

THE FOUR-FEATHERED CROWN OF AKHENATEN

BY

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The remains of a series of colossal statues ⁽¹⁾ of Akhenaten, began to be found in 1925, some distance to the east of the great Temple of Amun at Karnak, on the site of a temple which he erected to the Aten in the early years of his co-regency with Amenhotpe III before the schism and before changing the name. They originally stood against the pillars round a peristyle court. Instead of being in the jubilee-costume or in the mummy wrappings as Osiris, they show the king as a vital terrestrial ruler in the costume of the living ⁽²⁾ with bracelets and pectorals bearing the early names of his god the Aten instead of his own names. They show him in the same time wearing crowns which differ from those worn by companion Osiride statues. They are now kept in Cairo Museum and the Karnak magazine.

Of these forty fragmentary sandstone colossi, four at least must have worn the *nemes* surmounted with four ostrich feathers. Only the lower part of the feathers is visible on the one exhibited in Cairo ⁽³⁾, whereas the feathers (H. 0,80 m.) are completely preserved on another head of the same series kept in the museum magazine (pl. I). The *nemes* of this crown is

(1) Cf. CHEVRIER, *An. Serv.*, t. XXVI (1926), pp. 119-130; t. XXVII (1927), pp. 134-153; t. XXXI (1931), pp. 81-97; ALDRED, *New Kingdom Art*, 102-104; DRIOTON-VIGNEAU, *Musée du Caire* (éd. Tel), pl. 95; CAPART, *Statuaire*, pl. 339; VANDIER, *La Statuaire Égyptienne*, pl. CVIII, 4-6.

(2) Except one (*J.E.* 55938) naked and sexless. Cf. note (3) p. 249.

(3) *J.E.* 49529.

either entirely smooth or having the hair tressed in place of the lapels and a cylindrical tress on both sides of its hinder part⁽¹⁾.

The feathered crown thus introduced by Akhenaten, calls to mind the King's Horus name : *Hr k3 nht k3 šwty* 'Horus victorious-bull, high-of-feathers'⁽²⁾, which includes a characteristic epithet of Onuris :  *K3 šwty* 'high-of-feathers'.

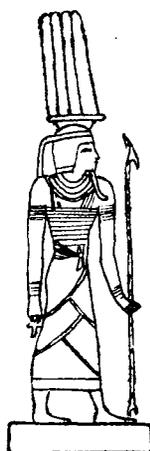


FIG. 1—Onuris

I wish to suggest that the feathers in Akhenaten's crown are those of Onuris-Shu ( *In-hrt Šw*) (Fig. 1) who was called "the god of the four feathers"⁽³⁾ and who was closely associated with the sun-worship⁽⁴⁾. The feathers of this god are, as a rule, straight feathers, with a central quill, arranged the four

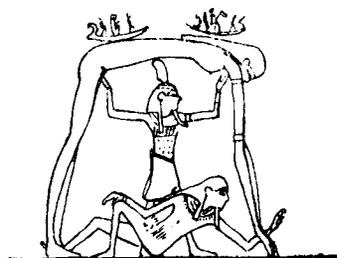


FIG. 2—Shu upholding the Heavens with his arms.

abreast or cylindrically. Yet there are cases when the straight feathers are replaced by ostrich ones⁽⁵⁾ () like the ones in the crown under consideration.

If my suggestion is correct, the four-feathered crown would afford an archaeological evidence of the connection between Onuris-Shu (= Rē' = Aten) and Akhenaten whose accession was,

(1) CHEVRIER, *An. Serv.* t. XXVI (1926), pp. 125 and 127.

(2) GAUTHIER, *Le Livre des Rois d'Égypte*, XVIII, p. 345 (VI), p. 346 (VII), p. 349 (XVII C.).

(3) JUNKER, *Die Onurislegende*, p. 54.

(4) For establishing the equation Aten = Shu (Fig. 2) = Harakhte = Rē' which seemed to be the chief purpose of the earlier form of the name of the Aten : " Rē' lives, Harakhte,

who rejoices on the Horizon in his name 'Shu who is Aten'.", see: Gunn, *J.E.A.* IX, pp. 168-176. Also see: VANDIER, *La Religion égyptienne*, p. 66.

(5) Cf. DARESSY, *Statues de Divinités* : Ptah-patèque (*Cat. Nos.* 38807-38809, p. 202, pl. XLII); Thueris (*Cat. Nos.* 39162 and 39164); Horus (*Cat. Nos.* 38166-33170, p. 50, pl. X, and No. 38200, p. 58, pl. X).

as Gunn says ⁽¹⁾: “the occasion of a return to kingship for the Sun-god, under the name of Aten”; which is also referred to by the words “who has returned as Aten” in the later form of the name of the god Aten. This is also proved by the inscription of the names of the Aten on the Karnak colossi instead of the name of the King himself. Thus, accepting that Akhenaten represented himself by these statues as assimilated to his god, the Aten ⁽²⁾, we can say that the extraordinary expressionist art of that period intended to represent by the Karnak colossi—in which the desire to approach feminine characters is very clear, especially in the one naked and sexless ⁽³⁾ (Pl. II)—a material expression of the motherhood attributed to the god Aten in being “the Father and Mother of all that he has made ⁽⁴⁾”

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(1) Cf. Gunn, *op. cit.*, p. 176 (10).

(2) Cf. ALDRED, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

(3) Cairo Entry No. 55938.

(4) Cf. GUNN, *op. cit.*, p. 175 (8); DAVIES
El-Amarna, IV, pl. 32, right.



Cairo Entry No. 55938.—The naked and sexless colossal
statue of Akhenaten.