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## The Presentation of The Udjat Eye as an Offering at Edfu Temple

Zainab Shobak Ibrahim<sup>a</sup>

Ahmed Mohamed Abo El Mgd<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Master's Degree Student, Tour Guiding Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Minia University

<sup>b</sup> Professor, Tour Guiding Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Minia University

### Keywords

The Udjat Eye  
Horus Eye  
The temple of Edfu

### Abstract

The Udjat Eye is considered one of ancient Egypt's most common offering symbols, and it survived into the Graeco-Roman period. In most scenes the reward of this offering is similar: the king receives everything upon which the sun and moon shine and his enemies are defeated and destroyed so that the offering reaffirms his kingship which of all the symbolic meanings of the eye offering is perhaps the most important factor, which gives a purpose and aim to the rite. The king is also enabled to see "those things which are hidden in the dark so his power is supreme.

**This paper** deals with the **ḥnk Wdjt** ceremony in Edfu temple. It will focus on the scenes of the **ḥnk Wdjt** rituals performed for various gods and the purpose of these rituals. The article also sheds the light on the religious significance of this ritual. A descriptive and analytical methodology will be followed to describe the **ḥnk Wdjt** ritual based on reexamining the scenes of the Edfu temple. Moreover, the article will provide an analysis of the scenes and inscriptions of the **ḥnk Wdjt** ritual.

## 1-Introduction

The myth of the Eye of Horus begins with the story of Osiris, which is the most well-known ancient Egyptian myth. It depicts the never-ending struggle between good and evil. This legendary battle consequently served as a metaphor for the conflict between order and chaos. The ancient Egyptians venerated Horus in the form of the Eye of Horus, which was a symbol of wealth and security.<sup>1</sup> As the organ that receives light, color, and images, the eye became one of the most significant ancient Egyptian symbols. It is frequently seen as a Udjat -an eye-shaped amulet. Even the Egyptians understood that the eyes sparkled, shone, flashed, and blazed, and these characteristics became symbols of authority and fire. According to legend, the sun and moon were Horus' eyes, who "fills the universe with light when he opens his eyes, and darkness when he closes them".<sup>2</sup>

The Ptolemies were powerful supporters of the native Egyptian religious foundations, the economic and political power of which was carefully controlled. A great deal of the late building and restoration work in many of the most important Egyptian temples is Ptolemaic, particularly from the period of about 150–50 BCE, and the monarchs appear on temple reliefs in the traditional forms of the Egyptian kings. The native traditions persisted in village temples and local cults, many having particular associations with species of sacred animals or birds. At the same time, the Greeks created their own identifications of Egyptian deities, identifying Amon with Zeus, Horus with Apollo, Ptah with Hephaestus, and so on. They also gave some deities, such as Isis, a more universal significance that ultimately spread her mystery cult throughout the Mediterranean world. The impact of the Greeks is most obvious in two phenomena. One is the formalized royal cult of Alexander and the Ptolemies, which evidently served both a political and a religious purpose. The other is the creation of the cult of Serapis, which at first was confined to Alexandria but soon became universal. The god was represented as a Hellenized deity and the form of cult is Greek, but its essence is the old Egyptian notion that the sacred Apis bull merged its divinity in some way with the god Osiris when it died.<sup>3</sup>

## 2-Literature review:

There are many references that dealt with the subject of the study as:

Wilson, P., A lexicographical study of the Ptolemaic texts of Edfu. Article submitted in accordance with requirements of the university of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of philosophy. March 1991. This article surveyed the "wd3t" as a room in temple during the Ptolemaic period only it was not focus on **hnk Wd3t** ceremony.

E. Chaissant, *Le Temple d'Edfou*, vol. XIV. Le Caire, IFAO. 1934. This book is focused only on all scenes of Edfu temple's wall including all forms of offering which dedicated to various Egyptian gods and goddess, without any explanation for the importance of these offering especially the **hnk Wd3t** rituals.

H. W. Fairman., "The Myth of Horus", *The Journal of Egyptian Archeology*. Vol.21.

<sup>1</sup> K., Refaey, C.G. Quinones, W. Clifton, S. Tripathi, A. Quinone-Hinojosa, "The Eye of Horus: The connections between Art, Medicine, And Mythology in Ancient Egypt", in *Cureus*, May 2019, 1-13, also available on:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333325577>

<sup>2</sup> L., Manfered., *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*.48,49.

<sup>3</sup> K., Refaey, C.G. Quinones, W. Clifton, S. Tripathi, A. Quinone-Hinojosa, "The Eye of Horus: The connections between Art, Medicine, And Mythology in Ancient Egypt".

No.1 sep.1935.

This paper focused only on the Myth of Horus and Seth its reasons and results in general and it was not mention the importance and power of the Wd3t eye for the kings.

Edwards. S., "The Symbolism of the eye of Horus in the Pyramid texts", research project for the degree of Ph.D. University College of Swansea. August 1995.

This research mentions the eye of Horus as a symbol in pyramid texts and its benefits for the deceased person in the afterlife only, not focusing on the rewards of the wd3t eye ceremony for the king's life and its political importance.

### 3-Objectives of the Study:

- To define the physical eye of Horus.
- To define the Udjat Eye
- To analyze some depicted scenes and texts for the **h<sub>nk</sub> W<sub>d3t</sub>** ceremony at Edfu temple.

### 4-Methodology:

- A descriptive and analytical methodology will be applied to achieve the objectives of this article. It will be achieved by describing some depicted scenes for the **h<sub>nk</sub> w<sub>d3t</sub>** ceremony at Edfu temple.

### Eye of Horus (Irt-h<sub>r</sub>):

The Irt-h<sub>r</sub> is the physical eye of Horus that represents the entire eye of the god Horus which he god Seth was unable to destroy during his conflict with Horus; it represents both health and power<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, it symbolizes the Heqat fractions, it was a measuring unit used by the ancient Egyptians for grains and flour.<sup>5</sup>

The Eye of Horus was one of ancient Egypt's most well-known and enduring symbols. it is a protective amulet, an offering symbol, a feature on coffins and stelae, a grain measure, a celestial body, or a royal symbol. The rich symbolism of the Eye of Horus strongly linked to the other divine eyes, like the Eye of Re and the Eye of Atum <sup>6</sup> is reported from a wide range of contexts.<sup>7</sup>

In mythology, the sun and moon were believed to be the eyes of the god Horus. The term 'eye of Horus' is commonly used to refer to the moon, but the distinction between it and the term 'eye of Re,' which refers to the sun, is similarly ambiguous. According to legend, the moon's eye was lost and then recovered during the battle against Seth. In Egypt, the presentation of Horus' eye was regarded as the prototypical offering ceremony. Following the New Kingdom, the lotus God Nefertum was frequently

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<sup>4</sup> W., Penelope., *A Ptolemaic Lexikon A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies., Belguim., 1997.286

<sup>5</sup> K., Refaey, C.G. Quinones, W. Clifton, S. Tripathi, A. Quinone-Hinojosa, "The Eye of Horus: *The connections between Art, Medicine, And Mythology in Ancient Egypt*", in *Cureus*, May 2019, 1-13, also available on:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333325577>

<sup>6</sup> In Egyptian mythology, much is made of the solar and lunar eyes, which are either conceived as the two eyes of the cosmic deity or assigned to separate gods. The sun is often the right eye of Ra, On the Neapolitan stele it is found the sun as the eye of Shu, the personification of light or space, and as the eye of Turn, the sun god of the west. In the Osiris cult, which finally gained the paramount place in the religion of the Egyptians, the cosmic eyes were assigned to Osiris, or to his son Horus; the concept reached its highest development in connection with the latter. Osiris sometimes represents the old sun in the west and Horus the young sun in the east; again both are recognized as general solar or cosmic personifications. Thus often being assimilated to Ra; and still again, Horus becomes the moon god. (L., Parmly., Brown., *The Cosmic Eye.*, 687:689).

<sup>7</sup> S., Edwards., *The Symbolism of the Eye of Horus in the Pyramid Texts.*, Research Project of THE Degree of Ph.D. University College of Swansea. 1995.,1.

depicted holding the eye of Horus in one hand, a symbolic reference to the offering that typically consisted of food and drink, from which Nefertum received the title "lord of sustenance."<sup>8</sup>

### The Udjat Eye

The term Udjat<sup>9</sup> refers to the eye of the symbolic eye of god Horus and was first mentioned in the pyramid texts: spells from Pepi II dealing with the restoration of the body, the presentation of water, and the Opening of the Mouth ritual.

*Irt hr mw nmst.... The Eye of Horus, water - a nmst jar.* The nmst jar was used for purification.<sup>10</sup>

The Udjat eye also refers to the eye of the god Re that was taken away from him (Tefnut) and was supposed to be returned to him by the god Thoth in order to restore cosmic order.<sup>11</sup> , "Richard Wilkinson" believes that the Udjat eye reflects the process of erasure and the position of the moon where it represents Horus' eye, which was injured and then healed, and that the term " Udjat " expresses the whole or restored one.<sup>12</sup>

The Udjat eye is also associated with other multifunctional deities such as Atom and Sekhmet; it was the most significant symbol in ancient Egypt and appears as a distinct entity. Hathor, Ra's daughter, is represented by the two eyes, which stand for the sun and moon. The sun is the eye of the day, Isis, the wife of Osiris, is the moon, and Hathor, united with the left eye, shimmers and illuminates the land from the darkness.<sup>13</sup>

The Eye of Horus is associated with all types of sacrifices, implying that it is involved in the maintenance of life. Horus presented it to his father Osiris, who consumed it as a sacrifice, thus reviving him. This suggests that the eye is responsible for life and rebirth. The name "Eye of Horus" for offerings indicates that they are regarded as contributors to the maintenance of life. This designation also distinguishes the offerings as divine substance and permits discussion regarding the transubstantiation of the offerings' substance. The Eye of Horus is the greatest and most perfect of all gifts.<sup>14</sup>

### The Udjat Eye in Edfu Temple

The Horus temple at Edfu was constructed during the Ptolemaic era (304-30 B.C.). The temple honored Horus of the Winged Disk, known to the Egyptians as Behdet and revered as Hathor of Dendera's consort.<sup>15</sup>

#### Scene No.1: Ptolemy XII Offering the Udjat Eye to Bastet and Mahes

**Location:** Enclosure Wall, External Face, 3rd Register West Wall.

#### Bibliography :

Le Marquis de Rochemonteix, *Le temple d'Edfu I*, MMAF 10, Le Caire 1897 [H]  
É. Chassinat, *Le temple d'Edfu II-XIV*, MMAF 11 and 20-31, Le Caire 1918-1928 [H]  
D. Kurth, *Edfu VII*, Wiesbaden 2004 [Ü].

#### Description:

The king is represented standing before the Goddess Bastet<sup>16</sup> and Mahes<sup>17</sup>, with right

<sup>8</sup> M., Lurker., *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt*.67.

<sup>9</sup> Wb, I, 401 (12-18)

<sup>10</sup> S., Edwards., *The Symbolism of the Eye of Horus in the Pyramid Texts.*, Research Project of THE Degree of Ph.D. University College of Swansea. 1995., 13.








<sup>11</sup> W., Penelope., *A Ptolemaic Lexikon A Lexicographical Study of the Ptolemaic Texts in the Temple of Edfu*, Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies., Belgium., 1997.286

<sup>12</sup> ريشارد ه. و لكنسون : دليل الفن المصري القديم ترجمة حسن حسين شكري, القاهرة 2011, 42

<sup>13</sup> سيلفي كوفيل, قرابين الالهة في مصر القديمة, ترجمة سهير لطف الله, 2010, 154

<sup>14</sup> E., Gertie, *Offerings*, *Oxford Encyclopedia*, Vol.2, 564

<sup>15</sup> M., R., Bunson., *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt.*, Revised Edition., Library of Congress Cataloging in publication data, New York., 1991., 114., (D., Arnold., *Temples in Ancient Egypt.*, Cornell University Press., New York.,1997.,205.)

leg advanced and wearing the  double crown of upper and lower Egypt, while he is raising his right hand open in the face of the Goddess as a sign of greeting, and holding the  wꜣt eye in his left hand to present it for Bastet. The goddess Bastet here is depicted while she is wearing the sun disk with copra crown and holding in his left hand the  papyrus plant and in his right hand  ꜥnh sign, and for the godd Mahes he is depicted while he is wearing the  double crown of upper and lower Egypt and holding in his left hand  wꜣs scepter and  ꜥnh sign in his right hand.

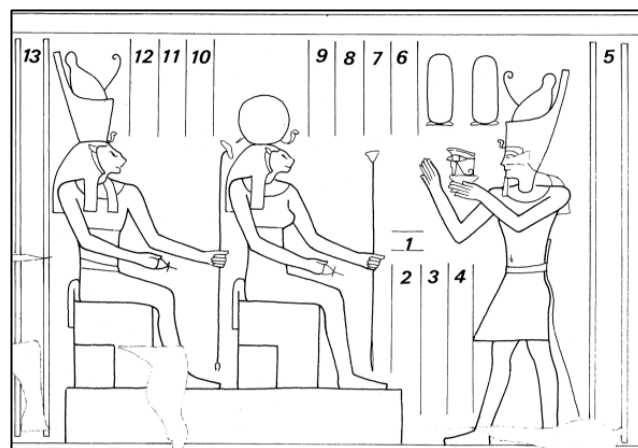
**Text**

*ḥnk wꜣt ḏd-mdw nꜥrt nꜥrj.tj wrt nbt-bꜣst jm .s mn.tj m st wnn . f rdw .s twt ꜥpr.tj dbḥw =s snb.tj nn ḏw ḥr =s wnmṯ jm =t jꜣbt m ꜥwj =j .. =t sw wnf ḥr =t*

Offering the wꜣt Eye. Words to speak: "The Divine Eye is Divine, O Great One, Lady of Bubastis; its pupil remains permanently where it belongs. His (the Eye's) discharge is (again) perfect and provided with its needs, it is healthy without there being any harm to it. The right eye is you; the left eye is in my hands; when you [behold] it, then you are glad.

**Commentary:**

The text proves that the deities Bastet and Mahes have the right eye and the king presented to them the left eye, then they will have the two complete and perfect eyes so they will be blessed and merry. It is apparent from the scene that the Udjat eye did not connect with only one god, instead, it was presented for all Egyptian Gods., Hence it has all aspects of protection and prosperity which are reflected on the receiver.



(Fig. 1) Ptolemy XII Offering the Udjat Eye to Bastet and Mahes, É. Chassinat, Le temple d'Edfu II-XIV, MMAF 11 and 20-31, Le Caire 1918-1928 [H]

<sup>16</sup> Bastet was a feline goddess who mothered the king and destroyed his enemies. Her name probably means She of the Ointment Jar. Her main cult center was at Bubastis in the eastern Delta. As “the Eye of Ra who protects her father Ra,” she was a manifestation of the solar eye. Bastet was regarded as both the daughter and the consort of Atum-Ra. (G., Pinch., *Egyptian Mythology, A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt.*, Oxford University Press.,115)

<sup>17</sup> Mahes (Mihos, Myuscis) was a fierce lion god and he was the cub of Bastet and Atum-Ra at Bubastis. (G., Pinch., *Egyptian Mythology, A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt.*, Oxford University Press., 134,163)








**Scene No.2: Ptolemy XII presenting the Udjat Eye to Min**

**Location:** Enclosure Wall, External Face, 3rd Register East Wall .

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 D. Kurth, Edfu VII, Wiesbaden 2004 [Ü]

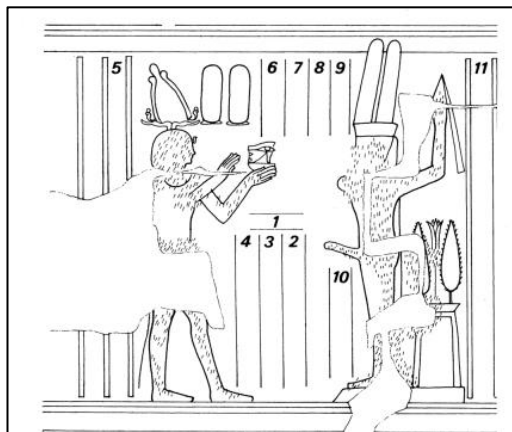
**Description:** The King stands before God Min<sup>18</sup> while offering the  wdjt eye. He is wearing the  white crown, standing with his left leg advanced, raising his righthand facing God as a sign of greeting, and holding in his left hand the  wdjt. Moving to the God Min, he is depicted standing to receive the offering, wearing  šwty crown, he is also represented with a phallus erect as a sign of fertility, and holding a  flail in his raised right hand.

**Text:**

sj<sup>c</sup> r wdjt dd-mdw wdjt .k n .k gsgs.tj m r3w .s sns n j3bt hn<sup>c</sup> wnmt 3h 3h.tj m jr w .s n h d f d  
 .s ddj.tj m st =f nrt nrtj.tj r 3hw skj.n =s snkt s3m.n =s hrw m hddwt =s

*"Offering the wdjt-Eye. Words to speak: "Your wdjt-Eye for you, which has been correctly fitted with its parts so that the left eye will unite with the right eye. The bright eye is bright, [ as] it <[should be]>, and its pupil lives by being firmly in place. The Divine (eye) is [against calamity], it has removed the darkness and the faces guided by his light."*

**Commentary:** The text indicates that the complete wdjt eye protects from disaster and helps to light the dark path. The scene proves that the roman people were interested in the ancient Egyptian religion in general, and specifically in all kinds of Egyptian Gods and the offerings which connected with them.



(Fig. 1) Ptolemy XII Offering the Udjat Eye to Min, É. Chassinat, Le temple d'Edfu II-XIV, MMAF 11 and 20-31, Le Caire 1918-1928 [H]

<sup>18</sup> On the god Min was an ancient god of agricultural and human fertility. Min, the most masculine of gods, was depicted as a cloaked figure with a large penis held upright. His head is adorned with two tall plumes, and his right arm is raised in a smiting gesture. Above his right hand is what appears to be a herder's whip or flail. These characteristics suggest that Min may be an apotropaic deity whose aggressive body language repels evil. To protect and bless the fields, statues of Min were erected, and the first fruits of the harvest were offered to him. (G., Pinch., Egyptian Mythology, A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt., Oxford University Press., 165,164), محمد أحمد السيد، حسون، المعبود مين و دوره في العقائد المصرية حتى نهاية الدولة الحديثة، رسالة دكتوراه غير منشورة، كلية الآثار، جامعة القاهرة، رقمه ١٩٩٩م، شكل

## Conclusion

Horus was revered by the ancient Egyptians in the form of the Eye of Horus, which represented prosperity and protection. The Eye of Horus was initially employed in the pyramid. Udjat could also be the Eye of Re, indicating that it had ties to the sun. The eyes were believed to be light organs, with the right eye of Re representing the sun and the left eye representing the moon, both of which provide light at night. As its name implies, Udjat is also the harmed eye of Horus, the one that Seth damaged during the conflict. On the other hand the irt ḥr is considered to be the physical eye of the god Horus which the god Seth was unable to harm it during his battle with the god Horus. Udjat is also the eye of Re, which departed from him (Tefnut) and had to be returned by Thoth in order to restore cosmic order.

The Udjat was a symbol of protection and healing in ancient Egyptian mythology. The symbol was widely adopted and used in Greco-Roman temples such as Edfu as a case study, where it was associated with the various deities. The depictions of the Udjat eye in Greco-Roman temples were often part of larger scenes that included other symbols and motifs. These scenes were rich in symbolism and often conveyed complex theological ideas. For example, the Udjat eye was often associated with the concept of divine protection and was believed to provide protection to the deceased in the afterlife. The study of these depictions can provide insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the Greco-Roman period, as well as the cultural exchange between Egypt and the Greco-Roman world. It can also shed light on the role of the goddess Isis in Greco-Roman religion and how her worship was adapted to fit into the local cultural context. All of these interconnected concepts are mentioned in the ḥnk wdjt Edfu ritual. It appears throughout these two studied examples.

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