

SATIRICAL AND CONTROVERSIAL MEDALLIC PIPE STOPPERS

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Amongst the Museum of London's collection are a group of six double-headed satirical medals which form the handles of tobacco pipe stoppers (fig. 1). Pipe stoppers, as smoking accessories, were used to press down the burning tobacco in the bowl. They were made in a variety of materials and the handles took on a diverse range of forms.

The habit of smoking was well established in England by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and continued to gain popularity in spite of James I's 'counter-blaste' of 1604.

And surely in my opinion, there cannot be a more base, and yet hurtful corruption in the Country, then is the vile use (or other abuse) of taking Tobacco in this kingdome...

And for the vanities committed in this filthy custome, is it not both great vanitie and uncleannesse, that at the table, a place of respect, of cleanlinesse, of modestie, men should be ashamed, to sit tossing of tobacco pipes, and puffing of the smoke of Tobacco one to another, making the filthy smoke and stinke thereof, to exhale athwart the dishes, and infect the aire, when very often men that abhorre it are at their repast!

Although clay pipes are recovered from archaeological excavations in vast quantities, pipe stoppers in museum collections form a very small group indeed. The style and shape of the clay pipe varies regionally and through time, enabling archaeologists to date these products with some precision. As a result, seventeenth century stoppers can be distinguished from later examples by the diameter of the operative part, which rarely exceeds 12mm in order to be able to fit into the very small pipe bowl characteristic of the period. The Museum of London's satirical medal stoppers range in diameter between 8mm and 11mm; the smaller examples fitting into bowls typologically dated to *c.* 1580-1610 and the larger to pipes of *c.* 1610-1640 or later.

In sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, constitutional turmoil and religious dissent produced many cross currents of political and theological opinion. Writers employed a powerful array of imagery, and the violence of the lampoon, with its biting mordant humour was exploited to the full during the Reformation. The medal was a perfect vehicle for such satirical expression and the rival religious parties were not slow to make use of it. Some of the elements in these controversial and satirical medals bearing conjoined reversible heads of Pope-Devil and Cardinal-Fool, as Jobert has argued, were probably derived from papal medallions. Barnard, in his analysis published in

1927, suggests that the head of Pope Leo X was probably taken as 'the stock type'. Pope Leo X (1475-1521) was a central figure in the religious conflict of the Reformation. His failure to silence Luther and his duplicity earned him a certain notoriety.

Barnard suggests that medals were probably issued after the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, by the papacy, with the active encouragement and support of the emperor Charles V, in an attempt to crush Lutheranism. The Protestant princes of Germany, including Luther's protector, the elector Frederick of Saxony, formed in 1531 the League of Schmalkald; and it is probably from about that year that their 'double-faced medallic rejoinders of the Pope-Devil and Cardinal-Fool types appear' [Barnard]. Klotz goes even further in attributing the design to Luther's friend Nicholas von Amsdorf, and suggests a date range of between 1537 and 1547 for these pieces. However, this form of medal continues in use until well into the seventeenth century and Barnard was unable to find an example earlier than 1542.

For an analysis of the possible origins of the double-headed Pope-Devil and Cardinal-Fool type, I would refer the reader to Barnard's scholarly paper. Suffice it to say however, that the association of the Pope and Devil was undoubtedly derived from Luther's own writings and teaching. As Etienne Cartier suggests, the word *PERVERSA* in the obverse legend probably refers to the abuses and moral decadence of the Roman clergy, which the Council of Trent recognised and condemned in its fifth session. Hence the Pope-Devil combination and statement *ECCLESIA PERVERSA TENETFACIO DIABOLI* (The Church perverted has the face of the Devil). The reverse legend *STULTI ALIQUANDO SAPIENTES*, with Cardinal and Fool, is clearly based on the Vulgate Psalm 93 v 8: 'Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?'¹ As Barnard points out, the legend may be read either way, according to the position in which the medal is held. If we begin with *stulti*, the sense is 'fools' (i.e. the dupes of Rome) are now at last wise; if we begin with *sapientes*, the sense is 'the wise' (i.e. the cunning authorities of Rome) are at length shown to be fools.

Within this group of Pope-Devil and Cardinal-Fool medals, Barnard has been able to identify a type classification, based on design variations. Some of these points of difference are scarcely perceptible, whilst others, such as the style of the cardinal's and fool's hoods and to some extent the papal tiara, are readily

distinguished. The six medallic pipe stoppers in the Museum of London's collection, however, do not fit neatly into the five stylistic classifications as devised by Barnard (see the catalogue entries below).

Manifestly the Museum of London's group of pipe stoppers are of seventeenth century date. It seems probable that they were produced in the late seventeenth century to express Protestant hatred, fear and mistrust of Catholicism. As the literature of the period testifies, the attitude towards Roman Catholicism was quite uncompromising. Lord Russell, speaking in the House of Commons in 1679, declared:

I despise such a ridiculous and nonsensical religion. A piece of wafer, broken betwixt a priest's fingers, to be our Saviour! And what becomes of it when eaten and taken down, you know.

Marwell, in the *State Tracts* of 1692-3, went further, denouncing the Catholic priesthood as 'jugglers and conjurers'.

In the popular mind, Catholicism was inextricably linked with danger, the threat of plots and *coup d'état*, and the turbulent events of the century had done little to quash such fears. Indeed, the very stability of the country was in no small measure dependent upon a firm affirmation of Protestantism.

Charles II's friendship with France and attempt to grant the Catholics a modest toleration in 1672 did little to soothe anxiety about the 'growth of Popery' in England. The entirely fabricated allegations of a 'Popish Plot' to assassinate the king, produced by Titus Oates in 1678, fuelled the anti-Catholic paranoia of England's Protestants. This situation was exacerbated by the murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey in October 1678. Sir Edmund, as examining magistrate in the Titus Oates affair, died in mysterious circumstances, and the blame was firmly 'laid against the Catholics' and the papacy as the *agent provocateur*.

A number of double-headed reversible satirical medals were produced to commemorate the murder of Sir Edmund, showing the Pope and Devil with the legend ECCLESIA on the reverse. It is possible that the Museum of London pieces were made during this time and it is interesting to speculate whether the Pope-Devil and Cardinal-Fool type medals were the source of Nicholas Murford's inspiration, in his poem of 1650, entitled *The Picture*:

... Look one way here, and there a Pope you see,
And but rever't the Devill a Pope is he,
A two-horn'd Devill, and there is no hope
That he can e're returned again to Pope.
But taken him at the beft he is so evill,
That I muft ftyle him here a right Pope-Devill,
Or Devill-Pope, which is not my meer humour,
Or taking up on truff of lying rumour;
But as the Devil proud was, fo is he,
And as it was his ruine, 'twill his be.

NOTE

1. The 9th and 10th Psalms were merged in the Vulgate, following the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew original; thus, in the Authorised version, the reference is Psalm 94 v 8.

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 J. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (Heinemann, London, 1972).
 A. Klotz, *Opuscula Nummaria* (Magdeburg, 1752), p.115: 'In primis vero ab anno 1537 usque ad annum 1547, Nicolao, ut dicunt, Ambsdorfo auctore, plures nummi prodierunt, qui habent caput aut Potificis, aut Cardinalis, aut Episcopi: si vero nummum vertis ita ut quae pars antea superior fuerat, nunc inferior sit, habes caput Morionis aut Diaboli.'
 A. Marwell, *State Tracts* i, 70 (London 1692-3).
 N. Murford, *Fragmenta Poetica* (King's Lynn, 1650).

CATALOGUE OF MEDALLIC PIPE-STOPPERS IN THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

16002 *Obv.* Two heads conjoined reversible, Pope and Devil. Legend (begins behind Pope's head) ECCLESIA PERVERSA TENETFACIO DIABOLI. The Pope wears a skull cap underneath the papal tiara. The orb and cross are very stylised. The Devil's hair presents a very wind swept appearance and there is a large slightly twisted horn.

Rev. Two heads conjoined reversible, Cardinal and Fool. Legend SAPIENTES STULTI ALIQUANDO: The Cardinal's hat is similar to Barnard's type five, with a twisted cord strap and is worn over a hood which unites with that of the Fool. There are four bells on the Fool's hat.

The medal has a beaded outer edge and serves as a handle to a tobacco pipe stopper. The shank is of baluster shape with three circumferential ridges at the junction of shank and handle. The stopper has a diameter of 11mm.

Height 71mm; diam. of medal 34mm; length of shank 36mm.

17865 *Obv.* and *Rev.* as 16002 above. The shank is of elaborate baluster form. The stopper has a diameter of 11mm.

Height 72mm; diam. of medal 34mm; length of shank 36mm.

A3046 *Obv.* Two heads conjoined reversible, Pope and Devil; much worn and barely perceptible. Legend probably as 16002 above.

Rev. Two heads conjoined reversible, Cardinal and Fool, as above. Plain baluster shank (cf. 16002). The stopper has a diameter of 8mm.

Height 71mm; diam. of medal 34mm; length of shank 36mm.

Purchased in 1912, Hilton Price Collection.

A3053 *Obv.* Two heads conjoined reversible, Pope and Devil.

Legend as above, slightly worn.

Rev. Two heads conjoined reversible, Cardinal and Fool. Legend as 16002 above.

The shank has broken off.

Diam. of medal 33mm.

Purchased in 1912. Hilton Price Collection.

A10129 *Obv.* Two heads conjoined reversible, Pope and Devil.

Legend as 16002 above.

Rev. Two heads conjoined reversible, Cardinal and Fool. Legend as 16002 above.

The stopper has a diameter of 10mm.
Height 70mm; diam. of medal 34mm; length of shank
Purchased in 1912. Hilton Price Collection.

6773 *Obv.* Two heads conjoined reversible, Pope and Devil. Mute.
The Pope wears a skull cap underneath the papal tiara, which has an orb without a cross.

Rev. Two heads conjoined reversible, Cardinal and Fool. Mute.
The Cardinal's hat, rather different in design and general shape, departs from Barnard's type series. (Cf. Cartier, no. 4). The Fool's hat has four bells and an ass's ear.

The shank, in section, is a flattened polygon with conical shaped terminal. The stopper has a diameter of 8mm.

Height 52mm; diam. of medal 26mm; length of shank 25mm.

METALLURGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A cast copper alloy microstructure was observed on the surface using a Scanning Electron Microscope. Non-destructive qualitative analysis shows that all the pipe stoppers contained zinc, some included varying proportions of tin (6773, A3046 and A3053), and 17865 is silver plated. Casting flashes are visible on 6773.

I am indebted to Mrs D Goodburn-Brown, Museum of London Conservation Department, for undertaking this analysis.



1. Seventeenth century medallion tobacco pipe stoppers, Museum of London.