

Mummy of Cleopatra from Thebes **The British Museum**

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

A young woman of 17



An inscription on her coffin states that this Cleopatra was the daughter of an important official at Thebes at the time of the Emperor Trajan (reigned AD 98-117). She died some 150 years after her famous namesake, Cleopatra VII.

The slightly messy bandaging of the mummy is secured by several tighter bandages on the exterior. X-rays of the body have shown that under the loose exterior bandaging, the body was so tightly bound that the left hip had been dislocated. Beneath the bandages there was also a layer of a material that was opaque to X-rays, perhaps plaster. Like many female mummies, she had her arms stretched down by her sides.

It is not possible to determine the cause of death from the X-ray evidence. Death during childhood was very common in ancient Egypt, as in all ancient societies. The lack of immunization against childhood diseases and lack of antibiotics and other modern medicines meant that many illnesses were incurable; the cuts and grazes from everyday activities could easily become life threatening.

W.R. Dawson and P.H.K. Gray, *Catalogue of Egyptian antiquities* (London, 1968)

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