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Český egyptologický ústav

Bakalářská práce

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The God Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman Times.

A Confrontation of the Cult of Sobek in Krokodilopolis and Kom Ombo

Bůh Sobek v Ptolemaiovské a Římské době.

Srovnání kultu Sobka v Krokodilopoli a Kóm Ombo

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Ráda bych poděkovala vedoucímu práce PhDr. Filipovi Coppensovi, Ph.D. za jeho čas, který mé práci věnoval, četné konzultace a cenné rady. Také děkuji všem pracovníkům Knihovny Českého egyptologického ústavu za jejich odbornou pomoc při vyhledávání literatury.

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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Maria Galuzina

Anotace

Bakalářská práce pojednává o kultu egyptského krokodýlího boha Sobka v Ptolemaiovské a Římské době. Cílem práce je srovnání kultu Sobka v jeho chrámech ve Fajjúmské oáze s centrem v Šedet/Krokodilopoli, a ve slavném dvojitém chrámu v Kóm Ombo v Horním Egyptě. Důležitou součástí práce je rozbor povahy a hlavních rysů božstva, včetně jeho jména, role v náboženském systému, chrámových svátků, věštek a synkretismu s jinými božstvy. Velká pozornost je věnována též srovnání místní teologií Fajjúmské oázy a Kóm Ombo a hlavnímu teologickému spisu krokodilopolských kněží – tzv. “Fajjúmské Knize” – která obě teologie spojuje. Na základě těchto analýz se tato bakalářská práce pokouší vysledovat a popsat vývoj a rozmanitost kultu krokodýlího boha Sobka v Ptolemaiovské a Římské době.

Klíčová slova: Sobek, Souchos, krokodýlí bůh, Ptolemaiovská/Římská doba, Egyptské náboženství, Fajjúm, Fajjúmská Kniha, Krokodilopolis/Šedet/Arsinoe, Soknopaiou Nesos, Karanis, Bakchias, Tebtynis, Narmouthis, Theadelphia, Euhemeria, Dionysias, Kóm Ombo, Re, Hor, Usir, věštby, festivaly, Nilská záplava, synkretismus, teologie, bůh-stvořitel, sluneční božstvo, místní božstvo, státní božstvo

Anotation

The B.A. paper deals with the cult of the Egyptian crocodile god Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman times. The aim of this work is to compare the cult of Sobek in his temples in the Fayum oasis with the center in Shedet/Krokodilopolis, and in the famous double temple of Kom Ombo in Upper Egypt. The main part of the paper focuses on the analysis of the nature, key aspects and forms of the god, including his name, role in the religious system, temple festivals, oracles and syncretism with other gods. Great attention is also paid to the comparison of local theologies of the Fayum and Kom Ombo and the most important theological document of the Krokodilopolite priests – the so-called “Book of the Fayum” – that brings both theologies together. On the grounds of this analysis, present B.A. work tries to trace and describe the development and diversity of the cult of the crocodile god Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman times.

Key words: Sobek, Souchos, crocodile god, Ptolemaic/Roman times, Egyptian religion, Fayum, “Book of the Fayum”, Krokodilopolis/Shedet/Arsinoe, Soknopaiou Nesos, Karanis, Bakchias, Tebtynis, Narmouthis, Theadelphia, Euhemeria, Dionysias, Kom Ombo, Re, Horus, Osiris, oracles, festivals, Nile inundation, syncretism, theology, creator deity, solar deity, local deity, royal deity

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1 Introduction

The time of Ptolemaic and Roman rule is generally seen as one of the most remarkable, diverse and challenging epochs in the history of Ancient Egypt.¹ The conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BC² introduced to the land of pharaohs Greek language, values and beliefs, and became a very important turning point in the political, cultural and religious life of the country.³ The long interaction between the Egyptian and Greek cultures resulted in exchange of ideas and concepts on all possible levels, from the linguistic to the political one.

The Ptolemaic dynasty, established in 304 BC in a new capital Alexandria, has brought to Egypt 274 years of reasonable stability, wealth and prosperity.⁴ Egyptian temples and cults experienced genuine renaissance. The Decrees of Canopus (238 BC)⁵, Rafia (217 BC)⁶ and Memphis (196 BC)⁷ bestowed excessive benefactions to the temples, priesthood and animal cults all over the country. Many temples have been renovated and many more built anew. Thanks to the support of the ruling dynasty, Egyptian temples enjoyed great amount of economic and theological freedom and authority, which made possible a continuous development of Ancient Egyptian religion and cults.

Present paper deals with the cult of Sobek (Greek *Souchos*) – the crocodile god, known from the Predynastic times until the very end of the ancient Egyptian culture.⁸ Although a crocodile deity

¹ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs. 332 BC – AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (London: British Museum Publications, 1986)

² Krzysztof Nawotka, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009)

³ Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt from Alexander to the Copts: an Archeological and Historical Guide* (London: British Museum Press, 2004)

⁴ Günter Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London – New York: Psychology Press, 2001)

⁵ Stefan Pfeiffer, *Das Dekret von Kanopos (238 v. Chr.) Kommentar und historische Auswertung eines dreisprachigen Synodaldekretes der ägyptischen Priester zu Ehren Ptolemaios III. Und seiner Familie* (München: K. G. Sauer, 2004)

⁶ Henri Gauthier and Henri Sottas, *Un décret trilingue en l'honneur de Ptolémée IV* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1925); Heinz-Josef Thissen, *Studien zum Raphiadekret, Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 23* (Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1966)

⁷ Stephen Quirke and Carol Andrews, *The Rosetta Stone: Facsimile Drawing* (London: British Museum Press, 1989); Richard B. Parkinson, *The Rosetta Stone. British Museum Objects in Focus* (London: British Museum Press, 2005); Wilhelm Spiegelberg, *Der demotische Text der Priesterdekrete von Kanopus und Memphis (Rosettana) mit den hieroglyphischen und griechischen Fassungen und deutscher Übersetzung nebst demotischem Glossar* (Heidelberg: Georg Olms Verlag, 1922)

⁸ Edward Brovarski, "Sobek" in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984) 995-1031

is not unique in the world mythologies, as one can come across it in the Native American, Australian and Indian legends, it has not played anywhere such an important role as in Ancient Egypt.

Primarily connected to the Nile and its life-giving fertile forces, Sobek is mentioned already in the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom. During the Middle Kingdom, he rises to prominence and becomes a royal deity of the 12th and 13th dynasties, who had their capitals in the Fayum region in Lower Egypt – the old center of Sobek cult.⁹ Many pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period choose Sobek as their personal god and divine patron, and make his name a part of their own royal name: Sobekhotep is a popular kings' name of the 13th dynasty¹⁰, Sobekemsaf – of the 17th dynasty¹¹; the last ruler of the 12th dynasty, a daughter of pharaoh Amenemhat III, who was deified and venerated in the Fayum as a local saint, was a famous queen called Sobeknofru.¹²

The ties of the ruling dynasties with the crocodile god of the Fayum raised Sobek on the very high level, making him a state god and therefore connecting him to the main symbol of power and kingship – the god Horus. This association was developed and elaborated by the priests of the Fayum capital city Shedet (Greek *Krokodilopolis*) – which resulted in a new syncretic deity of the Fayum oasis called Sobek the Shedtite – Horus, residing in Shedet.¹³

From the Middle Kingdom on Fayum oasis with its capital Shedet/Krokodilopolis became the most important center of the Sobek cult in Egypt.¹⁴ Through the centuries, Shedet always remained the capital city of the Fayum as well as the epicenter of theological thought and priestly knowledge. The most significant theological work of the Fayum priesthood – “Book of

⁹ Dieter Arnold, “Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.2* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1978) 87-93

¹⁰ Anthony Spalinger, “Sobekhotep I-VIII” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984) 1036-1049

¹¹ Anthony Spalinger, “Sobekemsaf I”, “Sobekemsaf II” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984) 1031-1036

¹² Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004)

¹³ Farouk Gomaà, “Medinet el-Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981) 1254-1255

¹⁴ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayyum: dalle origini al IV. secolo a.C* (Imola (Bo): La Mandragora, 2001)

the Fayum”¹⁵ – was also composed in Shedet. This document had an enormous authority and influenced all cults of Sobek not only in the Fayum, but also in many different, far-away places, including Kom Ombo. Long history of worship and the authorship of the “Book of the Fayum” allowed the Fayum priests and scholars, particularly the ones in Shedet, claim theological primacy over all Sobek cults in Egypt.

Ptolemaic and Roman times brought a new revival to the cult of Sobek in the Fayum. However, it was no longer homogeneous and unified, as every town had its own temple dedicated to the crocodile god under different names, most of which survived only in Greek-language sources. The continuous contacts between the Greeks and Macedonians, living in the Fayum towns side by side with the Egyptians, provoked many significant and fascinating changes in local cults of the crocodile god¹⁶, including high degree of syncretism.

Even though Fayum and its capital Shedet/Krokodilopolis still maintained the status of the oldest and most significant place of Sobek cult in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, the magnificent temple of Kom Ombo¹⁷, built by the Ptolemies on the foundations of the smaller pharaonic temple, gradually grew into the most important temple of Sobek in the Upper Egypt.¹⁸ This unusual double temple, dedicated to Sobek and Horus the Elder, became a famous place of worship, pilgrimage and religious thinking. It is notable for its complicated theology as well as connection to the mythology of Elephantine and the first southern nome of Upper Egypt.¹⁹

Unfortunately, there is no recent comprehensive study of Sobek available, and only few aspects of this god have been studied so far. Every year the new articles, touching upon Sobek and his cult in the Fayum and Kom Ombo are published, however they are often limited to a single (or a

¹⁵ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch vom Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991); Horst Beinlich, *Der Mythos in seiner Landschaft - das ägyptische "Buch vom Fayum."* 3 vols. *Studien zu den Ritualszenen altägyptischer Tempel 11* (Dettelbach: Verlag J. N. Röhl, 2013-2014)

¹⁶ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum: texts and archaeology: proceedings of the Third International Fayum Symposium, Freudenstadt, May 29-June 1, 2007* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008) 153-164

¹⁷ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York - Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 187-189; 234-235

¹⁸ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 3* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982) 675-683

¹⁹ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains. Monographies Reine Élisabeth 13* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009)

couple of) sites, or to a very specific timeframe. The present B.A. paper will try to analyse the cult of Sobek as one phenomenon in Ptolemaic and Roman times – the best-documented epoch for this god and his temples in Egypt.

The first chapter of this work will summarize all available and relevant material on the cult of Sobek in the Fayum region and try to describe this complex and diverse system, paying special attention to the theology of Shedet/Krokodilopolis and its major theological work – “Book of the Fayum”, and focusing on local theology and syncretism.

The second chapter will discuss the cult of Sobek in Kom Ombo, including his place in the complex religious system of the temple, local syncretism, assimilation of Sobek to other gods, and the main roles he takes on within the Kom Ombo temple and theological system of the first nome of Upper Egypt.

The main aim of this paper is to follow the development and change of Sobek cult in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt from the Fayum oasis to Kom Ombo, comparing two theological schools and analyzing their differences and common points.

2 The Cult of Sobek in the Fayum in Ptolemaic and Roman Times

2.1 The Fayum region: general characteristics

The Fayum region (Egyptian *p3 jm* “the lake”, Coptic *Phiom*, Arabic الفيوم) is situated in Egypt's Western desert, to the west of the Nile valley, about 100 km south-west of Cairo²⁰ (map 1). The Fayum is merely a semi-oasis, because it receives the Nile water through the Bahr Yusuf Canal and distributes it further to its towns via the network of small channels. The present-day lake Birket Qarun, which now lies about 45 m below sea level,²¹ is located in the north-west of the oasis and represents the last stage in the development of the ancient lake Moeris (Egyptian *t3 hnt n mr wr*).²² The main archeological sites of the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum can be found in the north-east, south-west and the south of this pseudo-oasis, on the edge of the desert (map 2).

The Fayum has always represented one province, famous for its agricultural production and magnificent complexes of the Middle Kingdom rulers, including the legendary Labirinth of Amenhotep III, described by Herodotos during his trip to Egypt.²³ Through the New Kingdom and later epochs, Fayum did not play any significant role in the life of the country. However, it gained particular importance under the Ptolemaic dynasty.²⁴ The rich and prosperous oasis became the main place, where Macedonian and Greek army veterans were settling and lot of new towns, such as Theadelphia, Philadelphia and Dionysias were founded for them by the Ptolemies.²⁵ From the reign of Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC) and his sister-spouse Arsinoe II the new period of prosperity began for the Fayum and its capital Krokodilopolis,²⁶

²⁰ Dieter Arnold, “Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.2*, 87-93

²¹ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 127

²² Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 152-153

²³ Herodotus, *The Histories (translated by Robin Waterfield; with an introduction and notes by Carolyn Dewald)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 122-132

²⁴ Terry G. Wilgong, “Fayum, Graeco-Roman sites” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London – New York: Routledge, 1999) 308-313

²⁵ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 158

²⁶ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: Der Römische Pharaos und seine Tempel. Bd. III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 2005) 96-101

which became a Greek city and received a new name Arsinoe after the queen. This name later extended to refer to the whole Arsinoite nome.²⁷

The older Egyptian and Demotic texts implicate previous division of the nome into two parts, either north or south from Bahr Yusuf. However, in Ptolemaic period the Arsinoite nome was clearly divided into three merides (from Greek μέρος – “part”) called Herakleides, Themistos and Polemon, which existed until 4th century AD²⁸ (map 2).

Flinders Petrie was the first to start excavations in the Fayum’s capital Arsinoe and surrounding towns in 1888-1889.²⁹ A few years later, in 1895 the British papyrologists Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt began fieldwork in the Fayum under the aegis of the Egypt Exploration Fund: from 1895 to 1901 Grenfell and Hunt undertook first excavations in 16 sites,³⁰ all of them located in the desert along the region's border.³¹ In the 1920-1930 archaeologists and Egyptologists from Italy and USA excavated the Fayum towns of Tebtynis, Karanis, Soknopaiou Nesos and Narmouthis. From the middle of 20th century onwards, different teams of scientists from all over the world conduct excavations at Backchias, Dionysias, Theadelphia and other important sites.³² In the subchapter on the Fayum sites in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* Paola Davoli, professor of Lecce and Salento universities, now leading excavations in Soknopaiou Nesos, provides the complete and up-to-date overview of all Fayum excavators.³³ In this paper I will mention only the most important research and undergoing excavations in subchapters, dedicated to the individual sites. I would also refer to some big international

²⁷ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 158

²⁸ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/gen_name.php
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁹ Flinders Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu, and Arsinoe* (London: Field and Tuer, 1889)

³⁰ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and David G. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900) 27-35

³¹ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 156-157

³² Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 131

³³ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 155-161

projects, having being held in the Fayum area. One of them is Fayum Survey Project³⁴ that was realized by Dominic Rathbone, Dirk Obbink and Cornelia Römer with their teams in the years 1999 - 2006, and contributed greatly to our knowledge of topography and geography of the Fayum.³⁵ Fayum Project, sponsored by the Onderzoeksraad of the University of Leuven and carried out between 1998 and 2002, was directed by Willy Clarysse and Katelijjn Vandorpe. The result of their laborious work is an online database of ca. 200 Fayum settlements with descriptions and links to other online resources.³⁶ From 2002 the Fayum Project, initiated and directed by the University of California (USA) and the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (The Netherlands) is being held, studying the landscape and water use in the Fayum and preserving the cultural heritage of the area.³⁷

2.2. The main Fayum towns with temples of Sobek

The state of preservation in the Fayum towns varies considerably from site to site. There are only few locations, where all levels were excavated stratigraphically, as in Karanis or Tebtynis,³⁸ because the so-called *sebakh* digging (collecting of an organic deposit that can be used as a fertilizer) affected almost all Fayum sites greatly in 19th and the beginning of 20th century³⁹ and complicated their stratigraphy.⁴⁰ However, the running excavations constantly contribute to our knowledge of the ancient Fayum, and at present, there are almost no blank spots on its map. So let us briefly describe the most prominent Fayum sites, connected with the cult of a crocodile god Sobek.

³⁴ The Fayum Survey Project 1999-2006: <http://www.dainst.org/en/project/fayum?ft=all>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

³⁵ Paola Davoli, "The Archaeology of the Fayum" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 161

³⁶ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/index.php>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

³⁷ The Fayum Project of the University of California and Rijksuniversiteit Groningen:
<http://www.archbase.com/fayum/project.htm> Accessed on 20.04.1014

³⁸ Paola Davoli, "The Archaeology of the Fayum" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 163

³⁹ Terry G. Wilfong, "The University of Michigan Excavation of Karanis (1924-1935)" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 225

⁴⁰ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt: a social history* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 119

2.2.1 Krokodilopolis/ Ptolemais Euergetis / Arsinoe

Krokodilopolis/ Ptolemais Euergetis / Arsinoe (Demotic *šdt - zrsynz*, Greek Κροκοδίλων Πόλις/ Πτολεμαίς Εὐεργέτις/ Ἀρσινόη - Ἀρσινόιτων Πόλις, Latin *Arsinoe – Crialon*⁴¹), which modern name is Medinet el-Fayum (مدينة الفيوم), has always been the capital city of the Fayum region, thanks to its location in the very centre of the province in Herakleides meris, at the joint of all three merides (map 2), on the artificial channel Bahr Yusuf.⁴²

The town was founded in early dynastic period and flourished during the Middle Kingdom as Shedet – the oldest and most important centre of a crocodile god Sobek in Egypt.⁴³ Known to the Greeks as Krokodilopolis, from the reign of Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC) and his sister-spouse Arsinoe II it became a Greek city and received a new name Arsinoe.⁴⁴ Finally in 116 BC the town was renamed Ptolemais Euergetis after the deceased king Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes II (145-116 BC).⁴⁵

One of the major Ptolemaic and Roman centers, nowadays Krokodilopolis unfortunately remains largely unknown and unavailable for excavations. In the end of 19th century the archaeological area called Kiman Fares in the north-west of the present-day Medinet el-Fayum still extended over 2.4 x 2.2 km. However, in 1960-70s it was highly damaged both by *sebakh* digging and the expansion of the modern city quarters.⁴⁶ Finds of Coptic and Arabic papyri, Ptolemaic theatre and bathhouses, and marble busts of Roman emperors are among the little published material

⁴¹ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=327&i=3>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁴² Farouk Gomaà, “Medinet el-Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Bd.3, 1254-1255

⁴³ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum: dalle origini al IV. Secolo a.C.*, 23

⁴⁴ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 158

⁴⁵ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 153

⁴⁶ Paola Davoli and Mohammed Ahmed Nahla, “On some Monuments from Kiman Fares (Medinet el-Fayyum)” in: *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia. Rivista internazionale* 3 (Pisa-Roma: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali MMVII, 2006) 81-110:
https://www.unisalento.it/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=7473184&name=DLFE-52090.pdf
Accessed on 20.04.1014

from that quarter.⁴⁷ Nineteenth-century publications by Jean Rifaud (1829),⁴⁸ Flinders Petrie (1889)⁴⁹ and some minor excavations of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities have also given us a few pieces of knowledge about the site, but the complete study of Kiman Fares area has never been done.⁵⁰

Red granite temple of the local crocodile god is attested in Shedet from the Middle Kingdom, the times of Amenemhat III⁵¹, when Sobek became an important royal deity of the 12-13th dynasties and was worshipped there in the syncretic form of *sbk šdtj hr jb šdt* (Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet).⁵² Under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC) the old structure was replaced by a new limestone temple with thick enclosure wall and enormous limestone and granite pylon.⁵³ The great temple of Sobek the Shedtite (Greek *Souchos*) – now located in the so-called area A of Kiman Fares – became the main cult place of Sobek in the Fayum.

Indeed, as an oldest cult place of Sobek, Shedet-Krokodilopolis claimed theological primacy over all Sobek cults in Egypt and in the Fayum region. The high priest of Shedet had a title “overseer of priests and director of priests of Sobek in the entire land.”⁵⁴ Besides, the main theological document of the Fayum – “Book of the Fayum” – was composed by Shedet priesthood in Ptolemaic epoch and developed the local theology and theology of the crocodile god further, making him a complex primeval deity, assimilated to many other Egyptian gods.

⁴⁷ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 152-153; Labib Habachi, “Une “vaste sale” d’Amenemhat III Kiman-Fares (Fayoum)” in: *ASAE* 37 (1937) 85-95

⁴⁸ Jean J. Rifaud, *Description des fouilles et des découvertes faites par M. Rifaud dans la partie Est de la butte Koum-Medinet-el-Farès: accompagnée du dessin, des coupes et du plan des constructions inférieures: lue à la société de Géographie, le vendredi 19 juin 1829* (Paris: 1829)

⁴⁹ Flinders Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London: Field and Tuer, 1889)

⁵⁰ Paola Davoli and Nahla Mohammed Ahmed, “On some Monuments from Kiman Fares (Medinet el-Fayyum)” in: *Studi di Egittologia e di Papirologia. Revista internazionale* 3, 81-110

⁵¹ Farouk Gomaà, “Medinet el-Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3*, 1254

⁵² Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984) 995-1031 (998-1000); Labib Habachi, “Une “vaste sale” d’Amenemhat III Kiman-Fares (Fayoum)”, 88

⁵³ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 159

⁵⁴ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1014

This theological work had an enormous authority and influenced all cults of Sobek not only in the Fayum, but also in Kom Ombo, Sumenu and other cult places of the crocodile god.⁵⁵ According to the Book, Shedet was seen as a primeval mound, and lake Moeris – as a part of the primeval ocean Nun, while Sobek was the syncretic primordial deity with many guises and manifestations.⁵⁶ Almost all known “names” of local varieties of Sobek are attested in Krokodilopolis.⁵⁷ He was assimilated to the main Egyptian gods such as Re, Atum, Osiris, Geb, Hapi and Chnum. However, the oldest association was with Horus – ancient Egyptian god, symbolizing the royal power.⁵⁸ This association was later developed by the theologians of Krokodilopolis, who made Sobek the Shedtite – Horus residing in Shedet a son and protector of Osiris and finally a representation of both Horus and Osiris in terms of endless life cycle and annual rebirth and renewal.⁵⁹ The theology of Shedet will be discussed in more detail below, in the special subchapter devoted to the “Book of the Fayum.” (2.5, 49)

As a famous place already in the antiquity, Krokodilopolis was described by many Greek travelers. Herodotus (Book II, 68-69),⁶⁰ Diodorus (Book I. 35; 89)⁶¹ and Strabo (XVIII volume. I.38-39.)⁶² wrote about the sacred crocodile that lived in Krokodilopolis in the sacred lake of the temple and was called Souchos. He wore “ornaments of glass and gold on its ears and bracelets on his forefeet,”⁶³ was fed “on grain and pieces of meat and on wine,”⁶⁴ and served as a main

⁵⁵ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands* (London: UCL Press, 2003) 185-188

⁵⁶ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 312-314

⁵⁷ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen in Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens,” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 153-164

⁵⁸ Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfred Wiczorek, *Egypt’s mysterious Book of the Faiyum* (Dettelbach: J.H. Röhl Verlag, 2013)

⁵⁹ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum: dalle origini al IV. Secolo a.C.*, 50-63

⁶⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 122-132

⁶¹ Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History. I. Books I-II, with an English translation by C. H. Oldfather* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936) 303-307

⁶² Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo: in eight volumes. 8., with an English translation by Horace Leonard Jones* (London: Heinemann, 1049) 103-109

⁶³ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 122-132

⁶⁴ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo: in eight volumes. 8., 103-108*

attraction for tourists and important guests of the city. One can imagine the splendor of Sobek temple in Krokodilopolis in Ptolemaic times, when it was a place of pilgrimage as well as a centre of theological thinking and knowledge.

Apart from Sobek, Ptolemaic and Roman Krokodilopolis housed local cults of Horus, Isis, Amun and other gods⁶⁵ and was a cult center of the deified Amenemhat III (Greek *Pramarres*, derived from Egyptian *pr-ʿ3-m3-t-r*).⁶⁶ One of the famous Fayum monuments is a Ptolemaic monument of Sobek on the base with hippopotamus of Thoeris, the baboon of Thoth and kneeling figure of *Pramarres* (figure 1).⁶⁷

2.2.2 Soknopaiou Nesos

Soknopaiou Nesos (Demotic *t3-m3y.t-n-sbk-nb-p3-jw*, Greek Σοκνοπαιου Νῆσος⁶⁸), which modern name is Dimé/ Dimeh al-Siba (د يمية السباع), is situated in the north-west of the Fayum oasis, on the border of the Arsinoite nome, in Herakleides meris (map 2), about 3 kilometers from the west bank of the lake Birket Qarun.⁶⁹

Soknopaiou Nesos was founded in 3 century BC, probably under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC) as a part of his reclamation project of the Fayum area, and flourished until 3 century AD as a port and a crossroad of the caravan routes.⁷⁰ The Egyptian name *t3-m3y.t-n-sbk-nb-p3-jw*, meaning “The island of Sobek, lord of the island,”⁷¹ implies that once it was an actual

⁶⁵ Farouk Gomaà, “Medinet el-Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Bd.3, 1254-55

⁶⁶ Henry Riad, “Le culte d’Amenemhat au Fayum á l’époque ptolémaïque” in: *ASAE* 55 (1958), 201-206

⁶⁷ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Bd 5, 1014; Labib Habachi, “A strange monument of the Ptolemaic period from Crocodilopolis” in: *JEA* 41 (1955) 106-111

⁶⁸The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=2157&i=1> Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁶⁹ Dieter Hagedorn, “Dimeh” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Bd 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972) 1094

⁷⁰ Terry G. Wilgong, “Fayum, Graeco-Roman sites” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 309

⁷¹ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2157.php?geo_id=2157 Accessed on 20.04.1014

island, according to Günter Hölbl, in Neolithic times⁷² – however, it was not the case already during the Old Kingdom.⁷³

The major excavations were carried out in 1931-32 by the University of Michigan team under Enoch E. Peterson, who has made a topographical survey of the site. However, the results of the survey and some of the found objects were published a few years later by Arthur E. R. Boak.⁷⁴ In 2001 begun a new Soknopaiou Nesos Project of Bologna and Lecce Universities, under the direction of Sergio Pernigotti, Mario Capasso and Paola Davoli. Their main aims were firstly, to continue Boak and Peterson's work in documentation the settlement, using modern archeological methods and techniques and creating a detailed topographical map; and secondly, to gather and study Greek, Coptic and Demotic papyri found in Dimeh.⁷⁵

Since 2003 the excavations in the area of temenos, comprising about 9000 square meters, began.⁷⁶ Located in the north-western part of the settlement, it includes the limestone temple of the local god Soknopaios⁷⁷ and his consort Isis Nepherses (Egyptian *js.t nfr.t* “beautiful Isis”),⁷⁸ enclosed by the massive wall, and the long paved processional dromos to the south with residential quarters on both sides. Within the sacred enclosure there are about 20 badly damaged subsidiary buildings – small temples or chapels – surrounding the main temple labeled ST 18

⁷² Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: der Römische Pharaos und seine Tempel. [Bd.] III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen*, 97

⁷³ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2000) 136

⁷⁴ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos. The University of Michigan Excavations at Dimê in 1931-32* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1935): http://oilib.uchicago.edu/books/boak_soknopaiou_nesos_1935.pdf
Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁷⁵ The Soknopaiou Nesos Project, Università del Salento: http://www.museopapirologico.eu/?page_id=1352
Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁷⁶ Sandro De Maria, Paolo Campagnoli, Enrico Giorgi and Giuseppe Lepore, “Topografia e urbanistica di Soknopaiou Nesos” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.* (Bologna: Ante Quem, 2006) 23-55

⁷⁷ Karl-Theodor Zauzich, “Soknopaios” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1075-76

⁷⁸ Dieter Hagedorn, “Dimeh” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 1*, 1094

(32,53 x 18,90 m).⁷⁹ According to Dieter Arnold, in the precinct there was also a sacred lake.⁸⁰ Dating of the temple remains an open question: while Arnold dates it to the Roman times as late as emperor Nero,⁸¹ Paola Davoli is inclined to think that the temple had been founded “between the end of the Hellenistic period and the beginning of the Roman period.”⁸² The main arguments for the dating to the earlier epoch is the well-known demotic papyrus from Soknopaiou Nesos (p.Wien Aeg 9976⁸³), which describes decoration of the temple and mentions Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes II (145-116 BC); as well as the wooden naos, found by the Italian team and bearing the Horus name of Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC).⁸⁴ According to Davoli, the Ptolemaic temple was transformed into a propylon by the Romans and later enlarged.⁸⁵

The temple itself consisted of a courtyard, pronaos, a series of chapels and storerooms,⁸⁶ but its decoration was never finished. Besides, the state of preservation is rather bad. However, the University of Michigan team found Greek papyri of the 1st century BC not far from the temenos area, including dedications to the local god Soknopaios.⁸⁷

Among other interesting things Soknopaiou Nesos possessed a small crocodile cemetery;⁸⁸

⁷⁹ Paola Davoli, “New Excavations at Soknopaiou Nesos: the 2003 season” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Tebtynis and Soknopaiou Nesos. Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum: Akten des Internationalen Symposions vom 11. bis 13. Dezember 2003 in Sommerhausen bei Würzburg* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005) 29-39: http://www.unisalento.it/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=7473184&name=DLFE-52089.pdf Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁸⁰ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 254

⁸¹ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 254

⁸² Paola Davoli, Ivan Chiesi, Simone Occhi and Nicola Raimondi, “Soknopaiou Nesos Project: The Resumption of the Archaeological Investigation. The settlement and its territory” in: *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007) 149-160

⁸³ Erich Winter, “Der Entwurf für eine Türinschrift” in: *NAWG 3* (1967) 59-80

⁸⁴ Paola Davoli, “New Excavations at Soknopaiou Nesos: the 2003 season” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Tebtynis and Soknopaiou Nesos. Leben im römerzeitlichen Fajum*, 29-39

⁸⁵ Paola Davoli, Ivan Chiesi, Simone Occhi and Nicola Raimondi, “Soknopaiou Nesos Project: The Resumption of the Archaeological Investigation. The settlement and its territory” in: *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology*, 153-154

⁸⁶ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos. The University of Michigan Excavations at Dimê in 1931-32*: http://oilib.uchicago.edu/books/boak_soknopaiou_nesos_1935.pdf Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁸⁷ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos. The University of Michigan Excavations at Dimê in 1931-32*, 5-13

⁸⁸ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1015

temporary dwellings for travelers and pilgrims north-east of the temenos;⁸⁹ and two small crypts, most likely used as a secret storage rooms for the cultic equipment of the temple.⁹⁰

The crocodile god Sobek was venerated in Soknopaiou Nesos in two guises:⁹¹ as Soknopaios (Egyptian *sbk-nb-pzi(w)* “Sobek, the lord of the Island”) and Soknopieios/Sokonopi (*sbk-ḥ‘pi* “Sobek-Hapi”). Thus, it seems that Soknopaios was the main and the oldest god of the region and Soknopieios was the manifestation of Sobek, associated with Hapi – a personification of the Nile inundation – and so emphasizing Sobek’s connection to flood, vegetation, fertility and regeneration. This suggestion also confirms Ghislaine Widmer in her article on the festivals of Sobek in the Fayum in Ptolemaic and Roman times, where she argues that Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos presented the so-called “Horus deity,” the “king” of the city; and Soknopieios – the “Osiris deity”, the deceased king, blessed and then reborn. When the sacred crocodile of Soknopaios (Horus) died, he was mummified and then ceremonially buried during the festival – as a result, he became “Osiris” and was festively “reborn”. The new Horus crocodile was chosen and the cycle continued.⁹² In this context, we can talk about assimilation of the Osiris myth into the cult of Sobek in Ptolemaic epoch. Although the name of this festival is not obvious, it is known from the papyri that Soknopaiou Nesos was famous for the festival called *Soucheia*, held just before the coming of Nile inundation and the rise of Sirius, where Sobek acted as an initiator of the flood and benefactor to the whole Fayum.⁹³ It is very likely that coming of the flood and celebrating the renewal and the New Year could have been expressed through the well-known Horus-Osiris myth.

⁸⁹ Paola Davoli, “Archaeological research in Roman Soknopaiou Nesos: Results and perspectives” in: Katja Lembke, Martina Minas-Nerpel and Stefan Pfeiffer (eds.), *Tradition and Transformation: Egypt under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 56

⁹⁰ Paola Davoli, “Archaeological research in Roman Soknopaiou Nesos: Results and perspectives” in: Katja Lembke, Martina Minas-Nerpel and Stefan Pfeiffer (eds.), *Tradition and Transformation: Egypt under Roman Rule*, 70

⁹¹ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

⁹² Ghislaine Widmer, “Les fêtes en l’honneur de Sobek dans la Fayoum à l’époque gréco-romaine” in: *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 32 (2003) 3-12

⁹³ Pierre P. Koemoth, “Couronner Souchos pour fêter la retour de la crue” in: Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IVth International Conference of Isis Studies, Liege, November 27-29, 2008* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010) 257-289

The god Soknopaios was also well-known in the Fayum as an oracle deity.⁹⁴ The Italian team has found inside the temenos area, a few preserved pieces of papyri with questions to the so-called “ticket oracle“of the god from 2-3 centuries BC, that were adressed to “my lord Soknopaios.”⁹⁵ This topic will be covered in more detail below, in a special subchapter, devoted to the oracles of Sobek in the Fayum. (2.8, 63)

Among the few discoveries from the domestic context, of particular interest is a wall painting from House II 204, a rare example of the “private religious practices” in the Fayum. It depicts a cult scene: a man and a woman standing before the incense altar and offering to the crocodile-headed god.⁹⁶

2.2.3 Karanis

Karanis (Greek *Καράνις*, Latin *Caranis*),⁹⁷ which modern name is Kom Aushim (كوم أوشيم),⁹⁸ is located in the north-eastern border of the Fayum, in the meris of Herakleides⁹⁹ (map 2). The mound of the ancient town rises about 12 m above the surrounding plain, which lies along a limestone ridge forming the north-eastern rim of the Fayum district.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L’Égypte Restituée. T.3., Sites, temples et pyramides de Moyenne et Basse Égypte: de la naissance de la civilisation pharaonique a l’époque gréco-romaine* (Paris: Errance, 1997) 190-191; Winifred J.R. Rübsam, *Götter und Kulte in Faijum während der griechisch-römisch-byzantinischen Zeit* (Bonn: Habelt (Kommiss.), 1974)

⁹⁵ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: assimilation and resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) 160; Edda Bresciani, *L’archivio demotico del tempio di Soknopaiou Nesos nel Griffith Institute di Oxford* (Milan: Cisalpino-La Goliardica 1975)

⁹⁶ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos. The University of Michigan Excavations at Dimê in 1931-32*, 9-12

⁹⁷ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=1008&i=1> Accessed on 20.04.1014

⁹⁸ Sergio Donadoni, “Karanis” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3*, 327-328

⁹⁹ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 118

¹⁰⁰ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, The University of Michigan, 1983) 1-2

Karanis was established under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC)¹⁰¹ and existed for nearly 8 centuries until its decline and abandonment in the end of 5th¹⁰² or middle of 6th century AD.¹⁰³ It was a prosperous agricultural village and centre of textile industry. In Roman times, Karanis was also one of the places where the Roman veterans were settling.¹⁰⁴

The main excavations on the site were carried out by the University of Michigan in 1924-1935, directed by Francis W. Kelsey, Arthur E.R. Boak and Enoch E. Peterson in 1925-28, and Elinor M. Husselman in 1928-35.¹⁰⁵ The expedition, which conducted archaeological excavations in Karanis from 1924 to 1934, tried on the first place to stop the *sebakhin* activity. However, their systematic work in the temples and residential areas of the town, together with extensive publications by Boak,¹⁰⁶ Peterson¹⁰⁷ and Husselman¹⁰⁸ made Karanis a well-known site.¹⁰⁹ Many artefacts, Greek, Coptic and Demotic papyri have been recovered and are now in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor.¹¹⁰

¹⁰¹ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 8

¹⁰² Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 1-5

¹⁰³ Paola Buzi, "Ancora sulla necropoli tardo-antica di Karanis: indizi per la determinazione della datazione del definitivo abbandono del sito" in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El coccodrillo e il cobra: aspetti dell'universo religioso egiziano nel Fayyum e altrove. Atti del colloquio Bologna - 20/21 aprile 2005* (Imola: Mandragora 2006) 128

¹⁰⁴ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 117

¹⁰⁵ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 1-2

¹⁰⁶ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Karanis: The Temples, Coin Hoards, Botanical and Zoological Reports. Seasons 1924-31* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series XXX, 1933)

¹⁰⁷ Arthur E.R. Boak and Enoch E. Peterson, *Topographical and Architectural Report of Excavations during the Seasons 1924-28* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series XXV, 1931)

¹⁰⁸ Elinor M. Husselman, *Karanis: excavations of the University of Michigan in Egypt, 1928-35: Topography and Architecture* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum of Archeology Studies 5, 1979)

¹⁰⁹ Dominic Rathbone, "The Fayyum" in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 131

¹¹⁰ Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey/>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

In 1967-75 a mission from Cairo University returned to Karanis, where they excavated mostly houses and public baths (small thermal complex built in fired and unaired brick¹¹¹) in collaboration with Institut français d'archéologie orientale,¹¹² directed by Jean Leclant in 1967-73 and Serge Sauneron in 1974-75.¹¹³

According to the archeological reports, the village spread over a distance of 1050 x 750 m¹¹⁴ and in 145 AD, its population was around 3316 people with 14 percent of Roman army veterans.¹¹⁵ The settlement has five distinct levels of occupation, distinguished by the University of Michigan team.¹¹⁶ Among the public buildings, there were identified granaries, dovecotes and Roman baths.¹¹⁷ However, of our particular interest are two major temples, made of stone and extending outside the temple enclosure: the so-called Northern and Southern temples, both devoted to different local forms of the crocodile god Sobek (Greek *Souchos*), who was worshipped there in three guises: as Pnepheros, Petesouchos and Soknopaios.¹¹⁸

The elder and better-documented Southern temple dates back to 1 century BC, when the first mud-brick temple was constructed. The inscription on the lintel above the main door informs that the temple was rebuilt in limestone in 59-60 years AD, under the emperor Nero, probably at the same time when the Northern temple was being constructed.¹¹⁹ The Southern temple has a typical Egyptian arrangement with the gateway, smaller pylon and a colonnaded courtyard

¹¹¹ Paola Davoli, "The Archaeology of the Fayum" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 161

¹¹² Georges Castel, "Un grand bain gréco-romain à Karanis" in: *BIFAO* 76 (1976) 231-275

¹¹³ Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/ifao/> Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹¹⁴ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 119

¹¹⁵ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 121

¹¹⁶ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 5

¹¹⁷ Paola Davoli, "The Archaeology of the Fayum" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 165

¹¹⁸ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 32

¹¹⁹ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 19-20; Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 253-254

before the main temple,¹²⁰ where the first chamber gives access to the smaller vestibule and then to the innermost chamber, which housed the sacred shrine. In this sanctuary the high platform or altar, representing the primeval mound,¹²¹ housed the image of god. The temple also had a library, an oracle in the hidden chamber beneath the hollow podium serving as altar¹²² and a small sacred lake.¹²³

Including the temenos wall the complex was approximately 60 x 16 m and the wall enclosed an area of around 940 m¹²⁴, so that the whole precinct with an extensive necropolis covered an area of around 75 x 60 m.¹²⁵

This temple was devoted to the cult of Souchos appearing here in the dual form of Pnepheros (the name derived from the Egyptian construction *p3-nfr-hr* “that one of the beautiful face”¹²⁶) and Petesouchos (Egyptian *p3-dj-sbk* “He who has been given by Souchos.”¹²⁷) Interestingly, Petesouchos is widely attested in the Fayum as a personal name, and Alexandra von Lieven in her article on personal names in the Fayum suggests, that originally Petesouchos could be a local human “saint“, a prominent Fayum individual or even a local “ruler“, later deified and associated with crocodile god, as well as pharaoh Amenemhat III was.¹²⁸ Another theory states

¹²⁰ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 120

¹²¹ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 34

¹²² Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 136

¹²³ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC – AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab conquest*, 171-172

¹²⁴ Richard Alston, *Soldier and Society in Roman Egypt*, 120

¹²⁵ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC – AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab conquest*, 171-172

¹²⁶ Heinz Josef Thissen (ed.), *Demotisches Namenbuch. Bd. 1* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1995) 641

¹²⁷ Angiolo Menchetti, “La devozione e il culto per la divinità di Narmuthis. La testimonianza degli ostraka da Medinet Madi (OMM)” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El cocodrillo e il cobra: aspetti dell’universo religioso egiziano nel Fayyum e altrove. Atti del colloquio Bologna - 20/21 aprile 2005*, 59-60

¹²⁸ Alexandra von Lieven, “Of Crocodiles and Men. Real and Alleged Cults of Sobek in the Fayyum” in: Carolin Arlt and Martin Andreas Stadler (eds.), *Das Fayyûm in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit. Fallstudien zu multikulturellem Leben in der Antike* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013) 90-91

that Petesouchos was not god's name, but rather a name for the local sacred animal of Sobek, Soknopaios or Pnepheros, his *ba*.¹²⁹

Although there is no direct evidence that sacred crocodiles were bred within temple precincts of Karanis, numerous crocodile mummies were discovered by the University of Michigan team and the existence of the deep niches in the walls of the inner courts of both Karanis temples indicate that mummified animals were kept there and probably used during the ceremonies. For example, having found behind the altars the recesses into which the ends of the biers may have been placed, Boak and Gazda thought that the sacred mummies may have been brought out on biers to the altar.¹³⁰

Among other interesting features of the Southern temple are: a large vat probably used for lustral baths of the priests,¹³¹ as Herodotus suggests;¹³² the great banquet hall (Greek *deipneterion*) built under Vespasian (69-79 AD) and used during sacred feasts and ceremonies;¹³³ and series of houses within the precinct along both sides of the South temple – probably used as priests' houses or temporary dwellings for worshippers who travelled to Karanis from another places.¹³⁴

The Northern temple was about a third size of a larger Southern complex and covered an area of about 32, 7 x 10, 5 m. It was built in the Roman period, under Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)¹³⁵ or earlier (Nero)¹³⁶ and consisted of 3 pylons and 3 courtyards leading to the altar-sanctuary with

¹²⁹ Alexandra von Lieven, "Of Crocodiles and Men. Real and Alleged Cults of Sobek in the Fayyum" in: Carolin Arlt and Martin Andreas Stadler (eds.), *Das Fayyüm in Hellenismus und Kaiserzeit. Fallstudien zu multikulturellem Leben in der Antike*, 87-94

¹³⁰ Arthur E. R. Boak and Enoch E. Peterson, *Topographical and Architectural Report of Excavations during the Seasons 1924-28*, 5-13

¹³¹ Arthur E. R. Boak and Enoch E. Peterson, *Topographical and Architectural Report of Excavations during the Seasons 1924-28*, 15

¹³² Herodotus, *The Histories*, 122-123

¹³³ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 36

¹³⁴ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 37

¹³⁵ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 270

¹³⁶ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: Der Römische Pharao und seine Tempel. Bd. III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen*, 100

a cult niche.¹³⁷ As well as Southern one, the Northern temple belongs to the so-called “local temple” type, denoted by Dieter Arnold, which main features are: large number of tiny side chambers, platform for the cult image shrine, and deep wall niches for sacred crocodile images.¹³⁸

It is not completely clear what local form of Sobek was worshipped there, as no inscriptions have been found in the temple. Some Egyptologists suggest the name Soxis (Egyptian *sbk-jw* “Sobek has come” or *z3-sbk* “The son of Sobek”) and Psosnaus,¹³⁹ but generally accepted name is Soknopaios (derived from Egyptian *sbk nb p3i(w)*: “Sobek, the lord of the Island”). However, it was not the only god worshipped in the Northern temple. In the precinct there were found several images and figurines of the youthful god Harpocrates; the goddess Isis as mother of Horus and Isis-Thermouthis as the protector goddess of harvest; Osiris-Serapis as god of resurrection; and Nilos/Hapi and Nefertum – Egyptian gods, very closely connected to the Nile and assimilated to Sobek/Soknopaios.¹⁴⁰

The University of Michigan expedition has also found in the the outer court of the Northern temple a large fire altar bearing the relief of Zeus Ammon Serapis head.¹⁴¹ It led Boak to the idea that the temple was devoted to “Souchos in the form of Soknopaios combined with that of Zeus Ammon Serapis Helios and possibly that of Isis.”¹⁴² The discovery of a small statue of Soknopaios with the crocodile body and hawk head (figure 2), found in the inner court of the Northern temple,¹⁴³ and fragments of a magical cippus from the Southern temple, depicting Harpocrates standing on two crocodiles (The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore 22.332; figure 3), allowed the University of Michigan team to suggest that Soknopaios in Karanis merged with

¹³⁷ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC-AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab conquest*, 171-172

¹³⁸ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 253

¹³⁹ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 153-164

¹⁴⁰ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 38-42

¹⁴¹ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 40

¹⁴² Arthur E. R. Boak, *Karanis: The Temples, Coin Hoards, Botanical and Zoological Reports. Seasons 1924-31*, 14

¹⁴³ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: Der Römische Pharao und seine Tempel. Bd. III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen*, 101

Horus the child/Harpocrates and took on aspect of Horus, the son of Isis.¹⁴⁴ Therefore it is possible to speak of a traditional Egyptian triad in the Northern temple, consisting of Isis-Thermouthis, Osiris-Serapis and Soknopaios, closely associated with Horus-Harpocrates.

The other important artefact, found in the inner sanctuary of the Northern temple, is a partial mummy of a crocodile that together with a number of crocodile mummies to the south-west of the temple, below the original ground level, may imply a subterranean crypt for the mummies.¹⁴⁵ According to Richard Wilkinson, the crypt may serve for giving oracles by hidden priests, keeping mummies or other valuable items, or even as a symbolic tomb of the god¹⁴⁶ – the cases known from many other temples, including the famous tomb of Osiris in Karnak.¹⁴⁷ As all Fayum temples of Sobek, except the one in Dionysias, have subterranean crypts - we can suggest with high degree of certainty the existence of the god's tombs.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, Herodotus also mentions subterranean tombs, where the burials of sacred crocodiles were kept, but unfortunately, he was refused to see them.¹⁴⁹

Both Southern and Northern temples of Karanis had voice oracles, which functioned from the late Ptolemaic period till the abandonment of the temples in 3AD. Within each altar, there is a small hidden chamber that can be entered through a low opening along one side (figure 4): it was constructed for the priest delivering oracle responses.¹⁵⁰ Boak describes that beneath the huge plinths, that apparently supported mummified crocodiles as images of god, there were tiny rooms

¹⁴⁴ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 39

¹⁴⁵ Terry G. Wilfong, "The University of Michigan Excavation of Karanis (1924-1935)" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 229

¹⁴⁶ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 68

¹⁴⁷ François Leclère, "Données nouvelles sur les inhumations de figurines osiriennes. Le tombeau d'Osiris à Karnak" in: Zahi Hawass (ed.), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. Proceedings of the Eight International Congress of Egyptologists* (Cairo, New York, 2003) 295-303

¹⁴⁸ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 2004) 191

¹⁴⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 148-149

¹⁵⁰ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* 37

that could have been entered only from the far side of the base¹⁵¹ – so the god was actually speaking.¹⁵²

There is no much evidence about the cult of Sobek in the domestic sphere, however, in some Roman houses there were found decorative wall-niches (house C 119), that are thought to serve as shrines for household gods.¹⁵³ The images of the deities were painted on the walls or small sacred sculptures were placed inside. Before the shrine, an oil-lamp was lit and offerings had been made. Some of Karanis papyri refer to ritual devotions in such altars.¹⁵⁴ Among domestic wall paintings from Karanis, there are some showing high degrees of syncretism: Harpocrates with crocodile in his left hand¹⁵⁵ or Heron, a soldier god with a solar aspect.¹⁵⁶

2.2.4 Bakchias

Bakchias (Demotic *gnw.t km wr*, Greek Βακχιάς, Latin *Bakchias*¹⁵⁷), modern name is Kom/Umm el-Atl (كوم القطل / كوم الاثل),¹⁵⁸ is a small settlement, located on the north-eastern border of the Fayum oasis in Herakleides meris (map 2), on the ancient caravan road from Memphis to the capital of the Fayum Krokodilopolis-Arsinoe.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹ Arthur E. R. Boak and Enoch E. Peterson, *Topographical and Architectural Report of Excavations during the Seasons 1924-28*, 4-36

¹⁵² David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: assimilation and resistance*, 150-151

¹⁵³ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 31

¹⁵⁴ David Frankfurter, “Religious practice and piety” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 332

¹⁵⁵ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Égypte: iconographies, pantheons et cultes dans le Fayoum hellénise des IIe-IIIe siècles de notre ère* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2013) 53

¹⁵⁶ Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BC to 395 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) 246

¹⁵⁷ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=392&i=1> Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹⁵⁸ Günter Poethke, “Bakchias” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 1*, 605-606

¹⁵⁹ Cassandra Vivian, *The Western Desert of Egypt: an explorer’s handbook* (Cairo-New York: American University in Cairo press, 2008) 231

Named after the god Bacchos or Dionysos,¹⁶⁰ this town was founded in 3 century BC in Ptolemaic times and abandoned somewhere around 4th century AD. Nowadays the archeological area of Bakchias consists of two big mounds with living quarters in the north-east, necropolis in the west, and small mud-brick temple of Sobek in the local twin form of Soknobkonneus (*sbk nb gnw.t* “Sobek, the lord of Genut” or *sbk-jnpw* “Sobek-Anubis”¹⁶¹) and Soknobrais (*sbk r' nb r3 hs* “Sobek of the terrific throat.”)¹⁶²

After the short survey in search for papyri by Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt in 1986, Bakchias was left almost unexcavated until 1993, when the joint Italian team of Universities of Bologna and Lecce started systematic excavations there under the direction of Sergio Pernigotti and Mario Capasso.¹⁶³

The Italian mission has identified in Bakchias five temple structures labelled A, B, C, D, E. However, the state of preservation is too bad to reconstruct the main deities and theology of all temples. The best preserved is the brick temple of Soknobkonneus (temple C), started under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC). It consists of three main halls and many small chambers and was once famous for its question oracle.¹⁶⁴ The temple of Soknobrais is labelled as temple E, but is badly damaged.¹⁶⁵ Another small temple of the Ptolemaic epoch (temple B) probably was dedicated to the main Fayum deity – Sobek the Shedtite-Horus residing in Shedet. The excavation team has found there fragments of reliefs with crocodiles. Temple B is situated on the north-eastern corner of temple A, the main deity of which is not possible to identify.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 135

¹⁶¹ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and David G. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri*, 22

¹⁶² Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

¹⁶³ La Missione Archeologica Congiunta Delle Universita di Bologna e Lecce a Kom Umm El-Atl : <http://siba2.unile.it/images/papiri/backias.html> Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹⁶⁴ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 159

¹⁶⁵ Gabriele Bitelli, Mario Capasso, Paola Davoli and Sergio Pernigotti, *The Bologna and Lecce Universities joint Archaeological Mission in Egypt: Ten Years of Excavations at Bakchias (1993-2003). Gli Album del Centro di Studi Papirologici dell'Universita degli Studii di Lecce 4* (Napoli: Graus editore, 2007) 2-60

¹⁶⁶ Anna Morini, “Oggetti del culto di Sobek a Bakchias” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El coccodrillo e il cobra: aspetti dell'universo religioso egiziano nel Fayyum e altrove. Atti del colloquio Bologna - 20/21 aprile 2005*, 167-178

The temple of Soknobkonneus possessed a large archive¹⁶⁷ and the Italian mission has found a few interesting documents, for example, a banker's receipt for the priests of Soknobkonneus, who should pay a tax to the Sobek temple in Krokodilopolis.¹⁶⁸ This find, on the one hand, once more confirms the dominant role of Krokodilopolis among the Fayum crocodile cults; and on the other hand, may indirectly hint at the existence in Bakchias of a small temple of Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet (temple B according to Sergio Pernigotti and Mario Capasso¹⁶⁹).

The cults of other gods such as Amun, Bastet, Isis, Pnepheros and Greek *Dioscuri* (Castor and Polydeuces – patrons of horsemen and sailors) are attested in Bakchias.¹⁷⁰ The most important goddess of the town seems to be Renenutet – the ancient cobra goddess of Narmouthis/Medinet Maadi – assimilated to Isis and worshipped in Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum in the form of Isis-Thermouthis. Fragments of seals with cobra images have been found in Bakchias. Besides the title *js.t wr.t sn.t ntr hryt jb t3-š* “Isis the grand, sister of the god, who resides on that lake” is attested. There are different suggestions on Isis-Thermouthis cult in Bakchias: she could be worshipped in Bakchias as a mother, sister or consort of Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet. The Greek form of Isis-Hathor-Aphrodite indicates that this goddess was popular among both Egyptian and Greek inhabitants of Bakchias.¹⁷¹

2.2.5 Tebtynis

Tebtynis (Demotic *tp-dbn, t3-b 'n (t3-tn - t3-btn - t3-nb-tp-tn - t3-nb.t-t3-tn)*, Greek *Τεβτυνίς*),¹⁷² modern name is Umm el-Breigat (أم البريجات), is one of the most southern points of the Fayum

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth H. Gilliam, “The Archives of the Temple of Soknobraisis at Bacchias” in: *YCS 10* (1974) 179-281

¹⁶⁸ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and David G. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri*, 110

¹⁶⁹ Gabriele Bitelli, Mario Capasso, Paola Davoli and Sergio Pernigotti, *The Bologna and Lecce Universities joint Archaeological Mission in Egypt: Ten Years of Excavations at Bakchias (1993-2003)*, 2-60

¹⁷⁰ Günter Poethke, “Bakchias” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 1*, 606

¹⁷¹ Sergio Pernigotti, “Non solo coccodrilli: Isis a Bakchias” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El coccodrillo e il cobra: aspetti dell'universo religioso egiziano nel Fayyum e altrove. Atti del colloquio Bologna - 20/21 aprile 2005*, 209-218

¹⁷² The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=2287
Accessed on 20.04.1014

oasis in Polemon meris (map 2), famous for its Greek, Coptic and Demotic papyri and the temple of the local god Soknebtynis with an extensive crocodile necropolis.¹⁷³

Founded in the Middle Kingdom by Amenemhat III, Tebtynis probably stood on the shore of el-Gharag lake, which completely evaporated and disappeared around 3^d century AD – the date, always connected with the end of Tebtynis’s “golden age”¹⁷⁴ – while the city still existed until 12th century AD.¹⁷⁵

After Grenfell and Hunt’s excavations in 1899-1900 a lot of papyri were uncovered and studied by the newly founded Center for the Tebtynis Papyri, University of California, Berkley.¹⁷⁶ In the 1930s Societa Italiana per la Ricercari dei Papiri in Egitto also worked in Tebtynis under the direction of Evaristo Breccia, Carlo Anti and Gilberto Bagnani (1930-35)¹⁷⁷, however, their main aim again was papyrology.¹⁷⁸ Only in 1988 the first major archaeological excavations by the joint Italo-French mission started in Tebtynis, lead by Claudio Gallazzi (Papyrological Institute of the State University of Milan) and Gisèle Hadji-Minaglou (Institut français d’archéologie orientale).¹⁷⁹

The French-Italian mission thoroughly excavated and mapped the site,¹⁸⁰ which consists of a large temenos area and long dromos with Ptolemaic and Roman kiosks on the north; *deipneteria*

¹⁷³ Wolfgang Helck, “Tebtynis” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 6* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1984) 245-246

¹⁷⁴ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 161

¹⁷⁵ Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/tebtynis/>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹⁷⁶ Center for the Tebtynis Papyri, University of California: <http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu/collection/tebtunis>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹⁷⁷ Girolamo Vitelli, *Papiri greci e latini, 10. Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto* (Firenze: Stabilimento Tipografico E. Ariani, 1932)

¹⁷⁸ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 158

¹⁷⁹ Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/tebtynis/>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

¹⁸⁰ Claudio Galazzi and Gisele Hadji-Mingalou, *Tebtynis I: la reprise des fouilles et le quartier de la chapelle d’Isis-Thermouthis* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2000) 4-13

on the west; Isis-Thermouthis chapel and dromos of Min or Osiris temple on the north-east; and public bathhouse with a few other buildings on the north-west (map 3).¹⁸¹

The main temple of the local form of Sobek called Soknebtynis (Egyptian *sbk nb btn* “Sobek, the lord of Tynis”) is located on the south-western side of the town, while the vast majority of the buildings are located on the east.¹⁸² The present-day remains of the Soknebtynis temple are that built by Ptolemaios I Soter (304-282 BC) at the place of an older structure. The temple precinct consisted of a paved processional dromos about 120 m long, with two kiosks, a few cult buildings and statues of lions and sphinxes. At the pylon there was a sacred tree and a royal statue of a Ptolemaic ruler in Egyptian style. Thick enclosure wall surrounded the limestone temple and priests’ houses. The temple precinct was completed by Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos (80-58/55-51 BC).¹⁸³ Two uninscribed kiosks, roughly dated to the Roman period, probably Augustian times,¹⁸⁴ stood in front of the temple and along the processional way.¹⁸⁵ Roman dromos leads from the main temenos to the western desert, probably towards an underground sanctuary, which, according to some scholars, could be the funerary temple or symbolic tomb of the crocodile god.¹⁸⁶

A large temenos area spreads over a distance of 63 x 113 m. In the first court of the temple the French-Italian team has found small chapel with 3 niches, remnants of a sacred tree and a circle structure 10 x 7 m, made of unfired mudbrick, which is supposed to be the place where the sacred crocodile of Soknebtynis was living.¹⁸⁷ Although Herodotus in his “History” emphasizes that the living crocodile was kept only in the main city of the Fayum province – Arsinoe-

¹⁸¹ Gisele Hadji-Minaglou, “L’habitat à Tebtynis à la lumière des fouilles récentes: Ier s.av – Ier s.apr. J.K.” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum: texts and archaeology: proceedings of the Third International Fayum Symposium, Freudentadt, May- June 1, 2007* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008) 124

¹⁸² Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 164

¹⁸³ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 155

¹⁸⁴ Elisabeta Valtz, “Italian excavations at Tebtynis 1930-1936: the objects at Egyptian Museum, Torino” in: Jean Leclant (ed.), *VI Congresso Internazionale di Egittologia. Atti* (Turin, Italy: International Association of Egyptologists, 1992) 625-627

¹⁸⁵ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 254

¹⁸⁶ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 148-149

¹⁸⁷ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 9-10

Krokodilopolis¹⁸⁸, there is evidence about the nursery for crocodiles in Medinet Maadi and numerous crocodile necropoleis in another places – which makes Herodotus’ account doubtful.¹⁸⁹

Between the first and the second court there is a pylon, bearing a very interesting relief, where the royal sphinx with a raised hand is depicted before Soknebtynis in human form with the crocodile head, sitting on the throne (figure 5). Between them there are two feathers - a symbol of Nefertum – a solar deity, associated with a newborn sun and creation myth.¹⁹⁰

Before the temple entrance there was an open vestibule of Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos (80-58/55-51 BC) called *p3 šš ‘ hftḥ sbk nb tn p3 ntr ‘3 –* “Oratory of the sacred voice of Sobek, the lord of Tebtynis, the great god” – decorated with offering scenes and depicting Soknebtynis in a human form with crocodile head before the offering table (figure 6). Particularly interesting is the scene¹⁹¹ of the annual festival procession of the mummified Soknebtynis,¹⁹² which depicts two sacred barks, transporting two images of the god: the so-called “Sobek of the South” and “Sobek of the North” (figure 7) – a division we also find in the “Book of the Fayum.”¹⁹³ The images on the bark are not preserved, but the heads of the barks are of a great interest: one of them is a ram head with a sun disc, uraeus and horns, associated with Re, “who navigates on the southern lake”; another is a falcon head with a sun disk and uraeus, associated with Sobek, “who navigates on the northern lake” – the two guises of Sobek, according to the Fayum theology.¹⁹⁴

This annual procession of sacred barks, also known as a Tebtynis processional oracle,¹⁹⁵ can be connected to the subterranean crypt, found in the temple and used probably as a symbolic tomb of the god, where the actual crocodile mummies were kept. Once a year during this festival

¹⁸⁸ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 122-132

¹⁸⁹ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 15-20

¹⁹⁰ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 26-30

¹⁹¹ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 126-129

¹⁹² Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 149

¹⁹³ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch vom Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 87

¹⁹⁴ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 112-143

¹⁹⁵ David Frankfurter, “Religious practice and piety” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 326

procession, celebrating the burial of the god, a crocodile mummy was carried out of the temple for people to see and ask questions, and then symbolically placed in the crypt-tomb.¹⁹⁶ Besides the crypt, an extensive Ptolemaic crocodile necropolis was adjacent to the temple precinct of Soknebtynis. Interestingly, it included not only burials of adult crocodiles, but also a few dozens of tiny mummies and even crocodile eggs.¹⁹⁷

Crocodile necropolis of Tebtynis is also inseparably connected with papyrology, and Tebtynis is worldly famous for its papyri, which have been found in the unique and very unusual context: already Grenfell and Hunt¹⁹⁸ found about 2000 crocodile mummies wrapped in recycled administrative papyri of Ptolemaic times in Greek, Demotic and Hieratic.¹⁹⁹ The Tebtynis papyri fall into few groups on the basis of their provenance: firstly, texts from the crocodile mummies; secondly, texts from the temple of Soknebtynis and the town; and finally, texts from the human mummies' cartonages.²⁰⁰ The variety of texts is enormous: from administrative documents to the temple archives (demotic documents, kept now in the British Museum²⁰¹), hymns and oracle dedications to Soknebtynis. Among the most interesting examples are mythological manual of nomes; astronomical papers; a "Book of the Temple"²⁰² and "Daily Ritual of Tebtynis"²⁰³ written in Hieratic and called: *r3.w n.w hw.t-nṯr iry m pr sbk nb btṯnw* – "Utterances of the things of God which are performed in the temple of Soknebtynis."²⁰⁴ Probably the papyri, used in crocodile mummies, originally belonged to the priesthood of Soknebtynis, and were later used by them in mummification. Although some Egyptologists think, that the priests could intentionally bury the

¹⁹⁶ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 191

¹⁹⁷ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC – AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab conquest*, 173

¹⁹⁸ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and David G. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900); Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and Gilbert J. Smyly, *The Tebtunis papyri* (London: Milford, 1933)

¹⁹⁹ H  l  ne Guvigny, "The finds of papyri: the archaeology of papyrology" in: Roger S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 46

²⁰⁰ The Center for the Tebtunis Papyri: <http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu/form.html> Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁰¹ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt et al. (eds.), *Tebtunis papyri vol.1-3* (London – New York: Oxford University Press, 1902-1903)

²⁰² Cassandra Vivian, *The Western Desert of Egypt: an explorer's handbook*, 251

²⁰³ Joachim Friedrich Quack, * gyptische Rituale der griechisch-r mischen Zeit* (T bingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014)

²⁰⁴ David Frankfurter, "Religious practice and piety" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 462

large amount of papyri (for instance with sacred texts, hymns and annual rules for the fraternity of the temple priesthood) alongside the crocodile mummies as offerings to Soknebtynis.²⁰⁵

Another intriguing find in the temenos area, connected to papyrology, is the sacred library of the temple, that included such important texts as hymn-glorification of Sobek, published by Giuseppe Botti;²⁰⁶ divine rituals and mythological manuel of nomes;²⁰⁷ and the hieratic version of the “Book of the Fayum” from Roman times, which belonged to the high priest of Soknebtynis and was published later by Gilbert Bagnani.²⁰⁸ The “Book of the Fayum”, that would be discussed below in more detail, is the main theological text of the province, explaining local theology and praising pantheistic nature of the Fayum crocodile god. The find of this important document in Tebtynis makes the city a very prominent cultic and theological centre of the Fayum.

Nevertheless, the theology of Tebtynis remains highly controversial subject. There are several viewpoints on the names of the local crocodile gods of the city. The most attested name is Soknebtynis (Egyptian *sbk nb btn* “Sobek, the lord of Tynis“) and he is assumed to be the main god, residing in the Tebtynis temple. The name Sokopichonsis suggests the existance of the other crocodile god (thus forming a traditional local pair of Fayum crocodiles) and his possible identification with the moon-god Chonsu (*sbk-hnsw* “Sobek-Chonsu”),²⁰⁹ who had his small sanctuary shared with Souchos²¹⁰ near the main temle.²¹¹ Blocks with the name Sobek-Hapi, associated with Nile inundation in hieroglyphs have been also found in the temenos area.²¹²

²⁰⁵The Center for the Tebtunis Papyri: <http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu/form.html> Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁰⁶ Giuseppe Botti, *La Glorificazione di Sobk e del Fayum in un papiro ieratico da Tebtynis* (Copenhagen : Ejnar Munksgaard, 1959)

²⁰⁷ Gloria Rosati and Jürgen Osing, *Papiri geroglifici e ieratici de Tebtynis* (Firenze: Ist. Papirologico G. Vitelli, 1998)

²⁰⁸ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 201

²⁰⁹ Wolfgang Helck, “Tebtnis” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 6*, 245-246

²¹⁰ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

²¹¹ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 155

²¹² Vincent Rondot, *Tebtnis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 76-77

The French-Italian team of excavators also assumes the existence of the two syncretic forms of Sobek in Tebtynis: “the Osirian deity” Sobek-Geb-Kronos²¹³ (the left side of the temple was dedicated to him) and “the solar Horus deity” Sobek-Re-Harachte (the right side of the temple).²¹⁴ The most important goddess of the town was definitely Isis-Thermouthis,²¹⁵ a syncretic form of Isis and Renenutet, who owned a small mud brick temple with limestone doorways to the west of the Soknebtynis temple.²¹⁶

The wall paintings from the temple of Soknebtynis from 2 AD show the great variety of syncretic and hellenized forms of Sobek in Roman Tebtynis. One of them is Soknebtynis-Kronos (Sobek-Geb-Kronos), represented as a man, sitting on the throne, together with the ithyphallic Min of Akhmim (Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria 22978).²¹⁷ The cult of Min is attested in Tebtynis demotic papyri mentioning the *p3 hm ntr* and *w b* priests of Min of Akhmim in Tebtynis.²¹⁸ Another wall-paintings show Soknebtynis sitting, in human form and Roman clothes, with a small crocodile on his left hand, sometimes – alone (Phoebe Heart Museum of Anthropology 6-21384 and 6-21385),²¹⁹ sometimes with Amon (Berlin Staatliche Ägyptisches Museum 15978, figure 8)²²⁰ or other gods, such as Re, Horus and Pramarres, the deified 12th dynasty pharaoh Amenemhat III.²²¹ The table from Pushkin Museum in Moscow number 6860 depicts Pramarres and Soknebtynis with a sun disk and uraeus standing face to face (figure 9). Although the figures are very much hellenized, Soknebtynis still has a traditional crocodile

²¹³ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 192

²¹⁴ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: Der Römische Pharao und seine Tempel. Bd. III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen*, 97-98

²¹⁵ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 150-151

²¹⁶ Claudio Galazzi and Gisele Hadji-Mingalou, *Tebtynis I: la reprise des fouilles et le quartier de la chapelle d’Isis-Thermouthis*, 3-28

²¹⁷ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte*, 75-77

²¹⁸ Albert Elsasser and Vera M. Frederickson, *Ancient Egypt: An Exhibition at the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) 91

²¹⁹ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte*, 196-197

²²⁰ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte*, 122-127

²²¹ Henry Riad, “Le culte d’Amenemhat au Fayum à l’époque ptolémaïque” in: *ASAE* 55 (1958) 201-206; Otto Rubensohn, “Pramarres” in: *ZÄS* 42 (1905) 111-115

head.²²² The same scene is depicted on stela Caire IE 28159 (figure 10).²²³ The cult of Amenemhat III was so strong in the Fayum in Late and Ptolemaic period that in Roman epoch Pramarres was already seen as one more guise of Sobek.²²⁴

From the unknown, maybe domestic context, comes the stone relief representing Soknebtynis in human form and Greek dress with small crocodile in his hands and solar rays halo around him (Egyptian Museum in Cairo CG 26902, figure 11). Private worship of the main god of Tebtynis is also proved by the domestic shrines in the wall-niches, similar to those found in Karanis.²²⁵

Another important place for the cult of Sobek is the nearby village Kerkeosiris,²²⁶ famous for its small shrine of Petesuchos and Thoeris, who was worshipped there as a mother of Sobek.²²⁷ Among other gods, attested in Kerkeosiris, are Souchos, Soknebtynis, Thoth, the *Dioscuri* and Osiris, as the name *grg.t wsjr* “The settle(ment) of Osiris” implies.²²⁸

2.2.6 Narmouthis

Narmouthis (Egyptian *d3*, Demotic *njw.t-rnn.t* “The town of Renenutet”, Greek *Ναρμουθις*),²²⁹ which modern name is Medinet Maadi (مدينة ماضي), is a town, situated in the southwestern edge of the Fayum in Polemon meris²³⁰ (map 2).

²²² Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte*, 166-169, 241-242

²²³ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Egypte*, 242

²²⁴ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L’Egypte Restituée. T.3.*, 182

²²⁵ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 134

²²⁶ Sergio Donadoni, “Kerkeosiris” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3*, 409

²²⁷ Dorothy Crawford, *Kerkeosiris: An Egyptian village in the Ptolemaic period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

²²⁸ Arthur M.F.W. Verhoogt, *Menches, Komogrammateus of Kerkeosiris: the Doings and Dealings of a Village Scribe in the Late Ptolemaic Period (120-110 BC)* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1997) 9-10

²²⁹ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=1421
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²³⁰ Edda Bresciani, “Medinet Maadi” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3*, 1271-1272

This site is known from the Middle Kingdom mainly for its fine triple-shrine sandstone temple of the cobra goddess Renenutet (later transferred to Ermouthis and Isis Thermouthis),²³¹ built by Amenemhat III or IV, restored in 19th dynasty and extended further in Ptolemaic times.²³²

Among the main excavating missions are the one of the University of Milan, directed firstly by Achille Vogliano²³³ in 1934-39²³⁴ and then by Edda Bresciani in 1976-77²³⁵; and the University of Pisa, directed by Edda Bresciani in 1978.²³⁶

The Italian team excavated and described the main Narmouthis temple (labelled A): it consisted of the two-columned portico, two halls and three chapels, dedicated to Sobek of Shedet, Renenutet and Horus.²³⁷ Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (145-116 BC) extended the Middle Kingdom structure, adding to it two larger pronaoi, the inner one with two columns, and the outer with four columns at the entrance; and a processional road, leading to the wide gate and a kiosk with columns of an unknown date.²³⁸ The main place of the temple under the Ptolemies was a chapel with three niches for Sobek of Shedet, Isis-Thermouthis-Renenutet and Pramarres, the deified Amenemhat III, also associated with Horus and kingly power.²³⁹ While Sobek and Isis-Thermouthis were worshipped there as “beneficent gods” of harvest, Pramarres-Horus was

²³¹ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im Römischen Reich: Der Römische Pharao und seine Tempel. Bd. III., Heiligtümer und religiöses Leben in den ägyptischen Wüsten und Oasen*, 99

²³² Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 137

²³³ Achille Vogliano, *Primo Rapporto degli scavi a Medinet Madi, Milano 1936; Secondo rapporto degli scavi a Medinet Madi* (Milano, 1937)

²³⁴ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 158

²³⁵ Edda Bresciani, “L’attività archeologica in Egitto (1966-76) dell’Istituto di Papirologia di Milano” in: *Quaderni della Ricerca Scientifica 100* (1978) 243

²³⁶ Edda Bresciani, “Medinet Maadi” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.3*, 1271-72

²³⁷ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1000

²³⁸ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 160

²³⁹ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L’Égypte Restituée. T.3.*, 195

strongly connected with royal theology as a ruler and guarantor of Maat.²⁴⁰

To the south-east of the main temple there was a small chapel, dedicated to the traditional Fayum pair of crocodile gods, and a unique crocodile farm, where crocodile eggs and mummies were discovered.²⁴¹ This nursery, connected to the so-called temple C, had a small 30 cm square basin for the newborn crocodiles. They were probably raised up to become votive offerings, sold to the local worshippers and pilgrims from other parts of Egypt and the Fayum.²⁴²

Egyptologists still dispute about the name of the local crocodile god of Narmouthis. Alongside the name Sokonopi (*sbk-h pi* “Sobek-Hapi”), such names as Petesouchos (*p3-dj-sbk* “He who has been given by Souchos”²⁴³), Tasouchos (*t3-sbk* “That one of Sobek”) and Marresouchos (*m3 t-r ‘-sbk* – the late syncretic god that united Pramarrès and Souchos in one deity) have been attested.²⁴⁴

2.2.7 Theadelphia

Theadelphia (Demotic *p3- ‘wy-n-sn.t*, Greek Θεαδέλφεια),²⁴⁵ which modern name is Kharabat Ihrit (خارجات اهریت), is a small town in the west of the Fayum oasis, in the meris of Themistos, situated on the edge of the desert²⁴⁶ (map 2).

The settlement was founded by Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285-246 BC), who also constructed there a small mud-brick temple, and was abandoned only in the middle of 4th century AD. The

²⁴⁰ Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.* (Bologna: Ante Quem: 2006) 117-137

²⁴¹ Cassandra Vivian, *The Western desert of Egypt: an explorer’s handbook*, 242-243

²⁴² Edda Bresciani, “Sobek, Lord of the Land of the Lake” in: Salima Ikram (ed.), *Divine Creatures: animal mummies in Ancient Egypt* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005) 204

²⁴³ Angiolo Menchetti, “La devozione e il culto per la divinità di Narmouthis. La testimonianza degli ostraka da Medinet Madi (OMM)” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El cocodrillo e il cobra*, 59-60

²⁴⁴ Angiolo Menchetti, “La devozione e il culto per la divinità di Narmouthis. La testimonianza degli ostraka da Medinet Madi (OMM)” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *El cocodrillo e il cobra*, 59-69

²⁴⁵ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=2349&i=1> Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁴⁶ Wolfgang Helck, “Theadelphia” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 6*, 463

temple was dedicated to the crocodile god Pnepheros (Egyptian *p3-nfr-hr* “That one of the beautiful face“), although nowadays the majority of Egyptologists are inclined to think that the temple in Theadelphia had a traditional pair of Fayum crocodile gods: Pnepheros and Petesouchos (*p3-dj-sbk* “He who has been given by Souchos“).²⁴⁷

Though famous for its unique wall paintings, Theadelphia still remains partially unexcavated and almost unpublished. After the short excavations by Otto Rubensohn in 1902,²⁴⁸ the Italian mission worked there in 1924-25, and in 1926, Evaristo Breccia published some of the results in his publication on Greco-Roman art in Egypt.²⁴⁹

The main temple of Theadelphia, devoted to Pnepheros, consisted of a short dromos, propylon and the temple house with a sacred tree and a well. The temple house enclosed two courts and a central stone chapel with three cult niches.²⁵⁰ In his study of different objects found in the temple, Breccia describes small 30 x 22 cm limestone model of a basin with a figure of a little crocodile inside (figure 12).²⁵¹ Together with a crocodile necropolis,²⁵² this find can imply the existence of a real pool for sacred crocodiles inside the temenos. Among other interesting items from the temple are: cultic equipment, portable shrine for processions (kept now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo) and an embalmed crocodile, found on the processional stretcher (Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, figure 13).²⁵³

The temple of Pnepheros in Theadelphia is world-famous for its wall paintings, now kept in the

²⁴⁷ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier* (Bergamo: Officine dell'istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1926): http://www.cealex.org/sitecealex/diffusion/etud_anc_alex/LVR_000053_w.pdf
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁴⁸ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 157; Otto Rubensohn, “Aus griechisch-römischen Häusern des Fayum” in: *Jahrbuch des deutschen archäologischen Institut* 20 (1905) 1-25

²⁴⁹ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 96-295

²⁵⁰ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 159

²⁵¹ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, tav. LXIV.4

²⁵² Wolfgang Helck, “Theadelphia” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 6*, 463

²⁵³ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. LVI.2

Egyptian Museum in Cairo.²⁵⁴ The most significant of them is the depiction of the mummified sacred crocodile with an atef-crown on the processional stretcher, carried by the procession of priests (figure 14). This unique fresco depicts the so-called processional oracle of the god Pnepheros, and one can see the priests on the right interpreting the movements of the god's mummy during the procession.²⁵⁵ Other well-known paintings are of a military god Heron, a divine Thracian horseman with a solar aspect, worshipped by Macedonian and Roman soldiers. As Theadelphia was one of the places, founded by the Ptolemies for their army veterans, it is understandable why Heron was so popular among the inhabitants of this town.²⁵⁶ However, even on these paintings the main god of the temple Pnepheros is present, in a form of a small mummified crocodile at the bottom, probably here in the role of a protective deity (figure 15). Some examples also show Heron, standing on two mummified crocodiles (Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, 20223, 20225), which is again an argument for twin crocodile gods in Theadelphia.²⁵⁷ Some Egyptologists try to interpret these traditional pair of crocodile gods in already known from other Fayum places Osiris myth, because one of the crocodiles on the wall-paintings with Heron wears an atef crown, characteristic of Osiris, and another – a solar disk with uraeus, characteristic for Horus (figures 15 and 16).²⁵⁸

Theadelphia is a very rich source of private votive stelae that usually depict Pnepheros in a form of a living crocodile, lying on the pedestal. Sometimes he is shown alone, but more often, there is a figure of a worshipper before the god and the short text, telling his name and position (figure 17).²⁵⁹ The interesting and rare example is a stele from Breccia's publication,²⁶⁰ where the deity is depicted as a living crocodile with uraeus, lying in the pedestal, made of lotus flowers, while the worshipper is also presenting him a flower (figure 18). This depiction certainly emphasizes Sobek's relation to water, vegetation and fertility, and his assimilation to Hapi as the Nile

²⁵⁴ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 137

²⁵⁵ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. XLIV.3

²⁵⁶ Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BC to 395 CE*, 246

²⁵⁷ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d'Égypte*, 210

²⁵⁸ David Frankfurter, "Religious practice and piety" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 446

²⁵⁹ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. LXV.1.2

²⁶⁰ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. LXIV.1

personification and probably Nefertum as a newborn sun-god and symbol of the first lotus-flower, that has arisen from the primeval waters.

2.2.8 Euhemeria

Euhemeria (Greek Εὐημερία),²⁶¹ modern name is Qasr el-Banat (قصر البنات),²⁶² is a small town, situated in the western part of the Fayum, in Themistos meris, a few km north of Theadelphia (map 2).

Unfortunately, nowadays this small site is completely destroyed and almost nothing remains of it, which makes the excavations impossible.²⁶³ However, from the travelers and excavators of 19th and early 20th centuries we know that Euhemeria had at least two temples, probably built under the Ptolemaic dynasty: one – dedicated to Souchos and Isis in the unknown forms; and the other – dedicated to three guises of the crocodile god called Pnepheros (Egyptian *p3-nfr-ḥr* “That one of the beautiful face“), Soxis (Egyptian *sbk-jw* “Sobek has come” or *z3-sbk* “The son of Sobek”) and Psosnaus,²⁶⁴ the most intriguing deity of these three.

The Greek name was definitely derived from Egyptian *sn.wj* “two brothers” – and most Egyptologists agree that *sn.wj* was a very old, if not archaic, crocodile god of the Fayum region, who later split into well-attested twin crocodile gods of the Ptolemaic epoch. However, the reason of that split and the origin of Psosnaus remain unknown and highly controversial. All that is known for certain is that in Ptolemaic and Roman times Psosnaus was venerated in the Fayum as the father of Sobek/Souchos,²⁶⁵ and the most important places of his cult were Euhemeria, Krokodilopolis and Kerkeosiris, where he could be worshipped in two guises: as Psosnaus, the

²⁶¹ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=675&i=41>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁶² Farouk Gomaà, “Qasr el-Banat” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 41

²⁶³ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L’Égypte Restituée. T.3.*, 192

²⁶⁴ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 153-164

²⁶⁵ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1004-1006

father of Sobek, and Osiris, the father of Horus the Shedtite – Sobek, residing in Shedet.²⁶⁶

2.2.9 Dionysias

Dionysias (Demotic *Tywnss - p3-dmi-n-m3y* (“The new village”), Greek Διονυσιάς),²⁶⁷ which modern name is Qasr Qarun (قصر قارون), is the westernmost settlement of the Fayum oasis²⁶⁸ in the meris of Themistos (map 2), a former crossroad of the caravan routes from the west desert’s Wadi Rayan to Wadi Natrun and the Nile valley.²⁶⁹

Founded on the western shore of the Birket Qarun lake in 2 century BC by Ptolemaios III Euergetes I (246-221 BC) as a military camp for Greek-Macedonian soldiers, Dionysias protected the borders of the Fayum from the nomads in Ptolemaic and Roman times until about 6th century AD.²⁷⁰ Famous for its vineyards, bathhouses and Medinet Quta copper mines,²⁷¹ the town is also known for the Sobek temple, described already by Charles Audebeau.²⁷²

The Franco-Swiss mission worked in Dionysias in 1948-50 under the direction of Jacques Schwartz,²⁷³ and excavated the large, uninscribed limestone temple of a local crocodile god. Although built in Egyptian style, it is quite difficult to date. Comparing its structure and building methods with Karanis “southern temple”, Dieter Arnold suggests the time of Nero (54-68

²⁶⁶ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

²⁶⁷ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=565&i=38>
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁶⁸ Dieter Arnold, “Fajjum” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd.2*, 92

²⁶⁹ Cassandra Vivian, *The Western desert of Egypt: an explorer’s handbook*, 240-241

²⁷⁰ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven: http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/565.php?geo_id=565
Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁷¹ The Fayum Project of the University of Leuven:
http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/565.php?geo_id=565 Accessed on 20.04.1014

²⁷² Charles Audebeau, “Les toitures du temple de Kasr-el-Karoun. La ville détruite environnant le sanctuaire et le lac Karoun” in: *BIE 11* (1917) 171-194

²⁷³ Jacques Schwartz and Henri Wilde, *Qasr-Qarun/Dionysias 1948* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1950)

AD).²⁷⁴

The vast enclosed temenos area, with dromos, a four-columned procession kiosk and Roman *deipneterion*,²⁷⁵ consists of the original pronaos with 12 columns; three halls with numerous side rooms and crypts; and a sanctuary with three niches, two long and one short. This structure implies the existence of a triad in Dionysias temple, with a traditional pair of local crocodile gods and one more deity, probably some form of a sun-god or an Osirian deity.²⁷⁶ The very notable feature of the temple is a “roof chapel” above the sanctuary, still in place, consisting of an open court and a tiny chamber.²⁷⁷ Dionysias temple is particularly known by one relief, which depicts a Ptolemaic king making offerings to Souchos, in human form with crocodile head.²⁷⁸

Both Richard Wilkinson²⁷⁹ and Paola Davoli²⁸⁰ speak of the existence of one more mud-brick temple in the south of the town, probably of Sobek-Re or some other form of the sun-god, which can be also supported by the discovery of the mural painting of Sol Invictus – special sun deity of the Roman soldiers, dated by Davoli to the earlier 4th century AD.²⁸¹

2.3 Local temple type in the Fayum

In spite of many differences in local pantheons and cultic practices in all Fayum towns described above, the cult of Sobek in the Fayum developed from the one centre in Shedet and followed similar “rules”, which have defined the so-called local temple type in Karanis, Dionysias, Bakchias, Theadelphia and Tebtynis. It can be characterized as a temple with a large number of

²⁷⁴ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 254

²⁷⁵ Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana* (Napoli: G. Procaccini, 1998) 300-305

²⁷⁶ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L'Égypte Restituée. T.3.*, 192-192

²⁷⁷ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 254

²⁷⁸ Dominic Rathbone, “The Fayyum” in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts*, 138

²⁷⁹ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of the Ancient Egypt*, 137

²⁸⁰ Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana*, 304

²⁸¹ Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana*, 304

small side chambers, a platform for the cult image shrine and deep wall niches for crocodile images.²⁸² The interior part is notable for the free standing bark shrine, surrounded by tiny chapels and rooms.²⁸³

The temple occupies central position in Karanis, Dionysias, and Bacchias; and it stands aside in Tebtynis, Narmouthis and Soknopaiou Nesos.²⁸⁴ It usually has a long dromos and many additional buildings such as *deipneteria*, so-called kiosks and small chapels of minor gods of the town.

2.5 The cult of Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum: local theology and syncretism

The cult of Sobek/Souchos in the Fayum province in Ptolemaic and Roman epoch can be described as very diverse and complex phenomenon, varying and constantly changing both through time and from one place to another.

The crocodile god is attested in the Fayum from Predynastic times, and already from the 12 dynasty Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet establishes himself as a main god of the region. Although in the Middle and New Kingdom the cult of Sobek was rather homogeneous and centered in Shedet, there were already different local temples, dedicated to local forms of Sobek, the best-known example of which is the temple of Sobek, Horus and Renenutet in *d3* (Medinet Madi).

The local theology of the Fayum was developing further in the New Kingdom, when in the hieratic papyrus of 18th dynasty the new name of a crocodile god *p3 sn.wj* (“these two brothers”)

²⁸² Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 253

²⁸³ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 145

²⁸⁴ Paola Davoli, “The Archaeology of the Fayum” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 166

is attested.²⁸⁵ This variation of Sobek became rather prominent in the New Kingdom Fayum,²⁸⁶ and later played extremely important role in the Fayum theology, as the dual crocodile god *sn.wj* (Greek Psosnaus) gave way to the later “twin crocodile gods” of the Fayum in Ptolemaic and Roman times. The reasons of that split remain obscure, but even after it Psosnaus did not vanish from the Fayum; on the contrary, he was venerated there as a father of Sobek.

The existence of local pairs of crocodile gods is probably the most characteristic and striking feature of the Sobek cult in the Fayum in Ptolemaic and Roman times. Holger Kockelmann called this phenomenon *θεοί κροκόδιλοι*.²⁸⁷ Already in Ptolemaic epoch, every significant town of the province had its own temple, dedicated to the local variety of Sobek, worshipped in one, two or even three guises. Each temple had its own local theology, sometimes a traditional Egyptian triad, sometimes additional cults, connected with the main one. Taking into consideration the character of many Fayum towns that have been founded as military settlements for Greek and Macedonian soldiers one can follow the interaction of Greek and Egyptian gods and religious beliefs, which resulted in many syncretic forms of different deities. “The two brothers” – local pairs of crocodile gods – became associated with the Greek *Dioscuri* (Castor and Polydeuces) – patrons of the Greek and Roman soldiers and sailors. Oracle questions to both crocodile gods and *Dioscuri* from Backchias and Soknopaiou Nesos²⁸⁸ confirm the suggestion that the inhabitants of Fayum did not distinguish between these gods: for the Egyptians the crocodile twin-gods were more close and understandable, and for the Greeks – that were *Dioscuri*.

The names of the local forms of Sobek, usually derived from the original Egyptian denominations and rendered in Greek, could be helpful in understanding the real meaning and position of a deity. The comparative table below shows the main crocodile gods of the Fayum towns in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt:

²⁸⁵ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 153-164; Ricardo A. Caminos, *Literary fragments in the hieratic script* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1956) 8

²⁸⁶ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 193

²⁸⁷ Holger Kockelmann, “Sobek doppelt und dreifach Zum Phänomen der Krokodilgötterkonstellationen im Fayum und in anderen Kultorten Ägyptens” in: Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum*, 153-164

²⁸⁸ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt, *Fayum Towns and their Papyri*, 292-293

Name of the town	Name of the local form of Sobek	Translation of the name	Deity assimilated to Sobek
Krokodilopolis	<i>sbk šdtj - ḥr jb šdt</i>	Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet	Horus
Soknopaiou Nesos	Soknopaios (<i>sbk-nb-p3i(w)</i>) Soknopieios/Sokonopi (<i>sbk- ḥ'pi</i>)	Sobek, the lord of the Island Sobek-Hapi	- Hapi
Karanis	Pnepheros (<i>p3-nfr-ḥr</i>) Petesouchos (<i>p3-dj-sbk</i>)	The one of the beautiful face He who has been given by Souchos	- -
Bakchias	Soknobkonneus (<i>sbk nb gnw.t</i>) Soknobraisis (<i>sbk r' nb r3 ḥs</i>)	Sobek, the lord of Genut Sobek of the terrific throat	- -
Tebtynis	Soknebtynis (<i>sbk nb btn</i>) Sokopichonsis (<i>sbk-ḥnsw</i>) Sokonopi (<i>sbk-ḥ'pi</i>) Sobek-Geb *disputable Sobek-Re-Harachte *disputable	Sobek, the lord of Tynis Sobek-Chonsu Sobek-Hapi Sobek-Geb Sobek-Re-Harachte	- Chonsu Hapi Geb Re-Harachte
Narmouthis	<i>sbk šdtj</i> Sokonopi (<i>sbk-ḥ'pi</i>) Petesouchos (<i>p3-dj-sbk</i>) Tasouchos (<i>t3-sbk</i>) Marresouchos (<i>m3't-r'-sbk</i>)	Sobek of Shedet Sobek-Hapi He who has been given by Souchos That one of Sobek Marres-Sobek	Horus? Hapi - - Pramarres – Amenemhat III
Theadelphia	Pnepheros (<i>p3-nfr-ḥr</i>)	The one of the beautiful face	-

	Petesouchos (<i>p3-dj-sbk</i>)	He who has been given by Souchos	-
Euhemeria	Pnepheros (<i>p3-nfr-ḥr</i>)	The one of the beautiful face	-
	Soxis (<i>sbk-jw</i> or <i>z3-sbk</i>)	Sobek has come/	-
	Psosnaus (<i>sn.wj</i>)	The son of Sobek The two brothers	-
Dionysias	Souchos (-Re) * <i>disputable</i>	Sobek – (Re)	Re?

The names clearly fall into three groups:

1. The names, denoting a place of cult (Sobek the Shedtite, Soknokonneus, Soknebtynis and partially Soknopaios);
2. The names emphasizing particular aspect of the god through assimilation to another deity/deified person (Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet, Soknopieios/Sokonopi, Sokopichonsis, Marresouchos and Souchos-Re);
3. The names, that developed from some divine epithets of the god (Soknopaios, Pnepheros, Petesouchos, Soknobraisis, Tasouchos, Soxis, Psosnaus).

The last group is the most complex and controversial of all, partially because some names are obscure and the original Egyptian meaning is not precise; and also because some of the epithets are personal epithets of Sobek, known from the Old Kingdom (“Sobek of the terrific throat”), and some are new, coined probably in Late or Ptolemaic epoch, using the so-called “*nfr ḥr* construction” (“the one of the beautiful face”) or other Egyptian constructions (“He who has been given by Souchos“, “Sobek has come“). The main question arises: **are all these names different forms of the one god or are these already different gods?** The first group can be easily interpreted as different local names for the one god called Sobek/Souchos. The second group deals with syncretic forms: Sobek-Horus, Sobek-Hapi, Sobk-Chonsu, Sobek-Pramarres and Sobek-Re. The third group again is not so homogeneous and could be divided further. Such names as “Sobek of the terrific throat”, “That one of Sobek”, “Sobek has come/ The son of Sobek”, “He who has been given by Souchos” and “Sobek, the lord of the Island” evidently have the name Sobek inside and should denote some form either of Sobek himself or his manifestation, “given” by him to his worshippers. The name “the one of the beautiful face” represents the divine epithet of a god, but does not state that it is Sobek – and we know that this epithet is universal and can relate to many deities, for example, Isis Nepherses in the Fayum. The

name Psoseus (“the two brothers”) is even more controversial, as Psoseus was traditionally seen as a separate crocodile god, the father of Sobek; and formally, he is a “father” of the duine crocodile gods of the Fayum who retained his position as a father-god till Roman times.

2.6 “Book of the Fayum”

As have been emphasized above, the cult of Sobek in the Fayum developed from one centre in the Fayum capital Shedet, Arsinoe-Krokodilopolis in Ptolemaic and Roman times. This city was a centre of the Fayum theological school and claimed primacy upon all local cults that were very much influenced by Shedet priesthood. Shedet theologians composed the most important religious document of the Fayum area called the “Book of the Fayum”. The main hieroglyphic versions of the Book preserved until nowadays are: papyrus Boulaq/Hood /Amherst; papyrus Wien/Paris number Aeg. 9975; papyrus Carlsberg 56; papyrus Tebtynis Tait 35; papyrus Botti A-H; papyrus Berlin 14469a; and the text from the Kom Ombo temple (in Jacques de Morgan number 172),²⁸⁹ dated to the Roman times (Augustus or Tiberius).²⁹⁰ Detailed description of the papyri provenience and publication history can be found in Horst Beinlich’s volume, devoted to the “Book of the Fayum” (1991),²⁹¹ where he summarized and corrected previous publications by Auguste Mariette (1871/96),²⁹² Willem Pleyte (1884),²⁹³ Ridolfo V. Lanzone (1896)²⁹⁴ and Giuseppe Botti (1959)²⁹⁵ and tried to represent the full text of the Book with photographs, translation and commentaries.

The “Book of the Fayum” is among the most complex and mysterious theological documents of Ancient Egypt. Formally, it represents the mythological map of the Fayum, listing its main

²⁸⁹ Jean Yoyotte, “Processions géographiques mentionnant le Fayoum et ses localités” in: *BIFAO* 61 (1962) 79-138

²⁹⁰ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 27-64

²⁹¹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1991)

²⁹² Auguste Mariette and Mathaf al-Misri, *Les papyrus égyptiens du Musée de Boulaq, Vol.2* (Wiesbaden: LTR-Verlag, 1982)

²⁹³ Willem Pleyte, *Over drie Handschriften op Papyrus bekend onder de titels van Papyrus du Lac Moeris du Fayoum et du Labyrinthe* (Amsterdam, 1884)

²⁹⁴ Ridolfo V. Lanzone, *Les Papyrus du Lac Moeris* (Turin: Bocca Freres Editeurs, 1896)

²⁹⁵ Giuseppe Botti, *La Glorificazione di Sobk e del Fayum in un papiro ieratico da Tebtynis* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1959)

places with corresponding deities/cults, arranged in horizontal registers in a few rows, with their names and symbols and sometimes short descriptions.²⁹⁶ The special organization of the text is obvious. However, it is not very clear how to read the Book, if it should be read at all. The Book uses all kinds of hieroglyph writing order: from right to left, from left to right and retrograde hieroglyphs with deities' images. Taking into consideration its visual qualities, one can say that the Book should be "read" as a map (Pierre Grandet even suggests that it was displayed on temple walls or at the temple entrance).²⁹⁷ Nevertheless, in hieroglyphic version there are ordinal numbers in Demotic, telling in what order to read. The exact time of creation of the Book as well as its usage remain unknown and highly controversial, although it is evident that in Ptolemaic and Roman times it was used and understood only by a close circle of priests, who maintained traditional Egyptian theological knowledge.²⁹⁸

The "Book of the Fayum" has a few distinguishable parts, dedicated to the depiction of the so-called "Channel of the Great waterway", Egyptian *mr wr* (Bahr Yusuf); the great goddess Mehet-Weret; lake of the Fayum with its flora and fauna; Shedet/Krokodilopolis as the central city of the Fayum; Fayum cultic places; Fayum deities and their descriptions; Fayum "House of Life"; the place called "Acacia of Neith"; Fayum lake as a lake of creation; the god Sobek-Re; Fayum as a whole and Sobek temple in Krokodilopolis; catalogue of Sobek forms in Egypt.²⁹⁹

According to the Book, lake Moeris was seen as a part of the primordial ocean Nun, from where with the help of the Ogdoad, the primeval mound of Shedet (etymologically derived from *šdt* "to dig, grab" and also "to protect"³⁰⁰) has emerged. The lake is described as "der Platz, wo die Achtheit den Re-Harachte erblickt, wenn er aus diesem See herauskommt als diesem seinem Geheimnis (Z.580)."³⁰¹ Before his "departure" to the sky, Re materialized himself on earth in the

²⁹⁶ John Tait, "The "Book of the Fayum": Mystery in a Known Landscape" in: David O'Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 185

²⁹⁷ Pierre Grandet, *Le Papyrus Harris I* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1994) 125-127

²⁹⁸ John Tait, "The "Book of the Fayum": Mystery in a Known Landscape" in: David O'Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 188

²⁹⁹ Horst Beinlich, "The *Book of Faiyum*" in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum* (Dettelbach: J.H. Röhl Verlag, 2013) 36

³⁰⁰ Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen* (Mainz: Zabern, 2006) 912

³⁰¹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 313

body of a crocodile, while the Ogdoad remained in the depth of the lake.³⁰² This version of the creation myth in fact makes a crocodile god a syncretic primeval deity Sobek-Re, “a manifestation” of the sun god on earth in crocodile’s body.

Indeed, Sobek of the Fayum is a syncretic god, taking on features of Re, Atum, Chnum, Hapi, Nefertum, Geb, Osiris, Horus and some other deities.³⁰³ Re, Osiris and Horus seem to be the most significant of all. Re is “resident in its channel”³⁰⁴; Osiris is inseparably connected with the Nile inundation, a very frequent and important motive of the Book; and Horus is a resident in Krokodilopolis, “the divine order upon earth.”³⁰⁵

The goddess Mehet-Weret (“The Great Flood”)³⁰⁶ seems to be one of the central figures in the Fayum theology and her image dominates one of the sections of the Book: she is shown standing with her feet on the west, head on the east and two raised arms in the form of a *ka*-sign (figure 19).³⁰⁷ Mehet-Weret, “the Great Flood” is strongly connected to the Nile inundation and actually represents the Fayum: her feet are standing on the west, at the lake Moeris; her left arm represents the southern channel, right arm – the northern channel; and her head is in the east, interestingly looking into the south, where the Nile flood comes from.³⁰⁸ The Book describes Mehet-Weret as the one who gives water to the two lands, which flows to the south and the north of the Fayum.³⁰⁹ She is both the part of Primordial Ocean and Nile inundation,³¹⁰ and is strongly

³⁰² Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 312-314

³⁰³ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1014

³⁰⁴ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 188

³⁰⁵ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 188

³⁰⁶ László Kákosy, “Mehet-weret” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 4* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983) 3-4

³⁰⁷ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 81-82

³⁰⁸ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 82-86

³⁰⁹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 147

³¹⁰ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayyum: dalle origini al IV. Secolo a.C.*, 78-79

associated with Nut, the Heavenly Cow and the Mother-goddess, giving birth both to Horus-the king and to the sun-god Re, shown born out under her legs.³¹¹

Probably, the most important part of the Book is a depiction of lake Moeris as a place where the gods permanently reside: *s.t pw ntj hnmw 'nh r ' htp wsjr jm qrs jmntj.w jm* - “This is the place of the Ogdoad, Ra lives here, Osiris rests here, the westerners are buried here.”³¹² The Book shows two barks, rowing in the lake Moeris,³¹³ and on each bark, a god with a crocodile head is sitting on the throne before the goddess Meret (figure 20).³¹⁴ The upper bark, according to Beinlich, depicts “Re, der im südlichen See fährt”:³¹⁵ he has an atef crown, combined with the Lower Egyptian crown; two small lions of Aker with acacia leaves are sitting in the bark and two ram-heads with sun disk and horns are depicted on the prow and stern of the bark. The lower bark depicts “Sobek der im nördlichen See fährt”, the god in a double crown; having falcon heads with a sun-disk on the prow and stern of the bark, and a ram with curved horns “sitting“ inside the bark – probably a symbol of sun and kingship.³¹⁶ This scene certainly played a great role in the Fayum theology. It is also depicted in the open vestibule of Soknebtynis temple in Tebtynis (figure 7), where this theological concept was “materialized” during the annual festival procession of these two barks. Such festival processions should have taken place in other Fayum towns, definitely in Shedet-Krokodilopolis. However, it is not completely clear what kind of symbolism is hidden between these two barks. According to Beinlich’s reading of the “Book of the Fayum”, these are solar barks symbolizing night unification of Re with Sobek in his body (“Das Mysterium des Sobek ist das Mysterium des Sobek-Re. Z.183”).³¹⁷ In this case we can assume that “the southern bark” is the one on which Re travels during the night, united with Sobek; and “the northern bark” is a day-bark, showing Sobek as a ruler of the lake and the king

³¹¹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft* 80-93; Horst Beinlich, “The Book of Faiyum” in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt’s Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, 42-43

³¹² Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*,130; Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 148

³¹³ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 86-90

³¹⁴ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 189-192

³¹⁵ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 86-87

³¹⁶ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 86-90

³¹⁷ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 319-320

of the two lands.³¹⁸ In his newer publication Beinlich suggests, that this scene shows early morning, “transfer from the night to the day” and everyday birth of the sun god out of the waters of lake Moeris.³¹⁹ Another point-of-view relies on the festival symbolism³²⁰, known from the Fayum in Ptolemaic and Roman times, and sees “the southern bark” as a bark of the deceased king (“Osirian deity” with an atef crown), residing in the netherworld; and “the northern bark” as the bark of the living king (“Horus deity”, the “ruler” of the Fayum). Actually, both theories seem to be right because this scene could function on two or even more levels. Shedet theologians must have been observing the natural behavior of crocodiles and connect it to the sun cycle: as Nile crocodiles usually spend the night in the water (uniting with Re in his night bark as it is depicted in “the southern bark”), and come out to the shore in the morning to bask under the sun (as Sobek – the king of the Fayum in “the northern bark”). It is evident that “the northern bark” is strongly connected to the kingship: the double crown, falcon heads and *sema-tawj* symbol on the throne indicate that the deity depicted here is Sobek the Shedet-Horus residing in Shedet. Besides, Sobek is usually connected to the northern cardinal point³²¹, and thus this association seems clear enough. “The southern bark” certainly depicts the solar aspect of Sobek – Sobek-Re, which is shown by solar rams with sun-disks as well as two lions of the god Aker, who symbolizes the horizon and protects western and eastern borders of the horizon as well as the sun-bark of Re on his netherworld journey.

The “Book of the Fayum” contains a few more interesting and controversial depictions of Sobek. One of them shows Neith in the form of a female hippopotamus, probably assimilated to Thoeris as a mother of Sobek and Opet as a personification of the Nile inundation and fertility. The goddess is carrying one crocodile on her back and is feeding another small crocodile with her hand (figure 21). According to the inscription, translated by Beinlich, she is “Neith, die Grosse, die ihren Sohn schützt.”³²² The associations with motherhood and fertility are emphasized with

³¹⁸ Pascal Vernus and Jean Yoyotte, *Bestiaire des Pharaohs* (Paris: Agnès Viénot Editios, 2005) 231

³¹⁹ Horst Beinlich, “The *Book of Faiyum*” in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt’s Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, 45-46

³²⁰ Ghislaine Widmer, “Les fêtes en l’honneur de Sobek dans la Fayoum à l’époque gréco-romaine” in: *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 32 (2003) 3-12

³²¹ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5.*, 1995-1031

³²² Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 99-100

her breasts, belly protecting gestures and fire coming out of her mouth.³²³ Beinlich also stresses striking similarity of Neith representation to the representation of the Big Dipper constellation in astronimocal scenes.³²⁴

Very significant scene of the Book depicts three chapels with sacred acacia leaves on the top and a human mummy on crocodile's back (figure 22). This important motif was widespread in Ptolemaic and especially Roman Fayum and is attested on many statuettes and protective figurines (figure 23). According to traditional interpretation, it may reflect the well-known Egyptian myth about the saving of Osiris's body from the waters by a crocodile.³²⁵ However, in his book Beinlich argues that the depiction in the "Book of the Fayum" is not of Sobek, saving the dead Osiris, but of the deceased syncretic "Sobek-Re-Osiris"³²⁶ – water, sun and land united in order to be reborn.³²⁷ He claims that it is the one god, who is depicted there, not two, and the mummy do not represent the body of Osiris, but rather emphasizes the dead form of this syncretic god, while the crocodile is Re, united with his earthly body in the Fayum – the body of Sobek-the crocodile.³²⁸ Therefore, this image shows one of the main theological concepts of the "Book of the Fayum" - the sun god Sobek-Re during his Netherworld journey in the lake Moeris before he would be reborn in the East in the morning.³²⁹

³²³ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 99-100

³²⁴ Horst Beinlich, "Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)" in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power. 7th Symposium on Egyptian Royal Ideology: Prague, June 26-28, 2013* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015) 56-57

³²⁵ Edward Brovarski, "Sobek" in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1000; Alan H. Gardiner, "Hymns to Sobk in a Ramesseum Papyrus" in: *RdE 11* (1957) 55

³²⁶ Horst Beinlich, "Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)" in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 49-50

³²⁷ Marco Zecchi, "Osiris in the Fayum" in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 135-137

³²⁸ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 113-114

³²⁹ Horst Beinlich, "The *Book of Faiyum*" in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, 49

The big part of the Book is devoted to the cultic places of Sobek in all nomes of Egypt.³³⁰ Nevertheless, Krokodilopolis gains primary attention and final scenes show Sobek with his mother Neith before the shrine with a sacred acacia of Neith; as well as Sobek temple in Krokodilopolis, which is called: *r3 wsjr hr pr 3 pn pw* (“It is Re, Osiris, Horus, pharaoh.”)³³¹ and thus demonstrates the high degree of syncretism in the Fayum theology.³³²

2.7 Syncretic forms of Sobek in the Fayum

The “Book of the Fayum” shows a great variety of syncretic forms and titles of Sobek. Let us now discuss the most frequent and important of them, using both the Book and archaeological evidence from different cultic places of Sobek in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum.

2.7.1 Sobek and Re

From the Middle Kingdom Sobek became associated with the sun-god Re, firstly as his defender, and later in Coffin texts as a syncretic sun deity. The Abgig obelisk of Senusret I from the Fayum already depicts Sobek with solar disk and uraeus, emphasizing his solar aspect.³³³ The syncretism was totally established during 19th dynasty, when Sobek is actually called in hymns “Re who emerged from the primeval ocean” (papyrus Ramesseum VI BM 10759³³⁴) and thus becomes the creator god.³³⁵ In the Fayum context, this association could be strengthened by the connection of Sobek-the Shedtite – Horus residing in Shedet to the concept of kingship and royal power, which is also related to the sun.

³³⁰ John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 195

³³¹ Horst Beinlich, “Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)” in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 70-71

³³² John Tait, “The “Book of the Fayum”: Mystery in a Known Landscape” in: David O’Connor and Stephen Quirke (eds.), *Mysterious Lands*, 195

³³³ Marco Zecchi, “The Monument of Abgig” in: *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 37 (2008) 373-386

³³⁴ Alan H. Gardiner, “Hymns to Sobk in a Ramesseum Papyrus” in: *RdE* 11 (1957) 43-56; Alan Gardiner, *The Ramesseum Papyri* (Oxford, 1955) plates 18-21

³³⁵ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1007

The theologians of Shedet-Krokodilopolis developed this concept further and united all three aspects – the solar aspect, the primeval creator aspect and the aspect of a kingship – in one syncretic god, who is called in the “Book of the Fayum” the one, “who created himself, who emerged from the Wadj-wer, the oldest son of Mehet-Weret... Ra-Harakhte... Sobek of Shedet, Horus in Shedet.”³³⁶ The “Book of the Fayum” pays much attention to Sobek-Re, because according to local theology, Sobek is the earthly body of the primeval sun-god Re, with which he unites during the night journey under the waters of lake Moeris³³⁷; therefore Sobek is also a primeval deity, “a manifestation“ of Re on earth.

In his creative aspect Re is sometimes connected with Chnum, Nefertum and Atum who is called “the foremost (*hntj*) of this lake.”³³⁸ A few scenes from the “Book of the Fayum” show highly syncretic forms of Sobek, emphasizing his solar aspect. One of them is the god having a crocodile body and a ram head with two kinds of horns and uraeus, possibly a syncretic creator solar deity Sobek-Re-Atum-Chnum³³⁹ (figure 24).³⁴⁰ Another example is a crocodile with double crown, Chnum horns, two feathers and a sun disk: according to Beinlich, Sobek-Kamutef, the primeval god, “era us dem Meer herauskam, als der älteste Sohn der Mehet-weret”³⁴¹, also taking on aspects of Re-Harakhte and Sobek the Shedtite-Horus residing in Shedet³⁴² (figure 25).³⁴³ The most complicated form of Sobek is the deity with the ram head, lion body and crocodile tail, having hemhem crown on his head, with uraeus and sun disks (figure 26)³⁴⁴. Beinlich interprets

³³⁶ Horst Beinlich, “The *Book of Faiyum*” in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt’s Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, 53

³³⁷ Horst Beinlich, “The *Book of Faiyum*” in: Horst Beinlich, Regine Schulz and Alfried Wiczorek (eds.), *Egypt’s Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, 48

³³⁸ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 104

³³⁹ Horst Beinlich, “Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)” in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 54-55

³⁴⁰ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 105-106

³⁴¹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 104

³⁴² Horst Beinlich, “Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)” in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 53-54

³⁴³ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 106-108

³⁴⁴ Horst Beinlich, “Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)” in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 48-49

it as a syncretic Sobek-Amun-Re, a primeval solar deity, residing in the lake Moeris, with a creative aspect of Atum.³⁴⁵

It is important to notice that syncretic Sobek-Re was not only a theological concept, worked out by the priests, but a deity, known and worshipped by the Fayum inhabitants, Egyptian, Greek and Roman as well. There are examples of votive figurines (Louvre Museum E 22888, figure 27³⁴⁶ and stelae (Theadelphia, figure 18) showing the worshipper before Sobek-Re or Sobek with a clear solar aspect. However, the most prominent example comes from The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore (61.271) and represents a wooden box from 1 century BC, showing a king offering to Sobek-Re in crocodile form with a sun-disk (figure 28).³⁴⁷

The temple of Sobek-Re probably existed in 3-4 centuries AD in Dionysias, where the deity could be assimilated to the Roman Sol Invictus.³⁴⁸ The French-Italian team of Tebtunis excavators also discusses possible existence of the two syncretic forms of Sobek in Tebtynis: Sobek-Geb-Kronos and Sobek-Re-Harachte.³⁴⁹ However, the most interesting and highly hellenized depiction of Sobek-Helios comes from Berlin Museum and shows Sobek as a man with his right hand raised and a small crocodile in the left hand (figure 29). He seems to have a tiny solar crown on his head, together with a great solar-rays nimb, characteristic for Greek Helios, and a guirlande of vegetale above his head.³⁵⁰

2.7.2 Sobek and Hapi

Attested in the Fayum as Soknopieios or Sokonopi, the syncretic god Sobek-Hapi was worshipped in Soknopaiou Nesos, Narmouthis, Tebtynis and Krokodilopolis.

The association between Sobek as the lord of the Nile, the god of water, marshes and other river

³⁴⁵ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 114-115

³⁴⁶ Louvre Museum: <http://www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/sebek-re>
Accessed on 20.04.2012

³⁴⁷ The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/4415/chest-with-writing/>
Accessed on 20.04.2014

³⁴⁸ Paola Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayyum di età ellenistica e romana*, 304

³⁴⁹ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 192

³⁵⁰ Pierre P. Koemoth, "Couronner Souchos pour fêter la retour de la crue" in: Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Isis on the Nile*, 274-275

vegetation, and Hapi as a personification of the Nile and its inundation was strong already from the Coffin texts (CT VII, 183, 203).³⁵¹ Besides, crocodiles' fecundity, aggressiveness and male ferocity were usually connected to brutal force, male power, and sexual violence, and as a result – great impregnation capacity and fertility. In the Pyramid Texts Sobek is called “the raging one,” “green of plume,” “the one who makes green the heritage of the fields and river banks,” “the lord of semen” and “the one, who impregnates women” (PT 507-510). One possible version of etymology of the name Sobek suggests the causative verb *s-bzk* (“to impregnate”).³⁵² Numerous crocodiles on the riverbank could be considered by the Egyptians the indication of the good Nile inundation³⁵³ – and the association with Hapi was strengthened. Thus a syncretic form Sobek-Hapi united Hapi as a personification of the Nile, and Sobek as the god, who has a real power over the flood – the concept, which was of primary importance in the Fayum, where the Nile inundation was connected to the annual festivals of renewal and resurrection and Sobek appeared as a benefactor of the Fayum, bringing forth the flood, fertility and rebirth.³⁵⁴ Many figurines of Sobek-Hapi, used for private worship, were found in the Fayum. They are usually made of bronze, faience or terracotta and show mummified crocodile adorned with flowers and vegetation (figure 30).³⁵⁵

2.7.3 Sobek and Horus

If the association with Re is the oldest and has mostly religious and theological reasons, the connection of Sobek with Horus seem to be a result of the 12th dynasty policy. The kings of the 12th and 13th dynasties had made Sobek their royal and state deity and thus connected him to the notions of kingship and royal power. The syncretic god Sobek the Shedtite-Horus residing in

³⁵¹ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1000

³⁵² Edda Bresciani, “Sobek, Lord of the Land of the Lake” in: Salima Ikram (ed.), *Divine Creatures: animal mummies in Ancient Egypt*, 199-206; Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, 280

³⁵³ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 998-999

³⁵⁴ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1000

³⁵⁵ Pierre P. Koemoth, “Couronner Souchos pour fêter la retour de la crue” in: Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Isis on the Nile*, 265

Shedet was established during the Middle Kingdom,³⁵⁶ and already in Coffin texts Sobek starts to be seen as Horus – the king, avenger and protector of his deceased father Osiris.³⁵⁷ This syncretic deity had its temples throughout the Fayum and enjoyed certain supremacy over other crocodile gods: probably they all were considered some forms of Sobek the Shedtite-Horus residing in Shedet.

There were found many votive figurines and amulets depicting Sobek in the form of a crocodile with falcon or hawk head as the one from Karanis (figure 2) and Walters Art Museum (22.347, figure 31). The excavators of Karanis, a town with mostly Greek and Roman inhabitants, suggested that Sobek-Horus deity was assimilated there to Greek Harpocrates, “Horus the child” (figure 3) and as a result the traditional Egyptian triad was created, consisting of Isis-Thermouthis, Osiris-Serapis and Soknopaios-Horus-Harpocrates.³⁵⁸

2.7.4 Sobek and Osiris

The assimilation of Sobek to Horus – the deity of kingship, symbolizing pharaoh as a living god, son of Re – lead to the very natural connection between Horus and Osiris as between a living king and his deceased father. This association was already well established in the end of the Middle Kingdom, when the cult of Osiris as *wsjr jtj hrj jb t3-š* (“Osiris the sovereign (father?) who resides in the land of the lake”) was founded in the Fayum. Hymns to Sobek the Shedtite - Horus residing in Shedet from papyrus Ramesseum VI of the 12th dynasty confirm the idea that at that time Osiris, the blessed deceased king, was separated in the Fayum theology from Osiris, ruler of the Underworld, and funerary deity Osiris-Sokar.³⁵⁹ As a king, Osiris of Shedet had his traditional spouse Isis and son Sobek-Horus, who was his heir, protector and avenger.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 998; Jean Yoyotte, “Le Soukhos de la Maréotide et d'autres cultes régionaux du Dieu-Crocodile d'après les cylindres du Moyen Empire” in: *BIFAO 56* (1957) 81-95

³⁵⁷ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1000; Brigitte Altenmüller, *Synkretismus in der Sargtexten* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1975) 188

³⁵⁸ Elaine K. Gazda, *Karanis: an Egyptian town in Roman times. Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)*, 39

³⁵⁹ Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 117-122

³⁶⁰ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum*, 58

Along with the aspect of kingship, very important for the Fayum, Osiris was strongly connected with vegetation, fertility, renewal and the annual cycle of death and rebirth. The titles *jtj m w3d wr/ hq3 w3d wr* (“father/ruler of the Great Green”) are attested for him in the Fayum.³⁶¹ The Nile inundation, personified in the goddess Mehet-Weret, and associated with Hapi as the personification of the river itself and Sobek as “the lord of the flood”, represents the fundamental concept in the Fayum theology. The coming of the annual inundation was traditionally connected with the rise of Sirius and beginning of the New Year. In Ptolemaic and Roman times, Fayum province was well-known for its prosperous agriculture and the importance of the Nile inundation was to a large extent reflected in local theology. According to it, the annual rebirth and inundation would come if the parts of the deceased Osiris’s body would be reassembled and then reunited in the lake.³⁶² The rebirth of Osiris – the god of fertility and vegetation – means the rebirth of life cycle in Egypt.

Sobek has always played an important role in reassembling of Osiris’s body. From the Old Kingdom already the Egyptians believed that it was a crocodile, who helped Horus to fetch the body of Osiris out of the water, or that it was Horus himself in the guise of a crocodile.³⁶³ There are many small statues depicting a crocodile with a mummy of Osiris on his back (figure 23). One of the epithets of Sobek from Papyrus Louvre 3079³⁶⁴ is *sbk h3.t* “the lord of corpses.”³⁶⁵ Interesting is the fact that drowning or death by a crocodile was considered lucky from the times of a New Kingdom: the roots of this popular belief are certainly linked to Osiris’s death in the water and his rescue by the crocodile.³⁶⁶ Finally, one of the theories of etymology of the name *Sbk* suggests that it has developed from the verb *s3q* (“to reassemble”)³⁶⁷. The wordplay, based on these two words, was very popular in Ptolemaic and Roman epoch in the Fayum, but it does

³⁶¹ Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 123-130

³⁶² Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum*, 58

³⁶³ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1015

³⁶⁴ Fachri Haikal, *Two funerary papyri of Nesmin. BAe 14* (Brussel, 1970) ; Jean-Claude Goyon, “Le cérémonial de glorification d’Osiris du papyrus du Louvre I. 3079 (colonnes 110 à 112)” in: *BIFAO 65* (1967) 89-156; Jean-Claude Goyon, “Le ceremonial pour faire sortir Sokaris” in: *RdE 20* (1968) 63-96

³⁶⁵ Edward Browarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

³⁶⁶ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1017-1018

³⁶⁷ Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, 716-717

not mean that it was original and was not coined after the New Kingdom.³⁶⁸

Later assimilation between Sobek and Osiris resulted into the syncretic deity Sobek-Osiris, a god of regeneration and fertility, attested in Papyrus Berlin 6750³⁶⁹ and in the “Book of the Fayum.” A fascinating example represents the coffin of Ankhruity (Hawara, C-31) from early Ptolemaic period, which shows Osiris having a crocodile body and a human head with two horns, solar disc and two feathers, and calls him *wsjr šꜣ hrw* “Osiris of many faces” (figure 32).³⁷⁰

2.8 Sobek festivals in Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum

Festivals, devoted to Sobek and other forms of crocodile deities, are attested in Shedet-Krokodilopolis, Soknopaiou Nesos, Tebtynis, Theadelphia, Karanis, Dionysias, and Bakchias, and most likely were held in every town of the province having a temple of the crocodile god.

These festivals were usually celebrated in June - July just before the coming of the Nile inundation, when Sirius appeared in the sky, and functioned on many levels. The crucial event in the life of Egypt and the Fayum – the Nile inundation – every year brought to the land fertile soil and indicated the beginning of the New Year, new agricultural season, hope and regeneration for nature and people. On this level, Sobek was praised during the festivals as a benefactor of the Fayum, the one who actually “initiates” the flood. On the deeper level, these festivals were connected to the notion of kingship and passing the throne from the deceased father-king to his young son-heir – the very well known Egyptian concept of renewal that forms the basis for all Egyptian festivals, either royal or religious.³⁷¹

As have been already discussed above, the double crocodile gods of the Fayum represented the so-called “Osiris deity”, the deceased king, and “Horus deity,” the living king, his son and

³⁶⁸ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1018

³⁶⁹ Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 135

³⁷⁰ Flinders W. M. Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London: Field and Tuer, 1889)

³⁷¹ Claas J. Bleeker, *Egyptians Festivals, Enactments of Religious Renewal* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967)

heir.³⁷² The festivals were built upon the renovation of power and vital forces through passing them from the blessed deceased father to his young and powerful successor. Vaulted niches called *loculi* by Ghislaine Widmer³⁷³ were found in the temples of Theadelphia, Dionysias, Backchias and Medinet Maadi, and they were definitely used for keeping crocodile mummies. Marco Zecchi in his article on Osiris cult in the Fayum supports Widmer's theory about the general meaning and course of these festivals. When the sacred crocodile of Horus died (or probably would be killed some time before the festival?), he was mummified and placed into the vaulted *loculus* as a temporary tomb: after this ritual, he became Osiris, the dead king and blessed god. During the festival itself, the festive procession carried his mummy to the tomb: in the Fayum temples of Sobek it would be a subterranean crypt,³⁷⁴ now identified in most temples, and mentioned by Herodotus.³⁷⁵ In Tebtynis, there is a hypothesis about the existence of the "funerary temple" with a tomb of the crocodile god in the western desert, not far from the temenos.³⁷⁶ The finds of crocodile mummies in such crypts in Karanis and Theadelphia also confirm this theory.³⁷⁷ After the burial rites, the Osiris in his form of a crocodile was ritually "resurrected" and "reborn" – and the new sacred crocodile of Horus would be chosen.³⁷⁸ Therefore, the assumption of power took place every year and expressed the concept of annual renewal, rebirth of Osiris and never-ending cycle of life, death and resurrection.³⁷⁹

³⁷² David Frankfurter, "Religious practice and piety" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 446

³⁷³ Ghislaine Widmer, "Les fêtes en l'honneur de Sobek dans la Fayoum à l'époque gréco-romaine" in: *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 32 (2003) 3-12

³⁷⁴ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L'Égypte Restituée. T.3.*, 182

³⁷⁵ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 148-149

³⁷⁶ Dominic Rathbone, "The Fayyum" in: Roger S. Bagnall and Dominic W. Rathbone (eds.), *Egypt: from Alexander to the Copts, an archaeological and historical guide*, 148-149

³⁷⁷ Terry G. Wilfong, "The University of Michigan Excavation of Karanis (1924-1935)" in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 229; Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 191

³⁷⁸ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 68

³⁷⁹ Marco Zecchi, "Osiris in the Fayum" in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 133-137

This concept, conveyed through the well-known Horus-Osiris constellation³⁸⁰ is also described in the demotic papyrus Berlin 6750, published and analyzed by Ghislaine Widmer.³⁸¹ According to Widmer, this fragmentary liturgical text from Soknopaiou Nesos speaks about the festival of birth of the local god Soknopaios and could be divided into two clear parts. The first part describes funerals of Osiris and then ritual “reassembling” and resurrection of his divine body by recitation the names of all body parts; the second part is devoted to the birth of Horus and his succession of his father’s throne.³⁸² Actually, the identification of the Fayum festivals with this text seems very logical and consistent: in this case, the nature of Sobek festivals, expressed through ancient Osiris-Horus symbolism,³⁸³ and represented by two Sobek crocodiles, becomes obvious.³⁸⁴

2.4 Oracles of Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum

Crocodile gods of Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum were very famous throughout Egypt as oracle deities. As relatively few people participated in the official cult,³⁸⁵ oracles as well as public festivals, were the only opportunities for ordinary people to come close to the divine and try to establish a direct contact with the gods: present to them their problems and concerns, ask for a piece of advice or thank for good health and prosperity.³⁸⁶

Oracles of the local forms of Sobek were particularly popular among ordinary people of the Fayum. The oracles of Petesouchos (Karanis), Soknebtynis (Tebtynis), Soknobkonneus

³⁸⁰ Ghislaine Widmer, “Les fêtes en l’honneur de Sobek dans la Fayoum à l’époque gréco-romaine” in: *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 32 (2003) 3-12

³⁸¹ Ghislaine Widmer, “Un papyrus demotique religieux du Fayoum: P.Berlin 6750” in: *BSEG* 22 (1988) 83-91

³⁸² Ghislaine Widmer, “Les fêtes en l’honneur de Sobek dans la Fayoum à l’époque gréco-romaine” in: *Égypte, Afrique et Orient* 32 (2003) 3-12

³⁸³ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum*, 50-63

³⁸⁴ David Frankfurter, “Religious practice and piety” in: Christina Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 464

³⁸⁵ John Baines, “Society, Morality and Religious Practice” in: Byron E. Shafer (ed.), *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) 148

³⁸⁶ Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BC to 395 CE*, 107-108

(Backchias), Pnepheros and Petesouchos (Theadelphia), Soknopaios and Sokonpieios (Soknopaiou Nesos) functioned from the late Ptolemaic period until 3century AD.³⁸⁷

Karanis was famous for its voice oracle of the local god Petesouchos.³⁸⁸ This type of oracle is connected to the sacred image or statue of the god in a temple and a hidden chamber for a priest. “At the back of the shrines, stand huge plinths that apparently supported mummified crocodiles as images of Petesouchos. Beneath these plinths are tiny rooms that could have been entered only from the far side of the base” (figure 4), writes Boak in his publication about Karanis.³⁸⁹ In this case we can assume that the god “was actually speaking” when he was asked a question by one of his worshippers.³⁹⁰

Another well-known type of oracle in the Fayum is the so-called ticket or question oracle, attested in Tebtynis, Soknopaiou Nesos and Backchias. This oracle implies writing a question to the god, using a special request formula: “If (this is the god’s answer), deliver this (ticket) to me”, and waiting for an answer. As consultation by ticket oracle was very popular among all inhabitants of the Fayum, Egyptologists have found hundreds of peoples’ questions to crocodile gods of different towns, written in poor illiterate Demotic and Greek.³⁹¹ For instance, in Soknopaiou Nesos we find questions from 2-3 centuries BC adressed to “my lord Soknopaios and Amun, the great gods” (P. Berlin 21875).³⁹² In 1st century AD a man from Soknopaiou Nesos named Stotoetis asked “Soknopaios and Sokonpieios, the great, great gods” whether he would be cured from the disease³⁹³, and in 6th year AD a man called Asklepiades asked the oracle of Sokonpieios whether he would be allowed to marry Tapetheus, daughter of Marres.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁷ Edward Brovarski, “Sobek” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd 5*, 1013

³⁸⁸ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC-AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab conquest*, 159-160

³⁸⁹ Arthur E. R. Boak, *Karanis: The Temples, Coin Hoards, Botanical and Zoological Reports. Seasons 1924-31*, 2-64

³⁹⁰ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 150-151

³⁹¹ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 159

³⁹² David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 160

³⁹³ *Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden, vol 1* (Berlin, 1985) nos 229 a 230

³⁹⁴ Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BC to 395 CE*, 313-314; Ulrich Wilcken, *Grundzüge und Chrestomathie der Papyrskunde, vol I* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1912) no122

Archives of Backchias temple also reveal questions to the oracle of Soknobia, written in illiterate Greek “To Soknobia, the great great god. Answer me, shall I remain in Backchias?” (number CXXXVII);³⁹⁵ or in Demotic: “If it is good for me to plough the shore of the lake this year, may this be taken out for me” (a question addressed to Soknobia and Isis Nephthys, P.O.xf. Griffith 1).³⁹⁶ These examples comprise a very interesting set of texts, telling us about the real life and everyday concerns of the Fayum inhabitants in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. Private life, family matters and business issues are central themes of these oracle questions.

The last but probably the most traditional for Egypt type is a procession oracle connected to annual festivals, which were held in June – July and celebrated the coming of the Nile inundation and beginning of the New Year. During the procession, the priests interpreted the movements of the sacred god’s image and got oracle prophecies and predictions for the future. Procession oracle is well attested in Theadelphia and Tebtynis, but most likely, it existed in more Fayum towns. Famous painting from the temple of Pnepheros in Theadelphia depicts a procession of priests carrying bier with mummified crocodile god, while priests on the right are apparently interpreting the movements of the bier with a sacred image (figure 14).³⁹⁷ In Tebtynis the procession oracle is usually connected with the procession of two sacred barks, probably of Sobek-Geb, “the Osirian deity” (the night bark), and Sobek-Re-Harachte, “the Horus deity” (the day bark) with solar aspect (figure 7). After the symbolical burial of “the Osiris deity” in the temple crypt, people celebrated “the Horus deity” and the renewal of the endless life cycle.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt and David G. Hogarth, *Fayûm Towns and their Papyri*, 292-293

³⁹⁶ Willy Clarysse, “Egyptian Religion and Magic in the Papyri” in: Roger S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 571

³⁹⁷ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l’Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-120

³⁹⁸ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 191

3 The Cult of Sobek in Kom Ombo in Ptolemaic and Roman Times

3.1. The Kom Ombo temple: general characteristics

Kom Ombo (Egyptian *nbw.t* – “the city of gold,”³⁹⁹ Demotic *jmbz*, Greek *Ὀμβοί*, Latin *Ombos*, Arabic كوم أمبو)⁴⁰⁰ is a modern Egyptian town in Aswan governorate, laying 45 km north of Aswan (map 4). From Ptolemaios VI Philometor (180-164 BC) up to the Roman times it was the capital city of the so-called Ombite nome, the first southern nome of the Upper Egypt, as well as an important administrative, cultural and religious center.⁴⁰¹

The Kom Ombo archeological area with the ruins of the unique and very well preserved Ptolemaic and Roman temple is located in the east bank of the Nile, a few km to the south from the modern town of Kom Ombo (map 5). Although the site itself seems to be occupied from prehistorical times, the oldest inscriptions found in the archeological area of the temple date from the Middle Kingdom up to the last Roman emperor Macrinus (3 century AD).⁴⁰² Until now archeologists have identified two Middle Kingdom blocks with the name of pharaoh Senusret, nevertheless the particular ruler of the 12th dynasty, who contributed in the building of the Kom Ombo temple, remain unknown.⁴⁰³ From the New Kingdom there have been found more blocks with kings' names, including Amenhotep I, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Ramesse II.⁴⁰⁴ However, the majority of archeological material dates back to Ptolemaic and Roman epoch, when Kom Ombo gained bigger importance and became not only a significant administrative

³⁹⁹ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L'Égypte restituée. T. 1., Sites et temples de Haute Égypte (1650 av. J.-C. - 300ap. J.-C.)* (Paris: Errance, 1991) 259-261

⁴⁰⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 3* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982) 675-683

⁴⁰¹ Robert Morkot, “Kom Ombo” in: Donald B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Vol.2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 248-250

⁴⁰² Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 3*, 680-683

⁴⁰³ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo: les textes et leur étude” in: *Textes et Langues de l'Égypte Pharaonique Cent cinquante années de recherches. 1882-1972. Hommages à Jean-François Champollion (BdE 64/3)* (Cairo: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1972) 241

⁴⁰⁴ Jacques de Morgan [et al.], *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombos. I. partie* (Vienne: Holzhausen, 1895) 978, 981, 982

city of the first Egyptian nome, but also the prominent cultic center⁴⁰⁵ and the city that protected southern frontiers of Egypt.⁴⁰⁶

The Kom Ombo temple was deeply studied by the French team of Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale.⁴⁰⁷ In the end of the 19th – beginning of 20th century French archeologist Jacques de Morgan together with his team, including Emile André, Urbain Bouriant, Georges Legrain, Gustave Jéquier and Alessandro Barsanti studied and published many scenes and hieroglyphic texts from the Kom Ombo temple.⁴⁰⁸ Although the great amount of work had been done, the publication contained gaps and inaccuracies, which are still being filled. From the year 1970 up to 1987 Adolphe Gutbub worked under the temple decoration. His publications “Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo” (1973)⁴⁰⁹ and “Kôm Ombo I. Les inscriptions du naos (sanctuaires, salle de l'ennéade, salle des offrandes, couloir mystérieux)” (1995)⁴¹⁰ are fundamental works on the Kom Ombo temple and theology and would be our main sources in present work. Nowadays the temple is still being studied by Egyptologists from Ayn Chams University, Universität zu Köln and Université de Genève. In 2012 the mission of Tübingen University has complied photographic documentation of the temple scenes.⁴¹¹

The temple area of Kom Ombo is situated on the hill and nowadays consists mostly of Ptolemaic, Roman and Coptic buildings. It includes the main temple with a decoration extending from Ptolemaios V Epiphanes (204-180 BC) to Roman emperor Macrinus (217-218 AD); mammisi (Ptolemaios VIII Euergetes II (145-116 BC) to Ptolemaios IX Soter II (88-81 BC); chapel of Hathor (from Domitianus (81-96 AD) to Commodus (180-192 AD); small Sobek

⁴⁰⁵ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains. Monographies Reine Élisabeth 13.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009)

⁴⁰⁶ Robert S. Bianchi, “Kom Ombo” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London – New York: Routledge, 1999) 418-420

⁴⁰⁷ Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/> Accessed on 27.10.2015

⁴⁰⁸ Jacques de Morgan [et al.], *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombos. 1. partie* (Vienne: Holzhausen, 1895); *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombos. 2. partie* (Vienne: Holzhausen, 1909)

⁴⁰⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1 [T.] 2* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1973)

⁴¹⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, *Kôm Ombo. [T.] 1., Les inscriptions du naos (sanctuaires, salle de l'ennéade, salle des offrandes, couloir mystérieux)* (Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1995)

⁴¹¹ Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/kom-ombo/> Accessed on 27.10.2015

chapel of Caraccala-Geta (198-212 AD) in the north-eastern corner; system of Ptolemaic and Roman wells behind and around the temple; small basin for sacred crocodiles; hydrological system; the so-called “Roman gate” and remains of the base of a Coptic church with a priests’ house. The detailed description of temple architecture is presented in the works of Alexandre Badawi⁴¹², Adolphe Gutbub⁴¹³, Günter Hölbl⁴¹⁴, and Dieter Arnold⁴¹⁵ and we would not render it here.

During the past centuries, the Nile has changed its course and many outer structures of the temple went under water, including mammisi and parts of mud-brick enclosure wall.⁴¹⁶ The forecourt has also been significantly eroded by the river.⁴¹⁷ Besides, as all Egyptian temples, Kom Ombo became the source of stone for many generations of local inhabitants, and suffered from time, earthquakes, *sebakh* digging and building of the Coptic church inside the precinct.⁴¹⁸

The main temple, dedicated to Sobek and Horus the Elder, stands on the east bank, facing the Nile river,⁴¹⁹ and is oriented from the east to the west “according to the local north determined by the river”⁴²⁰ (map 6). The Kom Ombo temple is worldly known because of its unusual double layout and complicated theology. Usually called “a double temple” (attested in the Egyptian text in KO 901⁴²¹), it is symmetrically divided into two equal parts, dedicated to the main gods of the

⁴¹² Alexandre Badawi, *Kom Ombo. Sanctuaires*, 1952

⁴¹³ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo: Les textes et leur étude”, in: *Textes et langages de l’Égypte pharaonique. Cent cinquante années de recherches. 1822-1972. Hommages à Jean-Francois Champollion*, 239-247

⁴¹⁴ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im römischen Reich. Der römische Pharao und seine Tempel I* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2000) 88-100

⁴¹⁵ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 187-189; 234-235

⁴¹⁶ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.) *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 3*, 676

⁴¹⁷ Robert S. Bianchi, “Kom Ombo” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 418-420

⁴¹⁸ Barry J. Kemp, “Kom Ombo: evidence for an early town” in: Paule Posener-Kriéger (ed.), *Mélanges Gamal eddin Mokhtar 2* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1985) 39-59

⁴¹⁹ Sydney Aufrère, Jean-Claude Golvin and Jean-Claude Goyon, *L’Égypte restituée. T. 1.*, 259-261

⁴²⁰ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 209-210

⁴²¹ Jacques de Morgan [et al.], *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l’Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombos*.

temple: Horus the Elder (Egyptian *hr wr*, Greek *Haroeris*)⁴²² and Sobek with their divine families. The ground plan of the temple, decorative program and distribution of texts show clear division into two parts (map 7).

The main entrance is by the pylon in the south-west. The temple, occupying the area of 28.5 x 44m⁴²³, consists of:

1. the big partially ruined forecourt with 16 columns along the walls and an altar with 2 small libation basins in the center;
2. the outer hypostyle hall with 2 rows of 5 columns;
3. the inner hypostyle hall with 10 columns (the so-called “hall of appearances”);
4. three smaller transverse halls (so-called “medium hall”, “hall of the offerings” and “hall of the Ennead” respectively);
5. two twin bark sanctuaries (of Haroeris in the west and Sobek in the east), where cult statues should have been standing inside the wooden naoi of the barks, which are now gone, leaving only the pedestals of black granite with a secret chamber for voice oracle below the ground level;
6. “the New Year festival chamber” with wabet on the west (or theological north);
7. a few smaller cult rooms around the perimeter of the temple;
8. the so-called “divine pavilions” of Haroeris and Sobek behind the sanctuaries;
9. the outer wall with the “hearing ear” oracle of the gods;
10. storerooms and a staircase to the roof between the sanctuaries and the outer wall of the temple.

The Kom Ombo temple is notable for many hidden crypts and passages, including the internal hallway running around the temple between the inner temple itself and its outer wall.⁴²⁴ There are a few important adjacent structures near the main temple. To the right of the forecourt with a large offering altar⁴²⁵ there is a gate of Ptolemaios XII Auletes (80-58/55-51 BC) with a chapel of Hathor behind it, while to the left there are remains of ruined mammisi with nice Hathor

⁴²² Dieter Kurth, “Haroëris” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 2* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977) 999-1003

⁴²³ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 188

⁴²⁴ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 209-210

⁴²⁵ Herbert Ernst, “Der Opferkult in den Vorhöfen der Tempel in Edfu, Medamud und Kom Ombo” in: *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde 129* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002) 12-19

columns.⁴²⁶ To the west of the main temple, archeologists have uncovered an ancient well with a small artificial pond for sacred crocodiles of Sobek. The temple is built from the local sandstone of the nearby Gebel el Silsila and is in a very good state of preservation, including the remains of color and inlaying the eyes in the hypostyle halls.⁴²⁷ The Kom Ombo temple is particularly famous for the relief on the north-eastern interior wall (K.O. 950), depicting the so-called “surgical instruments”⁴²⁸ or, according to other scholars, “craftsmen’s workshop, probably of metalsmiths.”⁴²⁹

On the one hand, the Kom Ombo temple is architecturally very typical for Ptolemaic and Roman epoch⁴³⁰ and resembles other well-preserved temples of Upper Egypt, for example the ones in Edfu and Dendera.⁴³¹ On the other hand, its double design and complicated theology make the temple very unusual and interesting with regard to religion and local theology.⁴³² As have been mentioned above, the two gods of Kom Ombo share the temple equally, at least from the architectural viewpoint: the west side belongs to Haroeris while the east side - to Sobek. This division between the two gods of Kom Ombo becomes clear at first sight, because the temple has two separate processional axes, leading through the temple to two twin sanctuaries. Speaking about temple orientation, it is also important to remember that it has a geographical orientation, as well as a theological one. In the theological one, Haroeris possesses the so-called “northern” part of the temple, and Sobek – the “southern.”⁴³³

⁴²⁶ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 202

⁴²⁷ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 209-210

⁴²⁸ Filip Coppens and Hana Vymazalová, “Medicine, mathematics and magic unite in a scene from the temple of Kom Ombo (KO 950)” in: *Antropologie XLVIII/2* (2010) 127-132

⁴²⁹ Robert S. Bianchi, “Kom Ombo” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 418-420; Paul Ghaliounqui and Zeineb el-Dawakhly, *Health and Healing in Ancient Egypt* (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 1965)

⁴³⁰ Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 306; Pierre Lacau, “Notes sur les plans des temples d'Edfou et de Kôm Ombo” in: *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 52/2 (1954) 215-228

⁴³¹ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im römischen Reich. Der römische Pharao und seine Tempel I*, 88-100

⁴³² Marie-Astrid Calmettes, “Une représentation cosmologique du temple de Kom Ombo” in: Michele Broze, Christian Cannuyer and Florence Doyen (eds), *Interprétation: mythes, croyances et images au risque de la réalité: Roland Tefnin (1945-2006) in memoriam* (Bruxelles: Société Belge d'Études Orientales / Belgisch Genootschap voor Oosterse Studiën, 2008) 143-160

⁴³³ Robert S. Bianchi, “Kom Ombo” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 418-420

3.2 The cult of Sobek in the Kom Ombo temple: local theology and syncretism

Adolphe Gutbub, Gihane Zaki, Philippe Derchain and other Egyptologists, working on the Kom Ombo temple, emphasize particular complexity of its theological system. Analyzed in detail by Adolphe Gutbub, temple texts demonstrate great variety of themes, revealing the influence of not only Fayumite, but also Heliopolitan, Memfite, Theban and Abydian theologies.⁴³⁴ Therefore, it is not surprising that minor gods of the temple include Amon of Thebes, Ptah of Memphis, Chnum of Elephantine and Min of Coptos.⁴³⁵ Among the main themes, constantly recurring in the texts, are: the creation myth; unification of the father-god (Haroeris) with son-god (Sobek) and mother-goddess (Tasenetnefert) with daughter (Hathor): “father is in peace with his son, mother - with his daughter”⁴³⁶; union of Shu and Geb and creation of Osiris; temple festivals, connected to the Osirian myth and dead gods of the necropolis; protection of Re and theme of a battle; legend about the so-called “distant goddess”; sacred geography of Egypt, the inundation and the theology of the first Egyptian nome.⁴³⁷

Although it is assumed that Haroeris and Sobek share the Kom Ombo temple equally, the deeper look into the temple theology show, that they are not any kind of “twin gods” and have a complex religious relation to each other inside the theological system of the temple. Firstly, each of them is the head of his own divine triad. Haroeris has a spouse Tasenetnefert (Egyptian *t3 sn.t nfr.t* - “the beautiful sister”) and a son Panebtawi (*p3 nb t3.wj* - “the lord of the two lands”). Sobek’s spouse in local theology is Hathor, and his son is Chonsu (figure 33). It is clear from the names only, that Tasenetnefert and Panebtawi are typical theological constructs, used in the Egyptian theology for special reasons. From the texts, translated by Gutbub in his major publication⁴³⁸, the deeper theology of the temple, definitely based on Heliopolitan cosmogony⁴³⁹,

⁴³⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 504-510

⁴³⁵ Heike Sternberg, *Mythische Motive und Mythenbildung im den ägyptischen Tempeln und Papyri der griechisch-römischen Zeit. GOF, Reihe IV: Ägypten Bd.14* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985) 21-35

⁴³⁶ Holger Kockelmann, “Das Soubassement der griechisch-römischen Tempel als Ort hymnischer Rede: ein Überblick” in: Alexa Rickert and Bettina Ventker (eds.), *Altägyptische Enzyklopädien: Die Soubassements in den Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Zeit, Soubassementstudien I (Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 7)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2014) 576

⁴³⁷ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*

⁴³⁸ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1 [T.] 2*

⁴³⁹ Hermann Kees, *Das Alte Ägypten* (Berlin: Akademie, 1958) 4

becomes apparent: in Kom Ombo Haroeris is assimilated with Shu (air), Tasetnefert with Tefnut (moisture), and Panebtawi (“the lord of the two lands”) with Sobek. Whereas in the Sobek’s triad Sobek becomes associated with Geb (earth), his spouse Hathor with Nut (sky) and son Chonsu with Osiris.⁴⁴⁰ Therefore, the main gods of Kom Ombo begin to function in more dimensions and acquire another connotations, roles and associations. Moreover, they become the primeval gods, and the temple obtains its own creation myth, based on that of Iunu / Heliopolis. Adolphe Gutbub translates the main text from the “hall of the offerings”, representing a short summary of temple theology, as follows: “le district de creation dit-on à Ombos, le temple d’Haroëris et Sobek seigneur(s) d’Ombos, Château du faucon également, Maison du crocodile également; ... (L’explication du) nom de ce district est (la suivante): Chou, le fils de Rê, s’y réjouit avec son fils Geb, de même, Tefnout avec sa fille Nout, ils y sont en joie éternellement... Il existe le nom de ce district parce qu’y fut créé Osiris comme jeune homme par son père Geb et son père Chou... On dit aussi à ce district le grand Siège, la maison où Rê brûle pour écarter ses ennemis; Chou s’y trouve en sa forme d’Haroëris, en sa qualité de dieu grand qui repousse les ennemies à l’est, Rê y est en tant que Sobek qui dévore les comparses d’Apophis, Tefnout y est en tant que Bonne Soeur, Isis s’y trouve sous le nom d’Hathor qui verse l’eau fraîche à son père Rê, Panebtaoui y est en tant que Chonsou qui écarte de son père les émissaires” (textes 2-3, monographie 709).⁴⁴¹ The small table below shows the generations of Heliopolitan gods, as assimilated into the local Ombite theology:

Heliopolitan theology	Kom Ombo theology
Nun (primeval ocean) → Atum (creator-god)	Nun → Tanen / Kematef (creator-god)
Shu (air) + Tefnut (moisture)	Haroeris + Tasetnefert
Geb (earth) + Nut (sky)	Sobek (=Panebtawi) + Hathor (=Isis)
Osiris	Chonsu (=Panebtawi)

Thus in the theology of Kom Ombo Sobek acquires new connotations on many levels and takes new, particular place in the whole religious system, probably the most complicated one. On the level of the Kom Ombo divine family he becomes Panebtawi, “the Lord of the two Lands,” the son-god, who succeeds his father Haroeris. On the cosmic level he becomes Geb, the son of Shu

⁴⁴⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, xvi

⁴⁴¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 1-3

and Tefnut, who brings to the world Osiris (together with his sisters, Isis and Nephthys), who in their turn give life to Harsiesis, Horus the child. Adolphe Gutbub admits that assimilation of Sobek with Geb (as well as Haroeris with Shu) was quite often in Egypt, but it was not systematic until Kom Ombo theology was formulated.⁴⁴² It is important to remember that Sobek is not Geb literally, but, how it becomes clear from the famous Double Hymn⁴⁴³, he is the *ka* of Geb.⁴⁴⁴ On the level of creation Sobek becomes the primordial creator deity, who is strongly associated with the primeval ocean Nun and thus with the Nile and coming of the inundation. Besides, in the Kom Ombo theological system Sobek is clearly connected to the sun-god Re as his protector and the slayer of Apophis, and to Osiris and the dead gods of the temple necropolis.⁴⁴⁵ These aspects of Sobek will be analyzed in more detail in following subchapters.

In relation to Haroeris, the ancient celestial deity of Kom Ombo, Letopolis and Qus,⁴⁴⁶ who represents the father-god and is strongly connected with air, sun, sky, royal power and healing (his 2 eyes *hnty-irty* are the sun and the moon),⁴⁴⁷ Sobek takes the role of the son-god, connected with water, fertility, light, succession of royal power and creation. Both Sobek and Haroeris play the part of a warrior deity, protecting Re and killing Apophis, as well as take important roles in the local creation myth and creation of Osiris in Kom Ombo, connected to the public festivals of the dead, held in the temple necropolis.

3.3 Major aspects of Sobek in the Kom Ombo temple

Let us consider in more detail themes, connected with Sobek and his role in the Kom Ombo theology. Adolphe Gutbub admits that “les aspects de Sobek sont complexes et difficiles à

⁴⁴² Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, xvi

⁴⁴³ Hermann Junker, “Ein Doppelhymnus aus Kom Ombo” in: *ZÄS* 67 (1931) 51-55

⁴⁴⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 479; Hermann Kees, *Der Gotterglaube in Alten Agypten* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1941) 434-435

⁴⁴⁵ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.) *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 675-683

⁴⁴⁶ Heike Sternberg, *Mythische Motive und Mythenbildung im den ägyptischen Tempeln und Papyri der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, 136-137; Henry G. Fischer, *Inscriptions from the Coptic Nome, Dynasties VI-XII* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1964)

⁴⁴⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, *Kôm Ombo. [T.] 1., Les inscriptions du naos (sanctuaires, salle de l'ennéade, salle des offrandes, couloir mystérieux)*, xvi

définir.⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, the genealogy of Sobek, described in Hymn 58 (K.O. 61 de Morgan)⁴⁴⁹ represents a long list of gods, from primordial creators (Tanen / Kematef) to the youngest generation (Harsiesis) with almost all gods assimilated to Sobek in different forms and degrees. Sobek of Kom Ombo is a universal syncretic deity with many features and faces. One of his epithets is *sbk š3 ḥpr.w* – “Sobek of numerous manifestations.”⁴⁵⁰ However, there are 6 major aspects of Sobek in Kom Ombo that can be distinguished and analyzed: Sobek as a son-god and divine king; as a primordial creator-deity; as a Nile inundation deity; as a warrior god; as a solar deity; and as a deceased god of the necropolis.

3.3.1 Sobek as a son-god / divine king, succeeding his father

As have been admitted above, in the theological system of the Kom Ombo temple Sobek-Geb takes the role of the son-god of Haroeris-Shu under the name of Panebtawi, “The Lord of the Two Lands”: “son père lui a donné le Double Pays en entiere en son grand nom de Panebtaoui.”⁴⁵¹ Kom Ombo hymn 58, translated by Adolphe Gutbub, defines the aspect of a divine kingship of Sobek-Geb-Panebtawi, who has succeeded his father Haroeris-Shu on the divine throne and “rules” his city, in traditional terms of royal power: “il a renouvelé sa jeunesse dans la Château des forms comme Geb...il prend la royauté de son père Chou, il administre ses habitants (ou les biens) de sa ville, il entoure sa protection ses habitants.”⁴⁵² Thus, Sobek rules in Kom Ombo as a divine king. The image of the divine young successor is strengthened by using the epithets *bnr-mrwt* “sweet of love”⁴⁵³ and *nfr-ḥr* “of the beautiful face.”⁴⁵⁴ The last one is widely known from the Fayum and refers to Fayumite Pnepheros, as well as Sobek the Shedtite –

⁴⁴⁸ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 400

⁴⁴⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 465-483

⁴⁵⁰ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 235

⁴⁵¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 484

⁴⁵² Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 484-485

⁴⁵³ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 233-234

⁴⁵⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 477

Horus residing in Shedet, who has a clear royal aspect: “Sobek of Krokodilopolis, Horus who resides in Krokodilopolis, son of Isis, sweet of love, Shedite.”⁴⁵⁵

Relations between father and son, Haroeris-Shu and Sobek-Geb are of primary importance in Kom Ombo. A central term for characterizing them is “peace” (Egyptian *hṭp*). Gutbub also admits the great significance of the word “union”, widely used in the texts. Sobek-Geb is united with his father and is in peace with both his parents: *hṭp r-gs jtj=f mw.t=f* “il repose en paix au côté de son père et de sa mère;”⁴⁵⁶ Sobek “protège son père dans sa ville, qui fait le répondant de sa mère” (monographie 912).⁴⁵⁷ Meanwhile it is interesting to notice that the emphasis is put on the relations father-son and mother-daughter: “Chou, le fils de Rê, s’y réjouit avec son fils Geb, de même, Tefnout avec sa fille Nout.”⁴⁵⁸ Some temple texts (monographies 912, 882, 193 in Gutbub’s publications) make accent on funerary motif, saying that their *ba* unite in the necropolis, but they should definitely function on more levels, including the domains of the dead as well as of the living.⁴⁵⁹

3.3.2 Sobek as a primordial creator-deity

From the Middle Kingdom on Sobek of the Fayum (Sobek the Shedtite – Horus residing in Shedet) has taken the role of the primordial creator deity, the manifestation of the sun god on earth. The “Book of the Fayum”, discussed in previous chapter, emphasizes this aspect of Sobek, and it seems that during the New Kingdom and later epochs, while the theology of Sobek was developing further, this role was considered one of the most important. In the Kom Ombo temple Sobek is a mysterious primeval deity: *sbk nb nb.t jtj nṯr.w pr m nwn jmn n rh.tw hprw=f* “Sobek seigneur d’Ombos, père des dieux, sorti du Noun, le caché, dont on ne connaît pas la forme.”⁴⁶⁰ Hymn 58 describes Sobek as “le Ba de tout dieu, l’image aussi de toute déesse.”⁴⁶¹ Therefore,

⁴⁵⁵ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 466-484

⁴⁵⁶ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 142

⁴⁵⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 142

⁴⁵⁸ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 1-3

⁴⁵⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 142-143

⁴⁶⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 400

⁴⁶¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 466-484

Sobek becomes a universal god, who incorporates in himself all other gods and goddesses. Such absolute character becomes widespread in the New Kingdom and is typical for Ptolemaic and Roman times. Belgian scholar Philippe Derchain, who has recently made a complete translation of this hymn (K.O.58-60 de Morgan), emphasizes the strong influence of Thebaid theology of Amon on Sobek of Kom Ombo: “grand dieu que ses enfants ne voient pas. L’érincellement même en cache le corps en un lieu mystérieux.”⁴⁶² He is the one “whose true name is not known” (*n rḥ rn=f m3*), obscure and unrecognizable deity.⁴⁶³ This concept of a hidden, enigmatic god, whose real form cannot be known, because he is transcendent and all embracing, certainly had its roots in Thebes. The wide use of curved ram horns on Sobek crowns in the Kom Ombo reliefs (figure 33) can also be the argument for the influence of Amon iconography and theology on Sobek.

However, the most important source of the Kom Ombo theologians was the “Book of the Fayum.”⁴⁶⁴ They often refer to the Fayum theology directly, admitting that Sobek the Shedtite – Horus residing in Shedet is one of many aspects of Sobek of Kom Ombo. Some Egyptologists, including Jean Yoyotte⁴⁶⁵ and Gihane Zaki⁴⁶⁶ argue that Kom Ombo syncretism has reached the highest point in the Roman times, when Sobek the Shedtite (*Sbk Šdt*) and Sobek the Ombite (*Sbk Nwb.t*) were actually seen as one god – as both names are equally used in Kom Ombo during the Roman period. Moreover, Zaki believes, that while in the Fayum Sobek-the creator symbolically comprised three fundamental physical forces: water, earth and sun, in Kom Ombo he was already perceived as a syncretic creator god called Sobek-Re. Without a doubt, Kom Ombo

⁴⁶² Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d’un divin crocodile ou l’originalité d’un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l’Antiquité: actes du colloque des 23-24 avril 1999, Institut des sciences et techniques de l’Antiquité (UMR 6048), Université de Franche-Comté, à Besançon* (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 2002) 86

⁴⁶³ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 234-235

⁴⁶⁴ Jean Yoyotte, “Processions géographiques mentionnant le Fayoum et ses localités [avec 1 planche]” in: *BIFAO* 61 (1962) 79-138

⁴⁶⁵ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 233; Jean Yoyotte, “Le Soukhos de la Maréotide et d’autres cultes régionaux du Dieu-Crocodile d’après les cylindres du Moyen Empire” in: *BIFAO* 56 (1957) 81-95

⁴⁶⁶ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 233

priests had a deep knowledge and understanding of the Fayum theology and found great inspiration in the “Book of the Fayum.”⁴⁶⁷

Creator aspect is definitely the main one in both theologies. Sobek hymns in the Kom Ombo temple, including the famous Hymn K.O. 58-60, translated by Derchain, describe Sobek-Re apparition in the primeval Ocean and his creation of the world with all its flora and fauna: “vigoureux crocodile des origins, issu de lui-même, exceptionnel, jailli du Noun où il était mêlé aux ténèbres... il illumine dans le Noun, depuis le commencement... Kematef des extrêmes débuts, il élève le ciel, établit le sol, définit les terroirs, étale les rivages...”⁴⁶⁸ One can admit that the important concept of “emerging” from the primeval ocean Nun (*pr m Nwn*) is the key point of the Fayum theology (where lake Moeris is considered to be a part of Nun) and is typical for Sobek in his role of the creator deity. According to the Kom Ombo theology, the creator god Sobek-Re, called Tanen or Kematef, is represented as a crocodile with falcon head and/or solar disk, emphasizing his royal and solar aspects⁴⁶⁹ - the image, which is also known from the Fayum (figure 27).

In the Kom Ombo texts Sobek-Re is also called the one, who “created light in the night”, “the Primordial, who has created the Primordials,” as well as the one “originating from himself.” This concepts probably experienced influence of the Memfite theology, where the creator deity is completely independent, absolute and self-sufficient: he creates the world using only his own creative forces. As a primordial creator deity, Sobek of the Kom Ombo temple gain awesome and terrific primeval appearance, not known from the Fayum. The famous Double hymn, translated by Herman Junker,⁴⁷⁰ describes Sobek in poetic terms, emphasizing his creative force and describing his body as the source of the most important natural phenomena, such as the light, the wind, the Nile water, the sun and the moon: “der grosse Gott, aus dessen Augen die beiden Lichtscheiben (Sonne und Mond) hervorkommen, dessen rechtes Auge am Tage erlänzt, und sein linkes in der Nacht. Dessen beide grossen Augen das Dunkel erhellen. Es kommt der Wind aus seinem Munde, der Nordwind aus seine Nase. Es fließt Nil von (als) seinem lebenden

⁴⁶⁷ Gihane Zaki, “Sobek et le rapatriement d'Osiris à at-aAt à l'époque romaine” in: *Göttinger Miszellen 188* (2002) 103-108

⁴⁶⁸ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d'un divin crocodile ou l'originalité d'un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité*, 81-82

⁴⁶⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 466-484

⁴⁷⁰ Herman Junker, “Ein Doppelhymnus aus Kom Ombo” in: *ZÄS 67* (1931) 51-55

Schweiss.⁴⁷¹ The hymn strikingly combines naturalism and real observations of crocodiles' appearance with theological concept of a creator deity, who comprises in himself the whole natural world. Sobek is described here as a terrifying omnipotent god⁴⁷² who possesses the powers of life and death and, as any primeval force, is highly ambivalent – he can be productive and life-giving, as well as terrible and awe-inspiring.⁴⁷³ Unlike the “Book in the Fayum,” the Kom Ombo Double Hymn pays great attention to the creation of flora and fauna by Sobek-Re. In his article Philippe Derchain remarks that the creation of plants and vegetation is described there using Sobek's identity of Geb, the soil, while his origin in the primeval ocean Nun is directly connected to his aspect of the Nile deity, bringing up the annual inundation.⁴⁷⁴

3.3.3 Sobek as a Nile inundation deity

The association of Sobek with the Nile river and inundation is probably the most ancient and the most natural one. As a primeval creator god, who came out from Nun, Sobek remains strongly connected to the concept of the sacred primeval waters of creation and therefore to its main manifestations on earth – lake Moeris in the Fayum theology and the Nile river in the Ombite one. That is why he possesses a power to bring the Nile inundation up to earth from the Primeval ocean, “providing breath for all living things, causing animals to mate and reproduce and making plants to grow.”⁴⁷⁵

As a deity of vegetation and fertility Sobek has epithets “lord of the color” (*sbk nb jnm*) and “lord of vegetation” (*sbk nb w3ḏw3ḏ*)⁴⁷⁶ and is closely associated with Hapi, the personification of

⁴⁷¹ Herman Junker, “Ein Doppelhymnus aus Kom Ombo” in: *ZÄS* 67 (1931) 54-55

⁴⁷² Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d'un divin crocodile ou l'originalité d'un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité*, 93-94

⁴⁷³ Mark Smith, “A new Egyptian cosmology” in: Christopher J. Eyre, (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998) 1075-1079

⁴⁷⁴ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d'un divin crocodile ou l'originalité d'un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité*, 87

⁴⁷⁵ Mark Smith, “A new Egyptian cosmology” in: Christopher J. Eyre (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Egyptologists, Cambridge, 3-9 September 1995*, 1078

⁴⁷⁶ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 235

the Nile and its fertile forces. The main colors of Sobek were sparkling green (*ṯhn* “sparkling”⁴⁷⁷) and golden (*nwb*), associated with sun, water and new vegetation.⁴⁷⁸

The so-called “Nile processions” are depicted on the southern wall of the Kom Ombo temple court.⁴⁷⁹ The relief shows the personified Nile inundation and agricultural processions⁴⁸⁰, and the king, bringing offerings to Sobek-Re, sometimes under his name of Panebtawi, “the Lord of the Two Lands.”⁴⁸¹ References to Genut/Tebtunis, according to Gihane Zaki, point out at the special position of this city as the most important center of the Fayum theology in Ptolemaic and Roman times, as well as at the continuous theological ties with the Fayum. Many texts, translated by Zaki in her book, talk about the coming of the Nile inundation from the South (Elephantine), clearly connecting Sobek to Hapi and using the famous formula from the hymns, saying that the flood of Hapi originates from Sobek’s sweat. In some texts, Sobek is directly called “the great Nun, father of gods, Irta, who created the existence” (*nwn wr jtj ntr.w jr-t3 qm3 wnn.w.t*). He is a part of the primordial waters of Nun, who created life and brings the flood to renew it every year.⁴⁸²

The concept of the inundation was particularly important for the first southern nome of Upper Egypt, because the Egyptians believed that the Nile flows from the south and springs from the Double Caverns *qrty* in the Elephantine island.⁴⁸³ According to the theological texts in the Kom Ombo temple, Sobek also lives in the underworld cavern called *tpht*,⁴⁸⁴ from where he sorts

⁴⁷⁷ Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, 1033

⁴⁷⁸ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d'un divin crocodile ou l'originalité d'un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité*, 80-99

⁴⁷⁹ Alexandra von Lieven, “Mythologie und Lokalthologie in Soubassements: das Beispiel Kom Ombo” in: Alexa Rickert Alexa and Bettina Ventker (eds), *Altägyptische Enzyklopädien. Die Soubassements in den Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Zeit: Soubassementstudien I* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014) 51-67

⁴⁸⁰ Alexa Rickert, *Gottheit und Gabe. Eine ökonomische Prozession im Soubassement des Opettempels von Karnak und ihre Parallele in Kom Ombo, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 4* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2011)

⁴⁸¹ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 20-30

⁴⁸² Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 59

⁴⁸³ Jean-Francois Pécoil, “Les sources mythiques du Nil et le cycle de la crue” in: *BSEG 17* (1993) 97

⁴⁸⁴ Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, 1002

away Hapi-the flood. In his article on the mystical sources of the Nile Jean-Francois Pécoil suggests, that the word *tpht* could be also translated as “a well”⁴⁸⁵ and thus may stand for the real wells, where the sacred crocodiles of Sobek lived in the Kom Ombo temple – a few of them have been found inside the temple precinct.⁴⁸⁶ New Kingdom texts usually designate *tpht* as the place, from where the primordial water comes.⁴⁸⁷

The importance of the inundation concept for the first southern nome of Egypt and Sobek’s association with the fertility of the land, can be confirmed by the famous relief on the so-called Hadrian’s kiosk⁴⁸⁸ in the Philae temple.⁴⁸⁹ The southern wall of the kiosk depict the “symbolical crypt“ of Osiris, showing a crocodile with a mummy of Osiris on his back – a concept, known from the Fayum theology⁴⁹⁰, but certainly having particular meaning for the nome, where the annual inundation begins from. In theological terms, the whole land of Egypt is the body of Osiris and Sobek was always believed to be the one, who helps to put it together and therefore guarantee regeneration, fertility and prosperity for Egypt.⁴⁹¹

3.3.4 Sobek as a solar deity

Solar character of Sobek and his connection to the sun-god Re, firstly as his defender and then in the Middle Kingdom Fayum as a syncretic deity Sobek-Re is one of the most ancient features of this god, and has been widely discussed in the previous chapter (2.7.1.,55). Sobek of the Kom

⁴⁸⁵ Jean-Francois Pécoil, “Les sources mythiques du Nil et le cycle de la crue” in: *BSEG 17* (1993) 97-98

⁴⁸⁶ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im römischen Reich. Der römische Pharao und seine Tempel I*, 80-85

⁴⁸⁷ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 238-239

⁴⁸⁸ Gerhart Haeny, “A Short Architectural History of Philae” in: *BIFAO 85* (1985) 197–233; Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 235–236

⁴⁸⁹ Gihane Zaki, “Sobek et le rapatriement d'Osiris à at-aAt à l'époque romaine” in: *Göttinger Miszellen 188* (2002), 103-108

⁴⁹⁰ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia religiosa del Fayum*, 58; Horst Beinlich, “Die Erneuerung der königlichen/göttlichen Macht und das Lebenshaus von Ra-sehet (Fayum)” in: Filip Coppens, Jiří Janák and Hana Vymazalová (eds.), *Royal versus divine authority: acquisition, legitimization and renewal of power*, 49-50; Marco Zecchi, “Osiris in the Fayum” in: Sergio Pernigotti and Marco Zecchi (eds.), *Fayyum Studies. Vol 2.*, 135-137

⁴⁹¹ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d'après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 234

Ombo is assimilated to Re to a very high degree, according to Gihane Zaki⁴⁹², he is rather a syncretic deity Sobek-Re, than Sobek, assimilated to Re. In many temple texts, including the Double hymn,⁴⁹³ we deal with this syncretic god, whose field of influence includes many levels, from the inherited Fayumite concept of creation, according to which Re materializes himself on earth in the body of a crocodile⁴⁹⁴ and unites with Sobek in his body at night,⁴⁹⁵ to the traditional sun symbolism of royal power and divine kingship. Zaki emphasizes interesting changes of the Fayum creation myth in Kom Ombo, according to which Re have installed Sobek as his manifestation and lord of the river in the Kom Ombo temple, after having left Elephantine – a place of creation in the Ombite theology.⁴⁹⁶

Among the solar epithets of Sobek in Kom Ombo are: *snn nḥ n r* “the living image of Re,”⁴⁹⁷ *nb nbj.t* “the lord of flame,” *jtn wr* “the great disk,” *wbn* “shining,”⁴⁹⁸ *ḥn jmn* “bright/sparkling of color,” *bnr mrwt* “sweet of love” and *sb3q-ḥr* “bright of face.”⁴⁹⁹ The last epithet is definitely built on the word play with the verb *s3q* (“to reassemble”)⁵⁰⁰ – a popular method of coining new epithets for Sobek in the Fayum.

Sobek-Re is usually depicted on the Kom Ombo temple reliefs as a man with a crocodile head or a lying crocodile with a big sun-disc on his head and a tiny uraeus on the forehead. In hymn 58 (K.O.61), translate by Gutbub, Sobek-Re is described as “le Grand disque, le Brillant, sortant du Noun, qui illumine le Double Pays qui est dans l’obscurité.”⁵⁰¹ The crucial concept of Sobek-

⁴⁹² Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 239-241

⁴⁹³ Herman Junker, “Ein Doppelhymnus aus Kom Ombo” in: *ZÄS* 67 (1931) 51-55

⁴⁹⁴ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 312-314

⁴⁹⁵ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 319-320

⁴⁹⁶ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 230

⁴⁹⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 483

⁴⁹⁸ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 474-475

⁴⁹⁹ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 232

⁵⁰⁰ Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch: Ägyptisch - Deutsch (2800-950 v. Chr.): Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, 716-717

⁵⁰¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 475

Re, the creator, “coming from the Nun” (*wbn m nwn / pr m nwn*) was taken directly from the “Book of the Fayum,” including the key image of Sobek, “residing in his See/Lake,” widely used in the both Kom Ombo and Fayum texts. The Double hymn also uses this well-known Fayum formula: “Sobek-Re, der in seinem See ist”⁵⁰² or “Sobek-Re, qui eas dans son Lac.”⁵⁰³

Adolphe Gutbub admits that this idea of Sobek, defending Re and defeating the enemies in his Lake comes directly from the Fayum⁵⁰⁴ (“celui qui dévore les enemies dans son lac”⁵⁰⁵), but it was developed further, emphasizing the role of Sobek as a warrior and his battle qualities. Therefore, the traditional role of Sobek as a defender of the sun god on his night journey (the one, “who devours the enemies of Re”) can be easily transformed into the syncretic warrior deity Sobek-Re (“Re est Sobek, qui dévore les comparses d’ Apophis”⁵⁰⁶), where Sobek is still the earthly body of Re.⁵⁰⁷

3.3.5 Sobek as a warrior god, defeating his enemies

Adolphe Gutbub recognizes that the warrior aspect of Sobek, defeating the enemies of Re, can be found in the “Book of the Fayum”, as well as in the sanctuary of Sobek in Gebel el Silsila⁵⁰⁸, where “Sobek, the powerful” (*sbq nht*) is assimilated to Geb and kills Apophis, defending his father Re.⁵⁰⁹ Although in the Kom Ombo texts father-son relations of Re and Sobek-Geb are not emphasized, taking into consideration examples from Gebel el Silsila, one can accept this concept as relevant for Kom Ombo. Sobek of Gebel el Silsila functions as a protector of the sun-bark of Re in many texts, including the scene of pronaos in Kom Ombo (K.O.243). Sobek is the

⁵⁰² Herman Junker, “Ein Doppelhymnus aus Kom Ombo” in: *ZÄS* 67 (1931) 55

⁵⁰³ Gihane Zaki, “L’intégration de Sobek dans le dispositif théologique des pays du Sud au temps des Ptolémées” in: *Orientalia* 83(1) (2014) 130-139

⁵⁰⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 423-436

⁵⁰⁵ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 522

⁵⁰⁶ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 400

⁵⁰⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 466-484

⁵⁰⁸ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 208

⁵⁰⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 279

one who “abat Apophis à la barque de Rê.”⁵¹⁰ In other texts (monographie 709)⁵¹¹ he becomes Re himself.

Concept of the warrior god is one of the leading in Kom Ombo. The theologians of the temple used the imagery and epithets of Sobek as a terrifying crocodile to represent him in the role of a horrible warrior animal in hymns 92, 58 and the Double Hymn.⁵¹² “crocodile vivant (*hm ntrj*), qui frappe les rebelles, le Terrifiant, qui dévore les comparses d’Apophis.”⁵¹³

Among Sobek main warrior epithets are: *r3-ḥs* (“the terrific throat”) and *ḥs-ḥr* (“terrific of face”). In the epithet *r3-ḥs* the Kom Ombo theologians probably saw the designation for the warrior form of Sobek. According to Gihane Zaki, Rahes is the local form of Re, which Sobek acquires as a proper name, when he takes part in the battle in Kom Ombo: *r3-ḥs ḥs-ḥr m ḥfty.w* – “Rahes of the terrible face, against the enemies.”⁵¹⁴ However, in a hymn of Sobek from Papyrus Ramesseum VI, translated by Alan H. Gardiner, we also come across this name in connection with Fayum theology: “Sobek of Krokodilopolis, who has revealed the face of Rahes, which have satisfied Horus who resides in Krokodilopolis.”⁵¹⁵ In some hymns (K.O.488 de Morgan⁵¹⁶) Sobek replaces Re in the role of a warrior deity: *sbk ḥsq n š gbty šḥr špp m-ḥ t wjz r’* - “Sobek, the massacreur, terrible of paws, who defeats Apophis in the nose of the bark of Re.”⁵¹⁷

Gihane Zaki emphasizes, that the Ombite battle myth was highly influenced by both Fayumite and Heliopolite theologies, which had been transmitted to the south in Ptolemaic times. The core of Fayumite doctrine (Sobek, defeating Apophis in his lake) was enriched by the Heliopolite

⁵¹⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 318

⁵¹¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 1-18

⁵¹² Christian Leitz, “Der Lobpreis des Krokodils: drei Sobekhymnen aus Kom Ombo” in: Hermann Knuf, Christian Leitz and Daniel von Recklinghausen (eds), *Honi soit qui mal y pense: Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010) 291-355

⁵¹³ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 15

⁵¹⁴ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 231

⁵¹⁵ Alan H. Gardiner, “Hymns to Sobk in a Ramesseum Papyrus” in: *RdE 11* (1957) 48

⁵¹⁶ Jacques de Morgan [et al.], *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l’Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombos. 1. partie*, 448 (1-13)

⁵¹⁷ Gihane Zaki, “L’intégration de Sobek dans le dispositif théologique des pays du Sud au temps des Ptolémées” in: *Orientalia 83(1)* (2014) 130-139

myth about the battle of Re with his enemies in the primordial times.⁵¹⁸ Taking into consideration the old Heliopolitan theology and the importance of the flood for the first southern nome of Egypt, some scholars suggest that the battle of Sobek-Re with his enemies also implies the battle of humidity/water/fertility against drought and death.⁵¹⁹

Kom Ombo temple texts give us other important details of the warrior aspect of Sobek, describing him as a god, who defeats his enemies in a form of four sacred animals: falcon in the air, crocodile in the water, bull on earth and lion on foreign earth. Thus in addition to his traditional crocodile form, during the battle Sobek can become a bull and a lion, the well-known animal forms of Haroeris, and a falcon, without doubt referring to the kingship and the divine power of Panebtawi “the Lord of the Two Lands” and Horus – the king.

3.3.6 Sobek as a deceased god of the necropolis

One of the most important aspects of Sobek in Kom Ombo is connected to the temple necropolis – the realm of the dead gods, buried there. According to the local theology, Re, Geb and Osiris, all representing different forms of Sobek, are buried at the Kom Ombo necropolis: “Sebek-Râ, seigneur d’Ombos, grand dieu, seigneur de Ta-seti, grand dieu sorti de Noun, Geb le grand, seigneur du sol, don’t l’effigie est cachée dans Ched-Beg (la nécropole).”⁵²⁰

As a deceased god of the necropolis, Sobek has an epithet *sbk nb šd-bg* “the lord of Ched-beg,”⁵²¹ where Ched-beg, “the one who knows the flood,” is an Egyptian name for the divine necropolis of Kom Ombo.⁵²² Sobek, lord of Ched-beg, is the deceased god, the inhabitant of Duat, where he is accompanied by his spouse Hathor, lady of Ched-beg (monographie 193),⁵²³ sometimes assimilated to Isis as a daughter of Re or spouse of Osiris: “Isis s’y trouve sous le

⁵¹⁸ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 67

⁵¹⁹ Jean-Francois Pécoil, “Les sources mythiques du Nil et le cycle de la crue” in: *BSEG 17* (1993) 97

⁵²⁰ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d’un divin crocodile ou l’originalité d’un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l’Antiquité*, 80

⁵²¹ Gihane Zaki, *Le premier nome de Haute-Égypte du IIIe siècle avant J.-C. au VIIe siècle après J.-C. d’après les sources hiéroglyphiques des temples ptolémaïques et romains*, 239-240

⁵²² Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 49

⁵²³ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 101-102

nom d'Hathor qui verse l'eau fraîche à son père Rê" (monographie 709).⁵²⁴ In hymn 10 Sobek is called *nb jnm š3 hpr.w h3p dt=f jmn dhn bs ntrj sm sšt3 st=f m šd-bg* – “the lord of the colour, of many forms, who hides his body, who conceals his secret forms, in the hidden image, in the divine form, in the secret residence in Ched-beg.”⁵²⁵ According to Adolphe Gutbub, the deceased god of the necropolis, called “the lord of Ched-beg”, is indeed Sobek – a universal transcendental deity, assimilated to Osiris, Geb and Re at once. This theological concept could have been realized in practice by the mummy of the sacred crocodile, buried in the necropolis of the temple.⁵²⁶ The existence of mammisi, although almost completely ruined by now, may hint at the ceremonies that could have been performed on the sacred animal of Sobek. The sacred crocodile, who was born in the “birth house,” and then crowned and lived in the temple precinct as the sacred animal of Sobek-Geb, could have been buried at the necropolis after death and thus become the personification of the deceased god of the necropolis, Sobek, the lord of Ched-beg.⁵²⁷ In spite of this natural cycle of life and death, Gutbub points at the clear distinction between Sobek as “the god of the temple” and “the god of the necropolis” in Kom Ombo. In the course of temple’s everyday life these two aspects of Sobek existed in two different domains: of the living and of the dead. Only during the temple festivals they could meet each other and continue the cycle.

3.4 Temple festivals in Kom Ombo

Kom Ombo temple life was rich with festivals and celebrations. At least five festival calendars from the times of Ptolemaios VI Philometor (180-164/163-145 BC) have been preserved on temple walls: a general festival calendar of all gods of the temple in the inner hypostyle hall and four texts in the outer vestibule: a special festival calendar of Haroeris and Hathor; calendar of the festivals of the necropolis and mammisi, involving Haroeris, Tasetnefert and Panebtawi; a special Panebtawi calendar and two more smaller calendars in outer and central vestibule.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 3

⁵²⁵ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d'un divin crocodile ou l'originalité d'un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l'Antiquité*, 80

⁵²⁶ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 265-266

⁵²⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 525-526

⁵²⁸ Alfred Grimm, *Die altägyptischen Festkalender in den Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Epoche* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994) 1-5

The most important and well-known festival of the Kom Ombo temple was devoted to the gods of the necropolis and cult of the dead ancestors. Celebrated in the month of Paopi, during the Akhet season, days 2-11, it comprised many important cultic events under the dominant figure of god Osiris: his creation, burial and funerary cult.⁵²⁹ Philippe Derchain points out that regeneration of Osiris in the form of syncretic god Sobek-Re was strongly connected to the coming of inundation in the Akhet season, bringing renewal of fertility, new birth and prosperity of the land.⁵³⁰

On the second day of Paopi the big procession of Haroeris/Shu went to the necropolis of Ched-Beg, bringing offerings to his son Sobek/Geb, the dead god of the necropolis and recreating Osiris together. On the third day of Paopi the procession of the divine triad of Sobek, including Tasetnefert and Panebtawi, made its way to the necropolis, making a stop at the mammisi for the important ceremony of “resting in the house of birth.”⁵³¹ On day 11 there was again the public appearance of the Lord of the Two Lands Panebtawi at the mammisi, accompanied by the offerings to the gods and having a rest and reunion at the birth house.⁵³²

One of the most significant concepts of the Kom Ombo theological system is peace and reunion of Shu and Geb, who create Osiris together during the annual Paopi festival. This mystical action can be identified as the central one:⁵³³ “dans la Belle Place en sa belle fête du deuxième mois de la saison de l’inondation, le jour 25. de ce mois, qui se rend à Beg en ce jour pour embellir les offrandes pour son fils Geb, Sobek, seigneur de la Place l’appelle-t-on, le Coeur du père s’unit à son fils, ils y créent leur fils Osiris” (monographie 193).⁵³⁴ Indeed, Paopi festival was to a great extent devoted to Osiris and his life cycle, including burial and funerary cult, performed during vast celebrations and festival processions to the necropolis. The procession was bringing

⁵²⁹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 524-525

⁵³⁰ Philippe Derchain, “Portrait d’un divin crocodile ou l’originalité d’un écrivain du temps de Domitien” in: Françoise Labrique (ed.), *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales de l’Antiquité*, 80-99

⁵³¹ Alfred Grimm, *Die altägyptischen Festkalender in den Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Epoche*, 375-378

⁵³² Sherif El-Sabban, *Temple festival calendars of Ancient Egypt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000) 158

⁵³³ Robert S. Bianchi, “Kom Ombo” in: Kathryn A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 418-420

⁵³⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 92-93; 105

offerings to the burial place of Osiris and other dead gods of the temple necropolis, such as Re and Geb, both assimilated to Sobek, “the lord of Ched-beg”, the hidden transcendental deity.⁵³⁵

The peculiar and highly unusual feature for Egyptian religion is that in Kom Ombo Haroeris-Shu, the father, performs mortuary cult for Sobek-Geb, his son. However, in Gutbub’s view, it can be explained taking into consideration high degree of assimilation among different gods in the Kom Ombo pantheon. Therefore as Sobek was assimilated to Osiris, Haroeris was to Horus – in this case the traditional model of Horus, performing funerary cult for Osiris is maintained. In the case of Sobek’s assimilation to Re, his spouse Hathor/Isis performs mortuary cult for her father Re.⁵³⁶ The ceremony at the mammisi, called in Kom Ombo *ht-št3.t* “the mysterious dwelling“, was performed in order to remember the birth of Panebtawi and emphasize the annual cycle of his rebirth and renewal.⁵³⁷

Complexity of the Kom Ombo theological system raises many problems with interpretation of Paopi festival ceremonies. As may be seen from the examples above, any traditional expression or concept of Egyptian religion could be easily used in different theological context in Kom Ombo. Therefore, we can actually speak about re-interpretation of traditional themes in a local mythology.

Another big festival, although not so well-documented, was called Intous and was celebrated in the new moon of the Pachons month, in the Shemu season. On the ground of the surviving temple calendars we can assume that it was devoted to the destruction of enemies of Re, particularly Apophis, and regeneration of Osiris.⁵³⁸ Among the most important ceremonies of Intous were “resting in the Secret Place, which is on the South-East of the town,” “making offerings at the Secret Place by the god” and “reciting aloud the spells for overthrowing Apophis.”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ Adolphe Gutbub, “Kom Ombo” in: Wolfgang Helck and Eberhardt Otto (eds.) *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Bd. 3.*, 680

⁵³⁶ René Preys, “Le rituel de Chedbeg aux mois de Paophi et de Pakhons” in: *BIFAO 108* (2008) 309-324

⁵³⁷ François Daumas, *Les mammisis des temples égyptiens* (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1958) 239-240

⁵³⁸ René Preys, “Le rituel de Chedbeg aux mois de Paophi et de Pakhons” in: *BIFAO 108* (2008) 309-324

⁵³⁹ Alfred Grimm, *Die altägyptischen Festkalender in den Tempeln der griechisch-römischen Epoche*, 403-406

Temple festival calendars mention more festivals of the birth of Sobek/Panebtawi,⁵⁴⁰ probably one of them was somehow connected to the serpent goddess Renenutet, as suggests the graffiti on the Trajan wall, representing the mummies of a crocodile and a serpent on the bier.

Unfortunately, the *mammisi*, where the divine birth of the son-god and his coronation as *nswt bjtj*⁵⁴¹ has been celebrated in a form of a mystery play, are ruined almost completely and cannot give any evidence.⁵⁴²

3.5 Oracles of Sobek in Kom Ombo

Archeological work in the sanctuaries of Kom Ombo revealed the existence of the voice oracle in the temple. Two twin sanctuaries of Sobek and Haroeris were divided in a half by a hollow separation wall, which contained 3-storey small secret chambers for the priest, serving, according to Richard Wilkinson, “to overhear petitions or deliver oracles on behalf of the deities.”⁵⁴³

Another possible type of oracle is a ticket one, connected to the famous “hearing ear” of Kom Ombo temple.⁵⁴⁴ In fact “the hearing ear” represents the false door in the outer wall of the temple behind the sanctuaries and depicts the goddess Maat in a central niche with carved images on her sides: the hearing ears and holy eyes of Horus⁵⁴⁵ and monumental carved figures of Sobek with a lion-headed scepter on the left side and Haroeris with a human-legged knife on the right (figure 34).⁵⁴⁶ The importance of this place confirms not only the famous Double hymn, placed between the two gods, but also the relief itself, which summarizes the main religious themes of the temple, including the battle of Re and union of the gods. The relief shows in a symbolical way the main points of local theology, written on temple walls – it was certainly done for the sake of

⁵⁴⁰ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 141

⁵⁴¹ Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo. [T.] 1*, 519

⁵⁴² Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs*, 285

⁵⁴³ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 210

⁵⁴⁴ Adolphe Gutbub, “Éléments ptolémaïques préfigurant le relief culturel de Kom Ombo in Das ptolemäischen Ägypten” in: Herwig Maehler and Volker M. Strocka (eds.), *Akten des Internationalen Symposions. Berlin, 27.-29. September 1976* (Mainz am Rhein, 1978) 165-176

⁵⁴⁵ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 71

⁵⁴⁶ Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 210

ordinary believers, who had no opportunity to enter the temple.⁵⁴⁷ However, there is not a single “ticket” left from Kom Ombo, which makes discussion about the ticket oracle rather vague. The same can be said about the existence of so-called processional oracle that could have functioned during public festivals and celebrations.

⁵⁴⁷ Adolphe Gutbub, “Éléments ptolémaïques préfigurant le relief culturel de Kom Ombo in das ptolemäischen Ägypten” in: Herwig Maehler and Volker M. Strocka (eds.), *Akten des Internationalen Symposions. Berlin, 27.-29. September 1976*, 165-176

4 Conclusion

The cult of Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman times represents a very diverse and complicated set of beliefs, traditions, theological constructs and concepts, originated as a result of the long development of Egyptian religion as well as its continuous contact and interaction with Greek culture after 332 BC. At first glance the two theological systems, described in this work, the Fayumite and the Ombite respectively, may seem very different and confusing. However, the research and analysis, based in great part on the relevant information about the Sobek cult in the Fayum and Kom Ombo, led to interesting and sometimes unexpected conclusions.

The cult of Sobek in the Fayum without a doubt has always been independent and self-sufficient. The “Book of the Fayum” demonstrates the richness and completeness of the Fayum theology, as well as a certain degree of autonomy from other religious centres of Egypt. Moreover, the diversity of crocodile deities in the Fayum towns and the further development of Sobek in Kom Ombo confirm the enormous potential and productivity of the “Book of the Fayum.” All crocodile gods of the Fayum, including the fascinating phenomenon of twin deities, are no more than different forms and understandings of many guises and aspects of Sobek. As a highly syncretic god in Ptolemaic and Roman times, he took on many more roles, than was the case in the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and therefore could bear more names and forms, as has been shown in the Fayum chapter. However, in spite of many crocodile deities, looking like separate local gods, Sobek of the Fayum always retained his uniformity, partially because all his guises and forms have been normalized in the “Book of the Fayum.”

The theology of the Kom Ombo temple, that looks completely different at first sight, after deeper analysis shows excessive ties and boundless connections to the Fayum, at the same time recognizing its theological primacy. Nevertheless, the Kom Ombo priesthood worked hard on the development and sophistication of the Fayum theology, bring it together with Heliopolite, Memfite and Thebaid theologies, as well as combining with their own theology of the first southern nome of Upper Egypt.

Probably the most important and unexpected conclusion coming out from present work is that syncretic forms of Sobek in the Fayum and Kom Ombo finally display almost full correspondence! This fact certainly speaks for the existence of a unified concept of Sobek in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, that was the result of a long development and the theological work of both Fayumite and Ombite temples’ priests, who shared and kept their theological knowledge.

The Fayumite and Ombite theological schools indisputably represent two immense and extremely complex systems, and they still need more studies, which will re-examine, complete and expand original works by Horst Beinlich, Jacques de Morgan, Adolphe Gutbub and other brilliant scholars.

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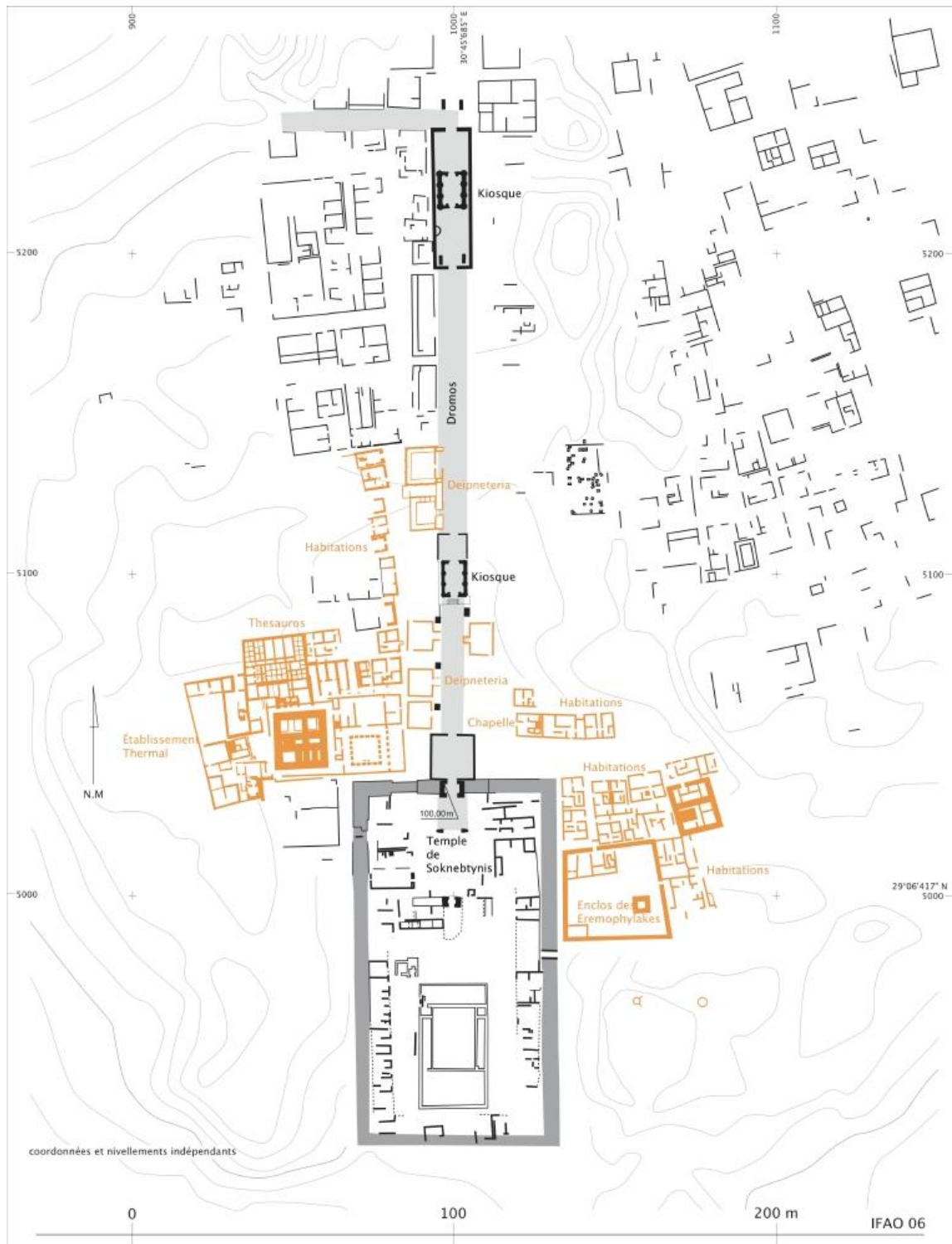
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6 Appendix (maps and figures)

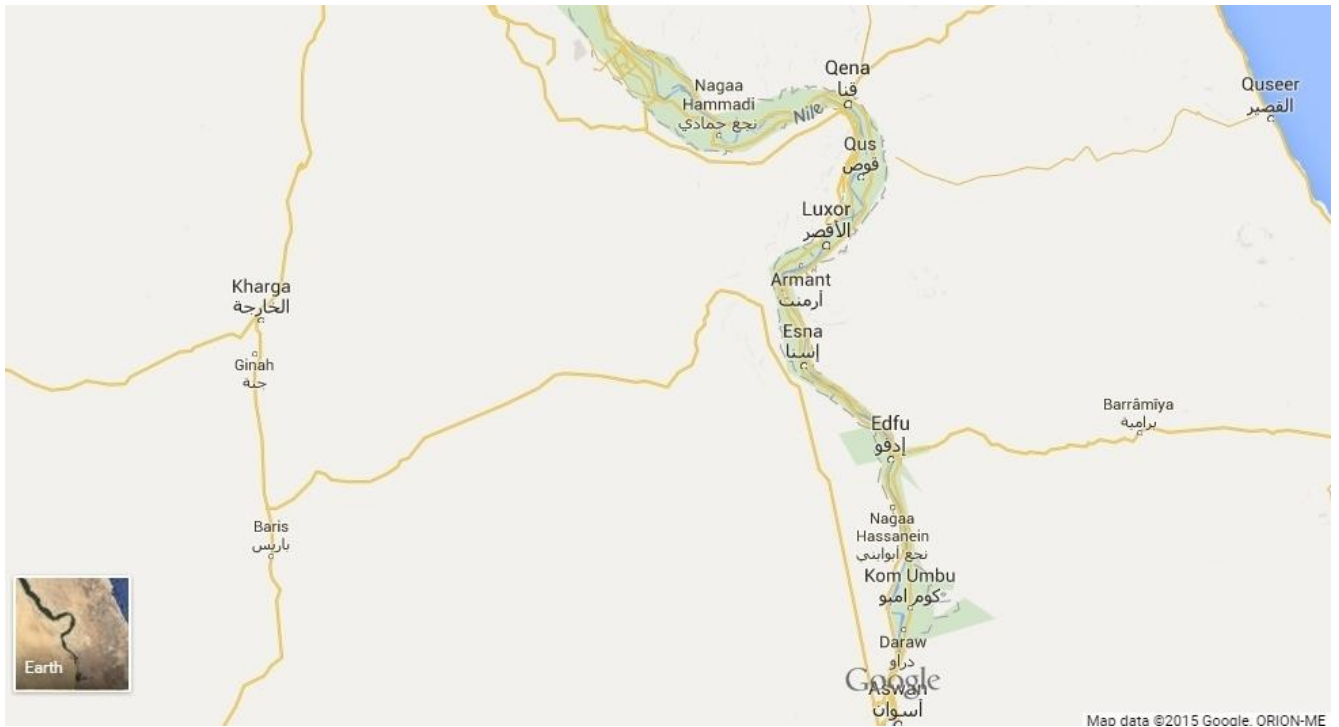


Map 1. Egypt and the Fayum region



Map 3. Plan of the temple of Soknebtynis with its dromos and additional buildings⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁹ Institut français d'archéologie orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/tebtynis/>
 Accessed on 20.04.2014



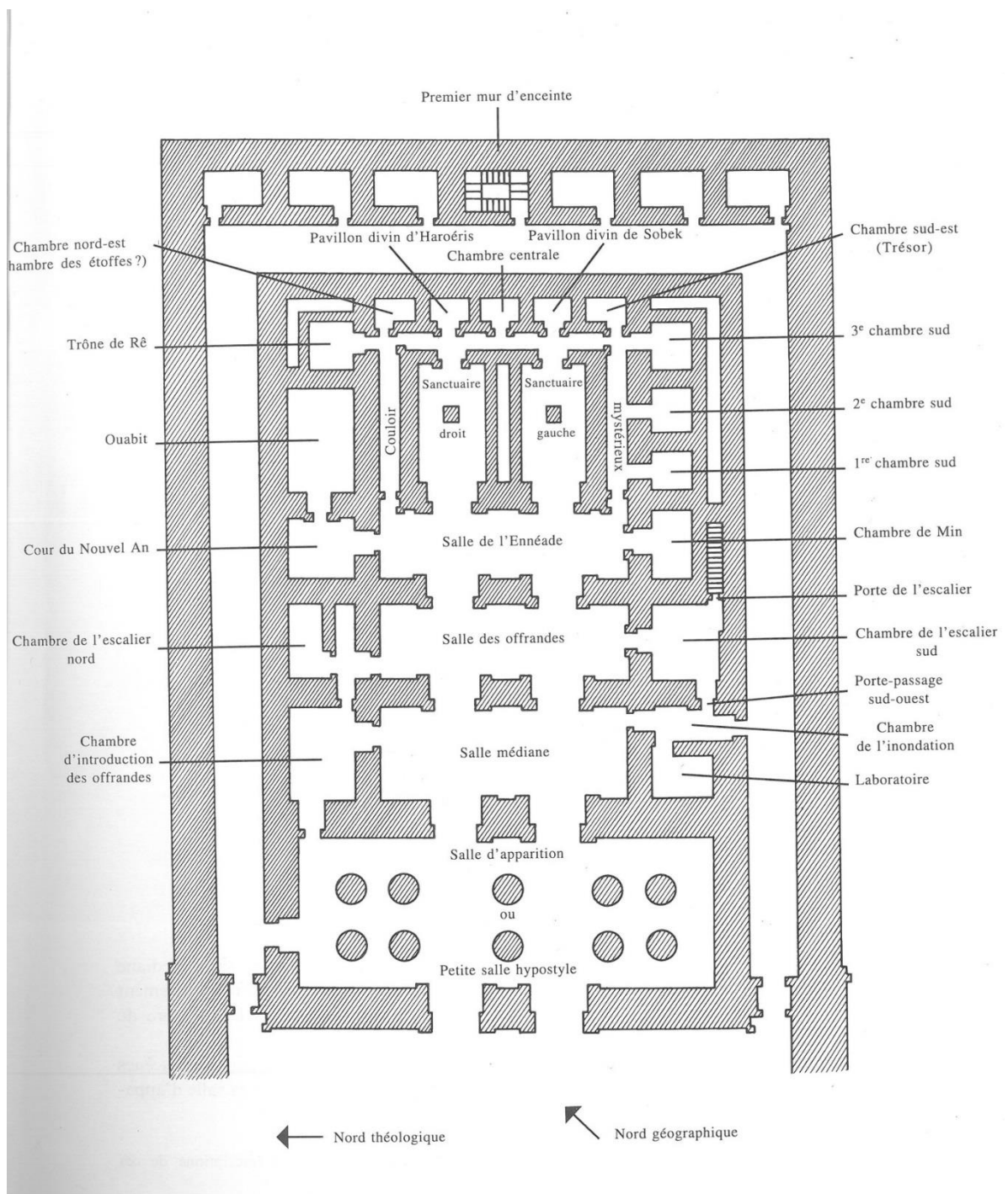
Map 4. Kom Ombo location in Upper Egypt



Map 5. Kom Ombo temple location



Map 6. Orientation of the Kom Ombo temple on satellite map



Map 7. Ground plan of the Kom Ombo temple⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁵⁰ Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale: <http://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/kom-ombo/> Accessed on 27.10.2015

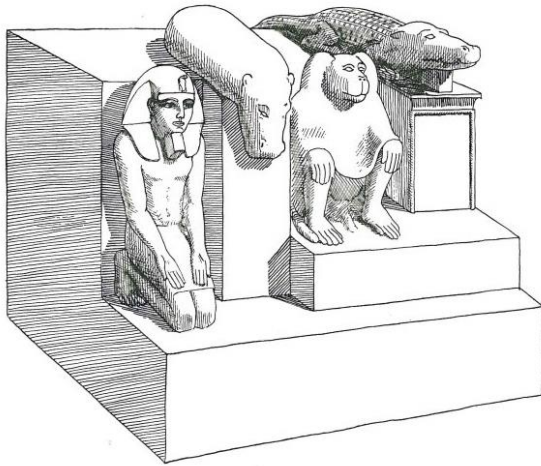


Figure 1. Possible reconstruction of the Ptolemaic monument of Sobek in Krokodilopolis with the hippopotamus of Thoeris, the baboon of Thoth and kneeling figure of Pramarras (drawing by Labib Habachi)⁵⁵¹



Figure 2. Statue of Soknopaios with the crocodile body and hawk head from the Northern temple of Karanis, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ Labib Habachi, "A strange monument of the Ptolemaic period from Crocodilopolis" in: *JEA* 41 (1955) 106-111

⁵⁵² Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey>
Accessed on 20.04.2014



Figure 3. Magical cippus depicting Harpocrates standing on two protective crocodiles from 3 century BC. The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, accession number 22.332⁵⁵³

⁵⁵³ The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/24712/horus-stele-3/>
Accessed on 20.04.2014



Figure 4. The altar in the Southern Temple of Karanis with a tiny room beneath the altar, used by the priests for the voice oracle. Photo Gigal 2009⁵⁵⁴



Figure 5. Relief from the temple of Tebtynis depicting a royal sphinx with a raised hand before Soknebtynis, sitting on the throne, and a symbol of Nefertum between them⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁴ Gigal Research: <http://www.gigalresearch.com/uk/publications-karanis.php>
Accessed on 20.04.2014

⁵⁵⁵ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 240

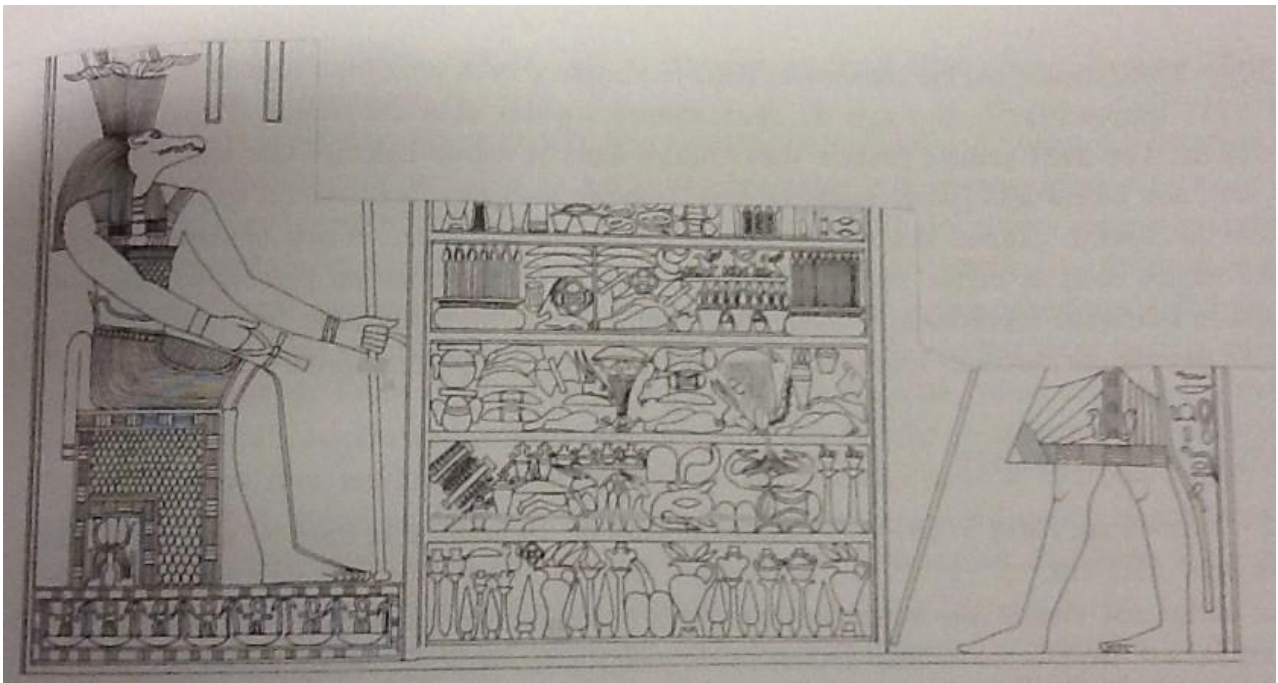
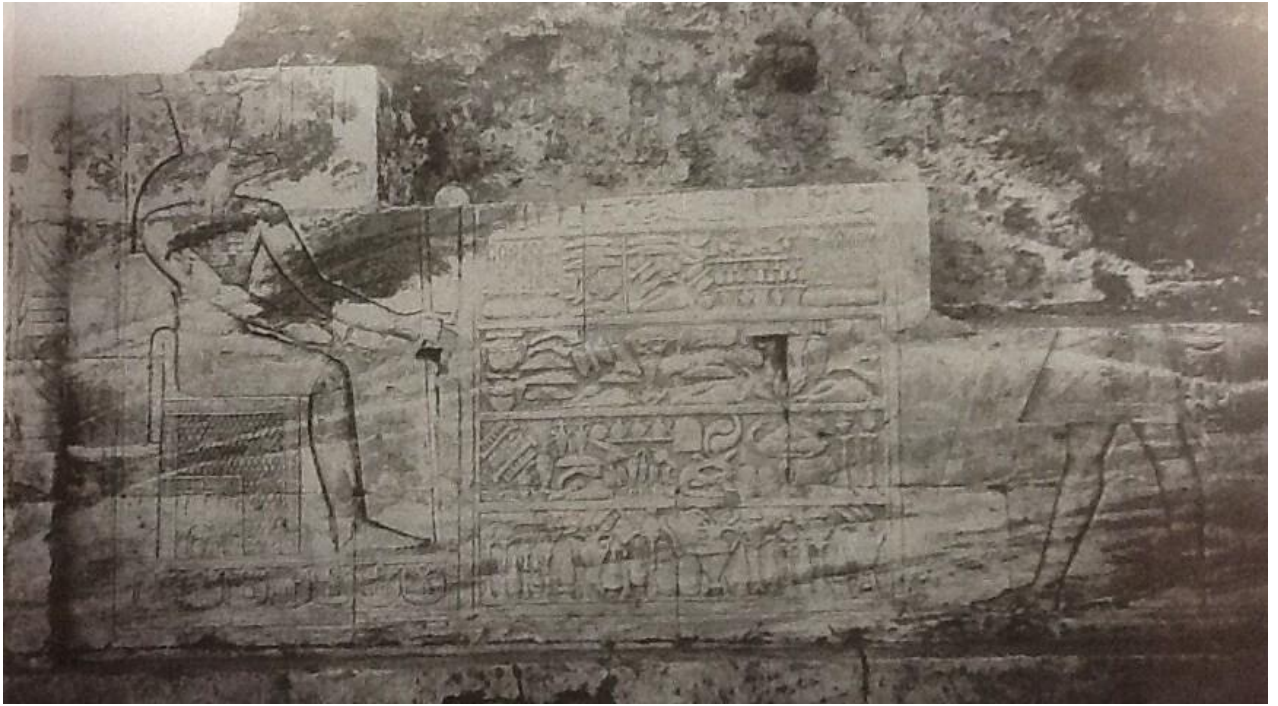


Figure 6. Soknebtynis before the offering table in the open vestibule of Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos, Tebtynis temple (the original relief and drawing by the Italo-French excavation team)⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁶ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 134-135

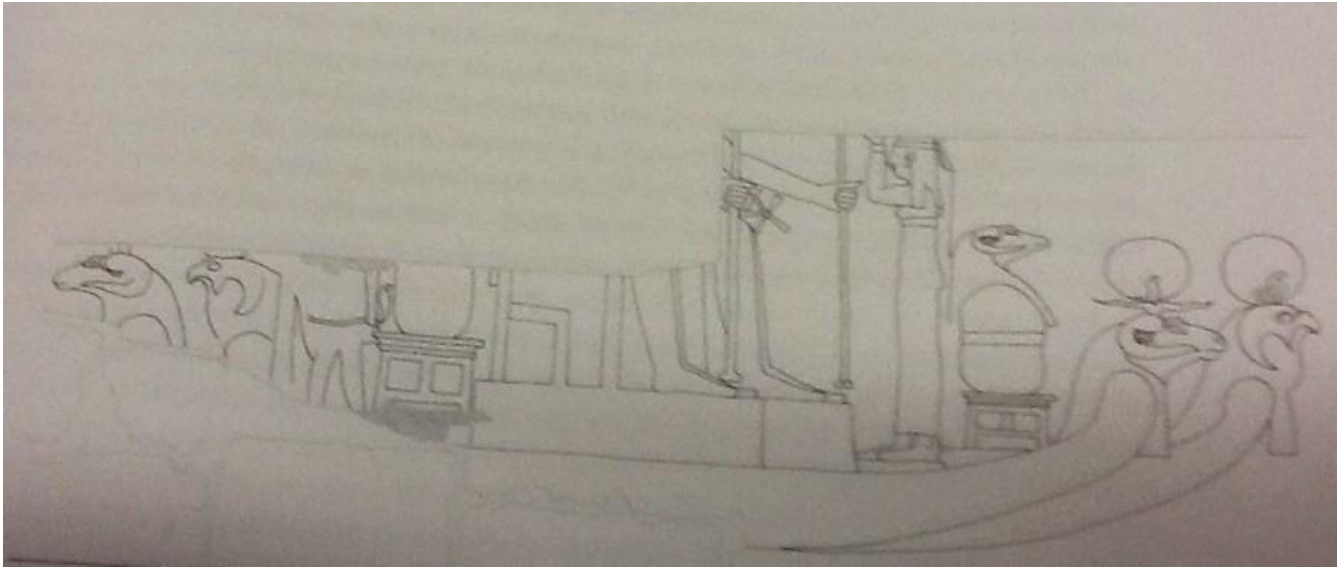
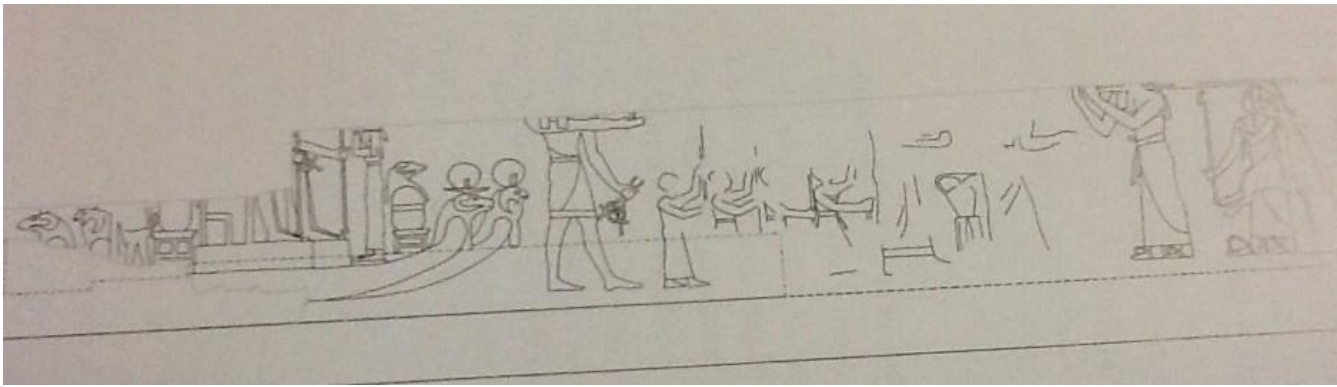


Figure 7. Relief from the open vestibule of Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos in Tebtynis temple, depicting two sacred barks of Soknebtynis: the so-called “Sobek of the South” and “Sobek of the North” during the annual festival procession (drawing by the Italo-French excavation team)⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷ Vincent Rondot, *Tebtynis II: le temple de Soknebtynis et son Dromos*, 126-129

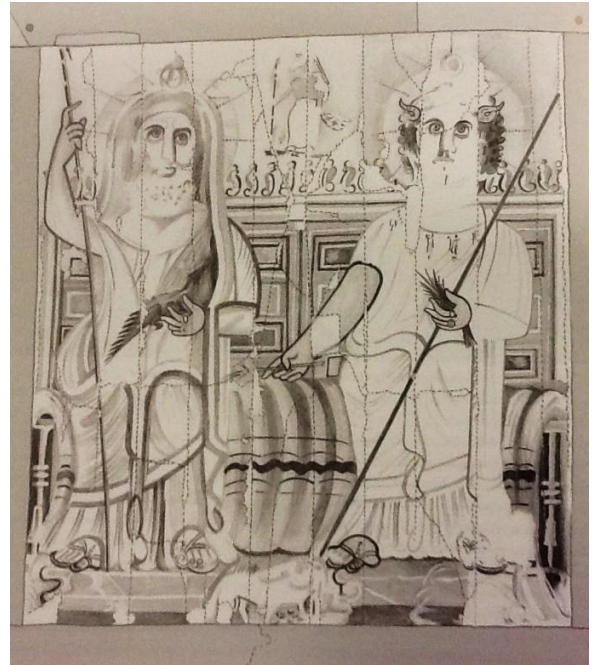


Figure 8. Wall painting from Tebtynis depicting Soknebtynis (on the left) with Amon (on the right). Berlin Staatliche Ägyptisches Museum, accession number 15978⁵⁵⁸

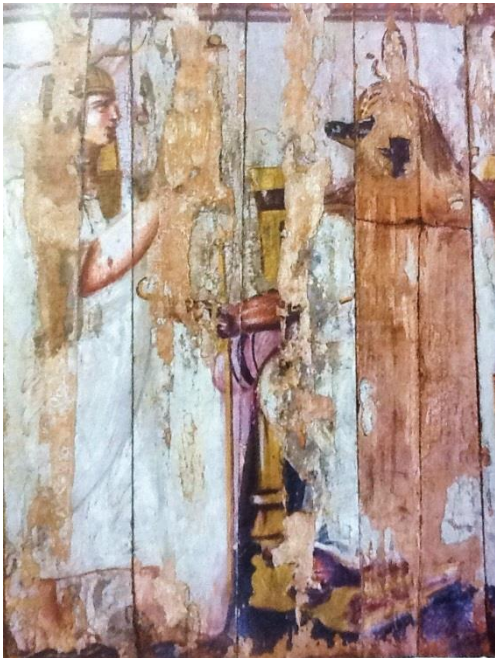


Figure 9. Wall painting depicting Pramarres and Soknebtynis standing face-to-face (drawing from the original table in Pushkin Museum, Moscow, accession number 6860)⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁸ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d'Egypte*, 122-127

⁵⁵⁹ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d'Egypte*, 166-169, 241-242



Figure 10. Sobek–Re and Pramarrès, stele from Egyptian Museum in Cairo, JE 28159⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁶⁰ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d’Égypte*, 242



Figure 11. Stone relief representing Soknebtynis in human form with a small crocodile in his hand and solar rays around his head. Egyptian Museum in Cairo CG 26902⁵⁶¹



Figure 12. Limestone model of a basin with a figure of a little crocodile inside, from the temple of Pnepheros in Theadelphia⁵⁶²

⁵⁶¹ David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 134

⁵⁶² Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, tav. LXIV.4

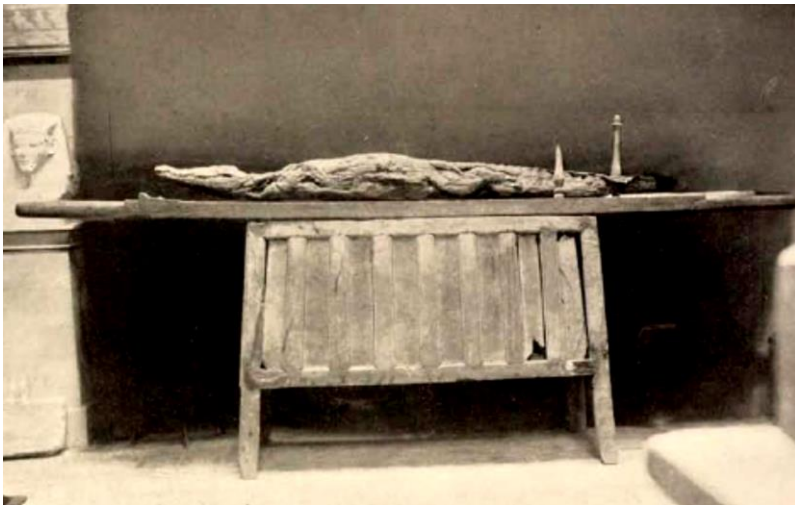


Figure 13. The embalmed crocodile, found on the processional stretcher in the temple of Pnepheros, Theadelphia, Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria⁵⁶³



Figure 14. The unique fresco from Theadelphia, depicting the so-called processional oracle of the god Pnepheros: the procession of priests is carrying the mummified sacred crocodile with an atef-crown⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶³ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, tav. LVI.2

⁵⁶⁴ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. XLIV.3



Figure 15. Wall painting from Theadelphia showing Heron with a small mummified crocodile at the bottom with atef-crown. Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, accession number 20225⁵⁶⁵

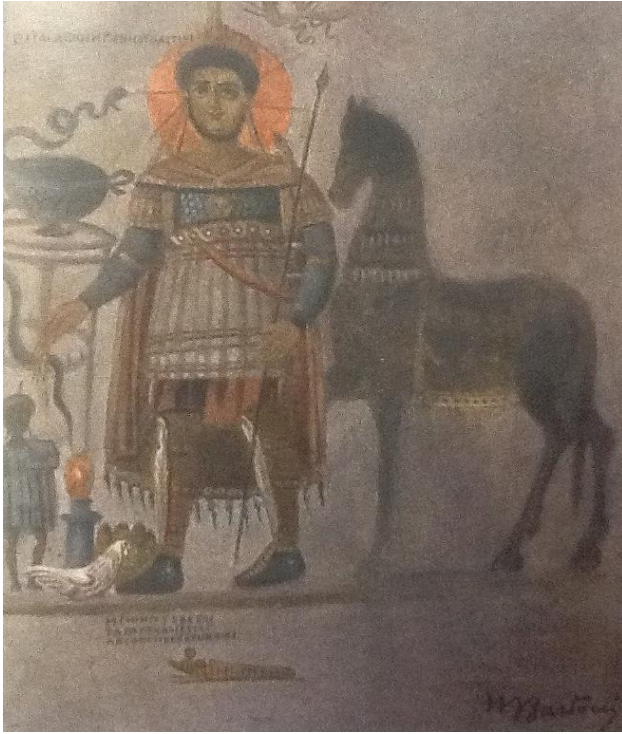


Figure 16. Wall painting from Theadelphia showing Heron with a small mummified crocodile at the bottom with solar disk and uraeus (drawing by Bartocci). Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, accession number 20223⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d'Egypte*, 210

⁵⁶⁶ Vincent Rondot, *Derniers visages des dieux d'Egypte*, 210



Figure 17. Private votive stelae from Theadelphia depicting Pnepheros in a form of a living crocodile, lying on the pedestal⁵⁶⁷



Figure 18. Private votive stele from Theadelphia depicting Pnepheros in a form of a living crocodile with uraeus, lying on the pedestal, made of lotus flowers, and a worshipper before him also presenting him a flower⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. LXV.1.2

⁵⁶⁸ Evaristo Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine. Tome premier*, 97-121, tav. LXIV.1

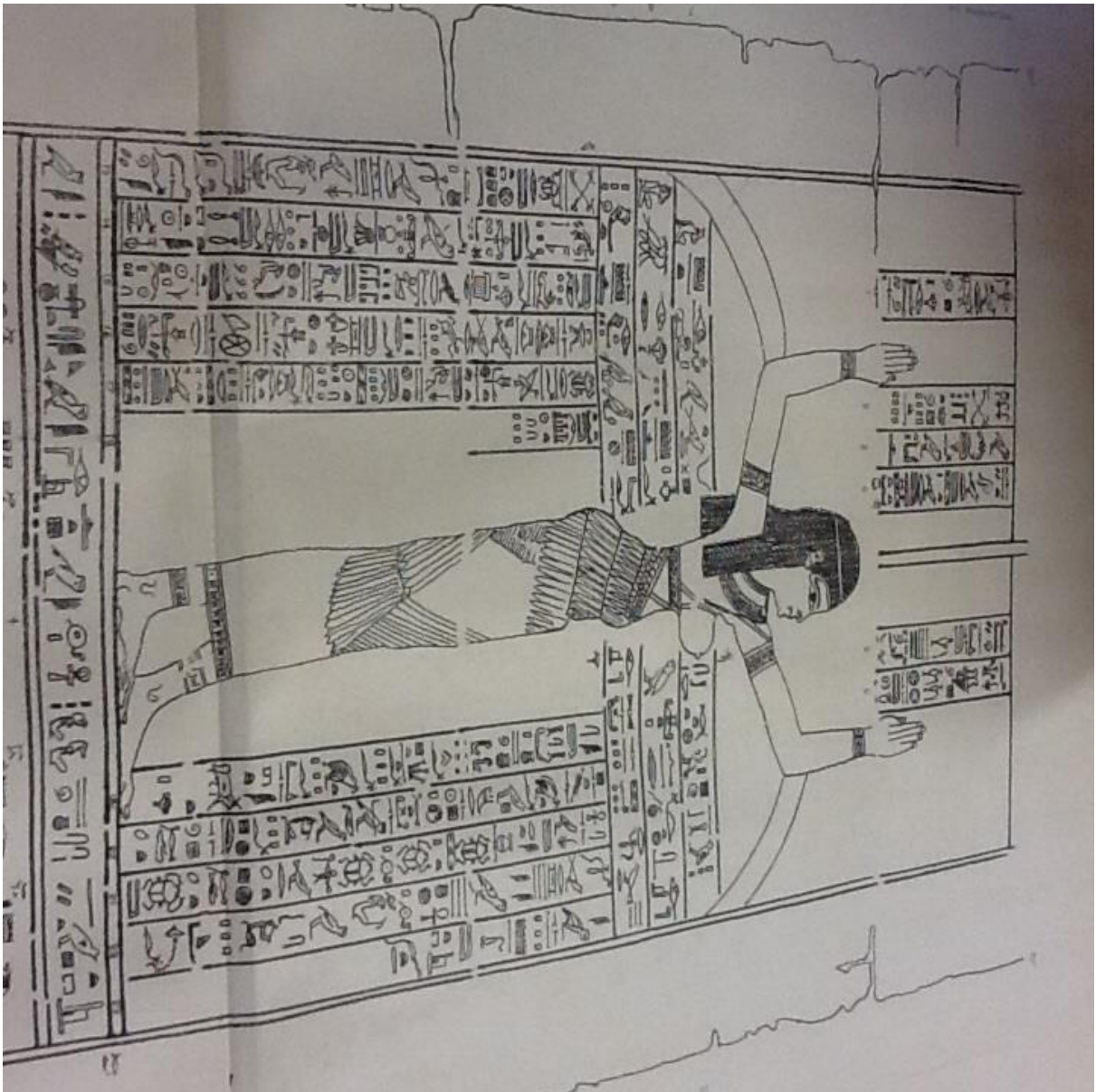


Figure 19. Fragment from the “Book of the Fayum”, showing the goddess Mehet-Weret (“The Great Flood“) as a representation of the Fayum – with her feet standing on the west, her head on the east and two raised arms in the form of a *ka*-sign, representing the southern and the northern channel of the Fayum⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 82-86

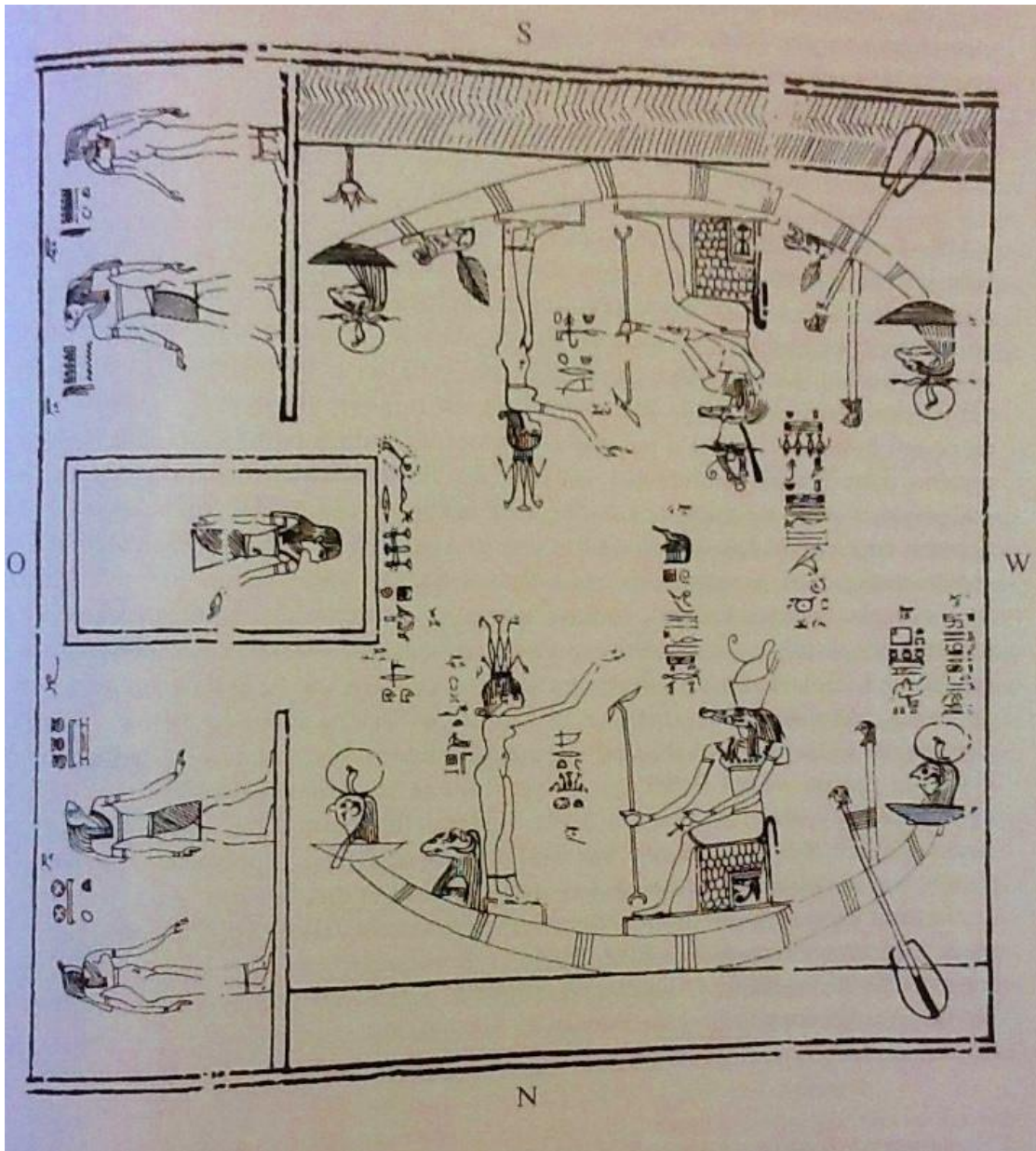


Figure 20. Fragment from the “Book of the Fayum” depicting two barks: “Re who rows in the southern sea” (the upper bark) and “Sobek who rows in the northern sea” (the lower bark)⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁷⁰ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 86-90

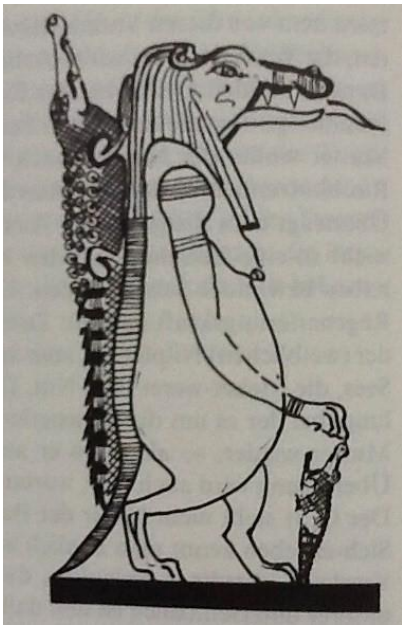


Figure 21. Detail from the Book of the Fayum: “Neith, the great one, who protects her son”⁵⁷¹



Figure 22. Detail from the “Book of the Fayum” depicting three chapels with acacia leaves on the top and a human mummy on crocodile’s back. According to Horst Beinlich, it is the image of the deceased syncretic “Sobek-Re-Osiris”⁵⁷²

⁵⁷¹ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 99-100

⁵⁷² Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 113-114

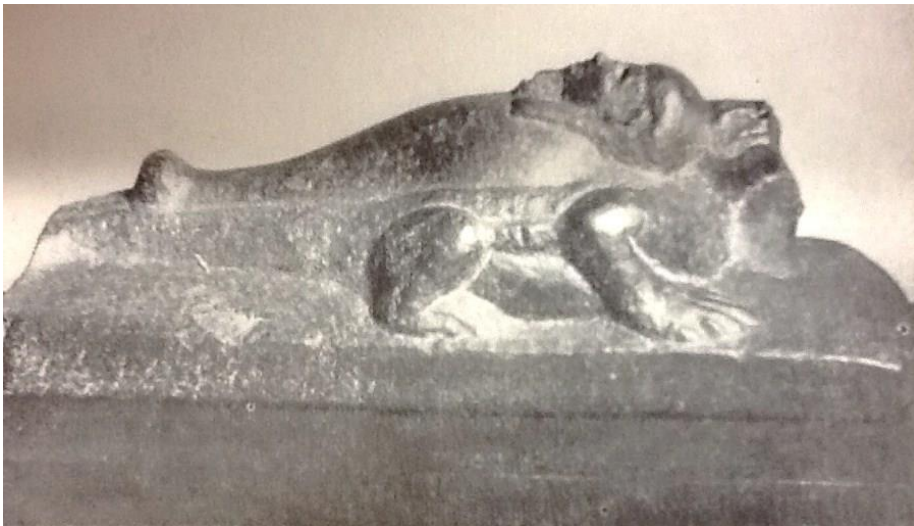


Figure 23. (Protective?) statuette of a crocodile carrying a human mummy on his back, from Berlin Museum⁵⁷³

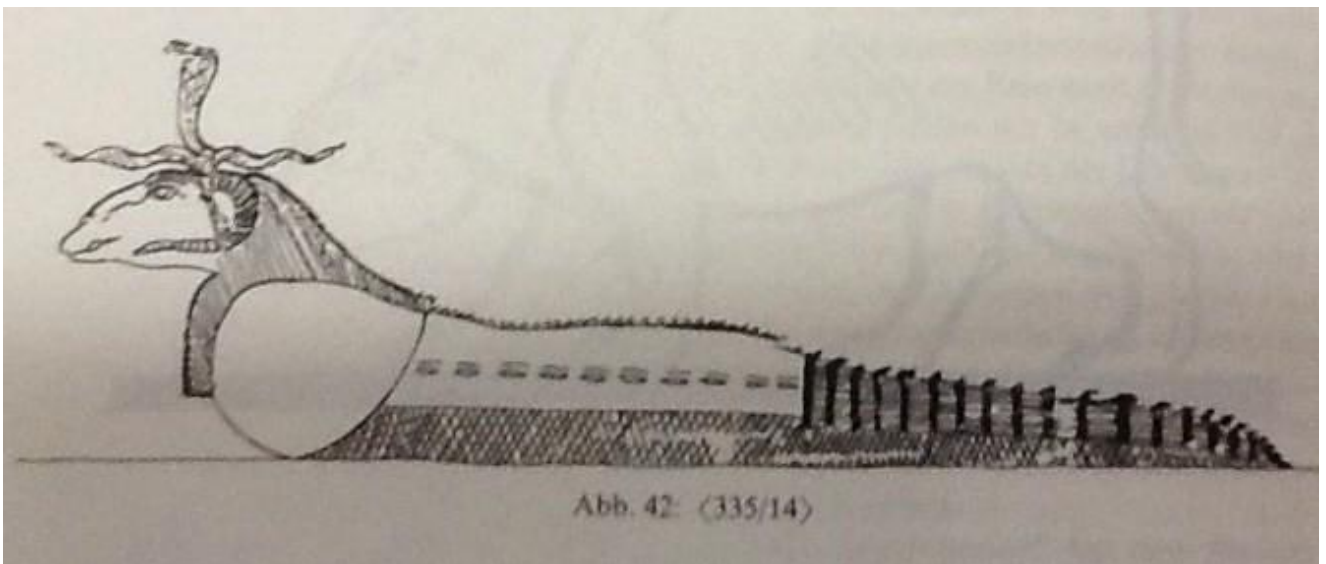


Figure 24. Detail from the “Book of the Fayum” depicting a highly syncretic form of Sobek having a crocodile body and a ram head with two kinds of horns and uraeus, possibly a syncretic Sobek-Re-Atum-Chnum⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷³ Claudia Dolzani, *Il dio Sobk* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1961)

⁵⁷⁴ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 105-106

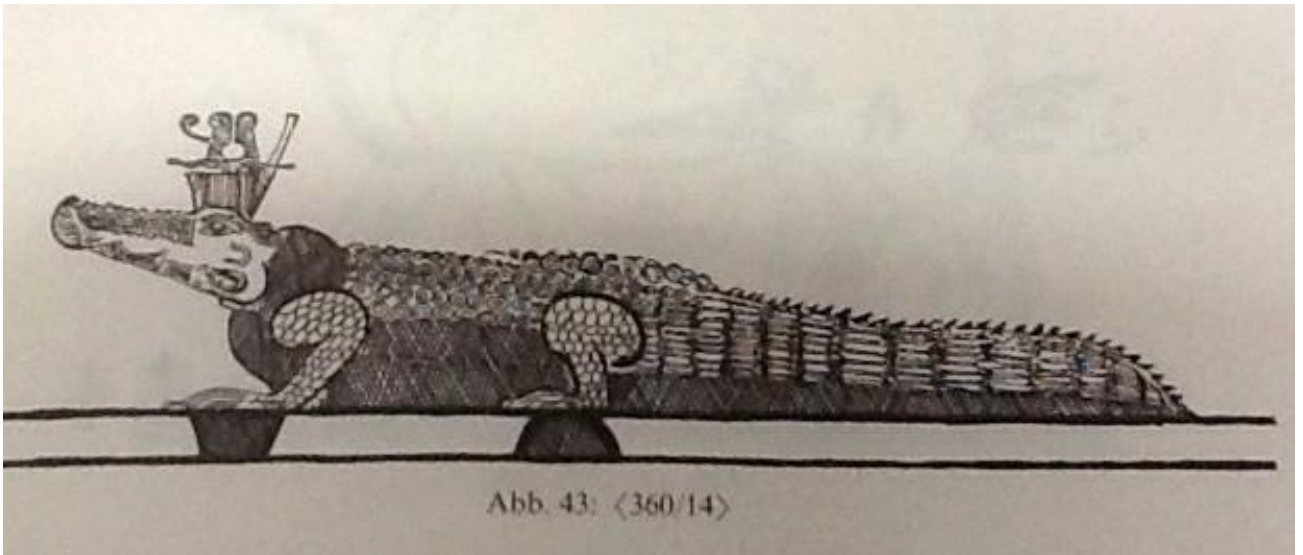
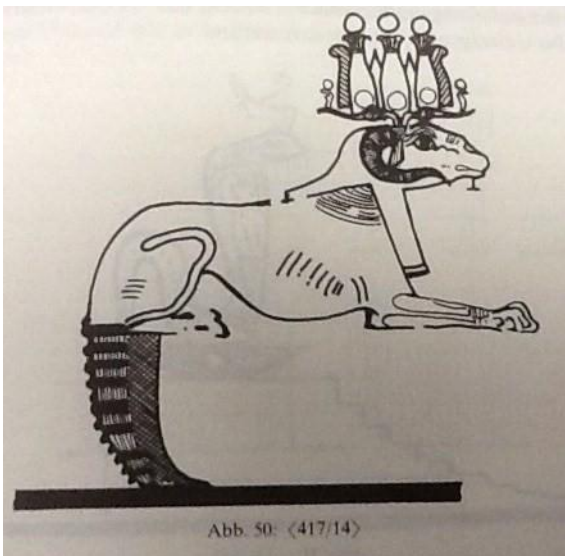


Figure 25. Detail from the Book of the Fayum representing, according to Horst Beinlich, Sobek-Kamutef – the primeval god “who has raised from the sea, the eldest son of Mehet-Weret”⁵⁷⁵



Figures 26. Detail from the “Book of the Fayum” depicting a highly syncretic form of Sobek having a crocodile tail, lion body and ram head, crowned with a triple atef-crown; probably a syncretic Sobek-Amun-Re – a primeval solar deity, residing in the lake⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 106-108

⁵⁷⁶ Horst Beinlich, *Das Buch von Fayum: zum religiösen Eigenverständnis einer ägyptischen Landschaft*, 114-115



Figure 27. Votive figurine of Sobek-Re from Louvre Museum, accession number E 22888⁵⁷⁷



Figure 28. A wooden box from 1BC, showing a king offering to Sobek-Re in a crocodile form with a sun-disk. The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, accession number 61.271⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁷ Louvre Museum: <http://www.louvre.fr/oeuvre-notices/sebek-re>
Accessed on 20.04.2012

⁵⁷⁸ The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland: <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/4415/chest-with-writing/>
Accessed on 20.04.2014



Figure 29. Highly hellenized depiction of Sobek-Helios with a tiny solar crown on his head together with a great solar-rays nimbus, characteristic for Helios, and a guirlande of vegetale above his head. Berlin Museum, accession number 10314⁵⁷⁹

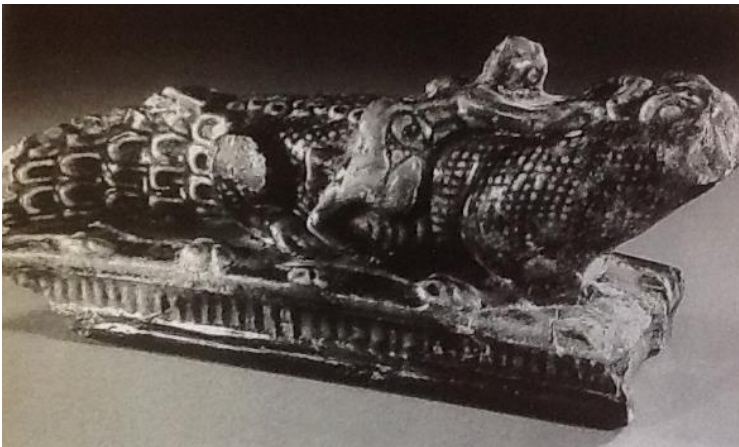


Figure 30. Terracotta figurine of Sobek-Hapi, used for private worship, showing mummified crocodile adorned with flowers or vegetation⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ Pierre P. Koemoth, “Couronner Souchos pour fêter la retour de la crue” in: Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Isis on the Nile*, 274-275

⁵⁸⁰ Pierre P. Koemoth, “Couronner Souchos pour fêter la retour de la crue” in: Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Isis on the Nile*, 265



Figure 31. (Votive?) figurine of Sobek-Horus in the form of a crocodile with falcon or hawk head. The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, accession number 22.374⁵⁸¹

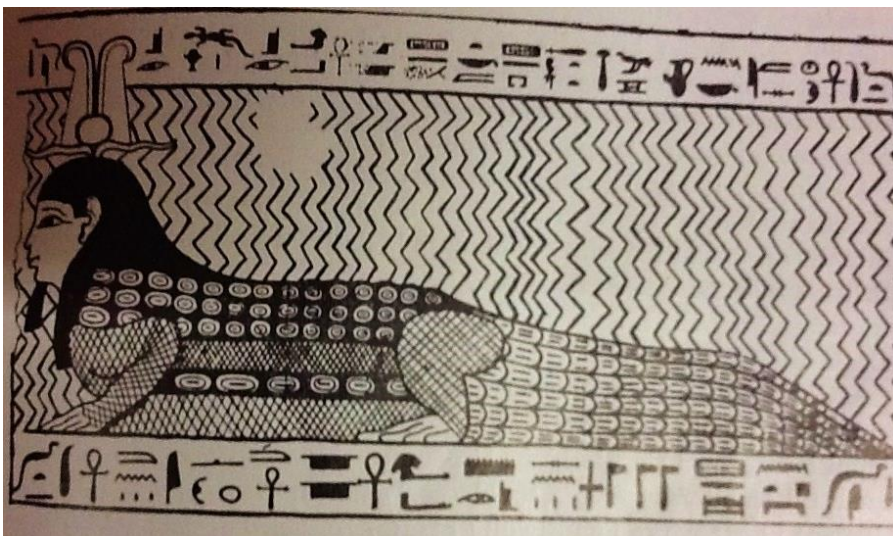


Figure 32. The coffin of Ankhruaty (Hawara, C-31)⁵⁸² showing Osiris as *wsjr š3 hrw* (“Osiris of many faces”), having a crocodile body and human head with two horns, solar disc and two feathers⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland:
<http://art.thewalters.org/detail/37893/statue-of-a-crocodile-with-the-head-of-a-falcon/> Accessed on 20.04.2014

⁵⁸² W. M. Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London: Field and Tuer, 1889)

⁵⁸³ Claudia Dolzani, *Il dio Sobk* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1961)

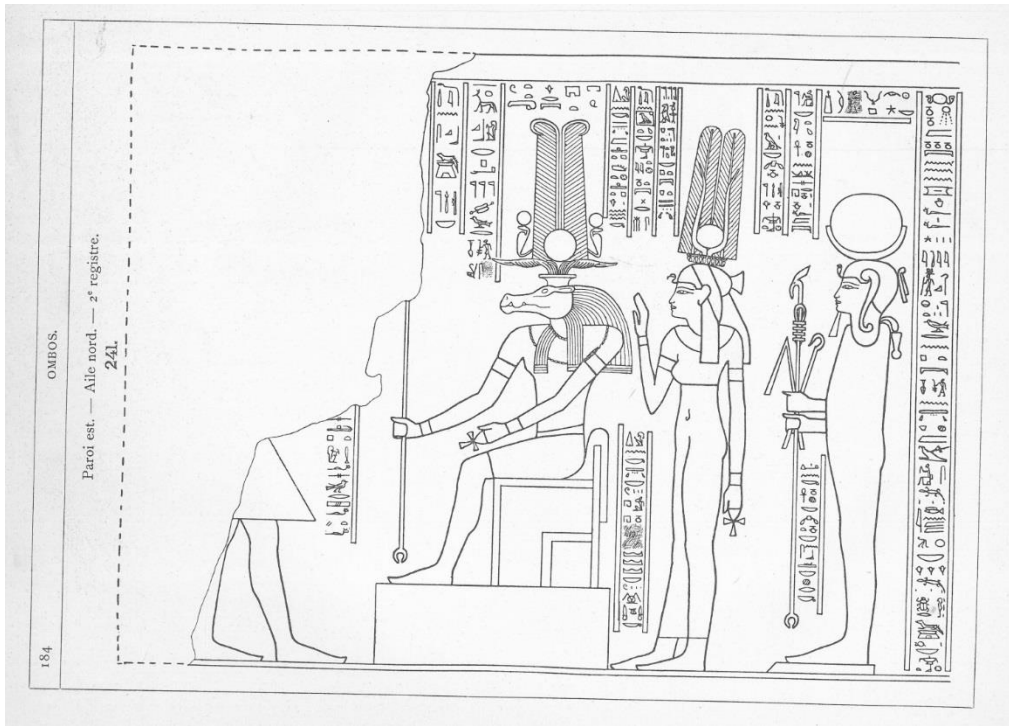


Figure 33. Sobek of the Kom Ombo with his divine family: Hathor and Chonsu⁵⁸⁴

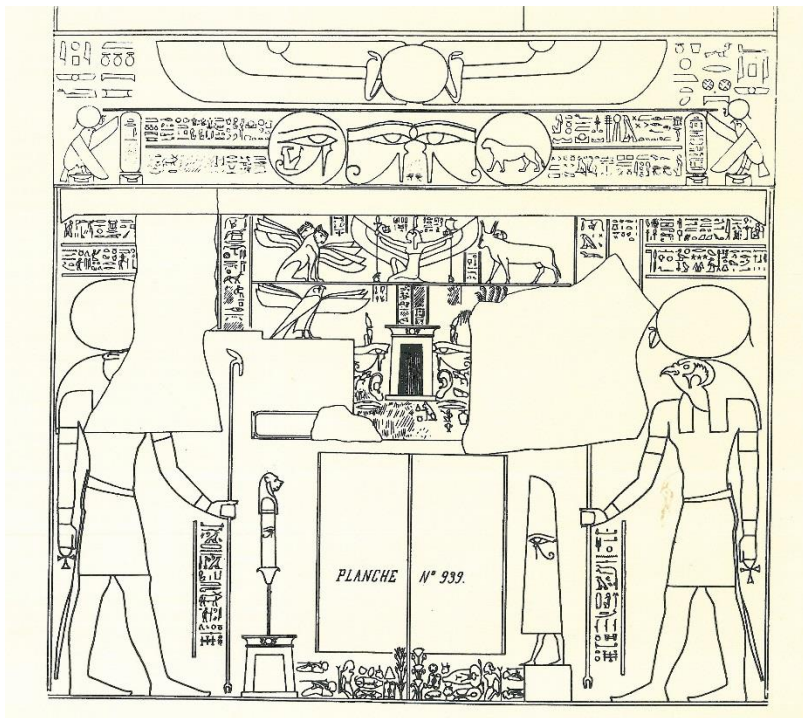


Figure 34. The “hearing ear” of the Kom Ombo temple⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁴ Jacques de Morgan [et al.], *Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique. 1. série., Haute Égypte. T. 3., Kom Ombo*, 184

⁵⁸⁵ Günter Hölbl, *Altägypten im römischen Reich. Der römische Pharao und seine Tempel I*, 95