

The Family of Soter, Archon of Thebes
The British Museum

The tomb of the Soter family, discovered in 1820, contained fourteen mummies in rectangular wooden coffins. The coffins belonged to members of the family of Soter, Archon of Thebes. Several of the coffins were inscribed in Greek with Soter's name and genealogy, which means that they can be dated precisely to the early second century AD. The decoration of the coffins is interesting in its use of Egyptian motifs, at a time when foreign influences tended to dominate funerary equipment. The motifs show that the family followed the traditional beliefs of Egypt even though Soter was a senior public figure, and probably of partly Roman origin.

It was common practice for the élite of the Roman period to reuse tombs as family vaults. Several generations of the family were buried in the tomb, including Soter's father, Cornelius, and his children and grandchildren.

The coffins passed into the hands of various European travellers, and are now dispersed among museums throughout Europe. The location of the tomb was subsequently forgotten, but has been recently identified as Theban Tomb 32 in the el-Khokha area on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes; this tomb was originally constructed during the reign of Ramesses II (about 1279-1213 BC).