

ATHANASIA KANTA – MASSIMO PERNA

## AN INSCRIBED BRONZE BOWL FROM CYPRUS IN THE ZINTILIS COLLECTION\*

The Zintilis collection in Nicosia contains a shallow, almost hemispherical bronze bowl hammered out of a single sheet of metal, which bears the number Z 730 (Fig. 1a–b).

The undecorated hemispherical bronze bowl is of the most common Cypriot metal shape from the end of the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age<sup>1</sup> and has a very long life from Late Cypriot to Cyproarchaic times, from ca. 1400 up to 500 B.C. There also exist some examples in silver. This is a very simple shape which is typical among grave goods, but also exists in settlements.

### Description

The rim of bowl Z 730 is slightly thicker than the body of the vase. It has been mended and its condition and patina are good. Its width varies from 18.9 to 19.4 cm. Its height varies from 6.9 to 5.8 cm. Three signs in Cypro-Minoan script are clearly incised on the external surface just under the rim (Fig. 2a–b).

### Dating

Bowl Z 730 cannot be dated with great precision because its archaeological associations are not known. However, comparable finds suggest a probable date for this bowl in LC II C or LC III A.

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\* We are very grateful to Mr. Thanos Zintilis for permission to publish this bowl. Thanks are also due to Dr. Demos Christou then director of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, for facilities in the Nicosia Museum.

<sup>1</sup> For a complete catalogue of Cypriot metal bowls see H. Matthäus, *Metallgefäße und Gefäßuntersätze der Bronzezeit, der geometrischen und archaischen Periode auf Cypern*, München 1985 (= Matthäus 1985).

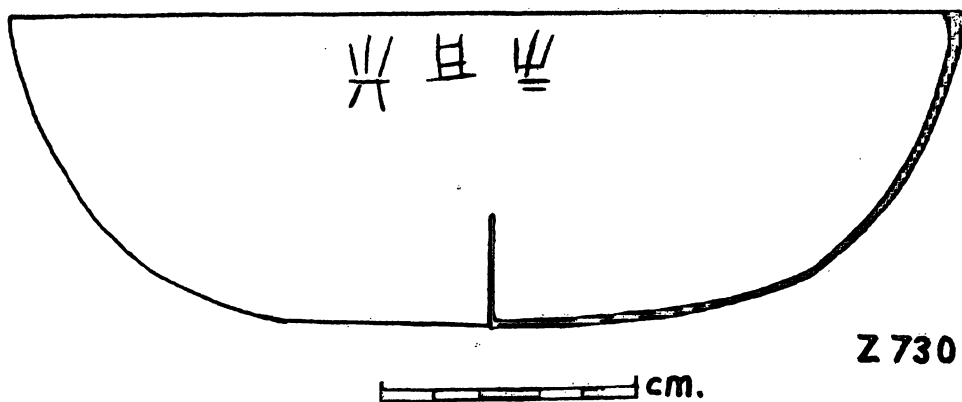


Fig. 1b The bowl Z 730

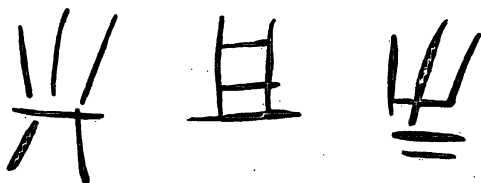


Fig. 2b The inscription (drawing M. Perna, scale 1 : 1)

|                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 𐤀 𐤇 𐤔                 | (Bowl Z 730)           |
| 𐤀 𐤎 𐤕 𐤔 𐤀 ' 𐤔         | (Bowl 45 of Matthäus)  |
| 𐤀 𐤎 𐤕 𐤔 𐤀 ' 𐤕 𐤔 𐤔 𐤔 𐤔 | (Bowl 274 of Matthäus) |
| 𐤀 𐤇 𐤔 𐤕 𐤀 ' 𐤔 𐤔       | (Bowl 275 of Matthäus) |
| 𐤕 𐤔 𐤕 𐤔 𐤀             | (Bowl 226 of Matthäus) |
| 𐤕 𐤎 𐤔 𐤀 ' : = -       | (Silver bowl 16.63)    |
| 𐤔 𐤔 𐤔 𐤀 ' 𐤔           | (Bowl 276 of Matthäus) |
| 𐤀 𐤔 𐤔 𐤀               | (Terracotta bowl 1904) |
| 𐤀 .                   | (Terracotta bowl 3438) |

Fig. 3



Fig. 1a The bowl Z 730 (scale 1 : 2)



Fig. 2a The inscription (scale 2 : 1)



Hitherto, only six metal bowls have been found in Cyprus with an inscription in Cypro-Minoan, five in bronze and one in silver. We can be sure of the provenance of only two of the five bronze bowls. One originates from the 1896 English excavations conducted at Enkomi by A. S. Murray and A. H. Smith and is kept at the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Bruxelles*.<sup>2</sup> The other originates from the necropolis of Kuklia-Skales and is in the Nicosia Museum.<sup>3</sup>

The three remaining bronze bowls are in the Nicosia Museum and for two of them the provenance from Enkomi can only be surmised, as O. Masson<sup>4</sup> suggests, since the material was found at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and kept in the museum storeroom until the late 1960s, when the bowls were cleaned and the inscriptions became visible. The provenance from Enkomi seems to be confirmed by the fact that in the list of the Enkomi tombs opened in 1893, hemispherical bronze bowls are quoted in relation to tombs 5, 7 and 82.<sup>5</sup> The third bronze bowl was donated to the Nicosia Museum by a collector.<sup>6</sup>

The last of the metal bowls, the only one in silver with an inscription in Cypro-Minoan, was found at Enkomi in 1963 during the excavations of the French archaeological mission conducted by C. F. A. Schaeffer in Quartier 4E, "... près d'un larnax en terre cuite"<sup>7</sup>. Noticeably, the inscription consists of a group of four signs followed by the numeral 230 (Fig. 3).

It is worth noting that at Hala Sultan Tekké another silver bowl was found, dated to LC III A:1, but with an inscription in the Canaanite alphabet<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> (Inv. no. A 1227). E. Masson, *Une nouvelle inscription chypro-minoenne d'Enkomi*, RDAC 1975, pp. 41–42 (= Masson 1975), pl. V. The bowl in question is no. 45 of Matthäus 1985, 75, pl. 2. Dating: LC III.

<sup>3</sup> V. Karageorghis, CRAI 1980, 135, cf. no. 226 of Matthäus 1985, p. 85, pl. 12.

<sup>4</sup> O. Masson, *Etudes d'épigraphie chypro-minoenne*, *Minos* 9, 1968, pp. 66–72, and, by the same scholar, *La diffusion de l'écriture à Chypre à la fin de l'Age du Bronze*, in *Acts of the International Archaeological Symposium "The Mycenaeans in the Eastern Mediterranean"*, Nicosia 1973, p. 93, cf. nos. 274, 275 of Matthäus, 87–88 pl. 15.

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Myres and M. Ohnefalsch-Richter, *A Catalogue of the Cyprus Museum*, Oxford 1899, pp. 183–186. Dating: LC III.

<sup>6</sup> (Inv. no. 1959/IX-28/I). Cf. no. 276 of Matthäus. See V. Karageorghis, BCH 84, 1960, p. 259, fig. 28, and O. Masson 1968 (*supra* n. 4), 66–67, fig. 4. Dating: LC III.

<sup>7</sup> J.-C. Courtois, *Alasia III*, pp. 52–53 no. 473 fig. 16. 17, pl. VI.8. Dating: beginning of LC III. The silver bowl is kept in the Nicosia Museum (Inv. no. 16.63).

<sup>8</sup> P. Åström and E. Masson, *A Silver Bowl with Canaanite Inscription from Hala Sultan Tekké*, RDAC 1982, pp. 72–76.

Finally, mention must be made of the famous silver bowl from Ras Shamra found in 1931 by Schaeffer<sup>9</sup> with other silver and gold objects in a votive repository, which presents on the exterior under the rim an inscription of 3–4 signs in the Cypro-Minoan script of Ugarit CM3 (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 The silver bowl from Ugarit, S. 89 of Matthäus

Apart from the six inscriptions incised on metal bowls from Cyprus, we have to record the presence of two inscriptions on terracotta bowls (Fig. 3). The first one, discovered at Enkomi by P. Dikaios<sup>10</sup>, consists of four signs all clearly incised on a fragment of the side and base of a large terracotta bowl of buff ware. The second inscription, found at Kition by V. Karageorghis<sup>11</sup>, consists of one sign plus a trace of a second sign, incised under the rim of a fragmentary bowl of LM III B ware on the external face.

### The inscription

The eight aforementioned cases present one, two or three words separated by a vertical stroke used as a punctuation mark, or one word plus numerals. The new inscription in Cypro-Minoan consists of only one word of three signs clearly incised on the external surface of the hemispherical bronze bowl, just under the edge.

The first two signs do not pose problems of identification. The first is sign 104 in Masson's classification<sup>12</sup>, appearing here in a rather

<sup>9</sup> C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Syria* 13, 1932, pp. 22–23, fig. 15, pl. XVI.1. *Ugaritica* I, p. 97. *Ugaritica* III, pp. 236–237.

<sup>10</sup> P. Dikaios, *Enkomi, Excavations 1948–1958*, Vol. II, p. 778, pls. 149.20 and 190.5, Mainz 1971. Inv. no. 1904.

<sup>11</sup> V. Karageorghis, *Excavations at Kition*, V.II, p. 137 inv. no. 3438 and Appendix III p. 283, pl. CXCIX, Nicosia, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> For the classification of Cypro-Minoan signs see E. Masson, *Ciprominoica*, Göteborg 1974, figs. 1–4, and for subsequent modifications, *Les syllabaires chyprominoens: mises au point, compléments et définitions à la lumière des documents nouveaux*, RDAC 1985, pp. 146–154, and *Les écritures chyprominoennes: Etat présent des connaissances et des ignorances*, in *Tractata Mycenaea*, Skopje 1987, pp. 189–202.

stylised form with the three divergent vertical strokes separated from the bottom part of the sign. Also in this case sign 104 appears in initial position, as often happens to be the case in the documents in Cypro-Minoan. The second sign does not raise problems either, as it is perfectly recognisable as sign 69.

It is the third sign, however, which appears here in a rather peculiar form, with three slightly divergent vertical strokes converging at the bottom with a horizontal bar. The layout perfectly corresponds to sign 61 but for the fact that it presents two further short parallel strokes beneath the horizontal bar. The only two signs to which reference could be made here are signs 60 and 67, which only show one – not two – horizontal bars at the bottom. In our opinion its identification as sign 61 is the most likely, although the possibility of its being a sign never encountered before cannot be disregarded.

The group of signs 104-69-61 is a hapax. However, the binomial represented by the first two signs 104-69 is well documented in Cypro-Minoan. It appears in the first line of the inscriptions recorded on five clay “rouleaux” found at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios. All five documents present the same heading in the first line. It consists of two groups of signs, the first of three, the second of five signs. The second group begins with the binomial 104-69 as in our inscription.

Another example is provided by the inscription incised on the small “enclume de bijoutier” found at Enkomi in 1967 and consisting of two groups of three signs each, divided by a vertical separation stroke. The second of these two groups begins, like our inscription, with the binomial 104-69 and it is different only in its third sign.

Likewise the binomial 104-69 appears in the groups of signs 104-69-51 and 104-69-27-21, where sign 69, which appears here with a small oblique appendix and was originally interpreted by E. Masson<sup>13</sup> as a different sign (70), has later been recognised as sign 69 with the addition of what E. Masson calls “épine” “. . . par analogie aux hiéroglyphes louvites”<sup>14</sup>.

Analysing the complete group of signs which appear on the seven metal bowls and on the two terracotta bowls, it is interesting that, in seven cases out of nine, the first group of signs terminates with sign 28, the so-called sign of the “petite flèche”, as underlined by E. Masson (Fig. 3)<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> E. Masson 1974 (*supra* n. 12), p. 14 fig. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 194.

<sup>15</sup> E. Masson 1975 (*supra* n. 2), p. 42.

Evidently, the presence of the same syllable at the end of a word is not casual. It is logical to assume, as suggested by E. Masson,<sup>16</sup> that the initial word in these short inscriptions is a proper name. The fact that the same name appears on two of seven bowls could be explained by postulating two individuals with the same name. The same syllable at the end of the word would represent therefore either the final inflection of a proper name or some possessive case.

The group of signs appearing on bowl Z 730 of the Zintilis collection is the only one which does not terminate with sign 28, although for this group of signs also the most plausible interpretation is that they constitute a proper name.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 42.