"Cypriot Syllabary"

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and when the literary relations of Cyprus with Constantinople and other major centers of the Greek world were in decline. In 1191 CE, Richard I Lionheart, king of England, seized the island and eventually sold it to Guy de Lusignan. A new period started under Frankish and later under Venetian control. A dialectal literature of secular content gradually developed, which reflects the early stages of the Modern Cypriot dialect that is still in common use today.

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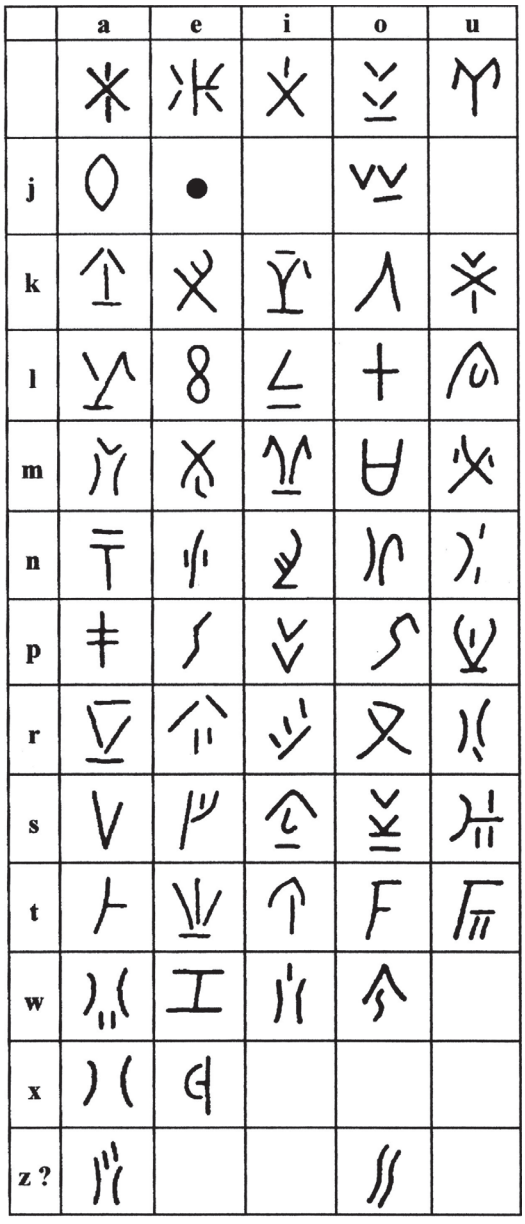
Anna Panayotou-Triantaphyllopoulou

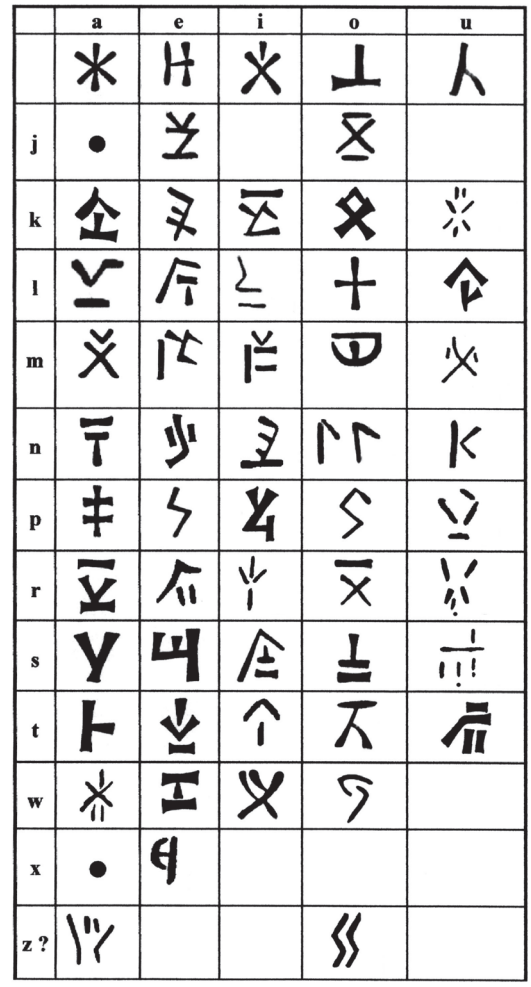
Cypriot Syllabary

The Cypriot syllabary (also known as the Classical Cypriot script) is a writing system that was employed in the Eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus between the 8th and the 3rd c. BCE. It is the latest offshoot of a family of five syllabaries, the → Cretan Hieroglyphic Script, → Linear A, → Linear B, and the → Cypro-Minoan Syllabary, all of the 2nd mill. BCE. It was used in the multilingual society that was Cyprus during the 1st mill. BCE, where three writing systems and at least three languages co-existed (Palaima 1991). Together with the Greek (→ Alphabet, The Origin of the Greek) and Phoenician alphabetic scripts that recorded the respective languages, the syllabary was used mainly for recording the Greek language in its → Cypriot, dialectal version, to which it is intrinsically linked (Morpurgo Davies 1988). It also records at least one more language, conventionally called '→ Eteocypriot'. The syllabary was used primarily on the island itself, but inscriptions are attested in Egypt (Abydos, Karnak, Thebes), where Cypriot mercenaries carved their signatures on buildings in the 4th c. BCE; a few more inscriptions have been found in Syro-Palestine, Cilicia, Greece and Italy, but there is no reason to believe that they constitute actual evidence of *in situ* literacy.

The script used 55 signs in its more widely used variety (the 'common' syllabary) and 54 signs in a local variety attested in Paphos and south-west Cyprus (the 'Paphian' syllabary). It is a well-established fact that the script signs denote syllables of the open type (consonant + vowel and simple vowel). Five separate signs were used to record the vowels *a, e, i, o* and *u*, without any indication of their length: *ka-si-ki-ni-ta-i* (dat.sg) corresponding to Att. *kasignḗtēi* 'sister'; *a-to-ro-po-i* 'men, persons' (Att. *ánthrōpoi*). The semi-vowel *j-* series appears in *ja* (only in the 'common' syllabary), *je* (only in the 'Paphian') and *jo* (in both): *se-la-mi-ni-ja* 'of Salamis', Attic *Salaminía*; *i-je-re-(u)-se* 'priest', Attic *hiereús*; *le-ti-ri-jo-se* 'of Ledra', Attic *Lḗdrios*; but is missing (and not expected to have) signs for *ji* and *ju*. An almost complete *w-* series is also attested (except for *wu*): *pa-si-le-wo-se* 'king (gen.sg.)' (Attic *basiléōs*). The signs used for the plosives, conventionally transcribed as the unvoiced *k-, p-, t-*, stand also for the voiced as well as for the aspirated stops of the same point of articulation (*g-/kh-, b-/ph-, d-/th-* respectively): *ke-ti-o-*



Grid of the "common" Cypriot syllabary ('Akanthou' type). Source: Olivier, Jean-Pierre. 2007–2008. "Les syllabaires chypriotes des deuxième et premier millénaires avant notre ère: état des questions", *Colloquium Romanum. Atti del XII colloquio internazionale di Micenologia, Roma 20–25 febbraio 2006*, ed. by Anna Sacconi, Maurizio Del Freo, Louis Godart and Mario Negri. Pisa-Rome, 617.



Grid of the "Paphian" Cypriot syllabary. Source: Olivier, Jean-Pierre. 2007–2008. "Les syllabaires chypriotes des deuxième et premier millénaires avant notre ère: état des questions", *Colloquium Romanum. Atti del XII colloquio internazionale di Micenologia, Roma 20–25 febbraio 2006*, ed. by Anna Sacconi, Maurizio Del Freo. Pisa-Rome, Louis Godart and Mario Negri, 618.

ne (gen.sg.) 'Kition', place-name (Attic *Kitíōn*); *ka-i-re-te* (Attic *khaírete*) form of greeting or of bidding farewell, 2nd pers. pl. imp.; *ka-la-u-ko-se* 'Glaukos' p.n. (Attic *Glaûkos*). Liquids (*r-, l-*) are denoted in separate sign-series (which is not the case with Linear B), and there are also two sign-series for the nasals (*m-, n-*). The syllabary also has (rarely attested) signs for *xa* (only in the 'common' syllabary) and *xe* (*wa-na-xe* 'prince, lord'; cf. Hom. *ánax*), as well as *za* and *zo* (the first is however a dubious attribution). It is worth noting that this open type syllabic writing system presented certain difficulties when it was called to register closed syllables (a simple consonant not followed by a vowel or a consonant cluster); the choice being between eliminating a consonant or adding a vowel in writing, the syllabary chose the latter; vowels in syllabic signs could therefore be 'mute', whether in the middle of a word or at its end (*a-ri-si-to-se* 'Aristos' p.n.;

Attic *Áristos*). Finally, numbers are also attested, although poorly, and it is possible that fractions were also written. The only sign of punctuation known is a small vertical stroke that functioned as a word-divider.

The bulk of Cypriot syllabic inscriptions dates from the 6th to the 4th c. BCE. The syllabary fell out of use around the end of the 3rd c. BCE, its last attestation being on votive vases in the rural sanctuary of Kafizin in central Cyprus that date between 225 and 218 BCE (Mitford 1980). Its demise is believed to have come about due to the political changes that occurred after the death of Alexander the Great. Still, its very latest attestation is on a small number of seal impressions on clay sealings from the Paphian public archives, which date to the second half of the 2nd c. or as late as the 1st c. BCE (Michaelidou-Nikolaou 1993). This isolated attestation should probably be seen as some kind of fossilized use of the syllabary. Between then and our era, all notice about the existence of this writing system had disappeared. A Cypriot syllabic inscription was seen by the Austrian Josef von Hammer-Purgstall in a travel to Cyprus only at the beginning of the 19th c. CE (von Hammer-Purgstall 1811). That this was in fact a different, unknown script, was understood by the Duke de Luynes, who posited the existence of a separate Cypriot script based on his observations on coin legends (de Luynes 1852); his 'breakthrough' was however also assisted by the retrieval of the famous bronze Idalion tablet in 1849 (ICS 217). From then on and on account of numerous excavations and archaeological discoveries, the decipherment of the writing system came relatively quickly. The keen interest on Cypriot archaeology in the 19th c. CE by the Americans, the French, the British and the Germans was not irrelevant to their geopolitical interests in the area; as a result, inscriptions in the Cypriot syllabary (other than the ones kept in Cyprus) can nowadays be seen in a number of museums around the world, such as the Metropolitan Museum in New York (which houses the Cesnola collection), the Louvre in Paris (mostly with inscriptions from Amathous) and the British Museum in London.

The decisive decades for the first systematic studies and the decipherment of the Cypriot syllabary were the 1860s and 1870s. The decipherment was assisted by the discovery of two digraph/bilingual inscriptions (ICS 260: 1862 in Golgoi a Greek alphabetic/Cypriot syllabic one; ICS 220: in 1869 in Idalion a Phoenician alphabetic/Cypriot syllabic). Robert Hamilton Lang, who managed to decipher the word for 'king' (*pa-si-le-u-se*; Attic *basileús*), together with George Smith, a cuneiform expert, and Samuel Birch, an Egyptologist, attributed a number of correct phonetic values to some script signs; Hamilton Lang realized that word declensions reminded him of Greek and Latin. A numismatist, Johannes Brandis, contributed further to the decipherment in 1873, and Moriz Schmidt in 1874, who took for granted that the language was Greek, managed to arrive to the desired result. Two Prussian researchers, Wilhelm Deecke and Justus Siegismund, came to the same conclusions as Schmidt, but they are not credited with the decipherment, since their work was published slightly later than his (although within the same year). After the decipherment, scholarly interest turned to the edition of inscriptions. Schmidt was the first to publish a collection of inscriptions, which he apparently compiled while working on the decipherment (Schmidt 1876). Two inscription collections by Deecke (1883) and Hoffmann (1891) remained the standard reference for years. However, the primary collection of inscriptions became *Les inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques* (1961; ICS) by Olivier Masson, which is still used today in its 2nd edition (1983). Masson accompanied his collection with an extensive introduction, where the most sound information on the Cypriot syllabic writing system is still to be found (Masson 1983:30–87). The most recent comprehensive contribution to the study of the Greek-Cypriot language is a grammar (Egetmeyer 2010) which is accompanied by an updated list of inscriptions.

The syllabary does belong, as noted above, to a family of 2nd mill. BCE Eastern Mediterranean writing systems. It is the descendant of the Cypro-Minoan scripts, which were used during the second half of the second millennium and believed to have developed from an adapted version of the Minoan Linear A (the predecessor of Linear B) (Chadwick 1979). Although the last attestation of Cypro-Minoan dates to the 11th c. BCE and the first attestation of the syllabary dates to the 8th c. BCE, the similarities between the systems are so remarkable that make it practically certain that the 'gap' in those centuries is in fact a gap in our evidence (Morpurgo Davies and Olivier 2012). This complicated prehistory of the syllabary of the 1st mill.

BCE, which includes an undetermined number of languages, makes the understading and interpretation of certain script features arbitrary. At the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to determine if the syllabary was created for writing an indigenous language or Greek, as many researchers have fequently wondered. The problem becomes even more complicated especially since current research anticipates more than one 'indigenous' language lurking behind the catch-all term 'Eteocypriot' (one attested in Amathous and elsewhere, and another one in Golgoi; Egetmeyer 2010:6).

The syllabary is known through some 1,400 inscriptions preserved on an impressive variety of objects. The largest number of inscriptions is to be found on stone stelai or blocks (more than 800), which attest mostly to funerary inscriptions but also to dedicatory texts. The longest text on stone is found on a lintel from a monumental tomb in Amathous; the lintel in fact hosts two separate honorific inscriptions (an educated guess, since they are in the undeciphered 'Eteocypriot'), which together amount to 350 signs and 73 words. Yet, almost half of these stone inscriptions present us with no more than one word each. Vases (mainly from clay, but also some metallic and stone ones, more than 300 in number) are the second largest category of inscription carriers; incised vase inscriptions most often seem to signify ownership of the vessel, even when this has been found in a funerary context. Vase inscriptions are in their majority extremely short and a large number of these present us with what was probably a common practice in the 5th–4th c. BCE, namely name abbreviations (either the initial syllable or two initial syllables, sometimes ligatured, i.e., in a sort of monogram). Coins are characteristic inscription carriers, also with their abbreviated or whole names and official titles. Some of the inscribed coins are the only pieces of information we possess for the existence of certain kings of the ancient Cypriot kingdoms. Additionally, stone statues, seals, some jewellery, weapons, a few weights and extremely few bone objects are also known to have inscriptions. Last but not least, the aforementioned Idalion bronze tablet, which records an agreement between the king of Idalion Stasikypros and the medical doctor Onasilos and his brothers, remains the largest preserved text (1,262 signs and 346 words). The nature of the inscribed objects and their texts point to a public and 'official' use of the script as well as a private and more informal use. The Cypriot syllabary was strongly connected to the Cypriot dialect, and they both permeated a multitude of levels and spheres of social life in 1st mill. BCE Cyprus.

Cypriot syllabic inscriptions have been found across the whole of Cyprus, and researchers assume that inscribed objects attest to local knowledge of writing/reading wherever they are found. The largest number of inscriptions comes from Paphos and the area around it in southwest Cyprus (close to 500), where the syllabary is attested in its 'Paphian' version. The 'common' syllabary is the most diffused one and is attested in the rest of Cyprus: in Marion-Arsinoe in northwest Cyprus (with some 250 inscriptions), in Kourion, Amathous, Salamis (coastal sites), and Golgoi, Idalion and Kafizin (inland sites), each of these with some 50–100 inscriptions. Besides pinpointing retrieval sites, however, details on their historical trajectories are much more meaningful: Golgoi and Kafizin are actually sanctuary sites, apparently of different status (Golgoi was also a proper habitation site with a necropolis); Idalion attests to a much more important Phoenician archive than the one drafted in the syllabary; Kition, much for the same reasons as Idalion, has produced a minimal number of syllabic inscriptions; finally, Cypriot kingdoms known to us from other ancient sources, such as Ledra, have remained until recently elusive as far as inscriptions are concerned (Pilides and Olivier 2008).

The differences between the two varieties of the Cypriot syllabary consist in the different structure of the two systems, different forms of certain signs, as well as the direction of writing/reading. The 'common' syllabary is sinistroverse (like the Phoenician alphabet), whereas the 'Paphian' is dextroverse (like Linear A, Linear B and the Cypro-Minoan scripts). The palaeography of these syllabaries is not yet adequately studied (Olivier 2007–2008), and scholars tend to use the plural for each of the two varieties, implying that within the ranks of each we may be expecting more divisions into further subvarieties; whether these are local particularities or simple sign/writing variants remains to be determined (Mitford 1961; Masson 1983:57–67).

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Cypro-Minoan Syllabary

Cypro-Minoan is the modern name given to several different but related Cypriot syllabic scripts of the second millennium BCE. These syllabaries seem to be linked in some way with the Minoan scripts, which were used mainly on the island of Crete. The Cypriot 'Greek' (or 'classic') syllabaries (→ Cypriot Syllabary) of the first millennium BCE clearly derive from these Bronze-Age Cypro-Minoan scripts. The main characteristics of the Cypro-Minoan corpuses are the following (after Olivier 2007; since then, four short Cypro-Minoan (= CM) inscriptions have been published: Cadogan et al. 2009):

Cypro-Minoan 0: One clay tablet found in Enkomi (Cyprus); 23 signs in total; 20 or 21 different signs; the text is too short to venture an estimation of its signary's total number of signs; dated not later than 1525/1500–1425/1415 BCE. Eight signs are common to CM 0 and CM 1–3. This script is frequently considered as an archaic form of the other Cypro-Minoan syllabaries.

Cypro-Minoan 1: 204 inscriptions found in Cyprus (whole island; written on clay, ivory, metal, stone, glass); 1079 syllabograms in total; 72 different syllabograms – ca 77 according to the Mackay formula; theoretically dated 1600/1575–850, but more likely to 15th/14th c.–950 BCE. There are 45 and 41 CM 1 syllabograms common to the CM 2 and CM 3 respectively.

Cypro-Minoan 2: Three clay tablets found in Enkomi (Cyprus); 1369 syllabograms in total; 61 different syllabograms – ca 64 according to the Mackay formula; dated no later than 1190–1125/1100 and 1125/1100–1050 BCE; 34 syllabograms are common to the CM 2 and CM 3.

Cypro-Minoan 3: 8 clay tablets found in Ugarit, modern Ras Shamra (Syria); 253 syllabograms in total; 50 different syllabograms – ca 62 according to the Mackay formula; dated 1320–1190 and 1190–1125/1100 BCE. CM 3 is generally supposed to be a variant of other CM scripts, but there are good arguments for considering it as a distinct system. 9 and 16 CM 3 syllabograms are absent from CM 1 and CM 2 respectively. Since CM 1 and CM 2 corpora are four and five times larger than CM 3, these absences seem highly significant. It is especially impressive that no less than seven CM 3 syllabograms are totally unknown in both CM 1 and CM 2.

The approximately 14 syllabograms that the Cypro-Minoan scripts have in common with the Cypriot 'Greek' (or 'classic') syllabaries allow some phonetic readings. However, no bilingual document has been found so far. A comparison of the internal analyses of the CM 1, CM 2 and CM 3 texts suggests that the languages of CM 1 and CM 2 could be different, whereas, quite hypothetically, those of CM 1 and CM 3 could be similar. The use of the Cypro-Minoan 1 ending