

## III.

NOTICE OF A CASKET OF AMENHOTEP II. (XVIII. DYNASTY *c.* 1430 B.C.)  
IN THE LATE MR A. H. RHIND'S EGYPTIAN COLLECTION, NOW IN  
THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES. BY PROFESSOR  
W. M. FLINDERS PETRIE, LL.D.

In a recent visit to Edinburgh, Dr Anderson was good enough to show me a portion of a casket which he had rescued in fragments from a box of miscellanea belonging to the Rhind Collection, and had carefully reunited. When and where it was found is unrecorded; probably it had been broken up by ancient tomb plunderers and left behind in the rubbish of the tomb, afterwards to be discovered during Rhind's excavations.

The casket (fig. 1) was made of ebony, inlaid with ivory and electrum; it is circular, and of twice the size shown in the illustration. The lower band of ornament is simply alternate stripes of ivory and ebony. Above a plain cincture is a deep band of lotus flowers on tall stems, alternately long and shorter, as in the normal dado pattern. But above the shorter flowers are seed vessels appearing, so as to fill up the spaces more completely; while between the tall and shorter flowers are stems bearing long pointed buds. Above another plain cincture coated with electrum is a line of cartouches. These are plaques carved in ivory, and attached to the curved body. Fortunately two remain in good condition, with the throne name of Amenhotep II., *Aā-kheperu-ra*, thus dating the object precisely. Probably the alternate cartouches, now lost, bore the personal name, Amenhotep. On each side of the cartouches is painted the notched palm stick, the symbol of recording time, and hence of long duration; these palm sticks rise out of a circle on a base, the symbol of eternity. Such ornament is frequent in that age.

But the most interesting point is the high-relief figure of the god Bes, the god of dancing and music, who was connected, therefore, with the graces and enjoyments of private life. How so grotesque a figure came to be connected with such light amusements and the elegancies of

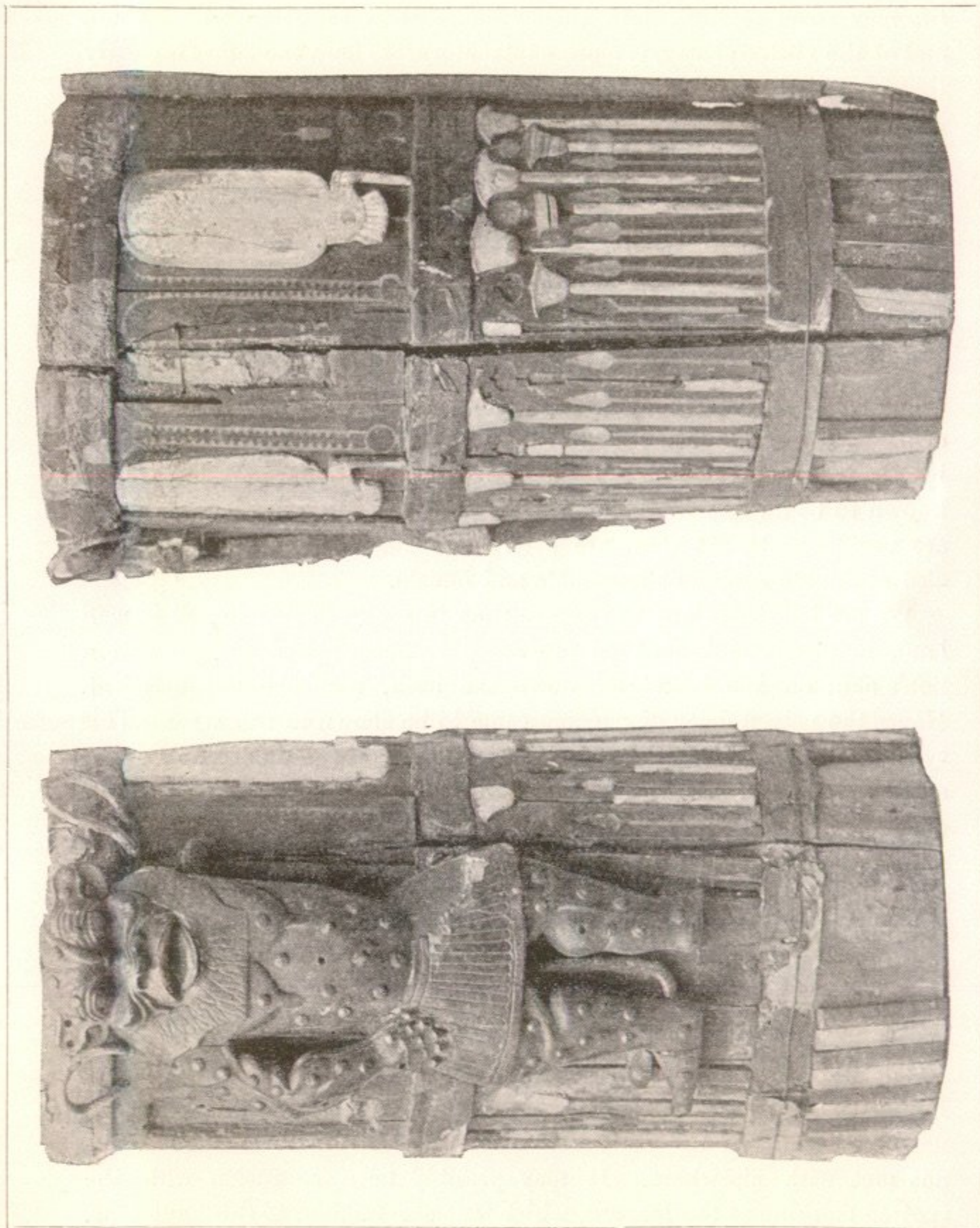


Fig. 1. Two Sides of Circular Casket of Amenhotep II. (Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ .)

life may seem strange. An earlier figure than this, found at Kahun, and of the xiith dynasty, is more explanatory. There the figure is clearly that of a nude dancing-girl, wearing a lion-skin mask and a lion's tail. Here a waist-fringe is worn, which disguises the figure, although the long breasts show it to be female. The great development of the arms and legs is somewhat akin to the celebrated example of fatness shown in the wife and daughter of the chief of Punt (or Somali land), on the sculptures of Deir el Bahri, at the west of Thebes.

Another connection with the Red Sea is shown by a piece of a dancer's mask made of canvas and plaster, which I found in the same chamber at Kahun as the wooden figure. This mask is painted with lines of colour round the eyes and mouth and on the cheeks; and such a style of painting the face still exists in the south of Arabia, as I am informed by Mr Theodore Bent. All this agrees with the fact that Bes was known to be an Arabian god. And though in later times figures of Bes are usually male, yet there are even late examples of a female Bes, and also of double figures of Bes, male and female.

We are led, therefore, to suppose that in southern Arabia and Somali land, in primitive times, the professional dancing-girls used to wear a lion's skin on the head and down the back, with the tail attached. Hence the patron deity of dancing came to be shown in this style. This type, both of dancing costume and of deity, was introduced into Egypt; and—lions being scarce—canvas and stucco masks were painted for dancing-girls to perform in. Two ivory castanets were found with the mask. Later, the goddess became converted into a god, by confusion of the lion's beard with that of a man; the adoption of a waist-cover—as in this instance—rendering the transition more likely. But the female idea was never lost, and reappears till late times (the xxii-xxvith dynasties, &c.) as a female Bes. The cause of the introduction of this type into Egypt was the migration of the Punite people into the Nile Valley, at a time just before the beginning of the historical record of Egypt.

The studding of the body with spots of electrum in this manner is not met with elsewhere. It may possibly be a confusion with the spotted marking of the leopard, which was also familiar to the Egyptians.

The whole piece is a very interesting example of the fine work of that most wealthy and luxurious period, the xviiiith dynasty.

[In accordance with a suggestion from Professor Flinders Petrie, a small sample of the yellow foil taken from the casket was sent to Dr J. H. Gladstone, 17 Pembridge Square, London, who has kindly furnished the following notes as to its analysis :—

*4th July 1895.*

SIR,—Pressure of other engagements prevented my examining the specimen of foil you sent me from the casket of Amenhotep II. until yesterday.

The colour is rather that of good gold than of electrum. I found it to contain about 11 per cent. of silver. This is about half the amount present in what is called 'electrum.'

As most of the native gold found in Europe or Africa contained silver, in varying proportions, sometimes exceeding the 11 per cent., it would seem probable that this foil has just been made from the unrefined ore, and that no silver has been added.

I could not detect the presence of any copper or iron, but of course the quantity experimented on was too small to recognise mere traces. I am having a more careful analysis made, and will send you the results as soon as they are ascertained.—Yours faithfully,

J. H. GLADSTONE.

J. Anderson, Esq.

*11th July 1895.*

DEAR SIR,—I have made a more careful examination of the gold foil from the casket of Amenhotep II., as far as the small quantity at my disposal would admit.

When freed from a little organic matter, it consisted of a yellow alloy, with a thin coating on one side of a dark colour.

The alloy was found to contain 83·5 per cent. of gold to 11·7 of silver, with a very small quantity of copper, and some other metal not recognisable. The dark coating seemed to contain a trace of oxide of copper and a little earthy matter, probably lime and alumina.—Yours faithfully,

J. H. GLADSTONE.

J. Anderson, Esq.

The photograph from which the illustration is taken was contributed by Mr J. R. Findlay.]