

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE MM: THE TOMB OF KAMILARI

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The tomb 1 of Kamilari, as is well-known,¹ was plundered in ancient times and, consequently, the layer of stones, which had fallen from the vault and was found at the moment of opening, did not seal in the state of things at the time of the last burial, but rather the situation left by the robbers. The door was still closed by a large stone slab, but the central keystone placed at the apex of the vault to ensure its stability was not found inside the tholos among the stones of the roofing which had fallen there, but rather outside it. This showed that the robbers had entered the tomb from above, and it is this fact which consequently caused the collapse of the whole vault, perhaps after a long time, although it is not possible to measure the interval between the removal of the keystone and the final collapse.

The total lack of precious objects, apart from a few grains of gold which had evidently escaped the notice of the violators, proves that the position of the materials was disarranged during the plundering of the tomb, although the groups of vessels do not seem to have been moved very much; rather they reveal signs of having been searched and, as a result, also broken, in the hunt for precious goods.

It is not possible, therefore, to determine with certainty the criterion used for the collocation of the burial material. However by carefully examining the position of groups of homogeneous vessels it would seem that, as more remains and material were added, the zone between the entrance and the central area was gradually cleared by moving the bones and material from the previous burial towards the perimeter of the tholos. In addition, the stylistic sequence and, to a certain extent, also the stratigraphic sequence of the ceramics, permit us to fix the date of its construction in MM IB and to establish that it was definitively abandoned in LM. Between these two periods the tomb was in constant use.

The finding of objects which can be dated from the early periods MM IB and MM IIA bear witness to this fact; for example: the small jug *à la barbotine* F 2927² and the small jar

* Translated by D. Bland.

The figures, not in scale, intend to stress the comparison between seal motifs.

Source of illustrations: *Fig. 4e*: Evans, PM I 674 Fig. 493a; *Fig. 5b*: Evans, PM I 565 Fig. 411d; *Fig. 5c*: Evans, PM I 565 Fig. 411c; *Fig. 6b*: Evans, PM I 673 Fig. 492e; *Fig. 6d*: Evans, PM I 673 Fig. 492d. (All drawings by the author).

¹ Levi, *ASAtene* 23/23, 1961/62, 7ff.

² Levi (*supra* n. 1) Fig. 114g.

F 3070,³ both of which were found in the enclosure for offerings, and the large number of small stone vessels, typical of the 2nd Palace Period at Phaistos, which were found both in and outside the tholos together with many ceramic remains from MM IIA. The last period in which the tholos was used is dated by the LM jars found around the door area which was subsequently occupied definitively by two sarcophagi of painted terra-cotta.

In between the two extremes of these dates we have, as I have already said, an uninterrupted sequence of use to which the ceramics from MM IIB and MM III bear witness. The latter, which are particularly abundant and homogeneous, were found in every part of the tomb.

I do not wish to linger on an examination of the ceramics, as the detailed publication by Doro Levi deals with the argument exhaustively. I merely wish to point out that, unlike his classification of the ceramics at Phaistos where he includes ceramics from both MM IIB and MM III in the so-called Phase III, when Levi speaks of Palace Phase III in the tomb of Kamilari, only production from MM III should be understood. With this awareness the reading becomes clear and the text convincing.

We also have confirmation of the constant use of the tomb of Kamilari in the more specific field of glyptics. In fact, numerous seals belonging to the deceased were found together with the offerings and household objects.

Unfortunately, we no longer have a sure connection between seal and burial furniture, both because of the practice of moving the older burial material to make room for the new, and because of the plundering of the tomb. This fact prevents us from dating each single seal by means of the excavation data; we can try, however, to date the seals by means of stylistic comparisons starting from the given fact that they were present in every period, in parallel with the ceramics.

Levi has also suggested a general chronological classification for this category of objects which is but, on the whole, correct. So I will limit myself to a review of the seals found in the tomb of Kamilari while making some illustrative comparisons, in the conviction, as I have already said, that, in the almost total absence of chronological-topographical data, a stylistic analysis of the material is of great help in its dating.

The nineteen seals found in the tomb can be chronologically attributed thus:

1. One seal to early protopalatial phases.
2. One cylindrical seal, widespread in every period.
3. Seven seals to MM IIB.
4. Six seals between MM IIB and MM III.
5. Four to LM.

Let us look at them now group by group:

³ Levi (supra n. 1) Fig. 114a,b.

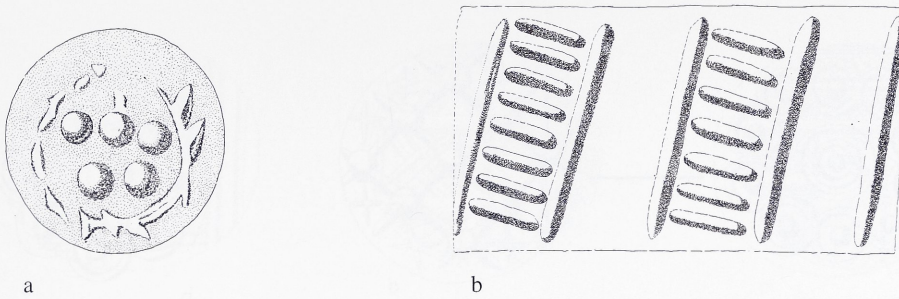


Fig. 1a, b a) Kamilari F. 2959; b) Kamilari F. 2652.

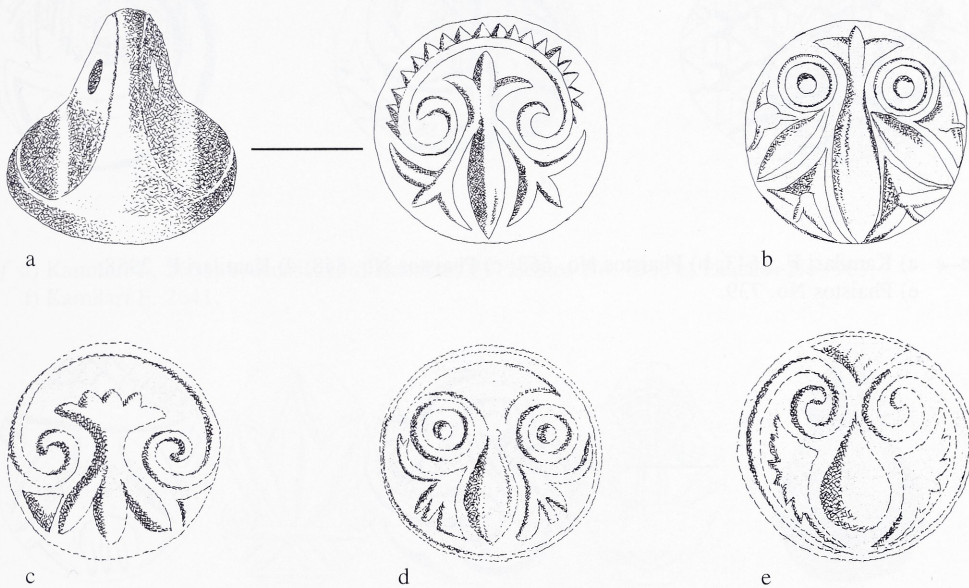


Fig. 2a-e a) Kamilari F. 2956; b) Phaistos C. 1896; c) Phaistos, Room VIII; d) Phaistos No. 968; e) Phaistos No. 971.

1. Levi attributes seal F 2959 (*Fig. 1a*) to the initial part of the period MM because of its simple, schematic composition, although its simplicity of execution could be due to lack of ability on the part of a mediocre craftsman.

2. The cylindrical seal F 2652 (*Fig. 1b*) bearing a very simple motif of small, slanting ladders, reveals a connection with the oriental cylindrical seals which were widespread in every period.

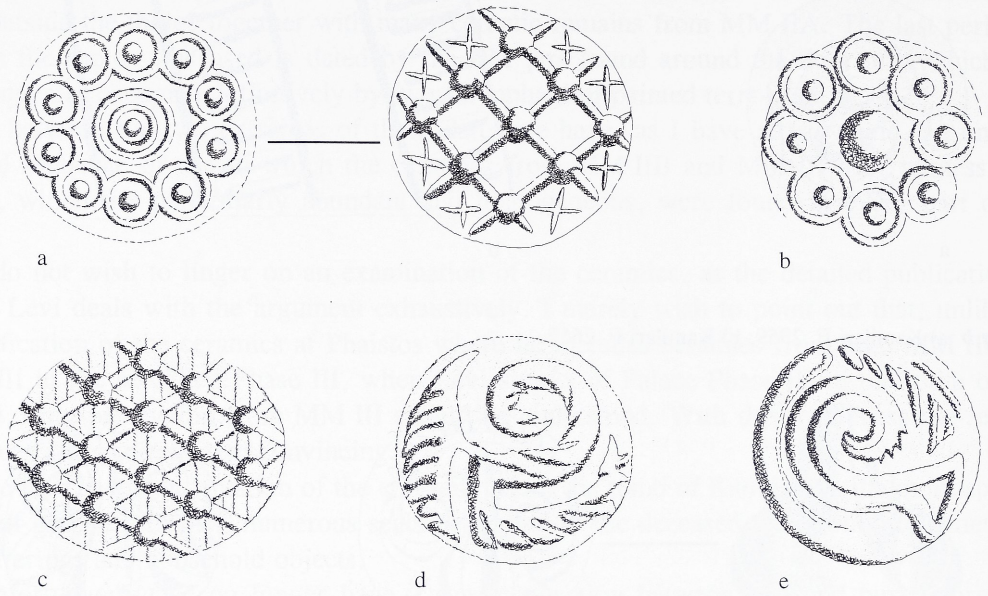


Fig. 3a-e a) Kamilari F. 2643; b) Phaistos No. 668; c) Phaistos No. 848; d) Kamilari F. 2958; e) Phaistos No. 739.

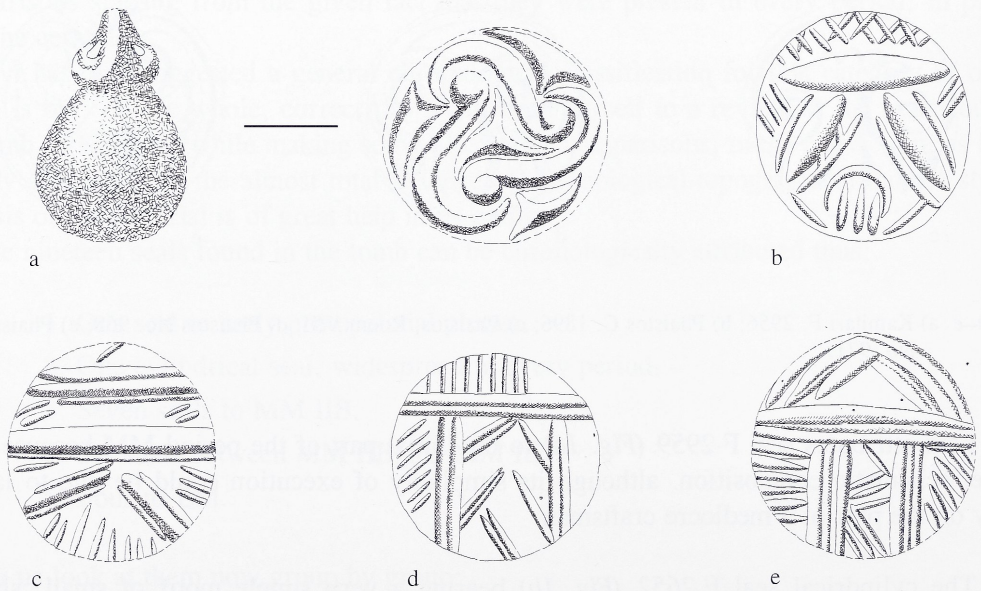


Fig. 4a-e a) Kamilari F. 2645; b) Kamilari F. 2646; c) Kamilari F. 3096; d) Kamilari F. 2647; e) Knossos.

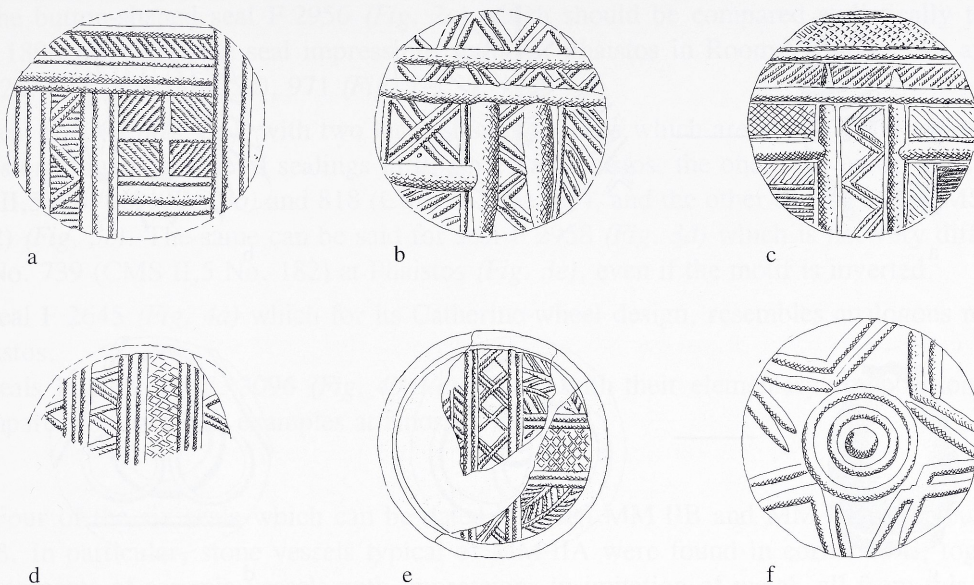


Fig. 5a-f a) Kamilari F. 2651; b) Knossos; c) Knossos; d) Phaistos No. 839; e) Phaistos No. 963; f) Kamilari F. 2641.

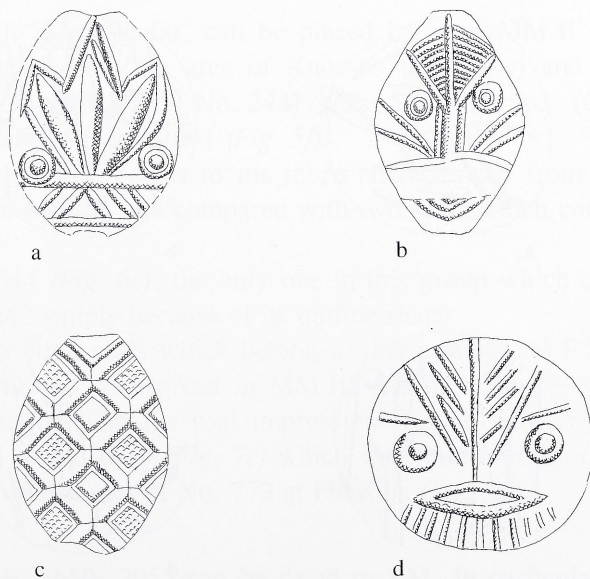


Fig. 6a-d a) Kamilari F. 2642; b) Knossos; c) Kamilari F. 2644; d) Knossos.

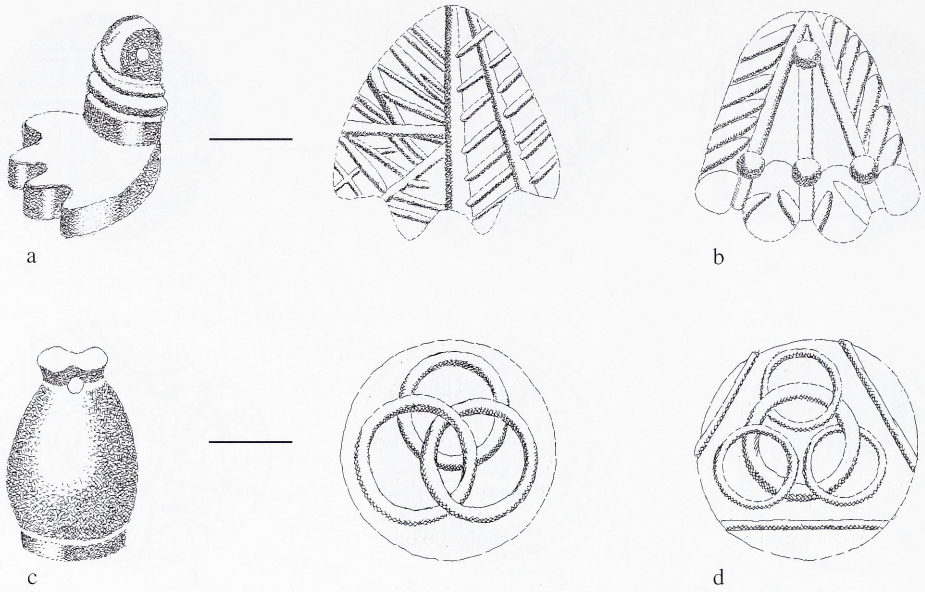


Fig. 7a-d a) Kamilari F. 2640; b) Phaistos No. 798; c) Kamilari F. 2639; d) Phaistos No. 773.

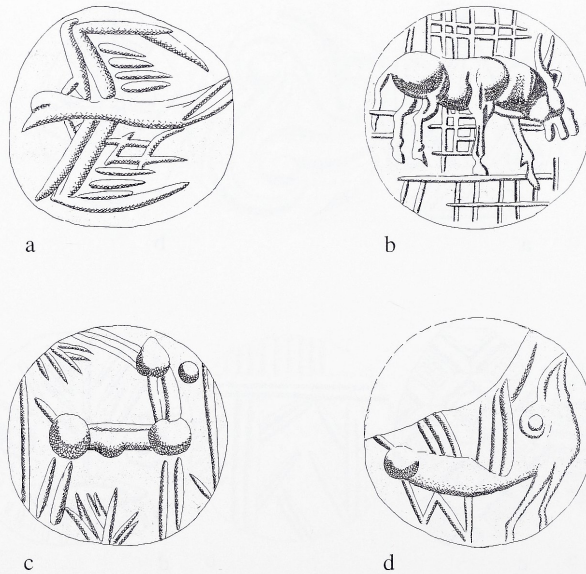


Fig. 8a-d a) Kamilari F. 2648; b) Kamilari F. 2649; c) Kamilari F. 2650; d) Kamilari F. 2955.

3. The seven seals which can be attributed to MM IIB are:

– the button-shaped seal F 2956 (*Fig. 2a*) which should be compared stylistically to the seal C 1896 (*Fig. 2b*), the seal impressions found at Phaistos in Room VIII (*Fig. 2c*) and in Room 25: Nos. 968 (*Fig. 2d*), 971 (*Fig. 2e*).

– seal F 2643 (*Fig. 3a*), with two faces showing motifs which are very similar to the seal impressions found on several sealings in Room 25 at Phaistos, the one to inventory Nos. 668 (CMS II,5 No. 60) (*Fig. 3b*) and 818 (CMS II,5 No. 58), and the other to No. 848 (CMS II,5 No. 12) (*Fig. 3c*). The same can be said for seal F 2958 (*Fig. 3d*) which is not very different from No. 739 (CMS II,5 No. 182) at Phaistos (*Fig. 3e*), even if the motif is inverted.

– seal F 2645 (*Fig. 4a*) which for its Catherine-wheel design, resembles analogous motifs at Phaistos.

– seals F 2646. 2647. 3096 (*Fig. 4b.d.c*) which, with their elementary composition, can be compared to analogous examples at Knossos (*Fig. 4e*).

4. Four of the six seals which can be dated between MM IIB and MM III were found in room β . In particular, stone vessels typical of MM IIA were found in corner N-E, together with fragments of ceramic vessels with impressions in imitation of metal, all from this same period.

However, a fairly certain dating can be hypothesized for at least four seals (F 2640. 2641. 2642. 2651) which were, in fact, found under the group of vessels from MM III including the amphora F 2723.

Seal F 2651 (*Fig. 5a*), in particular, can be placed between MM II and MM III, being comparable to several seals from the area of Knossos (*Fig. 5b.c*) and to seals Nos. 800 (CMS II,5 No. 243), 839 (CMS II,5 No. 244) (*Fig. 5d*) and 963 (CMS II,5 No. 242) (*Fig. 5e*) at Phaistos; similarly seal F 2641 (*Fig. 5f*).

Seal F 2642 (*Fig. 6a*), which seems to me more characterized from a stylistic point of view, can be attributed to MM III and compared with two seals which come from the area of Knossos (*Fig. 6b.d*).

I would put seal F 2644 (*Fig. 6c*), the only one in this group which does not come from room β , beside seal F 2642 simply because of its outline shape.

Finally, there are two other seals which belong to this group: seal F 2640 (*Fig. 7a*) with the bird's foot motif which is widespread in MM III and even later — although its outline shape gives us a comparison with the seal impression from Room 25 No. 798 (CMS II,5 No. 42) (*Fig. 7b*) — and seal F 2639 (*Fig. 7c*) which was found on the threshold between β and γ and resembles the central part of No. 773 at Phaistos (*Fig. 7d*).

5. Seals F 2648. 2649. 2650. 2955 can be dated to LM. In particular, F 2648 (*Fig. 8a*) seems to me to belong to the series with bird from Haghia Triada because of its motif and the type of incision.

The seals found in the tomb of Kamilari confirm the custom of burying the dead together with their own seals, a custom well-known both in Crete, in every period, and in the Orient; and this fact attests the personal, juridical value of the seal. The question of the length of time over which the seal was used, which in general should not exceed the period between the moment in which the individual acquires the right to use the seal and that in which he loses this right due to his juridical unworthiness or to his death, is undoubtedly one which needs further investigation. It would also be interesting to investigate if and in what situation a seal could be passed on to heirs or to other individuals, either indicated by the owner or, anyway, with the right to use it. This would justify the presence of seals which are stylistically more ancient in more recent contexts.

The brief analysis of the seals made above was indispensable to confirm the results also obtained from an examination of the ceramics, namely that there was a continuity of use in the tomb of Kamilari across the various periods which is more evident than in the dwellings and in the palace at Phaistos, where there are noticeable pauses in time caused by natural or accidental disasters such as earthquakes and fires. Thus it is that the successive reconstruction after every event or the new settlements still in the same place bear witness to the continuity of life in the area of the palaces. Whereas, in the tholos tomb the continuity of use is so linear as to give no suspicion of the revolutionary changes in construction and decoration which took place in the palaces between one period and another, as in the passage between the end of the Early Palaces (MM IIB), MM III with its scattered settlements, and the beginning of the Second Palaces.

The tomb of Kamilari confirms that all the more consistent changes — structural, artistic and administrative — did not influence in any way the carrying out of the various activities, including funerary activities, which continued uninterrupted through even the most radical events and changes.

Also as regards the custom of fixing seals on lumps of clay, the change which occurs between MM IIB and MM III is undeniable and quite revolutionary: from sealings on objects to sealings on tie-strings. But, despite this, the seals continued to have an analogous juridical-administrative value in both periods. I mentioned sealings hanging from strings, like those of Haghia Triada, meaning strings hanging from documents and not from objects. The only sealing of this type found at Phaistos in Room 10 supports us in this hypothesis. In fact, the lump of clay was laid against a papyrus before the word *su-ki-ri-ta* was inscribed on it. The impression of the papyrus is not functional, in fact the sealing is not of the type which is pressed on a document, but of the type which hangs from the document itself, a custom which became common and which has lasted until recent times. Probably the operation of writing and setting the seal occurred at the same time as the papyrus document from which the sealing was to hang was being handled, and this document was inadvertently allowed to touch the wet clay.

In conclusion, despite the lack of stratigraphic data, it is possible to observe that the tomb of Kamilari was in constant use from the period of the Early Palace to that of the Second Palace. This leads to the supposition, and it is this which interests us, that even the most

dramatic events, which caused a temporary interruption in the life of the palaces, were overcome without traumas or the abandonment of sites, in a continuing bent towards more and more improved technological and administrative systems.