

STATUARY 2003

Kristin Thompson

Most of the statuary in the magazine at Amarna has been recovered from two dumps left by previous expeditions: the South House Dump, located directly behind the current dig house, and the North House Dump, situated some distance from the ruins of the EES's dig house opposite the North Riverside Palace. Considerable progress was made this year in acquiring, sorting, and finding matches within the substantial number of pieces that have emerged from both of these sources.

The South House Dump

In 2000, Kristin Thompson began work on the registration of several hundred fragments from both dumps that had been in the magazine since partial clearances in the early 1990s. She found that 188 pieces of shattered dark-grey granodiorite all came from an unfinished, two-thirds life-size statue of Akhenaten and Nefertiti seated side by side. During that season she made over 60 joins, initiating a reconstruction of the statue that has continued over the subsequent two seasons, with a total of close to a hundred matches made by the end of the current season. Although perhaps half of the statue's material is missing, the several large sections that have resulted from the reconstruction constitute the most extensively preserved statue with a firm provenance at Amarna.



Figure 1. Site of the 'South House Dump'. The four red numbers mark the positions of most of the buried material. Numbers 1 and 2 mark the location of most of the stonework; numbers 3 and 4 most of the pottery. North is to the top of the image.

In July of 2002, Thompson visited the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin in order to study the extensive collection of pieces excavated by Borchardt at Amarna and hoping to find evidence of the provenance of the South House Dump material in Borchardt's dig diary. An entry for December 13, 1912, made reference to "black granite pieces" of an unfinished, two-thirds life-size, seated pair statue of the royal couple, found shattered into many pieces and lying in rooms 6, 10, and 12 of house P47.3, a small building at the rear of the sculptor Thutmose's workshop complex. Near the pieces Borchardt's team found a head of Nefertiti of the same material, also in an unfinished state. This well-known head was taken to Berlin in 1913 and is now exhibited under the inventory number 21358.

Dr. Dietrich Wildung kindly provided a cast of 21358 to the Expedition. Early in the 2003 season, the break at the lower back of this head proved a perfect match for the break on the top piece of Nefertiti's back pillar. This proved that the granodiorite statue was indeed found by Borchardt's team and was a product of the Thutmose workshop. Further evidence turned up in the form of a soccer-ball-size piece with a flat surface that had been picked up during the 1992 quern survey and was in storage among the querns in the magazine. A small piece from the South House Dump fits it, and Delwen Samuel, who had conducted the quern survey, provided information that this piece had been picked up in the Thutmose complex. A brief investigation of the surface in that complex turned up an even larger piece of the base, as well as several unworked pieces of matrix and a small slice which proved to be Akhenaten's right ankle which fitted onto a substantial portion of the pair statue.

The South House Dump had also contained hundreds of fragments of variously coloured quartzite, travertine, and other stones. Dr Dimitri Laboury, of the Université de Liège, joined the expedition this season to study the statuary fragments. He helpfully added to information gathered by Thompson in Berlin, demonstrating that several pieces at Amarna relate to those in the Ägyptisches Museum. Thus the statuary material from this dump appears to consist in part or in whole of pieces from the Thutmose complex left behind by Borchardt as not of museum quality. Laboury and team member Corinna Rossi collaborated in creating a digital image of the statue's various sections joined and arranged to give a good sense of the two figures' original appearance. This image will also be of use in future work. The physical reconstruction of the statue will continue next season, along with an investigation of how the various large portions might be mounted for display.



Figure 2. Fragments of a statue of Akhenaten in greywacke, from the South House Dump. They form part of the back-pillar, the hieroglyphs providing Akhenaten's epithet: 'who lives on truth'.

The North House Dump

The statuary fragments from the dump near the north dig house have been recovered in stages. In 1981, after it was noticed that pieces were coming to the surface as a result of wind and rain erosion, a preliminary clearance was made of the visible pieces. All of these 210 statuary fragments, mostly in pink granite and quartzite, were sent in crates to the Egyptian Museum, where they remained in storage.



Figure 3. The North City: area around the north dig house. The red arrow marks the location of the 'North House Dump' of stone fragments. North is to the bottom of the image.

Erosion brought more pieces to the surface, and in 1992 these were retrieved and stored in the magazine. In 2001, when Thompson began the reconstruction of the granodiorite dyad, a request was made to the SCA and the Museum for the return of the original group of fragments, with a view toward possible matching within that material as well. Permission was granted, and two crates arrived Amarna at the end of the 2002 season. Also during this season, Thompson supervised a further one-day clearance of the North House Dump, resulting in the recovery of hundreds of additional pieces.

During the 2003 season, the two crates of material from the Museum were unpacked, sorted, and put into numbered trays for later registration. Almost immediately matches among pieces from the Museum became apparent: between two pieces of quartzite representing what appears to be a Hathoric feather from the crown of a large-scale statue, and between two pieces of quartzite from a stretch of pleat-covered body surface. Further matches will undoubtedly occur in future seasons, when this material from the Museum can be compared with the many other pieces removed from the North House Dump. Near the end of the season, Thompson supervised a fourth and final clearance of the Dump, again resulting in hundreds of pink-granite, quartzite, limestone, and travertine pieces being added to those already in the magazine. Future seasons will be devoted to completing the registration of these many recovered pieces—perhaps in the neighborhood of a thousand—and to looking for joins among them.



Figure 4. Trays of unsorted fragments of red granite statue from the North House Dump awaiting further study.



Figure 5. Body fragment in red granite from the North House dump

In general, the many statuary fragments from the two dumps, along with a much smaller number of pieces found in situ at Kom el-Nana, the Small Aten Temple, and elsewhere, enormously expand the information on the statuary program in the ancient city. The original provenance of these pieces is now remarkably well understood, given that they came from dumps. The South House Dump primarily represents unfinished pieces from the Thutmose workshop. The North House Dump apparently consisted in large part or in whole of pieces excavated by John Pendlebury's EES expedition during the 1934-35 and 1935-36 seasons. Numerous labelled ostraca buried along with the statuary indicate a provenance in the Palace, and several of the travertine pieces are marked "PAL" in ink. (The quartzite, travertine, and granite pieces have no labels of any kind.)

In conjunction with this work, Thompson is also studying statuary fragments from Amarna held in museums throughout the world. The end result should be a much clearer picture of what types of statues were created and displayed in the buildings of the ancient city.