

III

THE BED CANOPY AND CURTAIN BOX

THE bed canopy and its method of construction were described in detail by Dr. Reisner in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, 30 (1932), 56 ff. There is little to add to this discussion, which is largely repeated here with the addition of the detailed drawings of the fittings which were mostly made by Bernard Rice, who undertook the final reconstruction of the piece for the Cairo Museum. One or two small points were elucidated when Joseph Gerte prepared the copy which is now exhibited in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. A small working model was first made by Dows Dunham. W. A. Stewart began preparing the woodwork and made a first set of working drawings, later somewhat modified by Mr. Rice. The final work of reconstruction began in September 1930, and was completed in February 1932.

The length of the whole canopy is 3.20 meters, the width 2.50 meters, and the height 2.20 meters (Pl. 5). Hooks were fastened around the top of the frame at intervals on all four sides, evidently for hanging curtains on the inside of the canopy. Apparently, a roofing cloth was also fastened to these hooks. There was also a hook at each end of the roof poles to secure them by ties to a series of staples which ran along the top of the front and back roofing beam. On the outside of each of the three floor beams was also a second series of copper staples. It does not seem possible, as Reisner thought, that these staples on the outside of the floor beams could have been used to fasten the side curtains, but their use is obscure.

No trace of the curtains was found in the inlaid box which was evidently intended to contain them. They may have been torn down by the thieves in the original tomb and then stuffed into one of the boxes of linen which were found stacked against the back wall of G 7000 X, when the objects were transferred. The whole canopy must have formed a curtained space where the queen's bed and perhaps other furniture could be placed, partly for the sake of privacy and partly for protection against insects. With its copper fittings and thong ties, it could be taken down quickly and set up again in a different place.

The wood had entirely decayed and the copper parts were not strong enough to be employed in the reconstruction, but the gold casing was well preserved, except for a few ancient tears. The base of the floor beams was sheathed in copper, as were all the practical bearing points throughout the canopy where a tenon and a socket came together. The edge of this copper sheathing was bent back and fastened to the wood by small copper tacks driven through the edge of the gold casing. Otherwise, the whole surface of the canopy was covered with a casing of fairly heavy gold, worked largely in imitation of mat patterns, except for the smooth surface of the canopy poles and the inner sides of the door frame, which had inscriptions in relief giving the titles and name of the queen's husband, Sneferu.

Above the entrance, the architrave was formed by an L-shaped piece of wood with a slender horizontal pole attached below in the typical fashion of 'drum' and architrave so often found in Old Kingdom architecture. A monumental example of such a form appears cut in the rock in the upper chamber of the Mycerinus Pyramid (first photographed in L. Grinsell, *Egyptian Pyramids*, 1947, pl. VIII). An unusually thick strip of gold was nailed with gold tacks around the edge of the socket in the upper part of the inscribed jamb where it received the copper-sheathed end of the architrave. Details of this joining

can be seen in Pl. 9 a, b and Fig. 23 a, b. The drawing in Fig. 23 c shows the socket in the front end of the left-side roofing beam (as seen from the front of canopy) which fitted down over the tenon which projects up from the top of the door jamb panel.

Figure 24 shows the copper-sheathed parts which form the joining between the right door jamb and the floor beam. In all these cases the same details are duplicated on the opposite side of the canopy. Here (Pl. 9 d) a copper-sheathed tenon projects down from the jamb and fits into a copper-cased socket in the floor beam. Fig. 25 and Pl. 10 b, c show the somewhat more complicated joining of the upright posts at the back corners, the right corner (as seen from the front of the canopy) being chosen for illustration. Here the floor beams (and roof beams) are joined to each other by a system of sockets and tenons. A similar join is made between the two corner posts and the roof and floor beams. However, the corner posts themselves, when fitted together at right angles, are fastened by three copper bolts, spaced at the top, middle, and lower part of the uprights. These have beetle-shaped ends which show on the side to the front of the canopy.

The corner posts are completely covered with gold, even on the faces which are fitted against one another. The flat copper bolt had a long slot in it (as appears in the three drawings in the upper left corner of Fig. 25). In the forward post the end of the slot was held by a copper pin countersunk in the wood, since the small beetle-shaped end would probably not have been strong enough to hold, being largely ornamental. The bolt passed through both uprights and protruded behind the back post. A copper pin was driven through the slot here. The gold-cased wood was protected by a copper washer which slipped on over the end of the bolt and rested under the pin.

Pairs of heavy copper staples were driven in, facing each other, at all the joints between floor beams, roof beams, and uprights so that they could be secured by fastenings probably made of rawhide. Wherever the staples were driven in, the gold was first cut away and then repaired with a small piece of gold sheet. These staples can be particularly well seen in Pl. 10 b, c, and the thong ties appear in the view of the whole canopy on Pl. 5.

The side poles and roofing poles were gold tubes laid over the wood and were made by rolling a single long sheet of gold. The upper part of the ten bulbous-headed tent poles was made of a separate piece of gold sheet and nailed to the lower half by tiny gold tacks which passed through both overlapping sheets of gold and into the wood. The tenon at the top of the poles was sheathed with copper and a copper ferrule fitted around the bottom of each pole. These formed bearing surfaces when the pole was slipped into the copper sockets of the floor and roof beams (Pl. 9 c, f; Fig. 26). The ends of the five roofing poles were cut into dovetailed tenons which were similarly covered with copper and fitted into copper sockets in the roof beams, as is shown in Fig. 26 and Pl. 9 e.

Plate 10 a shows two of the copper sockets to take the top of the tent poles (at each end of the upper row in the photograph). In the lower row (placed upside down in the photograph) are seven of the copper sockets for the base of the poles. In the middle and upper rows of Pl. 10 a are some of the other copper fittings. It will be noticed that these have been soldered together with a bright metal. When these were cleaned by Mr. Lucas, it was discovered that this solder was of silver (A. Lucas, *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Industries*, 2nd ed., 1934, p. 173; 3rd ed., 1948, p. 248).

The wood was evidently first carved with the matting patterns and the hieroglyphic inscriptions in relief and then the long sheets of gold were laid down over the wood and beaten until the surface of the gold assumed the raised shapes underneath. In general, the gold was composed of a single sheet, but in two cases there were two sheets overlapping at the edges. One of the roofing poles had been broken and was mended by a sheathing of copper tacked over the break. The gold of the long floor beam at the

back was made of thinner sheeting which was worn and appears to have been pieced together. The details in the decoration were tooled with a sharp instrument after the general outlines had been beaten out over the carved wood surface. Mr. Gerte believed that although the vertical lines of the matting patterns were carved in the wood, the three thin cross lines of the pattern were cut in a punch which was then used to stamp the design into the gold. The outlines and all the inner drawing lines of the hieroglyphs were certainly added with a sharp tool.

The inscriptions on the two jambs are the same, although the drawing of the individual hieroglyphs varies somewhat. The drawing and execution of the right-hand panel (reproduced in detail on Pl. 8) is more careful than that on the left. The vertical inscription is enclosed in a large cartouche. Above each of the three sections hovers the Horus hawk with the *šn* sign in its claws. The inscription reads: 'The Horus Neb-maat, the Great God, endowed with life, endurance and power, (2) the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the two Crowns (*nbtj*) Neb-maat, the Golden Horus Sneferu, Lord of the *Hpt*, (3) the Golden Horus, Foremost of the Places of the God, forever.'

In the debris beneath the inscribed panels were found five little scraps of plaster with the impression of a part of the Golden Horus name above the cartouche of Sneferu on the right-hand panel. A sixth plaster fragment may contain part of the *nb* sign from below the cartouche. These are drawn on Fig. 27. It will be seen that they can only be an impression of this particular part of the canopy, since the necklace upon which the hawk stands is drawn somewhat differently on the left-hand panel. The representation is in reverse, and the plaster must, therefore, have been pressed against the outer surface of the jamb. It may be that the workmen accidentally spilled plaster on the panel during the movement of the furniture to Giza or even in sealing up the original tomb. This plaster was then shaken off when the wood of the panel decayed, and the gold settled on the floor behind the sarcophagus.

In concluding this description of the bed canopy, I should like to quote from the report which W. A. Stewart made when preparing the drawings of the copper fittings illustrated in Fig. 26.

All the joints of the canopy are sheathed in copper which had been beaten from a sheet and cleverly worked around the shapes of the tenons and mortises, etc., and fixed in position with copper nails after the gold had been applied to the wood.

Some of the joints were very complicated and the skill in beating sheet copper to fit these shows a very high order of craftsmanship. The ferrules and sockets at the bottom of the upright poles have been made with an overlap joint beaten to the thickness of the original sheet metal—rather less than 1 mm.—and brazed with silver solder, traces of which were evident when the pieces had been freed from corrosion. The flanges, as seen on No. 1386 in the detailed drawing, were evenly beaten over and showed no trace of cracking such as would have happened with unskilled work by a craftsman who did not fully understand the behaviour of copper under the hammer and the constant need of annealing.

Where the joints were such a form that they could not be completed and then slipped on to the wood—as in the case of the dovetailed tenons (No. 1450 in the drawing) on the ends of the roof poles—they were completed on the wood itself and the overlap joint fixed down with copper nails as shown.

This dovetail is illustrated in its flat development to show how the form was achieved. Narrow edges were left on the end piece A and were beaten over the tenon at a right angle to close the joint when the sides B, B were turned up into position. The overlap C-C was then hammered over the rounded top and the full size of the circular rim D was developed by beating the bottom E and the sides B, B to spread the copper to the required size.

The overlap was left open until the copper was fitted on the wood, and was then fitted with copper nails after the end A had been fixed.

An equally interesting piece of construction is shown in the socket to receive this dovetail, No. 1309. The side flanges were cut wider at the corners and allowed to wrap over the end of the flanges as shown in the diagram of the flat sheet where the dotted lines indicate the bends in the metal.

The exactness with which these metal pieces were made to fit the joints of the wood and each other—there is only a working space of the thickness of a thin sheet of paper between the joints—shows a craftsmanship which is truly remarkable.

Another inscription giving the titles and name of Sneferu was found on the top and sides of the curtain box, which lay beside the canopy poles on top of the alabaster sarcophagus. The designs and inscriptions of this box were carved into the wood and then filled with colored faience inlays. Very

thin sheets of gold leaf were laid down over the surface to form the background, and the designs were cut out of this gold. The edges of the gold were pressed into the depressions around the edge of the designs before the inlays were inserted.

The boards of this box had subsided gently on top of one another on the upper surface of the sarcophagus. The outer side and the end which faced toward the entrance of the chamber had fallen face down. The lid fell face up on top of these, and finally, the inner side fell face up covering a portion of the lid. The wood had almost completely decayed but the gold and inlays remained in position, almost completely undisturbed. However, the upper feather pattern border of the east face fell down over the side of the coffin (Fig. 19; Pls. 7 b, 13 c), and the far end of the box fell down at the southwest corner of the coffin. In this last case a few of the inlays and parts of the thin gold shreds could not be identified amongst the tangled floor debris. The sides of the box seem to have been beveled and fastened together with wooden pegs. The lid had two battens on the underside, one at each end, 5.5 cm. wide and 1.5 cm. thick, to hold it in place. A small knob in the center of the lid had almost completely decayed and had to be replaced by a new wooden knob in the reconstruction (see Figs. 28, 29; Pls. 7, 11-13).

The box, as reconstructed (Pl. 12), is 157.5 cm. long, 21.5 cm. wide, and 18.5 cm. high. With the lid in place, the height measures 20 cm. The work of reconstruction was commenced by Haggi Ahmed Youssef, technical assistant in the Cairo Museum, on May 15, 1937. It was completed on March 9, 1938. During this time a full-scale copy was prepared for the Boston Museum in addition to the reconstituted original which was delivered to the Cairo Museum. Ahmed Youssef found that it was necessary to cut the designs to a depth of 4 mm. in the wood in order to allow 2 mm. for the thickness of the faïence and 2 mm. for the binding material which he prepared from a mixture of gum arabic, gesso, and water.¹ The gold was very thin and in many cases badly torn, while the inlays were in an extremely fragile condition. The carving of the designs to an exact size to take the inlays required considerable skill to begin with, and the fixing of gold and inlays proved a laborious process. The photographs of the completed box on Pl. 12, when compared with the drawing of the inlays in place in Fig. 19 and the photographs on Pls. 11 and 13, give some idea of the beautiful craftsmanship and skill shown by Ahmed Youssef in this difficult task.

The inscription on each of the two sides is identical and only one side is shown in the drawing in Fig. 28 and on Pl. 12. On both the sides and lid these inscriptions are bordered by a feather pattern formed of inlays which must originally have been blue-green and black, like those on the footboard of the bed, the second armchair, and the gold-covered box with the inlaid lid. The coloring has almost entirely disappeared on all the inlays of the curtain box so that its original nature is difficult to determine, particularly in the case of the hieroglyphs of the inscriptions. On the lid (Fig. 28 b; Pl. 12), the central knob is set into a small element of five feather strips which separate two flanking inscriptions with their hieroglyphs centered on the name of Sneferu. A wider feather element separates two similarly flanking inscriptions on each side of the box. On the right of the lid inscription, the Goddess Nekhbet in the form of a vulture (with her name written out behind her) faces left and stretches out a Was scepter and a *šn* sign to the name of the king which is written in hieroglyphics facing to the right: 'The Horus Neb-maat, Sneferu (in a cartouche), endowed with life forever.' Adjoining the central knob and facing left, the Cobra Goddess Wazet holds out a Was scepter and a *šn* sign to the king's cartouche which faces to the right: 'Sneferu, Foremost of the Ka(s) of the living, eternally.'²

¹ Lucas analyzed the original backing of inlays from the Hetep-heres tomb as being carbonate of lime (whiting) which he thought was probably mixed with size (glue). No trace of resin as a binder was found.

² Although the *ky* and *cnh* are in the singular here, it would appear that this is a shortened form for the *wn f hnt kyw cnhw dt* which appears as an epithet of Sahura in his funerary temple (Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Saḥu-re*, pl. 8).

On the side of the box, the right-hand inscription has again Nekhbet facing left with the epithet 'Mistress of the Temple' (*H.t-ntr*, the Upper Egyptian Shrine at Hierakonpolis). Then comes the cartouche of Sneferu with the signs facing right, followed by the Goddess 'Wazet, Mistress of the Per-nu (Lower Egyptian Shrine at Buto)', and 'The Horus Neb-maat'. To the left of the central feather pattern is repeated this same group of inscriptions. The whole of this decoration appears again on the other side of the box. The arrangement of the inscriptions on the sides has a more formal balance than it does on the lid. The king's cartouche stands between the tutelary goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt. There is not the alternation between his Horus name and an epithet. In fact, his Horus name appears twice, flanking the central feather pattern (Pl. 12).

The north end of the box has a seated figure of the king wearing a simple fillet and holding a staff (Pl. 11; Fig. 29 b). Behind him is his cartouche name Sneferu and facing him in front is his Horus name, Neb-maat, in a paneled frame. Above him the Vulture Goddess, Nekhbet, spreads her wings, while behind the Horus frame the Uraeus Wazet is poised on a papyrus standard.

The south end of the box is decorated with the first known representation of the winged sun's disk surmounting the king's cartouche (Pl. 11; Fig. 29 a). To the right of the cartouche is the king's Horus name with a Was scepter beside it. On the left of the cartouche are the hieroglyphic signs for the phrase: 'Protection behind (him), living eternally' (cf. discussion of designs on inlaid lid of box in Chapter V).