

GEORGIA BONNY BAZEMORE

ICS 464: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FRAUD OR INSCRIBED HEIRLOOM?

At some time before 1955, an inscribed bronze sword carrying two lines in the Cypriote syllabary was bought on the antiquities market in Cairo by Mr. G. Michaelides, a Cypriote businessman living there at the time. In 1955, drawings and photographs of this object were sent to Olivier Masson, from which he published his analysis of this inscription, to be found in his great compendium of syllabic inscriptions, *Les inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques*,¹ as no. 464.

The number system of Masson from no. 456 onwards indicates his section on *Dubia et Spuria*, and indeed Masson considers this inscription as such. His doubts have been raised by the many extraordinary attributes of this piece, which is unique in almost every respect. This new examination of *ICS 464*, however, considers the prospect that, rather than a modern forgery, this inscription is a valuable document concerning Cypriote culture outside of the island of Cyprus itself.

This inscribed bronze sword is described as 40 cm in length, with a maximum width of 4.5 cm. While the sword is of a type dated to the Middle Bronze Age, 2100-1600 B.C.,² the syllabic inscription incised on this blade is to be dated firmly to the Iron Age. The inscription consists of 17 signs in line one and 15 signs in line two. The two lines of the inscription are arranged on each side, top and bottom, of the midrib of the blade, written sinistrograde, or from right to left, placed so that the signs are read with the sword held horizontally, point to the left and handle to the right. The first sign of each line is placed near the edge of the wide, upper end of the sword blade out of which the tang extends; each line occupies approximately one-third of the length of the blade. The syllabic signs are clear and are easily read. *ICS* Plate LXXII no. 5 shows the complete blade with the tang, and no. 6 gives a close-up of the inscribed signs. The line drawing given in Figure 1 below was made from the photograph provided in *ICS* Plate LXXII no. 6, and does vary, as regards signs 1 and 2 of line one, and in several minor details, from the line drawing found in *ICS* fig. 153. These differences can only be resolved by the much-needed examination of the object itself.

For the aid of modern readers, the syllabic inscription is given here in dextrograde reading, or from left to right.

a pi ti mi li ko o a pi ta i ne o pa pi o se

ta i te o i a se ta ra ta i ka te te ke

Αβδιμιλκο(ς) ὁ Απ?ιτ?αιν ὁ Πάφιος

τᾶι θεῶι Ἀσ(ε?)τάρται κατέθεκε

Abdimilk, (son) of Ap?it?ain, the Paphian

to the goddess Astarte dedicates (lit. "places or sets down")

1. Masson, 1983: 391-92, figure 153 (line drawing), plate LXXII.5-6. When referring to an inscription found in this catalogue, the abbreviation *ICS* is used, followed by the inscription number.
2. Masson, 1983: 392 and n. 1.

Grammatically and epigraphically, this inscription is quite interesting. The final consonant of the dedicator's name has not been written. This is a commonly accepted practice within Cypriote syllabic orthography, where both internal and final sigma can be omitted in graphic representation.³ The grammatical form of the initial name as masculine nominative singular is confirmed by the following article. The patronym, however, is uncertain. This is not because of any ambiguity in the signs themselves, but rather results from the ambiguity of phonetic representation inherent within the syllabic script itself. For the Cypriote syllabary does not disambiguate between the voiced, unvoiced and aspirated forms of dental, labial and velar consonants. Thus, the dental consonants represented in Greek by τ, δ, and θ receive but one series of signs in the Cypriote syllabary, as do the labials π, β, and φ, and the velars κ, γ, and χ.⁴ On the other hand, the e-grade vowel attached to the final consonant of this name is considered as a mute, or dummy, vowel, the e-grade being the form of choice to complete, or fill out, final consonants, allowing them to be represented by a sign within the syllabic writing system.⁵ Furthermore, nasals, μ and ν, occurring before consonants are often not noted in writing,⁶ and thus the possibility that a nasal must be reconstructed at one or more places in this name does exist.

With these phonetic variables, there are a multiplicity of possible readings for this name:

A(ν/μ)π/β/φι(ν/μ)τ/δ/θαιν		which can be expressed more fully as:			
Αβιδαίν	Απιδαίν	Αφιδαίν	Αν/μβιδαίν	Ανπιδαίν	Ανφιδαίν
Αβιταιν	Απιταιν	Αφιταιν	Αν/μβιταιν	Ανπιταιν	Ανφιταιν
Αβιθαιν	Απιθαιν	Αφιθαιν	Αν/μβιθαιν	Αν/μπιθαιν	Ανφιθαιν
Αβιν/μδαίν	Απιν/μδαίν	Αφιν/μδαίν	Αν/μβιν/μδαίν	Αν/μπιν/μδαίν	Αν/μφιν/μδαίν
Αβιν/μταιν	Απιν/μταιν	Αφιν/μταιν	Αν/μβιν/μταιν	Αν/μπιν/μταιν	Αν/μφιν/μταιν
Αβιν/μθαιν	Απιν/μθαιν	Αφιν/μθαιν	Αν/μβιν/μθαιν	Αν/μπιν/μθαιν	Αν/μφιν/μθαιν

Masson attempts no transliteration of this name, and says that "le patyonyme du dédicant...est bizarre".⁷ Indeed, this patronym serves as an instructive example in illustrating that the inexact phonetic representation inherent in the structure of the Cypriote syllabary does not allow for the certain rendering of lexically new or previously unknown items.

It is important to note that no other word in the Cypriote syllabary displays the ending -a-i-ne.⁸ In Greek grammar, however, for first declension nouns, the masculine and feminine dual in the genitive and dative singular cases is indicated by the ending -αιν.⁹ Grammatically speaking, the dual is used when speak-

3. See Masson 1983: 71, §35.3-4; see also *ICS* 11c and 86 for other examples of the absence of the final sigma in a masculine nominative singular second declension anthroponym.
4. Discussed only briefly by Masson 1983: 52, §27. 2, see also figures 1-5.
5. See Masson 1983: 71, 73 and nt. 4, §35. 4, §39. 3.
6. Masson, 1983: 74, §40.
7. Masson 1983: 392.
8. Egetmeyer 1992: 251.
9. Smyth and Messing 1963: 48-52, nos. 211-227.

ing of "two persons or things which, by nature or association, form a pair".¹⁰ The dual can be used, as Homer shows us, to refer to two brothers.¹¹ A dual is not expected in the position in the dedicatory phrase which usually accommodates the patronym of the dedicator, and such a usage is certainly not paralleled in the Cypriote dialect. In trying to parse this word for grammatical form and root, it must be noted that the dual is often accompanied by ἄμφω, which indicates that the two things referred to by the dual belong together.¹² In this regard, one of the possible phonetic rendering of the first two signs of this name is αμφι. Although such a reconstruction of the name would seem to carry the preposition, ἀμφί, rather than the numeral ἄμφω, without further grammatical parallel, and lacking firm knowledge of the root to which this prefix is attached, we cannot be sure what the Cypriote dialectal treatment of such a name element would have been.

A second interpretation of this patronym is that it is an indeclinable noun, a foreign loan word which has one form for all cases.¹³ If the patronym here is to be considered as a foreign loan word, then the shape of the word is meant to reproduce, as far as the limits of the syllabic writing system would allow, the phonetic shape of the word.

The name of the goddess Astarte appears in no other syllabic inscription. Here, the spelling is unexpected. Rules had to be adopted among syllabic writers in order to provide for the notation of consonants within clusters or at syllable or word end, so that the assignation of vowel grades, and thus sign forms, could proceed in a systematic and orderly manner. The general rule was that each consonant in a cluster would be expressed with the vowel grade of the syllable to which the consonant belongs; ancient Cypriote ideas of syllable division, however, are sometimes surprising to modern eyes.¹⁴ In the spelling of the goddess' name as a-se-ta-ra-ta-i, the writer has shown no regard, in creation of the second sign, for the surrounding syllable vowel grade. Given the vowel grade throughout the inscription (but for the dative termination), one fully expects the form to have read a-sa-ta-ra-ta-i. Yet, the writer of this inscription has used the sign for the e-grade to represent the s-consonant of the goddess' name. As mentioned above, Cypriote syllabic convention reserved the e-grade of signs to note final consonants, the most common of which were -ς, -ν, and -ο.¹⁵ Indeed, final /s/ is one of the most common and easily recognizable of all the syllabic signs.

With these considerations, two interpretations for the spelling of the goddess names may be put forth. The first, that this spelling does accurately reflect phonetic information in the form of a dialectal variant of the name of the goddess. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the writer of this inscription carries a Phoenician name, and presumably speaks that language as well as Greek. The second, that the spelling represents an orthographic mistake, a misspelling, if you will. Implications of this interpretation include the idea that the writer of this inscription was relatively unfamiliar with the syllabic script, and when faced with the need for an s-sign, used the most common and well-known, the e-grade form. Such considerations could then lend credence to the interpretation that this inscription is a forgery.

10. Smyth and Messing, 1963: 45, no. 195; 269, no. 999.

11. Goodwin and Gulick 1930: 187, no. 838.

12. Smyth and Messing, 1963: 269, no. 999.

13. Goodwin and Gulick 1930: 62, no. 290; Smyth and Messing 1963: 71, no. 284.

14. Masson 1983: 74-74, §41-43

15. Masson 1983: 71, §35.4; 73-74, §39.3.

Abdimilk uses a demotic to refer to himself as a Paphian. Demotics are rare in syllabic inscriptions, found in texts created by persons identifying themselves when far away from their native city.¹⁶ If this inscription were seen to be authentic, the use of a demotic strongly suggests that this inscription was created outside of Paphos, and probably even outside of Cyprus, a suggestion which its appearance on the antiquities market in Egypt supports.

This demotic, however, presents a curious disjunct with the epigraphy presented by this inscription. Within Cyprus, syllabic sign forms fall within two distinct repertoires: that of Paphos and that of the rest of the island. These distinct regional sign repertoires are known as signaries: that of Paphos known as the Paphian signary; that used throughout the rest of the island known as the Common signary.¹⁷ While Abdimilk tells us that he is a Paphian, the signary which he uses to express himself is the Common one, rather than the distinct sign forms belonging to the Paphian repertoire. Indeed, when listing his reasons for regarding this inscription as a forgery, Masson remarks, "Du point de vue épigraphique, une première objection est fournie par l'emploi pour un Paphien du syllabaire commun, et non du syllabaire paphien."¹⁸ This observation is based on the fact that the four examples of /o/ found on the sword are all of the Common repertoire. Despite the indications given by Masson's sign chart for the early Paphian,¹⁹ the sign /ke/ is not diagnostic for the Paphian signary, as the distinctive Paphian form is found side-by-side with the Common form in Paphos itself from the earliest times.²⁰ None of the other signs distinctive to the Paphian signary are contained within the inscription on the sword, and as the rest of the signs of this inscription are among those forms shared by both signaries, there exists no other point of comparison to determine the signary of preference for Abdimilk.

Masson seemed to firmly believe that the epigraphy of Paphos would not allow for the occurrence of a Common /o/. Not only did it lead him to reject the authenticity of *ICS* 464, but, based on the appearance of this Common variant form in *ICS* 335, Masson rejects Cesnola's account of this inscription having been found in Paphos.²¹ After the appearance of the first edition of *ICS*, publications of excavated inscriptions combined with new archaeological findings have produced two examples of the use of the Common /o/ in inscriptions of secure Paphian provenance: *Kouklia* no. 4,²² found in the siege mound outside the city walls, and *ICS* 18g,²³ the obelos of Opheltas, from a tomb in the necropolis of Skales. Therefore, we now know that, although rare, the use of the Common form of the /o/ was not unknown in ancient Paphos. A further consideration is the direction of the writing. Although the sinistrotic direc-

16. Aristila from Salamis was buried in distant Marion, *ICS* 166; while in Egypt, Cypriote soldiers incised their names and home cities on the stone walls of the temples at Abydos, *ICS* 385, 392, 393, 395, 403, and Karnak, Traunecker, le Saout, and Masson 1981: 6, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 42, 43a, 43b, 44, 49, 55, 59, and 60.

17. Masson 1983: 57-67, §29-31, figs. 1-6.

18. Masson 1983: 392.

19. Masson 1983: 66, fig. 5.

20. Masson and Mitford 1986: 40, fig. 4, no. 17 bears the distinctive Paphian form, no. 18 the Common form.

21. Masson 1983: 333 and nt. 2, 334; Masson says of the provenance of *ICS* 335, "En principe, l'écriture et le contenu du texte vont à l'encontre d'une attribution à Paphos."

22. Masson and Mitford 1986: 27-28 no. 4, 32 fig. 2, Plate 5, nos. 4a-b.

23. Masson 1983: 408, *Addenda Nova* s.v. no. 18g.

tion of this inscription is generally associated more closely with the Common signary than the Paphian,²⁴ the sinistrotic direction of writing is found in several inscriptions from Paphos, including the dedication of King Onasicharis, *ICS* 15. Paphian writing habits, it would seem, were not as rigid as once was believed.

Several remarks can be made about the signs in this inscription displaying distinct variant forms. First of all, the form of the /mi/ is remarkable. The upper part of this sign is created by four intersecting diagonal strokes placed so that the two central strokes intersect at the bottom. In the example of /mi/ found in this inscription, a long vertical stroke has grown from this central point of intersect, and the upper part of this sign has been placed on a stalk, as it were. This form of /mi/, while not unknown, is not widely found.²⁵ *ICS* 118 from Marion does display a short stalk, but this variant form does not otherwise occur in the western part of the island. *ICS* 327, from Akanthou west of the Karpass, gives a variant cursive form where the stalk has become part of the right side of the divided upper part of the sign. The example in line 3 of *ICS* 193 from Amathus provides a much closer analogy to the /mi/ found on this inscription; other inscriptions from Amathus cannot be evaluated for this epigraphic trait due to the lack of line drawings and indistinct photography. The best parallel found for this form is, interestingly enough, from Phoenician Kition, found on *ICS* 259, where the /mi/ of the sword is almost perfectly reproduced.

Similar observations can be made about the /ra/ in the second line, which is also upon a small stalk. This elevated form of /ra/ however is more widespread than that of the /mi/, and is found in *ICS* 100, 118, 124, 144 and 175 of Marion, 193 of Amathus, 235 of Chytroi, with a variant form finding widespread use in Late Paphian, *ICS* 2, 3, 4, and 91.

The final sign in this inscription, the /ke/, is unusual in that the lowest of the three parallel diagonal strokes does not extend through the long single diagonal slanting down to the left, as is the standard practice in writing this sign. I can find no parallel or comparanda for such an abbreviation of this third stroke. This abbreviation, however, does not in any way compromise the reading of this sign, which is assured.

Masson says of this piece, "L' inscription et à première vue très intéressante; mais il doit s'agir d'un faux." His reasons for adjudicating this inscription a forgery are the following:

- "le bronze est un épée de l'époque du bronze moyen, 2100-1600, et l' on ne peut songer ici à une réutilisation dan l'antiquité"
- "l' emploi pour un Paphien du syllabaire commun"
- "la graphie a-se-ta-ra-ta est anormale"
- "le patronyme du dédicant, a-pi-ta-i-ne, est bizarre"

Masson argues that this object, whose antiquity is not in doubt,²⁷ has been enhanced with an inscription by "un faussaire ingénieux." He cites the fact that the name Abdimilk is known by an inscription from Idalion, *ICS* 220, from which the forger could have taken this name. Masson sees no model for the

24. Masson 1983: 57, §29.2, 64, §31.

25. Here, I must reluctantly admit that Deecke's sign charts, generally very accurate, are misleading, see Deecke, 1884.

26. Masson 1983: 392.

27. Indeed, Merrillees (1993: 10) characterizes this pieces as "a typical product of the Middle Cypriote period".

patronym, however. The dedicatory formula, he adds, could have been taken from *ICS* 219. He concludes, "La mention d'Astarté, inconnue des documents chypriotes, donne à l'inscription son originalité, mais pourrait suffire à éveiller la méfiance...on a affaire à un faux inspiré par un érudit."²⁸

Masson's arguments are, however, unpersuasive, and even untenable, on many counts. As Merrillees has already observed, "There is nothing inherently implausible in the proposition that the weapon was recovered in an accidentally disturbed Bronze Age tomb and put into service again as a voti[ve] offering".²⁹ It is indeed a fact that, during the Iron Age, Cypriotes both found the remains, in the form of tombs and their associated offerings, of earlier periods, and that they considered certain of these remains attractive enough to both procure for their own selves and incorporate into their lives. Merrillees cites an example of the intrusion by Iron Age diggers into a Bronze Age grave in *Bellapais-Vounous*, where two Cypro-Archaic II pots were left in the chamber of a tomb dated to the transitional period between Early and Middle Cypriote. Furthermore, the inhabitants of ancient Paphos certainly reused older objects, or heirlooms, both Cypriote and foreign, in their Early Iron Age burials in *Palaiopaphos-Skales*.³⁰

There do exist examples of heirlooms which have been inscribed. *ICS* 290, for example, is incised upon a disc of Red Polished Ware, pottery typical of the Early Bronze (or Early Cypriote) Age in the mid-third millennium B.C.³¹ A second example is a series of eight bone plaquettes, or pendants, graded in size so that each plaquette is smaller than the one before. These bone plaquettes are circular in shape, hollow in the center, pierced, and opposite each piercing, an extension in the form of a point has been carved. Seven of these bone amulets are inscribed.³² Such objects, both in bone as well as in stone, have been found in tombs in *Philia-Vasiliko*, dating to the initial stage of Early Cypriote I,³³ and at *Ayia Paraskevi*, in stone only, dated to slightly later.³⁴ These objects, then, are approximately two millennia older than the inscriptions that they bear.

Masson did not include the inscribed bone pendants in his corpus of Cypriote syllabic inscriptions, relegating them to a photograph on the last plate and limiting mention of them to footnotes. The reason given for their absence is that Masson considered them as "trop douteuse".³⁵ Later in the same edition, however, he notes that examination by another scholar of the pieces themselves suggested that they were authentic.³⁶ Masson later confirmed his belief in the authenticity of these inscriptions in a new publication complete with readings.³⁷ A decade later, Masson, ignoring both his own new reading and its bibliography, failed to note these inscriptions in his *Addenda Nova*, the additional notes and bibliography attached to his first edition of *ICS* to create the *Réimpression augmentée*.

28. Masson 1983:392.

29. Merrillees 1993: 10.

30. Merrillees 1993: 10-11.

31. Myres 1914: 11-22; 316-17, no. 1884; for the dating, see Karageorghis 1982: 9.

32. In Phoenician as well as Cypriote syllabic; Masson 1983: 315 n. 3, 390 n. 3, plate LXXII.4; Masson and Sznycer 1972: 125-27, plate XVIII.1.

33. Dikaios and Stewart 1962: 175, 190, fig. LII.

34. Hennessy, Eriksson, and Kehrberg 1899: 10, 14-16, 40-41, fig. 25.

35. Masson 1983: 315, n. 3.

36. Masson 1983: 390, n. 3.

37. Masson and Sznycer 1972: 125-127, 126 fig. 6, Plate XVIII.1.

Masson describes his proposed forger, the creator of the inscription on *ICS 464*, as “un faussaire ingénieux” and “un érudit”.³⁸ When pondering the skills needed by this proposed forger, he must have been a scholar indeed. As Masson has pointed out, the name *Abdimilk* was known from another syllabic inscription, a Phoenician/syllabic digraph, bilingual, *ICS 220* from Idalion, from which he suggests that the forger could have taken this written word shape. One must acknowledge that *ICS 220* does contain the only other example of this Phoenician name written in the Cypriote syllabary,³⁹ and admittedly there did exist a considerable bibliography concerning this inscription which was available before the appearance of this object on the antiquities market in the mid-1950s.⁴⁰ But antiquarian books and journals, while available, are certainly to be considered as specialized reading, not frequently found but limited to research libraries and private holdings. Furthermore, the dedicator’s name found on the sword is not simply an imitation or copy of that found on the Idalion inscription. For in the Idalion inscription, *Abdimilk*’s name is in Cypriote dialectal form of the genitive case of *o*-stems, Αβδιμίλων.⁴¹ On the bronze sword, however, the form is given in the nominative case, with the dialectal variant form of the loss of the final consonant *-s*, Αβδιμλκο(ς). Although the difference in spelling involves in actuality only the loss of the final consonant */ne/* of *ICS 220*, these spelling rules hold true only for the Cypriote dialect. In any another dialect of ancient Greek, the loss of the final consonant in the nominative case of a noun of this stem class would not have had the same effect. Thus, the proposed forger must have been quite adept at the Cypriote dialect, and perhaps, by extension, Greek dialectology in general.

The epithet, *Paphios*, or the *Paphian*, used by *Abdimilk*, is quite interesting. As mentioned above, demotics are known in the syllabic inscriptions, and are used by persons indicating they are far from home. In general, the inscriptions containing demotics have received systematic publication in the scholarly literature only in the last half century.⁴² In addition to the bronze sword, four other syllabic inscriptions carry the epithet *Paphios*; all are from Karnak.⁴³ Masson does not suggest that the proposed forger of *ICS 464* has copied this demotic, however, for he well knows, as he himself is the author, that these inscriptions were first discussed in print only briefly in 1958, receiving detailed publication only in 1961, with final, authoritative publication appearing only in 1981.⁴⁴ If the proposed forger has stayed within the bounds of the Cypriote syllabic epigraphic evidence as it existed in the first half of the 20th century, he would have known that the only attested demotic at that time was that of *Aristila* of *Selaminiya*, now *ICS 166*. Here, the demotic contains both an epichoric spelling as well as an intervocalic glide in the ending. He also might have been aware that the longest and most complete dedication to the *Paphian* goddess, *ICS 242* from *Chytroi*, called her *pa-pi-ya-se*, Παφίγας, again displaying the Cypriote dialectal intervocalic glide in the ending. Before the publication of the Karnak inscriptions, an erudite trying to reproduce unattested Cypriote dialectal forms might well have looked to the precedents cited, and reconstructed, *pa-pi-yo-se*, Παπίγος, with the intervocalic glide before the *-o-* of the nominative singular second declension mascu-

38. Masson 1983: 392.

39. Egetmeyer 1992: 12, s.v. *a-pi-ti-mi-li-ko-ne*.

40. Bazemore 1998: vol. III, s.v. *ICS 220*.

41. Masson 1983: 246, s.v. 220; Buck 1955: 88, no. 106.1.

42. Bazemore 1998: vol. III: XXV. Found in Egypt and Nubia.

43. Traunecker, le Saout, and Masson 1981: 274-275, nos 42, 43a, 43b, 44.

44. Masson 1983: 374-375, 383-384, nos. 444a, 444b, 444c, fig. 146; Traunecker, le Saout, and Masson 1981.

line ending, as seen in another inscription known at that time, *ICS* 153. Rather, however, the bronze sword carries the demotic with no intervocalic glide, just as it was soon to be attested to have been written by the Paphians themselves.

The proposed forger was not only an accomplished Greek dialectologist, but a master epigrapher as well. Masson's proposed forger, when he consulted *ICS* 220 for the name of the dedicator, certainly did not simply slavishly copy the signs, but used variant forms not found in the Idalion inscriptions, as seen in the discussion above concerning the form of the /mi/. Furthermore, the form of the /ra/ shows further familiarity with variant syllabic sign forms. Surely, a forger with such detailed knowledge of the syllabic writing system would have been aware of the disjunct between the epithet he has given and the epigraphic signary used.

Attested forgeries of syllabic inscriptions do exist, and they may be used as *comparanda* in this discussion of the inscribed bronze sword. In March, 1873, Dr. P. Schroeder bought two syllabic inscriptions in Nea Paphos; he had them in his possession only a short time before understanding that they were fakes.⁴⁵ Making enquiries over a decade and a half later, Hogarth reports that "Mr. Aristides Michaelides informed me that the shepherd, whose sheep has accidentally scratched out the first [inscription], saw that there was money in such discoveries, and forged others, selling them, as I understood, to Aristides himself." These forgeries are copies of *ICS* 84 and 86, syllabic inscriptions bought by R. Hamilton Lang from Drymou, in the hinterland of Marion, in 1870, and published, with their forged counterparts, by Schmidt.⁴⁷ The line drawings found in Schmidt (1876) for both *ICS* 84 and 86, as well as their corresponding forgeries, are given in Figures 2-3 below.

Here, knowing that the forger is a shepherd, we can be fairly certain that he is illiterate in the syllabic script, and perhaps also functionally illiterate in Greek as well. The manner of the creation of the forgeries is quite interesting. For *ICS* 84, the shepherd has started his inscription at the lower right hand of the stone, beginning with the sign on the lower right hand side of the syllabic inscription, i.e. sign 1 of line 3. The forger continues copying the syllabic inscription moving from right to left, or sinistrograde, and from bottom to top. The forger, however, does not observe the line ends of the original. This manner of creation is reflected in the position of the forged signs upon the stone: sign 1 of line three has been placed further to the right than the first signs of lines one and two; the relatively equal length of lines two and three in comparison with line one, which is only a fragment of the length of the other lines and is justified to the right. It is perhaps from the disposition of the line ends that the forger has adduced, and correctly reproduces, that the original inscription is sinistrograde, or read from right to left.

However, when faced with an inscription of a single line, as in the case of *ICS* 86, the forger has reproduced the signs by reading the original from left to right, or dextrograde, and placing them upon the stone starting at the upper left hand corner and proceeding in a dextrograde fashion, from top to bottom. The forger has separated the original single line into two lines. This interpretation is taken from the arrangement of the lines in the forgery, which is justified to left, with line 2 shorter than line 1. The dextrograde reading of the original inscription by the forger, as well as the dextrograde direction of the forged inscrip-

45. Schmidt 1876: 3.

46. Hogarth 1889: 30-31, n. 2.

47. Masson 1983: 138-142, nos 84, 86; Schmidt 1876: 3, , s.v. Taf. III.1a, (*ICS* 84), III.1c (forgery of *ICS* 84); Taf. VI.1a (*ICS* 86), VI.1b (forgery of *ICS* 86).

tion itself, would suggest that the writer of the forged text had some knowledge, at least, of contemporary Greek alphabetic literate practices. The original syllabic inscription is read sinistrotrograde, or from right to left.

Epigraphically, these forgeries do not present an exact copy of the sign forms of the originals, but rather certain signs and sign sequences have been inaccurately reproduced. For *ICS 84*, for example, only one of the last five signs in line one of the original have been correctly reproduced by the forger. Part of the inaccuracy of the reproduction is the fact that the forger has taken single syllabic signs, divided them into right and left halves, and has rendered them as two separate signs. Such is the case for signs 9 and 10 of line one and signs 2 and 6 of line three. In the imitation of *ICS 86*, the forger has changed the forms of signs 4-11 of the original so much that, in some cases, they only dimly reflect the correct shapes of the syllabary. These inaccuracies are the result either of a graphic misreading on the part of the forger, or alternately, they may be seen as a deliberate attempt to disguise the original script, so that the forgery does not appear a blatant copy of the original. Because the known forgeries of the syllabic script are not accurate copies of the originals, neither in the form of the signs, direction of writing, nor in position of signs upon medium, they present no readable content.

These known forgeries, therefore, differ in almost every aspect from the proposed forgery of *ICS 464*, which, as we have seen, shows a high sophistication of both dialectal and epigraphic forms within quite legible content. If this inscription were forged shortly before it appeared on the antiquities market, the forger must have acquired his extensive knowledge of the Cypriote syllabary during the first half of the 20th century, a time when little discussion took place, even in the academic journals, on the topic of the syllabary. For, as the bibliographies of the inscriptions show, after the death of Richard Meister in 1912, the Cypriote syllabary received almost no scholarly attention until the works of T.B. Mitford and O. Masson began appearing in the mid-1950s.⁴⁸ This consideration would mean, then, that the proposed forger must have been self-taught in the Cypriote syllabary, essentially working in a scholarly vacuum, creating forgeries in a script for which little or no general interest existed. In the period leading up to the mid-1950s, the linguistic and epigraphic skills needed to create the inscription found on the bronze sword, *ICS 464*, would define the forger as possibly the most erudite scholar of his time on the topic of the Cypriote syllabary. Considering the level of scholarship needed to have created such a forgery, surely, without further evidence of the activities of such a talented individual, Masson's proposals seem, at the very least, to strain credulity.

Rather, this inscription seems to be indeed genuine. Abdimilk, after all, would not have been the first Phoenician who dedicated in the Greek language using the syllabic script. Tamassos has produced two digraphic bilinguals, *ICS 215-216*, and Idalion one, *ICS 220*. In these inscriptions, the dedications are given both in Phoenician language and script as well as in the Greek language encoded in the syllabic script. Indeed, it was the Phoenician section of *ICS 220* which provided the key for the decipherment of the syllabic script in 1871.⁴⁹ Phoenicians also created inscriptions using the syllabary exclusively, as the funerary inscription of Abdubalos in Salamis, *ICS 318e*,⁵⁰ shows.

48. Bazemore 1998: vols. II-III, *passim*.

49. Masson 1983: 48-49, §23-24.

50. See also Masson and Sznycer 1972: 127-128.

Further, the unexpected spelling of the name of Astarte, as Asetarte, found on the bronze sword is arguably a result of Abdimilk's own Phoenician origin. Like the writers of *ICS* 215, 216, and 220, Abdimilk probably spoke and wrote in Phoenician as well as in Greek. The Phoenician writing system, reflecting the spoken language which it encoded, indicated four types of sibilants, or s-sounds: voiced, unvoiced, aspirated, and a voiceless affricate.⁵¹ The consonant structure of the Cypriote syllabary does not indicate such differences. It is suggested here, however, that the writer of *ICS* 464 has chosen the peculiar vowel grade for the consonant /s/ in the name of Astarte in a graphic attempt to define or reproduce the phonetic value of the particular sibilant found in the name of this goddess.

Merrillees argues that "the acquisition of a bronze sword in Cairo...should cause no surprise, as it was a well known entrepôt for the sale of Cypriote antiquities."⁵² In other words, Merrillees suggests that the site of the original deposition of this sword was in Cyprus, and that the object was then taken to Egypt for the sole purpose of being sold. The appearance of the demotic in this inscription, however, argues against this view, for demotics are found in syllabic inscriptions only when the writer is far away from the native city named. Abdimilk then, by using the demotic, indicates that, at the time of writing this inscription, he is far away from Paphos. Rather than the sword having been taken from Cyprus to Egypt for sale, the sword may have appeared in the antiquities market in Egypt because that was where it was found.

Certainly, ancient Egypt contained at least one Cypriote colony, that of Naukratis. Here, imported Cypriote sculpture shows close connections between the Cyprus and the Egyptian coast, while locally made examples of such sculpture indicate resident Cypriote craftsmen. One Cypriote sculptor of Naukratis inscribed his name and the ethnic "Kyprios" on an example of his work.⁵³ Conversely, Naukratite influence is also seen in Cyprus, where Mitford identifies the alphabetic part of a digraphic inscription from Marion as epigraphically close to pre-Classical Naukratite forms⁵⁴ and at PalaioPaphos, where Wilson sees close parallels between the sculpture of the royal sanctuary found in the siege mound and Naukratite examples. Ancient evidence confirms travel between the two places, as Athenaeus tells an apocryphal tale of a sailor whose route went directly from PalaioPaphos to Naukratis.⁵⁵

Abdimilk may well have been a citizen of a Cypriote community outside of Cyprus, such as that documented at Naukratis. In such communities, persons from throughout the island of Cyprus would find themselves living and working together, probably sharing in mutual celebrations and religious rites. Certainly, the residents from Kition and Salamis in Cyprus participated in communal religious groupings when they founded their temples to Aphrodite in Athens and Piraeus respectively.⁵⁶ In such a community, the limited number of syllabic writers might not tolerate differences in signaries, but would rather enforce a single set of sign forms intelligible to all. Such a state of affairs would explain why a person of Paphian origin would write using the sign forms of the non-Paphian, Common signary. A small, tight-knit community of native Cypriotes consisting predominately of syllabary-writing Greek speakers might also explain why a Phoenician would write in a non-Phoenician language and script.

51. Powell 1991: 46-48.

52. Merrillees 1993: 11.

53. Gjerstad 1948: 318-322.

54. Mitford 1960: 179-180, discussing *ICS* 164.

55. Athenaeus 15.675f-676c.

56. Bonnet 1996: 74.

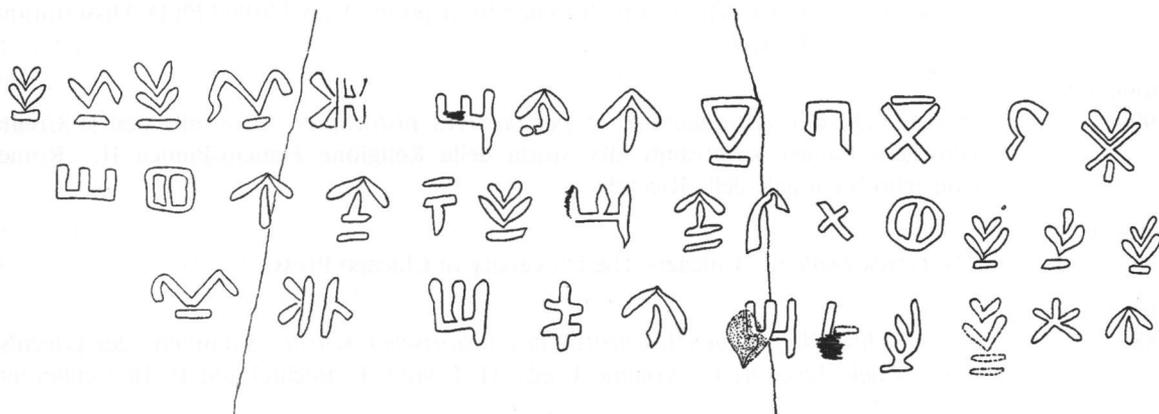
In conclusion, the inscription of Abdimilk, upon critical examination, does not appear to be a forgery. Rather, this inscription, a rare example of an inscribed heirloom, is another addition to the small group of Cypriote syllabic inscriptions of the Greek language written by Phoenicians. The patronym, either in its root or the entire word, should be considered as foreign, perhaps even Egyptian. The unexpected spelling of Astarte's name may well represent an effort to indicate the phonetic differentiation of sibilants inherent in the Phoenician language. The dedication of Abdimilk is especially important in that adds much new light on the subject of the inscribing practices of Cypriotes who have settled outside of the island.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ένα μπρούντζινο σπαθί με κυπροσυλλαβική επιγραφή αγοράστηκε στην Αίγυπτο στα μέσα του 20ου αιώνα και δημοσιεύτηκε μια και μοναδική φορά από τον Ο. Masson στο μνημειώδες έργο του *Les inscriptions chypriotes syllabiques*. Ο Masson τοποθέτησε αυτή την επιγραφή εντελώς στο τέλος του βιβλίου του και βασισμένος πάνω στις ιδιαιτερότητες του σπαθιού δεν το θεώρησε γνήσιο. Πράγματι, η επιγραφή είναι μοναδική για πολλούς λόγους. Κατ' αρχάς το σπαθί ανήκει στη Μέση Εποχή του Χαλκού, αλλά φέρει εγχάρακτη αφιέρωση της εποχής του σιδήρου. Ο αφιερωτής θεωρεί τον εαυτό του Πάφιο αλλά γράφει χρησιμοποιώντας χαρακτήρες όχι της Πάφου. Το πατρωνυμικό του όνομα δεν μπορεί να διαγνωστεί και τέλος ο συλλαβισμός του ονόματος της θεότητας στην οποία αφιερώθηκε το ξίφος είναι αλλόκοτος. Η παρούσα εργασία εξετάζει τη γραμματική και την ίδια την επιγραφή, για να αξιολογήσει την πιθανότητα η αφιέρωση να είναι πλαστή. Εσωτερική εξέταση της αφιέρωσης δείχνει ότι η τεχνική γνώση που απαιτείτο για τη δημιουργία του κειμένου ήταν πολύ πέραν της γνώσης των πλείστων που κατείχαν τη γνώση της γραφής. Από την άλλη, αρχαιολογικά και ιστορικά επιχειρήματα μπορούν να προβληθούν για τις φαινομενικές παραξενιές αυτής της επιγραφής. Το συμπέρασμα είναι ότι η αφιέρωση είναι αυθεντική και παρέχει σημαντική μαρτυρία για Κύπριο που ζούσε στην Αίγυπτο την Εποχή του Σιδήρου.

Figure 2

2a. Schmidt 1876: Taf. III.1a
 Inschrift des british museum (paper-cast)
 ICS 84 (Finder: Hamilton Lang 1870)



2b. Drawing taken from ICS 464, Plate LXXII no 6



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