

“THE MOST POWERFUL, POPULAR AND LONG-LASTING EGYPTIAN AMULETS”

THE UDJAT EYE (1)

Introduction

The photographs to the right show two small faience Udjat eye amulets from a string of amulets from Cyfarthfa Castle Museum (CMM 348.004). These amulets were donated to the museum by the family of early 20th century collector Major Harry Hartley Southey after his death on the 30th of March 1917 at the Battle of Gaza. (2,3,4,5)



What is a Udjat eye amulet and what were its uses?

The Udjat or Wedjat eye is a representation of the eye of Horus. Horus the son of Osiris and Isis was injured in a battle with his uncle Seth and later healed by Thoth. The magic in the healed eye was powerful enough to revive Osiris. Udjat amulets were thought to possess healing and regenerative properties and were produced from the Old Kingdom through to the Roman period. The Udjat eye was used in the funerary sphere as it appears on stelae, coffins and jewellery. It was also utilized in rituals to restore the sense of sight. Udjat amulets were protective and believed to help reach eternal life. (1,10,11,12, 13)

What is Faience?

Faience is a non-clay based ceramic made from a coarse white core (as seen in the amulet above) made from crushed quartz mixed with alkaline compounds and lime. This paste was moulded and left to dry before firing. There were 3 techniques utilised to colour faience: application, cementation and efflorescence. Copper was used to make blue, copper and iron oxide for green and iron oxide mixed with manganese oxide and water was used to paint black lines as seen on the amulets above. Faience was important to the Ancient Egyptians as it was considered magical and related to the sun and rebirth. (6,7,8,9)

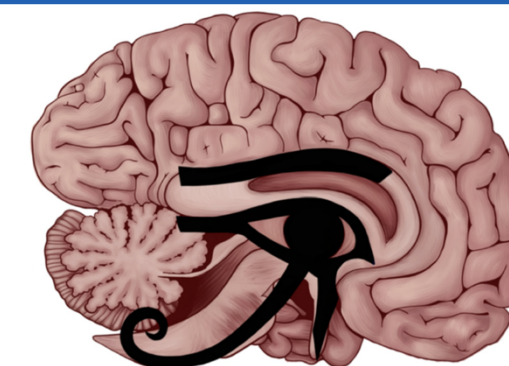
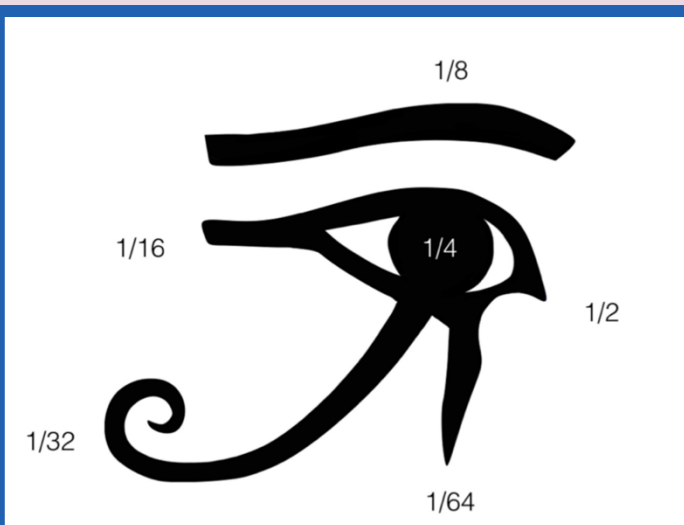


FIGURE 4: The Eye of Horus fitted in the mid-sagittal section of the human brain.

The eye of Horus in maths and medicine.

The eye of Horus was divided into six parts related to the Heqat system used to measure the volume of grains, the fractions can be seen in the image above. The fractions were also connected to the senses: 1/2 smell, 1/4 sight, 1/8 wisdom, 1/16 hearing, 1/32 taste and 1/64 touch. It has been proposed that the eye of Horus can be mapped onto the brain and some elements corresponds to the anatomical senses as seen above. This thought is highly debated and likely a modern interpretation. (13)

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