

Popular Religion and Ritual

in prehistoric and ancient Greece
and the eastern Mediterranean

edited by

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What relationship with the First palace of Phaistos? The funerary complexes of Kamilari and Ayia Triada in the Protopalatial period

Ilaria Caloi

Introduction

From an archaeological perspective, it is often difficult to recognize and distinguish what is 'elite' from what is 'popular', and largely depends on our interpretation. Since, in this paper, I shall deal with the Western Mesara plain (South-central Crete) in the Protopalatial period, corresponding to the 20-17th cent. BC, my work is facilitated by the presence of the palatial site of Phaistos. Although the palatial elites of Phaistos are still far from being well defined (Schoep *et al.* 2012), I shall here consider 'elite' whatever is physically related to the First (Protopalatial) palace of Phaistos and, specifically, what is performed within the areas of the palace, and 'popular', whatever is outside the palace, focusing mostly on the funerary realm rather than settlement remains.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the relationship between the First palace of Phaistos and the mortuary landscape in the Western Mesara plain, attempting to document the changes that occurred throughout the three phases of the Protopalatial period, MM IB, MM IIA, MM IIB. I concentrate on the ritual practices attested in the *tholos* tomb cemeteries of Kamilari and Ayia Triada for the following reasons: firstly, they have been recently re-studied, in particular Kamilari by Girella (2011, 2013) and by myself (2009b, 2011a see also Girella and Caloi *forth.*), and Ayia Triada by Cultraro (2000, 2003), Carinci (2003, 2004) and Aluia (2011); secondly, both the cemeteries are the only funerary complexes of Western Mesara to provide an *ex-novo* foundation of *tholos* tombs in MM IB, that is contemporary with the construction of the First palace of Phaistos; and thirdly, both cemeteries are quite close to the palace of Phaistos, thus allowing us to analyse their relationship with the palatial elite(s) in depth.

It is argued that the monumental *tholos* tombs founded at Kamilari and Ayia Triada in MM IB represent a reaction to the construction of the new, monumental, and innovative First palace of Phaistos. The MM IB ceramic evidence from the two cemeteries of Kamilari and Ayia Triada corroborates this hypothesis, as it reflects the performance of ritual activities that are different from those attested at the palace itself (see *infra*). Only from MM IIA does the ceramic evidence from Kamilari reveal the first change in ritual behaviours, probably due to the adoption of the same consumption

forms as in the Phaistian palace. It is argued that this change in ritual behaviours attested at Kamilari reflects some transformations of socio-political dynamics of the Western Mesara plain, which originate from the MM II consolidation and growth of the Phaistos palace.

In the following pages, I first present a brief introduction to Phaistos and its surroundings in the Protopalatial period, then focus on the two main cemeteries of Kamilari and Ayia Triada, and finally turn my attention to the discussion of the relationship of the First palace of Phaistos with these funerary complexes throughout the Protopalatial period.

The palace of Phaistos in the Western Mesara plain in the Protopalatial period: an overview

Recent studies have confirmed that the First palace of Phaistos was founded in MM IB (Carinci and La Rosa 2007). Besides the South-West building with its orthostate façade and its related Lower West Court (*Piazzale LXX*), the North-West building (La Rosa 2004: 627), the paved Middle West Court (*Piazzale I*) and the Central Court (Cortile 40; Carinci and La Rosa 2007) were also built in MM IB. Although in MM IB the strongest investment is on the South-West building, new investment is also attested in the town area, where new buildings were constructed to the West of the West Court, on the slopes of the palace hill, namely the Chàlara quarter and Ayia Photeini, as well as on the slopes of the nearby hill known as *Acropoli Mediana*. As far as the westernmost hill of the town, Christos Effendi, is concerned, the 2007-2013 Italian-Greek survey has revealed that also this hill was occupied since the beginning of the Protopalatial period (Todaro 2015).

As discussed elsewhere (Caloi 2015b), despite the existence of several factors which speak in favour of continuity from the late Prepalatial to the Protopalatial periods (Todaro 2012; Whitelaw 2012), the discontinuity of the MM IB phase in the Western Mesara plain is evident in the new investments which characterise both Phaistos and its surrounding territory. It is demonstrated by the foundation of the settlements at Kommos (Betancourt 1990) and Ayia Triada (Carinci 2003). At Kommos we observe an important increase in pottery depositions compared with the previous period (i.e. MM IA), as well as some architectural remains

datable to MM IB (Wright 1996; Betancourt 1990; Van de Moortel 2006). At Ayia Triada, a new settlement was founded in MM IB, which is not a continuation of the EM II occupation (La Rosa 1977, 1979-1980; Carinci 1999, 2003). Likewise, in MM IB, the ex-novo foundation of the Kamilari cemetery (Levi 1961-1962; Caloi 2009b, 2011a) and the construction of a second *tholos* tomb at Ayia Triada, i.e. *Tholos B*, take place (Carinci 2003, 2004; see *infra*), as well as an exponential increase in the use of the Kamares Cave (Van de Moortel 2011). Furthermore, the survey conducted by Watrous and colleagues in the 'Phaistos plain' has also revealed an increase in number of new sites in MM IB (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 40).

Although the new investment in the centre of Phaistos is mirrored at neighbouring sites, the distinctiveness of the Phaistos palace is displayed in its material culture, both in architecture and in pottery (see *infra*). From a ceramic perspective, from MM IB, Phaistos presents new wares, shapes and decorative forms, displaying a new impetus in terms of innovation and artistic experimentation (Caloi 2013). From MM IB, we observe a new and important sharing of pottery between Phaistos and most of the sites surrounding it. Indeed, the settlements of Kommos and Ayia Triada, as well as the Kamares Cave, have produced pottery that is absolutely identical and/or imitative of the contemporary Phaistian pottery (Levi and Carinci 1988; Carinci 2003; Van de Moortel 2006), whereas Phaistos maintains its role as leader of ceramic innovation throughout the Protopalatial period (Caloi 2007, 2013).

At MM IB Phaistos, among the new shapes, the most representative form is the globular open-spouted jar, which is often associated with handleless conical cups, forming the typical drinking set. In fact, at MM IB Phaistos, large fills containing globular open-spouted jars in association with large amounts of handleless conical cups have been retrieved to the West of the West Court. These fills have been interpreted as evidence for the episodic dumping of pottery used in ceremonial activities performed in the nearby Middle West Court (Caloi 2013). It is remarkable to observe that in MM IB the globular open-spouted jar is not well attested outside the Phaistos town in the peripheral quarters of Chàlara and Ayia Photeini (Caloi 2007, 2013), nor in the nearby settlements of Kommos and Ayia Triada. In fact, although in the MM IB phase, the Kommos and Ayia Triada settlements share the same ceramic production as Phaistos (Carinci 1999; Van de Moortel 2006), at these sites the MM IB globular-open spouted jar is barely attested. As we will see later, in MM IB the globular open-spouted jar is not attested in either the necropolis of Kamilari or the funerary complex of Ayia Triada, where the best represented form is the jug. By contrast, it is present at the Kamares Cave (Dawkins and Laistner 1912-1913: fig. 3, pls. V-VI; Van de Moortel 2011), where it is attested with several specimens all displaying the

same decorative forms found on Phaistian products (Caloi 2013: 252). This suggests a scenario where, in MM IB at the Phaistos palace, there occurred some communal ritual activities involving specific vases, such as the globular open-spouted jars, which are exclusive to the palatial site. Moreover, the ceramic evidence speaks in favour of a special relationship between the Kamares Cave and Phaistos since the beginning of MM IB (Van de Moortel 2011; Caloi 2013).

During the MM II phase, the site of Phaistos continues its process of monumentalisation, already started in MM IB. In MM IIA, the first architectural changes are visible in the South-West building, which was remodelled; new entrances were opened and the circulation pattern of the building was changed (Carinci 2011; Caloi 2012, 2015b). Moreover, in MM IIA, new wares appear, as well as new shapes imitating metallic prototypes and displaying innovative decoration forms (Caloi 2011c, 2013). Although the MM IIA phase is not well known in the other sites of the Western Mesara plain, from recent publications it seems that both at Kommos and in the Kamares Cave, there was an increase in pottery depositions (Van de Moortel 2006, 2011). As far as the settlement of Ayia Triada is concerned, the scanty structures and scarce quantity of pottery dating to MM IIA, make it difficult to define the pattern of the site in this phase.

The most remarkable change in the Western Mesara plain occurred in MM IIB, when the palace of Phaistos reached the conclusion of its process of monumentalisation. The most important works of renovation took place in the South-West building (Carinci 2011) and in the Middle West Court (*Piazzale I*), with the addition of a new orthostate façade to the North-West building and the construction of the *kouloures*, of the theatral area, etc. (Carinci and La Rosa 2007; Carinci 2011). In MM IIB, new buildings were also constructed in the Phaistos town, and especially to the West of the West Court, to the South of the South-West building, to the South of the ramp connecting the Lower with the Middle West Court, and on the southern slopes of the *Acropoli Mediana*.

Contemporary with the monumentalisation and expansion of Phaistos, important investment is visible in other settlements of the Western Mesara plain, mostly at Kommos and Ayia Triada. At Kommos from MM IIA to MM IIB a new monumental building, known as Building AA, is constructed (Van de Moortel 2006; Caloi 2013: 43), while at Ayia Triada the strong increase in pottery depositions of MM IIB and their distribution suggest that during this phase the settlement expanded to the North/North-East (Carinci 1999; see also Baldacci 2013). As we will see later, when the settlement started to grow, the funerary area was already in decline, while a new investment is visible between the settlement

and the necropolis (see *infra*). Also, the Kamares Cave is characterised by an important increase in pottery depositions during MM II. Of special note in MM IIB are some peculiar vessels, like the *stamnoid* jars, which are otherwise only found at the palatial site of Phaistos, suggesting that the relationship of the Kamares Cave with Phaistos remained exclusive in MM IIB (Van de Moortel 2011).

From a ceramic perspective, it is evident that from MM IIB the ceramics attested at the settlements of Ayia Triada and Kommos, as well as at the Kamares Cave, display the same shapes, forms and decorative forms as Phaistos. As discussed in more detail below, the Kamilari necropolis also started to adopt the same pottery and thus the same forms of consumption as Phaistos in MM II (see *infra*).

Without dwelling upon the main agents of the changes that occurred at the MM IIB Phaistos palace (Caloi 2015b), it is relevant to note here that in the MM IIB phase the material culture of the Western Mesara plain is much more standardised than before. Although the sites surrounding Phaistos had the same pottery as Phaistos, nonetheless, the palace maintained its distinctiveness in pottery production, attested by some peculiar and elaborate vases (i.e. fruit-stands, graters, filters, serving vessels, etc.) that seem only to be found at Phaistos (Van de Moortel 2006, Caloi 2013) and are most likely connected to the performance of ritual activities which took place only in the palatial centre.

The Kamilari cemetery from MM IB to MM IIB: changes in ritual behaviours

My recent analysis of the MM IB-MM IIB pottery retrieved from the funerary complex of Kamilari (Caloi 2009b, 2011a, 2015a), allowed me to confirm that the cemetery was constructed in MM IB (see now Girella and Caloi *forth.*). It then went on to be used until LM IIIA2 (Girella 2011, 2013), with further re-occupation in the Geometric period (Lefèvre-Novaro 2004). A possible settlement for the Kamilari cemetery was identified during the Western Mesara survey (Watrous *et al.* 2004), but only a few structures were recognised.

The original nucleus of Kamilari consists of the circular room, the antechamber α , located outside the entrance on the eastern side, the contiguous room β , whose function in MM IB is not known; to the North there is the courtyard, bounded on its north-western part by a *peribolos* wall and communicating with the antechamber through an opening in the southern wall of the room (Caloi 2011a: 99, fig.1). In MM IB, no rooms were found for the disposal of the skeletal material. Since the small amount of MM IB ceramic material retrieved from inside the circular funerary room was found against its western wall, it is likely that when the room was

cleaned, the skeletal material also was pushed towards the periphery of the *tholos* interior.

For MM IB the ceramic evidence comprises only 17 diagnostic vases: only two MM IB beaked jugs have been recovered from inside the funerary room, while the majority of the MM IB pottery was found outside the *tholos*. Most of the complete vases were retrieved from a specific area of the courtyard, that is the north-western area (Caloi 2011a: pl. XXXIIIa). They mostly include pouring vessels, such as medium-sized beaked jugs and small *askoid* jugs (Caloi 2011a: pl. XXXIIIb). From Kamilari no traces of food were retrieved, although the latter is a difficult category of material to preserve, and no evidence is offered by pottery and other implements associated with food and drink consumption. Indeed, in MM IB no cooking pots, no bowls and only two fragmentary drinking vessels are attested, while most of pottery consists of jugs. The overwhelming presence of jugs suggests that ritual activities were mainly based on pouring actions and/or libations rather than on liquid consumption. From the quantity and the distribution of the ceramic material, it seems that in MM IB the ritual activities were not large-scale ceremonies involving drink and food consumption as attested in the MM IA cemeteries, such as Moni Odighitria (Vasilakis and Branigan 2010), Platanos and Koumasa (Xanthoudides 1971 [1924]; Legarra Herrero 2011). By contrast, it appears that the rituals were restricted to few people, limited to the north-western part of the courtyard, where most of the MM IB material was found, and most likely focused on pouring actions and/or libations (Caloi 2015a).

At MM IB Kamilari, the great amount of work involved in the construction of the monumental tomb does not correspond to the evidence for a strong use of the funerary circular room, which appears to be limited. Although it is clear that much MM IB pottery from inside the *tholos* tomb was probably removed during cleaning operations, the ceramic evidence from the funerary circular room is scanty indeed. It seems that in MM IB the *tholos* tomb was not the focus of the ritual activities, which were instead performed in the courtyard (Caloi 2009b, 2011a). It is also evident that the cemetery was not used on a large-scale compared with the stronger evidence of use in the succeeding Protopalatial and Neopalatial phases (i.e. MM IIB-MM III).

By MM IIA, the funerary evidence at Kamilari reveals certain changes from MM IB. First of all, the quantity and the wider distribution of the pottery inside the necropolis suggest an increase in the use of the cemetery. We mostly observe an increase in drinking cups and the appearance of a new pouring vessel, the bridge-spouted jar, which is well attested at Phaistos (Caloi 2009b, 2011a). Among the new forms attested

at Kamilari from MM IIA onwards, are bridge-spouted jars, and plain handleless and fine carinated cups. In particular, some MM IIA bridge-spouted jars display innovative decoration, consisting of impressed and incised motifs, which reproduce the decoration of metallic prototypes (Caloi 2009b: 859, 900, pls. 31, 33). The appearance at Kamilari of new forms with impressed or incised decorations, and the occurrence of particular handles imitating metalwork, indicates that it followed the trend attested at Phaistos from MM IIA (Caloi 2009a: 420-427, figs. 14-16). Moreover, the association of bridge-spouted jars with drinking vessels, suggests the introduction of new forms of ritual, no longer based on pouring actions, but mainly on liquid consumption (Caloi 2011a).

In MM IIB the Kamilari funerary complex changes its pattern radically. Firstly, we observe a strong increase in the use of the cemetery, attested by the foundation of a new *tholos* tomb, known as Mylona Lakko (Levi 1961-1962), by the explosion in the quantities of ceramic material, and by the expansion of the occupied areas towards the East (Caloi 2011a). Most of MM IIB ceramic material from Kamilari was found in the courtyard, and especially in its north-western part, near the entrance to the antechamber α . This is mainly composed of drinking vessels, mostly plain handleless and fine carinated cups, and of pouring vessels, such as beaked jugs, bridge-spouted jars, and side-spouted jars (Caloi 2009b). In MM IIB, the increase in the use of drinking vessels, twice as many as the pouring vessels, argues for the performance of rituals that mostly comprise liquid consumption. Since most of the vases from the courtyard were retrieved near the entrance to the antechamber, it seems likely that they were used for mortuary feasting on the occasion of funerary rituals.

Secondly, from MM IIB, new ossuaries were established in the form of rooms β and δ . Here, new ritual activities connected with the relocation of bones are attested by the presence of handleless conical cups and stone vases, found either in association with long bones and pieces of skulls, or placed in row, inverted on the ground (Caloi 2011a: pl. XXXIV; 2011b: 138-139, fig. 2).

Finally, in MM IIB, the cemetery was equipped with a slab altar to the South of room β , where also some inverted handleless conical cups and stone vases were recovered. This suggests the performance of some ceremonies more connected with non-funerary rituals, most likely in honour of dead ancestors, rather than with specific funerary occasions. In contrast to the previous phases, in MM IIB, the Kamilari cemetery shows a new emphasis upon the secondary treatment of the dead, which can be interpreted as a stronger interest in the process of remembering/worshipping dead ancestors (Caloi 2011a, 2015a).

In conclusion as regards MM IIB, the evidence provided by the Kamilari cemetery suggests a spatial and functional differentiation of the areas outside the tomb: there are areas used mostly for mortuary feasting, such as the north-western part of the courtyard, and areas used mainly for non-funerary activities, like the southern part of the courtyard equipped with the altar. Comparing Kamilari with the other Mesara *tholos* tombs, it seems evident that Kamilari is one of the few funerary complexes still in use in MM IIB, being used both as burial place and a focus for ancestor worship; by contrast, most of Mesara *tholos* tombs went out of use as burial places during MM IB and were thereafter only sporadically used as cult places (Caloi 2011b, 2015a).

Ayia Triada cemetery from MM IB to MM IIB: from the *akmè* to the decline

At Ayia Triada, MM IB saw the foundation of a new *tholos* tomb, *tholos* B. Besides *tholos* B, the archaeological evidence shows that *tholos* A, founded in EM II, continued to be used in a limited way in MM IB (Carinci 2003, 2004), together with some annexes located to the South and known as the *Camerette*. The latter were used from MM IA until the end of MM IB, not for burials but more probably as pottery repositories (Cultraro 2000). In fact, no skeletal material was retrieved from them, but only large amounts of pottery. In MM IB, *tholos* tombs A and B were both in use, but they contained only few vases, with the best evidence of MM IB coming from the *Camerette*. The *Camerette* produced much more MM IB ceramic material, including a large number of *barbotine* jugs. These elaborate jugs with painted and relief decoration are represented by more than 70 specimens (Cultraro 2000).

As pointed out by Carinci (2003, 2004), at Ayia Triada there was a marked change in funerary rituals from MM IA to MM IB. Indeed, in MM IA, *tholos* A and its annexes to the East were used intensively for ceremonial activity involving drink and food consumption by large numbers of people. By contrast, in MM IB, the ritual activities seem to be limited to fewer people and did not involve food consumption. It is relevant to observe that in MM IB Ayia Triada, the increase in monumentality of the cemetery does not correspond to intensive occupation in the settlement, which has revealed few structures dating to that period (La Rosa 1977, 1979-1980) and also few MM IB ceramic deposits (Carinci 2003). From the pottery record, it appears that from MM IIA the Ayia Triada cemetery begins to decline. From the publications of Banti, and Cultraro, both *tholoi* A and B yielded only few vases which could be dated to MM IIA (Banti 1930-1931; Cultraro 2003: 317, fig. 17; Paribeni 1904: pl. XLII, 4 and pl. XLIII, 1-2). Furthermore, the *Camerette* had already gone out of use.

In MM IIB, the cemetery of Ayia Triada seems not to have been used, although a few vessels were found belonging to the last depositions of *tholos* A. These vessels, published by Cultraro (2003) as MM IIA, may actually date to final MM IIB, moving the last depositions of *tholos* A to the MM IIB phase. They consist of five vases, both pouring vessels and containers (Cultraro 2003: 317, figs. 17-19), which find good correlations with MM IIB vases retrieved from the destruction levels of the Palace of Phaistos (Caloi 2009b: 309). If these few vessels are to be dated to final MM IIB, it is likely that they could represent a final use of *tholos* tomb A, which can be interpreted as a cult activity.

In MM IIB a new investment of labour is visible in the area between the settlement and the cemetery, which went through several transformations. To the West of the *Camerette*, a new paved rectangular space was constructed, in the centre of which the excavator found a rectangular stone with small hollows (La Rosa 2001: pl. LXXIVe-f), which could be an offering table (*kernos*?). This space was interpreted by La Rosa (2001: 225) as a sacred and public space, while, in my opinion, it could rather be specifically linked to the worship of the ancestors buried in the then disused funerary area. I wonder whether the last deposition of *tholos* A and the transformation that occurred in this border area are both connected with the conversion of the funerary complex from a burial place into a cult place. I have proposed elsewhere (Caloi 2016) that the new burial place of the Ayia Triada community could have been moved to the nearby cemetery of Kamilari, which expanded precisely in MM IIB.

The Phaistos palace and the relationship with the funerary complexes of Kamilari and Ayia Triada: further thoughts

In MM IB the foundation of the palace of Phaistos with its monumental South-West building is contemporary with new construction in the Phaistos town and the surrounding territory, where we observe an increase in the number of ex-novo foundations. Nonetheless the monumental leap that occurs at Phaistos in MM IB finds a counterpart mainly in the funerary realm. A new investment in monumental structures is evident mostly at Kamilari and at Ayia Triada with the construction of the main *tholos* tomb and of *tholos* B respectively, whereas in the new settlements of Kommos and Ayia Triada, only ceramic deposits and very few structures can be attributed to MM IB. Despite the construction of a new monumental tomb, in both cemeteries the *tholos* tombs seem to be scantily used in this phase. Indeed, the mortuary area is not only separated from the area of the ritual activities, but yielded little evidence of use, as the emphasis is on the ritual activities performed respectively in the courtyard at Kamilari and in the area of *Camerette* at Ayia Triada.

Moreover, the ritual activities are no longer based on large-scale food and drink consumption as in Prepalatial times, but rather on pouring actions as testified by the numerous jugs found in both the cemeteries. It is remarkable to observe that the ritual behaviours performed in these two cemeteries are not attested in the Phaistos Palace. As already stated, although it is evident that the area surrounding Phaistos shared the same ceramic production as the palace, nevertheless, it seems clear that ritual activities attested in MM IB in the palace are different from those attested in the nearby funerary complexes of Kamilari and Ayia Triada. While at MM IB Phaistos the ceremonies are based on drink consumption, involving large quantities of people using mostly globular open-spouted jars and handleless conical cups, at Kamilari and Ayia Triada the almost exclusive presence of jugs suggests that the ritual activities focused on pouring actions.

From the ceramic evidence, it seems therefore clear that the ritual activities attested in both cemeteries in MM IB are not in line either with the funerary activities of the previous period (i.e. MM IA) or with the communal ceremonies performed in the MM IB Phaistos palace, which were both based on drink and food consumption. It appears that the ritual behaviours attested both at Kamilari and Ayia Triada in MM IB could represent the outcome of a more popular tradition, i.e. 'popular rites', which are shared at the local level, contrasting markedly with the elite ceremonies of the communal areas of the Phaistos palace that were performed by local and/or regional elites.

Moreover, since the monumental tombs of Kamilari and Ayia Triada were constructed but scantily used, showing that a strong investment in labour did not correspond to an intensive use of the mortuary areas, I wonder whether in MM IB, through the foundation of a monumental *tholos* tomb the communities of Kamilari and Ayia Triada respectively chose to create a new marker, using their cemeteries more as ritual foci rather than as burial places. The leap to monumentality demonstrated by the construction of the two *tholos* tombs of Kamilari and Ayia Triada could indeed represent a local statement in the face of the construction of the new, monumental, palatial building of Phaistos, with its innovative orthostate façade.

If the Phaistos palace was the result of a collective action driven by local and/or regional elites who decided to invest in the construction of a monumental building devoted to the preparation/performance of communal rituals (for a review of various interpretations of the same phenomenon see papers in Schoep *et al.* 2012; also Caloi 2015b; Driessen 2018), I wonder whether the communities investing in the funerary complexes of Kamilari and Ayia Triada respectively were rather

less involved in this Phaistian project (Caloi 2015b). From MM IIA the first changes are visible in both the necropoleis: at Kamilari the funerary area displays an increase in its use and reveals the first changes in material culture, while Ayia Triada begins its decline as funerary area. We have already observed that contemporary with the decline of the cemetery, at MM IIB Ayia Triada, there is a major investment in the area between the settlement and the necropolis, most likely in connection with the transformation of the cemetery into a cult place.

By contrast, in MM IIB Kamilari becomes an important cemetery, provided with another *tholos* tomb (i.e. Mylona Lakko) and two ossuaries. Moreover, we have already observed that from MM IIA drinking and pouring vessels that are typical of the nearby Phaistos palace were introduced at Kamilari. The adoption at Kamilari of the ceremonial sets used at Phaistos may signify a social strategy of imitation and emulation of ritual performances based on drink consumption which were acted out in the communal areas of the palace by palatial elites. This, in turn, may reflect new needs of the Kamilari community to evoke elite feasting, in order to display its membership of a much wider elite community. From MM IIA it seems that Kamilari was integrated into a new system defining a regional entity, probably focused on Phaistos, which seems to have played a new role.

Based on the ceramic evidence, I wonder whether as early as MM IIA, and not just in MM IIB, the Phaistos palace begins to play a key role in legitimising that regional integration which implies 'the reorganisation of a region into a subordinate hinterland by a palatial centre' (Schoep and Tomkins 2012: 23). Indeed, the MM II process of monumentalisation of the Phaistos palace increased its impact on the wider Mesara plain and influenced many aspects of the material culture of its neighbouring sites (Sbonias 2012; Todaro 2012; Caloi 2015b). In particular, concerning the necropolis of Kamilari, it seems that the 'popular rites' performed there in MM IB, and mainly based on pouring actions, in MM IIA gave way to new rituals which imitated the forms of consumption performed at Phaistos by the palatial elites. This change seems to convey the new integration of the Kamilari community into the much stronger MM II palatial system.

Although the settlement and funerary evidence of the Western Mesara region is still far from being well defined, these changes integrate new evidence into the discussion of socio-political development of the Western Mesara throughout the Protopalatial period, shedding new light on the varying role played by the Phaistos palace from the beginning to the end of the period.

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