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Field Report: Gournia Excavation Project 2016

This summer I had the privilege to work on the Gournia Excavation Project. Gournia is a Bronze Age, Minoan palace/town in Eastern Crete. The site was originally dug by Harriet Boyd Hawes in 1901. By digging Gournia she became the first woman to direct a major excavation in Greece. Boyd Hawes' work on Gournia has been succeeded by a variety of different archaeologists. Dr. Vance Watrous of the University of Buffalo is the current director of the project and has been since conducting an extensive survey of the area in 1992. The project is in a study season cataloguing and analyzing finds from digging done between 2011-2014.

During my time on the Gournia Excavation Project I worked in registration under Kapua lao, the Registrar for the project, and as a lithics cataloguer under Dr. Matt Buell. In registration I helped digitize various documents from prior excavation seasons. I also worked in the field cleaning and photographing the site so that we could digitally upload the site. The idea behind the project was to have such an accurate digital representation of the site that our architecture specialists could analyze even the smallest stone in a wall. The digital upload is so intricate that you could 3D print the entire site if you wanted to! When not helping in registration or in the field I catalogued stone tools. I measured and analyzed stone tools, such as hammer stones, grinding stones, mortars, pestles, querns, and obsidian blades. Through this work I learned about stone tool use throughout various occupation phases in the site.

During my downtime I participated in various different educational activities. The center that we worked out of, the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP), held two lectures that I attended by Dr. Metaxia Tshipopoulou concerning the most recent excavations at Petras and Dr. Colin Macdonald on new

interpretations of Protopalatial Knossos. The center also provided guided tours of the pottery that it stores. These tours allowed me to see how pottery differ between different sites within the same region of Crete as Gournia.

I also took trips to other sites with staff from the project. I traveled to the archaeological park in Kroustas forest. Kroustas forest is an unexcavated Minoan mountain settlement being overseen by Dr. Sabine Beckman. She served as our tour guide. On another occasion I spent the day with Dr. John Younger. He led myself and the American school at Athens, which had brought a group to Crete to see the archaeological history of the island, on a tour of the Archaeological Museum of Heraklion and of the Palace of Malia in Malia, Crete. These tours were particularly educational and helped to place the archaeological material that I had been working with at Gournia into a broader Minoan archaeological context.

The diversity of tasks that I took on allowed me to experience the excavation from diverse perspectives. I experienced the many different roles that archaeologists take on during an excavation first hand. Furthermore, learning from experts that specialize in different areas broadened my knowledge of the archaeological site and of differing archaeological approaches.

My experience with the Gournia Excavation Project has benefitted me tremendously. I expanded my knowledge of archaeological techniques and of Minoan archaeology. This experience has had an enormous impact on my academic background and will be an essential part of my graduate applications this fall. This would not have been possible without the Waldbaum Scholarship. Volunteering on an archaeological project is expensive, and this scholarship helped mitigate those costs for me. I am unbelievably grateful for the Archaeological Institute of America for making this opportunity a reality for me!



Me about to go on site at Gournia



The Institute for Aegean Prehistory where the Gournia Project is based



Kouloures at the Palace of Malia during my tour with Dr. John Younger



A Minoan House at the archaeological park in Kroustas Forest.