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Marked Objects from Apliki Karamallos

NICOLLE HIRSCHFELD

The study of Cypriot Late Bronze Age (LBA) writing had reached one of its apogees in the summer of 1939, when Joan du Plat Taylor undertook excavations at Apliki Karamallos. Publication of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition's reports and new discoveries by Schaeffer at Enkomi and the Americans at Kourion *Bamboula* had shrugged off the mantle of dormancy imposed by the first World War; by the mid '30's, scholarship on the origins and uses of writing on LBA Cyprus was in full swing. Evans (1935), Persson (1932 and 1937), and Schaeffer (1936) published important studies, and Casson (1937 and 1939) and Daniel (1941) produced major treatises. Actual inscriptions known at the time were few — a handful of marble-sized clay balls, perhaps ten cylinder seals, a gold ring, a silver bowl, a bronze plaque, and perhaps two dozen vases or fragments of vases, all with very brief texts (2-8 signs).

The corpus of inscriptions was much increased if the single marks painted or incised on local and imported vases were also considered as evidence of writing. This had been accepted practice since the turn of the century, with the earliest discoveries of marked LBA vases on Cyprus (Murray *et al.*, 1900, 27). The fact that many of the single marks resembled signs found in the longer inscriptions, the fact that single marks were often similarly placed and inscribed on the same kinds of vases as the longer inscriptions, and perhaps a scramble for any kind of evidence in light of the rarity of formal inscriptions encouraged most scholars of Cypriot writing to treat any mark on any object as a "sign

of writing". So, for example, Casson, in his comprehensive study of Cypriot writing, indiscriminately incorporated single marks and multi-sign inscriptions carved or painted on all media into his "Table of Signs" (Casson 1937, 98-107). Daniel differentiated his sign lists according to the provenience and type of object inscribed, but even his cautionary approach considered all types of marks on all types of objects found on Cyprus as possible traces of Cypriot writing (Daniel 1941). It was in this context that Joan du Plat Taylor collected the marked objects excavated at Apliki Karamallos.

Joan du Plat Taylor found nine objects incised with marks: handle fragments and a body sherd from five plain vases, one pithos rim, a Canaanite amphora handle, a Mycenaean jar handle, and a serpentine stamp seal. She published them in a succinct list appended to the site report presented in the 1952 issue of *The Antiquaries Journal* (Taylor 1952, 166). All of those marked objects are now stored in the Cyprus Museum.¹ Subsequent examination of Miss Taylor's unpublished "Notes" and of the artifacts stored in the museum has not revealed any additional marks. The following report has two purposes: First, descriptions of the marks and the objects on which the marks appear are presented in full detail, with some corrections and amplifications to the previous publication. Second, the context and implications of the presence of these marked objects at a mining settlement in the Troodos — issues not addressed at all by Miss Taylor — are here examined.

The Marked Objects

Plain White Ware

381 A5:39 [R. 5, XII(1) 39]² (Plate 69)

Area A, room 5, surface.

Vertical handle fragment.

Max. pres. L: 5.7; oval section: 2.8 x 2.0.

Fabric Pale Brown (10 YR 6/3) with black sandy grits; surface Very Pale Brown (10YR 8/3).

Single incised mark, partially preserved. Very shallow, thin grooves cut after firing. Horizontal groove cut before the two long verticals.

Bibliography: Notes, 68; Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 3.

*Comparanda:*³ This mark has the form of CM no.104 or 106⁴ which appear regularly in formal inscriptions of all sorts, most often as an initial or isolated sign. This mark is fairly common among the potmarks occurring on Cypriot vases.

Multi-sign inscriptions:

- 1st of 3 signs⁵, clay ball, from Enkomi (1951/inv. 1232: Masson, 1971a, 16 no. 14, fig. 14)
- 2nd of 3 signs, clay tablet, from Ras Shamra (RS 17.06 *lat.*: Masson 1974, 26 fig. 13)

- isolated, clay cylinder, from Enkomi (Masson 1971c, 460 fig. 2A ll. 2 (7), 6 (1), 12 (2))

Single mark incised on vases of Cypriot fabric:

- handle, plain amphoroid krater, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14: 38, 275 no. 38)
- handle, from Enkomi (Persson 1937, 603 no. 16)

Single mark painted on Mycenaean vases:

base, stirrup jar (Schaeffer 1936, 119 fig. 50:VIII)

- lentoid flask (Schaeffer 1936, 119 fig. 50:XIV, 120)

382 A5:40 [R. 5, XII (1) 40] (Plate 69)

Area A, room 5, surface.

Rim and handle fragment, from a jug.

Max. pres. L: 10; ovoid section: ca. 3.4 x 2.9.

Hard fabric, Very Pale Brown (10YR 7.3) with black sandy grits; surface White (2.5Y 8.2).

Single incised mark. Very shallow and thin grooves cut after firing; spalling, especially at junctions. Sequence of strokes: right oblique cut before left oblique; top horizontal, then vertical, finally bottom horizontal.

Bibliography: Notes, 68; Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 4.

Comparanda: This mark has the form of some variations of CM no. 27. CM 27 is one of the most frequently appearing signs in CM inscriptions. It appears in all positions (initial, medial, and final) except, perhaps, isolated — on various media. Among complex potmarks, marks in the shape of CM 27 and its variations are the most common, and they appear on all the usual varieties of marked pottery found on Cyprus.

Multi-sign inscriptions:

- 1st of 4 signs, clay cylinder, from Enkomi (Masson 1971c, 460 fig. 2A l. 4 (4)).
- 1st of 5 signs, bronze bowl (O. Masson 1968, 67 fig. 3, 69-70 “B”, pl. I:2).
- 1 of 2 signs, Canaanite amphora, from Kition (II/ 5201: Karageorghis 1985, 141, 283, App. II pl. C, pls. CXXIX, CCI)
- 2nd of 3 signs, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 481 no. 2, fig. 2)
- 2nd of 4 signs, pithos, from Enkomi (Persson 1937, 606 no. 11)
- 3rd of 3 signs, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 486 no. 13, fig. 13)

Single mark incised on vases of Cypriot fabric:

- bowl handle, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14:47, 276 no. 47)

Single mark incised on vases imported into Cyprus:

- handle, Canaanite amphora, from Maa-*Palaeokastro* (Karageorghis 1988, 169, 399, 403 pl. B:8, pls. CXXIV, CCXXIV [no. 81])

383 [AK TTA Rm. 6(5)] (Plate 69)

House B1, room 6, “filling layer 2”.

Handle fragment.

Pres. L: 3.5. No complete section preserved; appears oval/ovoid, with max. pres. diam. ca. 3.2.

Coarse fabric, Reddish Yellow (5YR 6/6) with gray core, with large white, gray, black, and dark maroon sandy grits.

Incised mark, partially preserved. Cut after firing. Horizontal nearest uneven break cut after vertical.

Orientation cannot be determined.

Bibliography: Taylor 1952, 146, 166 Appendix 5 no. 5.

Comments: Taylor suggests that “Perhaps part of two signs” is partially preserved on this handle (Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 5), but the slight separation between the horizontal stroke and the crossed strokes is not great enough to preclude them all from belonging to a single mark.

286 [AK V (4) 87] (Plate 70)

Opencast.

Rim and handle fragment.

Max. pres. L: ca. 4; oval section: 4.0 x 2.9.

Fabric Very Pale Brown (10 YR 8.4) with black and white sandy grits; slip slightly lighter (10 YR 8.3).

Incised mark, partially preserved. Shallow thin grooves display spalling, sharp V-section, and repeated scratches characteristically post-firing. Horizontal perhaps cut after the verticals.

Bibliography: Notes, 70; Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 3.

Comments: Taylor suggests some comparanda, but the mark as preserved is too fragmentary to verify any specific identifications.

492 A1:7 [AK IV (3) 80] (Plate 70)

Room A1, “pithos packing”.

Body sherd.

Max. pres. dimensions: 6.9 x 5.7 x (th) 0.9.

Hard fabric, Very Pale Brown (10 YR 8/4) with black sandy grits.

Single mark, incised after firing (sharp, V-shaped grooves). The two semi-parallel grooves cut after the single line perpendicular to them.

Bibliography: Notes, 70; Taylor 1952, 136, 166 Appendix 5 no. 2.

Comparanda: This mark has the form of AB 03 (LB “te”) and CM no. 6 (cf. comments, below). It

is very common in CM inscriptions, appearing in many positions on all kinds of objects.

Multi-sign inscriptions:

- 3rd? of 3 signs, Plain White jug handle, from Katydhata (“Archaic” CM) (Åström 1989, 121 fig. 181)
- 1st of 4 signs, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 490-1 no. 29, fig. 25)
- 2nd of 5 signs, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 491 no. 31, fig. 27)
- 2nd of 3 signs, pithos body sherd, from Arpera (Markides 1916, 16 no. 9)
- isolated, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 491-492 no. 32, fig. 28)
- 1 of 2 signs, hematite cylinder seal, from area of Salamis (O. Masson 1968, 13 no. 7, fig. 7)

Single mark incised on vases of Cypriot fabric:

- handle, Plain White jug, from Katydhata (Markidhes 1916, 16 no. 1)
- impressed before firing, interior of bowl, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14 no. 23, 275 no. 23)

Single mark incised on vases imported into Cyprus:

- handle, Mycenaean piriform jar (BM C 430 = 45. 97 4-1 932: Åström 1971, 294 (j); Walters 1912, 89)
- disk, (Minoan) transport stirrup jar, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 277 fig. 16 no. 79)
- handle, Anatolian Grey Polished ware amphora(?), from Pyla (Karageorghis and Demas 1984, 49, 76, 78 fig. 5b, pls. XXIII, XLIII)

Single mark painted on Mycenaean vases:

- base, pictorial krater, from Kourion (CM 1971/XII-6/1 = BM C 391: Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, 18-19, 196 [III:12])
- 1 of 2 signs, interior body, amphoroid krater, from Enkomi (BM C 523 = 48. 97 4-1 967: O. Masson 1957b, 20 no. 202; Walters 1912, 103)

Comments: Orientation of sherd (and therefore mark) uncertain, but comparanda suggest that mark most likely meant to be read as comprising a single vertical and two horizontals.

Pithos

412 [AK IV (3)] (Plate 70)

Area A, room 1, “pithos packing”.⁶

Rim and neck fragment.

Rim diam. (ext): 51, th: 4.3. Wall th: 1.7.

Fabric Very Pale Brown (10YR 7/4) with small (and some large) white, gray, orange, and black grits; slip Light Yellowish Brown (2.5Y 6/4).

Single mark preserved, incised on rim. Cut after firing (V-shaped groove with broken edges, popped grits and scratch marks). Horizontal line cut second.

Bibliography: Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 1.

Comparanda: This mark, a cross, has the form of CM no. 5. It appears in all positions in formal CM inscriptions, on many different kinds of inscribed objects. The cross is an element of many other notational and marking systems.

Multi-sign inscriptions:

- 1st sign of 3, loom weight, from Enkomi (“Archaic” CM) (Courtois 1984, 68 no. 650, pl. XXIII:3)
- 2nd sign of ?, clay tablet, from Enkomi (“Archaic” CM) (Janko 1987, 317 fig. 1)
- 1st sign of 4, handle, Plain White Wheelmade jug, from Kition (II/5189: Karageorghis 1985, 282 no. 5, App. II pl. B:5, pls. CIX, CXC)
- 2nd of 4 signs, clay tablet, from Ras Shamra (RS 19.02: Masson 1974, 21 fig. 7)
- 5th of 5 signs, clay ball, from Enkomi (Masson 1971b, 496-497 no. 45, fig. 39)
- 1 of 4 signs, cylinder seal, from Cyprus (O. Masson 1957a, 11-12 no. 5, fig. 5)

Single mark incised on vases of Cypriot fabric:

- handles, jugs [Plain Wheelmade (I/287/1: Karageorghis 1985, 16, 284, App. II pl. E, pl. XIV), Plain White (II/5338: Karageorghis 1985, 100, 284, App. II pl. E, pls. CIX, CXC), Plain White Wheelmade (II/5453: Karageorghis 1985, 183, 284, App. II pl. E, pls. CXLVIII, CCXIV), White Painted I (II/5498: Karageorghis 1985, 230, 284, App. II pl. E, pls. CLXVII, CCXXIX)], from Kition
- base, Red Lustrous Wheelmade Ware spindle bottle (Cesnola 378: Casson 1937, 102 no. 26a)⁷
- neck, pithos, from Hala Sultan Tekke (Åström 1998, 92, 88 figs. 168 & 170, 107 fig. 239)

Single mark incised on vases imported to Cyprus:

- Mycenaean krater, from Klavdhia (BM C 412 = 98 10-20 12: Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, 204 [V:62])
- handle, Canaanite amphora, from Kition (II/932: Karageorghis 1985, 226, 284, App. II pl. E, pls. CLXVII, CCXXIX)

Single mark painted on Mycenaean vase:

- base, Mycenaean globular stirrup jar (Åström 1966, 176⁸; Schaeffer 1936, 119 fig. 50: X, 120, 121 fig. 51: III)

Other media:

- belly of (terracotta?) female figurine, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14:69, 276 no. 69)
- steatite cylinder seal, from Kourion (B 1625: Benson 1972, 144, pl. 38d; Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14:70, 276 no. 70)
- steatite spindle whorl, from Enkomi (Persson 1937, 603 no. 22)

Comment: The vase is broken away close to the mark and it is possible that more than one mark may have been incised on the rim. Marks are regularly found on pithoi in Cyprus (at least forty have been recorded), most often incised into the rim, but also occurring on the neck, shoulder, and handle. There are examples of both pre-firing and post-firing marks and inscriptions.

Canaanite Jar

500 A1:5 [Rm. 1 (5)] (Plate 71)

Room 1, surface.⁹

One complete handle and shoulder section (both mended) from a very large Canaanite jar, plus lower half of the other handle and non-joining body fragments.

Max. pres. ht: 31; restored rim diam.: ca. 32; wall th: 0.8. Ovoid handle section: 3.8 x 2.9.

Fabric Red (2.5 YR 5/8) with many small black and white sandy grits; gray core; slip Pale Yellow (2.5 Y 7/4).

Single mark incised on one handle. Clearly cut after firing: wide, scratchy grooves cut through slip. Horizontal stroke cut second.

Bibliography: Taylor 1952, 166, Appendix 5 no. 1.

Comparanda: See 412. The cross is one of the marks most frequently incised into Canaanite jar handles.

Comment: M. Hadjicosti, based on visual inspection, suggests that this amphora was probably imported into Cyprus.¹⁰

Mycenaean

576 [AK XI (2)] (Plate 71)

Area A, room 1, below floor.¹¹

Vertical strap handle (mended) from a Mycenaean large three-handled piriform jar.

Wall th: 0.4. Handle section: 1.9 x 0.8.

Well levigated fabric, Light Brown to Pink (7.5 YR 6/4-7/4); slip Very Pale Brown (10 YR 8/4).

Lustrous Dark Brown (7.5 YR 4/4) paint mostly worn off.

Traces of painted loop around base of handle; handle monochrome, possibly originally with reserved triangles at top.

Single incised mark. Thin grooves, very shallow as now preserved. Heavily abraded surface makes it impossible to determine whether cut before or after firing, and sequence of strokes.

Bibliography: Åström 1971, 295 (y); Taylor 1952, 166 Appendix 5 no. 2, pl. XXVIIIa:2.

Comparanda: See 492. This is one of the most common marks appearing on the handles of Aegean vases.

Stamp Seal (cf. J. Webb, *infra*)

Comparanda: This mark has the form of one of the variants of CM no. 102.¹²

Multi-sign inscriptions:

- 1st? of 2 signs, silver bowl, from Ras Shamra (RS 389: Masson 1974, 19-20 fig. 5)
- 1st of 5 signs, clay tablet, from Ras Shamra (RS 17.06 face A, l. 2: Masson 1974, 26 fig. 12, 27)
- 1st of 4 signs, ivory bar, from Kition (II/4250: Karageorghis 1985, 116, App. III 281, pls. A&B, App. VII 335, pls. CXXII, CXC VII)
- 1st? of 4 signs, shoulder, jug, from Katydhata (Åström 1989, 122, fig. 184)
- 1 of 2 signs, base, bowl, from Kourion, (Daniel 1941, 273 fig. 13:9, 275 no. 9)
- 1 of 2 signs, lapis lazuli cylinder seal, from Enkomi (BM 1900. 5-21. 3: O. Masson 1957a, 9-10 no. 3, fig. 3)

Single marks incised on vases of Cypriot fabric:

- handles, jugs, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 274 fig. 14:34-37, 275 nos. 34-37)
- handle, jug?, from Enkomi (1986/33: Courtois 1988, 309 fig. 2:15, 310 no. 15, 317, pl. XLII:15)

Single marks incised on Aegean vases:

- handle, coarse-ware stirrup jar, from Kourion (Daniel 1941, 267 fig. 11, 277 fig. 16: 82, 278 no. 82)

Single mark incised on Canaanite amphora:

- handle, from Kition (I/53/3: Karageorghis 1985, 15, 283, App. II pl. D, pls. XIV, XL)

Single mark, other media:

- hematite cylinder seal, from Sinda (O. Masson 1957a, 14-15 no. 9, fig. 9)

Comments:

Positioning and manner of incision suggest that the mark was cut at the same time as the main design and intended as an integral element of its composition. The mark is prominent by virtue of its central position and its relatively large scale. It cannot be argued with certainty that the deep crescent above the horns was deliberately created to leave prominent space for the mark, but this is possible. More convincing is the comparable manner of incising mark and (edges of the)

bucranium, both deeply cut using a tool with a thin sharp edge, and with width and depth created by repeated paring of the line or cavity.

The curved nature of the outer verticals is probably due to the hardness of the material and the method and tool used for incising, rather than being a deliberate feature. But the rendering of a dot above and a stroke below the central horizontal feature is a deliberate difference.

The Significance of the Marks

The meaning(s) of the marks on the vases and seal found at Apliki is not immediately obvious. In Joan du Plat Taylor's day and to a great extent also now, studies of marked objects on Cyprus have concentrated on the marks themselves, and specifically on their presumed relationship to the Cypro-Minoan script. The assumption has been that the marks are signs of writing, and that the interpretation of the formal texts would then allow values to be assigned to the isolated marks. But the texts cannot yet be read.¹³ More fundamentally, the assumed identification of the marks as signs of writing needs first to be justified. There exists another aspect of the marks which is rarely considered, and that is their context. The type of object on which a mark appears and the environment in which it was deposited may suggest the reasons for marking. Discussion of the marks found at any site cannot be considered complete without consideration of all these aspects of marking: the contexts in which the marked objects were deposited, the objects on which the marks appear, and the marks themselves.

Archaeological Context

Marked objects appear in almost every Late Cypriot archaeological assemblage, no matter how small or humble.¹⁴ Most common is marked pottery, but loom weights and seals with marks are also regularly found. A wide variety of other types of marked objects are less frequently discovered: arrowheads, lead weights, lead sling bullets, copper ingots, cut stone blocks, stone anchors, for instance. Apliki's yield of marked pottery and a single seal is not unusual.

Marked pottery was uncovered in three of the eight trenches excavated at Apliki, and most pieces were found in two rooms of the building in Area A. None of the eight marked vases comes from a primary context. Three vase fragments were found in the pithos storeroom (room 1) in Area A, all in secondary depositions. The pithos rim [412] and

the plain-ware body sherd [492] were mixed into the mud brick and lime packed around the bases of the pithoi. At least one-half of the Mycenaean handle [576] was found in fill below the lime concrete floor of the storeroom; the find spot of the other half is not certain (cf. fn. 11). Also uncertain is whether the label [Rm. 1 (5)] on the marked amphora handle [500] refers to Area A; Taylor lists it only as a surface find. Two plain marked handles [381, 382] found in Area A room 5 were both surface finds. Area B yielded a single marked fragment, the plain handle [383] found in "filling layer 2" of room 6, House B1. One marked plain handle [286] was recovered from the opencast (Area C); there is no indication that the material from this area was stratified or associated with any identifiable architecture.

In the case of Apliki, the archaeological contexts of the marked objects yield little information. It is not possible to ascertain whether the concentration of marked vases in Area A is significant. This area was the focus of excavation efforts and the source of most of the archaeological material subsequently collected, recorded, and stored, and these factors may explain the clustering. The singletons discovered in areas B and C do indicate that marked pottery circulated outside Area A's "storehouse". Because the depositional contexts are all secondary, they can provide no clues to the use of marked vases at the mining settlement or to the reasons for marking.

The Objects

The eight marked pottery fragments comprise an almost representative sample of the range and relative frequency of marked pottery types characteristically excavated from Late Cypriot settlements.¹⁵ At Apliki, as elsewhere, the bulk of the marked pottery consists of handles from plain ware closed containers. When found complete, these containers are always medium-sized jugs. Inscriptions are rare; single marks are usual. The

marks are sometimes certainly Cypro-Minoan, but more often their classification is ambiguous. Post-firing examples seemingly prevail.¹⁶ For some reason(s) still unclear to me, Late Bronze Age Cypriots had need to label these containers above all others and this humble category of evidence promises eventually to reveal much concerning economic or social organization and perhaps even literacy on the island during its prehistoric heyday.

Pithoi are the other category of local pottery¹⁷ which is regularly marked, though in much smaller numbers than the jugs. There is much variety in how the pithoi are marked: inscriptions or single marks, sometimes both, many of them incised before firing. The single cross incised on the Apliki pithos rim is not unusual. The one point which the various pithos marks and inscriptions share in common is that they usually appear on the lip of the vessel which is, of course, one of the most readily visible parts of these giant vessels at stance. The variety of label-types suggests different purposes for marking the pithoi.

The two-handled transport amphorae commonly referred to as Canaanite jars were produced on Cyprus as well as on the Syro-Palestinian coast (for example, Hadjicosti 1988, Jones and Vaughan 1988). Most are unmarked but, especially on Cyprus, it is not unusual to find one or two marks incised on one or both of the handles. The marks are generally post-firing, there is no correspondence between any individual mark and find spot, shape, size, or fabric of the marked jars. Some marks can be certainly identified with Cypro-Minoan signs but most marks, like the cross on the Apliki amphora handle, cannot definitely be associated with any writing system. However, the similarities in form, placement, and ductus of the marks on Canaanite jars and the scarcity of any incised marks on amphorae found outside Cyprus suggest some Cypriot connection for most Canaanite jars with incised marks. Wherever the Apliki amphora was made, it was probably marked by a Cypriot or by someone working closely with Cypriots. (Hirschfeld 1999, 224, 268).

Large marks boldly incised after firing also appear on the handles of Aegean containers — large Mycenaean piriform and stirrup jars, and coarse Minoan transport stirrup jars. Aegean vases in their homelands are rarely marked and, as in the case of marked Canaanite jars, the marks on these imports to Cyprus were most likely cut by Cypriots, either by Cypriot merchants or their close associates at the point of lading in the Aegean (Hirschfeld 1992, 1993, 1996) or, once unloaded on the island, for local purposes. The mark on the Apliki piriform jar handle conforms in all respects

to the characteristics of other Aegean vases with incised marks.

The corpus of Cypriot seals with engraved marks is small, and the seal from Apliki is the single example of a stamp seal with a mark (cf. J. Webb's analysis, *infra*).

The Marks

All the marks found at Apliki *Karamallos* are incised. This is the normal pattern for LBA Cyprus, where painted marks were only regularly applied to the bases or lower bodies of certain types of Mycenaean vases, almost always found in tomb deposits. Given the small number (6) of stirrup jars recovered from the site and the absence of burial deposits, the lack of painted marks is to be expected.

Insofar as can be determined by means of visual inspection, all of the incised marks were cut after the vases were fired. The surface of the marked Mycenaean handle is too abraded for a determination to be made, and the worn condition of several other handle fragments makes it difficult to be certain. Elsewhere on LBA Cyprus, post-firing marks are far more common than pre-firing signs on most classes of pottery.

Six to eight different marks appear on the nine inscribed objects. The simplest mark, a cross, occurs on the rim of a pithos which may have been produced locally [412] and on the handle of a Canaanite jar probably imported from outside Cyprus [500]. The cross is a very simple sign which appears in many different and unrelated scripts and marking systems within and beyond LBA Cyprus, and no particular significance can be attached to its appearance on these two very different vases. A second mark of simple form found at Apliki is that consisting of a long vertical line transected by two shorter horizontal lines. It is incised on the Mycenaean handle [576] and perhaps also on the plain body sherd [492]. Again, the simplicity of this mark-form makes it impossible to identify it exclusively with any particular notational system.

Two marks are somewhat more complex and their occurrence is not quite so universal: the H-with-additional-stroke incised on a plain handle [381]¹⁸, and the arrow-like sign cut into a plain handle [382]. These marks are essentially simple forms with slight embellishments, and there is no need *per se* to posit the influence of any formal writing or notational system to explain their shape. On the other hand, these marks do occur as elements in multi-sign texts inscribed into objects made and used on Cyprus, and, therefore, can be identified with signs of the Late Cypriot writing

system(s), "Cypro-Minoan". The important question is whether, in fact, these single marks were incised with some direct reference to the signs of writing which they resemble: Is the resemblance of these relatively simple marks to signs of the script coincidental, or were the marks cut by someone familiar with Cypro-Minoan? If the latter, then did the potmarks stand for the same values as the signs written in longer texts? Can we use these marks to argue for (semi-)literate pot-labelers or -users? In and of themselves, these two potmarks do not provide definitive evidence for either argument.

There is one sign found at Apliki which is distinctive enough in form to provide unequivocal evidence for the use of Cypro-Minoan writing to mark an object, and that is the "H" embellished with dot above and stroke below the central horizontal element, incised into the stamp seal. It is sign 102 in the "standard" list of Cypro-Minoan signs published by E. Masson (Masson 1974). Masson's sign-lists and transcriptions are an initial step in the study of Cypro-Minoan and among the necessary further tasks is that of documenting the range of variability of individual signs, including sign 102. One feature which is striking in the rendering of the sign on the seal from Apliki is the

dot above the horizontal and the stroke below it. That differentiation is not consistent in all presentations of sign 102, which is often represented with strokes only [for example, Enkomi clay ball 1951/no. 950 (Masson 1971a, 14 no. 9)]. Whether there is significance to the alternate renderings is a matter still under study;¹⁹ the depth of carving and scale of the sign (H: 16mm) cut into the hard serpentine seal stone indicate that the dot above and stroke below were deliberate choices and suggest a significance which should be accounted for in any efforts to reconstruct the Cypro-Minoan corpus and the personal, regional, functional, and chronological idiosyncrasies of its use.

Sign 102 characteristically appears as the initial element of multi-sign groups (words?). Perhaps the isolated sign on the seal stands for the beginning of a word or phrase. There is at least one other instance of this sign appearing in isolation, on a vase found at Kition (I/53/3: Karageorghis 1985, 15, App. III 283, pl. D, pls. XIV, XL). Cypro-Minoan is undeciphered, and so it is presently impossible to propose any specific reading of the sign itself or use that information to hypothesize the reason for the sign's placement on the seal.

Conclusions

The marked vases found at Apliki are like those found at any Late Cypriot site. There are very few. They are found mostly on plain pottery used for domestic and storage purposes, especially medium-sized jugs. Marks characteristically appear also on Mycenaean imports and Canaanite jars. Most marks are incised, after firing, one per handle (or, in the case of pithoi, on the rim). They are simple in form, and many of those forms appear in several contemporary notational system(s). In those few instances where an identification with a sign of any script can be made, it is only with Cypro-Minoan. The marks on the imported vases may have been inscribed in the course of overseas exchange. But the marks on Cypriot vases which circulated only internally on the island indicate that there were local reason(s) for labeling vases, also. Those reasons are not yet understood, and the sample from Apliki is too small to reveal any suggestive patterns.^{xx}

The fact that the marking patterns at Apliki mirror those of the LBA sites dotting the coastal plains and river valleys of Cyprus indicates that this small mining settlement in the Troodos mountains was (closely?) incorporated into the cultural network dominated by the large

cosmopolitan sites of the Cypriot shoreline. But the nature of that connection will not become clear until two fundamental questions can be answered: the currency of the marks at the site, and the function(s) of those marks.

The marks on the Apliki vases may have been made and used at the site, they may have been incised elsewhere but their function recognized also at Apliki, or their appearance there may be fortuitous and they are merely the transposed remnants of marking systems devised and applied outside Apliki. Any discussion of the Apliki potmarks as evidence of literacy or incorporation into regional systems of notation depends on assessing which of the circumstances listed above best describes the situation at the site. In general, marks are too few in number at Apliki and their find spots are too disturbed to demonstrate any patterns indicative of their use at the site.

It is the marked plain-ware vases and pithos which can provide evidence significant to this issue. If, as is likely, these vases were made locally (either at the site or in close proximity), then it is also most probable that the marks were cut — and understood — on site. No scientific analyses of the plain wares found at Apliki have yet been

undertaken, and so it is presently impossible to corroborate positively the assumption of local manufacture and marking. At the very least, it can be said that the inhabitants of Apliki participated in an exchange network where marked vases circulated and out of which a few trickled into Apliki and drifted there devoid of meaning. But the existence of marks on probably-local products suggests a much greater degree of administrative or cultural interaction, and it seems that the specific cultural, economic, or bureaucratic reasons for marking vases elsewhere on Cyprus also applied to Apliki. When those reasons for marking become understood, they will serve to specify some aspect(s) of the manner in which Apliki participated in mainstream Late Cypriot culture.

The marked seal raises similar questions of production and use, addressed by J. Webb (*infra*)

It has been assumed that the marks on the vases and seal attest the use of Cypro-Minoan at Apliki.

This assumption should be treated with much caution, in the first place because the equation of the eight potmarks found there with script-signs is at best tenuous. And while it is apparent that several of the potmarking systems in use on LBA Cyprus were based upon or derived from the formal script, it is still unclear whether the values of the script signs had transferred to the potmarks, i.e. whether the potmarks are traces of a *writing* or a *notational* system. Second, the assumption that any of the marks were made and used at the site — though probable in the case of the plain domestic vases — is not proved.

The sample from Apliki is too small to override or support these cautions. The site is now destroyed, and no more evidence remains to be uncovered there. But better understanding of marking systems used elsewhere in LBA Cyprus will eventually clarify the significance of their appearance at this site.

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² The numbers and letters in brackets are a transcription of the label inked on each sherd.

³ Comparanda refer to the mark only. "CM no." refers to the sign lists published in Masson 1974, 12-15 figs. 1-4; Linear A/B parallels are given with reference to Godart and Olivier 1985, XXII-XXVII. No attempt is made here to list every object with a similar mark. Rather, the objective in listing selected comparanda is to demonstrate the range of objects on which a mark/sign appears, and positions within multi-sign inscriptions where the CM sign occurs. Chronological and geographical ranges still need to be established. Comparanda are limited to objects found in Cyprus. Only fullest and/or most recent publications are cited.

⁴ *nb* Taylor's illustration of this mark lacks the central vertical element. Therefore, comparanda she lists are not valid [Casson 1937, 107 (sign 53); Schaeffer 1936, 119 fig. 50:VI].

⁵ The total number (in this case "3") refers to the length of the specific sign-group (word?) in which

the mark of interest appears, and not the total number of signs in the entire inscription.

⁶ Taylor 1952, 166 lists this sherd as a surface find, but its inked label [AK IV (3)] indicates its provenience as stated above.

⁷ It has long been argued whether this specialty ware was produced on Cyprus or in the Levant. Eriksson 1993 presents the fullest and most recent argument for its production on the island.

⁸ Incorrectly cited as being object no. 52.

⁹ Taylor 1952, 166 lists this sherd as a surface find; its inked label [Rm. 1(5)] indicates it was found in a Room 1 but does not specify which room 1, i.e. in which area.

¹⁰ M. Hadjicosti, personal communication to B. Kling, 9/98.

¹¹ One fragment of this handle was found in the fill below the lime concrete floor of Room 1 (Area A), as indicated by its inked label. The other half had been stored in a box labeled "Apliki C Surface". It is not clear whether this is a case of mistaken storage, or whether the two halves really were found in separate areas of the site. The original report publishes only the Area A room 1 provenience (Taylor 1952, App. 5 166 no. 2) and illustrates both handle fragments in the photo (pl. XXVIIa, 2).

¹² Comparanda cited here refer only to signs/marks with a distinct dot (rather than a stroke) in the upper center.

¹³ For arguments against some of the proposed

decipherments of the Cypro-Minoan script, see Palaima 1989, esp. 147-162; Smith 1998; Krebern timer forthcoming.

¹⁴ Marked objects, usually pottery, have been found at every Late Cypriot site known to me, with the possible exception only of Alassa. This regular appearance of marked pottery sets Cyprus apart from its contemporary neighbors in the Aegean, and along the Asia Minor and Syro-Palestinian coasts, where potmarks of any kind are rare. Only in Egypt is a comparable array and frequency of marked vases found.

¹⁵ The only element missing from the usual range of marked pottery in a Late Cypriot assemblage is a marked Red Lustrous Wheelmade spindle bottle base or flask handle.

¹⁶ It is not always easy to discriminate between marks cut after firing and those cut into leather-hard clay, especially when dealing with gritty fabric or abraded surfaces, where the quality of incision is difficult to evaluate.

¹⁷ The extent of local production of Canaanite amphorae and Red Lustrous Wheelmade (RLWM) vases, both of which characteristically carry marks, is still under discussion. (For RLWM, see Eriksson 1993).

¹⁸ Incorrectly drawn and identified by Miss Taylor, who illustrates only an "H". She describes handle **286** as having the same mark. **286**, as now preserved, consists of a handle fragment with its mark only partially preserved. Insofar as it is preserved, this mark fragment matches the mark on handle **381**, but so much of the mark is missing that the identification Taylor did not publish drawings or photographs of this marked handle, it is impossible now to ascertain whether her identification was based on a more complete handle (i.e. additional pieces), or on analogy with the mark on handle **381**.

¹⁹ It is immediately clear that the dot/stroke and stroke/stroke signs cannot be explained as regional variations, since both are found on (separate) clay tablets found at Ras Shamra [dot/stroke, RS 17.06 (Masson 1974, 26 fig. 13); stroke/stroke RS 20.25 (Masson 1974, 31 fig. 16, 33 fig. 17)]. They cannot be explained as differences due to the medium, since both RS 17.06 and 20.25 are clay tablets.

^{xx} This study of the marks from Apliki is one of a series of examinations of marking patterns at Late Cypriot sites currently being undertaken by the author.