

Gournia 2012 Excavation

This report summarizes the results of the 2012 excavations carried out in three areas of the Gournia site: 1) north of House Ae, 2) north of House Ab, and 3) in the palace. All trenches appear on Figure 1. On-site conservation was carried out during excavation under the direction of K. Zervaki and S. Chlouveraki. Work will continue through the month of August until all walls have been successfully conserved.

Area North of House Ea. Trenches 47–50, 52, 57, and 59–60 were opened to trace the extent of the LM IB House found in 2010. Trench 51, immediately to the south, focused on a separate MM IB–LM I structure.

In *Trench 47* a layer of plaster and mudbrick were interpreted as wall collapse. A room was discovered with an east–west wall and a doorway leading out to the cobbled street to the north. Several re-constructible vessels, along with a serpentine bird’s nest bowl, were found on a LM IB level. Below this level a triton shell was found sitting against the western wall, perhaps belonging to a foundation deposit. Beneath the level, a Protopalatial destruction layer, associated with the east–west wall, was identified.

Trench 59 was dug to bedrock along two short east–west Protopalatial walls and a section of a north–south wall discovered during the excavation of *Trench 50* (discussed below).

Trench 60, east of the LM I House, revealed an outside surface with no finds.

Trench 48 was dug to uncover the western side of the LM IB building. Excavation produced a LM IB room internally divided by a north–south wall (visible in Fig. 2), perhaps used as a storage space. The room contained a cooking pot, side spouted jars, “beehive” vessels, jars, a spouted jug, two pithoi, and a stone bird’s nest bowl. Stone objects included a stone table, at least one pounder, a drill core, a possible whetstone, and an odd colored stone, which had been chipped, with a hole partially drilled in it. A room to the north, bounded on the north by a megalithic east–west wall, is Protopalatial.

Trench 49 was opened to determine how far north the LM IB House (Fig. 3) extended. Upper levels consisted of a modern (H. Boyd’s?) dump on the surface followed by multiple layers of MM IB–LM I slope wash. Below were two layers of building collapse. Finally, an east–west Protopalatial cobbled street was revealed. A sounding, down slope to the north of the street, uncovered what may be collapse or dump debris of the MM III(?) period.

Trench 57, like *Trench 49* immediately to the east, was laid out to establish the northern extent of the LM IB House. Below two slope-wash levels (the upper dating to the time of Boyd), a level of rubble and burnt debris with cooking pots were found. Furthermore, a Protopalatial structure (destroyed and rebuilt in MM IIIA) and cobbled street (as in *Trench 49*) were also encountered. Both building and street were in use into the LM I period.

Trench 52 investigated the relationship between the Protopalatial structure (*Trenches 3 and 51*) to the south and the LM IB House to the north. The upper level was a MM IB–LM I rock dump. Bedrock below produced a cut-out flattened area partly bounded with a small stone enclosure (with MM III–LM IA cup

fragments), a larnax fragment (perhaps used as a work platform), and a pit (probably to catch water) at the east edge of the trench.

Trench 50 was laid out to shed some light on the relationship between the nearby LM IB house and the earlier Proto- and Neopalatial buildings to the south (*Trenches 3 and 51*). The uppermost MM IB–LM I level contained a large quantity of burnt mudbrick, small bits of charcoal, a worn clay conoid seal, and a ceramic industrial tray or work platform, all washed down from the south. At bedrock, an open area or courtyard was revealed that was cut down to form a lower north level, with an east–west runnel running along its southern edge into *Trench 52*. At the west edge of the court was a walled niche that had an amphora set in it.

Trench 51 finished uncovering a Protopalatial building (Fig. 4) begun in 2011. Excavation this year yielded four LM I rooms abutting the building to the north. Room 1 (east room) held pottery, stone tools, and a bronze razor that had fallen into the room from a collapsed upper floor. Room 2 (the central room) had intact vessels sitting on stone benches and other vessels that fell into the room from an upper floor. Next to the bench were also two deposits of triton shells. Room 3 was divided into a large space to the north and a room that was completely closed off (no door). This room held five intact vessels sitting on the bedrock floor, two of which stored smaller vessels inside. The yard uncovered in *Trenches 50 and 52* may belong to this building.

Area North of House Ab. In this area, four trenches (58 and 62–64) were opened (Fig. 5).

Trench 58 began next to last year's excavations, where several buildings and a paved street were discovered, to expose more of the Protopalatial building there. The southern half of the trench did not produce any floor deposits, but was an exterior space with a drain on the western side. This drain flowed down at a rather steep gradient into a room with a basin-shaped pit cut into the bedrock, where water was collected for some purpose. Analysis of the pottery from the basin suggests a date of MM IA–B, and the discovery of a potter's bat and overfired sherds may indicate pottery production there. In the northern area, excavation came down on an interior space. No packed earthen floor level was discovered above the bedrock, but it seems possible that the bedrock itself was used as the floor, even though there was not much pottery on its surface.

Trench 62 investigated the extent of the street initially uncovered in *Trench 21* and whether this road has any relationship with the street system of the LM I settlement. The initial layer of topsoil produced a mixture of Protopalatial and Neopalatial pottery in the form of pithoi, a water channel, and the base of a coarse stand. Fineware was mostly Protopalatial while the coarseware was a mixture of Protopalatial and Neopalatial (pithoi, cooking pots, basins, amphoras, jars, a few conical cups, and an LM IA amphora fragment. Finally, more of the street running south was exposed.

Trench 63 was dug to follow the Protopalatial street further to the south. During excavation, an exterior wall façade of a building to the west appeared. Above

bedrock, the Protopalatial street was revealed and appears to go well under Boyd's Neopalatial street at the north edge of the LM I town.

Trench 64 was just begun; topsoil was removed.

Area of the Palace. In this area, six trenches (11, 53–55, and 61) were excavated.

Trench 11 (Fig. 6) in 2011 had uncovered architectural remains beneath the palace, in particular a substantial wall constructed of large boulders and following a different orientation than the architecture of the palace. Part of a small room (Room A) was also revealed to the north of this massive wall. Excavation in 2012 focused on uncovering the rest of this room and attempted to clarify the architecture, date, and function of the building. Excavations uncovered the entire eastern half of Room A and traced the southeastern extension of the massive wall for at least another 1.80 m.

Trench 53 (Fig. 6), immediately to the north, also uncovered the northwestern corner of Room A and what appear to be exterior areas to both the north and west. Low shallow benches line Room A's western and northwestern interior faces. Additional benches, similar in their dimensions and construction techniques, appear along the northern, exterior face of the building, as well as along the eastern face of the east wall of Room A, possibly indicating another room in that direction. Latest datable pottery from the north wall of Room A was Prepalatial.

Another small bench along the western face of the west wall may be the southwest corner of another room (Room B) to the east of Room A. One Prepalatial coarseware bowl was sitting on this bench. Ceramic remains excavated this year indicate a Prepalatial date for

this room/ space. Finds include three terracotta figurines: a fragment of an animal possible a pig, half of a boat, and the upper half of a human figure holding an oblong object, perhaps a child or an animal.

The lowest levels reached in the area north of Room A in 2012 revealed a thick layer of water-rounded pebbles, on top of which was a good deal of Prepalatial pottery and several concentrations of burnt and unburnt animal bones. These pebbles seem to have been deposited on top of and around a stratum of tightly packed, small boulders, possibly the remains of an earlier paved (Prepalatial) area, such as a courtyard.

To the west of this area, excavation of fill or slope wash beneath the topsoil defined the west wall of Room A as well as a small concentration of rock tumble, probably to be interpreted as material collapsed from the wall itself. Below the rock tumble, a layer of possible roofing clay and lenses of cobbles were removed; these revealed the continuation of the stratum of water-rounded pebbles discovered in Room A in 2011, which form either the original surface of the room or, as now seems likely, a leveling fill. Although no substantial floor deposit was recovered above the pebble stratum, which clearly seems to extend beneath the north and west walls of the room, the latest datable pottery indicates a Prepalatial date for the abandonment and fill of the room. The lowest level (Late Prepalatial) of *Trench 53* produced a uniform layer of water-rounded pebbles. In front of the north wall of Room A, a stratified series of three low, narrow benches may have formed exterior work surfaces or stands.

Ceramic remains from the excavated levels north and west of Room A consisted primarily of small and worn fragments of Prepalatial pottery (EM II, EM III–MM IA).

Trench 56 was dug in Room 15 of the palace. Excavation revealed a leveling fill, consisting of LM IA upper story collapse (from a destruction?), laid for the LM IB level above. Finds from this level include two bronze rivets and a large piece of raw tin. An interior north–south wall built no later than MM III, with a column

base, was revealed at this level, when the area was an interior space (Fig. 7). Associated was a plaster floor sitting on top of bedrock along the eastern wall. A harder, clay-like surface with numerous pebbles and small limestone plaster inclusions was reached along the west wall, the remnants of the plaster floor. Chunks of pumice, roughly 4 cm in diameter, were found at the lowest level, which is in a direct line to the corridor connecting Room 15 to the rest of the palace. Leveling fill associated with the floor dates to MM III.

Trench 55 in Room 16 of the palace began below a partly preserved LM IB level excavated by Boyd. Some four paving stones were left in situ in the northeastern corner. Immediately below the level of the pavers was a level of rubble, burned mudbricks, fragments of a plaster, and some burned pottery and stones, perhaps part of the final collapse of the palace. Notable finds from this level include a stamped roundel, a copper alloy knife fragment and possible ring bezel, and fragments of a LM IB vase decorated with double axes. Below this level was an earlier LM IB destruction level, with many signs of burning: streaks of ash, carbonized wood, accumulations of soil and debris that had been hardened by fire, and amorphous lumps of melted plaster. Finds from this level included: a fragment of a Linear A tablet (Fig. 8), a roundel, some finely painted plaster, and approximately 70 pieces of scrap copper or copper alloy, such as drips, chunks, ingot fragments, and broken objects (tweezers, rivets, and handles), as well as three pieces of iron slag or bloom. Below the destruction debris was a relatively level surface, empty of finds. Below this, the lowest level (on bedrock), consisted of construction debris (for Room 16) dated to LM IA.

Trench 61, immediately east of *Trench 55*, is in Room 17 of the palace. The first layer under the level of the final LM IB surface was a leveling fill consisting of

many cups and small bowls, datable almost exclusively to MM III. Conical cups, Vaphio cups, straight-sided cups, and ledged-rim bowls were numerous. Other ceramic finds including body and leg fragments from red-painted coarseware incense burners, including one miniature version, several fragmentary plaster tables with painted decoration, and a flat ceramic slab with thick raised edges that has a burnished surface and evidence of red paint. The slab shows signs of burning and may have been a portable hearth. This deposit continues to the north and excavation will continue in 2013. Below this fill, an earlier levelling fill was laid for an unpreserved surface. Patches of burned soil suggest there was a destruction event in the room, perhaps datable to early LM IB, but the room was cleared of debris before the upper levelling fill was laid down.

Trench 54 was established in Room 14 of the palace and is a corridor that runs roughly north–south, connecting Rooms 18, 13, and 15. Excavation revealed two types of contexts within *Trench 54*: destruction levels and lower fill levels.

The southern part of *Trench 54* before the blocking wall at the threshold to Room 13 revealed destruction levels, with much ash, burnt red plaster, and mudbrick fragments. In the southeast corner of this area, pumice and conical cup sherds emerged. Some cups removed were up to two-thirds complete, but most were fragmentary. Only one whole conical cup was removed. This cup (LM IA?), placed upright, and packed with and surrounded by pumice, was perhaps a small foundation deposit associated with the flat stones and building of the southern palace wall.

Notable finds from the fill levels in the north part of the trench include a portion of an animal figurine, a ceramic counter/ token, and two ceramic dockets. Immediately below the fill layers, bedrock was encountered.

Fig. 1: Plan of Gournia showing 2012 Trenches.

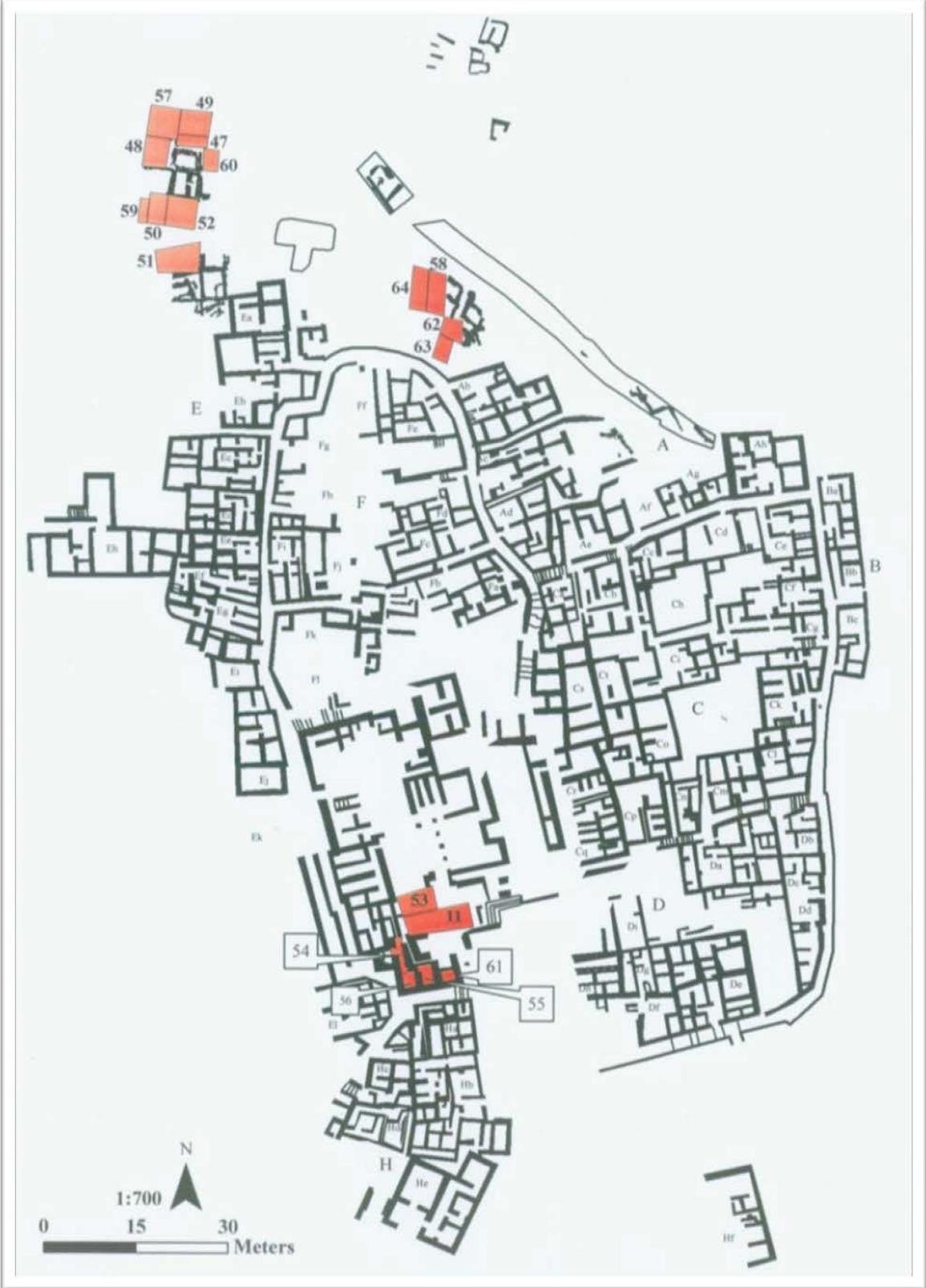


Fig. 2: Trench 48.



Fig. 3: Aerial View of Trenches 47, 48, 49, 57, 60, with the Protopalatial Street at Top.



Fig. 4: Aerial View of Trench 51.



Fig. 5: Aerial View of Trenches 58, 62, 63, 64.



Fig. 6: Aerial View of Trenches 11, 53.



Fig. 7: Trench 56.



Fig. 8: Linear A Tablet from Trench 55.

