

***Limestone Headrest of Qeniherkhepeshef***  
**The British Museum**

From Deir el-Medina, Egypt  
19th Dynasty, around 1225 BC

**Carved with protective figures of Bes**



Qeniherkhepeshef lived at the village of Deir el-Medina, and was the official scribe of the tomb. His job was to keep the attendance register of the workers who were employed in the construction of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. His comfortable seat, by the workmen's rest huts on the pass between the village and the valley, can still be seen. It is inscribed with his name to prevent anyone else from using it. Surviving documents show that Qeniherkhepeshef used men of the gang to do private work for him during official hours. He tried to use his office to get the workmen to do the work without payment. He was also accused of bribery on two occasions.

It is perhaps no wonder then, that he seems to have suffered from bad headaches. A papyrus written in his sloppy hand gives a spell against demons. His limestone funerary headrest is decorated with figures of Bes. The god's hideous appearance and the snakes and a spear that he is brandishing were intended to drive away night demons. The 'Dream Book' in Qeniherkhepeshef's private library also offered interpretations of nightmares. These were thought to be caused by demons, or sent as a punishment by particular gods.

G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (London, The British Museum Press, 1994)

R. Parkinson, *Cracking codes: the Rosetta St* (London, The British Museum Press, 1999)

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M.L. Bierbrier, *The tomb-builders of the Phara* (London, The British Museum Press, 1982)

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