

A. Bes: Development of a Deity

Object key

BMAG = Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Eton College = Eton College William Joseph Myers Collection

A1. 1969W1212 (BMAG ~ ex-Wellcome Collection)

Faience amulet of a Bes-deity between two Taweret-deities

22 x 19 mm

Date unknown

Provenance unknown

This small amulet depicts a Bes-deity standing between two Taweret figures. A suspension loop is located above the head of the central figure. Taweret was another household deity whose purpose involved protecting women through pregnancy and childbirth. Here ferocious appearance, a hippopotamus with crocodile tail, was most likely intended to scare away demons. In this example the Bes-image includes an animal tail, as well as a large lion's mane. These features may indicate that this deity's role was also apotropaic in this instance.

A2. ECM822 (Eton College)

Fragment of a faience figurine of the goddess Beset

53 x 44 mm

Late New Kingdom

Provenance unknown

The head of this goddess is flanked by a monkey on each shoulder, which links this object to the developing iconography of both Bes and Beset. Occasionally both can be shown as monkeys, as well as often depicted with monkeys around them. The cruciform style of the hair/wig on ECM822 implies a Nubian influence in the iconographic style, something that is confirmed by the stereotypical facial features. A large suspension loop is situated at the back of the neck, between the two monkeys.