AKHENATEN OR NEFERTITI?

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Since it was first discovered in 1929–30, the allegedly ‘sexless’ colossus from Karnak (Cairo JE 55938)¹ has been the unfortunate subject of constant and colourful speculation. Identified as Akhenaten because of its close association with other similar fragments,² it has been generally taken as nude and devoid of male genital organs,³ and only occasionally has a cautionary note been sounded.⁴ On the basis of this supposed repression of sexual characteristics, extravagant theories have been developed as to Akhenaten’s physical status⁵ and psychological make-up⁶—theories which, on the whole, contribute less to scholarship than they reveal of their authors’ peculiar bent. My purpose here is to suggest an extremely simple alternative: that the figure appears

¹ Porter & Moss, *Top. Bibl.*, II², p. 253.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 253–4.

³ Thus already by Chevrier, *ASAE*, XXX (1930), p. 169: ‘... et, particularité vraiment surprenante, Amenophis IV est représenté nu et asexué’.

⁴ e.g., by Smith, *Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*, pp. 179–80: ‘One Cairo figure gives the impression of being naked, but perhaps we are to understand this as a drastic simplification of the thin robe worn by Amenhotep III in two remarkable statues ... from his mortuary temple ...’; cf. also Samson, *Amarna: City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, pp. 23–4, with comments in *OLZ*, LXXI (1976), col. 135.

⁵ For the full orchestration, cf. Aldred, *Akhenaten*, pp. 133f. That such discussions are falsely based has been demonstrated by Westendorf, *Pantheon*, XXI (1963), pp. 269–77 (especially pp. 270–1)—though the fecundity figures are not bisexual, and the idea of creator-gods as androgynous is of doubtful validity, whether in Egypt or elsewhere; cf. also Noblecourt, *Monuments Piot*, LIX (1974), pp. 35–7.

⁶ e.g., Strachey, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XX (1939), pp. 33–42.

to have feminine contours for no more exotic reason than that the subject is female; in other words that it was made as an image of Nefertiti and not of Akhenaten.⁷

The first point to be noted is that the statue has no specific identification, the only cartouches upon it containing the names of the Aten, such as occur on the other colossi. In fact, all but a few of the figures are now anonymous, the royal titulary being confined to the belt, where this is preserved, with the nomen still in the earlier form Amenhotpe.⁸ That the 'sexless' colossus belongs to the series, in the broad sense of its having the same conventions and stylised features, cannot be doubted,⁹ but whereas the typical headdress of the majority is composed of a wig-cover, such as the *nemes* or *afnet*, on top of which perches a crown or other insignia,¹⁰ the 'sexless' example is one of four where the crown fits directly onto the head: a second is now in the Louvre,¹¹ and there are two others at Karnak.¹² The more complete of these latter preserves the greater part of the double crown,¹³ for which

⁷ This possibility has already been hinted at by the editor of the UNI-DIA slide catalogue, who describes the piece (no. 32506) as 'Osirispfeller der Nofretete oder des Echnaton'.

⁸ Cairo JE 49529: *Top. Bibl.*, II², p. 253; cf. Pillet, in *Mél. Mariette*, p. 90, n. 2: '... on y relève le protocole amonien sur une ceinture ...'. Two other torsos preserving the belt are illustrated by Noblecourt, *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), p. 14, fig. 12 and p. 36, fig. 26, and a third is shown *in situ* by Chevrier, *ASAE*, XXVII (1927), pl. 4 (centre).

⁹ It will not necessarily follow that all the colossi were executed *en suite*, and at the same date.

¹⁰ cf. Chevrier, *ASAE*, XXVI (1926), pp. 126-7, figs. 1-4.

¹¹ No. E 27.112: Noblecourt, *Revue du Louvre*, IV-V (1972), pp. 1-12; *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), pp. 1-44.

¹² Noblecourt, *Rev. Louvre*, IV-V (1972), p. 12, refers to 'deux autres têtes, coiffées uniquement du *pschent* ...', one of which is illustrated in *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), p. 44, fig. 33, while the other will be the head visible in Chevrier, *ASAE*, XXVII (1927), pl. 4 (far right). From Chevrier's account of the finds (*op. cit.*, pp. 145-6), the latter would appear to be that described by him as wearing the red crown, and, if so, the features have been restored in the accompanying sketch (p. 146, fig. 6). The mention of four (additional) examples (Noblecourt, *Rev. Louvre*, IV-V (1972), p. 11, n. 37; *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), p. 15, n. 3) is clearly in error, since it appears from Chevrier's note on these (*ASAE*, XXVI (1926), p. 125, with fig. on p. 123) that the '*pschent*' was on top of the headdress.

¹³ Noblecourt, *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), p. 44, fig. 33.

there is also adequate evidence in the case of the Louvre piece,¹⁴ and what remains of the fourth is consistent with this.¹⁵

Their crowns apart, these four are distinguished in other respects. All have been broken in pieces (only one body survives), and the features of all are defaced, which is not so with the other colossi.¹⁶ This state of affairs is closely paralleled among Karnak *talatdt*, deliberate destruction having, it seems, been concentrated on blocks from a structure of Nefertiti, as though a particular stigma attached to her, which was not shared by Akhenaten.¹⁷ One may therefore suspect that these very figures were wilfully smashed for a similar reason, i.e., because they were thought to represent Nefertiti in a presumptuous manner.¹⁸ That the heads were meant to be female is further suggested by the apparently 'feminine' line of the neck, a detail to which I have drawn attention elsewhere.¹⁹ This is quite evident on the published photographs of the Louvre piece,²⁰ and seems to apply to the 'sexless' colossus as well.²¹ Moreover, there is clear confirmation that an Amarna queen, presumably Nefertiti—but conceivably Tiy,²² was represented at

¹⁴ The upper part of a double crown in the reserves at Karnak belongs to the Louvre head, the surfaces corresponding along the diagonal line of the break. I am indebted to Mme Noblecourt for this information, and for the loan of unpublished photographs.

¹⁵ The shape of the small projection or 'flap' in front of the ear is against either the crown of Amūn in its tall 'Amarna' form or the characteristic flat-topped crown of Nefertiti.

¹⁶ cf. Noblecourt, *Rev. Louvre*, IV-V (1972), p. 12: '... ce dernier type, précisément, paraît avoir été plus injurié que les autres ...'; *Mon. Piot*, LIX (1974), p. 15: '... les têtes ornées de ce seul *pschent* ont été les plus détériorées ...'; also *ibid.*, p. 43. The head with the red crown (*sic*) is probably not an exception; cf. above, n. 12.

¹⁷ cf. Smith, *Nat. Geog. Mag.*, vol. 138, no. 5 (Nov. 1970), p. 648; Redford, *JARCE*, X (1973), pp. 91-2.

¹⁸ cf. Wilson, *JNES*, XXXII (1973), p. 238. Wilson suggests that Nefertiti had 'exceeded the acceptable limits' by arrogating divinity to herself, but shrewdly compares the behaviour of Hatshepsut, who had 'committed the heresy of parading as a god-king'.

¹⁹ Harris, *Acta Or.*, XXXV (1973), p. 7, with nn. 13-15.

²⁰ Noblecourt, *Rev. Louvre*, IV-V (1972), especially fig. 2.

²¹ cf. Westendorf, *Pantheon*, XXI (1963), p. 270, fig. 2; Michałowski, *L'Art de l'ancienne Égypte*, fig. 449; UNI-DIA slide no. 32506.

²² cf., in particular, the head of a statuette from Sinai, Cairo JE 38257; *Top.*

Karnak with similar facial (and perhaps bodily) characteristics. Part of the head of another colossal statue wearing a ringlet wig was discovered previously in the cachette,²³ and identified as Akhenaten; but the wig is more likely to be a woman's,²⁴ and—which is crucial—the double uraeus is properly that of a queen.²⁵ This piece may well belong to a different series, such as the

Bibl., VII, pp. 361–2; (conveniently) Lange & Hirmer, *Egypt*, 4th ed., pl. 157, bottom—and below, n. 25.

²³ Cairo CG 42089: Legrain, *Statues et statuettes*, I, pl. 54, with p. 51.

²⁴ cf., e.g., the head of queen Tiy from Sinai (above, n. 22), and the slab from the royal tomb at el-Amarna, Cairo CG 54517: Martin, *Royal Tomb at El-Amarna*, I, pl. 54 (395), with bibliography pp. 92–3. Alternatively, it might be the short, round-bottomed wig; cf. Harris, *Acta Or.*, XXXV (1973), p. 9, n. 30.

²⁵ The duplication of the uraeus, its parallel repetition, and its occurrence in combination with other insignia will repay further investigation. What is in question here is the double uraeus as such—i.e., a pair attached to the brow, as opposed to uraei appended to elements of a (separate) crown. In an article soon to appear elsewhere, I have commented on more than sixty published examples, and a brief summary of the conclusions may therefore suffice.

i) The double uraeus is worn by a number of queens, principally during the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, namely: (?) Ahmose-Nofretiri, Èse (mother of Thutmose III), possibly Meritrē (mother of Amenhotpe II), Tiy, Nefertiti, (?) Meritaten, Ankhesenamūn, Mutnedjmet, Nofretiri, (?) Bintanat, several unidentified (Ramessid) queens, Amenirdis, and Arsinoë II. Three of these, Tiy, Nefertiti, and Nofretiri, account for over two-thirds of the instances cited, and only with them is the use of the double uraeus in any sense 'regular'.

ii) Nefertiti is shown with the double uraeus attached to the long curled wig with lappets, the short 'Nubian' wig, and the 'bag' wig (*afnet*)—whereas Tiy wears it only with the long wig. All extant examples date from the earlier part of Akhenaten's reign, before the change in the titulary of the Aten: thereafter the characteristic headdress of Nefertiti is the tall, flat-topped cap or crown, adorned with a single (kingly) uraeus upon the brow.

iii) There is no positive evidence that Akhenaten at any time wore the double uraeus. Instances have been alleged, but of those known to me none is identified by name or can be distinguished iconographically.

iv) Apart from the Kushite pharaohs (cf. Russmann, *The Representation of the King in the XXVth Dynasty*, pp. 35f.), no other king has the double uraeus—which in this context must be distinguished clearly from the uraeus and vulture. The latter device is common on funerary items of Tutankhamūn, and also occurs on the heads of canopic receptacles of Amenhotpe II and Horemheb (where it has been misinterpreted), and on shawabti figures of Ramesses II and Ramesses VI. In the case of the Memphite colossus of Ramesses II now in the station square, the similar traces are what remains of a rebus, while the supposed examples of double uraei in Ramessid tombs and elsewhere are irrelevant, in that the serpents are not on the brow.

various offering figures of marble-like limestone recovered in fragments from the main temple at el-Amarna.²⁶ These were apparently comparable to the Karnak colossi in manner of representation,²⁷ and one head of above life size has a double uraeus attached to a smooth wig surface (? the *afnet*).²⁸

The importance accorded to Nefertiti at Karnak,²⁹ and her eventual kingly status,³⁰ will serve in general to justify her appearance in parallel with Akhenaten.³¹ The details of her regalia—the twin sceptres of kingship, the double crown, and the royal beard—cannot, however, be proved together³² from other known representations of her, though they are matched in the case of Hatshepsut, as is the 'Osirid' form.³³ The *hk3t* and *nhhw* may be inferred from a damaged portrayal at el-Amarna,³⁴ and a selection of

²⁶ Petrie, *Tell el Amarna*, p. 18; *Catalogue of the Amherst Collection* (= *Sotheby Sale Cat.*, 13–17 June 1921), p. 75, lots 834–842; Ransom Williams, *MMA Studies*, III (1931), pp. 81–99; Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, II, pp. 285–6; Cooney, *Amarna Reliefs from Hermopolis*, pp. 102–6; Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, pp. 91–3, nos. 3–5 and p. 106, no. 20.

²⁷ Apart from the head in Hamburg (cf. the following note), one may compare the treatment of nose and mouth on the M.M.A. fragment 26.7.1395 (Aldred, *op. cit.*, no. 3), and the effeminate contours of the two torsos Brooklyn 58.2 and M.M.A. 21.9.3 (Aldred, *op. cit.*, nos. 4,5). The belt composed of cartouches is also paralleled on the Karnak colossi, as noted by Ransom Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

²⁸ Hamburg 1966.96: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, *Bildführer* 3 (1972), p. 12, no. 2. I am grateful to Dr W. Hornbostel both for the reference and for an excellent photograph of the piece. It has been suggested that the head may be that of the Brooklyn torso 58.2 (cf. the previous note), but in view of the double uraeus it is more likely to come from a parallel figure of Nefertiti. For her wearing the *afnet* with double uraeus, cf. a parapet block from el-Amarna, now at U.C.L., UC 401: Petrie, *Tell el A.*, pl. 12,3 with pl. 1,14; Samson, *Amarna*, p. 44, fig. 20—and for a pair of identical statues in similar garb (presumably Akhenaten and Nefertiti), cf. a relief from el-Amarna, now Boston 63.961: Aldred, *op. cit.*, p. 155, no. 81.

²⁹ cf. above, n. 17; Smith, quoted in *CdE*, XLVII (1972), p. 67; Redford, *Archaeology*, XXVIII (1975), p. 20.

³⁰ cf. Harris, *GM*, IV (1973), pp. 15–17; *Acta Or.*, XXXV (1973), pp. 5–13; XXXVI (1974), pp. 11–21. I feel that this point at least may fairly be emphasised, irrespective of whether one then is prepared to accept the identification with Nefernefruat.

³¹ cf., in particular, Harris, *Acta Or.*, XXXV (1973), pp. 11–12, with nn. 40–42.

³² But equally there is no extant parallel in the case of Akhenaten.

³³ e.g., Hayes, *Scepter of Egypt*, II, figs. 49–55 (pp. 90f.); Smith, *Art and Architecture*, p. 179, pl. 94, a, b.

³⁴ Davies, *Rock Tombs of El Amarna*, III, pl. 13; cf. Harris, *Acta Or.*, XXXV (1973), p. 11, n. 41.

other headdresses are undoubtedly shared with Akhenaten³⁵—but not the double crown. This, on the other hand, is not often depicted as worn by Akhenaten himself,³⁶ and his use of the beard is equally rare, except on these same colossi, on his canopic heads, and on shawabti figures.³⁷

The significance of the colossi is difficult to determine. There seems to be programmatic intention in the full series of headdresses worn by Akhenaten,³⁸ and in four instances he is assimilated to Shu.³⁹ Whether the figures that wear the double crown are to be seen as a further extension of the didactic programme, and in what sense, is in the present state of our knowledge imponderable. If the entire group is intended to represent Rē-Harakhty (Aten) in different hypostases, as indeed the cartouches may indicate, then one might postulate the symbolic expression both of the phases of the sun's ageing and of the complementary principles of fecundity. That the *diva matrix* should thus be reflected in the queen's person is the less difficult to accept in the present context, in that the counterpart of the king as Shu would be the queen as Tefenet,⁴⁰ who, through the imagery of the solar eye, might be further equated with Hathor.⁴¹ And if the figure is actually Nefertiti, one is not faced with the incongruity of an emasculated Akhenaten posing as cosmic creator.⁴²

³⁵ cf. Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–11, with nos. 30–33, 38–40.

³⁶ One of the very few instances is on the stela of Pase (Berlin 17813); cf. Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 5f. The meaning in this particular case is a little obscure, but the crown may indicate a development in Akhenaten's status.

³⁷ cf. Martin, *Royal Tomb*, I, pls. 23, 25f. Its occurrence is thus somewhat parallel to that of the *nemes*. For an isolated example in a different context, cf. Berlin 15081; Schäfer, *ZÄS*, LV (1918), pl. 1, 1–4.

³⁸ Apart from the *nemes* and *afnet*, there is the peculiar (?) variant of the former with ringlets on the lappets (cf. Schäfer, *ZÄS*, LXX (1934), p. 18, fig. 17; Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 11, no. 37), and one that has been in some way modified from an original *nemes* (Chevriér, *ASAE*, XXVII (1927), p. 145, fig. 5). The insignia include the feathers of Shu(Onuris), and the double crown without an attached uraeus.

³⁹ cf. Abd-ur-Rahman, *ASAE*, LVI (1959), pp. 247–9. The double crown without uraeus may, correspondingly, be a reference to Atum.

⁴⁰ cf. Fecht, *ZÄS*, LXXXV (1960), pp. 117–8; Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, pp. 154–5; Munro, *Städte Jahrbuch*, IV (1973), p. 18 and n. 28; Harris & Mamiche, *Louisiana Revy*, 17. årg., no. 1 (Oct. 1976), p. 10; Harris, *Meddelelser fra Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek*, 33. årg. (1976), p. 81 and n. 12.

⁴¹ cf. Bonnet, *Reallexikon*, pp. 280–1, 772–3; Junker, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, pp. 19–23.

⁴² cf. Westendorf, *Pantheon*, XXI (1963), p. 273.