

Chapter 5 The Bounty of Nature

Flowers and plants are among the earliest images in the art and continue to be important. At first the seal designs show flora images as separate items but by Minoan High Art they have become full garden landscapes¹. Some images continue into the Legacy and Late Periods.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 5.1 to 5.24)

In the Early Seal Period the designs fill the seal face with flora images. The names rosette, quatrefoil, lily, iris, crocus and papyrus are used here as art terms for the characteristic motifs. They are so useful because they encapsulate all the design possibilities of plan and profile flower shapes seen in Mediterranean nature². Flowers displayed in plan are the very early rosette as in 5.1 and the quatrefoil as in 5.2, the latter also allowing the possibility of forming an all-over design as in the quatrefoil flower pattern of 5.3. Then there are the flowers seen in elevation: the lily as in 5.4, the crocus as in 5.5 and the papyrus as in 5.6. The lily and crocus are characteristically shown with petals framing the central pistil florescence area of the flower. Sometimes the stamens are shown as here, sometimes not. The main difference is that the petals of the crocus regularly point up and the two outside petals of the lily regularly curve outwards and downwards. In some representations the lily petals curve sufficiently to form a volute while in other representations this distinction is blurred, and it is not certain which flower is meant. The iris is similar to the lily but the petals curve upwards. The lily is rarely shown at this early time³. The papyrus flower in 5.6 shows the fan shape with vertical elements rising up from the calyx and a curved cap above these, in this case the curve extending to volutes on each side.

The next five floral designs – triple bud, triple bud rod, petaloid, truncated petaloid and flower cross – differ from the images of flowers that we have just been discussing in that they are motif constructs rather than attempts at representations⁴. The triple bud is a three-pointed motif seen filling the interstices as in 5.7. Its inspiration may be the lily (or crocus) bud just beginning to open, with two petals peeling out, or it may be any bud or shoot pushing out from its protective calyx or leaf surround. Triple buds are much used as parts of larger floral designs. The angular treatment of triple buds and dot flowers or fruit in 5.9 creates a floral cross of a rather stylised form which is a regular motif in this period. In 5.10 the triple bud is placed centrally above the antithetical group of hybrid women while in 5.11 and 5.12

1 Search the IconAegean Database in the Element field on rosette, quatrefoil, lily, iris, crocus, papyrus, flower field, triple bud, triple bud rod, petaloid, truncated petaloid and flower cross, leaf, leaf band, double leaf band, branch, ivy leaf, palm tree, palm plant, palmette, palmette band and palmette pattern. Search in the *Icon* field on tree growing from rocky ground and pulling the tree.

Search the IconADict Database for the definition of each term or refer to IAS.

2 The delights of shape and colour in the flora of the American and Australian continents were yet far away from European consciousness.

3 It seems to be represented more as a geometric pattern. Compare CMS II.2 142 and CMS II.5 181, and see the discussion on geometry and natural shapes in Chapter 3 above.

4 The triple bud resembles the *fleur de lys motif*, but anachronistic terms are not used in the IconAegean Classification. The petaloid is also known as the petaloid loop.

it is placed beside sole subject male and female figures as identification. Then it has a long stem added to become the triple bud rod as in 5.13 and 5.14. In 5.15 two triple buds rather like lilies spring out each side from an S spiral in a much-used combination, this time to accompany hieroglyphic text. As already explained, the petaloid is a perfect geometric shape, half an ellipse. Its design effect is both floral and foliate. The looping shape, as in 5.7, may be either a rounded petal or rounded leaf, and the curling stem suggests its attachment to the flower or plant. It is a favourite motif used regularly as the base for a design to which other flora or spiraliform components can be added. The truncated petaloid, as in 5.8, where the loop is cut across and replaced by (usually) 3 prongs, is also regularly used in the early seals.

Turning to the foliate designs, we see leaves and branches in profusion from the earliest times, termed leaf, leaf band, double leaf band and branch. Even with the smallest motif, the leaf, the variety is astonishing. In 5.21 the lanceolate leaf is shown, in 5.18 the rounded leaf and in 5.16 the double leaf. Internal details may be added to reflect the central rib and veins of the leaf as in 5.18, 5.19 and 5.21. The leaf may be repeated to form a leaf band as in 5.18, a double leaf band as in 5.17 and a spiral leaf band as in 5.21. Luxuriant foliage is also suggested by the repetition of leaf forms surrounding the fantastic creature in 5.20. The branch, as a separate form detached from the tree, is found somewhat later. It is placed beside animals as with the agrimi in 5.22 and the bird in 5.23. As allusion to human activity comes with its placement beside a sailing ship as in 5.24.

The hieroglyphic signs CHIC 023 to 032 are listed as being sourced in floral and foliate images⁵. Sign 023 appears to be the crocus flower while signs 025 to 030 are various types of branches.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 5.25 to 5.48)

At first the motif usage of the earlier period is continued. The rosette and papyrus design of 5.25 shows the same tight design and the use of fill in the interstices. Yet there are also significant changes. The papyrus flower plants of 5.26 are shown apparently growing naturally in a clump⁶ but they are not entirely naturalistic. There is careful arrangement of the details of stem, dotted floret and leafy sections, revealing that the old delight in patterning persists. This patterning is also seen in the arrangement of the flower plants surrounding the tumblers in 5.27 so that a balance in the total design is achieved. The agrimi with the crocus in 5.28 echoes the earlier animal with branch compositions although we should note that the crocus is increased in size in proportion to the animal and so is enhanced in importance⁷. Then in 5.29 the birds in a papyrus thicket are presented in the new naturalistic view. Even fantastic creatures are given papyrus landscapes in which to prance and hunt as in 5.37 to 5.39. Flower depictions accompany humans in their activities. In 5.30 a hand holds the papyrus-lily, which is a composite flower created when the papyrus floret is inserted into the two volute lily petals⁸. In 5.33 women carry long stalks of flowering lily and papyrus. In the cultscapes of 5.31 and 5.32 a flower field surrounds the women beholding the epiphany and two women servers approach a shrine holding open lily flowers. In the cultscape in 5.34, the triple bud is placed like a hovering symbol over a scene where a deity who holds a triple bud rod leads two women away. A crocus is placed in the significant position behind the female figure in 5.35 to identify her. In 5.36 the female figure holds a papyrus and also has one placed behind her in identification. The iris, with its incurving petals differentiating it from the lily, is rarely seen in seal design. Then there are the cases where flower motifs are used in antithetical group compositions. The tree of life as the central focus takes the form of a stylised papyrus plant in 5.40, a stylised tree topped by a rosette or sunburst in 5.41 and a triple bud rod in 5.42. Fantastic creatures, the griffin and the genius, are attendants at the tree. In 5.42 the triple bud rod is further embellished by positioning it on a curved

5 CHIC, 16-18.

6 Olga Krzyszkowska, AS, 126-127 Fig. no. 212 with note 27, advises that the MM III-LM I dating indicated in the CMS is too late.

7 The increased size of the crocus underscores its importance, and its placement beside the agrimi suggests a fertilisation link through adding ground horns to the soil.

8 This is Evans' "wazlily".

altar and having a Mistress figure placed on top. In 5.43 the papyrus lily is the sole subject. The rosette and the papyrus form part of the fantastic assemblages of the Zakros compositions as in 5.44 and 5.45. Examples from the talismanic repertoire⁹ show papyrus, lily, leaf and branch motifs as in 5.46 to 5.48. The ivy leaf as in 5.47 is a new shape in the repertoire of leaf motifs. Placing the papyrus lily centrally within double horns as in 5.48 adds importance, and here the branches coalesce with the upright horns.

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – Legacy and Late Periods (Plates 5.49 to 5.57)

Some floral usages continue into the Legacy Period but they are not usually rendered with naturalism. A bull is tethered to a flowering plant in 5.49 and tumblers in acrobatic pose are paired about papyrus plants in 5.50. Even more formal compositions are seen with animals posed heraldically. In 5.51 a bull and a ram flank triple bud rods. Bulls, sphinxes and rams are seen as attendants to a tree of life in 5.52 to 5.54. In each case the tree incorporates a stylised flora element – leaves in 5.52, a triple bud rod in 5.53 and a papyrus in 5.54. The last vestiges of the floral/foliate display are found in the Late Period in the schematic branches placed beside human figures and animals as in 5.55 to 5.57.

Plants and Trees

Plants and Trees – Early Seal Period (Plates 5.58 to 5.60)

In the Early Seals there are few plants and trees growing up from the ground since the flora repertoire is mostly represented by individual flower, leaf and branch motifs, as discussed above. The vegetation surrounding the agrimi in 5.58 may be branches but, because of their vertical orientation and their source in the ground, they can be viewed as trees. In 5.59 we see the more familiar leaves but some are used in the position of the tree canopy. In 5.60, a slender tree grows up behind the seated figure which it shades with its over-arching branch.

Plants and Trees – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (Plates 5.61 to 5.78)

The combination of fauna with vegetation is widely used now as animal with plant or tree. The bull, the boar and the exotic lion are seen in 5.61 to 5.63, posed standing or resting in a stage composition. A somewhat more naturalistic landscape handling presents agrimi, hound and bird in action poses in 5.64 to 5.66.

Scenes with human figures are predominantly cultscapes as in 5.67 to 5.73 and 5.121 to 5.129. The tree growing from rocky ground is seen in 5.67 where it is placed centrally in the design to draw attention to its importance and in 5.127 where it is the focus of the pulling the tree ceremony. The tree grows out of a shrine, as with the tiered tree shrine in 5.68 and 5.122, the ashlar tree shrine in 5.69, 5.70, 5.123 and 5.124 and the lattice tree shrine in 5.126¹⁰. In 5.72 a female deity is identified by the grand boat and the tiered tree shrine behind her. The ceremony of kneeling the boulder, discussed in Chapter 4, shows in 5.73 the variant of the double boulder with plants, also seen in reduced size beside the shrines in 5.71 and 5.72. The plants growing up behind the boulders are always of a particular kind with strappy long pointed leaves¹¹. In the cultscapes of 5.121 to 5.128 the ceremony of pulling the tree is graphically shown with both the woman and the man as tree puller. Other foliate examples include the tree behind a deity accompanied by a sunburst as in 5.74 and the genius figures holding ewers over plants as in 5.75. Here the antithetical group places the creatures as attendants to a tree of life in the

9 The talismanic analysis by Artemis Onassoglou, CMS B2, lists various floral and foliate motifs. The *Spross-Motiv*, 35-44, XIV-XVII, is covered here by plant and branch, although it is of note that most examples of the sprouts are with three shoots, thus indicating the triple bud. The *Herzform-Motiv*, 44-48, XVIII-XIX, is here the ivy leaf. The *Papyrus-Motiv (Löwenmaske)*, 48-56, XX-XXa, is identified here as the palm tree, including some of its stylised forms. The *Rosetten-Motiv*, 117-119, XLIV, is here the rosette.

10 See the discussion on shrines in Chapter 8 below.

11 Warren 1984a, 17-24, sees the boulders and plants as squills.

form of three plants sprouting from double horns placed upon a curved altar. A group of talismanic seals presents the ewer and the vase flanked by plants or branches as in 5.76 and 5.77 while in others the plant springs up from double horns beside a bee smoker as in 5.78.

Plants and Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 5.79 to 5.84)

The animal plus plant/tree motif remains a favourite in the Legacy Period. The agrimi and the bull are the usual animals as in 5.79 to 5.81, and stationary poses in the stage composition are the norm. Sometimes the tree is given a flat base as in 5.79 and 5.81, making it look artificial. Fantastic creatures and deities are placed with trees as in 5.82. In 5.83 and 5.84 agrimia are attendants at a tree of life. In the Late Period trees and plants are not carefully articulated, rather being part of the schematic vegetation noted in the description of branches in 5.55 to 5.57 above.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Early Seal Period* (Plates 5.85 to 5.96)

Differentiated from all the above foliage forms is the family of palms. The fan-shaped leaf with central rib from which veins spring out is called a palmette. It is seen as a separate motif in 5.85 and 5.86, in a line as a band in 5.87 and 5.88 and repeated as an all-over pattern in 5.89. The palmette settles deeply into the iconography of the early designs. It partners with flower/foolate motifs like the quatrefoil, rosette and petaloid in 5.86 and 5.87. It plays with translatory and dilatory symmetry in 5.90. It nestles into spiraliform designs as in 5.91 to 5.93. It surrounds the exotic lion in 5.94. The tree in 5.60 may be the earliest palm tree, but with only one curving frond its identification is difficult. Certainly, the palm tree is clearly seen in 5.95 in one of the earliest depictions of the tree growing from rocky ground motif, and it already has palm plants shooting out from its base, a detail that continues in the motif. Palmettes frame the hieroglyphic text in 5.96.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Minoan High Art* (Plates 5.97 to 5.108)

The palm tree as sole subject is seen in 5.97 as a tree growing from rocky ground with additional palm fronds growing out of the base. As part of a landscape, the palm tree in 5.98 does seem to be an edible date palm with the small-sized fruit carefully depicted. Significantly, a lion is also shown. The hunter in 5.99 aims his spear in a landscape containing a palm plant. Examples from the talismanic repertoire, 5.100 to 5.102, show that the motifs, so well-known from the early seals, are now given stylised renderings. The palmette of earlier times turns into a tree which grows from a smooth ground mound. The palm plants springing from the base are linearised, and in some examples the flowering/fruited pendants are shown as round or oval shapes¹².

Fantastic creatures find a natural home where the palm tree and the palm plant grow, as with the dragon in 5.103 and the griffin in 5.104. The cultscapes of 5.105 to 5.108 stress the importance of the palm tree and palm plant. A woman server places a plant on the altar with double horns in 5.105, and at her back is a palm plant growing from rocky ground. In 5.106 a female deity accompanied by two servers stands before a tree shrine given extra import by the placement of a palm plant in front. In both 5.107 and 5.108 the palm tree is placed in a significant position. In 5.107 it stands before a lattice shrine in the grand boat, and a female deity acknowledges it with gesture. In 5.108 it identifies the female deity seated before it.

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods* (Plates 5.109 to 5.120)

The animal with palm combination continues as in 5.109 to 5.111 with the palm tree and bulls and lions and as in 5.113 and 5.114 with the palm plant and boars and lion. For the palm tree, the natural

¹² This linearisation and its effect were discussed under Brief Experiments in Chapter 3 above.

look of 5.109 disappears and stylised variations become the norm as shown in 5.110, 5.111 and 5.115 to 5.120. This stylised palm tree has a single slender trunk which springs from a base knob with shoots emerging each side. The trunk is often horizontally ribbed and the canopy consists of a central spike(s) or triple bud while branches and/or inflorescence curve down each side. An attempt at placing the palm trees in a landscape is seen in the chariot scene of 5.82 and the animal attack/suckling scene of 5.112. However, increasingly the palm trees are seen in symbolic compositions. They are placed with animals like the bulls in 5.116 and the antithetical groups of 5.117 and 5.118. They appear in cultscapes like the sacrifice scene in 5.115, the serving at the altar scene of 5.119 and the deity gesturing in 5.120. By the Late Period there are few designs that can be seen clearly as palms but there are schematised shapes that may be trees as in 5.55 to 5.57.

Iconographic Interpretation: Two Beautiful Gardens

Interpretation of the lush plant images created by the Minoans follows. For the Mycenaeans, their plant iconography, including the Mycenaean palm, is discussed below in Chapter 14.

It is as if the Minoans, for the first thousand years of their artistic life, carry a garden around with them on their seals and after that they are never quite able to leave it. When we first meet the seals in the Early Seal Period the proliferation of floral and foliate designs is striking. All the flower shapes are there very early, seen in plan or in elevation: the rosette, quatrefoil, papyrus, lily, iris, crocus and triple bud. Various patterns are made from these flower shapes, both band and all-over patterns like the rosette band, flower cross and quatrefoil flower pattern. Foliate shapes are there, too, individually or cumulatively: leaf (rounded or lanceolate), petaloid, double leaf, branch, plant and palmette. Then, just as with the flowers, the leaves and plants are made into band and all-over patterns like the leaf band, double leaf band, palmette band and palmette pattern. As we move into Minoan High Art these individual floral and foliate motifs are lost to the seal repertoire, and seal artists construct developed landscapes and cultscapes which frame the activities of animals and humans¹³. The flower field and the papyrus marsh are notable here. The pairing of animal with branch or tree/plant remains a favourite subject. The tree growing from rocky ground becomes a significant symbol at this time while the triple bud continues in use. The bounty of nature inspires seal artists to create floral and foliate symbols which are among the most potent and the most lasting of Minoan images.

Now, is it possible to identify within the Aegean florilegium the actual flowers, plants and trees that inspire the artistic motifs we have been examining¹⁴? The rosette is ever important and, since it can have 5 to 12 or more petals, it may represent any number of flowers. With 6 or 8 petals, it may be showing the open flower faces of Cretan wildflowers like those of the ranunculus, anemone or cistus families. With 5 petals it may be the ever-so-useful flax plant. The quatrefoil may represent simpler flowers with 4 petals like the rare Cretan clematis which spreads its tiny white flowers out from cracks in the rocks¹⁵. More likely it is the olive flower since the olive, with its sustaining food and oil, is a vital part of the agricultural produce for the people. The iris in art, rarely shown, may well be the iris flower. The lily and crocus may, between them, represent the flowers sprouting from bulbs like the crocus, tulip, lily and sea daffodil

13 The earlier floral and foliate motifs do not disappear from art. They take their place as jewellery designs, in metalwork, on ivory carvings and as borders to the frescoes. See the discussions in Chapters 13 and 14 below.

14 Endemic plants that may be the source of the artistic motifs include: *Iris unguicularis* ssp *cretensis*, *Ranunculus cupreus*, *Crocus sieberi* ssp *sieberi* (Siebers crocus is the only spring flowering crocus on Crete), *Crocus oreocreticus*/*Cretan crocus*, *Crocus sativus* (the autumn flowering saffron crocus), *Lilium candidum*, *Cistus creticus*, *Tulipa cretica*, *Pancretium maritimum* (spectacularly flowering in late summer), *Anemone hortensis* ssp *Heldreichii*, *Cyclamen creticum*, *Capparis spinosa*, *Helichrysum stoechas*, *Origanum dictamnus*, *Phoenix theophrasti* and *Olea Europa* ssp *oleaster*. Note also the flowers of the flax plant, *Linum usitatissimum*.

15 Perhaps not so rare in Bronze Age times, the Clematis elisabethae-carolae is now found in the White Mountains, nestling in craggy clefts.

families. The Minoans grew the crocus and no doubt valued saffron, its dried stigma, as a culinary ingredient and a yellow dye. The crocus and its saffron deserve special mention because of its medicinal properties, known in the ancient world and being researched further today. Some of the early fan-shaped florets filling interstices may be inspired by the thistle, the caper or flowers of the aster family. The palm and palmette may be sourced in the Theophrastus Date Palm which is endemic to Crete. Perhaps the distinct yellow/orange colour of the large inflorescence of the Cretan palm recommended its inclusion in the floral repertoire. The detail of leaf types is impressive and indicates close attention to the different plants and no doubt to their uses. The tiny leaves may represent the favourite herbs. The paired leaves of the leaf band may be sprigs of thyme or oregano while the larger rounded leaves may belong to Cretan dittany. The motif name ivy probably covers the creeping ivy but the inspiration for the design may be not a leaf at all but the heart-shaped seed pod of the silphium plant, now extinct¹⁶. The plants with long strappy leaves rising behind boulders are likely to be squills¹⁷ whose strong growth comes as winter moves to early spring. The careful rendition of shape in all these flower and leaf images provides evidence of different endemic plant types, suggesting not only food sources but also herbal and medicinal usages and the changing seasons. The many micro-climates of Crete which helped promote the varied florilegium and many unique endemic species of Crete have long been recognised as very special¹⁸. The Minoan artists were certainly appreciative, recording plant beauty in exquisite detail as shape which, in the seals, must do duty to suggest colour, texture and perfume. These representations provide an expansive picture of the bounty of nature to be enjoyed by the peoples of Crete from the earliest times. This is the Minoan endemic garden which we may name after its favourite flower, the Lily Garden.

However, the terms papyrus, palm and palmette may well indicate exotic flora, particularly when there are so many links with Egypt discernible in the Early Seal Period in Crete¹⁹. For the papyrus there is a strong case to be made that it is indeed the Egyptian papyrus, famous in the ancient world both as the extensive papyrus thickets of the Nile marshes and the beautiful depictions in Egyptian art²⁰. The palm and palmette may be recording the eastern domesticated date palm, so useful as a food source and distinctive marker of watered fertile oases²¹. The papyrus and palmette motifs are well-established in the iconographic repertoire by the end of the Early Seal Period where the papyrus flower stem is already sprouting lanceolate leaves as in 1.66. Adding leaves to the papyrus stem may be in imitation of the endemic reeds or as a parallel to the lily flower stem, or both. Clearly, the bare triangular stem of the Egyptian papyrus has been Aegeanised. In Minoan High Art, the papyrus plant creates a special marshy landscape where waterfowl swim as in 5.29. The many depictions of water birds and a marshy landscape suggest that Crete enjoyed a wetter climate in the Bronze Age than today²². However, in Minoan High Art, the main role of the palm tree, palm plant and papyrus flower is to designate a fantasy landscape where deities, dragons and griffins abide as in 5.37, 5.39, 5.103, 5.104 and 5.106 to 5.108. Sourced in exotica, this is the Minoan supernatural garden, which we may name after its favourite flower, the Papyrus Garden.

Yet for all the delightful floral and foliate life depicted in both these Gardens, the aim is not simply to display each flower, leaf, branch, plant and tree. The Minoan artist also seeks to present the deep

16 Products of the silphium plant, used for food and medicine, were highly sought in the Greek and Roman world. It is thought to be a type of large fennel plant, possibly with yellow leaves and flowers. The image of the silphium plant and its seed are found on the later coinage of Cyrenaica.

17 Sea squills, *Urginia/Charybdis/Drimia maritima*, have a large bulb, sprout long leathery dark leaves in spring which die back and then produce a tall raceme of white flowers in autumn.

18 Baumann 1993 gives an overview of the wildflowers and plant lore, noting the prevalence of micro-climates.

19 Links may be earlier. See AE, 71-83, and the discussion on exotic and fantastic arrivals in Chapter 10 below.

20 *Cyperus papyrus*. See the MAST Seminar 2021 and Crowley ZOIA, 208-210.

21 The domesticated date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*.

22 Vlacopoulos and Zorzos, PHYSIS, 183-196.

geometric structuring of each living element, thus revealing their ability to peer into the natural world and see its deep patterning²³.

Plant Symbols: tree growing from rocky ground, triple bud, rosette, lily and papyrus

For the tree growing from rocky ground, it is crucial to see beyond a simple assessment of a stage setting for human activity. The tree growing from rocky ground is an *Icon* in its own right, occupying central place or either side of the bezel curve in complex compositions as in 5.67, 5.127 and 5.128. Arthur Evans recognised its importance in his early writing where he saw both the tree and the pillar as the focus of worship²⁴. However, the tree is only half of the image. The tree has to be rooted in the nurturing soil which, as we have seen in Crete, comes naturally in the form of rocky ground. The tree is shown in various forms as in 5.67 to 5.72, 5.121 to 5.124 and 5.126 to 5.128. Even when the tree grows out of a tree shrine it is rooted in the rocky ground as in 5.121 and 5.126. It is one of the main indicators of a cultscape. It is the focus of the important tree pulling ceremony discussed below. Yet it is also a reflection of the slopes of the rocky mountains we met in Chapter 4. The tree growing from rocky ground is the vibrant symbol that encapsulates in one image the great forests clothing the Cretan mountains which surround the Minoans in their daily life.

The triple bud is one of the most striking of the endemic green symbols, and in it we see further testament to the importance of enveloping greenery. The triple bud and its extended form, the triple bud rod, continue from the Early Seal Period through into Minoan High Art. The triple bud may be the lily or crocus bud or the first shoot sprouting from a seed. As any, or all of these, it becomes a symbol of the bursting energy of every plant as it grows to the light. Of prolific use in the designs of the early seals, it is overtaken by more naturalistic floral displays in Minoan High Art but its symbolic use continues. In the antithetical group composition of 5.42, the triple bud rod is the central motif associated with other important symbols, the curved altar and the Mistress with horn bow hat, all three together being the focus of the attendant griffins. Its importance is underscored by naming the VIP who holds it the Triple Bud Rod Lord as in 5.34.

Now we turn to the flower symbols of the rosette, the lily and the papyrus. The rosette has a strong presence in the early seals although it is eclipsed by other flowers in the later more naturalistic depictions. The lily is the endemic flower shown in profile with loving detail of volute petals and upright stamens as in 5.4/1.36 and 1.25. Its shape helps create the triple bud symbol. By Minoan High Art it takes a more naturalistic form, being shown as opening bud and fully open flower in 5.32 and as fully open flower on its stem with lanceolate leaves in 5.33. Its strong presence in the iconographic repertoire²⁵ makes it the symbol of the endemic garden. Papyrus images begin as the individual flower head motifs favoured in the early seals. In the Phaistos Sealings it is shown growing in a landscape as in 1.66, and by Minoan High Art its long stem has gathered lanceolate leaves as with the lily, seen in 5.26 and 5.33, or reeds. It is used symbolically to identify a deity as in 5.36 or as a tree of life as in 5.40. It is the abode of exotic and fantastic creatures as in 5.37 to 5.39. Now, the other plant with exotic links, the palm, enters the iconographic repertoire as the palmette pattern of the early seals and becomes the full-grown tree in Minoan High Art where it partakes in the symbolic role of the tree, as discussed above. In 5.106, as a palm plant, it grows before a tree shrine, in 5.107 it grows before a shrine in the grand boat, in 5.108 it marks the seat of a Seated Lady, and in 5.97 it is a special case of the tree growing from rocky ground. The palm has important roles to play but it still seems that the papyrus is the signature plant of the supernatural garden. The two floral symbols, lily and papyrus, are paired as the artist displays in 5.33. This pairing immediately, in the most succinct way, reminds us of the two gardens: the endemic garden of the real world inhabited by the Minoans, the Lily Garden; and the supernatural world of their beliefs

23 As discussed in the section Beautiful Geometry and Natural Shapes in Chapter 3 above.

24 Evans 1901, 99-204.

25 See Aphordhakos and Warren 2011, 271-284, on the lily in botany and iconography.

where exotic and fantastic creatures play in the company of deities, the Papyrus Garden. Is this endemic-supernatural pairing the meaning behind their fusion into the papyrus lily flower as in 5.30? Although it does not enjoy a wide coverage in the seals, the papyrus lily is beloved of the decorative designs in jewellery and in fresco borders. Even as the floral and foliate symbols transform they are potent to the end.

The Ceremony of Pulling the Tree (Plates 5.121 to 5.129)

The tree is the focus of the pulling the tree ceremony, whether it is depicted as the tree growing from rocky ground or as the tree growing from within a shrine. The tree is as much a protagonist in the ceremony as the woman or man. The nine seal examples comprise seven gold signets, 5.121 to 5.124 and 5.127 to 5.129, one sealing from a metal signet 5.125 and one soft stone lentoid 5.126. Seven of the examples, 5.121 to 5.127, belong to the Minoan High Art Period and are discussed here. The signet 5.128 is an exceptional example and is treated fully in Chapter 14 along with the signet 5.129.

The ceremony of pulling the tree consists of the human stepping up to the tree, raising one or both their arms to grasp the trunk or bough and pulling it towards their body so that the tree canopy overshadows them. The ceremony presents a striking image which the artist has captured in a compelling cultscape *Icon*. Tree pulling takes place in the open air with the cultscape indicators, apart from the tree, being one or more of the *Icons*, beehive with bees, hovering symbol or celestial sign. The beehive is the pithos-shaped item occupying the left curve of the bezel as in 5.121 and 5.127 and in all beehive representations. The bees are shown as dots around the beehive and even flying in a line to the tree canopy as in 5.121. The tree canopy is regularly shown as heavy foliage with a variety of surface textures, often raised dots or fringe dots. The exaggeration of these details draws attention to their importance and so, in conjunction with the beehive and bees, they can plausibly be read as flowers and more bees. In 5.123 and 5.124 a female epiphany figure is seen. The hovering symbols as in 5.122, 5.124 and 5.127 are the eye, triple bud rod, piriformshape, pillarshape, grainshape and double axe with scarf. Although these items cannot actually be in the air above, they are depicted as hovering over the human figures who do not pay any attention to them. The celestial sign, the skyline, is seen above in 5.124. In performing the act, the tree puller usually uses both arms. If the tree puller uses only one arm to grasp the tree then the other may reach out and gesture to other figures in the scene as in 5.123 and 5.127. In 5.123, the only example where something is held, the man holds a piriform rhyton²⁶ in his outstretched hand. When rocky ground or boulders are shown they provide a natural base for the puller to step up to the right height to perform the act as in 5.121, 5.123 and 5.127. We should see 5.126 in the same way, allowing that the looping rocks supporting the tree would have been extended around for the puller to stand upon, but the constraints of the circular lentoid composition did not provide the space to do so. When the tree is growing out of a shrine constructed in a paved area as in 5.122, the puller has the paving to stand upon but he still exhibits the same stepping pose. The ring bezel 5.124 is quite worn and there is no clear base for the puller but he still has the stepping pose as if rocks were there. Accordingly, it is hard to substantiate suggestions of the puller dancing or swinging on the tree when all the seal relief details are consulted, rather than the line drawings which sometimes omit the rocks. Most images clearly show that the puller is firmly on the rocks/ground, pushing up to reach the tree. The human pulling the tree may be a woman or a man. Both wear standard Minoan attire. The woman has a bare breast and does not wear one of the more familiar skirt variations but dons long pants. The wearing of pants, which cling close to the body and are sometimes diaphanous, has led some readers to see the women as nude. This is never the case, and close observation will always reveal the hemline marked at the calf. The man wears belt, codpiece and kilt with the rest of his body bare. Their bodies are appropriately shaped as female and male within the Minoan norm, the woman with generous bosom and some exaggeration of the thighs and buttocks, and the man lean and muscular. Their heads show some shape allowing for the minute size

26 For piriform, globular, alabastron and ovoid rhyta see Koehl 2006, 85-114 and 131-136.

– a nose in profile, an eye perhaps – but are too small to show individual identity or emotion. Their hair is in long ringlets or braided and is regularly shown as dots. In performing the tree pulling, the humans raise their heads so their faces can look up at the tree canopy, except for 5.123 where the woman's head is turned towards the other figures in the scene to whom she is also gesturing with her free hand. When pulling the tree, women and men are shown in full control of their limbs and actions. Other figures in the scenes are carefully posed. They are boulder kneelers as in 5.121 and 5.122, beholders of epiphanies as in 5.123 and 5.124 or witnesses to the ceremony like the women in 5.122 and 5.127. As standing or seated figures, they too give deliberate gestures.

This ceremony has always been seen generally as part of the nature worship of the Minoans, from allowing that the tree is sacred through to celebrating animism, but the detail of the seals has shown that there are many layers of meaning in this complex image²⁷. The tree, the focus of the human act, is the symbol of nature, of growth emanating from the sacred ground itself and found so important that a shrine is constructed around it. These focus trees may vary as to foliage and flower shape, with this variation possibly indicating the olive, which is vital for the economy, the fig or the grape. The tree is full of flowers and the bees are buzzing to pollinate the blossoms; so this must be a spring ceremony. The human partakes of this bursting life by grasping the tree and pulling it over her/him while the symbols connecting to the other world watch over the mortal. When the woman/man pulls the tree down it must shower him/her with petals or, more importantly, pollen. However, the pulling may also be shaking – it is very hard to indicate this in a static art form – a movement duplicating the movement of wind through the trees. If this is also intended by the artist then the “showering” of pollen would be even more effective. In taking into account the bees and beehive linked to the tree, and remembering the other seal images with little bees working away at pollen and bee bread balls²⁸, we need to remember the importance of honey to this community as the only available sweetener and for its antiseptic and medicinal properties. In all these details we can see that the celebration of spring and the fertilising of the cropping tree is the essence of the pulling the tree ceremony. The seasonal nature of the ceremony suggests that it is performed every spring, perhaps in each community. Thus, as a regularly repeated ceremony, it would carry added import. The human is the active participant in this seasonal miracle and all the while performs the ceremony with deliberative care and serious intensity. There are no physical indicators of an out-of-body state²⁹. The cultscape has specifically set the scene as linking this world with the other, and so humans perform an act which completely identifies them with the regenerative forces of nature – even to personifying the wind or bee as pollinator of the sacred tree.

27 Caroline Tully, 2018b, gives a detailed discussion of tree worship in the Aegean, Egypt, the Levant and Cyprus in her important monograph, *Aegaeum* 42.

28 See the discussion on bees in Crowley 2014a, 129-139.

29 Nevertheless, much has been written on this ceremony as being performed by a human in ecstasy or trance, McGowan 2011; Tully 2016, 19-30; Tully and Crooks 2015, 129-169 and MNEME 749-752. The phenomenon of ecstatic experience in the ancient world is generally addressed in Stein et al 2022, with papers on the Aegean by Bonney, Foster, Lupack, Morris and Peatfield and Tully.

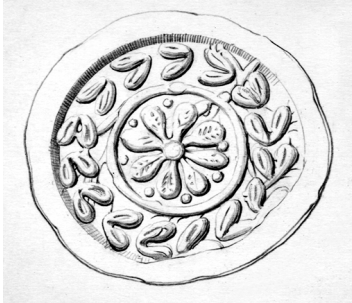
Comparisons with Images in Other Media

1. Flowers and leaves in gold jewellery from Mochlos.
FLL, 166 and Plates 131 A-B, 132 A-B.
2. The extensive use of floral/foliate motifs in Kamares pottery designs.
FLL, Plates 12 to 21.
3. Papyrus, palms and griffins in the Throne Room Frescoes, Knossos.
CM, Plate 33.
A careful recalibration of the original fragments is found in Galanakis et al. 2017, 47-98.
4. White lilies in a flower garden in the Amnisos Fresco.
CM, Plate XXII.
5. Spirals, papyrus, triple bud and rosette patterns on the stone ceiling of the grave chamber of the Orchomenos Tholos.
CM, Plate 161.

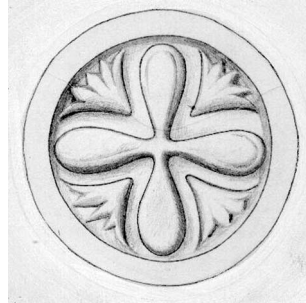
Plates 5.1 to 5.129

Flowers, Leaves and Branches

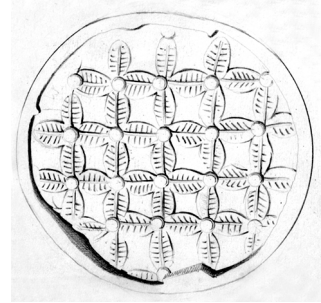
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period*



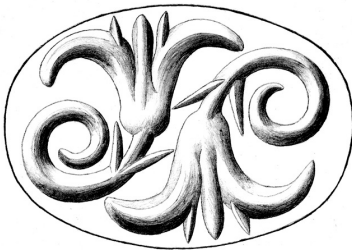
5.1 – rosette, double leaf band
(II.1 228/EMIII-MMIA)



5.2 – quatrefoil, papyrus
(II.5 219/MM II)



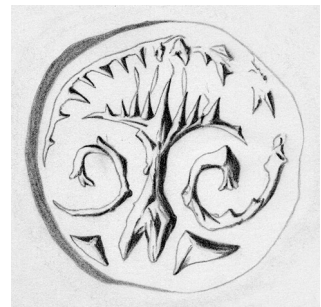
5.3 – quatrefoil pattern
(II.1 241/EM III-MM IA)



5.4 – lily
(VS 3 41/MM II)



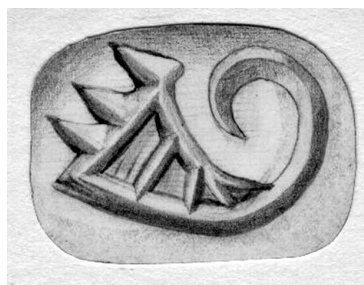
5.5 – crocus
(XI 12c/MM II-MM III)



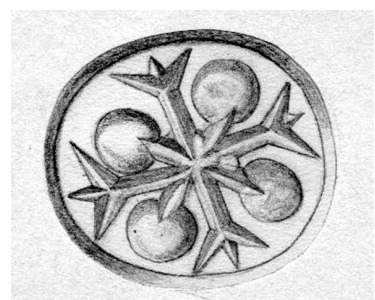
5.6 – papyrus
(VIII 22b/MM II)



5.7 – triple bud, leaf, petaloid
(II.1 90/MM II)



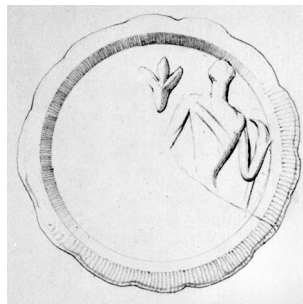
5.8 – truncated petaloid
(II.2 250a/MM II)



5.9 – flower cross
(II.2 164a/MM II)



5.10 – triple bud
(II.5 323/MM II)



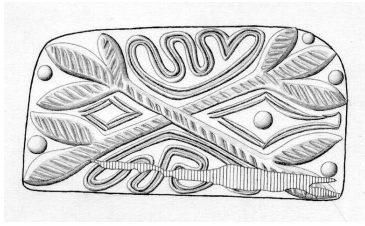
5.11 – triple bud
(II.5 325/EM III-MM IA?)



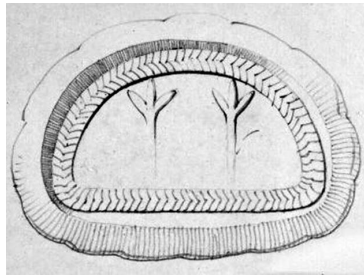
5.12 – triple bud
(II.2 242a/MM I)

The Bounty of Nature

Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Early Seal Period (cont.)*



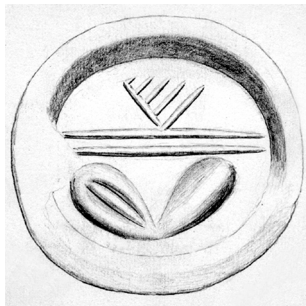
5.13 – triple bud rod
(VS 1A 295/EM III-MM IA?)



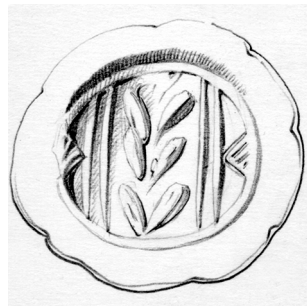
5.14 – triple bud rod
(II.5 230/EM III-MM IA?)



5.15 – triple bud lily
(II.2 316a/MM II)



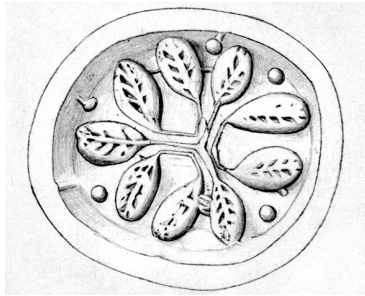
5.16 – double leaf
(II.1 379/EM III-MM IA)



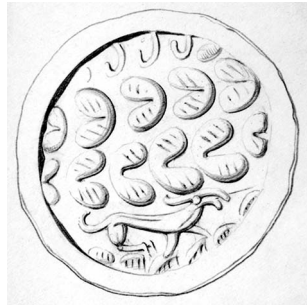
5.17 – double leaf band
(II.1 333b/EM III-MM IA)



5.18 – leaf band
(II.6 179/MM II)



5.19 – leaves
(II.1 44/EM III-MM IA?)



5.20 – leaves
(II.1 295a/EM III-MM IA)



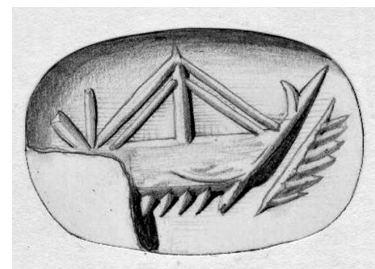
5.21 – spiral leaf band
(II.1 222a/EM III-MM IA)



5.22 – branch, agrimi
(II.2 125a/MM II)



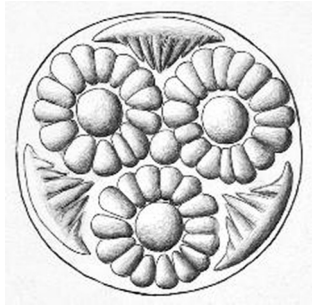
5.23 – branch, bird
(II.2 184a/MM II)



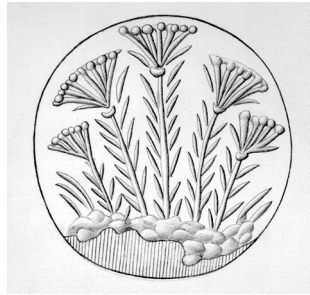
5.24 – branch, ship
(II.2 261b/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

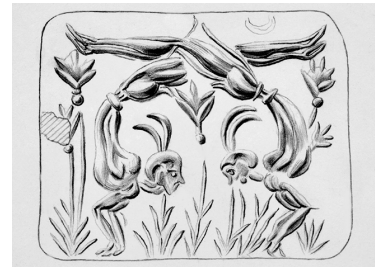
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art*



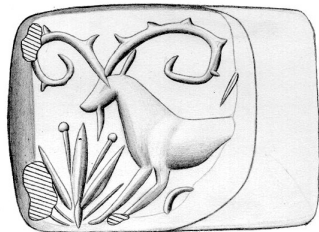
5.25 – rosette, papyrus
(II.8 116/MM III-LM I)



5.26 – papyrus flower plant
(VS 1A 46/MM III-LM I)



5.27 – flower plants
(VI 184/MM III-LM I)



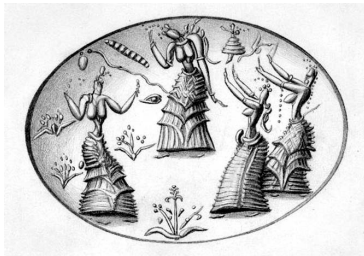
5.28 – crocus, agrimi
(VS 1B 247/LM I)



5.29 – papyrus, birds
(VI 459/LM I)



5.30 – papyrus lily
(II.8 285/LM I-LM II?)



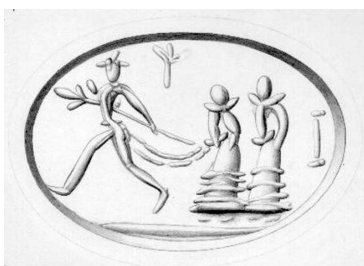
5.31 – flower field
(II.3 51/LM I-LM II)



5.32 – flower field
(VS 1B 113/LB I-LB II)



5.33 – lily, papyrus, women
(VS 3 243/LB I-LB II)



5.34 – triple bud rod
(V 173/LH I-LH II)



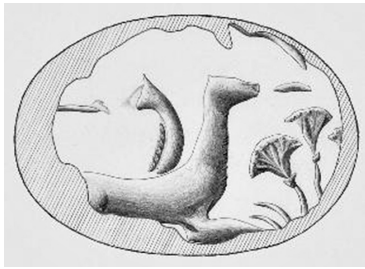
5.35 – crocus
(III 349/LM I-LM II)



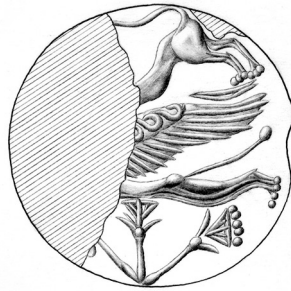
5.36 – papyrus
(XI 20a/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

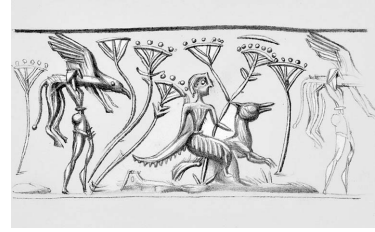
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



5.37 – papyrus, dragons
(II.6 34/LM I)



5.38 – papyrus, griffin, lion
(VS 3 480/LM I-LM II)



5.39 – papyrus
(VI 321/LM I-LM II)



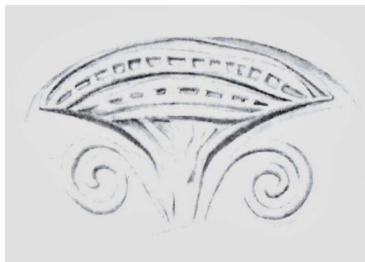
5.40 – papyrus tree of life
(II.6 102/LM I)



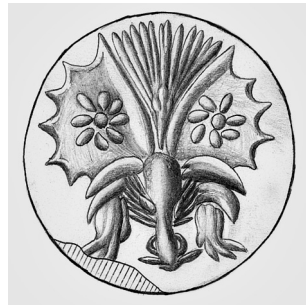
5.41 – rosette tree of life
(VI 310/LB I-LB II)



5.42 – triple bud rod
(XIII 39/-)



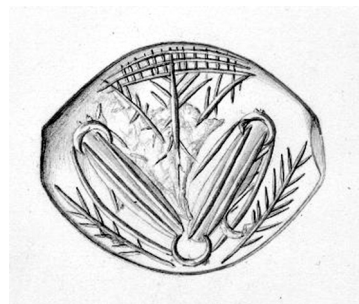
5.43 – papyrus lily
(X 120/LM)



5.44 – rosette
(II.7 158/LM I)



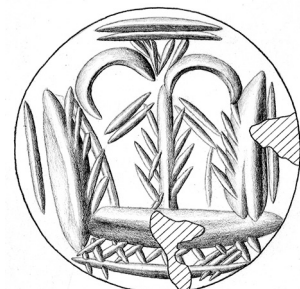
5.45 – rosette, papyrus
(II.7 104A/LM I)



5.46 – leaf, branch, papyrus
(X 230/LM I)



5.47 – ivy leaf, branch
(IV 234/LM I)



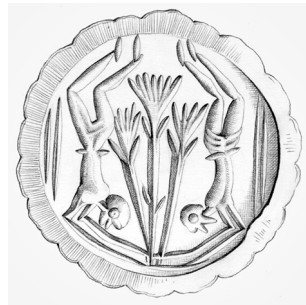
5.48 – papyrus lily, double horns
(III 345/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

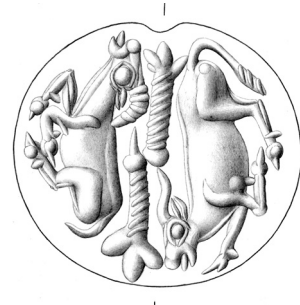
Flowers, Leaves and Branches – *Legacy and Late Periods*



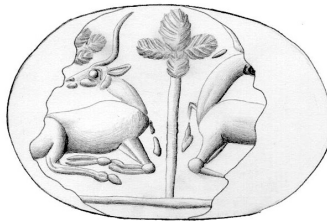
5.49 – flower plant
(XII 249/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.50 – papyrus
(I 131/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.51 – triple bud rod
(I 53/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.52 – tree of life
(VS 1B 354/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.53 – tree of life
(I 87/LB II-LB IIIA1)



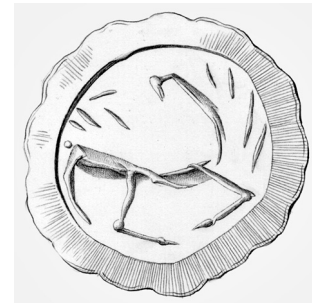
5.54 – tree of life
(II.8 521/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.55 – branches
(I 42/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



5.56 – branches
(VS 3 180/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)



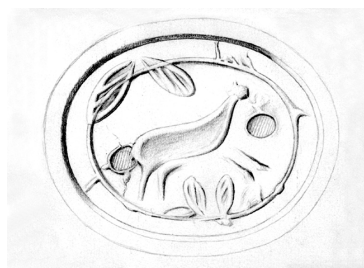
5.57 – branches
(I.29/LH IIIA2-LH IIIB)

Plants and Trees

Plants and Trees – *Early Seal Period*



5.58 – plant, tree
(II.1 64b/EM III-MM IA)



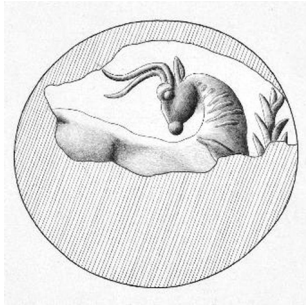
5.59 – leaves as plants
(II.1 392b/EM III-MM IA)



5.60 – tree
(VI 45a/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

Plants and Trees – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art



5.61 – plant, bull
(II.8 437/LB I-LB II)



5.62 – plant, boar
(I 436a/LM I)



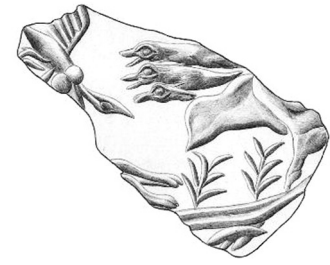
5.63 – plant, lion
(I 272a/LB I-LB II)



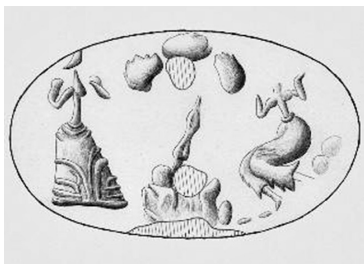
5.64 – tree, agrimi
(VI 178/MM III-LM I)



5.65 – tree, agrimi, hound
(II.8 353/MM III-LM I)



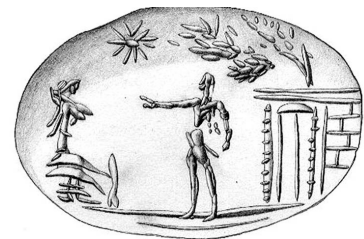
5.66 – plants, birds
(II.8 370/LM I)



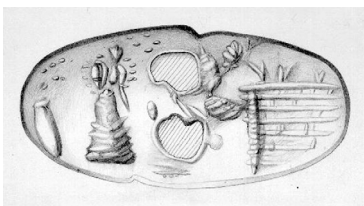
5.67 – tree growing from rocky ground
(II.6 5/LM I)



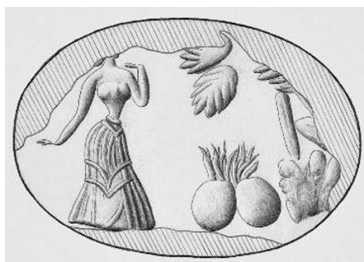
5.68 – tree shrine
(VS 1A 176/LM I)



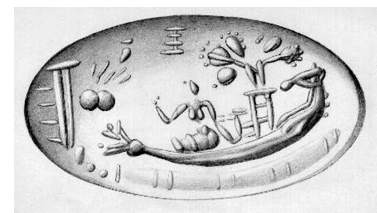
5.69 – tree shrine
(XI 28/LM I)



5.70 – tree shrine
(II.3 15/LM I)



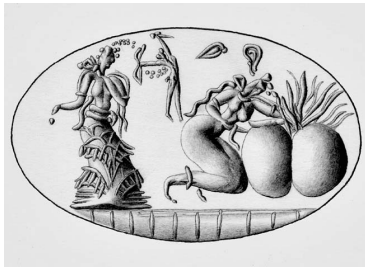
5.71 – tree shrine, boulders with plants
(II.6 2/LM I)



5.72 – grand boat, tree shrine
(II.3 252/LM I)

The Bounty of Nature

Plants and Trees – Experimentation Period and Minoan High Art (cont.)



5.73 – boulders with plants
(VI 278/LM I)



5.74 – plants, deity
(II.3 171/LM I)



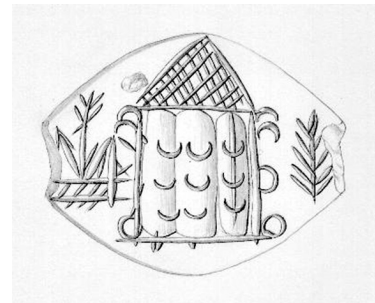
5.75 – plants, genius
(I 231/LB I-LB II)



5.76 – ewer with plants
(II.3 261/LM I)



5.77 – vase with plants
(III 245/LM I)



5.78 – plants, double horns
(X 101/LM I)

Plants and Trees – Legacy and Late Periods



5.79 – plant, agrimia
(I 45/LB IIIA)



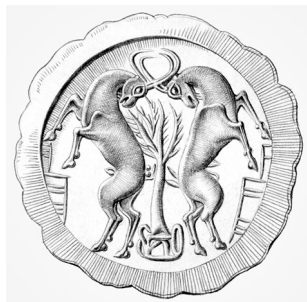
5.80 – tree, agrimi
(II.6 248/LM IIIA1)



5.81 – tree, bull
(XI 248/LM IIIA1)



5.82 – tree
(VS 1B 137/LB II-LB IIIA1)



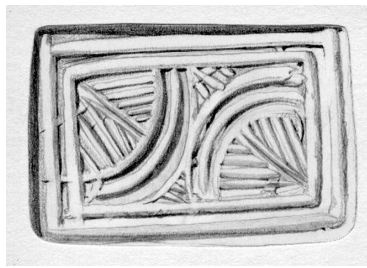
5.83 – tree of life
(I 123/LB II-LB IIIA1)



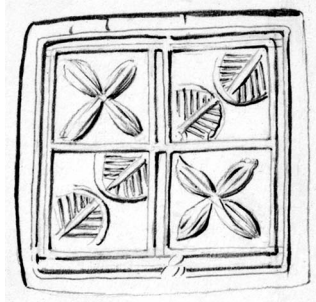
5.84 – tree of life
(VI 446/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Early Seal Period*



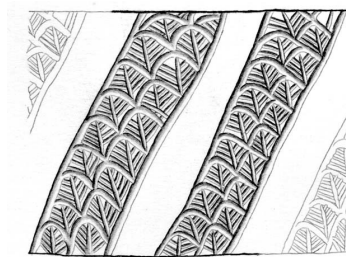
5.85 – palmettes
(II.2 70b/EM III-MM IA)



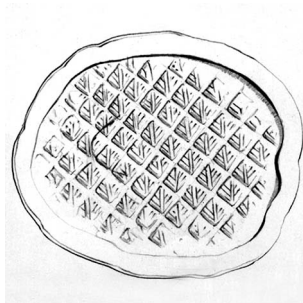
5.86 – palmettes
(II.1 450/EM III-MM IA)



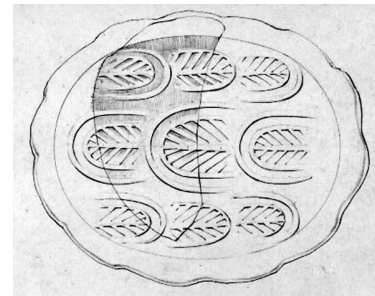
5.87 – palmette band
(VS 3 186/MM IA)



5.88 – palmette band
(III.31/MM II)



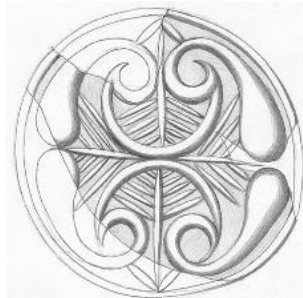
5.89 – palmette pattern
(II.1 242/EM III-MM IA)



5.90 – palmettes
(II.5 206/EM III-MM IA)



5.91 – palmettes, spirals
(IV 42a/EM III-MM IA)



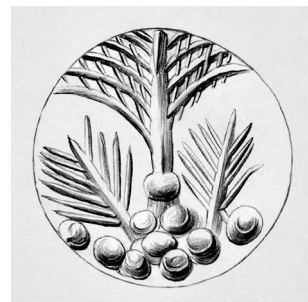
5.92 – palmettes, spirals
(II.8 20/MM II)



5.93 – palmette
(VI 7/EM III-MM IA)



5.94 – palmette band
(II.1 252a/EM III-MM IA)



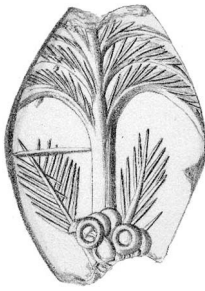
5.95 – palm tree growing from rocky ground
(VI 157/MM II-MM III)



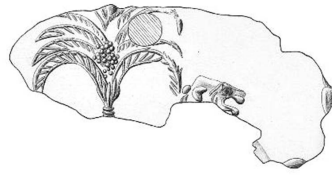
5.96 – palmettes
(VI 93b/MM II)

The Bounty of Nature

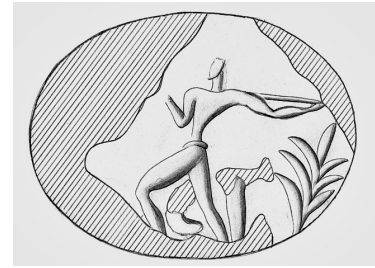
Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Minoan High Art*



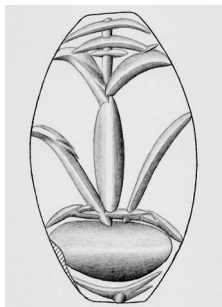
5.97 – tree growing from rocky ground
(XII 180/LM I)



5.98 – palm tree
(II.8 297/LM I-LM II)



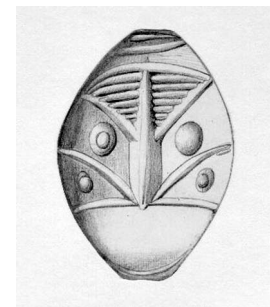
5.99 – palm plant
(II.7 19/LM I)



5.100 – palmette tree
(VI 213/LM I)



5.101 – palmette tree
(II.3 12a/LM I)



5.102 – palmette tree
(II.3 253/LM I)



5.103 – palm tree, dragon
(VI 362/LM I)



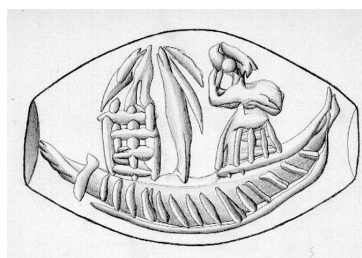
5.104 – palm tree, griffin
(II.7 87/LM I)



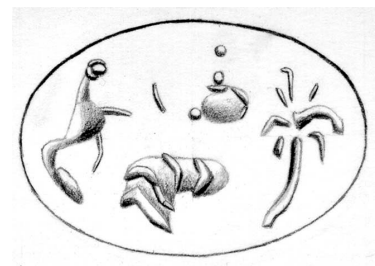
5.105 – palm plant, altar
(I 410/LB I)



5.106 – palm plant, shrine
(II.6 1/LM I)



5.107 – palm tree, grand boat
(VS 1A 55/LM I)



5.108 – palm tree
(IS 114/LB I-LB II)

The Bounty of Nature

Palmettes, Palm Plants and Palm Trees – *Legacy and Late Periods*



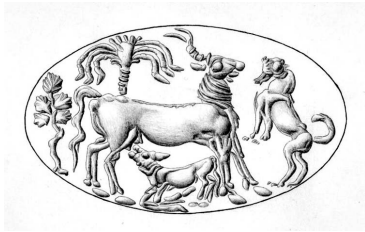
5.109 – palm tree, lions
(I 71/LB II)



5.110 – palm tree, bull
(I 57/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.111 – palm tree, bull
(V 157/LB II-LB IIIA1)



5.112 – palm tree
(VS 1B 136/LB II-LB IIIA1)



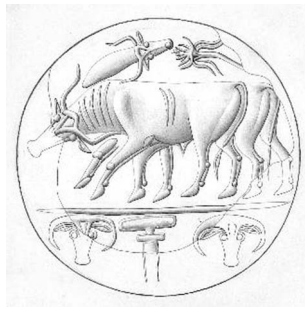
5.113 – palm plants
(XI 55b/LB II-LB IIIA1)



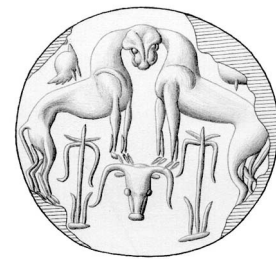
5.114 – palm plant
(XI 284/LB II-LB IIIA1)



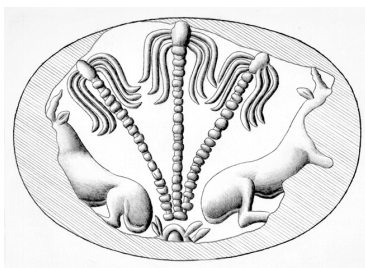
5.115 – palm tree
(XI 52/LH II-LH IIIA1)



5.116 – palm tree
(II.8 498/LB II-LB IIIA1?)



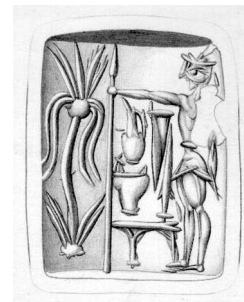
5.117 – palm trees
(VS 1B 353/LB IIIA1-LB IIIA2)



5.118 – palm tree of life
(I 375/LB II)



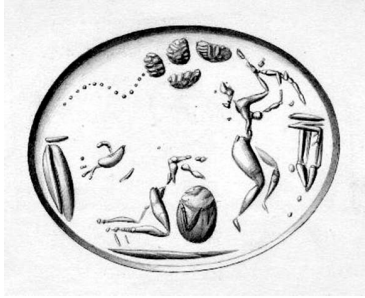
5.119 – palm tree, curved altar
(VS 1A 75/LB II-LB IIIA1)



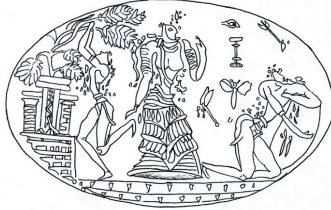
5.120 – palm tree, sacrifice altar
(V 608/LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2)

Iconographic Interpretation: Two Beautiful Gardens

The Ceremony of Pulling the Tree



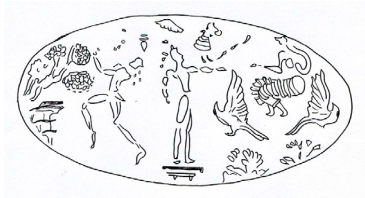
5.121 – woman tree puller, man boulder kneeler (II.3 114/LM I)



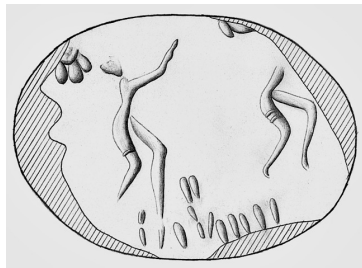
5.122 – man tree puller, man boulder kneeler (Archanes Cult Ring/LM I)



5.123 – woman tree puller, man tree puller (Minos Ring/LM I)



5.124 – man tree puller (Poros Ring/LM I)



5.125 – man tree puller (II.7 10/LM I)



5.126 – woman tree puller (XII 264/LM I)



impression



impression



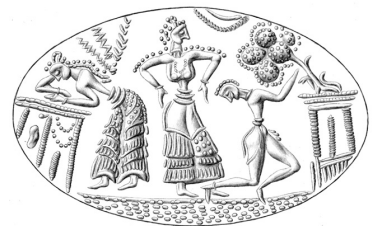
impression



5.127 – man tree puller (I 219/LM I)



5.128 – woman tree puller (I 17/LB I-LB II)



5.129 – man tree puller (I 126/LB II-LB IIIA1)