



ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
MINISTRY OF CULTURE
SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUITIES

PRESS RELEASE

Release Date: December , 2010

From: Office of Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General, SCA

Subject: Cache of demotic ostraca found at Soknopaiou Nesos in the Fayoum

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A Roman cache of demotic ostraca has been discovered at the Greco-Roman site of Soknopaiou Nesos/Dime es-Seba, located two kilometers north of Qarun Lake in the Fayoum.

Minister of Culture, Farouk Hosny, announced today that the cache was uncovered during an excavation carried out by an Italian archaeological expedition from Università del Salento.

Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), said that 150 ostraca were found. Each ostrakon was inscribed with the name of a priest who worked at Soknopaiou Nesos in a temple dedicated to the god, Soknopaios. The texts written on the ostraca date back to the Roman period and have been very helpful in illuminating the religious practices and the prosopography of Greco-Roman Egypt.

Dr. Mario Capasso, Director of the mission, suggests that the newly discovered ostraca were originally kept in a storeroom situated in a courtyard in front of Soknopaios' temple. Dr. Capasso believes that the ostraca were thrown out of the temple during a clandestine excavation at the end of the 19th century.

Soknopaiou Nesos is very important for the understanding of Greco-Roman society in Egypt because of its excellent state of preservation and the amount of papyri and other inscribed material found at the site. Civilization at the site reached its peak during the first and second century AD as it sat along a major trade route. In addition to the Ptolemaic temple of Soknopaios, the site is well known for a collection of sphinxes, as well as Roman and demotic papyri.