A LOST NOTEBOOK FROM
THE EXCAVATIONS AT
GOURNIA, CRETE

FIG. 2. SKETCH MAP OF THE Isthmus OF Hierapetra.

Map copied from H. B.
Hawes, B. E. Williams,
R. B. Seager and E. H. Hall,
Gournia, Vasiliki and
Other Prehistoric Sites
on the Isthmus of Hiera-
petra, Crete, Excavations
of the Wells—Houston—
Cramp Expeditions 1901,
1903, 1904. Philadelphia:
The American Exploration
Society, Free Museum of
Science and Art. 1903.

In the spring of 1973 a small notebook,
titled "Inventory of Gournia Finds. Gournia,
by class," was presented to the University
Museum by Mr. Alexander Hawes, the son of
Harriet Boyd Hawes, who excavated the
Minoan town of Gournia for the Museum dur-
ing the years 1901 to 1904. Finds from the site
included tools belonging to the many trades of
a small community and an enormous amount
of pottery both practical and decorative. The
Cretan authorities permitted Miss Boyd to
export to the University Museum representa-
tive examples of these finds, nearly three
hundred objects in all, which form the major
part of the Museum’s Minoan collection.
Unfortunately, Miss Boyd had provided no
excavation information about these objects,
and for many years an unsuccessful search
for the original excavation records had been
made. So the inventory notebook was received
with great hopes that it would aid in the
study of this material.

It is an old-fashioned looseleaf notebook
which contains, in addition to the inventory
itself, field notes from the excavation of tombs
in the vicinity of Gournia, and a few pages
from Miss Boyd’s diary at the end of the 1904
season. The first six pages list sherds, mostly
Middle Minoan, and the inventory proper
begins on the seventh, after which the pages
are numbered to 190. The finds are organized
under sixteen headings, ranging from vessels
of clay, bronze and stone, figurines, and orna-
ments, to weapons, tools, and industrial equip-
ment. The entire notebook is in Miss Boyd’s
handwriting, with additions and changes
supplied at different times. The entries provide
succinct but complete information about each
item, giving its dimensions, year of excav-
ation, location and registration number in the
Heraclion Museum, and findspot, and are
usually accompanied by a quick but accurate
sketch. Pieces in Philadelphia or illustrated in
the publication are so marked.
The diary pages reveal Miss Boyd’s gift for evoking in few words character, landscape, or mood. There is a vivid account of a journey across the isalıms to the village of Agios Ioannis to investigate some caves containing burials date June 16, 1904. “At about 4 o’clock horses . . . headed w. beds, tinned food, blankets etc—we start. E.H. & I mounted; Aristes George and Michael Paviadakes on foot. . . . Cross Latham fr. Vasiliki west of Monastiraki. Ascend rocky path stonyTo, in every ravin or dry watercourse tens of thousands of oleanders in full bloom. As we rise Michelinos to the north, Libyan sea to south, magnificent panorama. . . . Reach Ag. Ioannis usual white village perched on rocks. We find it deserted save former Vasiliaki schoolmaster—comment allez-vous?—& father our government epistles. All at Kathaia harvesting. We wind slowly down path meeting families returning—typical, father walking w. babe in arms, mother riding donkey w. 2 yr old in lap, sheep, goats, pigs driven by small boys and girls—11 small boys escort us for certain distance fr. village—people fine physique—we meet two women who are great beauties, & many pretty ones. At sunset reach coastal plain Katharais, . . . Beautiful evening after glow—we eat—men then gather near 8—songs by rascals who went to kapnheni w. her lover & therefore was killed by her brother etc etc.—Our beds are set up on threshold floor: comparatively clean but a hurricane. We move from beds under lee of wall fr. which masses dirt were blown upon us to bed of boughs E.H. & I together. Such a night, dirt pebbles, grain blown into our eyes if we star-gaze, bed too 'knobbly' for sleep till we dose toward morning but must needs rise at about 4 a.m.” Three days later she describes an exceptionally vivid sunrise: “Dawn—Gray headland, Ledges of pudding stone slanting up r. a few scrub pines, steep break down to sea, scattered rocks in sea, a point back & back of this one point reaching out beyond another distantly . . . a bright red over the points and sea, the headland in shadow and saffron clouds above—such a dawn! The boys are taking gently then move away to let us dip in sea. . . . Now feathered gray fingers reach out fr. ones behind headland—then millions gray feathers flung across sky. What fields—borders grazing in stubble—olive trees—Arises brings fresh milk in large tin cup & mulberries in his stained hands—” However, like the true scholar she was, with his mind on the essentials and despite feeling “pretty seedy,” at Agios Ioannis she writes of the Early Minoan culture they had excavated. “It is we who all our trouble to have found the 2 unmistakable exs. of Vasiliaki ware, the little grey vase with string handles & early geometric Polos type together.”

When the notebook first reached the Museum, one of its most promising aspects was the record of findspots for nearly all objects, including many in the Museum collection. Unfortunately, the system for referring to the recoveries is not completely different from that used in the final publication, and this notebook provides no key to explain it. Careful comparison between the two systems has enabled a number of references on the published plan, and also revealed that the notebook is not internally consistent in the manner of use. There seems no way to extrapolate from the present incomplete information the original system, but even the limited understanding now achieved has been of considerable use.

Turning to the finds themselves, it is possible to illustrate for the first time a scrap of bronze vase recorded in the notebook under the heading “Bronze Vases de Lane.” It is a fragment from the rim of a shallow bronze bowl, stated to have come from G.37, which is known to be room D29 of House D at the southeast quarter of the town. It is described as “same as rim large bronze basin w. handle . . . pub. IBA 9, fig. 76 . . .” Perhaps Miss Boyd meant this fragment was exactly the same as the Knossos bowl with its distinctive layered rim, the more so since the figure she cited gives a profile drawing, in which case it might be another product from the same bronze-smith shop. However, it is also possible that the comparison is only with the rim decoration. The final context of the Gournia bowl provides a date for this type, since all the known pottery from that room in the final publication and the notebook is MMII—early LM IA. A second fragment, the handle of a bronze jug found in the Palace, lacks an accompanying sketch, but is compared to the jug from the same Knossos board.

In addition to the published bull’s-head vases, the notebook records a number of small animal figurines, unfortunately without any drawings. A hare, a lizard, and a complete cat’s head add variety to the more common goats and bulls. The description of the cat’s head matches two cats found at Palaikastro and Zakros equally well, and all three are probably from one workshop in the region. Two small wild goats’ heads, described as having been once attached to vases, recall the goat-headed rhyton from Palaikastro. The additional find of a goat’s-head mold suggests that such vases were also made at Gournia.

Three substantial Middle Minoan deposits beneath the LM I town are well described in the notebook, supporting the published account. Two of these are remains of houses, and the whole pots from them are represented, being largely utilitarian vessels like the MM I “plume jug” from House EK on the west slope. The third, called Deposit A, was
apparently not associated with any construction but used as fill when the later town was built. Its size may be judged by the remark in the notebook that... Seager reported more than 400 cups from this deposit. Of this vast amount only fourteen pieces of fine ware and three plain cups are listed in the notebook. Some were published, though without finds, spots, and a few can be identified in the University Museum collection. The plain cups are of the type shown here, which is listed with them but not attributed to this deposit. Two "plume jugs" and numerous sherds with MM I dark-on-light and trinkle decoration accompanied the polychrome sherds. They range in date from MM IA through the MM II Palace Style, thus giving a date in the MM IIIA period for the rebuilding of the town, when the deposit was covered over. Other Middle Minoan finds come from the house tombs at the rocky northern edge of the town. Bound in at the back of the notebook are field notes from the excavation of these and the other burials in the area, which give a rather brief description of the actual digging together with a numbered inventory of the finds. Two new facts emerge from these records. In what is published as room 2 of House Tomb II a number of Vaphio cups and six plain cups were found. A great many fragments of Vaphio cups with spiral or fern-like decoration were also found, as well as a sealstone. Originally all the Gournia house tombs were dated to MM I, but with a fuller illustration of their contents, the finds from this room are seen to be clearly later. Vaphio cups with spirals and ferns were found in the town together with early dark-on-light ware of the LM I style. The plain cups, whose form is clear from the drawings in the notebook, are paralleled by cups from a MM IIIA stratum in a house at Mallia, while a bowl like #8 (opposite) was found in a grave at Mavro Spello dated to MM IIIB. The seal, added at the end of the pottery list, is recorded as found by one of the workmen in the earth thrown out from the excavation of this tomb. Its best parallels are perhaps the sealings from the Temple Repositories at Knossos, especially for the architectural background. It is certainly not earlier than the style represented by the Hieroglyphic Deposit. All available evidence points to this burial having occurred within MM IIIA, certainly the latest burial in the old house tombs.
The notes on House Tomb 1 show that it also was divided into two rooms. The first, Tomb 6 in the notebook, contained only the silver kantharos and two small stone bowls. The second, originally Tomb 7, "the small room," was described and sketched. When excavated, a shallow stone bowl was found in one corner of the room with two fragments of skull inside it, a pair of bronze tweezers above it, and two MM I clay kantharoi set in front. This is the same kind of ritual secondary burial that was discovered during cleaning operations on the site in 1971, and provides added confirmation for this practice. Such clear and precise information serves to correct the published description of the tomb as "full of bones and skulls in disorder, a veritable charnel house." In fact, in the notebook there is no mention at all of the bones from these tombs.

During her search for burials at the close of the 1904 season, Miss Boyd excavated six LM III graves, two on the hill known as Alazomouri near the village of Pachyammos, and four on the slope to the southeast of this, called Asa Langhada. The notebook contains accounts of the excavations and a complete inventory of the finds, accompanied by sketches and museum registration numbers which make it possible to reassemble the original tomb groups. The first to be discovered was Alazomouri I, a collapsed rock shelter containing two painted larnakes. For this burial the notebook has only an inventory of the pottery found. Of the twelve vases, three are in the University Museum collection. The others, five stirrup jars, three miniature jugs, and a plain amphora, are sketched well enough to be dated quite clearly to LM III.
The circumstances of the second burial or set of burials are published as they are recorded in the notes accompanying the inventory. To the seventeen published vases from this tomb four new ones may be added, together with a plan of the shallow pit beneath the larnax. The larnax, with vases resting on its cover and inside it, stood balanced over the edge of the square pit in which six skulls lay. Five other pits of about the same size lay in a line to the west, containing nothing but a few sherds, and to Miss Boyd at the time the area appeared to have been disturbed and plundered in antiquity.

Two of the four graves at Aina Langhada held pithos burials. The first was almost completely published; only one amphora and the pithos itself were not included. The second pithos burial is described but not illustrated in the Gournia publication. The pithos lay in a shallow pit with vases on either side and two skulls to the right and above. At the closed end of the pithos stood a pithos containing a child burial. The ten vases found included two one-handled cups, six jugs of varying sizes, one tiny (6 cm.) stirrup jar, and a "sea-pot." Both the pithos and the burial pithos are now in Philadelphia.
Two other deposits of pottery found along the same ridge were the remains of burials. Aisa Langhada III consisted only of a plain spouted jug, a small stirrup jar, and a spouted bowl. The fourth grave contained a plain trefoil-mouthed jug, two plain cups, a bronze dagger blade, and some bones. A drawing of its ground plan (no dimensions are given) shows a paved approach and a truncated oval pit. From the incomplete or missing skeletons and the disorder of the finds it is probable that the burials along this ridge also were plundered. All six graves are exactly contemporary with the reoccupation of the town, from LM IIIA into LM IIIB, after which the site was uninhabited.

Further information remains of course to be gleaned from Miss Boyd's notebook in addition to what has been mentioned here. It can in places confirm or correct her published accounts. It serves as a check on the University Museum collection, and can in most instances identify and provide contexts for this material. It also raises several interesting questions, such as the matter of the goat-headed rhyta mentioned above, which might be answered in the Heraklion Museum. The marginal notes indicate that complete excavation records were kept by all the excavators, and tantalize the reader with references to the "Find Book," "Miss Hall's notes," and so on. Should these records be found again, they would be invaluable for the study of the site. But even without them, this single notebook has contributed both knowledge of Gournia and insight into the archaeologists who worked there.

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