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## The Map of the Book of the Faiyum

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### 1- Introduction

There is a large number of copies that are preserved from the content of the Book of the Faiyum, these copies were written in hieroglyphic, hieratic and demotic scripts.<sup>1</sup> These copies are divided into two types that are illustrated and unillustrated versions of the Book of the Faiyum. Many Egyptologists suggest that maybe the Book of the Faiyum was one of the last hieroglyphic mythological texts that are written by the ancient Egyptians.<sup>2</sup>

### 2- Literature Review

#### 2.1 Definition of the Book of the Faiyum

The Book of Faiyum is a map-like depiction of the Faiyum in a religious way in which different gods and goddesses are depicted. This book represents the cosmography and the geography of the ancient Egypt. The main geographical features of this book are the water bodies, religious buildings, and landforms that are represented by the same sequence of reality, because they were there

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<sup>1</sup> Beinlich, H. (2013). "The Book of the Faiyum", in Beinlich, H. Schulz, R., and Wieczorek, A. (Eds), Egypt's Mysterious Book of The Fayum. J-H. Roll Verlag, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Nichols, M. and Arico, A. (2013). *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, KMT: A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt, vol. 24, no. 4, p. 55.

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at the time of the composition and organization of this book.<sup>3</sup> Recent Egyptologists recognize that this map of the Book of the Faiyum is a representation for both Lake Moeris and the canal which feeds it, so this map is bird's-eye view of the region,<sup>4</sup> in which the real geography of the Faiyum cult places.<sup>5</sup> According to Tait, "the text as whole is concerned with places, and is not a catalog of deities. Therefore, in the various horizontal depictions of deities, their names lead to their cult places".<sup>6</sup>

Probably the book's designer firstly wanted to represent the overall view or outlined general map of the region of the Faiyum with its lake, but after that he focused on particular places inside this region, as at the beginning of the book the geographic places were created in a logical sequence as in reality, but after that they seem to have moved more erratically from Lake of the Faiyum, then to *shedet* in the southeast, after that to Bacchias<sup>7</sup> in the north, and then to the suggested place of the Acacia House of Neith<sup>8</sup> in the southwest.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> O'connor, D. (2012). "From Topography to Cosmos, Ancient Egypt's Multiple Maps", in: Talbert, R. (ed.), *Ancient Perspectives Maps and their Place in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome*. Chicago, pp. 68,72.

<sup>4</sup> Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> Priskin, G. (2014). *A Map of Egypt Reconstructed from the Description of the Country at Edfu*. BEJ 2, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Tait, J. (2003). "The Book of the Fayum: Mystery in a Known Landscape", in O'connor, D. and Quirke, S. (eds) *Encounters with Ancient Egypt: Mysterious Lands*. London, p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Bacchias is the ancient town founded during the Ptolemaic period on the northern edge of the Faiyum, now is called "Kom el-Asl. for more information visit <https://egyptsites.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/kom-el-atl/>

<sup>8</sup> The Acacia House of Neith is a place presented in the Book of the Faiyum which is located next to the temple of Sobek on an island mountain on which Acacia grow. For more information see Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>9</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, pp. 68,70.

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(Fig. 1) The geography of the Faiyum city.

[https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZknkwuKh97C65s4UA?g\\_st=iw](https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZknkwuKh97C65s4UA?g_st=iw) (Accessed on 20 April 2024).

### 2.2 The Illustrated Versions of the Book of the Faiyum

Many papyri of the Book of the Faiyum are illustrated versions such as the papyrus of interest in this article which is the best preserved and the largest version from the papyri collection of the Book of the Faiyum.<sup>10</sup> This papyrus perhaps dates back to the time of Ptolemy Euergetes II, which was written in hieroglyphic, and it contains four portions, that were divided and sold to four different travelers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>11</sup> Two of these parts are now in the Egyptian Museum (Nos.CG58040, JdE 95662), one portion is now at Walters's Art Museum in Baltimore (No. W 738), while the last part is now at Morgan library and Museum in New York (Amherst No. EG.8).<sup>12</sup> The total length of all parts of this papyrus is about 10 meters.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.3 The Unillustrated Versions of the Book of the Faiyum

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<sup>10</sup> Tait, “*The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape*”, p. 183.

<sup>11</sup> Nichols, and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>13</sup> Tait, “*The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape*”, p. 183.

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There are also many unillustrated versions of this book such as the text that was found in Kom Ombo<sup>14</sup> Temple<sup>15</sup> dates back to the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (13-47 AD).<sup>16</sup> It was thought that all papyri versions of the Book of the Faiyum were created in the Faiyum region except for this copy which was inscribed on the Kom Ombo Temple's walls.<sup>17</sup> Another source of the Book of the Faiyum was found on the wooden sarcophagus of *ꜥnkhꜣrꜥhi* which was discovered at Hawara and dates back of the 30th dynasty. It contains three hieroglyphic vignettes on its inner face like those drawn in the Book of the Faiyum. There are also two fragmentary copies of the hieroglyphic text of the Book of the Faiyum at Copenhagen among the papyri collection that was brought from Tebtunis' finds in the southern Faiyum. Furthermore, there are many unillustrated hieratic copies on papyri that were found but the majority of them remain as small pieces, except for only one papyrus (Botti's version A)<sup>18</sup> that was found in Tebtunis dates back to 135 AD,<sup>19</sup> and contains five-sixths of the hieroglyphic text.<sup>20</sup>

## 2.4 The Usage Ways of the Book of the Faiyum

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<sup>14</sup> Kom Ombo locates at the north end of the agricultural land south of Gebel el-Silsila. For more information see Baines, J. and Malek, J. (2002). Atlas of Ancient Egypt. Cairo, pp.74-75.

<sup>15</sup> Kom Ombo Temple is the temple dedicated to the god Sobek the main god of the Faiyum region. For more information see Nichols, and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Tait, "The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape", pp. 184, 201.

<sup>19</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*. p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Tait, "The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape", p. 184.

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There are many suggestions about the usage of the different versions of the Book of the Faiyum, one of them suggested that the illustrated version of the Book of the Faiyum was probably made in order to be as “display papyri” that gave prestige to their owners. Another opinion was that they were used as an academic manuscript in order to exchange the knowledge between the different Houses of Life, but the main aim of the Book of the Faiyum during the Graeco-Roman Period that it was a religious composition which was written, copied and read by the specialized scribes in theological traditions as a cultural memory from Egypt. It should also be mentioned that the existence of the large number of the unillustrated hieratic and demotic copies of the Book of the Faiyum refers to the active need for this type of books between the learned people from the Egyptian inhabitant.<sup>21</sup>

### 3- Research Method

The analytical descriptive method: The research deals with the descriptive study, which is based on the data derived from a papyrus of the Book of the Faiyum in order to define the map of this book with examination and analysis of the different figures that are depicted on this papyrus.

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<sup>21</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 35, 83-87.

#### 4- Presentation of Results

- The research presents a descriptive study of the Book of the Faiyum which was made in a form of map and is written from left to right, the same direction of the sun's movement from east to west, and it was also the direction of the water's movement from Bahr Yusef in the east to the Faiyum's Lake in the west.<sup>22</sup>
- The research presents the creative and unusual design of this book as the author of the Book of the Faiyum was very skillful in fitting the geography of the Faiyum with the layout of the map.<sup>23</sup>
- The research presents an analysis of the different portions of the Book of the Faiyum to clarify the uniqueness of the geography of the region of the Faiyum, and the importance of the role of Moeris Lake in increasing the religious, cultural and agricultural success of the region.<sup>24</sup>

#### 5- Discussion of Results

##### The Parts of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum

According to the structure of the contents of the map of the Book of the Faiyum, it is divided into eight parts of different depictions of geographical features of the wealthy and religious region of the Faiyum in Egypt.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>23</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>24</sup> Priskin, *A Map of Egypt Reconstructed from the Description of the Country at Edfu*, p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 51.

## **The Map of the Book of the Faiyum**

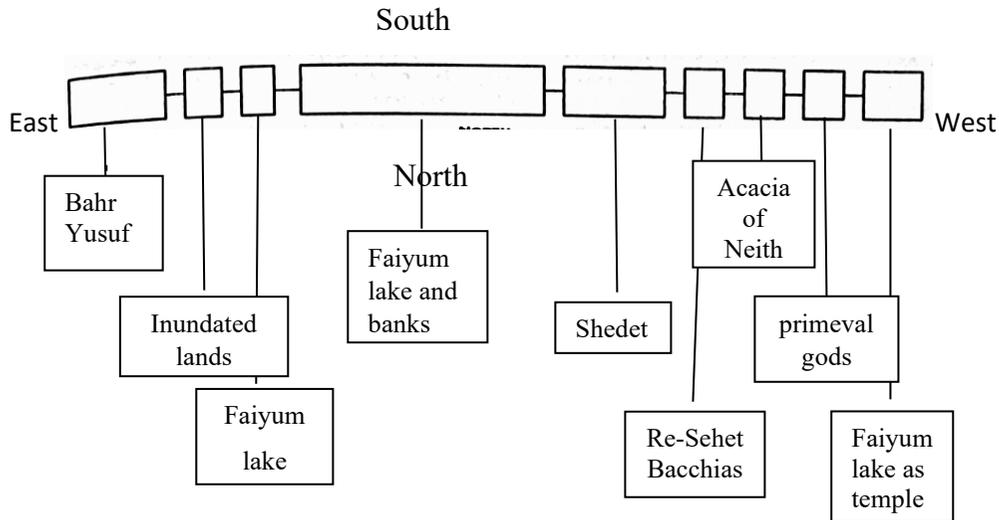
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orientations of this map follow the four cardinal points in which the south at the top of the map, north at the bottom, east at the left and west at the right.

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(Fig. 2) A plan of the parts of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 71.

The scribes or authors of the Book of the Faiyum were high priestly scribes of the House of Life (*Pr-ankh*).<sup>26</sup> Each scribe was responsible on a different task in the creation of this papyrus as one was responsible for sketching, another for the layout's planning and another for writing.<sup>27</sup> It was suggested that the text of the Book of the Faiyum was originally written on two papyrus rolls because of the difference in their scribes' handwriting and their formats, so the first papyrus contains the first three parts of the Book of the Faiyum which is in better condition than the second one that contains the other five parts of the Book of the Faiyum.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Pr-Ankh was an institution for the activities connected to scribes such as learning and recording the knowledge, for further information, see Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 53.

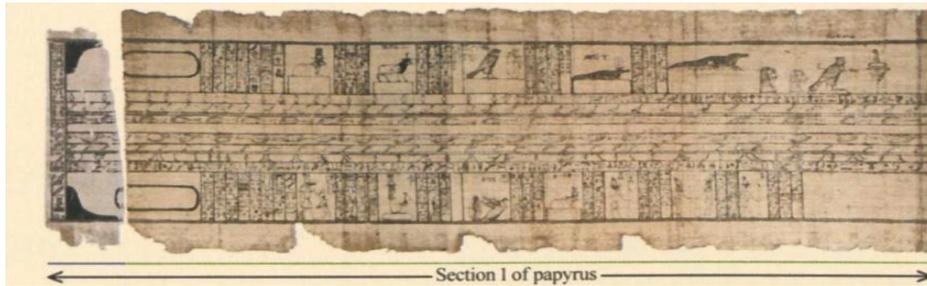
<sup>27</sup> Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 53.

<sup>28</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 27, 64.

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### The First Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 3) First Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., “The Book of the Faiyum”, P. 77.

The first part depicts a schematic map of the entrance of the Faiyum from the Nile Valley at the town of Crocodilopolis.<sup>29</sup> At the far left of the papyrus, Faiyum entrance is depicted by two black signs. On the upper and lower edges of the papyrus to the right of these black signs, there are two ovals. These black ovals depict the tongues of the Libyan Desert which surround the Faiyum down to the Nile Valley.<sup>30</sup> So Heracleopolis<sup>31</sup> (the city which was invaded by the sun-god’s enemies) is represented by the southern or upper oval, while Menmen (the city of Osiris before his fighting with Seth) is represented by the northern or lower oval.<sup>32</sup> Between these ovals Bahr Yusuf is depicted as a single canal with deep water, on its both sides three strips depicted the wetland’s shores: the first strip as a canal filled with fish, the second one the

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<sup>29</sup> Crocodilopolis is a Greek name of the city of Faiyum, which was called in ancient Egypt Shedet. for more information see Shoup, J. (2017). *The Nile: An Encyclopedia of Geography, History, and Culture*. California, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Heracleopolis is a Greek name for the ancient Egyptian village “Henen-Nesut” which is called nowadays Ihnasya el-Medina. this village locates on the right bank of Bahr Yusuf about 15 kilometers west of Beni Suef. for more information see Baines, and Malek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, p. 129.

<sup>32</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 37-38.

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transition water area filled with birds, while the third strip contains trees that are grown on a coast.<sup>33</sup>

ϕ.wi (rmn.wi) hn.t m šmϕ.w hft spd.t ϕnk.t. ϕ.wi (rmn.wi)  
hn.t m mh.w r bϕh spz. wt-ntr m N.t<sup>HS</sup>

The watercourse of the wetlands (Hn.t) in the south. The watercourse of the wetlands in the north is the gift of God to flood (Horus areas) in the city of Neith.

As it is mentioned in the text of the next section of the first part, it contains many representations of the individual deities placed above and below Bahr Yusuf. These deities represent different places in the same sequence and their *fqrn qf the reˆlity, ϕs they ϕre lqˆted ϕt the nqrth ϕnd sqhth qf Bϕhr iħshf.*<sup>HS</sup>

hn.t n.t mr-wr pw wr ntr.w iw.s rwd hr sbk šd.ti rϕ-nb  
Rϕ pw ħri-ib hn.t f.<sup>HT</sup>

The wet beer of the large canal, it is a large water with numerous gods, it is permanent with Sobek from Shedet daily. Re is in the middle of its wetlands.

The arrangement of these places from left to right is: “Battlefield”, “Lake of Memphis”, “Land of the Pyramid”, “Atfih” town, and “Mer-Wer”.

<sup>33</sup> Tait, “*The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape*”, p. 190.

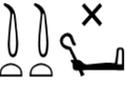
<sup>34</sup> Beinlich, H. (2014) *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2: Die Hieratischen Texte. Dettelbach, p. 428.

<sup>35</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 72.

<sup>36</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 428.

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**Battlefield** (titi pw)  : (The place of battle between Horus and Seth which is located to the west of *Menmen*), and should be between the Faiyum and the Nile valley<sup>37</sup> at *ḥꜥwꜥrꜥt el-Mꜥktꜥ*.<sup>38</sup>

**Lake of Memphis** (*pꜣ-š-n-inb.w-ḥd*)  : Probably this lake from which they caught the fish which were came to Faiyum through the flood water, as the lake of the Faiyum was very salty so there was a water basin in which the fish was directed in order to be held longer time for eating.<sup>39</sup>

**Land of the Pyramid** (*tꜣ-mri*)  : It represents Hawara<sup>40</sup> pyramid.

**Atfiḥ** (*tp-iḥ.t*)  : The city that is located near to the Faiyum's entrance and it was a capital of the 22<sup>nd</sup> province of Upper Egypt, it's an ancient Egyptian name was "Tp-iḤt," which means "head of the cow".

**Mer-Wer** (*mr-wr*)  : A great canal which was later called by the Greeks "Moeris" after the name of the king who founded it according their beliefs, and its Egyptian name is "Bahr Yusuf". This canal is near to Crocodilopolis, which brings water and fish to Faiyum till nowadays.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*. pp. 39,41

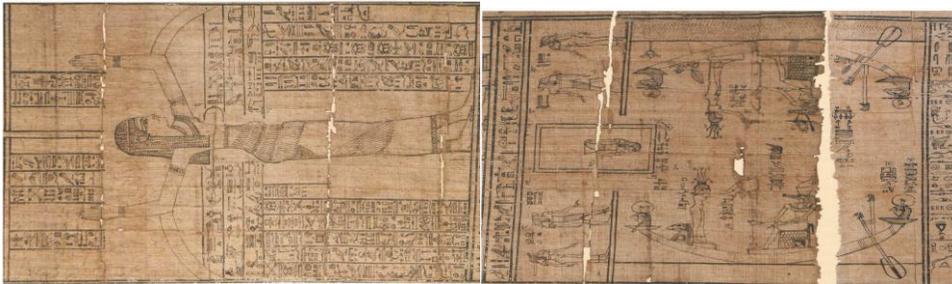
<sup>38</sup> Hawarat el-Maqa is a village locating in al Faiyum near Bahr Yusuf. For more information see <https://mapcarta.com/N768555359>

<sup>39</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>40</sup> Hawara locates at the entrance of the Faiyum city about 9 kilometers to the south east of the town of El Faiyum and it was the burial place of the pharaoh Amenemhat III during the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty. For more information see Habachi, L. (1977). "Hawara", in: Helck, W. and Otto, E. *LA*. 2. Germany, pp. 1072-1074.

<sup>41</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 39-40.

## The Second Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 4) Second Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., “The Book of the Faiyum”, P. 77.

The second part depicts the topography of the Faiyum,<sup>42</sup> at the beginning of this part, on the lower side of the papyrus, there is a crocodile god (Sobek of Crocodilopolis) looking towards the left side of the papyrus in the direction of the Nile Valley in the east. This scene is depicted with the text next to it contains a name of a place that is called (Peter) which means (the place of observing or watching) which is considered as a doorplate to the Faiyum entrance.

*s.t tn ptr pw rn f dd.twf iw t3-š ḥ.t-ntr nt sbk šd.ti  
ḥri-ib šd.t.*<sup>43</sup>

The name of this place “peter” as he is called. It is the sea land of the temples of Sobek of Shedet and Horus in the middle of shedet.

<sup>42</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 434.

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The next scene in this part depicts the personification of the wetlands by the great goddess of the sky *Mehet-Weret*<sup>44</sup> that means (great flood). Goddess Mehet-Weret gives birth to the sun-god Re in her form as a cow. She is represented as a standing woman but rotated 90 degrees which appears as she is lying down. Both of her arms are raised in the same representation of goddess Nut who is used to appear supporting the horizon by her hands and feet. Two waterways are represented while they branch from the elbows of the goddess toward the directions of the north and the south, in a representation of the two waterways that embranchment from Bahr Yusuf before Crocodilopolis, which were used for the irrigation of the arable and marshy lands of the Faiyum. The head of the goddess is looking towards the Nile valley's direction to the east, while her legs toward the Faiyum Lake's eastern shore direction.<sup>45</sup> above the representation of the goddess, there is a text mentions the eight primeval gods at the performance of the foundation of the great lake.

*nn n ḥmn.w ntr.w ḥm.wt-ntr pw S m ʒw f m wsh f  
m k3 (m) snṯ wr m š wr m t3-š.*<sup>46</sup>

These eight (primal gods) there are the gods and goddesses (wives of the gods) four and four each in its length and in its width at the work of the great founding in the large lake in sea land.

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<sup>44</sup> The goddess Mehet-Weret: her name means (Great Flood). She personified the fertile aspect of Nun (the primeval water). She was considered the mother of all primeval creatures and she was represented in a human form like in the previous scene above-discussed, and she was also represented as a cow, for more information see Pinch, G. (2002). *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*. California, p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Tait, "The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape", p. 190.

<sup>46</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 435.

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Another text also explains that goddess Mehet-Weret provides the land by the cool water from her two arms.

*Mh.t-wr.t pw hr iri ʿ.wi si di s ʿ.wi si di s m kbḥ r  
t3 iw f m f šmʿ.w mh.w t3-š pw.*<sup>47</sup>

Mehet-Weret is extending both of her arms. Her two arms, which give to the land the cool water, (so that) it (cooling) in him (the country), that is the south and the north of the sea land.

Then there are two divine boats with their prows facing the left (east) side. The boats are facing each other in a depiction of the transformation from the night to the day. The lower boat represents god Sobek with the northern Egyptian Meret goddess. The upper boat depicts the god Re with the southern Egyptian Meret goddess. This cosmological scene is described by the accompanied text.

*Rʿ pw hni f m š-rsi hnti-š Mr.t-rsi.t sbk pw hni f  
m š-mḥ.ti.*<sup>48</sup>

Re is the one sailing on the southern lake. The first of the lake, Meret of the south. It is Sobek who sails on the northern lake.

There is a depiction of the birth of the sun god with the previous scene of goddess Mehet-Weret in her rotating position which refers to the birth of the sun-god under her feet and she is Re's mother, also the morning sun birth repeats the creation process from the first time of creation. Also, the goddess

<sup>47</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 435.

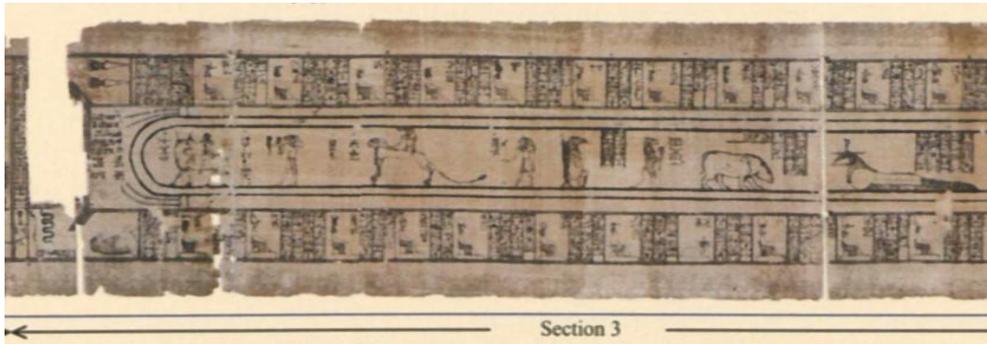
<sup>48</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 437.

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*Mehet-Weret* is related to the sun-god in traversing the celestial water as the daily solar cycle of the sun-god spread out around the cosmos.<sup>49</sup>

### The Third Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 5) Third Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., “The Book of the Faiyum”, P. 77.

The third part depicts the eastern side of the Faiyum Lake with its banks.<sup>50</sup> The major mission of the artist in this part is to show the two opposing directions of movement (direction of the sun’s movement and the direction of Osiris’ movement). The direction of Osiris is explained by his yearly journey in which he is represented as floodwater who comes out from the source of the Nile at Elephantine and flows through the Nile till, he arrives the Faiyum and chooses the western regions of the Faiyum Lake for his final residence.<sup>51</sup>

The direction of the sun is explained by the daily cyclic direction movement of the sun, which rises in the east every day morning and sets in the west every evening, while it travels from west to east during the night. This nightly path of the sun is represented in the water of the Book of the Faiyum, because Faiyum is the only location in Egypt from which the person can watch the

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<sup>49</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 72.

<sup>50</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 70.

<sup>51</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 47-49.

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sunrise out of the water and the sunset into the water.<sup>52</sup> God Sobek who is represented as a large crocodile depicts the movement of the sun from west to east, so the starting point of the journey of Sobek in the lake's western side is the endpoint of the Osiris' way.

In the middle of the third part, the lake is depicted as a large oval shape with the representation of two strips surrounding the lake. These strips should be filled with fish and birds like other copies of the Book of the Faiyum but they were never completed.<sup>53</sup> Inside the oval shape of the lake, there are different creatures and gods, because this part of the papyrus deals with the nightly journey from west to east, so the explanation of these creatures will be from right to left.

The text on the east and west outside the lake describes the lake as a representation of the four cardinal points.

*s.t tn s.t knb.w pw n w3d-wr hr ifd f n rsi mhw  
imnt.t izbt.t.*<sup>54</sup>

This place, that is the place of corners (or of the court) of wadj-wer on its (sides or cardinal points) south, north, east, west.

Outside the oval shape of the Faiyum Lake, on its eastern and western sides, there are two almost identical representations. The eastern section of the papyrus is almost destroyed, except for few hieroglyphic signs and illustrations

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<sup>52</sup> Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 57.

<sup>53</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 72.

<sup>54</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 442.

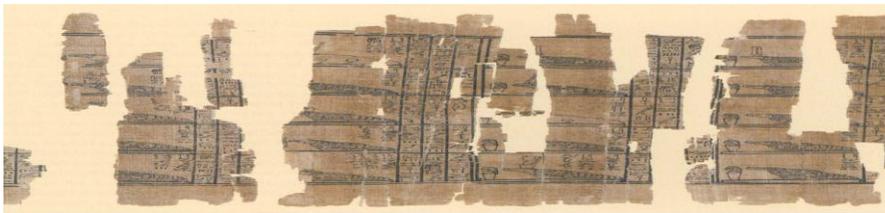
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which are still preserved. By a comparison with the discovering Copenhagen's papyrus<sup>55</sup>, the scholars could reconstruct this eastern section which resembles the western part, that is preserved in some of its details. In the middle of the eastern and western parts, there are two goddesses of Egypt Nekhbet and Wadjet in a basket placed on a podium's top and one of them wears the white crown of Upper Egypt while the other wears the red crown of Lower Egypt. At the lower part of the eastern section there is large baboon, and at the upper part of the same section two mummies with head of scarabs' beetle are represented. Also, there are two crocodiles in the lower and upper parts of the western section.<sup>56</sup>

Outside the oval lake, at the upper and the lower edges of the papyrus there are 42 squares containing the gods and goddesses of the nomes of Egypt, a reference to all Egypt.<sup>57</sup> These gods are different in their iconography from the typical Egyptian iconography that is known, such as the figures of Re and Horus depicted with the crocodile heads which is probably related to the Faiyum's religious cult in which Sobek was the main pattern.

### The Fourth Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 6) Fourth Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., "The Book of the Faiyum", P. 65.

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<sup>55</sup> The papyri of Copenhagen are preserved demotic and hieratic manuscripts of the Book of the Faiyum that date back to the Roman Period. For more information see Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp.84-86.

<sup>56</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>57</sup> Nichols, and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 56.

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A large section of this part has been lost, but it depicts the Faiyum's geography, as the temples of Shedet are described at the beginning of this part. The most preserved section of this part includes chapels of different Egyptian provinces of all Egypt.<sup>58</sup> Each chapel contains a deity with a crocodile and a text with the number of offerings that each of these deities receives in the Faiyum. The crocodiles of this scene are considered a form of god Sobek.<sup>59</sup> The description of the different temples of Shedet in the following text.

*ihssf pri m wr.t sbk šd.ti pw s3 N.t-wr.t. s.t tn h.t-ntr nt ihssf  
pri m wr.t R<sup>c</sup> pw s3 tfn.t. iw f r-gs h.t-ntr nt hri-ib šd.t mh.ti  
n s.t tn . m33-hr hr.tw r f hr n i<sup>c</sup>ni m<sup>i</sup>.tit. s.t pw m33 hmn.w  
R<sup>c</sup>-hr-3hti pri m š pn m sšt3 f pn.<sup>60</sup>*

“Ikhesesef, who emerges from the deep, it is Sobek of Shedet, the son of Neith, the Great.” This place, the temple of Ikhesesef, who emerges from the depths, it is Ra, the son of Tefnut. It lies next to the Temple of Horus in the midst of Shedet, north of the place. "Mirror," they say to him, or "Place of the Baboon. It is the place where the primeval Eight Gods sees the sun-god of the horizon (Ra-Harakhte), as he rises from this lake as out of its mystery. "

<sup>58</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, pp. 70,73.

<sup>59</sup> Tait, “*The Book of the Faiyum: Mystery in a Known Landscape*”, p. 192.

<sup>60</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 451.

## The Map of the Book of the Faiyum

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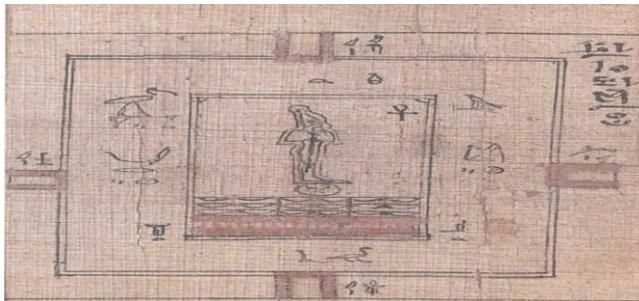
### The Fifth Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 7) Fifth Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., "The Book of the Faiyum", P. 66.

The fifth part depicts the plan of House of Life of *R<sup>c</sup>-šehet*<sup>61</sup> with its location's description.<sup>62</sup> The House of Life is described both times, the first one is in the description of the Book of the Faiyum, and the second time is in a description of Abydos<sup>63</sup> in a papyrus Salt 825<sup>64</sup> (Fig. 8).



(Fig. 8) The House of Life in the papyrus Salt 825

After: Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, p. 67.

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<sup>61</sup> The House of Life was a learned institution in which all information about the Faiyum with its evaluation was collected in one treatise. All scribes, skilled people theologians and archivists where in this place. For more information see Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, pp. 32-34, 66-67.

<sup>62</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 70.

<sup>63</sup> Abydos is the Greek name for the ancient city Abedju which was the most important burial place in Egypt and the beginning of the dynastic period. for more information, see Baines and Malek, *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, p. 114.

<sup>64</sup> The papyrus Salt 825 (B.M. 10051) is written in a mixture of cursive hieratic, hieroglyphs and figurative hieroglyphs, and it includes a composition entitled 'The End of the Work'. For more information, see [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA10051-4](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA10051-4)

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Both descriptions of the Book of the Faiyum and papyrus Salt 825 mention that there is a ground plan with a central building, which is surrounded by a court that is called the “Broad Hall of the Gods”. There are four buildings containing entrances in the north and the south sides, these buildings protected the whole outside area. At the vertical points to the sky and to the Underworld, and the intersection point of the four cardinal directions, a mummy of the principal god’s ancestor like Osiris lies. Also, below the House of Life there is a direction to the body of the primeval water. The exact location of the so called “Broad Hall of Things” is unknown but it exists somewhere in the area. Probably, this hall was used for the settlement of the artisans and for keeping the burial objects.<sup>65</sup> In the lower part of the right side, there is a text of the female vulture describing the oracle in which the king would receive protection in the House of Life from the four vulture goddesses who would spread their wings over him when they come from the four corners of the world.

The previous description of the House of Life is mentioned in the accompanied text of this part.

*rh h.t m-<sup>c</sup> bn.w (b3) hnt Nwn. rh h.t m š pn pw š3 sh.t mnmn  
<sup>c</sup>3 sr r3 rm.w. ) ibd tp 3h.t ibd tp pr.t ibd tp šm.w tr. rh  
h.t m sšt3 n ntr.w ntr.wt t3.wi pd.wt.*

*rh p.t t3 dw3.t itr.w HH rsi itr.w HH mh.w t3w<sup>c</sup> mw s.t  
k<sup>c</sup>. h.t nb.t mi.tit sp m nn shr.w wsh.t ntr.w m mi nn r-gs  
sbk nb r3-sh.t. wsh.t h.t mi nn tnw nb h.t nb.t (m) mi kd sn*

<sup>65</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, p. 67.

## The Map of the Book of the Faiyum

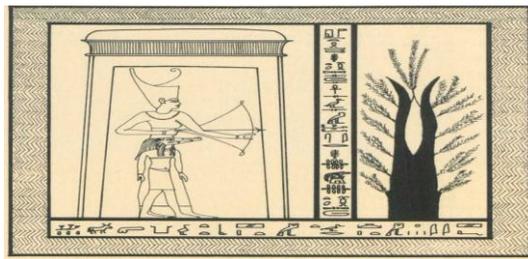
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s pw hr hnw.t. sdm d3d3.t nswt tp.w sdm md whm rnpī m  
šn-wr.<sup>66</sup>

Area of knowledge of Benu (or the ba), the first of the Nun (or in the Nun). “Area of Knowledge regarding this Lake: trees, fields, cattle, donkeys, rams, geese, fish”. The first month of the *akhet* period, the first month of the Peret period, the first month of the Shemu period of the year. “Area of knowledge” about mystery of the gods and goddesses of the two countries and the nine-bow people.

"Area of Knowledge regarding the sky, the earth, the Underworld, the 20 Iteru of the South, the 20 Iteru of the North, the winds, the condition of the water, the place of "exaltation", everything and similar things of this kind. The broad hall of the gods is like this next to (the temple of) Sobek of *Re-šehet*. The broad hall of things like this: each number of all things in its own way. A man that with his) grave furnishing. “Hearing of the utterances of the first kings, the hearing of the deep, that is the repetition of the rejuvenation in the ocean."

### The Sixth Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Fig. 9) Reconstruction of the sixth part of the papyrus.

After: Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, p. 71.

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<sup>66</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, pp. 463-465.

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The sixth part depicts the place of “the Acacia of the Goddess Neith”. This place was a temple or a cult center.<sup>67</sup> It is located next to the Sobek temple and the wetlands’ eastern parts,<sup>68</sup> so probably its location is between Kom Aushim and Sanhur in the northern east of the Faiyum.<sup>69</sup> The plan of this place with its description in the text shows that it was an island or a mountain surrounded by water. Probably this place is situated near by *Re-šehet* on an island mountain on which acacia trees grow. Also, there were a shoreline and a wooden statue of Neith and her son as it was described in the text. On this island, the king or the priest who replaces him performing a ritual on the judgment day (day 23 of the first month of summer), in this ritual the king takes the arrow and bow of the goddess Neith, with acacia wooden staff that measures over six feet in its length.<sup>70</sup> The temple of the Acacia of the goddess Neith is described in the following text

*ḥ.t-nṯr nt šnd n.t ts-phr (s<sup>c</sup>nh s s3 s m <sup>c</sup>.wi isr s3 sbk s3 N.t ts-phr). š<sup>c</sup> m iz.t wr.t m š-bddw-k3. s.t tn šnd n.t pw rn f iw s r-gs ḥ.t-nṯr nt sbk nb r3-sh.t r-gs. izbt.t n hn.t. p<sup>c</sup>i n š<sup>c</sup> pw n sk f n wrd...d.t. rd f m isr nbì.t iwn.t šsr pw n n.t m s.t tn.<sup>71</sup>*

"Temple of the Acacia, likewise of Neith. " "she revives her son with her two arms, the tamarisk tree is the protection of Sobek, or the protection

<sup>67</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 70.

<sup>68</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*, p. 70.

<sup>69</sup> O'Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 70.

<sup>70</sup> Beinlich, *The Book of the Faiyum*. p. 70.

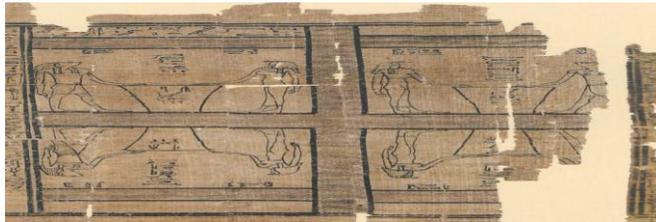
<sup>71</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, p. 469.

## The Map of the Book of the Faiyum

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of Neith. “The sand is on the great Island (or: mountain) in the lake of the Bededu-Ka plants. This place, Acacia of Neith is its name. It is situated next to the temple of Sobek, lord of Ra-Sehet, next to the eastern parts of the wetlands. The shore of the sand will not perish forever. The shoreline is overgrown with tamarisks and reed. These are the bow and arrow of the Neith at this place.

### The Seventh Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Pl. 6) seventh Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., “The Book of the Faiyum”, P. 73.

The seventh part includes the myth related to the emerging of the Faiyum Lake. The text of the Book of the Faiyum refers to the Lake of the Faiyum as an embodiment of the Sobek Temple, so the depictions of this part refer to the levels of the foundation of the temple as in the first level the eight primeval gods stretched out the measuring cords, as each pair of them is represented at each corner of the building. The text describes that the eight primeval gods dug the foundation trenches by their hands to the deepest point so the primeval ocean came out of it and filled the Lake of the Faiyum.<sup>72</sup>

*iw w3d-wr ntr.w im s.t tn m h.t-ntr nt sbk šd.ti mi nti. iw snṯ  
n t3-š m h.t f nb. in iri.n k nn w3h nr.t rh k nmt s m n.t s  
smn h̄ n nb t3.wi. š̄ šdi m š szi-t3 pw.*

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<sup>72</sup> Nichols and Arico, *Egypt's Mysterious Book of the Faiyum*, p. 57.

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*Nwn Nwn.t šđi š smn rn n jt.w-Nwn. imn imn.t šđi š hn.t smn  
rn n Mw.wt-Nwn.t. kk kk.t šđi š iri h.t n ms.w sn. hḥ hḥ.t šđi š  
shpr shr n ms.w sn. hzi.t pw nt hmn.w hft ʿnk Nwn hr sn. ʿkʿ.wi  
fi m tph.t f. dd in hmn.w ikh n kr.ti kik m hr n. hʿt.t pw m ib sn  
hft wd.t n jt.w-nwn dmd im. šđi sn m ʿ.wi sn ds sn. pri Nwn im f  
m mdw.t hḥ n hḥ.<sup>73</sup>*

It is the great lake and the gods that are in this place, likewise this temple of Sobek of Shedet. The founding of the sea land is entirely his property. Makes the permanence of the vulture, do you know her coming with her claw? It remains that lifetime of the lord of the two lands. The sand that is protected in the lake (that is dug out of the lake), that is the ground.

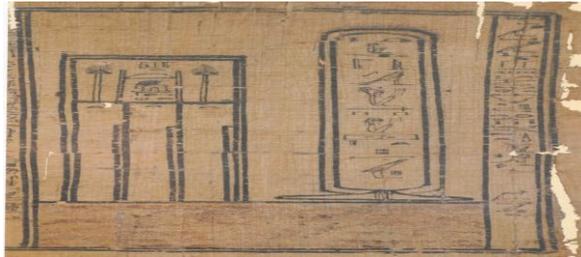
Nun and Naunet, who dig the lake, who make the name fathers (and) Nun. Amun and Amaunet, who dig the lake and the wetland which make the name ‘Mothers and Naunet’ last. Kuk and Kʿhket, who dig the lake, who trade for their children in order to know the plans (future) for their children. Hah and hʿhhet, who dig the lake, who let the plans (the future) of the children engraved. The (area of the lake) was the chapel of the eight gods when Nun brought to them (the flood). When his two arms entered his cave. The eight said: enter the two caves, so that your figure. This chapel was their heart center according to the command father and nun should be unite there. They dug (the lake) with their own hands. Now came forth from him from the depths of millions of millions.

<sup>73</sup> Beinlich, *Der Mythos in Seiner Landschaft das Egyptische Buch vom Fayum*, Band 2, pp. 471-423.

## The Map of the Book of the Faiyum

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### The Eighth Part of the Map of the Book of the Faiyum



(Pl. 7) eighth Part of the map of the Book of the Faiyum.

After: Beinlich, H., “The Book of the Faiyum”, P. 75.

The eighth part also refers to the conception of the Lake of the Faiyum as the embodiment of the Temple of Sobek, as on the left side of this part there is a lake above which a hieroglyphic text reads as “the Temple of Sobek of Shedet”<sup>74</sup> while on the right side there is a cartouche represents the same shape of the Faiyum Lake, inside which are the names of the most important gods who were given birth by the lake.<sup>75</sup>

### Conclusions

The Book of Faiyum is a map-like depiction of Fayum in a religious way. It contains a depiction of the cosmography and the geography of ancient Egypt. Probably the book’s designer firstly wanted to represent the overall view or outlined general map for the region of the Faiyum with its lake, but after that he focused on particular places inside this region. The geographic places at the beginning of the book were created in a logical sequence as in reality. After that they seem to have moved more erratically from Lake of the Faiyum, to Shedet in the southeast, then to Bacchias in the north, to the suggested place of the Acacia House of Neith in the southwest.

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<sup>74</sup> O’Connor, *From Topography to Cosmos*, p. 70.

<sup>75</sup> Priskin, *A Map of Egypt Reconstructed from the Description of the Country at Edfu*, p. 31.

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The importance of this book for the learned people: 1- The book represents the results of the desire of the late period Egyptian priestly scholars to codify the universe. 2- The book illustrates the Egyptian interest with the intersection of geography and theology. 3- The main topic of the book is the House of Life as the book was written by the elite priestly scribes of the House of Life who like to devote their time to write about the theological and cultic aspects of the institution to which they proudly belonged.

The Book of the Faiyum represents traditional Egyptian religious ideas with little influence from the Graeco-Roman era. The oldest source of the book of the Faiyum was found on the sarcophagus of Ankhru dates back of the 30th Dynasty, which contains three hieroglyphic vignettes on its inner face like those drawn in the book of the Faiyum. All papyri of the Book of the Faiyum date back to the Graeco-Roman Period. Also, the book contains many myths and gods relate directly to the ancient Egyptian religion and date back to the earlier times of the ancient Egyptian history. These myths include the depiction of Sobek as the book of the celestial cow and a nightly manifestation of the sun god in the cyclic movement of the sun. Furthermore, this book represents Faiyum as the center of the regeneration process, and the starting point for the creation in which the union between ancient Egyptian creation myths and special places in the Faiyum. This location of the creation is represented in the Lake of the Faiyum that was established by the eight gods of Hermopolis. Also, many places that are described in the text of this book date back to Ptolemaic Period as the book was collected and arranged most probably in the House of Life of the Faiyum. So, the origin of the Book of the Faiyum can be suggested as the text of the book was created and completed during the Ptolemaic period

## **The Map of the Book of the Faiyum**

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while it was spread during the Roman Period but with the ancient Egyptian religious influence.

The main aim of the Book of the Faiyum that was a religious composition which was written, copied and read by the specialized scribes in theological traditions. This book was collected and written in the house of life and its copies are preserved among about 400 literary texts as a cultural memory from Egypt where these copies were found in the temple library of Tebtunis.

Many aspects of this book that might refer to the thoughts of the Graeco-Roman Egypt: 1- The book contains the main Egyptian mythological events such as the rebellion against the sun god which refers to the cultural continuity which characterize the Egyptian intellectual society during the Graeco-Roman Period. 2- The book reflects the importance of the cultic activity to all levels of the Egyptian society during the Graeco-Roman Period, as it gives a great attention to oracular questioning.

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