

Regional Pressures in the Formation of Script Use and Formation of Cypro-Minoan

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Earlier regional divisions

Emilia Masson was the first to subdivide Cypro-Minoan (CM), the undeciphered Late Bronze Age (LBA) script of Cyprus (ca. 1500-1050 BCE), into different language and script traditions.

Her designations mixed geographic and stylistic features:

- “CM1” – All CM found on Cyprus excepting tablets (ca. 200+ objects)
- “CM2” – The three clay tablets from Enkomi, Cyprus, long texts with a distinctive ductus
- “CM3” – All CM texts found at Ras Shamra, Ugarit, Syria (assorted media, 8+ texts)

Masson’s division has lost favor, especially over the last decade (Ferrara 2013, Valerio 2016)

Why think about regionalism?

The political organization of LBA Cyprus, a trading powerhouse is unclear. Was it a unified political entity or several coexistent trading regions? *The presence or absence of standardization in the material features of CM (such as format and media) may provide some answers.*

The case of potmarks

Potmarks are short, visible inscriptions incised into trading vessels. They plausibly have an administrative function. I have looked at the formatting and punctuation of potmarks from the coastal cities of Enkomi and Kition.

- At Kition, two-sign potmarks (1+1) on handles are oriented horizontally on handles in 8 of 10 instances. 7 of the 8 have punctuation.
- At Enkomi, two-sign potmarks on handles are oriented vertically on handles in 5 of 7 instances. All 5 lack punctuation.

There’s a clear difference in text orientation but consistent application of punctuation for horizontal texts at both sites.



Examples of CM1, CM2, and CM3 texts according to Masson’s division



On the left, handle from Enkomi (##119); On the right, handle from Kition (##139)—it is the only horizontally inscribed handle from Kition which lacks punctuation

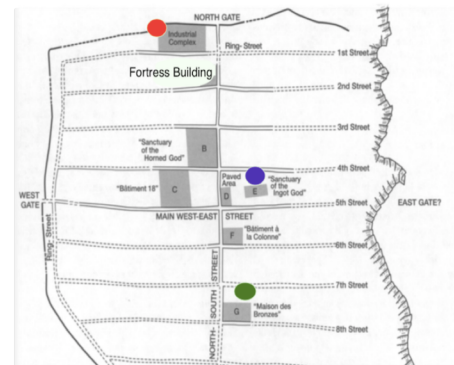
The case of boules and punctuation

Boules, or clay balls, are the most numerous CM inscription type (ca. 90 examples, 85 from Enkomi). Based on mortuary evidence, Keswani proposed that the elite at Enkomi comprised several distinctive groups. Do the boules bear this out?

- Boules feature three distinctive word dividers: short impressed marks, long drawn lines, and “exclamation points”
- Boules with exclamation points cluster in the Fortress Building
- Aside from the Fortress Building boules, exclamation point word dividers only appear at Ras Shamra, Ugarit



Picture on top: boule ##13 from Enkomi; on bottom: close-up of punctuation from Tablet ##212 from Ras Shamra, Ugarit



Locations at Enkomi which share repeated signs sequences. The red dot marks the “industrial complex,” a.k.a the Fortress Building, where boules with exclamation point punctuation have been found

Conclusions and Questions

Potmarks:

- The sample sizes of potmarks at Enkomi and Kition are small. Autopsy in the fall of 2019 will seek to identify additional similarities or differences in inscription methods.

Boules:

- The differences in punctuation are striking. By contrast, the ductus, format, and sign sequences of the Fortress Building boules are not unique.

Cypro-Minoan, contrary to contemporary scripts such as Ugaritic or Linear B, is distinctive in the lack of uniformity across its script tradition.

Whether regionalism can account for some of the variability remains an open question.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the Cyprus Museum for allowing me to take pictures of tablets and boules on my visit in the summer of 2016.

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