

Gournia: 2011 Excavation

In 2011, excavations at Gournia focused on three areas of the site, north of the LM I town, in and under the palace, and in House He to the south (Fig. 1):

North of the Late Minoan Town. Several sections were opened in this area.

North of House Ab, *Trench 13* in House Aa revealed two floor levels: Boyd's plaster floor level—which held a saddle quern and Middle Minoan IIB pottery (an earlier phase of this floor produced mudbrick and red painted plaster)—and a lower level that yielded MM II carinated cups and a small bronze knife.

In the area of the North Trench (*Trenches 5, 17, 20, 22, 26*) no structures of any kind were found south of Wall C (Fotou 1993, plan B), revealed to be a short retaining wall. South of this wall, leveling fill with a mixture of EM III–MM IB pottery, animal bone, charcoal, mudbrick, and plaster was identified. On both sides of Wall X—X, *Trench 20* found an identical stratum of hard soil with patches of burned limestone located directly above bedrock. A cluster in a pit abutted the southern face of Wall X—X; it contained a potter's rib and pottery dated to EM III. *Trench 23*, adjacent to the western baulk of *Trench 2* and *Trench 7*, may be debris due to the many ceramic sherds embedded within the thick plaster matrix, the presence of several burn layers, and the enormous amount of wasters and potter's wheels (from the destruction of a pottery kiln in MM IA).

Turning north of House Ea, to the northern edge of the site, *Trenches 3* (excavated in 2010 and reopened in 2011), and *12* and *25* (both new in 2011) yielded the remains of four structures that can be traced through three major occupation phases (Fig. 2).

Phase I. A massive building with a cobbled court in the north section of *Trench 12* was constructed early in the Protopalatial period. Only the exterior south face of wall 25.1 of this building has been excavated. A doorway at the west end of wall 12.7 in the southwest corner of the cobbled court originally led to a (presumably interior) space to the south.

Phase II. The “Early Building,” perhaps dated to MM IIA, possesses a neat wall with a door that should be the eastern wall of a building with at least two rooms in *Trench 25*. Within the “Early Building” were found many larnax sherds. The larnax fill may have been the result of an earthquake or may have originated from the “Early Building’s” original use. The date of the space inside (to the west of) the “Early Building” may have been used to house larnakes; the yard to the northeast contained a vat. The “Early Building” remained standing, and the space around it was still being used —or at least the area was apparently still in use when the first earthquake hit early in MM II, the period of the Protopalatial House (**Phase III** below).

Phase III. Almost all of the rest of the architecture belongs to this phase. Walls 3.3, 12.1/3.4, 12.2, and 12.3/3.2 constitute the Protopalatial House constructed early in MM II. The house is impressive; it originally had access to two cobbled courts: one to the north and one at a higher level to the south side (with two kernoï). The house is built of small stones set among occasionally larger ones. The threshold was constructed with small stones neatly laid and topped with a thick layer of mud brick; large brick jambs also flanked the entrance, and a substantial pivot stone for the door was found in situ against the north jamb. The bedrock cavity in the southeast corner of the house was lined on the north and west with large stones laid on their side. A final level of kouskourous, and three short and shallow benches of one course each were constructed against the north wall, and against the northern halves of the east and west walls. The yard outside the house immediately to the west was also outfitted for use. It received a compact surface; a short stone platform was erected in the north east corner of the yard.

The Protopalatial House had two main levels. The earliest level, associated with the benches, had strewn some 15 vessels, mostly domestic, fallen during a destructive event

(probably an earthquake): coarse ware cooking pots, bowls, and other vessels, as well as a pierced stone weight, TC spool, and a miniature figurine. From the yard outside and to the west came cups, jugs, and a large, intact spouted vat, which probably slid off the short stone platform that was stacked in the corner of walls 25.1 and 12.5. Besides the vessels around the vat, there were loomweights and spindle whorls, as well as two loomweights that had fallen into the vat along with a stone pestle. This first level preserved some interesting vessels. From the level inside the house come various domestic wares: conical cups, a clay stamp seal, tripod bowls, jugs, a bridge-spouted bowl, and other vessels, as well as a couple of querns. From the yard come an intact vat, cups, jars, and other vessels, more stone tools, and loomweights and spindle whorls. The domestic character of the house's first phase is marked primarily by the assortment of cups, bowls, jugs, and querns. Its industrial character is marked primarily by the vat in the yard; larnakes were possibly used in levigating clay for the making of pottery (in the storage area of the "Early Building" a fragment of a potter's disc and a waster were found in the dump above the north cobbled court).

An upper level yielded a couple of minor objects, a pierced stone weight, a clay stamp seal, and five cups—one of coarse ware and three fine ware conical cups, a quern, BSJ, bowls, and a fine ware tumbler. After this second destruction, there was no clean up; the cups were found more or less whole. The second destruction preserved a variety of objects in the Protopalatial House (including a clay stamp seal), but several examples of only one vessel type: ten cups. At least four large spherical weights (D. 7.5 cm), weighing at least 450 grams each, and one rectangular pendant weight (5.5 x 7.5 cm), weighing about 318 grams, were all found together below the surface of the yard; they may have been loomweights; this along with other evidence suggests that weaving was going on in the Protopalatial House and adjacent areas.

The North Cemetery is located around a spur or ridge of bedrock northeast of the town. *Trenches 14, 16, 28, and 30* recovered little cultural material. *Trench 18*

revealed H. Hawes' dump, including human bone, shell, mudbrick, charcoal, and an obsidian scraper.

In the area north of House Ab, *Trenches 21, 29, 41, 44, and 45* are all adjacent to each other (Fig. 3). *Trench 21* revealed two rooms with three walls and a floor of hard-packed earth with a Protopalatial deposit containing a small gold perforated disk, a potter's wheel, and some worked serpentine. These two rooms faced out onto a Protopalatial cobbled road that may have connected the town with the cemetery to the north. In an area just off of the paved road was a platform (shrine?) of stone and rubble. Here, a pot filled with limpet shells, chunks of pumice (including large fragments that may have been within the remains of a jar), many conical cups, other drinking/ pouring and cooking pots—as well as a miniature jug bearing a Linear A inscription, and animal bones and teeth were discovered, many of which dated to the Neopalatial period.

Palace Area. Three sections of the palace were excavated: the area directly west of the courtyard (near the baetyl), the area surrounding the “Bathing room/ Lustral Basin,” and parts of the north area of the palace.

Room 13 (*Trench 10*) of the Palace complex is next to the baetyl stone in the street to the west. The ashlar masonry of the Room's west wall rests on top of a kernos stone. The south and west walls abut existing palace walls, making them later additions. Three centimeters below the surface was a LM IB deposit of over 120 vessels, mainly complete conical cups filled with pumice, animal bones, or fragments of flat plaster, surrounded by pumice. One burn layer may have been a wooden shelf with cups stacked on it which fell during a LM IB fire. There seem to have been two periods of similar deposits within the LM IB level, which were

separated by a carefully placed single layer of pumice stones in the southwest corner. Below the LM IB deposit, two walls forming a right angle abut each other and the pre-existing north and east walls of the palace. Another vessel deposit appeared, with over 150 mostly complete MM IIIA vessels; but without pumice, unlike the LM IB deposit. Within the structure, a burn layer running across the south interior wall is confined to a small space and may have been a wooden shelf against the south wall with cups placed on it. Outside the structure many MM IIIA vessels were leaning up against its exterior. In MM IIIA, walls were built on top of crudely prepared surface and the vessels were placed in the area very soon after. The original palace wall at the north edge of *Trench 10* seems to have been built in MM IIIA.

Trench 11 encompasses the northern portion of Room 18 originally excavated by Hawes (Figs. 4–5). In 2011, we explored three areas or soundings within this room: **Area 1** in the far western portion of the room (where Hawes had apparently dug well below the LM I level to reveal a short stretch of a substantial early wall running at a different orientation than the architecture of the palace), **Area 2** immediately west of **Area 1**, and **Area 3** at the far eastern end of the room.

Area 1. Excavation began at the level reached by Hawes, with the large early wall already visible. A small section of a previously unrecorded ancient wall, aligned north to south, came to light. The wall preserves one course of large and small boulders set in an earth mortar. Since it only preserves a face on its western side, it may have originally been a small terrace or retaining wall. Excavation continued below, until bedrock was encountered. Datable ceramic remains included both Pre- and Protopalatial material in these stratigraphic levels, which probably represent ancient surfaces, west of and below both walls.

Area 2. Excavation revealed a room with a low, narrow bench. The floor of the room consisted of a uniform layer of carefully selected, water-worn sea pebbles, held together with only a thin layer of soil. The floor surface contained several stone tools. The room went out of use, or was abandoned/ filled in during the Protopalatial period. In the southern half of **Area 2**, several layers of fill south of the large, early wall were encountered. The latest datable pottery from these strata is Late Prepalatial. As observed in **Area 1**, the large early wall was founded on a pebble filled soil, probably of Protopalatial date.

Area 3. The central part of this area contained a deep deposit of backfill from Hawes' excavations. A sounding in the northern half of **Area 3** revealed an earlier north to south wall, parallel but at a lower level to the LM east wall, clearly separated from the LM wall by a layer of compact soil.

Trench 19 encompasses a small room immediately east of Room 10 (Fig. 4). Digging revealed a small bench against the face of the north wall (modern cement around the stones indicates that it must have been visible at the time of consolidation). A sounding in the southern half of the room revealed a small portion of an earlier surface, but with very little cultural material associated with it. Below this earlier level were several layers of fill with recognizable Pre- and Protopalatial material. *Trench 31*, located within Room 10, found a layer of fill consisting of chunks of bedrock and broken mudbrick, as well as Pre-, Proto-, and Neopalatial wares (Fig. 4).

Trench 32 is located within Room 8. Paving stones on a final surface yielded part of a terracotta animal figurine and a small millstone (not excavated in 2011) (Fig. 4). *Trench 43*, Room 11, revealed a LM level with plaster (Fig. 4). In the southern portion of the room, excavation uncovered part of an earlier wall oriented northwest to southeast, upon which the south wall of the LM room seems to have

been built. The orientation of this new wall is similar, but not identical to that of the large, early wall under the LM palace surface seen in *Trench 11*. A *terminus post quem* of Late Prepalatial exists for the construction of the wall. The west wall of the room also seems to have been built—or rebuilt—at different times. Rooms 8 and 11 may have been planned and built as one large space, later divided by the construction of Room 9.

Trench 40 explores two features found within the “Bathing room/ Lustral Basin.” Directly to the east are Rooms 30 and 34; to the south is Room 29 with a basin in the northeastern corner that drains into the southeastern corner of *Trench 40*; and to the west is Room 28, often identified as a lustral basin, with a well-preserved plaster floor. The basin used to remove water from Room 29, is a semi-circular stone connected to an opening in the wall that leads into *Trench 40*. Room 28 has an L-shaped entrance and a fine plaster floor. In the southwestern corner of the floor is a patch of upper floor plaster that preserves a portion of wall plaster going up the bedrock ledge. This room should be considered private living quarters.

North of the palace, *Trenches 33, 34, 38, 40, and 46*, explored rooms that J. Soles sees as a late LM I remodeling of the palace, perhaps after a minor destruction such as the eruption of Thera. The rooms are uniformly megalithic constructions that generally abut earlier walls. They have clearly been previously cleared down to bedrock; the large megalithic walls are all founded on bedrock. *Trench 39* is located directly north of the complex comprised of Room 30/34 (explored as *Trenches 33, 34, and 38*). The area has a number of low lying rubble walls that were not mapped by Hawes and have a different alignment than the rest of the town. A wall may have been part of a paved exterior court north of the Room 30/34 complex. Both the curved megalithic wall and the wall of Locus 9 from

Trench 39 must have been standing when the pavers were put in place. A small destruction layer, with nothing later than LM IA, was found.

Southern Sector: House He. Excavations in House He revealed two occupational phases in this building. First, House He was built in early LM IIIA:1/2. In this early phase, the megaron hall had a floor with blue and white fresco decoration similar to that of the Megaron at Agia Triada. House He fulfilled a public and/ or administrative function. In the LM IIIB phase, House He was privatized, with the addition of an impressive entrance on the west and an interior confined court. This private elite residence was involved with trading and industrial activities, as indicated by the finds recovered during the excavation of C. Davaras.

Fig. 1: Plan of Gournia showing 2010-2011 Trenches.

The Settlement of Gournia

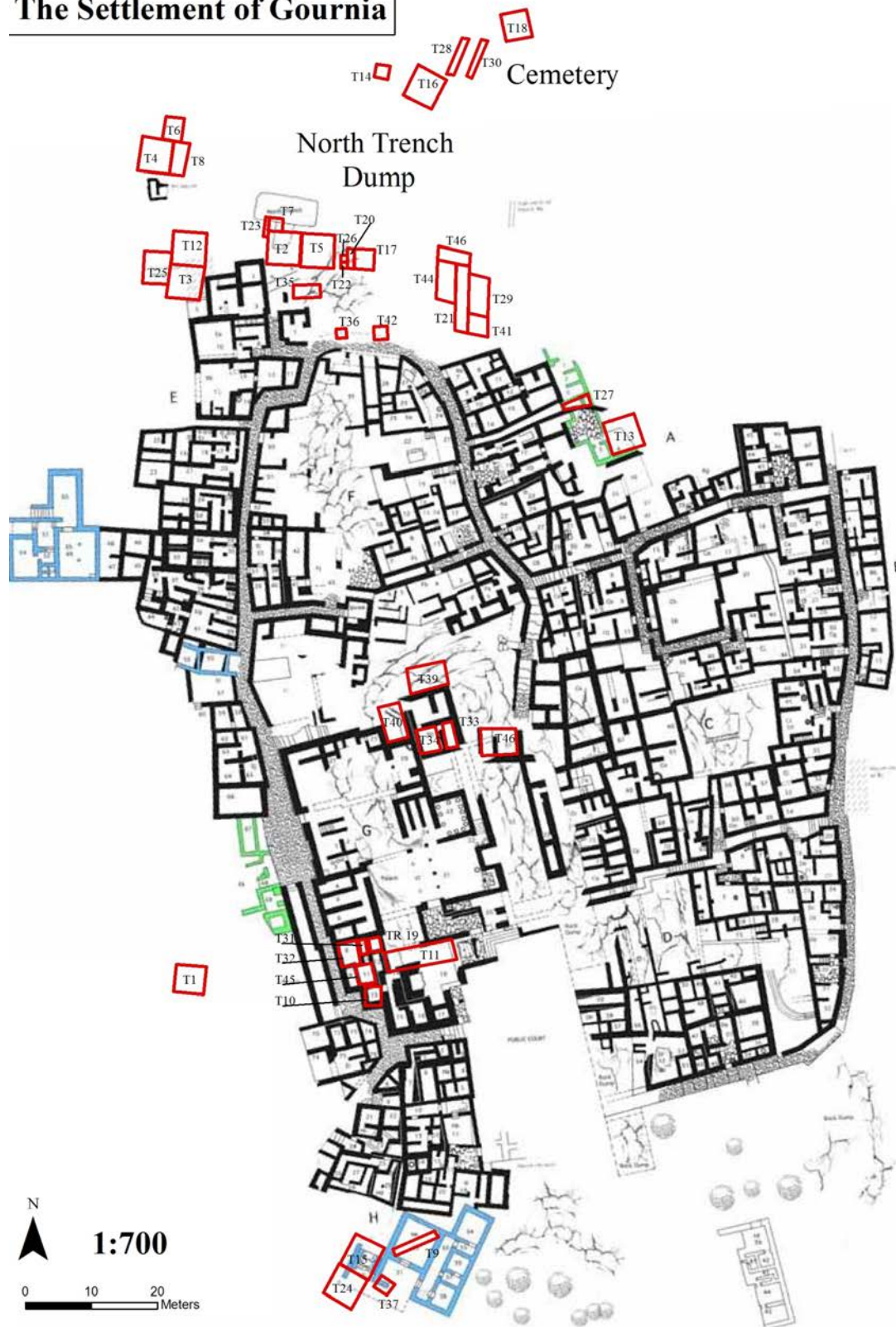


Fig. 2: Protopalatial House and Yard, and “Early Building” to West.



Fig. 3: Aerial View of Trenches 21, 29, 40, 41, 45.



Fig. 4: Plan of the Palace showing Locations of Trenches 11, 19, 31, 32, and 43.

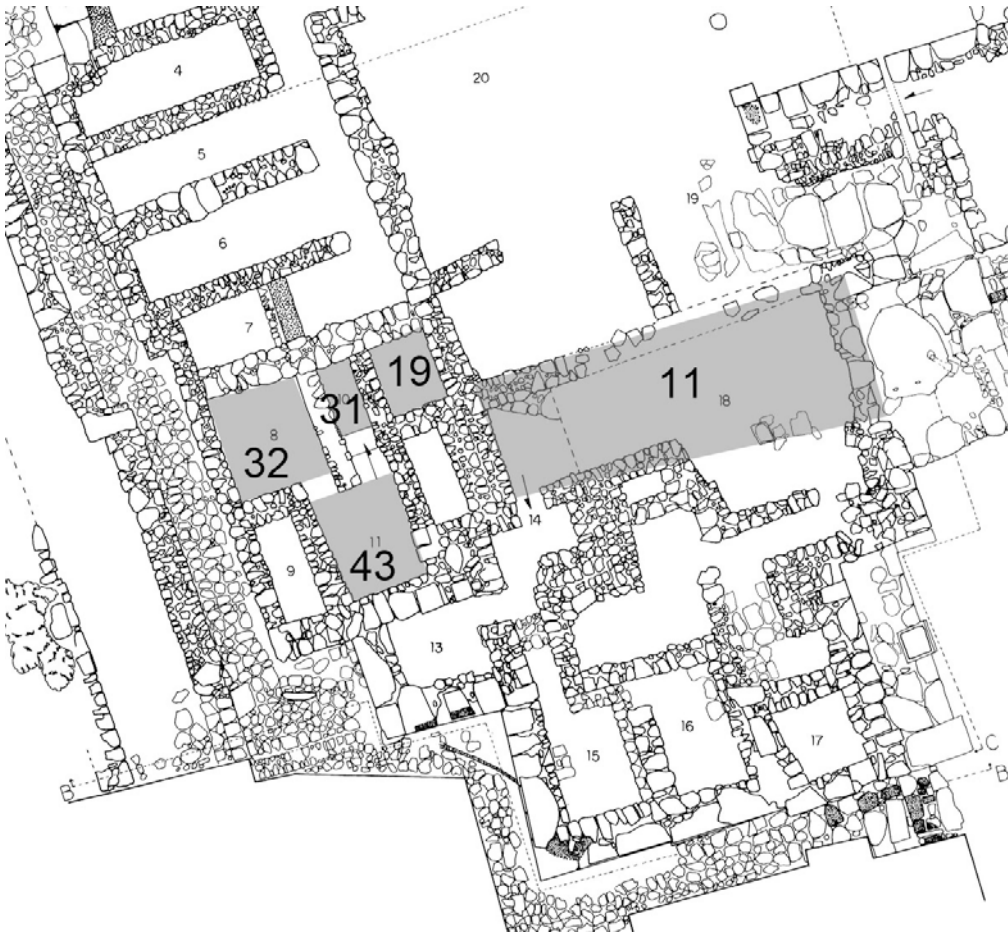


Fig. 5: Aerial Photograph of Trench 11, indicating Locations of Areas 1, 2, and 3.

