

A Unique Bes Figurine from Al-Faw, Saudi Arabia

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تمثالٌ فريد للمعبود بس من الفاو- المملكة العربية السعودية

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المخلص

تشغل شبه الجزيرة العربية موقعاً جغرافياً فريداً هيأ لسكانها فرصة أن يكونوا همزة وصلٍ لربط المناطق المجاورة بعضها مع بعض. وقد مكّنهم ذلك من إقامة علاقات، منذ العصور القديمة، مع حضارات أمم الجوار؛ فأتروا وتأثروا بشعوبها في الكثير من النواحي الحضارية. وتأتي هذه الورقة البحثية لمناقشة مثل هذا التأثير في الجانب العقائدي في ضوء الشواهد الأثرية المكتشفة. يتناول هذا البحث دراسة وصفية وتحليلية-مقارنة لإحدى التماثيل الصغيرة للمعبود المصري القديم بس والتي عُثِر عليها في موقع قرية الفاو الأثري بالمملكة العربية السعودية، سعياً وراء الإجابة على عدة تساؤلات تدول حول ما إذا كانت مستوردة أو مصنوعة محلياً، والهدف من وجودها لدى سكان الفاو.

الكلمات الدالة: تميمية، قزم، المعتقدات الدينية، العلاقات الحضارية، شبه الجزيرة العربية، الأنباط، مصر

Abstract

Arabia occupies a characteristic geographical location that enabled it to establish relations, since ancient times, with other neighbouring civilizations in the east, west, north and south. This contribution investigate one of Arabia's cultural aspects, which has undeniably been affected by its nearby civilizations. This aspect is particularly demonstrated in religious beliefs, which are confined to the ancient Egyptian deity Bes. Although the origin, worship place, and date of first appearance of Bes are still uncertain, it was argued, however, that he hails from Arabia.

This Paper discusses a unique figurine of the god Bes discovered by Al-Ansary during his excavations at Al-Faw site in central Arabia.

Keywords: Egypt, Arabia, amulet, dwarf, religious beliefs, intercultural relations, Nabataean.

Introduction:

Findings of ongoing archaeological excavations reveal a cultural solid correlation between the civilizations of Ancient Egypt and Arabia. This correlation is neither exclusive to nearby north-western regions nor to those on the border of the Egyptian

Empire, but it extends directly or indirectly to the southern, central, and eastern areas of Arabia⁽¹⁾.

Object mobility reflects not only trade and exchange but also interest in and curiosity about other foreign culture. The adoption of foreign elements, such as decorative motifs as well as ideas, could be used to improve culture and lifestyle. This tendency applies to all regions and societies within the Egyptian sphere of influence, including Arabia⁽²⁾.

Ancient Egyptian beliefs spread into its neighbouring regions either by trade or as a consequence of Egypt's extensive rule and influence outside its borders, with the former having a larger impact. These effects have been observed in the Near East, particularly in the Levant, the Mediterranean region, as well as the areas south of Egypt and some northern African regions⁽³⁾. Archaeological evidence supports the fact that the Egyptian ideological influences were also present in many parts of Arabia [for example: Petra, Tayma, Mada'in Salih, Failaka, Marib and Al-Faw], where statues of the Sphinx and

¹⁾ Al- Said, S. (2003), *The cultural relationship between Arabia and Egypt in the light of ancient Arabic inscriptions* (in Arabic), Riyadh; Sperveslage, G. and Eichmann, R. (2012), "Egyptian cultural impact on north-west Arabia in the second and first millennium BC.", Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies, Vol. 42, Papers from the forty-fifth meeting of the Seminar for Arabian Studies held at the British Museum, London, 28 to 30 July 2011, pp. 371- 377; 'Ammār, H. and 'Abd El- Basset, M. (2017), "Ancient Egyptian Symbols from Tayma and its cultural indications" (in Arabic), *Journal of Tourism and Archaeology- King Saud University*, Vol. 29: (2), pp. 119- 120; Mahfouz, E. and Others (2021), "Egyptian Scarabs Discovered on Kuwait's Failaka Island and Similar Finds from the Gulf Region", *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, Vol. 32, pp. 41–49.

²⁾ Sperveslage, G. (2016), "Intercultural contacts between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula at the turn of the 2nd to the 1st millennium BCE", in J. Garcia, *Dynamics of production in the Ancient Near East 1300–500 BC*, pp. 303–330, Oxford: Oxbow Books, p. 303.

³⁾ Erman, A. (1907), *A handbook of Egyptian religion*, Translated from German by A. S. Griffith, London: Longword Press, p. 193; 'Ammār, H. (2015), "New spotlights on cultural communication between Egypt and Arabia: Osirian triad indicators in Arabia during the first millennium BC" (in Arabic), *Journal of Saudi Society for Archaeological Studies*, Vol. 6, pp. 45–46.

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adorned tombs with ancient Egyptian religious symbols such as the winged sun-disc were found. Seals and scarabs, which bear images of ancient Egyptian deities such as Horus, Thoth, Nekhbet, and Wadjet, were also recovered, alongside with statuettes and amulets representing the Osirian Triad (Osiris, Isis, Horus), Sekhmet, and Bes⁽⁴⁾.

This current research investigates a unique figurine of the Pre-Islamic deity Bes, discovered in Al-Faw, Saudi Arabia (see map no. 1). He was believed to be the god of joy and pleasure, as well as a protector from evil spirits during childbirth. The paper first discusses the site of Al-Faw and gives a brief overview of the different opinions about Bes' origin. Then an in-depth discussion about the statuette of Al-Faw will follow.

Site of Al-Faw:

Al-Faw is one of the most important and well-known archaeological sites in Saudi Arabia. It is located in the south-eastern part of Riyadh (latitude 26°52.5' north, longitude 48°42.9' east). It lies on the edge of the desert of the Rub' al-Khali, or the "Empty Quarter," about 700km south-west of the capital Riyadh, 100km south-west of the city of al-Sulayyil, 150km south-east of al-Khammasin, the regional centre of Wadi al-Dawasir, and 280km north-east of Najran. The region is crossed by the Wadi al-Dawasir, which runs between the cliffs of Jabal Tuwaiq through a narrow gorge or a dry channel called "Al-Faw." For this reason, the site was recently given the name "Al-Faw." In the South Arabian inscriptions (such as Ja 634/4–5; 635/25–26, 28, 36; 641/5) it was called "Qaryat," or "Qaryat Dhat Kahl قرية ذات كهل". Kahl was the principal deity of the town⁽⁵⁾.

⁴⁾ Siraj, J. (1990), "A preliminary report on the southern Khiraiba, Al-Hijr excavation: third season (1410/1990)", *Atlat: Annual of Saudi Arabian Antiquities*, Vol. 13, pp. 27; 'Ammār, (2015), "New spotlights on cultural communication", p. 45- 53; 'Ammār, and 'Abd El- Basset, (2017), "Ancient Egyptian Symbols from Tayma", pp. 119, 120; Mahfouz and Others (2021), "Egyptian Scarabs Discovered on Kuwait's Failaka", pp. 41- 49.

⁵⁾ Burrows, G. (1978), *The ancient settlement of Qaryat al Fau*, Paris: UNESCO, p. 1; Al-ansary, A. (1982), *Qaryat Al-Fau: a portrait of the pre-Islamic civilization in Saudi Arabia*, Riyadh: King Saud University, p. 15; Robin, C. (1988), "Two inscriptions from Qaryat Al-Faw mentioning women", in D.T. Potts, *Araby the blest: studies in Arabian archaeology*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, pp. 168- 169; Al-Ansary, A. (2002), "Al-Gerrha, the port of 'Qaryat' al-Fau", *Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement*, Vol. 14, p. 7; Al-ansari, A. (2010), "Qaryat al-Faw", in A.I. Al-Ghabban *et al.* (ed.) *Roads of Arabia archaeology and history of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Paris: Musée du Louvre, p. 311.

Al-Faw is located on the ancient trans-penisular trade routes, which connect the southern Arabian states not only to the northern and north-eastern Arabian trade centres but also to neighbouring countries. This geographical location was the main factor contributing to the rise and flourishing of civilization at Al-Faw. This is particularly evident in the large variety of small finds and architectural remains recovered during the excavations including: coins; pottery and stone vessels; glass; jewellery; metal objects, including figurines; textiles; ivory, bones and faience objects (among them is the relevant Bes figurine); inscriptions; and frescoes⁽⁶⁾.

The excavation work revealed an advanced civilization that had flourished between approximately the third century BC and the third century AD⁽⁷⁾.

The Bes-image:

Bes occupies a very prominent position in ancient Egyptian religion, as one of the most popular tutelary deities. He started to gain popularity in the New Kingdom, which continued until the late period into the Greco-Roman Period⁽⁸⁾. He even reached a point where he vied with the three main deities Osiris, Isis, and Horus for status and grandeur⁽⁹⁾. His cult broadened to that outside of Egypt; His image has been frequently found in the Near East, mainly disseminated by the Phoenicians⁽¹⁰⁾. It should be noted that the name “Bes” is a generic term used for various dwarf gods with ugly faces, usually wearing a crown made of feathers and a lion’s mane⁽¹¹⁾.

Despite his admirable character, positive role, and praiseworthy qualities, Bes has always been depicted in an ugly and unpleasant manner with a small dwarf-sized body, a massive head, an irregular shape, and bandy-legged, on which he sometimes rests his long arms. He is characterised by a wide face, lion’s mane and ears, flat nose, a plumed crown, shaggy beard, an animal bushy tail, and a tongue that often protrudes in a

⁶⁾ Al-Ansary, (1997), "Qaryat Al-Fau", in Eric M. Meyers (ed.) *The Oxford encyclopedia of archaeology in the Near East*, Vol. 4, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 372.

⁷⁾ Al-Ansary, A. (1997), "Qaryat Al-Fau", p. 372; Al-Ansary, (2002), "Al-Gerrha", p. 7.

⁸⁾ Sayed, A. (2006), *The god Bes and his role in the Egyptian religion* (in Arabic), Cairo, p. 13.

⁹⁾ Erman, (1907), *A handbook of Egyptian religion*, p. 227.

¹⁰⁾ Hall, J. (1995), *Illustrated dictionary of symbols in Eastern and Western art*, New York: HarperCollins, p. 169.

¹¹⁾ Shaw, I. and P. Nicholson (2002), *The British museum dictionary of ancient Egypt*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, p. 54; Sayed, (2006), *The god Bes and his role*, p. 22.

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playfully aggressive fashion⁽¹²⁾. Simply looking at him brings about joy and happiness up to this day. Additionally, he can be likened to the monsters of Greek mythology. For example, he is depicted many times serving greater gods or bringing happiness and joy into their hearts through dance and music⁽¹³⁾. He was believed to be mainly responsible for the protection of children and women during childbirth together with his consort, hippopotamus-shaped, Taweret⁽¹⁴⁾.

He can be a valiant warrior or, conversely a subtle musician⁽¹⁵⁾; but he never ceases to be a guardian⁽¹⁶⁾. In the Greco-Roman Period, he was regarded as the protector of the dead⁽¹⁷⁾.

As previously mentioned, the origin of the name “Bes” is still uncertain⁽¹⁸⁾. The native origin of Bes remains unclear as well, but the main possibilities can be concluded as follows: some Egyptologists suppose that he was Egyptian by origin. Other scholars believe him to be of non-Egyptian origin⁽¹⁹⁾; Asiatic Semitic (Arabian) or African by

¹²⁾ Hart, (2005), *The Routledge dictionary of Egyptian gods and goddesses*, New York: Routledge, p. 49.

¹³⁾ Erman, (1907), *A handbook of Egyptian religion*, p. 75- 76.

¹⁴⁾ Hart, (2005), *The Routledge dictionary*, p. 49; Hinnells, J. (2007), *A handbook of ancient religion*, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 82; Holland, G. (2009), *Gods in the desert religions of the Ancient Near East*, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 23, 84.

¹⁵⁾ The magical symbol of protection “SA سا” is considered to be a chief attribute of Bes. As a god of music, he also carries a harp in some representations. He wields a knife or a short sword in his right, hand held aloft; most likely because his primary role is to ward off harmful beings and evil gods roaming in the desert or the underworld.

¹⁶⁾ Hall, (1995), *Illustrated dictionary of symbols*, pp. 157, 169–170; Shaw and Nicholson, (2002), *The British museum dictionary*, pp. 53–54.

¹⁷⁾ Erman, (1907), *A handbook of Egyptian religion*, p. 232.

¹⁸⁾ Malaise, M. (2001), “BES” in D. Redford (ed.) *The Oxford encyclopedia of ancient Egypt*, Vol. 1, Translated from French by Paule Mertens- Fonck, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 179- 180; Sayed, (2006), *The god Bes and his role*, p. 17.

¹⁹⁾ These suggestions are based on the depiction of Bes wearing his feathery crown and supported this by titles that he carried in the Late and Greco-Roman Periods, which were related to some geographical sites. Among these titles are: “*Bes the Pure Master (= lord) of Punt: bs nfr nb pwnt* بس نفر نب بونت,” which appeared in the writings of Mammisi (house of birth) in the Temple of Dendera and “*the one who came from Ta- Ntr (Land of God= holy land)*,” which appeared in writings of the Temple of Armant of the Ptolemaic period (Romano, J. (1989), *The Bes-image in Pharaonic Egypt*, Ph.D. dissertation, New York, P. 12; Sayed, (2006), *The god Bes and his role*, p. 23)

origin⁽²⁰⁾. As Punt is the land of incense which in his opinion is Arabia, Fakhry pointed out that Bes is Arabian by origin, according to his titles⁽²¹⁾.

Based on these divergent views, along with the lack of archaeological evidence discovered in Arabia, it is not possible to ascertain whether Arabia was Bes' place of origin. This possibility will remain as long as suggestions regarding the location of Punt and the land of God keep changing every so often, and as long as the archaeological evidence and the written texts do not explicitly state their exact geographical location.

The Bes Figurine from Al-Faw:

During the eighth excavation season (1403H.\ 1982) in the site of Al-Faw⁽²²⁾, a Bes figurine made of faience was discovered. It is surrounded by a gold frame inlaid with a ruby in the centre (Fig. 1). Its dimensions are 38mm x 15mm. It is currently exhibited at the museum of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, King Saud University (Inv. Nr. F8.35)⁽²³⁾. The figurine has two holes one on each side so that it can be worn as a necklace or pendant.

Bes is represented in his typical dwarf body and large head with his feathery crown on top, which appears as though it is mounted on a rectangular base. The crown consists of four feathers that are separated by three deep grooves. The artisan fixed interwoven

²⁰⁾ Black, J. and A. Green (2004), *Gods, demons and symbols of ancient Mesopotamia: an illustrated dictionary*, London: British Museum Press, p. 42; Bacquerisse, C. and Lupo, S. (2016), "The god Bes at Tell El-Ghaba, a site in the ancient Egyptian eastern border", *Revista Mundo Antigo – Ano V, V. V, N° 09 – Maio*, p. 139.

²¹⁾ Fakhry, A. (1952), *An archaeological journey to Yemen (March–May, 1947)*, Part I, Cairo, pp. 136- 139.

²²⁾ King Saud University had little to no interest in Qaryat Al-Faw, until 1967, when it sent a team there from the History and Archaeology Association of its History Department. In 1971, the team started to explore the region, aiming to localize the site with accuracy. They started digging in 1972, which lasted three years. Then the Department of Antiquities took over and continued the excavation.

²³⁾ Al-ansari, (2010), "Qaryat al-Faw", p. 350. When I visited the national museum in Riyadh on Thursday, 9 November 2017, I found it displayed there as a master-piece at the "Roads of Arabia: Archaeology and History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" exhibition.

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gold strips in each groove as if each strip was in the form of three plaits (braids). It can, however, be observed that each strip is merely a combination of three columns (bars); more specifically, a straight unbraided one in the centre of two plaited columns. Only two strips are completely preserved, while remains of the third one can still be recognized. Each gold strip is decorated at the top with a circular golden compact piece welded onto it. At the bottom of the two strips lies a golden frame surrounding the base of the feather crown or garland that rests on the head. This golden frame has two slightly prominent braided edges. The inner surface of the frame between the two edges features decorative elements of small golden balls, which were made in spaced groups. Each group consists of four small welded balls that form the shape of flowers with four petals. The use of such balls in decoration is known as the granulation⁽²⁴⁾. This technique of granulated gold beads was widespread in the Hellenistic period in the ancient Near East⁽²⁵⁾, Cyprus, Mycenae, Troy and the Black Sea region⁽²⁶⁾.

With regard to his broad face, Bes has large, wide eyes that resemble a rectangular shape and appear as though they were inlaid with a precious stone. He also has a flat straight nose that starts from the eyebrows and continues downward until it disappears behind a ruby, which also hides the area of the mouth; therefore, it cannot be determined whether his tongue sticks out or not. However, based on the appearance of the mouth area on the back of the amulet, where the tongue is not sticking out, it is likely to be the same

²⁴) Granulation or Coccidia: a goldsmith's decorative technique, where tiny gold beads are attached to the surface of the jewelry (Lazarou, A. (2019), "Golden Gorgon-Medousa Artwork in Ancient Hellenic World", *Scientific Culture*, Vol. 5, No 1, p. 3). By other words it is the soldering of minute gold granule to cover an area (Pinckernelle, K. (2007), *The Iconography of Ancient Greek and Roman Jewellery*, Master Thesis, University of Glasgow, History of Art, p. 62).

²⁵) The earliest known examples of granulation are two pieces from the grave of Queen Pu-Abi of the Early Dynastic period (c.2500) at Ur, ancient Iraq, and a gold cylindrical amulet dating from the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, c.1900 BC (Ogden, J. (1992), *interpreting the past: ancient jewellery*, University of California Press/British Museum, pp. 51, 52).

²⁶) Wolters J. (1981), "The Ancient Craft of Granulation: a re-assessment of established concepts", *Gold Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No 3, pp. 119- 128; Sperveslage, G. (2019), *Ägypten und Arabien Ein Beitrag zu den interkulturellen Beziehungen Altägyptens*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 420, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster, p. 101; Lazarou, (2019), "Golden Gorgon-Medousa Artwork", pp. 1- 14.

on the front of the amulet, confined within his slightly open mouth, between his thick prominent lips. It should also be noted that the ears are absent, while the two cheeks are represented by indentations (grooves), possibly denoting a shaggy beard. The lower part of his body starting under the head, was formed as a circular abdominal area, which has a small hole or cavity that stands for the navel at the centre. Two arms extend along the entire length of the body embellished by a pair of bracelets that are bound upon the upper arms.

The amulet ends with a base encircled by a golden frame, similar to the first one, although it is wider and has a different outer decoration; as it is composed of small golden balls arranged in triangular groups. Each group consists of about seven golden balls. A golden strip, which has the length of the amulet, connects the lower left edge (from the amulet's perspective) of the upper frame to the upper-right edge of the bottom frame. This strip resembles the three strips at the top, of which two are still preserved, and it consists of two long plaited columns with a third straight one between them. In the centre of the strip sits a ruby set in a well-polished golden frame and encompassed by a group of small golden balls.

It is noteworthy that the amulet not only embodies a picture of Bes on the front, but also represents it with the same features on the back, though in a less visible and less prominent manner. This back-side of the amulet is characterised by the fact that one of the two remaining golden strips out of the three (the first from the right on the front facade) extends continuously backwards, attached to the golden frame surrounding the head, down until it joins the base of the amulet with the decoration of the triangular groups. This strip is similar to that one with the red stone (a ruby), divides the amulet from the top right down to the left, but with no such gemstone. The second golden strip is incomplete and does not even reach the upper golden frame (Fig. 2).

Discussion:

Despite the simplicity of its material (faience) and lack of quality, the amulet of Bes manifests the desire to make it more aesthetically pleasing by surrounding it with a golden frame and adorning it with a gemstone (a ruby), thus giving it greater physical and aesthetic value. This amulet is not only one of the unique Bes figurines discovered at the Al-Faw archaeological site, but also in the entire Arabian Peninsula.

Finding artefacts with a religious Egyptian style/influence in Arabia, among them this figurine, raises many questions. There are two main questions: The first is "Were these artefacts imported or made locally?", while the second is "Did the people of Al-Faw worship the Egyptian gods who were represented by these figurines?"

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The answer to these difficult questions preoccupies many scholars who are interested in the history of the Arabian Peninsula. These answers must be definitely linked, logically and chronologically, to the historical events of the whole region.

The answer to the first question can be connected with Al-Ansary's opinion about a scarab (20mm x 15mm) discovered in Al-Faw, which is similar to the Bes figurine in question in terms of the way it is made (Fig. 3). Al-Ansary points out: "*This exotic item was certainly brought to Qaryat al-Faw by a tradesman returning from a journey*"⁽²⁷⁾. If the assumption of Al-Ansary proves correct, it can be suggested that the figurine of Bes is an imported object. The spread of such amulets in the Near East areas, including the Syrian-Palestinian area during the Late Bronze Age, the Iron Age and later, as previously mentioned, may support that opinion.

There are two possibilities concerning the arrival of this amulet and other Egyptian-style objects to the Al-Faw site in central Arabia. The first is that this figurine was brought to Al-Faw indirectly by an intermediary, who either reproduced it from an Egyptian model or brought it from Egypt. This possibility can only hold true if the intermediary had relations with the people of Al-Faw, and if Bes figurines appeared in his artistic works. This mediator could be from the Nabataeans, the people of the Southern Levant, the Eastern Mediterranean basin people, the Greeks, the southern Arabians, or the Persians. The second possibility is that these objects had been transferred directly from Egypt to the Al-Faw site.

The strong trade relations between the Nabataeans and Egypt, as well as their presence in the southern Levant, their arrival in northern Arabia (now northern Saudi Arabia) and their discovered products, such as pottery sherds, in Al-Faw maybe proof that the Nabataeans were indeed the intermediaries. It should be noted that this does not completely negate the possibility that the Nabataeans brought it from the Mediterranean region, because Greek influence is clearly visible in Nabataean art and architecture, and the double-faced Bes figurine has already appeared in Greek archaeological sites⁽²⁸⁾.

Another hypothesis could be less acceptable; Although gold workshops are not yet documented in Qaryat al-Faw, there is of course also the possibility that it is a local production, due to wide distribution of the granulation technique, and the detection of other similar artifacts⁽²⁹⁾ with granulated beads from al-Faw itself⁽³⁰⁾.

²⁷⁾ Al-ansari, (2010), "Qaryat al-Faw", p. 350.

²⁸⁾ Skon-jedele, N. J. (1994), *Aigyptiaka: a catalogue of Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects excavated from Greek archaeological sites, ca. 1100–525 B.C., with historical commentary*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, pp. 2208–2209.

²⁹⁾ In addition to the Bes Figurine, Sperveslage (2019, p. 101, Nr. 48; 49; 82) referred to three other objects that have a similar frame, the scarab (Inv. Nr. F8.34) mentioned above, another

However, there are some reasons that makes al- Ansary's point of view more acceptable as an imported objects, although the origin of those artifacts cannot be determined in certain without analyzing its material. These reasons are: First, the Bes figurine (Inv. Nr. F8.35) and the scarab (Inv. Nr. F8.34) were found together in the same archaeological context (Trench M.14), with similarities in the style of industry and an almost equal size. It is likely that they were in the same necklace, and made in the same workshop.

Second, the pseudo-hieroglyphic writing on the scarab (Inv. Nr. F8.34) indicates that it was a non-Egyptian manufacture⁽³¹⁾. Rather, it was produced elsewhere, probably in the Levant or the Mediterranean basin, for their fame for making imitated Egyptian artifacts⁽³²⁾.

Third, the other objects that have a similar frame, on which Sperveslage relied to support his opinion, are three or four examples only. These samples are clearly ancient Egyptian symbols and there are no models with Arabian characteristics.

Fourth, the double Bes amulet⁽³³⁾ did not appear anywhere else in Arabia, but has already appeared frequently in the regions of Levant, Eastern and Western Mediterranean⁽³⁴⁾ and in several Greek archaeological sites; almost of them is currently

scarab (Inv. Nr. F14.20), and an amulet (Inv. Nr. F13.77). A fourth important piece (Inv. Nr. F14.19), can be added to them.

³⁰⁾ Sperveslage, G. (2019), *Ägypten und Arabien*, p. 101.

³¹⁾ Sperveslage, G. (2019), *Ägypten und Arabien*, p. 102.

³²⁾ Hölbl, G. (2015), "Egyptian Cultural Values in the Ancient Greek World during the Protogeometric and Archaic Periods", in: M. L. Famà et al. (eds.), *Magia d'Egitto. Mostre archeologiche e convegni in Sicilia* (Palermo: Regione Siciliana), p. 84.

³³⁾ This kind of amulet appears more frequently during the Third Intermediate Period (Bacquerisse and Lupo, (2016), "The god Bes at Tell El-Ghaba, p. 144).

³⁴⁾ Herrmann, Ch. (2003), *Die ägyptischen Amulette der Sammlungen BIBEL + ORIENT der Universität Freiburg Schweiz: Anthropomorphe Gestalten und Tiere*, Fribourg, Switzerland / Göttingen, Germany: Academic Press / Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, p. 96; Herrmann, Ch. (2016), *Ägyptische Amulette aus Palästina/Israel Band IV: Von der Spätbronzezeit IIB bis in römische Zeit*, Fribourg / Göttingen: Academic Press / Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, pp. 124, 350, 351; Van Sister, J. (2012), Cultural exchange on Malta and Gozo A study on the Aegyptiaca on Malta and Gozo from the Phoenician and Punic periods, BA3 Thesis, Universiteit Leiden, Faculty of Archaeology, pp. 29, 64.

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exhibited at Paros and Rhodes museums⁽³⁵⁾. Most of these amulets can be safely dated to the period between ninth to fourth centuries BCE⁽³⁶⁾.

Fifth, Rectangular amulet (Inv. Nr. F14.19) with the same golden frame, was discovered nearby (Trench L.16), bears early Latin inscription⁽³⁷⁾.

As for the answer to the second question, it is remarkable that many figurines, amulets, and scarabs found inside and outside Al-Faw temples and tombs resemble those from Syria, Egypt, and the Mediterranean basin. This strongly suggests that there were foreign relations and influences on the different aspects of the civilization of Al-Faw. However, this does not prove that the people of Al-Faw actually worshipped Egyptian deities such as Bes, Horus, and Isis, or that they knew the religious significance of these amulets and scarabs as protective objects in daily life as well as in the afterlife. They may have used it for ornamental purposes such as necklaces and pendants.

Previous interpretations are mere assumptions, and they cannot be confirmed with certainty in the absence of written evidence, and the fact that they are small artefacts that can be easily transferred from one place to another.

It is worth mentioning that this statuette, discovered at Al-Faw site, is not the only Bes figurine from Arabia, as other figurines were also found in the archaeological sites in northern and southern Arabia⁽³⁸⁾. Four examples were found in Yemen; at Marib مارب and Al- Baiḍaa البيضاء sites⁽³⁹⁾, while three amulets were discovered in Mada'in Salih in

³⁵⁾ Skon-jedele, N. J. (1994), *Aigyptiaka*, pp. 1381, 2208–2209, 2373- 2378, 2645.

³⁶⁾ Herrmann, Ch. (2002), *Ägyptische Amulette aus Palästina/Israel II*, Freiburg, Switzerland / Göttingen, Germany: Universitätsverlag / Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, pp. 8, 69, 73; Herrmann, Ch. (2003), *Die ägyptischen Amulette*, p. 96; Herrmann, Ch. (2016), *Ägyptische Amulette*, p. 350; Van Suster, J. (2012), *Cultural exchange on Malta and Gozo*, p. 29.

³⁷⁾ Alsmail, M. (2019), *Metal jewelry from Qaryat al-Faw: Artistic & Cultural Study, Master Thesis (in Arabic)*, Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, King Saud University, p. 111.

³⁸⁾ 'Abd El- Basset, M. (2018), "Bes figurines from some archaeological sites in Arabia" (in Arabic), *The 18 scientific meeting, Gulf journal of history and Archaeology*, pp. 157-190.

³⁹⁾ Rathjens, C. (1955), *Sabaica. Bericht über die archäologischen Ergebnisse seiner zweiten, dritten und vierten Reise nach Südarabien*. II. Teil. Die unlokalisierten Funde. (Mitteilungen aus dem Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, 24), Hamburg: Kommissionsverlag Ludwig Appel., pp. 101–102, 244; phot. 381; Grohmann, A. (1914), *Göttersymbole und Symboltiere auf südarabischen Denkmälern*, Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Classe, 58. Bd., 1. Abh., Wien: In Kommission bei Alfred Hölder, S.

northern Saudi Arabia⁽⁴⁰⁾. In addition, terracotta figurines of Isis, Harpocrates, Bes and Orans were found in the Nabataean capital “Petra” as well⁽⁴¹⁾. However, all of these figurines, excluding Al-Faw's figurine, do not consist of a golden frame and are not double-faced.

Conclusion:

This paper has presented a unique Bes figurine, unlike any found before it, in museum of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, King Saud University (Inv. Nr. F8.35), which was discovered by Al-Ansary during his excavations at Al-Faw site.

Al-Faw is an unusual cosmopolitan site deep in the Arabian Peninsula with extensive commercial relations with South Arabia and the Levant. The site is rich and deserves more visible scholarly attention.

The Bes figurine bear witness to the great development of gold jewelry. It is decorated with the granulation and braided wire technique that require close coaching and persistent practice.

The distinction between Egyptian, Canaanite, Phoenician or Aegean origin for such scarabs and amulets is not, however, completely clear, and can still benefit from additional research by making comparisons.

Figurines of Egyptian god Bes were found in the different archaeological sites in northern, central and southern Arabia.

58, Abb. 149; 179; ‘Aqil, A. and S. Antonini (2007), *Bronzi sudarabici di periodo pre-islami*, tomo3. Roma: Distributions de Boccard, p. 235.

⁴⁰⁾ Siraj, J. (1990), "A preliminary report, p. 27; Delhopital, N. (2016), "Études archéologiques, zone 34 (le camp) et zone 5 (tombeaux nabateens)", in Alhaiti, Kh. *et al.*, *Madain Salih Archaeological Project, Report on the 2015 Season*. [Research Report], p. 80.

⁴¹⁾ El-Khoury, L. (2001), The Nabataean terracotta figurines, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mannheim, p. 104; Sachet, I. (2012), "Dieux et hommes des tombeaux d’Arabie Pétrée: iconographie et aniconisme des élites nabatéennes", in I. Sachet, *Dieux et déesses d’Arabie Images et représentations*, Paris, p. 237

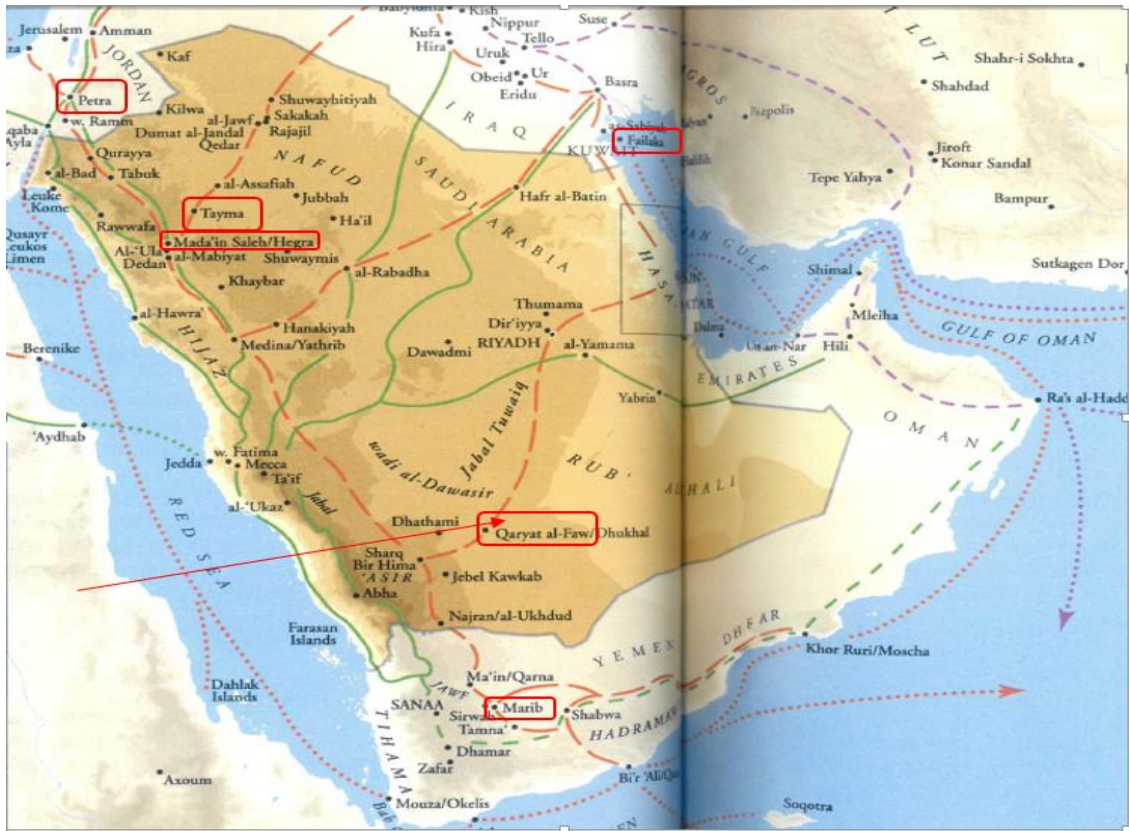
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The double Bes amulet did not appear anywhere in Arabia, till now, except in Al- Faw site in Saudi Arabia.

Archaeological discovered objects confirmed that there were foreign relations and influences on the different aspects of the civilization of Al-Faw.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my sincere thanks to ‘Alaa Shaheen, Hala Youssef, Zeyad Al-Salameen, Nora ‘Abd El-Qader, Ghada Sayed, Ahmed Mekawy, ‘Uzair Saleem, Eid Nagy and Mohamed El- ‘Awady for their support and assistance.



Map 1: Site of Al-Faw in central Arabia

(Al-Ghabban et al. (ed.) (2010), *Roads of Arabia archaeology and history of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Paris: Musée du Louvre, pp. 28- 29)



Figure 1: Front side of Bes figurine from Al-Faw

(Al- Ansari, (2010), "Qaryat al-Faw", p. 350; Drawing: Nora ' Abd El-Qader, Mohamed El- ' Awady)

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Figure 2: Back side of Bes figurine from Al-Faw

(‘Abd El- Basset, M. (2020), *Jewelry and Ornament from North- West Arabia in the First Millennium B.C.*, Ph.D. Dissertation (in Arabic), Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, King Saud University, p. 359; Drawing: Nora ‘Abd El-Qader, Mohamed El- ‘Awaḍy)

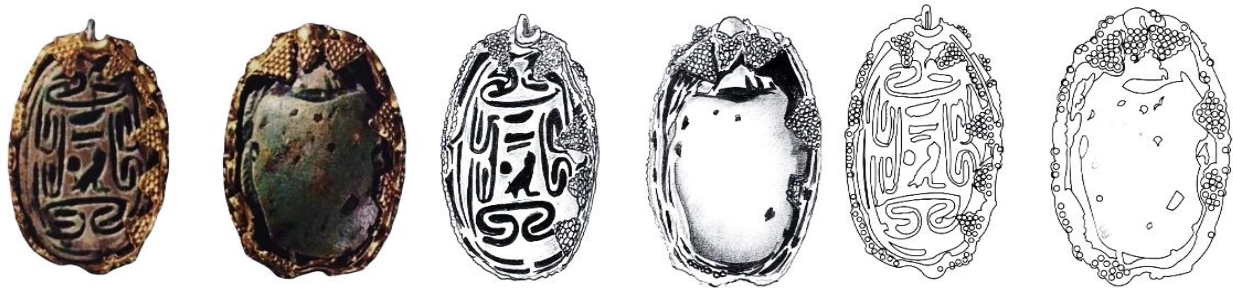


Figure 3: Scarab from Al-Faw

(Al- Ansari, (2010), "Qaryat al-Faw", p. 350; Drawing: Nora ‘Abd El-Qader, Mohamed El- ‘Awaḍy)

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