

## ***Lid of the Coffin of Soter*** **The British Museum**

From Qurna, Thebes, Egypt  
Roman Period, early 2nd century AD

### **Archon of Thebes**



In January 1820 a tomb was found in the Theban necropolis belonging to members of the family of Soter; the coffins and mummies are now in various European museums. The site of their discovery was never recorded, but has been plausibly identified as Theban tomb No. 32, originally of the reign of Ramesses II (1279-1213 BC).

The coffins are all rectangular in form, comprising a baseboard and a cover with a vaulted top (representing the canopy of heaven) and four corner-posts.

The inscriptions are in hieroglyphic and Greek. The Greek inscriptions provide genealogical information about the occupants, sometimes including exact ages and dates of birth and death. Several of these events are dated to specific years of the reigns of the Roman emperors Trajan (reigned AD 87-117), Hadrian (reigned AD 117-138) and Antoninus Pius (reigned AD 138-161).

The exterior decoration of the coffin is taken from the traditional Egyptian repertoire. Inside is a large figure of the sky-goddess Nut, as if stretched above the mummy. Twelve female figures at each side personify the hours of day and night, and the morning and evening suns in barques flank the goddess' head. At the sides of Nut's body are painted the signs of the zodiac, Leo to Capricorn on the left, and Aquarius to Cancer on the right.

Source URL: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aes/lid\\_of\\_the\\_coffin\\_of\\_soter.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/lid_of_the_coffin_of_soter.aspx)  
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>

S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, *Ancient faces: mummy portrai-1* (London, The British Museum Press, 1997)

Source URL: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aes/l/lid\\_of\\_the\\_coffin\\_of\\_soter.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/l/lid_of_the_coffin_of_soter.aspx)  
Saylor URL: <http://www.saylor.org/courses/arth201>