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As the first Postpalatial cult building to be discovered on Crete, the Late Minoan IIIB shrine at Gournia has played an important role in studies of Minoan religion, both as an example of an “independent bench sanctuary” of the “Goddess with Upraised Arms” and as an architectural precedent for more recently excavated cult buildings in eastern Crete. Factors that challenge a full understanding of the architecture, however, include a lack of stratigraphy due to shallow deposition and bioturbation observed at the time of excavation (1901), the relatively poor preservation of the walls, and mid-20th century consolidation and conservation efforts now partially obscure most wall faces and joins. Based upon a program of architectural study conducted as one part of the Gournia Excavation Project, this paper presents a new plan of the shrine and discusses issues of wall construction and sequencing that provide new insights into the complex building history of this part of the site. For example, our analysis shows that the LM IIIB shrine clearly reuses and modifies several earlier Neopalatial (and perhaps even Protopalatial) walls. The built feature in the southwest corner of the room can be interpreted either as a shallow bench that originally extended along the entire inner face of the south wall or as a wall from an earlier phase whose upper surface was reused as a bench in LM IIIB. The “buttress” in the southeast corner may have been constructed to reinforce the pre-existing (Neopalatial?) south wall or functioned as a tall platform. The paper also considers the purpose and meaning of this building within the settlement, including questions of both when and why it was constructed on this location, and discusses the architecture and associated artifacts of the Gournia shrine within the context of other Postpalatial cult buildings on Crete.

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