

PROBLEMS OF ROOFING OF EARLY MINOAN THOLOS TOMBS:  
THE CASE OF KAMILARI A THOLOS TOMB IN THE WESTERN MESARA  
PLAIN

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ABSTRACT

Due to their reduced state of preservation, the argument of a stone vault for Minoan tholos tombs has been discussed in the past years with open or not unanimous conclusions.

Thanks to a special survey carried out during summer 2009 on Kamilari A tholos tombs and the good state of preservation of many architectural parts, the present article wants to explore under a new perspective the issue of the vault system. After the presentation of the problem of roofing of Minoan tholos tombs through archaeological and ethnographical examples, the second part of the paper deals with the discussion of the false and the true vault systems and the analysis of possible roof profiles and collapse mechanisms of the vault. It will be argued that: 1) the true vault behaviour cannot be excluded for Kamilari tholos A; 2) among the possible causes inducing this structure to collapse there is an earthquake hitting the structure along the South East-North West alignment.

Finally, further considerations about the relation between Minoan and Mycenaean tholos tombs are stressed.