

The Funerary Powers of the Udjat Eye

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The Eye of Horus, or *udjat* eye, was a potent symbol in ancient Egyptian funerary culture.¹ The eye, believed to be imbued with the falcon god Horus's healing and regenerative powers, was employed to ensure the deceased's rebirth into the afterlife. The ancient Egyptians included *udjat* images and amulets in their burials and funerary equipment to ensure the health, wholeness, and serenity of their eternal bodies.

The symbol of the *udjat* eye derived power from its mythic connections to the god Horus. In one story, Horus's eye was wounded in battle and later healed by the gods. In another, Horus used his fully healed eye to revive Osiris, his murdered father, so that Osiris could take his rightful place as king of the dead.² Thus, in the funerary realm, the *udjat* eye signified not only Horus's power and triumph but also the rebirth of Osiris, and by extension, the rebirth of the deceased.³

When the *udjat* eye was depicted or crafted, it displayed Horus's falcon-like ocular features and was shown in its healed form. *Udjat* eye amulets, like the one here from the Art Museum of the University of Memphis,⁴ were typically made of faience (a type of ceramic) and created in molds.

Due to its power and popularity, the *udjat* eye was commonly employed in Egyptian funerary spaces. It was painted on tomb walls and coffins, placed in amuletic form on bodies, and even emblazoned on mummy wrappings as an extra layer of protection for the body.⁵ Elite Egyptians often called on more than one *udjat* eye in their burials to ensure extra safety, healing, and revivification in the hereafter.

In ancient Egyptian funerary rites, the *udjat* eye played a pivotal role. It was depicted at incision sites during the embalming process to prevent dangerous entities or forces⁶ from entering the body. It was also employed in rituals to help restore the body—particularly the face and eyes—so that the dead could see again and return to a complete, living state. This belief was closely tied to a ceremony known as the “Opening of the Mouth,” which was performed to restore the senses of the deceased.

The *udjat* eye's promise of healing and safe passage made it one of the most widely used funerary emblems in ancient Egypt. The *udjat* eye linked myth and ritual, offering protection, life restoration, and eternal continuity to the dead. It was an important element for the ancient Egyptians to depict and wear for safe passage to the land of the dead.

¹ Carol Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* (London, England: British Museum Press, 1994), 43.

² Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 132.

³ “Cutting the S3mt, Shaving the Mourners, Offering the Udjat Eye,” Hair and Death in Ancient Egypt, September 5, 2013, <https://hairanddeathinancientegypt.com/2013/09/05/cutting-the-s3mt-shaving-the-mourners-offering-the-udjat-eye/>

⁴ “Udjat eye amulet.”, April 6, 2025, <https://amum.catalogaccess.com/objects/1273>

⁵ “Mummy Bandage Inscribed with a Wedjat Eye.”, Accessed March 30, 2025, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548266>.

⁶ Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*, 43.

Further Reading!

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