

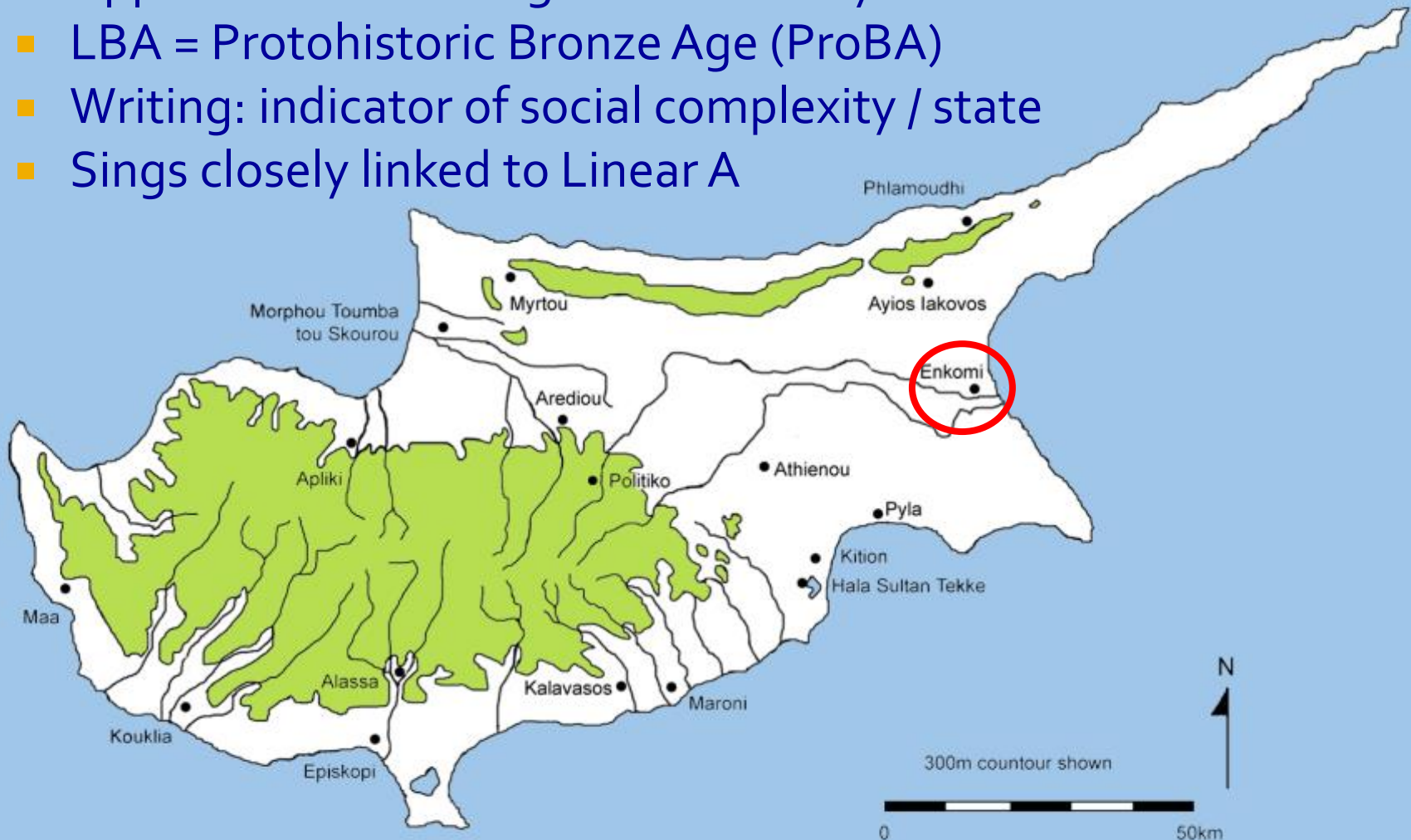
Cypriot Scripts



**Hieroglyphs, Text &
Society**

LBA Cyprus

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



From Crete to Cyprus

- How did transmission of script occur in LC I?
- Intense cultural contact between Minoans & Cypriots
- Script is borrowed & adapted
 - Why the choice of Minoan script rather than cuneiform?
- “decision to make a deliberate statement, to claim a Cypriot script as a distinctive marker of a burgeoning and progressively expanding... Cypriot culture”
(Ferrera 2012: 63)

Cypro-Minoan

- Script used from 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



Texts from Enkomi



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?



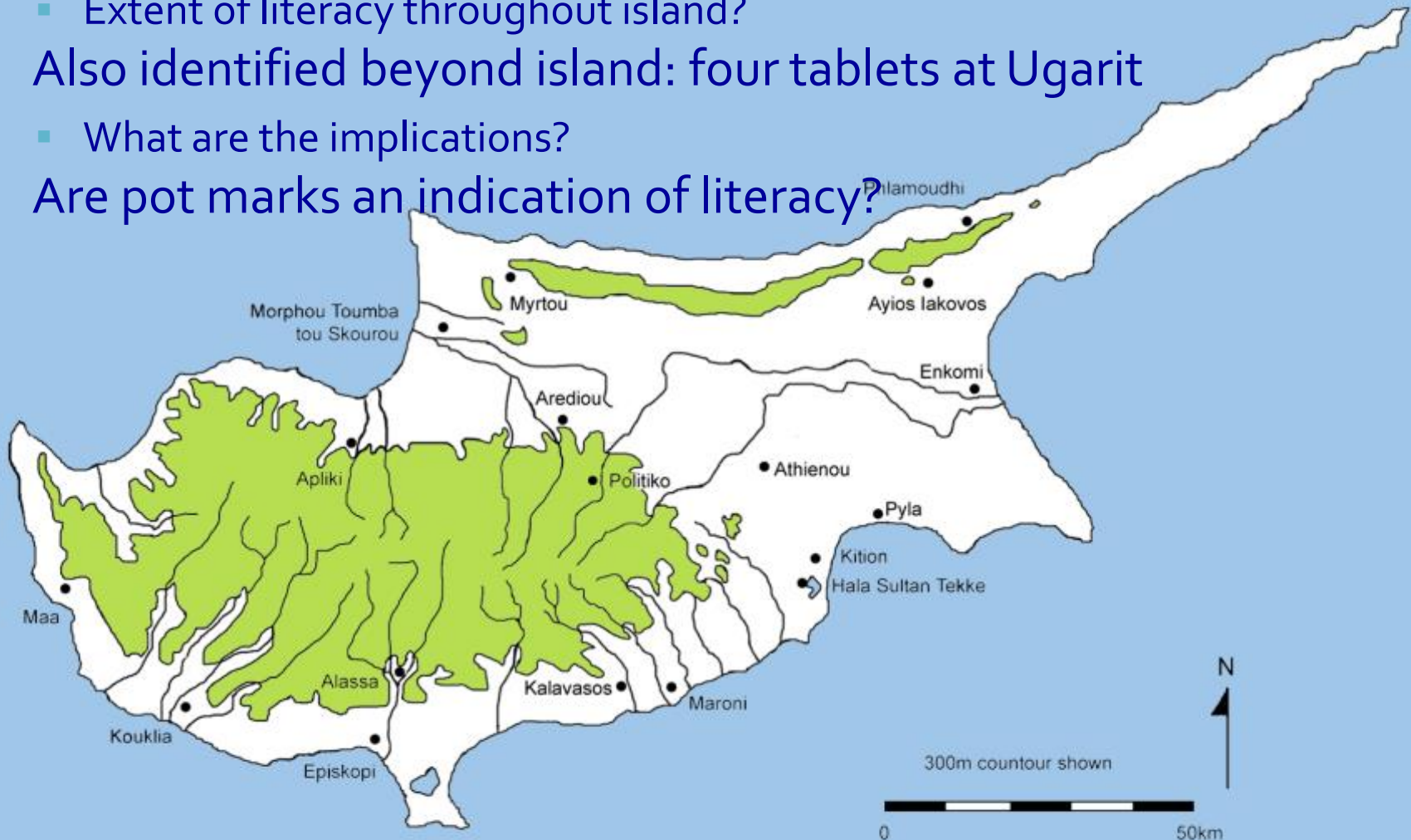
Clay ball, Enkomi



Pot handle, Arediou

Cypro-Minoan

- Primarily identified at Enkomi
 - Extent of literacy throughout island?
- Also identified beyond island: four tablets at Ugarit
 - What are the implications?
- Are pot marks an indication of literacy?



Trade, Exchange & Commodities

- 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
Minet el-Beidha

Writing as a Status Symbol

- Short inscriptions on other high status objects:
 - Bronze & silver bowls
 - Votive objects
 - Small ivory objects
- Ferrera: possibly personal names?



Inscribed bronze bowl



Votive ingot

Writing as Status Symbol

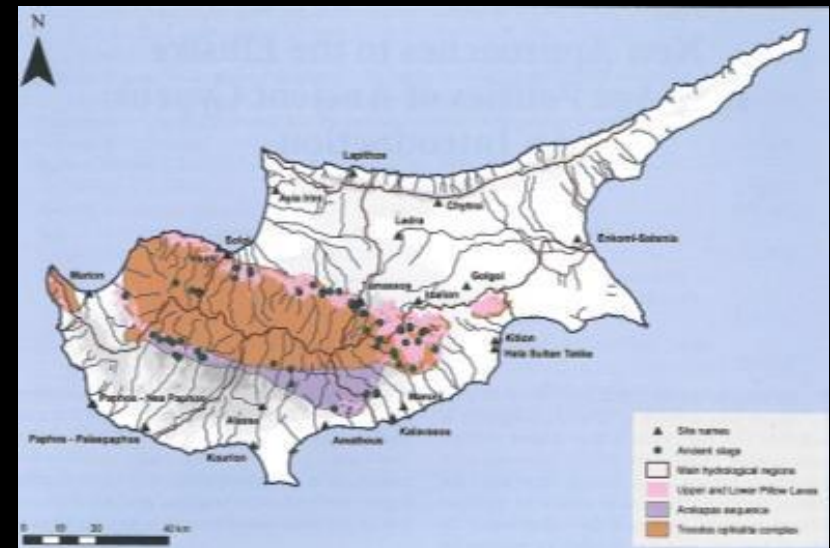
- Enkomi: silver ring
- Kalavassos: two gold signet rings:
 - Inscription on both rings identical
- Personal names?
- Literacy a marker of elite prestige paraphernalia
- Gendered associations



Kalavassos signet ring

Iron Age Cyprus

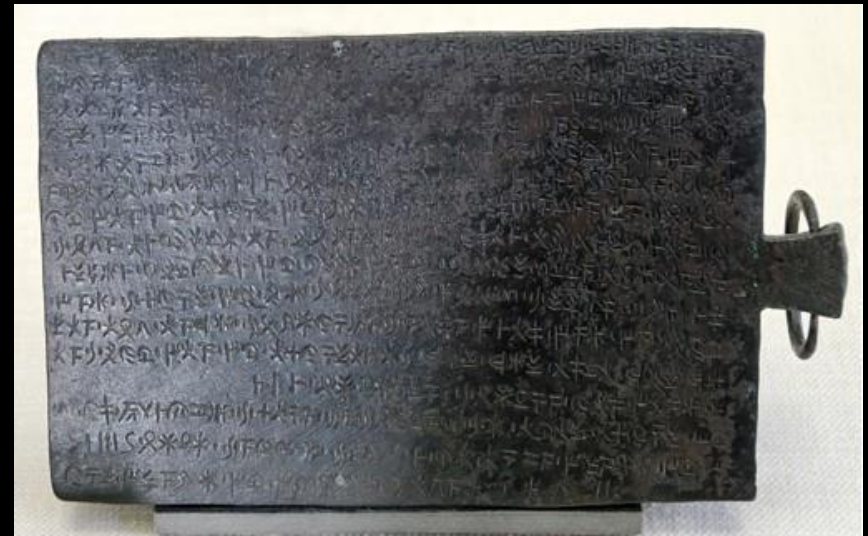
- c.1200 BC: collapse of LB urban centres
- c.800 BC: establishment of new centres (City Kingdoms):
 - Mycenaean colonisation
 - Greek Foundation Legends



Iron Age Cyprus

Greeks, Phoenicians & Eteocypriots

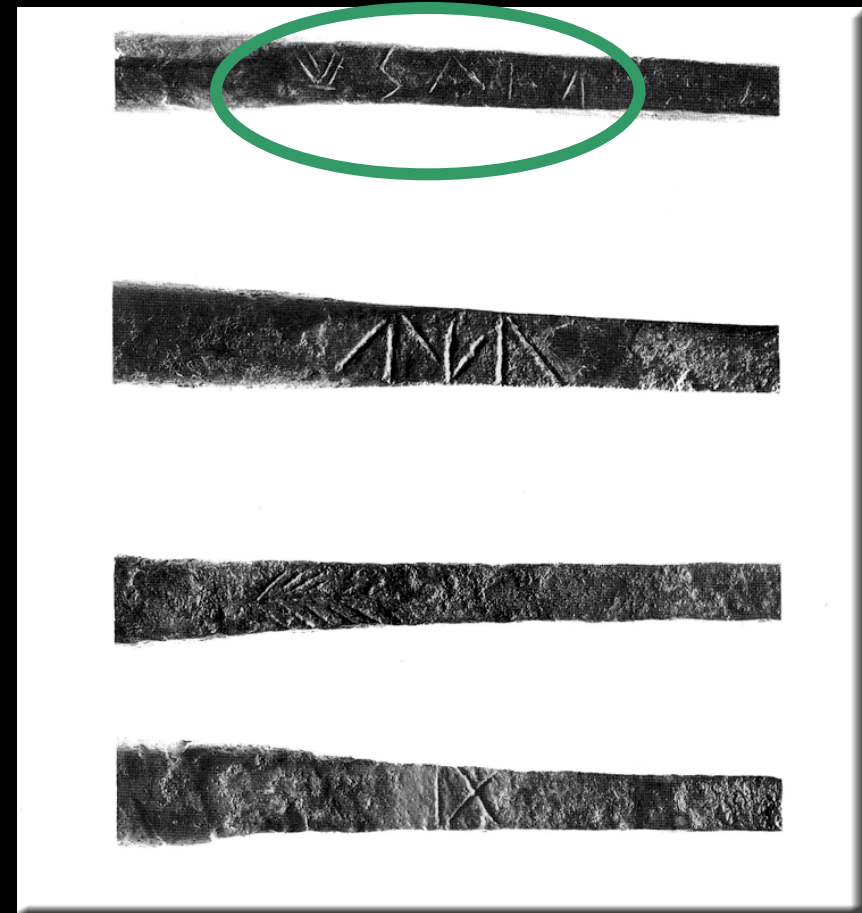
- 3 ethnic groups?
 - Debate revolves around choice of language & script
 - Two writing systems & three languages:
- Writing: proclamation of (ethnic) identity?
- Diverse uses:
 - Coinage
 - Royal dedications
 - Epitaphs
 - State decrees
 - Funerary



Bronze tablet, Idalion

Cypro-Minoan Legacy

- Kouklia *Skales*: Greek inscription
 - pe-le-tau-u
 - Ωπέλταυ = “of Opheltes” in Cypro-Arcadian dialect
- First evidence for use of Greek on Cyprus
- Use of distinctive Cypriot writing system
- Steele (2013): Cypro-Minoan **not** Cypro-Syllabic



Detail of bronze spits

Cypro-Minoan Legacy

- Culturally different to writing practice in LBA Greece
 - Marking ownership of precious items
 - LC & Phoenician parallels
- Greek community resident in Cyprus at end of LBA
 - CM script was still in use
 - Knowledge of Linear B had disappeared



Opheltes inscription

Cypro-Syllabary

- 2 languages:
 - Greek
 - Un-deciphered language:
Eteocypriot
- Derived from Cypro-Minoan
 - Cypriot writing practices continued without break from the Bronze Age?
 - Use driven by new Greek-speaking population who adapted local script
- "scribal system ... instead of dying out with the old language, acquired a new life" (Iacovou 2006b: 36)

* a	* e	* i	≋ o	γ u
ϝ ja			ϝ jo	
† ka	† ke	γ ki	† ko	† ku
† la	8 le	† li	† lo	ϝ lu
† ma	† me	† mi	ϝ mo	† mu
† na	ϝ ne	† ni	† no	ϝ nu
† pa	† pe	† pi	† po	† pu
ϝ ra	† re	† ri	† ro	ϝ ru
† sa	† se	† si	† so	† su
† ta	† te	† ti	† to	† tu
† ua	† ue	† ui	† uo	
† xa	† xe		† zo	
† ga				

Cypro-Syllabary

City Kingdoms

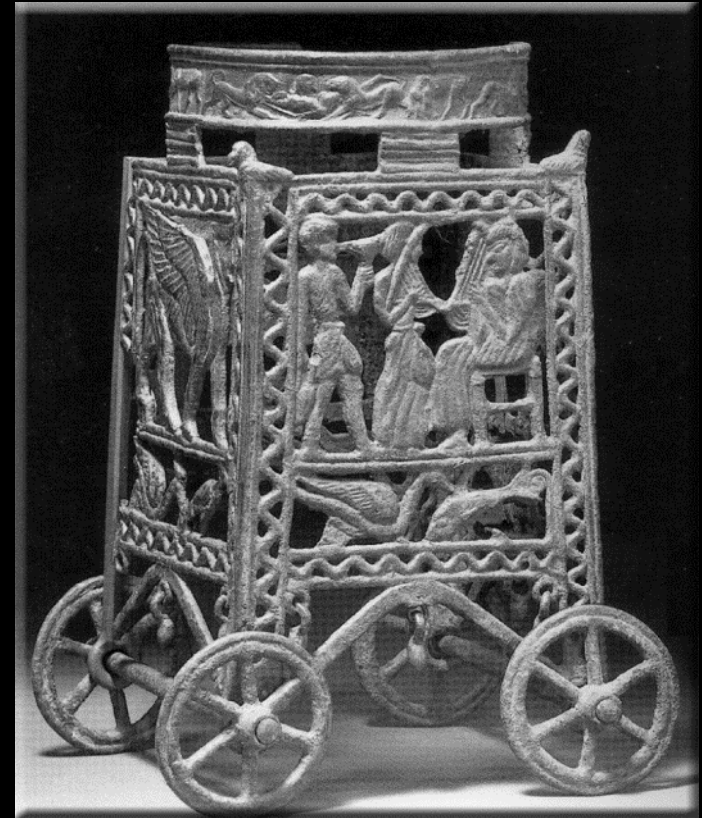
- Earliest Greek inscriptions = 7th century
- Royal inscriptions:
 - Gold arm bracelets naming Eteandros of Paphos
 - Silver plate naming Akestor of Paphos
- Bazemore: writing develops in Paphos



Silver gilt Akestor plate

Basileus

- Mycenaean **qa-si-re-u** becomes Cypriot basileus (**pa-si-le-wo-se**)
- Term transmitted to Cyprus at end of LBA
- Mycenaean: local chief responsible for metal stores
- Role survives in Cyprus in 12th century
 - Collapse of palaces
 - Mycenaean colonisation
 - Continued Cypriot bronze working



12th century bronze stand

Wanax/Wanassa

- Term survives in Cypriot Iron Age
- Divine use associated with Cypriot goddess with cult centred at Paphos
 - 4th century inscriptions & dedications “basileus priest of the wanassa”
- Wanax: member of royal family
- Royal sons & daughters = anactes & anassi



Nikokles king of Paphos & Priest of Wanassa

Beyond Cyprus

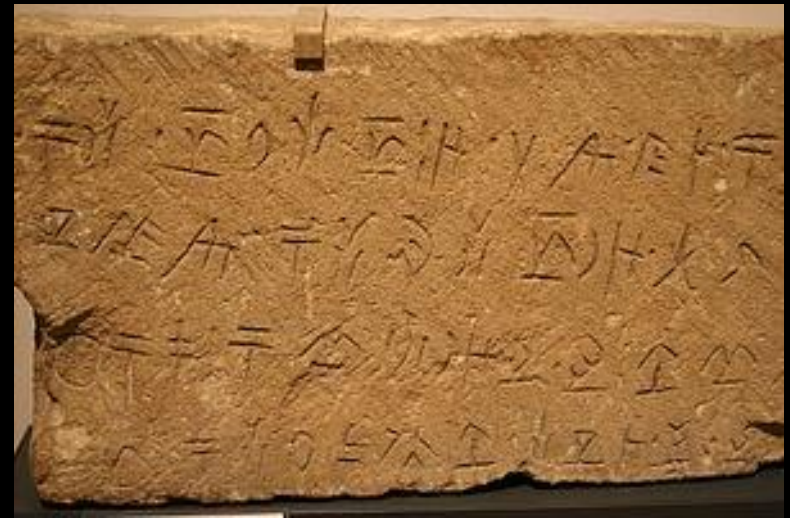
- Occasional Cypro-Syllabic dedications outside Cyprus
- Delphi:
 - Religious dedication
 - Political statement



Dedication from Delphi

Eteocypriot

- Assumed to be ancient language of Cyprus
- Limited corpus
 - Concentration of inscriptions at **Amathus**
 - Also attested at **Paphos** (the original home of Kinyras)
 - 2 from Egypt
- Associated with cult of Aphrodite or with royal officials



Eteocypriot inscription

Eteocypriot

- Amathus: earliest inscriptions from sanctuary of Aphrodite:
 - Bichrome pictorial krater c.750
 - Stone vase c.700
- Religious display: royal/elite activity associated with rise of city kingdoms?



Stone vase, sanctuary of Aphrodite

Summary

- Writing on Cyprus intrinsically associated with process of state formation in LBA & IA
- Writing practice originally learnt from Crete
- Some administrative use
- Primarily marker of status & identity
- Closely aligned with religious performance