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“MALACHITE, THE HEALING GEM OF GREEN NATURE”

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Objectives

Aim to review the use of malachite, related to its chemical composition, also pointing out the impact of its use in myth, magic and art.

Methodological research

I chose the times and cultures that provide more information on this subject.

Summary

Malachite, a copper carbonate hydroxide, has been mined mainly from the Sinai, Mexico, Urals, Congo, Mexico and United States. It was used as an adornment in the Portuguese territory from the end of the Neolithic onwards. Its deep green colour is a powerful symbol of healing Nature. Malachite was one of the most praised minerals in ancient Egypt. Deep green resembling leaves and forests stood as a symbol for the everlasting gardens of heaven where Osiris reigned as “The big Green”, overcoming death and evil. Malachite also provided protection to Horus, his child, against the wicked Seth. The gem is featured with fertility goddesses. In Egypt, it was associated with joy and music, and enhances positive energies. It is consecrated to Hathor, goddess of vegetation. She had the epithet of “Lady of Malachite” because she protected the miners. Malachite is a symbol of beauty, sensuality, seduction, and curiosity. In Greece, malachite was consecrated to Aphrodite, in Rome to Venus, in Northern Europe to Freyja . The name is derived from the Greek word ‘maláche’ ‘malve’, ‘molochitis’ in Latin. Malachite was used as a cosmetic and as a medicine in ancient Egypt. Its chemical copper composition mineral gives it antimicrobial properties and protection against eye conditions, the most common of which was trachoma, a highly contagious disease caused by *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

Malachite is associated, and was often confused in Antiquity, with other green copper minerals, especially azurite, chrysocolla, and emerald.

Greek-roman authors used it in the treatment of eye ailments, skin diseases, in the cleansing of wounds, scar healing, and in plasters to relieve bone pain. It was also taken orally to provoke vomit. As an amulet it was especially used to protect children from diseases, possibly as a long lasting memory of its protection in the myth of Horus. The Arabic authors used it as an antidote (acting as an emetic), and

prescribed it externally against scorpion and bee stings. Some Arabic authors were aware of its toxicity (copper's toxicity) and advised against it.

Malachite was amongst the gems that could bring cure and happiness to Anfortas in Wolfram von Eschenbach's 'Parzival'. In Medieval Germany, it was belied to relieve labor pain.

In Mesoamerica, malachite was highly appreciated. Aztec gods and warriors were carved on malachite. Malachite was also one of the gems that covered sacrificial knives. In medicine, it was used as a source of copper.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the interest in this gem as a medicine has declined, because of the existence of other gems with similar composition.

In art, malachite was very appreciated by Russian czars, and reached its greatest splendor in the nineteenth century with the construction of 'The Malachite Room', the state drawing-room of Empress Alexandra Fiodorovna, the wife of Nicholas I.

Conclusions

Associated with myths and gods, malachite is one of the oldest and most celebrated gems whose therapeutic use we can better understand thanks to our current knowledge of its chemical composition.