

Cyprus, Part 2: Tenth to Seventh Century BC

The tenth to seventh centuries on Cyprus are characterised by the establishment of prosperous city-kingdoms (Fig. 1) and their increasing political and economic activity in the East Mediterranean. According to later tradition the city-kingdoms were founded by Greek heroes, returning from the Trojan War, but with an indigenous stronghold at Amathus and a Phoenician colony at Kition; this picture of three distinct population groups, each preserving their individual language, receives some support from inscriptions – although otherwise the material record is largely homogeneous. Archaeological evidence reveals very little of the daily life during these centuries and most evidence comes from tombs and sanctuaries. Cyprus also played an important role in the re-establishment of Mediterranean-wide maritime trade in the early first millennium, acting as a pivotal node in sea communications between the Aegean and the Phoenicians.

Terminology & Chronology

The Early Iron Age (EIA) on Cyprus is divided into two main phases: the Cypro-Geometric (CG) and Cypro-Archaic (CA) periods (Table 1). This terminology explicitly links the Cypriot Iron Age with that of the Aegean; moreover, its conventional dating (with an initial date of 1050 BC (Gjerstad 1944b) and the end date coterminous with the transition from Cypro-Archaic to Cypro-Classical (CC) in 480 BC) perhaps has more to do with historical events further west than an archaeological reality on Cyprus. The definition of phases was developed by Gjerstad (1948) and is based on his sequencing of decorated pottery types (White Painted, Bichrome and Red-on-Black wares) excavated by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition in numerous tomb groups throughout the island (Nys 2008). The absolute dates are based on occasional Greek imports and correlations with stratified Phoenician pottery from the mainland. The period under discussion is brought neatly to a close by the re-integration of Cyprus into the historical narrative of Near Eastern mainland: the tenth to seventh centuries are essentially proto-historical and the earliest datable event is the apparent subjugation of the rulers of the island's city-kingdoms to the might of the Assyrian Empire, dated to 709/7 BC (Iacovou 2002: 82).

City-Kingdoms and Foundation Legends

Research has focussed on two main questions: the date of the establishment of the city-kingdoms (Iacovou 2006a; Petit 1991-1992; 2001; Rupp 1987; 1988; 1989; 1998; Steel 1993) and the ethnicity of their inhabitants (Given 1999; Iacovou 2006b; Janes 2010; Petit 1999). In the absence of historical documents prior to the end of the eighth century BC, this revolves around balancing the rather sketchy archaeological record with later foundation legends (Gjerstad 1944a; Leriou 2002; Steel 1993: 147-8) and linguistic studies.

Epigraphically the city-kingdoms are visible from the final decade of the eighth century, when "seven kings of Ia, a district of Iatnana" submitted to Sargon II (Iacovou 2006a: 317). More or less contemporary with the stele are the earliest Greek inscriptions recording the *basileus* of Paphos: Akestor on a silver bowl (Fig. 2) and slightly later Etewandros on a pair of golden bracelets (Iacovou 2006a: 319). It is assumed that the city-kingdoms emerged at some time between the eleventh and eighth centuries, but the actual date remains contentious. There are two opposing schools of thought. The accepted historical narrative attributes the formation of the kingdoms to Aegean migrants who settled on the island during the final years of the LBA, bringing with them Mycenaean royal practices and structures (see critique in Leriou 2002; 2007). Alternatively, some scholars contend that the city-kingdoms appeared in the eighth-seventh century as a result of Phoenician influence.

The more commonly accepted hellenisation narrative is based on a group of foundation myths which attest to the establishment of the city-kingdoms by Achaean heroes returning from the Trojan War (Gjerstad 1944a). Most significant are the legends linking Teucros (brother of Ajax) to Salamis and Agapenor (from Arcadia) to Paphos; the latter has particular resonance as this is presumably when the Cypro-Arcadian dialect was established on the island (Iacovou 2006b: 38). Agapenor ousted the local king Kinyras from Paphos, who was forced to establish an enclave at Amathus (remembered in later times as the home of the autochthonous Cypriots). These legends have been woven into the archaeological narrative as a means for explaining the apparent aegeanisation of material culture and cultural practices on the island in the final years of the LBA (Leriou 2002; 2007). Nonetheless, there is no firm archaeological evidence from the CG period to suggest that Aegean settlers were able to establish political control of (part of) Cyprus, nor that they brought with them a Mycenaean

system of government. Rather than an historical document some scholars maintain that the foundation legends were pro-hellenic political propaganda associated with political events of the fifth century (Rupp 1998).

Rupp (1987, 1988, 1998) and Petit (2001) have highlighted changes in the archaeological record in CGI III-CA I, which they identify as evidence for the formation of the city-kingdoms. Following a long, culturally-impooverished period there was a significant change in the island's occupation and survey data illustrates a sharp increase in settlement together with the development of a three-tiered settlement pattern. The reappearance of monumental architecture, especially in the funerary arena, illustrates the emergence of an economic and political elite. This is reiterated by the concentration of luxury goods in a small number of tomb groups. There was increased use of writing, especially during the seventh century. Finally, rural sanctuaries became widespread (Cannavo 2010: 38). Petit (2001: 57-9) also highlights the urbanisation process on the acropolis of Amathus in the eighth century, with the construction of the first palace and the sanctuary of Aphrodite. It is worth noting however, that at other capital centres, such as Salamis (Yon 1999), there is incontrovertible evidence for urbanisation from CG I. Nonetheless, these developments are attributed to increased contact with the Levantine city-states and the Assyrian Empire following the establishment of the Phoenician colony at Kition, within a classic model of secondary state formation.

Linguistics may shed some light on the debate. The Assyrians accorded the Cypriot rulers the Akkadian title *šarru* (king) and the names of the Cypriot rulers listed on a clay prism dating to the reign of Esarhaddon suggest that these kings were of Greek descent (Iacovou 2006b: 318-19); for example Eleandros of Pappa (Paphos) and Akestor of Edil (Idalion). The term the Cypriots used to refer to their rulers was *basileus*, a title ultimately of Mycenaean derivation (*qa-si-re-u*). Although in Classical Greek this term had acquired the meaning of king, during the LBA (when the title was supposedly transferred to Cyprus) it simply referred to a local official within the palace administration, but who was also a significant figure in charge of metallurgical production. Iacovou (2006a: 326-8) raises the intriguing possibility that possible Mycenaean migrants included some individuals (namely the *basileus*) who were able to assume an important role in the still thriving Cypriot copper industry. These

individuals eventually came to dominate the economic and political sphere on Cyprus and by the late eighth-seventh century the term *basileus* had come to mean "king". In essence the city-kingdoms should be seen as a continuation of LBA polities with similar economic concerns, namely copper and maritime trade; eventually the most successful of the Cypriot polities were those that were able to both control access to copper resources in the hinterland as well as a harbour town which was the gateway for international maritime trade (Iacovou 2013: 32).

Death and Burial

For much of the period under discussion the only evidence comes from numerous tomb groups. These provide an insight into daily life and materiality of the inhabitants of Cyprus – the pots and pans used in the household, occasional imports, small items of personal adornment and simple dress accessories. Funerary practices appear to have been remarkably homogenous in the CG period (Iacovou 2006b: 41); the dead were buried in extramural cemeteries accompanied with a range of ceramic grave goods, occasional tools and weapons, and small items of personal adornment. Typically the dead were inhumed but some cremations are attested (Janes 2013: 151). The characteristic funerary structure was the rock-cut chamber tombs approached by a long *dromos*, a type which was introduced to the island at the end of the LBA (Steel, this volume). A different type of tomb was used at Amathus; this had a square chamber cut into the bedrock, perpendicular to which was the *dromos*, and it was roofed with large slabs of stone (Carstens 2006: 129-30). This distinctive tomb-type has been used to support the identification of a distinct Eteocypriot population at Amathus (see discussion in Given 1999; Janes 2010). For the most part provision of grave goods was rather simple throughout the CG period: typically a range of pottery jugs, bowls and amphorae (Janes 2013: 151). However, a small number of wealthy tombs have been excavated at Palaepaphos-Skales, Salamis and Kourion-Kaloriziki; in addition to locally-made pottery, these were equipped with gold and silver jewellery, Egyptian faïences and scarabs, imported pottery, elaborate metal vessels, bronze or iron *obeloi* (spits) and iron weapons.

There was a significant change in funerary practices in CG III-CA I with the appearance of monumental tombs and increasing provision of luxury items. Particularly noteworthy are the nine built tombs in the Royal Necropolis at Salamis; of these, two tombs were monumental

and two have been described as megalithic (Tombs 50 and 79; Carstens 2006: 134). A major aspect of the ritual performed in the Royal Necropolis centred on display and conspicuous consumption of wealth (Blackwell 2010: 153; Carstens 2005: 64; Rupp 1988). While the actual burial chambers were relatively small these were approached by massive, ashlar-built *dromoi*. Here elaborate ceremonies could be performed watched by mourners above the tomb, including funerary processions, the provision of spectacular grave goods, funerary pyres and animal sacrifice (Carstens 2005: 63-6). The incredible wealth deposited in Tomb 79 included ivory-inlaid furniture and a massive bronze cauldron on an iron tripod (Fig. 3).

Sanctuaries and Religion

Sanctuaries provide important data for the CA and CC periods, but during the CG period there is very little evidence for religious activity. If extra-urban cult places existed then these were certainly not places of display and, in contrast to CA practice, they were not incorporated within a politicised landscape (Fourrier 2013: 105). The earliest religious evidence is the urban sanctuary at Salamis, built in the eleventh century and used until the eighth. However, the creation of the Cypriot sacred landscape dates to CG III, with an increase in religious activity both in the urban centres and their hinterland. Much of this early activity is known from *bothroi*. The earliest of the rural sanctuaries was established at Ayia Irini in CG III; like many other Iron Age sanctuaries this was located above LBA remains. Also dating to CG III were the state sanctuaries at Kition, Amathus, Idalion and Apollo Hylates at Kourion. In contrast to lavish display in the LG-Archaic sanctuaries of the Aegean, on Cyprus dedications were simple, typically terracotta figurines of male and female votaries. While shared religious practices brought local urban and rural communities together, they also had an important political and economic role, which developed increasingly throughout the CA period (Fourrier 2011: 130). The extra-urban sanctuaries served as territorial markers; moreover, performance of organised cult within the official sanctuaries, both town and countryside, served to promote royal ideology and authority (Iacovou 2013: 29; Petit 2001: 59).

Writing Systems and Language: Greeks, Eteocypriots and Phoenicians

Given the cultural homogeneity on Cyprus during the EIA, the ethnicity debate largely revolves around choice of language and script (Iacovou 2006b). During the EIA two very

different writing systems were used to write three separate languages. For the most part there appears to be a correlation between the distribution of these languages (and scripts) and the identification of the three main ethnic groups according to the dominant historical narrative: the Greek language was most widespread throughout the island, Phoenician was primarily used at Kition (and later at Idalion), while an un-deciphered language assumed to be the aboriginal Bronze Age tongue of Cyprus was predominantly used at Amathus. In the case of the Cypriot-Syllabary the choice of script and language might well have been a proclamation of (ethnic) identity, but the same should not be extrapolated to Phoenician use of their *abjad* (Iacovou 2002b).

Cypro-Syllabic and Greek

The most important of the Iron Age scripts was Cypro-Syllabic, which was used to write Greek and a second un-deciphered language until the fourth century. Cypro-Syllabic Greek was deciphered in 1871 by Assyriologist George Smith, using a digraphic bilingual inscription from Idalion. On the basis of a limited corpus of inscriptions from the earliest centuries of the Iron Age it is assumed that Cypriot literacy and writing practices continued without break from the Bronze to Iron Age (Bazemore 2002: 158); under the impetus of a new Greek-speaking population the Bronze Age "scribal system ... instead of dying out with the old language, acquired a new life" (Iacovou 2006b: 36). Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions appear earlier in Paphos than elsewhere on the island and in larger quantities (Bazemore 2002: 159). The earliest Greek inscription was on a bronze spit from a tomb at Palaepaphos-Skales (Fig. 4a). It represents a transitional form between the Cypro-Minoan and Cypro-Syllabic scripts, possibly closer to its LBA antecedents than the Iron Age syllabary (Steele 2013: 91), and was essentially an adaptation of the island's Bronze Age writing system to record a new language (Bazemore 2002: 159; Iacovou 2006b: 38). The reading of the inscription *o-pe-le-ta-u* is generally accepted as the genitive form of the name Opheltes in Cypro-Arcadian (Masson and Masson 1983) and is the earliest evidence for this dialect on Cyprus. The earliest clear Cypro-Syllabic inscription dates to the late ninth century and was painted on a White Painted III jug from Palaepaphos (Bazemore 2002: 159); however, it is only in the late eighth-seventh century that the Cypro-Syllabic script was firmly established on the island.

Cypro-Syllabic and Eteocypriot

Eteocypriot refers to a limited corpus of Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions that cannot be read and which are usually assumed to be written in the ancient Bronze Age language of Cyprus, which was replaced by Greek during the Iron Age (Steele 2013: 101, 121). The earliest inscriptions were found in the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Amathus – a Bichrome pictorial krater dating to c.750 (Hermay and Masson 1990: Iacovou 2006a: 42) and the massive stone vase dating to c.700 (Steele 2013: 110-11; 119). There is a clear concentration at Amathus, but Eteocypriot texts are also attested at Paphos (the original home of Kinyras, founder of Amathus), possibly one at Kourion and two from Egypt (Steele 2013: 120, map 2). The distribution of the texts has been used to support the hypothesis that the population of Amathus represented an enclave of the island's indigenous population.

Phoenician

Phoenician colonists on Cyprus brought with them their own language and writing system early in the first millennium and this thrived as a linguistic tradition until the mid-third century. Only a small number of inscriptions survive from the EIA, with a concentration at Kition (Steele 2013: 179, table 9); otherwise most Phoenician inscriptions date to the CC period. The earliest inscription on the island is believed to be that on the base of a green steatite vase, which by form can be attributed to the twelfth-eleventh century BC and thus predates the colonisation horizon by two centuries or more. The inscription is short and has been transcribed as “HHh” (Masson and Sznycer 1972: 128-30, fig. 7, pl. XIX/1).

Unfortunately, it is without a provenance; nonetheless it would certainly indicate continued contacts between Cyprus and the coastal Levant in the formative stages of the Iron Age.

There are several inscriptions dating to the ninth-eighth century, contemporary with colonisation of Kition, including a short inscription on a CG II bowl from (Greek-speaking) Salamis (Iacovou 2006b: 39; Yon 1999: fig. 6b), a funerary stele (Steele 2013: 176, **Ph2**) and a Red Slip bowl from Kition (Fig. 4b; Steele 2013: 176-7, **Ph5**). Ironically, although the Greeks in the west adapted the Phoenician *abjad* to create myriad Greek alphabets, on Cyprus this writing system remained exclusively for recording the Phoenician language.

International Relations

Phoenicians on Cyprus

Throughout the EIA Cyprus remained in contact with the communities of the southern Levant (Steel, this volume). Phoenician imports are found in some quantity in Cypriot tombs between the eleventh and eighth centuries (Bikai 1987), in particular at Palaepaphos. This is paralleled by an horizon of Cypriot pottery in the central-southern Levant in the eleventh-tenth century, most notably at Tel Dor (Gilboa 1999: 122-6). Occasional Egyptian faïences were placed in tombs at Amathus from 950-900 and from the ninth century these included images of the god Bes (Aupert 1997: 24); these objects probably made their way to Cyprus as a result of Phoenician trading activity. Orientalising iconography on bronze bowls found in tombs at Amathus from the eighth century indicate these either to be Phoenician imports or local products influenced by Phoenician craftsmanship.

There is some archaeological evidence for the presence of small groups of Phoenician settlers on Cyprus from the beginning of the EIA, albeit not as part of a concerted colonisation programme. The Levantine practice of burying infants in Canaanite jars inside the city walls is attested at Salamis from the eleventh century (Steel, this volume) and persisted into the tenth and ninth centuries. This practice is likewise attested in the area of *Bamboula* at Kition, following the establishment of the Phoenician colony in the ninth century (Yon 1999: 20). A Phoenician presence has also been suggested for Amathus from the eighth century (Aupert 1997: 24). A possible Phoenician burial ground has been excavated to the west of the main necropolis, initially identified as an early example of a *tophet* for the burial of children, whose cremated remains were placed in ceramic urns; however, this interpretation has been challenged since the cemetery also contained adult burials (Christou 1998). Interestingly, the strong Phoenician character of Amathus has led to its identification as the *Qarthadasti* (or Phoenician colony) of Assyrian texts (Karageorghis 1991; 1995: 329).

A Phoenician colony was established at Kition in the ninth century BC (Reyes 1994: 18-21). Excavations have revealed evidence for a substantial building programme, including defensive walls and a small mudbrick temple built on virgin ground in the area of the harbour at *Bamboula* (Yon 1999: 20). Better known is the massive ashlar-built Temple 1 dedicated to Astarte and constructed over the ruins of the ancient temple quarter of LBA Kition

(Karageorghis 2002: 144-8). Despite the identification of Kition as a Phoenician colony, surprisingly little imported Phoenician pottery was recovered in the early levels (Bikai 1981: 29); instead, materially Kition conforms to the homogeneity recorded elsewhere on Cyprus.

The Aegean

Due to its privileged position on the East-West trade route between Phoenicia and the Aegean Amathus enjoyed early contacts with Euboea in particular, as is evidenced by early occurrence of Aegean imports at the site. Three Late PG *skyphoi* from Euboea (late tenth century) from a CG II tomb at Amathus represent the earliest Greek imports to the island (Fig. 5: Coldstream 1987: 22; Hermary 1999: 58). From CG III Aegean imports became abundant at Amathus, including Euboean Sub-PG *skyphoi* and plates as well as the occasional vessel from Attica (Aupert 1997: 24; Coldstream 1987). The concentration of Aegean imports at Amathus indicates that the settlement was established as the main port-of-call between the Aegean and Phoenicia during the earliest phase of east-west maritime ventures, and at least a century before the establishment of the Phoenician colony at Kition (Coldstream 1988: 43). Rare Cypriot imports west include a Bichrome II jug from Lefkandi (Coldstream 1999: 111) and possibly three bronze bowls and a curved iron knife from the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens (Antonaccio 1994: 222).

"Cypro-Phoenician" Red-on-Black Ware

Cypriots were pro-active in the creation of markets overseas for their wares. This is particularly illustrated by the Red-on-Black ware; frequently given the misnomer "Cypro-Phoenician" this purely Cypriot product (Iacovou 2004) was made on Cyprus between CG III-CA I, inspired by Phoenician Red ware imports (Schreiber 2003: 231, 275). Typically it was fashioned into small bottles with a small aperture and splaying lip (Fig. 6), containers of perfumed oil. With its distinctive shiny red, non-porous surface and simple painted decoration Red-on-Black pottery was "a recognizable and marketable commodity" (Schreiber 2003: 1) which advertised its contents and was specifically designed for an export market. As such it was widely exported around the East Mediterranean to the Levant, Egypt Anatolia and also to the Dodecanese and Crete during the eighth century.

Assyria

The stele of Sargon II (the only Assyrian document to date found on Cyprus) represents the earliest historical record of the city-kingdoms (Iacovou 2002: 82-3; Malbran-Labat 2004, fig. 43; Reyes 1994: 52-3; Yon and Malbrat-Labat 1995). The actual kingdoms are not listed and the number seven simply suggests geographical distance and exoticism for the Assyrians (Malbran-Labat 2004: 352). The stele, the product of an Assyrian craftsman, was a piece of propaganda marking the idealised boundary of Sargon II's empire (Radner 2010: 429). A second, possibly more informative document is the clay prism of Esarhaddon dating to 673/2 (Fig. 7); this lists ten kingdoms of Cyprus, eight of which can be firmly identified (Iacovou 2006a: 328-19; 2013: 27) and names their rulers. This is the single clearest historical account describing the geopolitical situation of EIA Cyprus. Although the texts might suggest Cyprus submitted to Assyrian force, in fact the island did not suffer any military incursion but remained independent. Instead, these inscriptions illustrate Cypriot incorporation within the economic sphere of Assyria.

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Illustrationsb

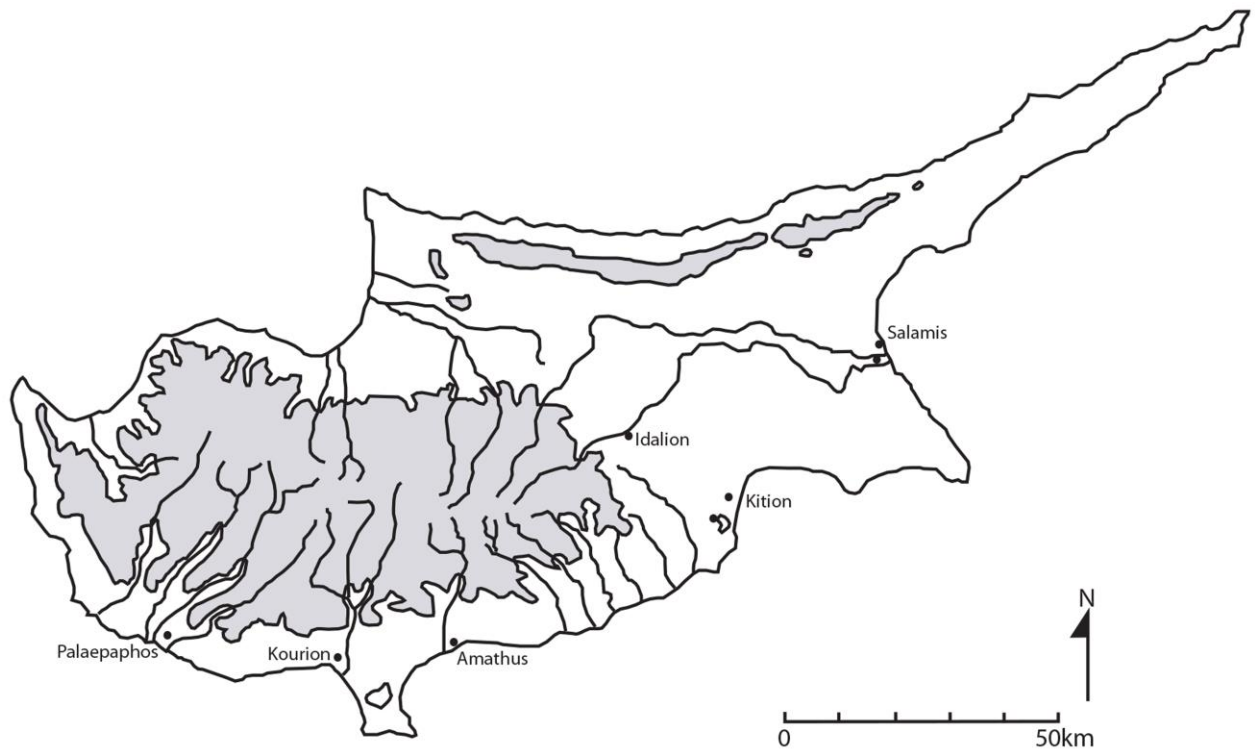


Fig. 1 Map of Iron Age Cyprus (LS)



Fig. 2 Silver gilt bowl from Cesnola collection with Akestor inscription (Courtesy MMA)



Fig. 3: Bronze cauldron on iron tripod from Salamis Royal Tomb 79 (Courtesy Cyprus Museum)



Fig. 4 Inscriptions: Opheltes inscription on bronze obelos from Kouklia Skales Tomb 49 (Permission: Cyprus Museum); Red Slip Phoenician Bowl from Floor 3 temple to Astarte, Kition with Phoenician inscription (Permission: Cyprus Museum)



Fig. 5: Two Euboeae Late PG drinking cups from Amathus (Limassol 46/3 and 46/4)
(Permission: Cyprus Museum)



Fig. 6: Red on Black juglet (Courtesy BM)

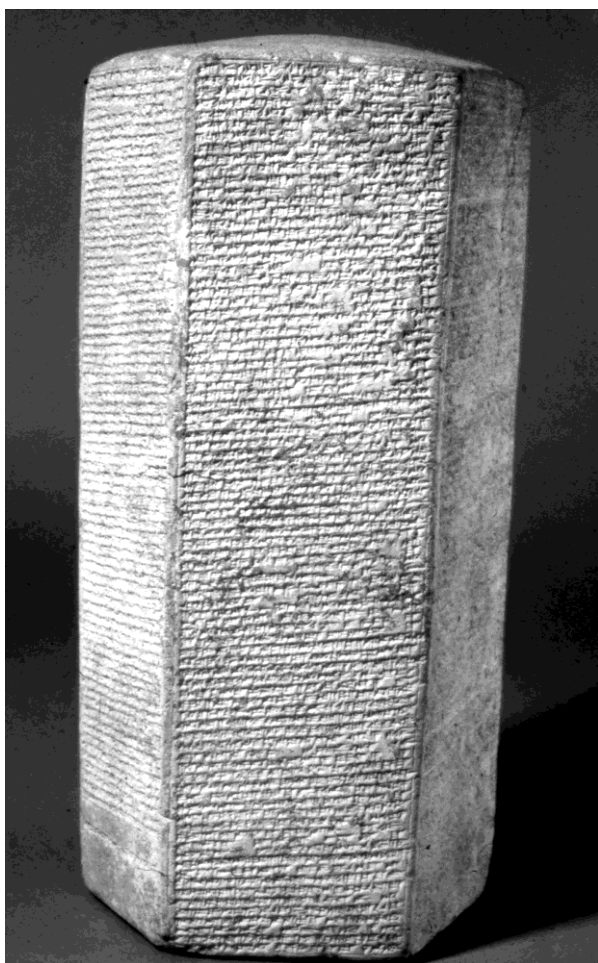


Fig. 7: Prism of Esarhaddon (Courtesy BM 121005)

Table 1. Relative Chronological Phases on Cyprus

Relative Chronological Period	Approximate Date B.C.E.
Cypro-Geometric (CG) IA	1050-1000
Cypro-Geometric (CG) IB	1000-950
Cypro-Geometric (CG) II	950-850
Cypro Geometric (CG) III	850-750
Cypro Archaic (CA) I	750-600
Cypro-Archaic (CA) II	600-480