

What were sarcophagi (sarcophaguses)

Ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife, and the sarcophagus was to be the eternal dwelling (home) of those within it. The sarcophagi of pharaohs and wealthy residents were elaborately decorated with carvings and paintings.

The earliest sarcophagi were designed for the pharaohs of Egypt and reflected the architecture of their palaces. Egyptians believed that remembering a person's name would ensure that he or she would live on in the afterlife, so a sarcophagus also typically included the name of the person or people buried within.



External decorations might also record the accomplishments of the deceased (dead person). Sarcophagi also typically included a list of food offerings, a door for the soul to pass through, and eyes so that the deceased could continue to view the world. Eventually, sarcophagi were carved to look like the person within, following the curve of the mummy's body.

Decoration

The outside of the coffin was elaborately decorated.

The head was painted to look like the person, the arms crossed and jewellery round their neck. Patterns and hieroglyphics, or even pictures, covered the legs.

The inside would also be painted, underneath where the body lay.

The Eye of Horus was put on the side of the sarcophagus, near the head, so the mummy could look out.



A scarab beetle was often painted on the sarcophagus as it was a good luck symbol of rebirth.



God and goddesses were painted or carved into the sarcophagus.



A false door was painted on the sides so the mummy's spirit could leave and re-enter the sarcophagus.



Strips of hieroglyphics told the story of who was inside, and gave them information that might be helpful in the afterlife. It could also warn off grave robbers!

