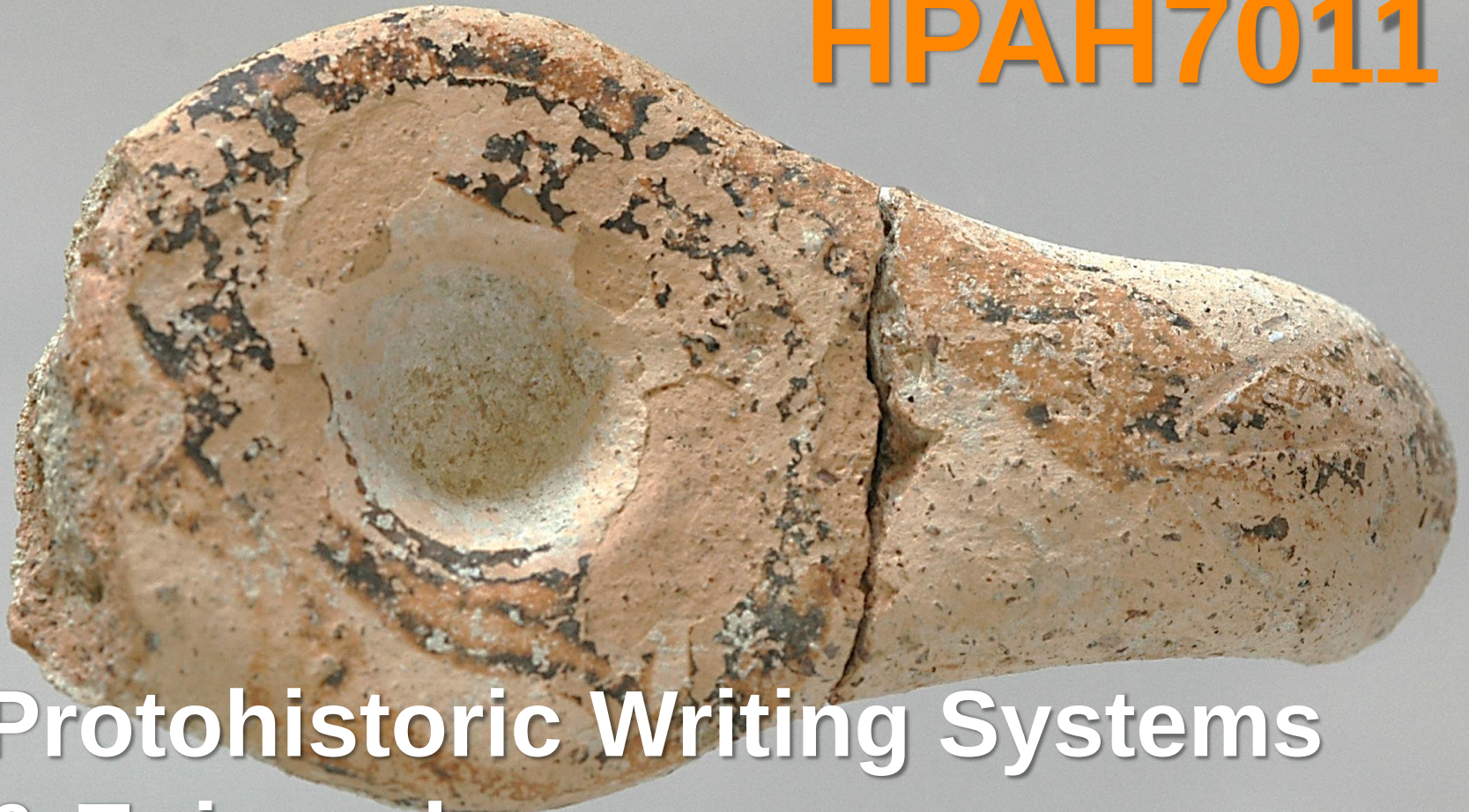


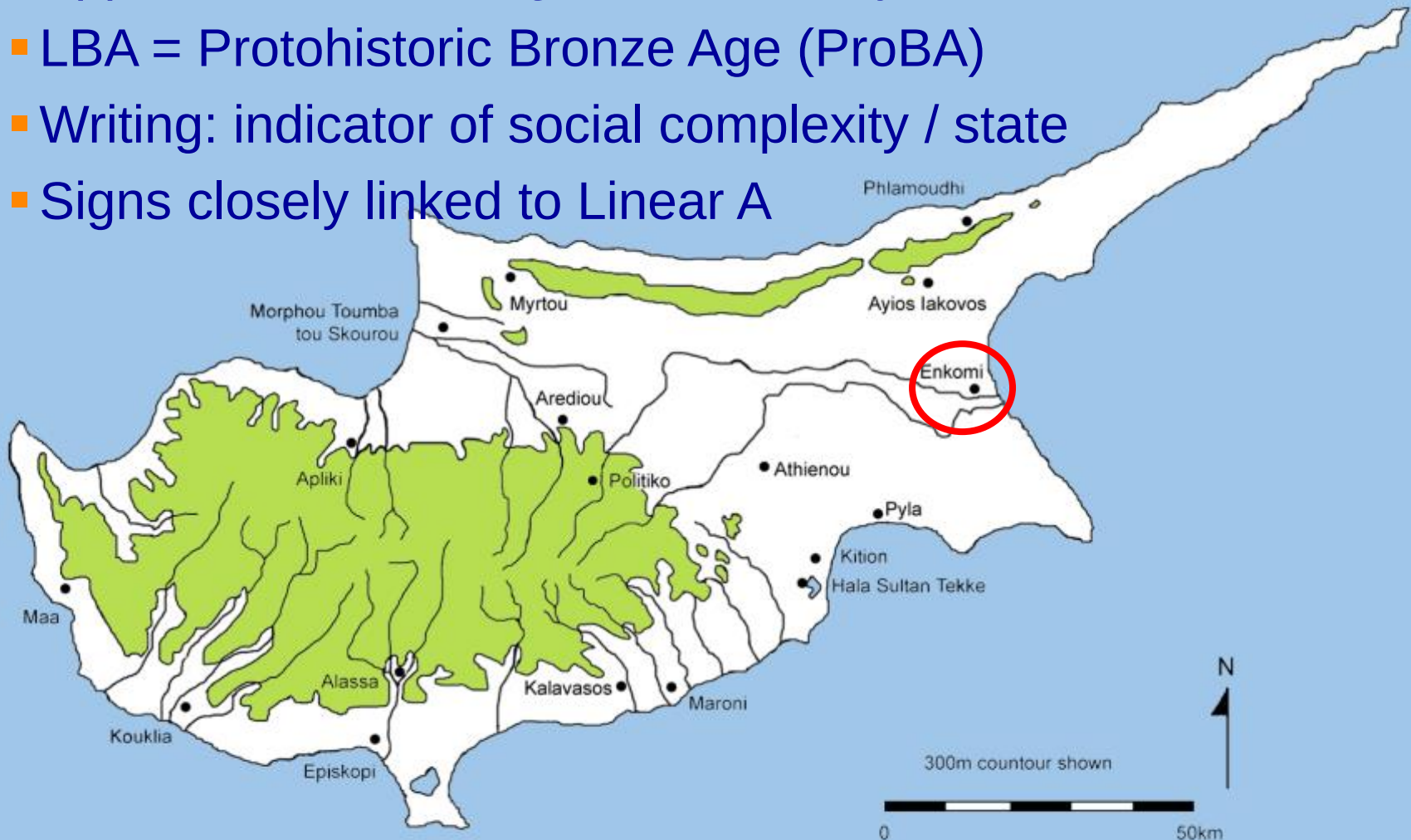
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**Protohistoric Writing Systems
& Epigraphy**

LBA Cyprus

- Appearance of writing in 16th century – LC IA
- LBA = Protohistoric Bronze Age (ProBA)
- Writing: indicator of social complexity / state
- Signs closely linked to Linear A



Cypro-Minoan Script

- 1600-1100 BC
- Around 200 inscriptions but still no definitive corpus of signs
- Only smaller number of long texts:
 - Eight clay tablets
 - Six clay cylinders
 - Administrative function
- Most writing on another medium?



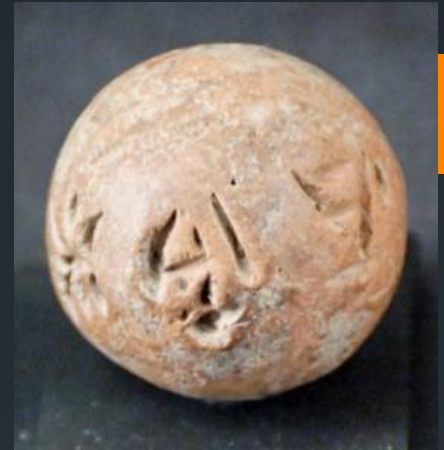
Enkomi: tablet



Enkomi: cylinder

Cypro-Minoan

- Mostly short inscriptions:
 - (2-8 signs) impressed on clay balls
 - Incised or painted on pottery
 - On loom weights
 - Ivory, bronze & stone objects
- Widespread “literacy” or recognition of signs
- Portability of objects hint as to their use?
- Ritual function for some objects?



Enkomi, inscribed ball



Inscribed pot handle, Aredhiou

Pot Marks

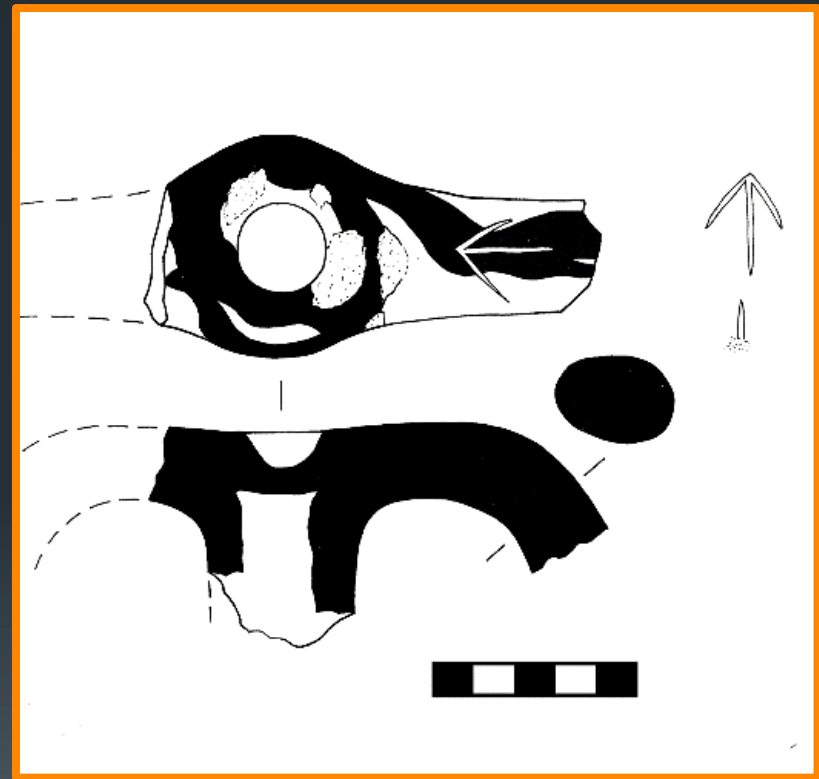
- Development of unique pot-marking system:
 - Large single marks (CM) incised into handles of medium-large containers
- Variety of different wares & forms are marked **post-firing**
- Hirschfeld: marking system not necessarily indicative of knowledge of Cypriot writing system:
 - Signs not intended to be “read”



Cypro-Minoan sign on
Minoan stirrup jar, Minet el
Beidha

Pot Marks or Inscriptions?

- Most pot marks represent single signs
 - Simple marking system associated with Cypriot administrative activities
 - Mercantile handling practices
- Olivier & Godart (1978: 34) identify a group of at least two signs as an **inscription**
 - More complex system of communication (words)



Incised Minoan stirrup jar, Aredhiou

Writing as a Status Symbol?

- Short inscriptions on other high status objects:
 - Bronze & silver bowls
 - Votive ingots & other objects
 - Small ivory objects
- Kalavassos: two gold signet rings:
 - Inscription on both rings identical
 - Personal names?
 - Literacy a marker of elite prestige paraphernalia
 - Gendered associations



Inscribed bronze bowl



Kalavassos, gold ring



Votive ingot

Commodity Branding?

- Ferrera & Bell (2016): short inscriptions on miniature ingots
- Compare with inscription on clay label from Ugarit (used to mark traded commodities)
- Identify these as a form of commodity branding:
 - Indicator of quality

Miniature copper ingot	inv. 1936/Vi-19/1 (Cyprus Museum)	##174	𐎲 𐎠
Miniature copper ingot	inv 53.2 (Cyprus Museum)	##175	𐎲 𐎠 𐎲 𐎠 𐎠 𐎠
Miniature copper ingot	inv. 53.3 (Cyprus Museum)	##176	𐎲 𐎠
Miniature copper ingot	inv. 1995 (Cyprus Museum)	----	𐎠 (rotated 90°)
Clay label	RS 94.2328 (Damascus Museum)	##210	𐎲 𐎠



Ugarit: clay label

Summary: Epigraphy in Proto-Literate Societies

- The importance of detailed observation of inscriptions even if the script cannot be read
- Criteria that can help determine function & “meaning”:
 - Signs: development of a detailed corpus of signs that can be recognised (despite different hands)
 - Complexity of the epigraphy: single signs, short inscriptions & longer texts
 - Materials & objects being inscribed
 - Context of use