

Philippa M. Steele. 2019. *Writing and Society in Ancient Cyprus* (Cambridge Classical Studies). pp. xvii+272, black and white illustrations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 978-1-107-16967-8 hardback £ 75.00.

Writing and Society in Ancient Cyprus is the edited version of the Evans-Pritchard Lectures, which the author, Philippa Steele (PS), delivered at All Souls College, Oxford, in 2014, under the title, *Society and Writing in Ancient Cyprus*. The decision to reverse the order of the two main terms on the book's title suggests that the primacy of *Writing* over *Society* had become obvious when the lectures were presented. PS achieved a fascinating synthesis of the written evidence, which would have, undoubtedly, steered her audience towards new venues regarding the interpretation of society in Ancient Cyprus. The monograph is divided into the following five chapters:

The Advent of Literacy in Cyprus (pp. 4–44)

Scripts and Languages in Geometric Cyprus (pp. 45–94)

'Understanding' Undeciphered Scripts and Unidentified Languages (pp. 95–146)

Visible Languages and Cypriot Identities (pp. 147–196)

Cypriot Writing at Home and Abroad (pp. 197–244)

There is a fairly extensive *Bibliography* (pp. 247–268) and an *Index* (pp. 269–272).

Preceding the first chapter, a two-page *Introduction* (pp. 1–2) underlines the first of three research principles, which constitute PS's *modus operandi*: instead of isolating the textual material of the second from that of the first millennium BC, which was until recently one of the methodological problems affecting the study of the island's antiquity as a whole, PS pledges to interpret the place of writing in the *longue durée* of Ancient Cyprus from the Late Bronze Age (LBA) through to the Hellenistic period; she honours her commitment from the first to the last page. Thus, her new book¹ becomes one of the first substantial publications on the island's archaeology to reject the unqualified

belief in a cultural break between Bronze Age and Iron Age Cyprus. This alone makes the monograph exceptional and initiates a new period in Cypriot studies.² Comments made below with reference to specific archaeological arguments that deserve to be updated in the future (PS, no doubt, will rise to the challenge) will not take away from the book's pioneering aspect.

The second principle stands out on the first page (p. 4) of the author's first chapter: it is described as *An Internal Approach*. This most welcome viewpoint suggests that the advocates of Cyprocentricism³ have had a successful effect among colleagues working on Cyprus.⁴ PS generates a fresh approach regarding the study of the first Cypriot script when she states, '[w]hat if we were to shift the focus from the external to the internal? What if we were to begin by considering not the relations between ancient Cyprus and contemporary Mediterranean powers, but rather the internal factors that gave rise to the advent of literacy on the island' (p. 5). PS cultivates this innovative research mode throughout the book, though admittedly not always with the same steadfastness. Her internal analysis of the LBA is by far more successful than that of the Iron Age. Her methodology falters when, in a rather sudden change of approach, PS attempts to interpret the human environment through external literary sources, like the *Periplus* of Pseudo-Skylax, that do not qualify as educated descriptions of the island's ethnolinguistic identities (p. 152).⁵ The third principle, which PS describes as 'a new perspective that has not previously been studied systematically', focuses on 'the immediate context of writing' (p.6). In this, the LBA textual evidence is contextualized quite successfully with the contemporary archaeological framework; the much richer written material of the Iron Age is analysed rather randomly and mostly out of its archaeological context, which is formed by the island's fragmented

² Having repeatedly underlined that the continuity of the syllabic scribal tradition is one of the 'fundamental cultural continua that bridge the divide between the island's Bronze and Iron Ages' (Iacovou 2008: 626), I cannot resist expressing my delight.

³ Note that the relevant paper, 'Advocating Cyprocentricism' is cited twice in the Bibliography (p.253), the first time with the wrong date (Iacovou 1997), the second time correctly (Iacovou 2007).

⁴ This positive development is also evident in the introduction of a recently edited volume by Cannavò and Thély 2018: 1–4.

⁵ The *Periplus* is an especially problematic source; the information it provides on the coastal centres of Cyprus appears to be in conflict with the archaeological evidence of the 4th c. BC: 'there is no sensible explanation as to why a fourth-century B.C. *Periplus* would have ignored the prime Classical city-states of Kition and Paphos, or why it would have claimed that the harbors of the coastal poleis of Cyprus were deserted' (Iacovou 2013a: 16).

¹ Prolific and devoted to her research, PS has made significant contributions to Cypriot literacy in recent years. In 2013, CUP published her monograph, *A Linguistic History of Ancient Cyprus: The Non-Greek Languages, and their Relations with Greek, c.1600–300 BC* (Steele 2013a). That year she also edited, *Syllabic Writing on Cyprus and Its Context*, a collection of papers presented in a conference she had organised at the University of Cambridge in 2008 (Steele 2013b).

and, admittedly, unstable political geography (further in the discussion below).

Chapter One is written with gusto and retains the liveliness of the original lecture. It makes an excellent instructor's tool that can, and will, be used when one introduces young scholars to 'the technology of writing', which developed in the early LBA in Cyprus. The *Earliest Examples of Cypriote Writing* (p. 11) is a meticulous analysis of the Late Cypriot I inscriptions: a tablet, a label (until recently described as a weight) and a steatite cylinder seal, all three from Enkomi. Commenting on their diversity, PS underlines that the object type is as significant as the epigraphic features.⁶ It is well known that, though Cypriots adopted high status insignia from their Mediterranean neighbours, they always gave them a new identity in the context of the island's own institutions. PS shows that this is also true of the technology of writing. While there was no wholesale borrowing of either Aegean or Near Eastern scribal tools or scribal uses, whatever they chose to adopt they made their own. This selective adoption pattern is also evident in the study of the Cypriot cylinder seals, which though an object borrowed from the Near East, often have decorative motifs borrowed from contemporary Aegean styles. Moreover, despite the presence of some hundreds of cylinder seals, seal impressions and sealing practices are absent.⁷ Likewise, despite the attestation of links between the inception of literacy on the island and economic administration, Cyprus never adopted anything like the systematic notation of commodities and quantities witnessed in the Aegean (p. 17).

The reader benefits from PS's intentional return to the same written evidence that she then proceeds to analyse from a different perspective. Far from being a case of repetitiveness, this approach fortifies her methodological scheme and ties different sections and chapters together. Thus, in the *Epigraphy of Early Cypriot Inscriptions* (p. 19), PS returns to the epigraphic divergence of the three earliest inscriptions. In this context, she gives a history of research, which begins with Emilia Masson and ends with Miguel Valerio, who is in this manner introduced to Cypriot scholarly society as (almost certainly) the youngest scholar to have specialized in the study of Cypro-Minoan (CM) after Ferrara.⁸

Although the direct connection of CM (some 250 documents) to Linear A (some 1500 documents) has not always been treated as a certainty, Valerio has no such reservations. This is also confirmed by his contribution to the recently published, *Paths into Script Formation in the Ancient Mediterranean*, entitled 'Cypro-Minoan: An Aegean-derived Syllabary on Cyprus (and Elsewhere)'.⁹ In *External influences on Cypriot Writing* (p. 35), PS concurs that 'the initial adoption of writing [was] almost certainly based on Linear A', but she prudently adds that, irrespective of the process of adaptation, 'the end result of the adoption of literacy on Cyprus was a writing system that was characteristically Cypriot and could not be confused with similar scripts in other areas.' (p.39). In *Multiple External Influences*, she vividly describes what she considers the '[o]ne striking aspect of Cypriot writing' (p. 43), namely the mixed nature of influences, which together with the rejection of the cuneiform script (pp. 40–41),¹⁰ suggest that the Cypriots were consciously creating their own unique written tradition in the context of building their distinctive Cypriot identity (p.43). With this statement, PS introduces one of the most prominent themes of her monograph, and one that she will develop further in the next chapters: the 'link between Cypriot writing and Cypriot identity that was to last until the abolition of the city kingdoms around the end of the fourth century BC and probably even later' (p. 39).

In *The Context of the Earliest Cypriot Writing*, PS explores the extensive divergences between the regionally specific Cypriot evidence and that of the Mesopotamian states and the states of Aegean Greece, and makes some decisive observations with respect to LBA Cyprus: she recognises that the island 'shows no direct signs of centralized economy types based around building complexes'; 'the few clay tablets that have survived [...] have not come from obvious archival contexts'; and, that 'it seems quite unlikely [...] that a single, lasting archival tradition was ever established in Cyprus, given the great degree of variation in writing practices [...] throughout the LBA' (p. 32). Hence, despite her reluctance to take a firm stand as to the political institution of *Alashiya*, in this section, and again in *Chapter 3* ('the notable lack of uniformity in any tradition of writing on clay tablets', p.

⁶ Likewise, Ferrara 2013 on 'considering the Cypro-Minoan inscriptions not only as texts but also as objects, with a full archaeological and cultural context' (Steele 2013b: 3).

⁷ How Cypriots made use of seals remains elusive, but the imagery on seals has been strongly linked with status or prestige (Webb 2002; 2005).

⁸ Masson 1987; Valerio 2016; Ferrara 2012/2013.

⁹ Valerio 2018.

¹⁰ On the decision of the Cypriots to shun cuneiform, see also Peltenburg and Iacovou 2012: 357: '[...] the island chose not to adopt the established cuneiform tool - with which Akkadian, the *lingua franca* of international diplomacy, was written - [...]. Thus, the expansion of the cuneiform system in the Mediterranean which, since its development by the Sumerians, had 'conquered' the whole expanse of the Near East and Anatolia, was halted in Cyprus.'

122), the evidence from the different regions of the island does not support the development of a real central state, either at the beginning or at the end of the LBA. Her discussion on the 'overall distribution of power on the island in LCI' (p. 9), and on the 'role Cyprus played in international diplomacy, as attested in cuneiform documents' (p. 10), would have profited from reference to two seminal works directly relevant to the *Alashiya* debate. The absence of the first, Peltenburg's 'Text Meets Material Culture in Late Bronze Age Cyprus', is hard to explain (PS has a paper in the same volume).¹¹ The absence of the second, which came out in 2018, is excusable (given the publication date of PS's book), but has to be mentioned in the context of this review since it constitutes the single most important development in the history of ancient Cyprus in recent years. The Idalion palace archive has furnished decisive textual proof that the term *Alashiya*, which appears in second millennium BC external textual records, was Cyprus's geographical and political designation. The term had evidently survived among the Cypro-Phoenician population as late as the early Hellenistic period.¹² Among other things, the preservation of Cyprus's second millennium BC name ought to make us reconsider the traditional Early Iron Age chronology of the establishment of Semitic speakers on the island; the episode of their migration could very well date to the LBA.¹³

Chapter Two is the most decisive and insightful part of the monograph; it provides a thorough documentation of scribal continuity from the LBA to the otherwise textually poor Cypro-Geometric (CG) period. PS devotes a whole chapter to *Scripts and Languages in Geometric Cyprus* because she acknowledges that 'it is not only the ruptures that are important but also the continuities across the whole period and beyond' (p. 45). PS does not find the scarcity of CG textual material daunting because, instead of isolating it, she contextualizes it between two periods in which writing is quite rich by Cypriot standards: the Late Cypriot (LC) and the Cypro-Achaic (CA). This approach identifies her as one of the first scholars to adopt the view that artificial barriers between historical periods are not necessarily helpful (p. 45),¹⁴ especially when the 'stability of certain socio-cultural phenomena

across periods of transition [is] just as important as the changes [...]' (p. 46).

Once again, therefore, PS returns to the beginning of writing on the island and takes us step by step through the development of the technology of writing from LCI to LCIIIA (p. 47), before embarking on LCIIIB (conventionally the 11th c. BC) and CG I-II (traditionally the 10th and 9th c. BC). With respect to this substantially long horizon, where others would readily identify a break, not only in literacy but also in social complexity, urbanism and even in human settlement across the island, PS exclaims: 'The 'gap' is ours, a gap in surviving epigraphy, not in literacy or epigraphic habit' (p. 48). Although her argument is well fortified throughout, I cannot help thinking of an earlier *tour de force* on the same issue, which would have deserved a reference in this as well as in other chapters: Morpurgo-Davies's contribution in 'Syllabic Scripts and Languages in the Second and First Millennia BC'.¹⁵

As few as they may be in number (less than 20), the surviving CG inscriptions are 'some of the most important texts for our understanding of the development of language and script on the island' (p. 46). This statement is not at all hyperbolic: they include (a) the *Opheltau* inscription, 'the earliest of all surviving Greek texts after the Mycenaean Linear B documents';¹⁶ (b) the earliest appearance of the Phoenician alphabetic script on Cyprus; and (c) the earliest confirmed examples of the Cypriot Syllabary that had grown out of CM (p. 46). Hence, CG cannot be treated as a silent 'Dark Age' period; it provides confirmation for (a) the continuity of CM, (b) the development of a new script (i.e. the Cypro-Syllabic) out of CM and (c) the introduction of another ready-made script (the Phoenician alphabet). The former, the Cypro-Syllabic script, becomes the writing tool for the Greek as well as for the non-Greek languages of Iron Age Cyprus; the latter is the script with which the Semitic/Phoenician language is expressed until its disappearance from the epigraphic record of Cyprus in the 3rd c. BC.

It is well known that since the first interpretation of the *Opheltau* inscription by Emilia and Olivier Masson,¹⁷ a debate has unfolded over the identification of the script. Following Olivier, PS identifies the *Opheltau* inscription as a Greek text

¹¹ Peltenburg 2012; similar views were also expressed in Peltenburg and Iacovou 2012.

¹² Amadasi Guzzo and Zamora 2018: 89.

¹³ More on this below; argument summarised in Iacovou 2018: 26.

¹⁴ See on this issue: 'The question is whether, at long last, we are ready to leave behind the compartmentalization of Cypriot history into chronologically narrow and windowless period boxes so that we can begin to define 'cycles of social complexity' in the *longue durée* of the island's landscape.' (Iacovou 2013: 17–18).

¹⁵ Morpurgo-Davies and Olivier 2012 in a joint paper where each has the authorship of a separate part.

¹⁶ Contrary to Knapp (2009: 229), PS does not see in the *Opheltau* inscription 'an endlessly-cited' object that 'serves as the lynchpin to most arguments for a Greek migration to or colonisation of Cyprus'.

¹⁷ Masson and Masson 1983.

written in the CM script.¹⁸ Therefore, '[t]he earliest texts that can be identified with certainty as being written in the new Cypriot Syllabic script' date to the 8th century BC. So far so good, as long as we do not attempt to date the establishment of either the Greek or the Phoenician linguistic element on the chance discovery of texts inscribed in the new languages. PS creates a circular argument when she suggests that Phoenician inscriptions dating to the 9th c. BC 'are likely to have been associated with the settlement of Phoenician speakers on the island' (p.71). From an archaeological as well as a linguistic point of view it would appear that the original settlement of both groups could have taken place in the 12th c. BC (LCIIIA).¹⁹ Teixidor was among the first to suspect that a resident Semitic-speaking population had been living in Cyprus since the LBA.²⁰ Now, the study of the Phoenician archive found in the palace of Idalion could turn his suspicion into a certainty, which will also explain why LBA Semitic dialectal forms that were no longer in use in the Iron Age states of the Levant were preserved only in Cyprus.²¹

In discussing the first royal inscriptions (p.55), which appear in the early 7th c. and contribute to the cultural transformations associated with the consolidation of the city-states, PS could have underlined that they are exclusively syllabic Greek and, whether by sheer chance or not, they come from the Kourion-Paphos area.²² But, I am still puzzled by the curious dismissal of the well-known syllabic inscription of king Akestor of Paphos (inscribed on a silver plate from the Cesnola collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), which, since its publication by Mitford,²³ has been repeatedly presented together with the inscription of king Eteandros of Paphos (inscribed on a pair of gold bracelets).²⁴ Although its existence is acknowledged once (in Chapter 4), as 'Akestor, perhaps king of Paphos' (p. 173) with a reference to Masson (only), who does not doubt the royal title,²⁵ PS's reluctance to include it in the royal inscriptions from Paphos requires an explanation.

In *Epigraphic Culture and Continuity across the CG Period* (p.83) PS makes some meaningful and daring

comparisons in relation to the state of literacy in Greece and Cyprus: 'While Greece had been illiterate since the fall of the Mycenaean palaces, writing in Cyprus continued without any break. Changes in social habits, political structure and language use did take place but they did not cause ruptures in literacy' (p. 90). However, to say that 'Palaepaphos and Kition have both produced syllabic written material' from the LBA to the Hellenistic period (p.85), is not the most accurate of statements. It would be hard to deny the extreme scarcity of the Cypro-Syllabic inscriptions from Kition in the first millennium BC,²⁶ which suggests that it was largely substituted by the Phoenician alphabet. Yon has shown that from the 9th to the end of the 4th c. BC the inscribed record from Kition is almost exclusively in the Phoenician alphabet.²⁷ This suggests that Phoenician had become the region's majority language even before the appearance of the first known official inscriptions of Kition, which are exclusively in the Phoenician script. Coin issues as well as royal inscriptions are not recorded from Kition before the early 5th c. BC.²⁸ Despite the fact that it had been the laymen's as well as the city-state's script, the Phoenician alphabet had a precise expiration date, which coincides with the termination of the Phoenician dynasty. In the 3rd c. BC, as soon as Cyprus was made a Ptolemaic colony, the inscriptional evidence from Kition became alphabetic Greek.²⁹ By contrast, as PS herself recognises (p. 241), Paphos is the region where long after the abolition of the Cypriot city-states the syllabary remained in use almost to the end of the first millennium BC.³⁰

One would have thought that in '*Understanding Undeciphered Scripts and Unidentified Languages*', PS was going to present the Iron Age syllabic texts that are unreadable as Greek. However, this 'unknown linguistic component' (P.128) is reserved for the second half of *Chapter Three*. True to her diachronic method, PS devotes the first half to the problems of 'reading' the otherwise unreadable/undeciphered CM texts through their context (p.96). She eloquently leads us to appreciate the role played by literacy in LBA Cyprus so that we can see why it survived:

²⁶ Cf. Yon 2004: 337; Iacovou 2012: 220.

²⁷ 'Pour la période qui va du IX^e à la fin du IV^e s. av. J.-C., on ne s'étonnera pas de trouver presque uniquement des inscriptions en phéniciens (environ 150 numéros).' (Yon 2004: 159).

²⁸ Cf. Iacovou 2008: 645 on 'the Chronology of the Cypro-Phoenician kingdom'.

²⁹ Yon 2004: 160 : 'à partir du III^e s. le grec devient la langue commune, et Kition perd alors sa spécificité linguistique pour s'aligner sur le reste de l'île.'

³⁰ Michaelidou-Nicolaou 1993: 346-7; cf. Iacovou 2013b: 138: 'the last joint appearance of the syllabary and the Greek language occurs on first-century BC sealings from the Roman archive of Nea Paphos.'

¹⁸ Cf. Olivier 2013: 16-17.

¹⁹ Iacovou 2012: 220.

²⁰ Teixidor 1975: 123.

²¹ Amadasi Guzzo 2007; 2017.

²² Satraki 2012: 391-418 provides a catalogue of Cypriot royal inscriptions.

²³ Mitford 1971: 373-6.

²⁴ Cf. Satraki 2013: 128, in an important paper on the iconography of *Basileis*, missing from PS's bibliography; also in Iacovou 2013b: 140, which was edited by Steele.

²⁵ Masson 1961/83: 412, no.180a.

‘literacy was sufficiently widespread for people to experiment with placing it on objects that usually did not bear writing’ (p.127). Unlike Linear B, which was apparently restricted to administration - hence ‘literacy must have declined sharply and suddenly when the [Mycenaean] palaces fell’ (p. 207) - CM was not the exclusive tool of a central state.

The most exhaustive discussion in this first part of *Chapter 3* is concerned with a distinctively Cypriot type of CM inscriptions on clay balls (p. 110). As with the majority of LC cylinder seals, the majority of inscribed clay balls come from Enkomi (81 examples), and their occurrence in layers of the 13th as well as the 12th c. BC (before and after a major reorganisation of the urban layout) provides important evidence as to the continuity of inscription types despite administrative upheavals (pp. 111, 116). The exciting discovery of one inscribed and a few more uninscribed clay balls in the post-palatial layers of Tiryns, made of local clay (p.118), is discussed here as well as in *Chapter 5*, where it is suggested that they ‘may reflect the presence of Cypriots living in Tiryns and continuing their home-grown epigraphic traditions’ (p. 206).

The second half of *Chapter 3* is devoted to the complex problem of the *Non-Greek Cypriot Syllabic Inscriptions*. Besides confronting the reader with their visibility and distribution in the epigraphic record of the different regions of the island, PS also provides the non-specialist with a fairly straightforward explanation as to why they do not constitute a homogeneous group: ‘they are written in one or more languages that we do not understand’ (p. 128). Gently but firmly, PS sides with the view that the traditional term ‘Eteocypriot’ should not be used as a catch-all term; rather as the name for only one non-Greek language identified in inscriptions, mainly from Amathus (p. 137), that share a set of confirmed linguistic features (p. 131). Hence, in accord with Egetmeyer,³¹ she sees in the non-Greek syllabic texts from the sanctuary of Golgoi ‘a different Cypriot language’, other than the Eteocypriot (p. 144). Finally, in closing this chapter PS recognizes, albeit indirectly, that besides the Greek syllabary (e.g. in Paphos, Kourion and Idalion) and the Phoenician alphabet (e.g. in Kition), Eteocypriot was the third Cypriot language found in association with official (civic/royal) inscriptions but only at Amathus (p. 146).

Chapter Four on Visible Languages and Cypriot Identities is missing a clear methodological structure that would have brought forward the socio-political

landscape of writing in the different Cypriot *poleis* (i.e., city-states that have for long been referred to as ‘city-kingdoms’).³² The main section is entitled *The 1st Millennium BC and the Age of the City Kingdoms* (p. 158–175) so the reader is led to think that PS will treat the written evidence as part of the material culture of the different Cypriot *poleis*. Instead, a subsection on Amathus is followed by another on Golgoi, which is not a *polis* but a sanctuary site, and that by Kition and other sites; but nowhere in this chapter, or even in the next (and last one, on *Cypriots Writing at Home and Abroad*) does PS provide an essential geopolitical definition of the Iron Age polities based on the latest research and literature.³³ Although *Chapters 4* and *5* are exceptionally rich in bottom-up observations - e.g. on Cypriot multilingualism and ‘multiscriptualism’ (p. 196) and on the writing habits of Cypriot mercenaries abroad (pp. 212–218) - no attempt is made to associate the written evidence with the island’s political geography and economy.

The Cypriot *poleis* and their respective political territories (the *chora*) provided the physical and socio-political context of writing in the first millennium BC. They were, nonetheless, in a constant state of flux throughout the Cypro-Archaic and Cypro-Classical eras, and political boundaries were much more elusive and unstable than PS seems to think when she suggests (in an earlier chapter) that based on Assyrian sources we can ‘draw a map of the Cypriot political configuration of the early Archaic period’ (p.55).³⁴ However, the spatial and temporal parameters of the Cypriot political establishment in the Iron Age are no longer as inaccessible as they used to be. Besides having confirmed that the number of the Cypriot city-states diminished (apparently, from 10 to 7), which betrays a healthy process of consolidation, we have also observed the primacy of coastal over inland central places;³⁵ and, most importantly, we have come to recognize the significance of the extra-urban sanctuaries in the construction of the politico-economic territories³⁶ and as ‘remarkable organisational instruments’, which gathered communities around common

³² ‘They [the Cypriot polities] were ruled by kings - basileis - and there is nothing in the ancient sources that would exclude them from the polis category.’ (Demand 1996: 8). Cf. Iacovou 2014.

³³ Useful references missing from PS’s Bibliography: Counts and Iacovou 2013; Fourrier 2007; 2013; Hatzopoulos 2014; Hermay 2014; Kassianidou 2013; Satriki 2012; 2013. Also, the papers in Cannavò and Thély 2018.

³⁴ The map to which PS refers accompanies a paper (Rupp 1987, p.166) that has often been criticized for its problematic interpretation of the origins and the number of the Cypriot city-states (cf. Iacovou 2013a: 15–16; 2014a: 119–120).

³⁵ Cf. Iacovou 2013a: 29–30.

³⁶ Cf. Fourrier 2007; Papantoniou 2012; Papantoniou *et al.* 2014.

³¹ Cf. Egetmeyer 2010.

cults.³⁷ This is the city-state landscape to which the multilingual written evidence should be anchored in order to reveal more sharply the regional identities of the Cypriot society.³⁸

In Writing and Society in Ancient Cyprus we have been offered a magisterial treatment of the scribal evidence from the time of the appearance of the autochthonous Cypriot script in the LBA to the Hellenistic period, when both the non-Greek languages and the language of the Cypro-Phoenicians disappeared from the written evidence, leaving the Greek syllabary to continue a while longer (until the 1st c. BC) alongside the Greek alphabet. This must be the first time that the intricate history of Cypriot writing has been so ably registered in a single, handy book form. PS's major accomplishment is that she has extracted from the study of the written evidence Cyprus's idiosyncratic island identity; at the same time, she has established that the culture of writing in Cyprus was unique among Mediterranean islands - especially in terms of how scripts and as many as three different languages were employed as political instruments. Because it addresses all these special themes, the book will serve as a point of reference to a much wider audience that will include scholars working on island archaeologies.

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³⁷ Fourrier 2011: 130–131.

³⁸ Minor editorial errata: on p. 25 LCIIC should be corrected to LCIIC (there is no LCIIC phase in the chronology of Cyprus); on p.54, note 28 and again on p.255 in the Bibliography Korou should be corrected to Kourou; on p. 258, Palaephos in the Masson, E. and Masson, O. 1983 entry should be corrected to Palaepaphos.

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Metaxia Tsipopoulou. *Petras, Siteia I. A Minoan Palatial Settlement in Eastern Crete. Excavation of Houses I.1 and I.2*. pp. 486, 57 b/w illustration, 48 b/w plates. 2016. Philadelphia: Instap Academic Press. ISBN 978-1-931534-85-7 hardback \$80.00

This volume is the third in a series that publishes the final results of the excavations at Petras. The first volume was dedicated to the Cretan Hieroglyphic archive from the palace, the second to the proceedings of the first Petras symposium that took place in 2010. Since the publication of the volume under review in 2016, the second Petras symposium that took place in 2015 has also been published.

The site of Petras is spread out over four hills (I–IV), which with two valleys in between that were filled with water, offered safe anchorage to boats in the Bronze Age. A Final Neolithic/EM I site is located on Hill II (Kephala), which also houses an extensive prepalatial-early protopalatial cemetery. In EM II, occupation moved to Hill I, which is also the location of the Protopalatial Wall, the Lakkos Deposit, the MM IIA Palace and the Proto- and Neopalatial settlement (Sectors I–III). The current volume is the first of two covering Sector I of the settlement, which is situated to the north-east of the Palace and comprises House I.1. and the partially excavated House I.2. It comprises chapters covering the stratigraphy and architecture (Tsipopoulou), the Early and

Middle Minoan pottery (Relaki), the Protopalatial, Neopalatial and Postpalatial cooking ware (Alberti), the miniature vessels (Simandiraki-Grimshaw) and the potters' marks (Tsipopoulou). Other chapters in the current volume cover figurines (Simandiraki-Grimshaw), textile production (Cutler), stone vases (Tsipopoulou), ground stone implements (Dierckx), obsidian (D'Annibale), mammalian faunal remains (Isaakidou) and marine faunal remains (Theodoropoulou). Note that the Neopalatial and Postpalatial pottery as well as the petrographical analytical work will appear in the next volume of Sector I.

Sector I was inhabited from the Middle Minoan period (transition MM IB/MM IIA) onwards, especially in its north-western part. The Protopalatial ceramic material from House I.1. points towards patterns of consumption on a notably smaller scale than the Lakkos Deposit but on a larger scale than the nuclear household, and are associated with a larger corporate group. Chronologically, the material from House I.1 bridges the gap between the MM IB Lakkos material and the first palatial establishment in MM IIA, and shows that relatively large consumption events were fairly regular in the settlement in the time just before and at the turn of the MM IIA period.

House I.1 was built in the Early Neopalatial period over the Protopalatial remains and was enlarged in a second Neopalatial (LM IA) phase. In its first phase, it consisted of five rooms (A, M, E, Lambda and 1–2) on the ground floor and probably also an upper story. The other rooms were added in LM IA. House I.1. was deserted after an earthquake destruction in LM IA and fell into ruin to be partially reoccupied in LM IIIA and LM IIIB. The partially excavated House I.2 was separated from I.1. by a narrow passage and reveals a similar building history as the latter.

House I.1. is interesting because it gives us an idea of how a Neopalatial house lacking in elite/palatial-type architectural features functioned and how it was integrated in the urban tissue through open spaces and passages. On its ground floor, it contained a wine-press installation and two storage rooms (E and Lambda) which, in contrast to the former, were only accessible from the first floor by means of ladders. Rooms M and A, which provided access to the stone wine-press installation, contained pithoi. On the whole, however, the house had low storage potential. Rooms engaged in the preparation of foodstuffs (Room Ksi) and rooms that were used as workspaces (Rooms 1–2 and Area 3) were also identified on the ground floor. Two pits (Thita and I) can be connected with the deposition of pottery