, 'Fowl for the Governor: The Tomb of Governor Djehutinakht IV or V at Dayr Al-Barsha Reinvestigated, I. Architecture and Archaeology', in *JEA,* vol. 98 (2012), p. 57.
[167] R. Anthes, G. Möller, *Die Felseninschriften von Hatnub* (Leipzig, 1928), p. 67.
[168] Idem, p. 100.

have been his son. Their dating is unsure, but since Nehri I ruled during the reign of Amenemhat, his sons probably ruled during either the reign of this king or his successor Senusret I.

Djehutinakht VI's tomb is very damaged. It consisted of one main chamber, with a chapel at the end and two burial shafts. The outer decorations have mostly been ruined, and the façade is missing. The decorations inside seem to have been incised and painted on stucco, and show hunting and fishing scenes. Some inscriptions remain, and describe Djehutinakht as a r-pˁ, ḥ3ty-ˁ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḥry tp ˁ3. A ṯ3ty is also mentioned in the tomb, but unfortunately, his name is lost. Griffith argues that it is likely not Djehutinakht VI since his titles have not been found elsewhere in the tomb.[169] I tend to agree since this person does not carry the same titles as Djehutinakht, however, the inscription is heavily damaged and therefore it remains uncertain. Djehutinakht VI may not have been a vizier like some of his predecessors were, but he still emphasized his royal connections by calling himself the 'prince of princes in the house of the king'.[170] Djehutinakht was followed by Amenemhat, who may have been his brother. Since Amenemhat can be dated to year 31 of Senusret I, it seems likely that Djehutinakht ruled during the earlier years of this king.

Amenemhat was the son of Nehri II and followed Djehutinakht VI as nomarch of the hare nome. Amenemhat can be dated to year 31 of Senusret I through the Hatnub graffiti.[171] His tomb was partly quarried away, and only few inscriptions remain.[172] While the name of Amenemhat is not recovered from the entrance, his titles are; r-pˁ, ḥ3ty-ˁ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḥry tp ˁ3. He also includes ṯ3ty, even though his predecessor did not. Interestingly, the tomb was first attributed to Sepi, a royal scribe, by Griffith. This happened because the name of Amenemhat was not recovered, but there was a shrine which mentioned Sepi.[173] This Sepi turned out to be Amenemhats' son.[174] Willems argues that Sepi being a royal scribe and being very close to Amenemhat, supports the theory that he actually carried out some tasks linked to the vizier, with the assistance of the royal scribe.[175]

Djehutihotep followed his uncle Amenemhat, and ruled for an exceptionally long time. He lived during the reigns of three kings; Amenemhat II, Senusret II and Senusret III. His tomb is the biggest and most elaborate one at Deir el-Bersheh; it consisted of a large room entered through a façade that was cut out of the rock, and supported by two pillars. The antechamber was elaborately decorated, but is now heavily damaged. Scenes of fishing and hunting can still be distinguished, together with an unique scene of the moving of a colossal statue. Djehutihotep carried multiple titles; r-pˁ, ḥ3ty-ˁ, imy-r ḥm.w nṯr and ḥry tp ˁ3. He also emphasized his royal connections with the title imy-r pr nswt, although he did not carry the title ṯ3ty like his predecessors. He was the last nomarch of the Hare nome.

It is exceptional that Ahanakht I, Nehri I, Kay and Amenemhat all carried the title of vizier; it almost seems like a hereditary title, although there is no evidence that Djehutinakht also carried it. No other family of nomarchs claimed this title, and some evidence points to the title being a functionary, not just an honorary one (although that is still debated). The family of nomarchs also used the title ḥry tp ˁ3 for an exceptionally long time; Djehutihotep was one of the only nomarchs to still use this title after the reign of Senusret I. The family of nomarchs at Deir el Bersheh seems to have been exceptionally well connected to the central government, starting with Ahanakht I who claims to have played some part in the reunification and reorganisation of Egypt (see chapter 2.2.). However, even such a closely connected family apparently lost the nomarchal power over their nome. The cemetery at Deir el-Bersheh supports the theory that Senusret III was responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs; Djehutihotep was the last to build a tomb, and he also seems to have been the last nomarch. And while Djehutihotep still built a tomb during the reign of Senusret III,

[169] Griffith (1895), p. 24.
[170] Idem, p. 26.
[171] Anthes (1928), p. 76.
[172] Griffith (1895), p. 27.
[173] Idem.
[174] Willems (2007), p. 106.
[175] Idem.

it is very likely that he had started the construction earlier in his life, during the reigns of either Amenemaht II or Senusret II.

3.8 Beni Hasan (16th nome of Upper Egypt, Oryx nome)

The cemetery at Beni Hasan is very interesting, since it is possible to date almost all of the nomarchs' graves to a king, and therefore to get a really good look at the developments during the 12th dynasty by studying the nomarchs' tombs.

The findings at Beni Hasan point to the position of nomarch being hereditary in this nome during the 11th and 12th dynasty; most nomarchs can be linked to each other because the tomb owners are described as being 'the son of' or 'the father of' another tomb owner. It seems likely that two different families were in power consecutively during the 11th and 12th dynasties, with maybe the exception of Amenemhat (who was nomarch during the reign of Senusret I).[176] The focus will be on the second family in power, starting with Khnumhotep I, since they governed the Oryx nome during the twelfth dynasty when the supposed changes in provincial administration took place. This is reflected in the titles; all of the nomarchs of the earlier family, who ruled during the eleventh dynasty, bore the title ḥry tp ꜥ3 n m3ḥḏ, meaning great overlord of the Oryx nome.[177] This was not the case with the second family in power, which will be discussed more in depth below.

Khnumhotep I (BH 14) was the first nomarch of the new family in power, and he was nomarch of the Oryx nome during the reign of Amenemhat I, who was the first ruler of the twelfth dynasty. Noteworthy titles found in his tomb are r-pꜥ, ḥry tp ꜥ3 n m3ḥḏ, and ḥ3ty-ꜥ n mnꜥt ḫwfw.[178] He was the first to use the titles r-pꜥ, hereditary prince, and ḥ3ty-ꜥ n mnꜥt ḫwfw, mayor of Menat Chufu, and after him, most of his successors used this titles. The title of mayor of Menat Chufu was bestowed upon him by Amenemhat I, after he assisted him in a military expedition against Asiatics and Nubians at the beginning of his reign.[179] His grave is one of the bigger ones in the upper cemetery, and was elaborately decorated. Its design was simple, it consisted of a single rock cut room, with two columns inside. From looking at this tomb, it looks like Khnumhotep I was not only already quite powerful as great overlord of the Oryx nome, but became even more powerful thanks to Amenemhat I, who also named him mayor of Menat Khufu.

Nakht (BH 21) was the son of Khnumhotep, and succeeded his father.[180] He also bore the title ḥry tp ꜥ3 n m3ḥḏ, great overlord of the Oryx nome, and was also the ḥ3ty-ꜥ n mnꜥt ḫwfw. He also used a title his father did not, and most of his predecessors would: imy-r ḫ3swt i3btt, overseer of the Eastern Desert.[181] Interestingly, he does not use the title r-pꜥ, hereditary prince. He most likely lived during the reign of Senusret I, but there is no kings' name mentioned in his tomb. The design of his tomb resembles that of his father; a single rock cut room, with two columns inside. His tomb was only partly decorated, leading to the belief that it was most likely unfinished. There are also no autobiographical texts found in the tomb. Judging by the state of his tomb, Nakht was most likely not as powerful as his father. It is only possible to speculate on why; maybe he died unexpectedly, or maybe his nome experienced some economic hardship during his lifetime, leaving him with less funds for the completion of his tomb.

Amenhemhat (BH2) was the successor of Nakht. His parentage is problematic, as only the name of his mother is known: Baqt. Some believe that Amenhemhat was part of the family of nomarchs that used to be in power during the eleventh dynasty, but there is no way to be sure. He was nomarch during the reign of Senusret I. He bore a great number of titles, not only civil and religious ones like his predecessors and successors, but also military. A few things stand out; he was

[176] Newberry, BH II (1893), p. 29.
[177] Newberry, BH II (1893), p. 7.
[178] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 81.
[179] J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, Volume I, the First to the Seventeenth Dynasties* (Chicago, 1907), p 225.
[180] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 9.
[181] Newberry, BH II (1893), p. 26

the last leader of the Oryx nome to use the title ḥry tp ᶜ3 n m3ḥḏ, and he does not use the title ḥ3ty-ᶜ n mnᶜt ḫwfw (maybe the 'mayorship' of Menat-Chufu was hereditary, and since Amenemhat did not come from the same family of nomarchs, he did not inherit it). He also does not use the title imy-r ḫ3swt i3btt. Still, his tomb is one of the greatest of the upper cemetery; it is large and beautifully decorated, it had not only four columns inside but also two outside on the portico, and there was a causeway constructed that led up to the tomb. Amenhemhat was nomarch of the Oryx nome for at least 25 years, which is known because he used a dating system similar to the one that the kings used (starting with year 1 at the beginning of their reign, and so forth). He seems to have been a very important and powerful individual.

Netjernakht (BH 23) was most likely the successor of Amenemhat, but his lineage and placement in the sequence of nomarchs is vague. The name of his father is missing, but there is mention of Khnumhotep II (his successor), who claimed to have built this tomb for his predecessor. However, it is unclear in what way they were exactly related. Netjernakht does not bear the title ḥry tp ᶜ3 n m3ḥḏ, his most important titles seem to be; r-pᶜ, ḥ3ty-ᶜ (but not ḥ3ty-ᶜ n mnᶜt ḫwfw), and imy-r ḫ3swt i3btt (overseer of the Eastern Desert). His title string is very small compared to Amenemhat, and his grave is less impressive; it is decorated and quite large still, but only has two columns, no causeway, and the southern wall was left unfinished.[182]

Khnumhotep II (BH 3) lived and ruled during the reign of Amenhemhat II and Senusret II. He was a relative of his predecessor Netjernakht, but it is not known exactly in what way they were related. He was the grandson of Khnumhotep I. He bore a great string of titles, and is the first after Nakht to use the title ḥ3ty-ᶜ n mnᶜt ḫwfw again. His grave is one of the most notable ones of the necropolis, together with Amenemhats'. A causeway led up to the portico and a small courtyard, the main chamber was supported by four columns and had two shafts leading to the burial chambers, and the tomb was elaborately decorated.[183] In the main chamber there is an autobiography, where the close relationship between him and the royals is emphasized; it is mentioned how Khnumhotep II was appointed as ḥ3ty-ᶜ in mnᶜt ḫwfw by Amenemhat II, and how his son Nakht was appointed nomarch of the 17th Upper Egyptian nome by Senusret II.[184] It seems evident that Khnumhotep II had a strong bond with the kings he served, and that he was a powerful individual.

The tomb of Khnumhotep IV (BH 4), the son of Khnumhotep II and his successor, was unfinished, the construction of the burial chamber had just begun. An unfinished grave obviously indicates that something happened that prevented Khnumhotep IV from finishing his grave; implying he did not have the funds or may not have lived long enough to see it finished. Despite the grave being unfinished, some titles were still recorded: r-pᶜ and ḥ3ty-ᶜ.[185]. At the same time, his brother, Khnumhotep III, made his career at the royal court, became vizier during the reign of king Senusret III,[186] and was imy-r ḫ3swt i3btt during the reign of Senusret II,[187] when he was appointed to court. So Khnumhotep III controlled the trade of the Eastern desert, and not Khnumhotep IV. It is not clear how Khnumhotep III ended up at court. In any case, as a result of the appointment of Khnumhotep III, a valuable resource (controlling the Eastern desert trade) had been taken away from the local family of nomarchs, and had been added to the central government.

When looking at the nomarchs' tombs at Beni Hasan, a few things stand out. The first nomarch of the new family, Khnumhotep I, seems to have risen to power partly with the help of king Amenemhat I, or at least, gained more influence with the help of this king. This could have been the result of an attempt by Amenemhat I to put his 'friends', or people that had depended on him to get

[182] Newberry, BH II (1893), p. 28.
[183] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 67.
[184] Idem, p .60- 62.
[185] Newberry, BH I (1893), p. 5.
[186] D. Franke, 'The Career of Khnumhotep III at Beni Hasan and the so-called Decline of the Nomarchs', in S. Quirke, *Middle Kingdom Studies,* (New Malden, 1991), p. 51-67 (checken).
[187] J. P. Allen, 'The Historical Inscription of Khnumhotep at Dashur: Preliminary Report', in *BASOR*, 352 (2008), p. 29.

where they were, in powerful positions. It may not have been a coincidence that the old family of nomarchs was replaced by a new one exactly during this time. Amenemhat I also moved the capital from Thebes to ity-t3wy, where his officials would not have a powerbase, and be more dependent on him,[188] implying that he was consciously making decisions to strengthen his position in relation to the established elite. The last nomarch to bear the title ḥry tp ᶜ3 n m3ḥḏ was Amenemhat, who lived during the reign of Senusret I. This shows that, at least in the Oryx nome, the nomarch title fell out of use before the reign of Senusret III, implying that some changes took place well before his reign. Even though the title of nomarch had fallen out of use, Khnumhotep II's tomb was still one of the biggest and most impressive ones of the necropolis, implying that whatever made him lose the title of ḥry tp ᶜ3 did not really influence his overall power and riches. This might be explained by another title found in the graves of this family of nomarchs; imy-r st 3btt, overseer of the Eastern Desert. The title indicates that the nomarchs played a prominent part in the Eastern Desert trade, and may have gotten their wealth from that. Senusret II promoted the oldest son of Khnumhotep II away to a different nome, and another son to court; maybe in an attempt to curtail this powerful family, and also to transfer the task (and the profits) of overseeing the Eastern Desert trade to the central government.[189] The last, smallest, and unfinished tomb belongs to Khnumhotep IV, who probably lived during the reign of Senusret III.

So, while the cemetery at Beni Hasan supports the notion that Senusret III was responsible for the disappearance of the graves' of the nomarchs, indications for changes in provincial administration can be noted throughout the entire 12th dynasty.

3.9 Conclusion

It is very difficult to say anything definitive about the disappearance of the graves of the nomarchs because of the state of the material sources, lack of recent research, and lack of representation. Only eight necropolises have enough available information to be discussed here, and of that eight, only two definitely show tombs disappearing during the reign of Senusret III (Beni Hasan and Deir el-Bersheh), and two point to tombs disappearing around the reign of Senusret III (Meir and Asyut). These nomes are all adjoined; leaving the possibility that this development may have been a regional one. Two nomes (Tell Basta and Deir el-Rifeh) have too little information or evidence available to give any information about the disappearance of nomarchs' tombs, and two (Qubbet el-Hawa and Qaw el-Kebir) do not support the notion that Senusret III was responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs. At Qubbet el-Hawa there is evidence of nomarchs' tombs being built during the reign of Amenemhat III (QH33 may have been built during his reign, and C23 definitely originates from his reign), but the situation there may not be representable for the entirety of Egypt, since it borders on Nubia. At Qaw el-Kebir, nomarchs were still attested through seals during the reign of Amenemhat III (even though the tombs disappeared before that). They may not have carried the title ḥry tp ᶜ3, but none of the nomarchs at Qaw el-Kebir did, not even Wahka II who built one of the biggest none royal tombs of the Middle Kingdom. Egypt had at least 38 nomes at this period in time; it seems very presumptuous to project the findings of four nomes on the entirety of Egypt.

It cannot be denied that changes seem to have taken place around the reign of Senusret III. But, changes that point to kings interfering with the power of local nomarchs can be observed during the reigns of other Middle Kingdom kings as well, at least in three out of the four cemeteries that may support the notion that tombs disappeared around the reign of Senusret III. Amenemhat put new families in power that were more dependent on him than their predecessors, and the title ḥry tp ᶜ3 seems to have disappeared after the reign of Senusret I everywhere except from Deir el-Bersheh.

While some evidence points to it, it is still too presumptuous to hold Senusret III solely accountable for the disappearance of all the powerful provincial nomarchs based on the material culture. Only two nomes irrefutably show the disappearance of tombs during his reign, and in most

[188] G. Callender, 'The Middle Kingdom Renaissance' in I. Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2002), p. 147.
[189] Willems (2013), p. 378.

nomes signs of change can be seen during the reigns of Amenemhat I and Senusret I as well. However, there is certainly evidence that points to the nomarchs' disappearing from the 13th-16th nome during or around the reign of Senusret III; this implies that he played some part in the disappearance of the nomarchs, but maybe on a smaller scale than previously assumed. This does not refute the notion that he was responsible for the disappearance of the nomarchs though; all in all, it is just too presumptuous to make any definitive statements on the matter for the entirety of Egypt.

Conclusion

To what extent were changes in provincial administration implemented during the reign of Senusret III that attributed to the shift of local power from provincial rulers to town mayors?

Because of the lack of useful sources, it is very difficult to make definitive statements about the provincial administration during the Middle Kingdom. There are very little administrative sources from the early Middle Kingdom, and almost no burials of nomarchs after the 12th dynasty, so making comparisons is very difficult. The decline of the nomarchs has long been contributed to Senusret III, almost solely based on the fact that graves of nomarchs seem to not have been built anymore during his reign. However, there is not enough evidence to prove that Senusret III was responsible for the decline of the nomarchs, and there is definitely not enough evidence to prove he was responsible for the decline of the nomarchs through the implementation of changes in provincial administration. When carefully looking at the available necropolises, only two (Deir el-Bersheh (chapter 3.7) and Beni Hasan (chapter 3.8)) can show irrefutably that tombs indeed disappeared around the reign of Senusret III. Tombs also disappeared around the reign of Senusret III at Asyut (chapter 3.5) and Meir (chapter 3.6), but this cannot be pinpointed to his reign definitively. These are Upper Egyptian nomes 13 through 16, and they all border on each other. This points to a local, rather than a national development. It is too little to indicate a trend throughout the entirety of Egypt, especially because nomarchs were still attested through statues, seals and stelas after the reign of Senusret III (see chapter 3.2 and 3.3), and even through tombs at Qubbet el-Hawa. With the argument of the disappearance of the tombs falling away, there is nothing left to base the theory on that Senusret III was in some way solely responsible for the decline of the nomarchs by implementing changes in provincial administration; however, evidence does point to him being in some way involved with the disappearance of the nomarchs in the four adjoined nomes.

Also, when looking at the texts and titles in tombs, it seems that changes concerning the nomarchs were already being implemented before the reign of Senusret III. With the exception of Deir el-Bersheh, the title for nomarch (ḥry tp ꜥ3) seemed to disappear after the reign of Senusret I, not around the reign of Senusret III (see chapter 3.2, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8). There are also strong indications that Amenemhat I already tried to curb nomarchal power, by changing the ruling families and putting officials that were dependent on him in power (see chapter 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8) and moving the countries capital to ity-t3wy. Also, as early as the 11th dynasty, Theban kings may have tried to corb nomarchal power in the first seven nomes of Upper Egypt that later formed the administrational unit ‘Head of the South’. So, even though there is evidence that points to Senusret III being responsible for the disappearance of some nomarchs, it should be noted that changes took place before his reign as well, and he was not solely responsible.

It seems highly unlikely that a drastic change like a powerful group of officials disappearing could have taken place during the reign of one king, and drawing such a conclusion should only be done based on irrefutable evidence. It is much more likely that the decline of nomarchs was gradual, and did not happen simultaneously throughout Egypt. The 12th dynasty kings gradually became more powerful, and both the fragmentation and centralization of power during the Middle Kingdom resulted in nomarchs having less resources to build extensive burial grounds. This would also explain why some graves were still build during or after the reign of Senusret III; nomarchs like Djehutihotep and Wahka II at Qaw el-Kebir were either reigning for an exceptionally long time or may have been exceptionally wealthy, and could thus still afford the construction of an extensive tomb.

This does not mean that Senusret III did nothing to contribute to the decline of the nomarchs. The nomarchs did seem to disappear from Asyut, Meir, Deir el-Bersheh and Beni Hasan during or around the reign of Senusret III, implying that he may have been responsible for this in some way. However, how and to what extent he contributed is uncertain, and this disappearance is not reflected throughout the entirety of Egypt. Until new sources are discovered, the only thing that can be said with a certain confidence, is that it is not possible to say that Senusret III was solely

responsible for the decline of the nomarchs and that the evidence points to a local development taking place during his reign, not a national one.

For further research, more archaeological research on Middle Kingdom cemeteries is extremely important to come to a better understanding of the developments in provincial administration during the 12th dynasty. The recent work on sites like Deir el-Bersheh, Qubbet el-Hawa and Asyut shows how much more can be discovered with up to date scientific methodology, and has been vital for this research. Imagine how much more information could be gathered if comparable research would be done on other sites as well. Especially the Lower Egyptian nomes are currently frustratingly underrepresented. Hopefully, the more recent research in the aforementioned Middle Kingdom cemeteries will only be the beginning of renewed interest, and more excavations (if funds, Covid-19 and Egyptian bureaucracy allow it) will follow suit.

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