

# STUDIES IN THE LATE EGYPTIAN DOCUMENTS PRESERVED IN THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY

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## II. DIMÊ AND ITS PAPYRI: AN INTRODUCTION

### A. THE TOWN AND ITS NAME

**D**IMÊ was an important town in the Fayyum in Graeco-Roman times, founded on the north shore of the great lake of Birket-el-Kûrûn,<sup>1</sup> in an area which had a tradition of settlement from very early times.<sup>2</sup> The lake and its immediate surroundings were certainly one of the favourite places for fishing and hunting of the kings of Egypt and their nobles. All that can reasonably be surmised regarding conditions in remote times suggests merely conglomerations of humble fishermen's huts built around small and primitive shrines of the Crocodile god. No record has come down to us of the history of these ancient places during Pharaonic times. Dimê<sup>3</sup> was essentially a Graeco-Roman city created about the middle of the third century B.C.<sup>4</sup> on lands sacred to the Crocodile god called *Sobek Lord-of-the pây-land* (cf. below, pp. 441-43).

Several successive excavations were carried out on the mound of Dimê between the years 1890 and 1932<sup>5</sup>; the earliest ones, unfortunately, amounted to little more than a plundering of the central part of the mound.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the great papyrological discoveries between 1900 and 1908 and the area unearthed

<sup>1</sup> For general information and for the geographical position of the town see Boak, *Soknopaiou Nesos, University of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series*, vol. 39, where plans of the site and a detailed technical description of the mound and the town are to be found; cf. also Porter-Moss, *T.B.*, iv. 96-97. Grenfell-Hunt-Hogarth, *Fayyum Towns*, p. 6 and pp. 15 ff.; Krebs, *ZÄS*, xxxi. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Caton-Thompson and Gardner, *The Desert Fayum* (1934).

<sup>3</sup> For the etymology of the name, cf. below, p. 438-43.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. Lille 3,20 giving the earliest date (241 B.C.) for Dimê; also Mahaffy-Smyly, *Petrie Papyri* (Index).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Grenfell, *op. cit.* p. 6 and Boak, *op. cit.* Introduction, pp. vi-vii.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* p. 3.

by the University of Michigan Expedition in 1931-2<sup>1</sup> yielded results of great importance. In his report on the American expedition Boak presented an adequate picture of the history of the building and organization of Graeco-Roman Dimê. The part of the mound excavated covered the residential area of the ancient city, consisting of lofty and solidly built houses. Little, however, has been found which enables one to determine by archaeological means the activities of the inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> From all that can be gathered and from the lay-out of the houses, it would appear highly probably that these were not the dwelling places of ordinary people. A special significance may, perhaps, be attached to the discovery of certain pieces of fine woodwork in one of the houses, which indicates a high standard of life. There is, unfortunately, nothing that enables us to claim that this particular house was used for official purposes or was the residence of a Roman official.<sup>3</sup> Remains of a wall decoration have been found in another house.<sup>4</sup> The scenes represented are painted on white plaster and are primitive, with a rudimentary execution. Boak attempted to interpret the significance of these scenes and thinks that some may well portray, on the one hand, the owner of this particular house, and, on the other, depict ritual acts. He suggests that they may be taken as evidence of a domestic cult celebrated within private dwellings.<sup>5</sup> His opinions may be supported by textual evidence which we find in demotic contracts from Tebtunis. These documents acquaint us with private cults which took place in small chapels erected at the side of dwelling houses, and which were in the care of the owners of the houses.<sup>6</sup> It would not be surprising if similar cults also existed at Dimê and if the ritual service on behalf of the chief local god were performed within the houses, perhaps in a part reserved for this special purpose. This, however, is mere conjecture, for we do

<sup>1</sup> See Boak's report, op. cit. pp. 5-18 and Plan, xi-xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boak, *ibid.* pp. 8-13.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Boak, *ibid.* pp. 10-13, pl. VI-VII.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.* pp. 9-10, pl. IV.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. P. Cairo 30617 A.B. in Spiegelberg's CCG, II, pls. 27-28; *Texte*, pp. 56-61 and P. Cairo 30620, cf. *ibid.* pl. 36; *Texte*, pp. 71-73 and my article in *Hist. Droit de l'Antiquité*, i. 449, n. 14.

not know of any supporting evidence and we know very little from the context of this kind of decoration. Nevertheless, these scenes appear significant in the history of Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian society in Dimê and provide interesting evidence to illustrate the standard of popular art of the time.

Close to each house was a broad courtyard which does not seem to have been without importance in the everyday occupations of the inhabitants of Dimê. It was most probably there that their chief occupation centred. Boak drew attention to other characteristic features found in the organization of the houses.<sup>1</sup> All this is, however, insufficient to enable us to say more about the people who lived there.

A broad paved avenue divided the town into eastern and western districts.<sup>2</sup> It led from the lake northwards to the two temples erected in the temenos. There is no difficulty in seeing in it the dromos which had an important part in the social and religious life of the town and where also the processional festivals of the temples took place.

There were two temples at Dimê<sup>3</sup>, undoubtedly consecrated to the cult of the Crocodile god. Much of their history has been completely lost. No trace of inscriptions has yet been found on the walls of these two enormous buildings set in a massive brick-built enclosure. We are, therefore, deprived of an abundant source of information regarding the foundation ceremonies of the temples, the history of their building, the organization of the priesthood, the ritual services performed in them, and all the religious festivals. No extensive inscriptions have been preserved which disclose the daily and yearly life within the temples and record their functions. In contrast to the majority of late Egyptian temples, of which the wall inscriptions relate their history, purposes and functions in full, the temples at Dimê remained undecorated, though it can safely be said that mural inscriptional decoration was intended. A hitherto unpublished text furnishes us with decisive evidence that such

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 14-19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 4, pl. I and Plan I; and below, p. 461.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.* Plan I, xiii; *L.D.*, i. 52, 54; *Text*, ii. 35-41 and Porter-Moss, *T.B.*, iv. 96.

decoration had been planned, but we do not know why it was never carried out, if only in part.<sup>1</sup>

If we attempt to outline the history of Dimê on archaeological grounds, many facts are uncertain. We may venture to say that the city seems to have developed rapidly into an important centre in the Fayyum and to have been a prosperous community from the middle of the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. There seem to have been four great periods of expansion of the city, each followed by an interval of decline. We do not know the reasons for this. There are no data to help us to decide whether this situation was the result of economic decay or was influenced by general political conditions in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, there are definite hints that the community stayed outside political events and the great religious struggle of the time. The striking feature of the history of Dimê is that the town remained an essentially pagan community until the close of its existence. Neither archaeological nor textual evidence can be cited to prove that a Christian community came into being there before the end of the third century A.D.<sup>3</sup> This situation is, without any doubt, of great historical importance, particularly if we bring to mind Karanis,<sup>4</sup> where Christianity seems to have rooted early and deeply. At Dimê, however, the Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian society seems to have remained faithful to the old traditions and to the native cults and customs of their ancestors. The reason for the contrast between these two cities will clearly require much research and close study of the surviving texts before a satisfactory answer can be reached. Strictly speaking, Dimê seems to have preserved the aspects of a genuine Graeco-Egyptian city throughout the centuries.

The end of the city remains doubtful. It is generally admitted that it was abandoned in the middle of the third century A.D. This view was propounded by Grenfell and Hunt according to the evidence of datable texts;<sup>5</sup> all Greek papyri from Dimê

<sup>1</sup> I take this opportunity of thanking Dr. Erich Winter, Lecturer in Egyptology in the University of Vienna, for his kindness in drawing my attention to this particular document and showing me photographs of the Dimê temples in his possession.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Boak, *Karanis* (1931), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Tebt. II, p. 360, Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 13-14.

antedate 250 A.D., and consequently the city must have been abandoned about that time. Subsequent research has failed to shake the authority of this statement. But although it is true that datable finds, such as coins and papyri, do not extend beyond the middle of the third century A.D., if we consider, on the other hand, how much has been lost, and how great must have been the quantity of papyrus rolls destroyed in the upper layers of the mound at Dimê, and if we pay rather more consideration to the contribution made by native Egyptian documents, the date appears less probable. A period of two and half centuries of the Roman era would seem to be too short a time into which to fit the whole bulk of demotic texts from Dimê which date from Roman times, particularly the endless number of demotic accounts. We are inclined to think that the unpublished demotic texts provide evidence in favour of a contradictory theory. There appears a distinct possibility that the life of Dimê extended beyond the middle of the third century A.D.

In spite of the uncertainty of general data and of the historical context, the latest excavations carried out at Dimê provide a solid background for further research into its history and into an attempt to reconstruct the life of an Egyptian city at a turning point of history. The paucity of proper archaeological finds has largely been balanced by the discoveries of papyri. They are a plentiful source of study for bridging gaps on the archaeological side and filling with life the empty spaces of the ruined temples and the rooms of the abandoned houses. Very little, however, has been done as far as these Egyptian textual sources are concerned.

The name of the town in the demotic records is *Tꜣ-my n Sbk nb Pꜣy* and is rendered in Greek texts by *Σοκνοπαίου Νήσος*.<sup>1</sup> There is much that is uncertain about the significance and origin of this name. The really puzzling point is why the town was called "Island" when in fact it was not an island, at least during the late period.<sup>2</sup> This problem can hardly be solved without a careful study of the Egyptian textual evidence. The

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wessely, *Spec. Isogog.*, p. 4, n. 6; Krebs, *ZÄS*, xxxi. 31 ff.; Mahaffy-Smyly, *Petrie Papyri*, (Index); Spiegelberg, *DPB*, p. 22; Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 168-9, 170, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 1-3.

full topographical description of Dimê is very long and reads in Greek texts :

- (1) τῆς κώμης Σούχου Σοκνοπαίου θεοῦ μεγάλου μεγάλου Νήσω.
- (2) τῆς κώμης Σούχου Σοκνοπαίου Νήσου θεοῦ μεγάλου.
- (3) ἐν τῇ κώμῃ Σούχου Σοκνοπαίου Νήσω τῆς Ἡρακλείδου μερίδος τοῦ Ἀρσινοΐτου γομοῦ.<sup>1</sup>

Its demotic parallel is : *dmy n Sbḳ T3-my n Sbḳ nb P3y p3 ntrc3'3 nt hr p3 'd mḥty t3 ḥnyt Mr-wrnt hn t3 dnit Hyrky n p3 tš 3rsyn'*, the *Village of Sobek Temy of Sobek Lord of Pāi, the great god, which is on the northern shore of the swampy land Moëris in the division of Herakletes of the Arsinoïte nome*.<sup>2</sup> No comment will be required regarding its two parts, which are common and recurrent in topographical descriptions of all Fayyumic towns from early Ptolemaic times : (a) *nt hr p3 'd mḥty (rsy) t3 ḥnyt*, which is on the northern (southern) shore of the swampy land,<sup>3</sup> (b) *dmy Sbḳ*, the *Village of Sobek*, preceding as a rule the names of all places founded on lands sacred to Sobek, is attested from the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.<sup>4</sup> The real difficulty arises from the second part of the name *Σοκνοπαίου* ; the *-παίου*, of which the demotic parallel reads *-P3y* and shows the determinative of a deity. It is difficult to say at first what sense may there be hidden. Griffith attempted to study the significance of this word.<sup>5</sup> In his opinion *-παίου*, may have been derived from *P3y*, which he took as the demotic form of *p3 iw*, "the island". *p3 iw*, or only *iw*, was common in describing ancient sacred places in which, according to the Egyptians, the god was believed to have settled in primaeval times.<sup>6</sup> In many Egyptian mytho-

<sup>1</sup> Wessely, op. cit. p. 4, n. 6 ; Preisigke, *W.G.P.*, iii. 323b.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Ryl. 44, A. 6 = 44, B. 6-7 ; P. Ryl. 45, A. 10 = 45, B. 9 ; P. Berlin 6857, 5. 16 ; 7054, B. 7 ; 7057, 6 ; 7058, 7 ; 8085 (end) ; 8092, 1 ; P. Strassburg, 32 ; P. Vindob. 6933, 10 ; the unpublished Rylands and Vienna papyri show the same wording. The translation given here is made along the lines of Griffith's interpretation, cf. *Ryl.*, iii. 168. See also below, p. 459.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *CCG*, II ; *Texte*, p. 41, n. 2 ; Griffith, *Ryl.* iii. 299, n. 6 and Sethe, *Bürgsch.*, p. 438 ; for *ḥnyt* we have adopted the interpretation suggested by Gardiner in P. *Wilbour*, ii. 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. Lille dem. 4, 1 from the year 247 B.C. ; see also Sethe, op. cit. p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 168, 229, n. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. my *Myth. Orig.* (to be published shortly) for references ; Gardiner, P. *Wilbour*, *Index*, pp. 69-70.

logical narratives *iw* (= "island") was replaced by *i3t*, meaning "the primaeval mound" but conveying in this particular context more or less the same meaning.<sup>1</sup> This interpretation finds support in the names of many Fayyumic places. The component *i3t* seems to have been common in the formation of Fayyumic place-names.<sup>2</sup> More decisive evidence can be seen in the great hieratic papyrus from Tebtunis dating from Roman times.<sup>3</sup> This document is a mythological narrative and its beginning explains the origin of the sacred places of Sobek, all of which are described as the *i3t*.<sup>4</sup> Theoretically and from the point of view of Egyptian mythology the Tebtunis mythological narrative may be regarded as supporting Griffith's suggestion. This interpretation appears plausible if we recall that the site of Dimê was of ancient origin and that the Egyptians, even in later times, may well have continued to look upon it as an island. But if we accept it, further difficulties emerge. It is unlikely from the phonetic point of view that *P3y* could have originated in the Old Egyptian word *iw* ("island") preceded by the definite article according to the Late Egyptian. Moreover, *iw*, as a common noun, would require the geographical determinative which never occurs in the demotic writing of the word. Finally, it is difficult to accept that the word "island" would be repeated twice in a single name. *T3-my* as the equivalent of the Greek *Nῆσος*, conveys the sense of an island or the like, and if we admit that *iw* was included in the name and retained its original meaning, the interpretation of the name of the town would read *The Island of Sobek Lord of the Island*, which sounds unlikely. Accordingly we are inclined to suggest that another meaning must be concealed in the word *P3y*.

The demotic form of *P3y* recurrent in all the known texts has always the sign of a deity as its determinative.<sup>5</sup> It may be taken as the emphatic form of the demonstrative pronoun, the Coptic *ⲡⲁⲓ*, and if so, we have here a word which reads *Y+ the*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Myth. Orig.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gardiner, *P. Wilbour, Index*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G. Botti, *La Glorificazione di Sobk e del Fayyum in un Papiro Hieratico da Tebtunis*, *Anal. Aegypt.*, vol. viii.

<sup>4</sup> Col. I, 8-II, 8.

<sup>5</sup> For references see p. 438, n. 2.

determinative of a deity. The resulting sense is hardly satisfactory. We should have to admit that we have here a divine name reading *Y*. Since *nb* (= "lord"), retained in the Greek *-vo-* after dropping the final occlusive *b*, forms an inseparable part of the name, we should have to interpret it as follows *Sobek-the-Lord-of-Him-of-Y*. It is hardly necessary to comment on the absurdity that would result from such an interpretation. It is certain that we have here a special form of the Crocodile god called *Sbk nb Pzy*, *Sobek-Lord-of-Pāi*. This is confirmed by textual evidence found in demotic records. The name of the town reads: *Tꜣ-my n Sbk nb Pzy ntr* 'ꜣ, *Temy of Sobek-Lord-of-Pāi, great god*.<sup>1</sup> The sense implicit there is that *Temy* was the land, or was upon the land, sacred to the special form of the Crocodile god, whose name is further attested by the titles of the Dimê priests, the *w' b.w n Sbk nb Pzy*,<sup>2</sup> and also occurs in the name of the Dimê dromos, the *ḥfty-ḥe n Sbk nb Pzy*.<sup>3</sup> The second deduction that can be made is that the word "island" does not seem to be contained at all in the Greek *-παίου*, since we have here the *my* as the equivalent of the Greek *νησος* and this is common in Egyptian place-names of Ptolemaic times.<sup>4</sup> Another way of approach might be by way of a study of the word *my*. There appears to be a distinct possibility of an alternative meaning. If we examine carefully the demotic writing of *my* it is clear that the spelling must have been *\*māwe* or *\*māye*.<sup>5</sup> *my* in the name of Dimê may well have originated in the Egyptian word *mꜣ'*, conveying the meaning "bank of river or lake shore"<sup>6</sup>, or in *mꜣwt*, meaning "new lands".<sup>7</sup> This last suggestion is attractive from the phonetic point of view. There

<sup>1</sup> See P. Ryl. 44, B which shows a more careful orthography than other texts and where the indirect genitive *n* is always written before the name of the god; see also Spiegelberg, P. Strassburg, p. 45, n. 4.5; ZAS, xliii. 84, n. 4; Krall, WZKM, xviii. 120.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the unpublished texts.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Vindob. 6933, A. 16 = B. 12 (unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Erichsen, Gloss. 148 and Crum, CD, 160b; also Gardiner, P. Wilbour, Index, pp. 79-80.

<sup>5</sup> However in Z 299 the spelling is *TMOY* against the majority of instances.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Peas. R, 84; P. Kah. 23, 15. 16; Urk. iv. 57, 2; Caminos, Lit. Fragm., pl. 9, 2.3-4; Urk. iv (1821), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Amarna, v. 26, 21; P. Wilbour, i. 27 and my Myth. Orig.



is no difficulty in equating it with its Coptic derivative. Moreover, the word *m3wt* seems to have been common in the formation of Fayyumic toponyms.<sup>1</sup> Gardiner interpreted the significance of the word as describing "new level ploughlands deposited by the Nile or waters".<sup>2</sup> The connotation which can reasonably be derived from the word fits in with the geographical position of Dimê, in particular as far as the early stages of its history are concerned. Further support for this view may also be seen in Egyptian mythology and its eventual projection into the toponyms. It reminds one of an ancient myth known from the Edfu narratives. These tell of the origin of the *t3 m3wt*, "new land", that was created for the god in primeval times after he had settled in his original domain.<sup>3</sup> We learn from the myth that this "new land" was land deposited by primeval waters on the margin of an already existing piece of earth which has in the myth a special name, *iw* = island, already mentioned above. In the myth *t3* conveys the meaning "earth" and *m3wt* is an adjective. It is difficult to decide whether the demotic name *T3-my* originated in the ancient word of the myth and the sense of the "new land" has been retained there or whether it is to be taken with the common meaning "island" preceded by the definite article *t3*. Since the Greek translation is *νησος*, we should unhesitatingly support the latter. It is possible that the original meaning of *t3m3wt* ("new land") may have weakened in the course of time and disappeared; consequently the original sense may have become associated with the idea of an "island". We do not know what the attitude of the Greeks was towards Egyptian technical words describing various kinds of ancient lands; to them all such words may well have conveyed the single idea of an "island".

The Edfu myth furnishes us also with a strong argument that *P3y* could only form part of the divine name and that most probably it does not apply to a real entity or convey the sense of anything concrete. If we follow the mythological argument there is no difficulty in clarifying the meaning. The expression *nb P3y* brings to mind the beginning of the Edfu

<sup>1</sup> *P. Wilbour, Index*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Myth. Orig.*

myth, that part which tells us of the *p'y*, the " *pāy-land* " created for the god in primeval times, the first solid piece of land on which was his original domain. We have dealt with this myth on two previous occasions<sup>1</sup> and also attempted to interpret the Egyptian belief in the original *nb p'y*, the *Lord-of-the-pāy-land*.<sup>2</sup> The myth seems to have been known in many places in Egypt in which the chief local god became equated with the original *Lord-of-the-pāy-land* in the course of time. It does not appear unreasonable to suggest that this myth may have been known in several places in the Fayyum. The hieratic papyrus from Tebtunis cited above may be taken as a proof that myths concerning the origin of sacred places were popular in the Fayyum and that they may have been used as the prototype of the mythological narratives written at a later date.

The interpretation here suggested for the demotic word previously read as *Pȝy* is also feasible from the phonetic point of view. The demotic script gives the spelling \**pāy* which has the same phonetic value as its ancient prototype *p'y* > \**pāy*. The close similarity between these two words is emphasized when we recall that in demotic texts the name *pāy* has always been treated as a single word. We do not think there can be any real difficulty in admitting the word *pāy* with its original meaning and in suggesting that the Fayyumic *Lord-of-the-Pāi*, whom we know particularly from late Ptolemaic and Roman texts, was the Crocodile god who was first worshipped around lake Birket-el-Kûrûn in the dim past and was the same deity to whom the Dimê Temples were dedicated. That region may have been considered to be his original *pāy-land*. We are inclined to think that *pāy* in the name of the Dimê god defines his original characteristics and venture to suggest that the whole region may have been sacred to this special form of the Crocodile god from remote times. The immediate geographical conditions may have resulted in the myth of the *Lord-of-the-pāy-land* becoming popular there and the lake with its surroundings coming to be regarded as sacred to the Crocodile, the *Lord-of-the-pāy-land*. The Dimê material made available so far does not provide us with mythological narrative to support

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Myth. Orig.* and *ZÄS*, lxxxvii. 50-52; also *P. Wilbour*, ii. 26. 27, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Myth. Orig.*

our hypothesis. Nevertheless, it seems highly probable that the memory of the ancient myth and the original god survived in the name of the deity adored there throughout Pharaonic times and in the cult that persisted there far into Roman times.<sup>1</sup>

## B. THE ARCHIVES

The enormous quantity of papyrus rolls and fragments found on the site of Dimê take us into the final stage of the history of the domain of the ancient *Lord-of-the-pāy-land*.

It is hardly necessary to embark on a long description of the importance which these papyri have for the history of papyrology and of Graeco-Roman Egypt in general. It is well known to all papyrologists, as is the sad fate of a good deal of the papyrological treasure that was brought to light there and destroyed by the native Arabs. Nevertheless, substantial portions of papyrus or fragments of papyrus came into the hands of European collectors of antiquities. They were bought by the 26th Earl Crawford, by the Archduke Rainer of Austria and by some European museums towards the end of the last century and subsequently passed into the hands of institutions. The surviving Dimê papyri are now shared between the Berlin Museum,<sup>2</sup> the Rylands Library, where the former Crawford collection is to be found,<sup>3</sup> and the Papyrus Collection of the National Library in Vienna, which has the entire Rainer collection.<sup>4</sup> A smaller number was purchased by the British Museum and the Library of the University of Strassburg.<sup>5</sup> Papyri found during the excavations of the American Expedition 1931-2 came into the possession of the University of Michigan.<sup>6</sup>

The Dimê papyri were the subject of extensive studies soon after they had been brought to the notice of scholars. Interest was, however, concentrated on the Greek documents. Wessely

<sup>1</sup> If this suggestion be accepted the name should then be interpreted as *the-pāy-land*, unlike Griffith's reading *Pāi*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *DPB*, pp. 22 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 168 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Krall, *WZKM*, xviii. 117 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *P. Strassburg*, pp. 44 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Worrell, *AJSL*, lviii. 84.

was the first to produce an extended study based chiefly on the Dimê Greek documents. His work<sup>1</sup> is an interesting and instructive introduction to the contents of the Dimê archives and was followed by shorter studies by Bayer,<sup>2</sup> Boak, Metzger<sup>3</sup> and Evans.<sup>4</sup> Little has been done as regards the demotic papyri since the pioneer work of Griffith and Spiegelberg at the beginning of this century.<sup>5</sup> Griffith made available two Dimê contracts from Roman times which are preserved in the Rylands Library, P. Ryl. dem. 44 and 45. Spiegelberg included in his catalogue of the Berlin demotic papyri a number of Dimê Roman contracts and a small number of documents from the archives of the Dimê Temple. This is really very little if we consider the extent of the Dimê papyri which remain unpublished in various collections. As far as the demotic papyri are concerned there is, indeed, great need to remedy this neglect and to bridge the long period between the publications of Griffith and Spiegelberg and our own time. The writer of the present paper came to study closely the Dimê demotic papyri while preparing for publication Vol. IV of the *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library*. This study also provided the opportunity to spend some time examining the demotic papyri which belonged to the former collection of Archduke Rainer, now preserved in the National Library in Vienna.<sup>6</sup> As a result I was enabled to appreciate the extent of the surviving part of Dimê demotic papyri, which is, without any doubt, huge and most probably one of the largest collections of demotic papyri to come down to us from Egypt. Although these documents are divided between several collections, there are obvious and close connections between the texts which are, on the one hand, in the Rylands Library and, on the other, in the Vienna collection or in Berlin.

<sup>1</sup> Wessely, *Karanis und Soknopaiou Nesos*, *DKAW*, vol. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Bayer, *Urkunden aus Soknopaiou Nesos*, *Aegyptus*, xx. 299-314.

<sup>3</sup> Metzger, *Zur Tempelverwaltung im frühromische Ägypten* (Mus. Helvet., 3).

<sup>4</sup> Evans, *Social and Economic History of an Egyptian Temple*, *Yale Classical Studies*, 1961.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *PDB*, pp. 22 ff. and Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 168 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Here I wish to thank most warmly the Director of the Vienna Collection of Papyri, Dr. H. Loebenstein, for her kind permission to study the unpublished demotic papyri from Dimê which are preserved in the Austrian National Library.

I had the opportunity during a preliminary study and general examination to arrange the bulk of the demotic papyri by its main groups in chronological order and to classify them according to content. It is clear that we have preserved here only chance portions of various single archives that once existed in Dimê. These preliminary studies make clear that the Dimê archives, where the native demotic texts were kept, preserve evidence of outstanding value for further research into the history of Graeco-Roman Egypt as well as into papyrology in general. It seems worthwhile, therefore, to outline the general scope of the ancient archives of Dimê before proceeding to studies of single texts or groups of texts. The unfortunate circumstances that surrounded the discovery of these papyri has resulted in there being a great deal of uncertainty as to the technical side of the organization of the native Egyptian archives. There are also inevitable gaps in the chronology and difficulties in accurately dating most of the Dimê texts. The majority only rarely bear the exact date when they were written and an attempt to classify them chronologically has to depend mainly on palaeographical criteria. Among the legal documents, for instance, there is only a limited number in which that part of the document giving the regnal year of the king or emperor has been preserved. From these we can single out texts which furnish criteria useful for dating other texts.

The earliest date for the Dimê Archives which we have found among the documents examined is the year 6 of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (= 165/164 B.C.), which occurs in P. Vindob. D 6844 (unpublished). This does not mean that there may not have been documents of a much earlier date, but so far earlier textual evidence has not come to light. The latest date known is the year 15 of Trajan (= 112 A.D.), which occurs in P. dem. Berlin 7056.<sup>1</sup> This document is palaeographically of great interest and useful for dating other texts. We do not argue that the Dimê Archives extended only from the beginning of the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II to the beginning of the second century A.D. There is a large number of texts undoubtedly later than the end of the second century A.D. The variety of demotic hands which can

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *PDB*, pl. 59, p. 24.

be identified suggests that these archives extended beyond the end of that century. We do not think that it would be unreasonable to argue that the surviving archives range in date from the second century B.C. to the fourth, and perhaps to the beginning of the fifth century A.D. This view, however, is based only on the result of palaeographical study.

When the Dimê Archives are considered from the point of view of content they fall into two main groups. It is possible that the more substantial part is a relic of the archives of the Dimê temples (a), while the smaller part seems to be from the local Record Office (b).

#### (a) THE ARCHIVES OF THE TEMPLES AT DIMÊ

The greater part of these documents, still unpublished, is in the Vienna collection. Other texts of the same nature are to be found in the Berlin collection and are known from Spiegelberg's publication.<sup>1</sup> To them may be added a considerable number of unpublished fragments in the Rylands Library. All these documents are late in date, the majority being from Roman times. As a whole, the archives of the Dimê temples are undoubtedly one of the most important and extensive archives of an Egyptian Temple known to us. The following division of this material may be suggested according to the nature of the texts it contains :

(i) *Archives of the priests of Sobek*. A category which includes the regulations of the priesthood of Sobek and texts bearing on the admission to the priesthood. These are chiefly in the Vienna collection and all are unpublished.

(ii) *Records from various proceedings of the priesthood of Sobek* and mainly concerning administrative matters of the temple. These are again mostly in the Vienna collection and unpublished. One document only has been made available from the Berlin collection, P. Berlin 7059.<sup>2</sup>

(iii) *Properly administrative texts of the temple*, chiefly *accounts*. These form the largest portion of the temple records. They are in the Vienna collection, the Rylands Library, and

<sup>1</sup> See P. Berlin 7059 (*PDB*, pl. 45, p. 22) ; P. Berlin 6848 (*PDB*, pls. 63-64), P. Berlin 8043 (*PDB*, pl. 65-70, p. 24).

<sup>2</sup> *PDB*, pl. 45, p. 22.

Berlin, the last being known from Spiegelberg's publication.<sup>1</sup> These texts, in spite of the generally dull nature of accounts, are an important source of information for the life and functions of an Egyptian temple in Graeco-Roman Egypt.

(iv) *Records bearing on the interrelationship between the priesthood and the inhabitants of Dimê.* All these documents are in the Vienna collection and unpublished.

(v) No *ritual books of the temple*, which were written on papyrus and kept in the *Temple Library*, have been preserved. Nevertheless, the contents of these books are in part revealed by a series of hitherto unpublished mythological narratives and funerary texts. They acquaint us in a very instructive manner with the doctrine of the priests of Sobek and with the mythology and religious festivals of Dimê.

This brief summary shows that the Dimê texts are abundant in information about life in an Egyptian temple at the close of the Ptolemaic era and during Roman times, and enable us to outline the functions of the temple and its priesthood as well as their position in the life of the city under Roman rule. There are obvious connections between the demotic and Greek sources. The co-existence and interrelationship of bilingual texts having a direct bearing on a single temple would require extensive research and will not be dealt with here. Studies of single documents from these archives, or groups of documents, as well as a detailed discussion of the categories listed, are outside the scope of this account. A series of expanded studies dealing with these is planned and will be made available in the future.

#### (b) LOCAL RECORD OFFICE

The present paper is devoted to the study of documents that have been preserved from the *archives of the Dimê Record Office*. These documents are smaller in number than those from the archives of the Temple. They are also less instructive for outlining the history and organization of the local Record Office. Judging from what has been preserved, it is possible to suggest that these archives had several sub-divisions or were

<sup>1</sup> *PDB*, pls. 63-64 ; 65-70.

organized into a number of single departments. But there are only a few documents for a period which covers four centuries at least. The earliest dated text in this set is P. Vindob. 6844 from year 6 of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, already mentioned,<sup>1</sup> the latest known is P. dem. Berlin 7056 from year 15 of Trajan.<sup>2</sup> All these are legal documents, *contracts* concerning transactions respecting private properties in Dimê. The majority date from the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius and were in part made available by the publications of Griffith<sup>3</sup> and Spiegelberg.<sup>4</sup> We have been able to identify further fragments of private legal documents among the unpublished Rylands papyri and in the Vienna collection.<sup>5</sup> The number of Dimê contracts (eight) already published may thus be increased by about thirty new documents. This is clearly too small completely to fill the space of several centuries.

The subject matter of all these contracts is limited. They deal exclusively with the conveyance of part shares of private properties in Dimê. As regards the nature of the transactions, it is highly probable that only a part of the records of a single department of the archives has been preserved. There are certainly other legal documents that were written in the Egyptian language. As far as our evidence goes we can refer in this connection to one text which is other than a mere contract: P. dem. Berlin 8092.<sup>6</sup> This appears to be a portion of a letter addressed to local officials. We may reasonably suppose that there were many other texts of the same kind and other documents bearing on the interrelationship between the Egyptians of Dimê and the local officials, and documents dealing with legal procedures other than the transfer of part shares of private

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. n. 1, p. 445.

<sup>3</sup> P. Ryl. 44 from the year 15 of Tiberius (A.D. 29); P. Ryl. 45 from the year 2 of Claudius (A.D. 43).

<sup>4</sup> P. Berlin 7057 from the year 8 of Claudius (A.D. 48); P. Berlin 8085, the exact date has not been preserved; P. Berlin 7058 from the year 16 of Tiberius (A.D. 30); P. Berlin 6857 from the year 5 of Claudius (A.D. 45); P. Berlin 7054 from the reign of Tiberius; P. Berlin 7056 from the year 15 of Trajan (A.D. 112); P. Strasburg 32 from the reign of Nero (A.D. 55).

<sup>5</sup> The unpublished Rylands contracts from Dimê will be made available in vol. iv of the *Catalogue*. The Vienna documents are reserved for future studies.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *PDB*, pl. 46.



properties. Of all this not a single piece of papyrus has been preserved. This small group of legal texts may be supplemented by archives which seem to have been kept in private houses. We may refer here to a single private archive belonging to a certain Melas son of Horion, a priest of Sobek, which was found in the underground passage of a house in Dimê during the excavations of the American Expedition.<sup>1</sup> None of the demotic texts there discovered has been made available.

Despite technical difficulties caused by the state of the documents, it is clear that we have here an extensive single archive in which documents concerned with property settlements were kept. This archive certainly originated in Ptolemaic times ; datable pieces of evidence are known from the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. The subsequent documents make it certain that the archive continued until the first half of the second century A.D. There appear close and real ties, if we consider not only the type of transaction endorsed but also the manner of endorsing agreements and the social rank of people mentioned in the texts of the contracts. We may reasonably conclude that there existed in Dimê a large and important archive in which records relevant to the history of private houses there were kept. On the whole this archive is less rich in information than connected sets of documents that have come down to us from Thebes, Siut, Gebelein, Tebtunis and Memphis. Nevertheless, the study of this group of texts is useful. From them we obtain a picture of the life of an Egyptian community, the society of the devotees of the Crocodile god. They take us into the heart of the society of ordinary Egyptian men and low ranking officials who lived during an historically important time in a town which preserved its native characteristics far into the Roman period. From them it can be strongly argued that there was a continuity of essentially Egyptian elements in the life of the city in spite of Greek administration and Roman rule. This situation appears particularly important if we recall the history of Karanis.<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptians we meet in the demotic contracts very often had long and complicated names, though old and simple

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Worrell, *AJSL*, lviii. 84 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boak, *Karanis*, p. 5.

names like Hor seem also to have been very popular even at this advanced stage of their history.<sup>1</sup> But they do not appear to have been very attractive personalities. On occasion we find in the Greek subscriptions of the demotic contracts brief descriptions of the characteristics of the contracting parties, stating their age and giving details of their physical appearance.<sup>2</sup> We also learn that many of the inhabitants of Dimê were incapable of writing and that a third party was called upon to substitute for them when drafting agreements.<sup>3</sup> It is not safe to generalize from isolated pieces of evidence; what we learn about the people of Dimê from these legal texts accords with the characteristic features of the wall paintings found in one of the houses, to which reference has already been made,<sup>4</sup> and this hardly offers favourable testimony on behalf of the Egyptian inhabitants of the town. The demotic contracts rarely give the titles of the contracting parties, which would make possible a determination of the everyday occupations of the owners of the houses. In the majority of cases both the contracting parties and the owners of other properties referred to are addressed only by their proper names followed by a brief indication concerning their parentage. But here again the occupation of the father is not revealed. This appears rather unusual when compared with private documents from other places in Egypt. In this group of contracts we never meet with titles of members of the priesthood of Sobek; no single instance of the title *hm-ntr* ("prophet") or *w'b* ("priest") can be cited. What is more surprising is that even simple and ordinary titles, such as merchant or farmer, or titles of tradesmen, never occur. On the other hand, however, if we surmise that these people were owners of houses in the town and picture the lay-out of these houses, it seems unlikely that they could have been from the lower classes of Dimê. This may, perhaps, have been one of the practices of the local Record Office: to name people concerned only by their proper names when actual properties were to be described. This may ultimately have been

<sup>1</sup> The personal names of individuals in Dimê will be discussed in connection with the publication of the contracts in the next issue of the BULLETIN.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ryl.*, iii. 172 and 175.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, in particular the demotic subscription. <sup>4</sup> Cf. above, pp. 434-35.

derived from certain customs of Egyptian society in Dimê. This suggestion appears more likely from a study of the following context. A number of the demotic deeds introduce us to a category of person found qualified by a long series of titles which read: *nb w'b hry šy Wt-wry N³-nfr-ir-šdy*; a tentative translation would be *Master of sanctity Superintendent of the Great-Green of Nefershati*.<sup>1</sup> This series of titles is known to us only from Dimê contracts but certainly is not late in date and seems to have existed already in Ptolemaic times.<sup>2</sup> The earliest evidence known for them is to be found in a contract from the reign of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II<sup>3</sup> and it would be unlikely that precisely this particular series of titles had its origin in his reign. Spiegelberg, who was the first to deal with the Dimê contracts, thought he recognized in this series the demotic prototype of the Greek titles νεβοαπι ριση ρισιγету νεφορσατει.<sup>4</sup> His view has been followed by Krall,<sup>5</sup> who suggested that these titles were the designations of the High Priest of Dimê. Griffith discussed their significance in part in connection with his study of P. Ryl. 45.<sup>6</sup> He pointed out that they must have been borne by several individuals simultaneously, but admits that they denoted priests.

No text has been found in which the characteristics of this office are described. The study of the significance of these titles is therefore limited to occurrences in contracts and other legal documents from Dimê which are still unpublished. We do not think that the persons bearing them were real members of the priesthood of Dimê. Such titles are not included in the lists of the *w'b.w Sbk* (the "priests of Sobek"). We know only that these individuals were on occasion brought into contact with the priesthood of Dimê. This, however, was only for legal matters and could have no bearing on the meaning of the titles.<sup>7</sup>

The first part of the title, the *nb w'b*, seems to have had its own use and application. It does not appear to have been

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 301-2, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> According to unpublished contracts in the Vienna collection.

<sup>3</sup> P. Vindob. D 8444 from the year 6 of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (unpublished).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *P. Strasburg*, p. 44 and Wessely, *Spec. Isagog.*, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Krall, *WZKM*, xviii. 117.

<sup>6</sup> Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii., 301-3 and 173-8.

<sup>7</sup> According to a set of unpublished documents in the Vienna collection.

closely bound up with the titles following. We know of individuals from Dimê who were designated only by the title *nb w'b*.<sup>1</sup> But it is not clear whether this conveys the sense of anything real or is essentially an honorific. The title is an early one and attested by textual evidence from Pharaonic times. We find it in a papyrus from Ghoran, P. Lille 26, 1.2, dating from the time of Hakoris (393-380 B.C.).<sup>2</sup> It designates the son of a prophet. Then in P. Lille 22, another document from Ghoran, dating from the year 8 of Nechtanebo (370 B.C.),<sup>3</sup> where it designates one of the contracting parties. In both, the individuals bearing this title had an association with the temple or the priesthood. What matters here, however, is that the title occurs in documents from the Fayyum. For the word *w'b* in this context an alternative interpretation may be suggested (1) either it indicates a condition like "being pure", "being purified", "being sanctified", and, consequently, in this connection, "purity" or "sanctity",<sup>4</sup> or (2) the word meaning "to serve as a priest",<sup>5</sup> or (3) finally, it may have a bearing on the acts of mummification and describe the various acts of purification or lustration of the dead.<sup>6</sup> Hence a tentative interpretation of the title could be either "master of purity or sanctity" or "master of purification" in the sense of embalmment. It follows that the title might well have been that of a Necropolis official. If we admit that it denotes status, we may venture to suggest that it describes either a minor priest or one who for some reason of privilege was admitted to attend at a ritual service performed either in the temple or outside, as, for instance, the religious festivals. It may also designate a member of a priestly family who bore this title to justify his privileged position at law. Since the documents concerning admission to the priesthood do not contain this title, we incline to the opinion that it may have been honorific only. Its connection with the title of *hry šy* may help to clarify the matter. This is common and of wide application.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Berlin 7058, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sottas, *P. Lille*, i. 52-54, pls. 12-13; Malinine, *Rev. ég.*, vii. 107-20, pl. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sottas, *ibid.* pp. 49-51, pl. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Wb.* i. 280; Erichsen, *Gloss.* 82-83.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Neferhotep*, 32; *Urk.* i. 15, 7; *Adm.* 11, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Wb.* I. 284, 5.

It could denote an administrative function, an official attached to the temple or to other sacred places who was in charge of the lake either from the technical point of view or as the superintendent of festivals and other religious acts performed on it. Moreover, this title, which we would interpret as the "Superintendent of the Lake", was not uncommon in the Fayyum. The demotic contracts from Tebtunis provide us with a considerable number of instances of it.<sup>1</sup> There it is usually preceded by the group which reads *rp'y*, the demotic prototype of *ὀρπαις*, of which the significance is known.<sup>2</sup> This title was purely honorific and was used to describe members of higher classes. If we refer to the Dimê documents, we obtain a parallel between *nb w'b* and *rp'y*. One is tempted to suggest that the parallel between these two may also indicate closely similar significance. We should be inclined to admit that there existed in late Fayyumic cities various names to indicate either a higher social class or a class of special functionaries. In fact, in both cases the presumed honorific is followed by the title *hry šy* ("Superintendent of the Lake"). The word *šy* can mean here an ordinary pool or garden, or a sacred pool within a garden having ritual and funerary associations.<sup>3</sup> From the context we would favour the idea of a pool within a garden of which the significance and use were strictly defined. We have in mind a pool that played an important part in the performance of the funerary cult, like the *šy*-pool in the Osiris cult.<sup>4</sup>

In the Tebtunis texts we have two pools, one named *šy km³*, the other *šy-rsy-nb-imnty*, preceding the names of the Ptolemies. Although there are two different pools and two titles of the *hry šy* (the "Superintendent of the Lake"), it is evident that these two functions were assumed by the same individual. We may venture to suggest that the names of the Tebtunis pools may be paralleled by the name of the Dimê lake, the *Wt-wryt (n) N³-nfr-ir-šdy*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Cairo 30607, 2; 30608, 2; 30609, 2; 30612(a), 2, (b), 1; 30613, 5; 30615, 4; 30627, 3; 30626, 2; 30625, 3; 30628, 9; 30630, 2.4; Wb iv. 397.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Reich, *Sphinx*, xiv. 5, 13, 26-27; Möller, *P. Rhind, Gloss.* n. 225.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Erichsen, *Gloss.* 484-5; Wb. III. 398, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. II-Khuam. 3, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, ii. 301, n. 2, c.

The first Tebtunis pool is named šy k̄mꜣ. k̄mꜣ can mean either "creation" or "creator".<sup>1</sup> It becomes clear now that important information can be derived from the name. It is well known that the cult of the Creator of the World and the ritual service connected with the Creation in general was a prominent feature of cults celebrated in Egyptian temples during Graeco-Roman times.<sup>2</sup> It is equally well known that the cult of the Creator was essentially that of the deceased god.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that in this simple series of titles we have a clear allusion to this cult, which may well have existed in Tebtunis. Thus with the help of titles occurring in legal documents we may perhaps conjecture the existence of a ritual service duly performed in the Temple of Tebtunis<sup>4</sup> on behalf of the deceased Creator. On the other hand, we also know that there existed in the late temple of Graeco-Roman Egypt a complete "Ritual of Creation"<sup>5</sup> in which the ancestors of the gods of Egypt played a prominent part and which was partly performed on the sacred pool of the temple.<sup>6</sup> We have no connected texts for the Temple and the sacred lake in Tebtunis to support our theoretical deductions; they are based on analogies with the Ptolemaic Temples in Upper Egypt. That, however, something of this kind had existed in the Temple of Tebtunis is inherently possible, since we have here evidence of the title of an official who seems to have been in charge of or connected with the performance of these rites. If our suggestion is accepted, it will follow that the ritual enactment on the sacred pool required a special official of the cult and consequently that the title of ḥry šy described an official connected with the local cults. It is to be recalled that the Tebtunis holders of this title were, indeed, attached to the service in a sanctuary. The demotic contracts tell us that they were responsible for a sanctuary of the snake goddess Renenet.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Wb.* v, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. our *Myth. Orig.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.* and our article in *JEA*, vol. li, 144-48; *CdE*, 75 49 ff.

<sup>4</sup> No connected texts of this nature could be identified for the temple in Tebtunis.

<sup>5</sup> According to my unpublished work on the "Ritual of Creation" performed in the Temple of Edfu.

<sup>6</sup> Studied in detail in the same work.

<sup>7</sup> See the two already mentioned P. Cairo 30617 and 30620 and n. 6, p. 434.

Further support for our hypothesis may be seen in the connection with the second pool, the *šy-rsy-nb-imnty*. The name appears at first sight rather unusual. We suggest that *rsy* may be taken here as an adjective qualifying the pool; thus the "southern pool". As regards the second part of the name, we do not think there is any difficulty in seeing in it the name of Osiris, the "Lord of the West". We are inclined to think, therefore, that we have here a pool consecrated to the cult of Osiris that was named the "Southern Pool", since it was to the south of the original home of Osiris. The parallelism of the "pool of the Creator" with the "Southern Pool" of Osiris fits sufficiently well with the major trends of thought that governed the funerary cults of Graeco-Roman times for any further comment to be necessary. The Osiris pool in Tebtunis had apparently special significance. We learn from the instances of the titles that it was sacred to the Ptolemies. We can see in their names further support for our hypothesis that this pool was strictly reserved for the funerary cults. The Tebtunis documents date from the times of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II but the names of the kings occurring in the titles of the officials are: the Gods Soteres, the Gods Adelphoi and the Gods Euergetae. There is no need to enlarge on the fact that we have here convincing evidence of a cult of Ancestors duly celebrated in the temple which was precisely the same as the cult of Royal Ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

If we return now to our officials from Dimê, there appears to be a close parallel as far as the probable significance of the title is concerned. We may suggest, too, that there may also be a similarity in the nature and use of the *šy*-pool in Dimê. As has been said above,<sup>2</sup> the Dimê pool bears the name *šy Wt-wryt (n) N3-nfr-ir-šdy*; the last word shows as its determinative the snake and was taken to be the name of a snake goddess.<sup>3</sup> *Wt-wryt* is generally the name of the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes also used to describe Lake Moeris.<sup>4</sup> This, however, does not eliminate

<sup>1</sup> This is the subject of a study by H. W. Fairman and will not be discussed here.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. above, p. 451.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 301, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 299, n. 7; Gardiner, *AEO*, A392 and *P. Wilbour, Index*, p. 81.

the possibility in this context of its being the name of a pool in Dimê sacred to the presumed snake goddess, so-called for some special religious reasons which are not clear to us. We should, therefore, prefer to take the name of the šy-pool with its literal meaning of the "Great-Green". The name of the snake goddess was regarded as the demotic prototype of the Greek name *Νεφροσατης*.<sup>1</sup> This may be possible; nevertheless, it would be useful to examine the significance of the components of this divine name. It shows on the whole a formation that may be compared with that of Nefertum. For *Nfr-* we have here the Late Egyptian form of the adjective *Nṣ-nfr*, *ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲣⲉ* in Coptic, which means "good", "beautiful", or "blessed"; for *-tm* we find in the name of the Dimê deity the expression *ir-šdy*. The word *šdy* as it occurs in demotic texts can conceal a wide range of meanings and we may suggest for its interpretation "secret", "holy", or take it with the meaning "ground", "plot of land", "region", "waters" or "supernatural powers".<sup>2</sup> Thus the intimate connection with the verb *ir*, "to make" or "to create", will give the meaning either "He-who-created-the secret", or "He-who-created-the-plot-of-land" (or "waters"), or "He-who-created-the-supernatural-power". The whole name of the deity would thus be "Blessed is He-who-created-the plot-of-land" (or "the mound", etc.). There is, therefore, a distinct possibility that the Dimê deity had a pronounced creative capacity. The expression *ir-šdy* by itself, disregarding the variety of meanings suggested, brings to mind, in connection with the creation, another Egyptian deity who was conceived to be a snake with creative powers. This is the *'Ir-tṣ*, the "Earth-Maker". We have devoted a study to this god and the background of his cult in an Egyptian temple<sup>3</sup> during Graeco-Roman times; there is, therefore, no need to enlarge on the subject here. It may be surmised that in the doctrine of the Sobek priests the original plot of land that emerged from the Nun at the commencement of the world was habitually described by the word *šdy*,<sup>4</sup> and consequently the original Creator of waters and earth was called *'Ir-šdy*. Although this can only be theoretical deduction, there

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 301, n. 2, d.      <sup>2</sup> Cf. Erichsen, *Gloss.* pp. 526-7, 529.

<sup>3</sup> To be published in the forthcoming issue of *ZAS*.      <sup>4</sup> Cf. *Wb.* iv. 567.



seems to emerge a distinct possibility of the already known parallelism between creation and ancestry. We should be inclined to admit that the Dimê deity represented as a snake may have been for Dimê, and perhaps for other Fayyumic places, what the Earth-Maker was in other temples. We also know that the Earth-Maker functioned as a protector. The Egyptian snake deities had generally the same capacity. Since this deity was essentially a creative power, it is evident that its cult must have contained the whole, or at least a part, of the "Ritual of Creation". And as a creative power the deity must have had, according to the doctrines of the late period, funerary associations also. It is equally well known that both the funerary rites completed on behalf of the deceased deities as well as the rites of creation took place on the sacred pool. It does not appear unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that this may have been at Dimê the place which in our documentary evidence is described as the *šy Wt-wryt*, the "Pool of the Great-Green". The choice of this name may have been dictated by some local beliefs, perhaps to indicate the connection with Lake Moeris, or to intimate the connection with the original waters for which the Mediterranean Sea may have been the prototype. There is much that is uncertain here because of the lack of connected and more explicit mythological texts for Dimê and its cults. It may perhaps be relevant, however, to refer at this point to a number of Edfu and Denderah ritual scenes which confirm the close connection between the worship of the snake and the "Ritual of Creation". These are the scenes of the "Offering of the Lotus".<sup>1</sup> In a number of scenes in both of these temples we find as the chief deity in the ritual enactment the Earth-snake *S3-t3*.

As far as the temple of Dimê is concerned we cannot say where this pool sacred to the Dimê Earth-snake was situated. Was it included in the temple or in the Necropolis? Neither can be proved at present. That it did exist there is, however, evidence, since there occur many instances of the title of the officials who were responsible either for the pool or for the ritual. It follows that the Dimê *hrywšy*, "Superintendents of the Pool",

<sup>1</sup> These ritual scenes were the background of my study of the "Ritual of Creation", cf. n. 5, p. 454.

were officials closely connected with sacred places, though they seem to have been outside the body of the *n3 w'b.w Sbk*, the "Priests of Sobek". Their function would thus appear to have been semi-sacerdotal in nature. The fact that they seem to have formed a special body among the sacerdotal officials of Dimê gives us a hint by which we may attempt another approach to the significance of the title. There is in the meaning a clear allusion to funerary cults. If we now recall the first title in their designation, the *nb w'b*, and admit that the word *w'b* conveys here a sense of ritual purification or lustration of the dead, there would be little that would hinder us from suggesting that this series of titles, which appears to be limited to Dimê, was borne by the officials of the Necropolis there. We know nothing of the organization of the Dimê Necropolis, but we do know that officials of the Fayyumic Necropolis bore special titles which are not attested elsewhere. One may recall here the officials of the Hawara Necropolis, whom we know from an unpublished set of demotic documents.<sup>1</sup> We know also that the late Egyptian Necropolis included in its organization the *šy*-pools, where ceremonies on behalf of deceased gods and humans were performed.<sup>2</sup> The unpublished Hawara documents provide us with other pieces of evidence to suggest that we may reasonably see in these *Masters of purification and Superintendents of the Pool (called) Great-Green of Nefer-rashety* the officials of the Dimê Necropolis who resided in the town of Dimê. The documents which they have left deal exclusively with the private properties which they possessed in the town.

These Dimê private legal documents do not enable us to pursue in all details our research into the Egyptian society that lived there. Documents solely concerning the *n3 w'b.w Sbk* (the "Priests of Sobek"), as well as texts bearing on the relationship between the local priesthood and the citizens of Dimê, will not be dealt with in this account. A special study of these will be made available in the future.

<sup>1</sup> These texts are the subject of one of my forthcoming studies which will not be anticipated here.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Bruxelles E 6033, 3 and my *Memphite Archives* where the ceremonies performed on the lake of the necropolis have been discussed (not yet published).

The excavations by the University of Michigan at Dimê offered a unique opportunity of obtaining a realistic picture of the places in which the people named in the contracts lived. The legal texts are worthy of recall in this respect. They offer data from which we can complete the context of life in the city. In stating this we do not claim that the houses described in the contracts and owned by commoners and Necropolis officials are precisely the same houses that were excavated. Nevertheless, the two are worthy of being studied in conjunction. As has been said above,<sup>1</sup> all the surviving contracts have the same object—the procedure of conveyance of part shares of private properties in the town. The description of these properties is in every instance brief and written according to a kind of formula recurrent in all the known documents. The main parts of the private property are only briefly given. These properties are said to have consisted of (a) a house which was always described in the following manner : *p3 'y nt kd iw.f grg sy sbe iw.f whm ht 2.t*, *the house which is built, furnished with beams and doors, which is two-storeyed*<sup>2</sup> ; (b) a courtyard, *p3 inh nt ir*, *the courtyard which forms either the southern, eastern or western side of the house* ; (c) as the third item of the description of the estate we read only the expression *nt nb nt hn.f iw.f ws-pš* or *nt nb nkt nbt nt hn.f*, *everything that it comprises undivided*. This last item may conceal a variety of meanings. It may describe other additional parts of the property and may have taken the place of the expanded and detailed specification of additional property which we know from the formula of early Ptolemaic deeds, of which P. Ryl. dem. 11<sup>3</sup> preserves the most complete version. It may also refer to subsidiary revenues afferant to a particular property. Finally, it may indicate that which is included within the house, like furniture, tools and the like. On one occasion only do we find that a special reference has been made to a *ryt* ("chamber") built within the house.<sup>4</sup> The text does not define the use and purpose of this particular room. Each house is said to have had

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, p. 448.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P. Ryl. 44, A. 4 ; B. 4 ; 45, A. 7-9 ; B. 6 ; P. Berlin 6857, 4 ; 7057, 4 ; 7058, 5-6 ; the evidence of the unpublished contracts will not be cited here.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 257-8 and 122-3.

<sup>4</sup> P. Ryl. 44, A. 7 = B. 5.

a courtyard on one of its sides. This was apparently a prominent feature in the layout of private properties in Dimê. We already know this from archaeological evidence.<sup>1</sup> Since the courtyard is emphasized in every transaction, we may assume that it was not without importance in the everyday occupations of the owner. The courtyard appears here in the same position in which in the property settlements of the Memphite merchants who lived in the Anubieion we find reference to a mill and granaries.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it has been noticed that in most of the Fayyumic contracts dealing with transactions concerning real properties, the *inh*-courtyard is always stressed and sometimes we find a special reference in the text emphasizing that the courtyard pertains to the house. This is attested from early Ptolemaic contracts from the Fayyum.<sup>3</sup> Special consideration must be given to P. Cairo 30612, dating from the second part of the Ptolemaic period,<sup>4</sup> where the description and specification of the courtyard occupy a much greater part of the transaction than the house itself. We learn from unpublished contracts from Hawara that the courtyard played an important part in the duties of the owners. It appears likely that in the life of the inhabitants of the Fayyum a good deal of their activities or functions centred in the courtyard adjacent to the dwelling place. We need not wonder that the same situation existed in Dimê throughout the centuries, although the texts of contracts reveal only too little of the real occupations of the owners. What, moreover, the Dimê texts seem to show is that in the local formulary the expression *p3 'y + p3 inh* (*the house and the courtyard*) is used as a technical legal idiom to describe a single private property. Several instances can be cited where both are treated as a single undivided unit.<sup>5</sup>

The private houses with which the contracts acquaint us are said to be in the western district (*t3 ewe imnty*)<sup>6</sup> and in the eastern

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, p. 435.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. P.B.M. 10075 in *JEA*, xliii. 45 ff. and *JEA*, xlv. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P.B.M. 10616 in *Griffith Studies*, pp. 152-60.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *CCG*, pls. 21-22, *Texte*, pp. 39 ff.

<sup>5</sup> See in particular P. Berlin 7058, 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14 and P. Vindob. 6933, A. 13 = B. 10 (unpublished). See also Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 8-9 and Karanis (1931), 34-35.

<sup>6</sup> Properties in the western district are referred to in P. Ryl. 44; P. Vindob. 6933; P. Berlin 7058.

district (*t3 ewe ybty*).<sup>1</sup> In both of the main areas of the town the private houses are described in the same way. We should imagine that the same type of private property was built throughout the entire town.<sup>2</sup> A further deduction is that the " Superintendents of the Pool " had neither houses of a special type nor their own quarters. It is likely from the descriptions preserved that they lived among the commoners. In this respect it should be noted that we have never come across a single reference to a house occupied by a priest (*w'b*) of Sobek.

As far as can be judged from the textual evidence of the contracts, there were in the town large areas in which private houses stood close to one another. In most instances the property dealt with is said to have been surrounded on all four sides by private properties of the same kind. In a few texts we read that the northern boundary of the estate was a road, presumably one of the main streets in the town.<sup>3</sup> The really important information is to be found in the unpublished P. Vindob. 6933, which refers to properties in the western district and informs us that their eastern boundary was the *hfty-he Sbk*, the *dromos of Sobek*.<sup>4</sup> It follows, according to the evidence of the contracts, that the dromos leading to the temples divided the town into two main districts. We may thus picture the scene as follows: in the South was the Lake of Birket-el-Kûrûn, from which led the processional way, the dromos of Sobek, northward to the temple; on each side of the dromos, to the East and to the West, spread the residential areas of the town. The textual evidence appears close to the archaeological facts<sup>5</sup> and one can hardly resist feeling that it is likely that the private properties dealt with in our legal texts may well have been among those included in the area uncovered during the latest excavations at Dimê. But a detailed identification will not be pursued here.

In the study of these contracts it has been noticed that lands were never included with the property conveyed. We can cite

<sup>1</sup> Properties in the eastern district are mentioned in P. Ryl. 45; P. Berlin 7057; 6857.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* pp. 10-13.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Ryl. 44, 11 and P. Berlin 7058, 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. Vindob. 6933, A. 16 = B. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Boak, *op. cit.* p. 4.

only one reference to the *wrh*-waste-land<sup>1</sup> ; this occurs, however, in a description of the boundaries.

The number of Dimê contracts preserved is, as has already been stated,<sup>2</sup> too small to enable us to reconstruct the history of the properties mentioned or to follow their fate through the centuries. Usually we have one contract dealing with a single estate in the town and there are many properties which we know only from references in the descriptions of boundaries. It is impossible to construct an unbroken history of these small private properties, to follow the succession to them, or to study the rights of inheritance, facts which can be studied when dealing with legal documents from many other places in Egypt. We may suppose that rights of inheritance were as developed in Dimê as in many other places. But we can cite only a single document revealing the form of procedures of a property settlement that took place within a family of the Dimê "Masters of lustration" and "Superintendents of the Pool (called) the Great-Green"—P. Ryl. 45. In this document it was the property inherited from the father that had been conveyed to another member of the family.<sup>3</sup> P. Ryl. 44<sup>4</sup> illustrates another kind of settlement within the family : the conveyance of a part of the estate from the mother to the daughter. Here, however, it is not clear for how long the family exercised its rights to the particular property. It should also be stressed that we are never told that the whole property would be sold ; it was only the *dnit-pšy*, the part shares of a particular property, that formed the object of the transaction. In contrast, there has not been preserved a single document that exemplifies the procedures of sharing private properties. This does not appear without significance. It has been noticed in the study of P. Berlin 7058<sup>5</sup> that the part of a house and courtyard here conveyed by sale had as its western boundary the estate of the B-contracting party ; he only extended his own estate by a quarter part share from the neighbouring property. In P. Ryl. 45, dealing with an estate in the eastern district, we meet a certain Stotoetis son of Hor who is most probably the same person as

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Ryl. 45, A. 13 = B. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. above, p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 173 and 301.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.* pp. 169 and 299.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *PDB*, pl. 47, p. 23.

the B-contracting party in the transaction known from P.Vindob. 6933. The dates of these two transactions are so close to one another that one may assume the individual to be the same. Thus, we have here an individual who lived in the eastern district but who bought, by virtue of the transaction known from P. Vindob. 6933, part shares of a house in the western district. The fact that the same person owned at the same time part shares in houses in different parts of the town does not appear without significance for this kind of transaction dealing with private houses. We may recall here the courtyard which, as has been said, was always treated as an equal part of the property. This brings to mind the property settlements of Memphite merchants in Anubieion where the second part of their estates, represented by a mill and granaries, was treated in the same manner as the courtyard in the Dimê contracts. We are inclined to think that we have here a situation that can be compared legally with the former and that, consequently, in the Dimê legal documents only the *dnît-pšy*, the part shares, mattered. A further inference would be that underlying this type of property settlement was the question of the profit derived from a specific estate, and that these transactions were arrangements, or rather agreements, concerned with the revenues from properties. This appears likely if we remember again the courtyard, which may have been used for various trade purposes. If this suggestion is correct, it would seem as though usufructuary rights were conferred upon these properties. This possibility led us to examine the significance of the expression *nt nb nt hn.f*.<sup>1</sup> Its meaning may be ordinary, but it is quite evident that in the wording of the contract the expression appears to describe the third item of the transaction. Spiegelberg took it to mean "Mobilien und Unmobilien".<sup>2</sup> We are inclined to accept this and to agree with Griffith<sup>3</sup> that it describes what is comprised in the house. If, on the other hand, we suppose that only a part share of the house was conveyed and that there was no special clause to indicate what had been included in this part share from the interior of the house or what eventually may have pertained to it from the courtyard, then some doubts

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. Ryl. 44, 5; P. Berlin 7058, 6; 6857, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Spiegelberg, *PDB*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 170.

arise. We think that in the interpretations of this seemingly ordinary statement much depends on the meaning conveyed by the preposition *hn* used here with the suffix *-.f*. The suffix *-.f* may refer only to the house, but it may also include the courtyard at the same time, since, as has been said, both are treated as a single and undivided unit. The use of *hn* (lit. "in" or "within") is not uncommon in the technical vocabulary of legal texts. We often find it in deeds where stipendiary foundations are described.<sup>1</sup> *hn* can convey either the partitive sense "from", or "derived from", a stipendiary foundation, or the meaning "included", "comprised in", the stipendiary foundation. P. Bruxelles E 6033<sup>2</sup> furnishes an interesting parallel in this respect. In view of its position in the Dimê contracts, it seems probable that *hn* has the same meaning as in the former. We are inclined to take it with the partitive sense and to suggest that the apparently ordinary statement *nt nb nt hn.f*<sup>3</sup> defines here the income coming from the property or from a part share of it. If this view is accepted, it will follow that the private properties within the town were a kind of stipendiary foundation and that the documents habitually written in a less explicit manner were agreements for the conveyance of usufructuary rights conferred upon private properties or on parts of them at least.

As has been pointed out on several occasions, the wording of Dimê contracts is brief.<sup>4</sup> The wording of the agreement consists only of a summary description of the property to be conveyed. The description is the same in both deeds, in the contract of sale as well as in the contract of cession of rights. They differ from each other only by the introductory formulae of sale or of cession, respectively. The clauses of stipulation are also written briefly and not always all of them were included in the text of the contract. There is usually a selection made from standard clauses which seems to have depended on the scribe in the Record Office. From the strictly diplomatic point of view Dimê contracts represent a perceptible step backwards if we compare them

<sup>1</sup> Cf. our *Memphite Archives* (unpublished).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; for the first edition of this text cf. Spiegelberg, *P. Bruxelles*, no. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, p. 363.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *ibid.* pp. 169 and 268-9.



with the Memphite deeds dating from the first century B.C.<sup>1</sup> It seems, however, that it was only the Memphite grapheion which preserved the full and most complete form of contracts up to the close of Ptolemaic times. It would be incorrect to think that the manner of endorsing agreements in Dimê was due to the advanced stage of their history and consequently to a lessened interest in the drafting on the part of the scribe. If we examine the demotic contracts from Ptolemaic times which have come down to us from various places in Egypt,<sup>2</sup> it is clear that the description of the property conveyed, particularly if it consisted in the first place of a house and other real properties, was always brief. Upon what was considered important in the additional parts of property or special categories of revenues to be included in the wording, mainly depended the length of the descriptive clauses of the contracts. On rare occasions scribes would describe in detail points such as particular features in the appearance of the real property. The essential difference between Ptolemaic and Roman contracts seems to consist only in the number and wording of the clauses of stipulation. It should also be noted that Fayyumic contracts in general exhibit a lower standard than contemporary deeds from other places. The abbreviated manner of endorsing agreements, usually considered to be a Roman type of contract, including the habit of endorsing both the agreements side by side on the same sheet of papyrus, was much earlier in date. We find this abbreviated type of endorsing among the unpublished papyri from Hawara dating from the time of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II. The Harawa agreements for the sale of real property dating from the first century B.C. exhibit precisely the same form of contract which we know from the Dimê deeds from Roman times; there, too, there was the practice of endorsing both of the agreements on the same sheet of papyrus. As far as the Hawara and Dimê system of endorsing contracts is concerned, the connections are close and obvious. By reference to the earliest preserved Dimê contracts dating from the time of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II,<sup>3</sup> we find no difficulty in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the already quoted P.B.M. 10075 and n. 12, p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Griffith, *Ryl.*, iii. 117, 118-22; 126-8; and Glanville, *Cat. B.M.*, i. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. above, p. 448.

concluding that this manner of drafting agreements must already have been standardized at Dimê during the second century B.C. The form exhibited in Roman deeds is merely a continuation of the system which survived until the first half of the second century A.D., as far as can be judged from datable sources. The differences which we meet are, of course, only of a palaeographic order.

It is hoped to publish in the next issue of the *Bulletin*, as no. III in this series, the demotic texts which form the background to this account, in particular P. Ryl. 44 and 45, together with the unpublished P. Vindob. D. 6933. The following issue will contain, as no. IV, a discussion of the palaeography and diplomatic of the Dimê records.