

D. Apotropaic Gestures

Object key

BMAG = Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Eton College = Eton College William Joseph Myers Collection

D1. ECM117 (Eton College)

Flat-backed Bes-head amulet

42 x 44 mm

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

Provenance unknown

This flat-backed amulet depicts the frontal face of a Bes-deity. The curved ears are reminiscent of the god's leonine origins, while the flat nose with remains of a piercing may be indications of a Nubian influence over the iconography. The protruding tongue is an apotropaic feature designed to ward away evil from the bearer. The suspension lug I now missing from the top of the head and probably once went through a plumed headdress. The reverse of the amulet is blank.

D2. 1969W2342 (BMAG ~ ex-Wellcome Collection)

Flat-backed circular Bes-head amulet

78 mm diameter

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

Provenance unknown

This example of a circular Bes-head amulet also depicts the deity frontally with leonine and Nubian iconography. Once again the tongue is depicted protruding from beneath the long beard. The typical 'Bes' plumed headdress forms part of the depiction and a now missing suspension loop was one located on the exterior of the amulet above the face. The reverse of the amulet has a crudely moulded *wedjat* eye motif that associates the Bes-deity with the healing and regenerative powers of Horus. This connection reflects the syncretising properties of the Bes-deities and other divinities within the Egyptian pantheon from this period.

D3. 1969W3740 (BMAG ~ ex-Wellcome Collection)

Baked clay mould for a Bes-head amulet

85 mm wide

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

Provenance unknown

This clay mould indicates the manufacturing process of Bes-head amulets during the Late Period. The motif was carved into the clay mould ready to accept the faience paste for imprinting. The two holes on each side of the mould facilitate the insertion of wire or tools to help get the paste off the mould and could also have aided in the creation of a transverse suspension hole through the amulet in this case. Subsequent trimming and carving after moulding may have produced more intricate shapes.

D4. 1969W2538 (BMAG ~ ex-Wellcome Collection)

Openwork Bes-head amulet

18 mm high

Twenty-Sixth Dynasty

Provenance unknown

This Bes-head amulet has been carved more intricately into an openwork example. After initial moulding the spaces between the face and the sides were cut away. The amulet has identical moulded faces on each side while a suspension hole is inserted through the face of the Bes-deity from top to bottom.