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THE ROYAL AND THE LAYMAN? POSSIBLE ONOMASTICS ON LATE BRONZE AGE CLAY BALLS

Silvia Ferrara

Summary

This article proposes to cast new light on the role played by small spherical objects inscribed in the undeciphered Cypro-Minoan script, dating to the very end of the Bronze Age, defined as clay balls. It is argued that the inscriptions bear personal names of (at least some) high-profile individuals active in Cypriot urban societies, and responsible for overseeing industrial and cultic activities in more than one centre on the island. In advancing such conclusions, this contribution also offers a revised interpretation of two short inscriptions attested on two clay balls from Ras Shamra-Ugarit in Syria, inscribed in the cuneiform script. The cross-comparison will also include a contextual and epigraphic analysis of a typologically identical object recently discovered at Tiryns, Greece and dating to the same period. To corroborate these hypotheses, other Cypriot texts, such as a clay cylinder found at Enkomi, will be included in the discussion, together with cuneiform texts found in kilns at Ugarit, the so-called *tablettes du four*, to elucidate the function and subject-matter of clay balls in general.

THE CYPRIOT CLAY BALLS

There are more than 80 attestations of clay balls from Cyprus, one example being shown in Fig. 1. All objects inscribed in Cypro-Minoan can be consulted in Olivier 2007 (numbered from ##001-##217) and integrated with more detail in Ferrara 2013 (##001-##244): the clay balls are in the numerical range ##002-##091.¹ Most of the inscribed balls come from the site of Enkomi (Masson 1974; Olivier 2007; Ferrara 2013), on the east portion of the island, while four more come from Kition and Hala Sultan Tekke in the south (Karageorghis, Demas 1985, 104, 114, 281-282; Öbrink 1979). A recently discovered example comes from Tiryns, in mainland Greece (Vetters 2011). They mostly date to the final phase of the Late Bronze Age, in relative terminology known as the Late Cypriot IIIA period, *ca.* 1200 BC, but also to the previous phase, Late Cypriot IIC. Typologically, clay balls are small spherical objects, remarkably uniform in their physical characteristics (regular diameter, not exceeding 2.1 cm, with a very smooth surface conducive to being inscribed, using different clay fabrics), bearing short inscriptions in Cypro-Minoan syllabic writing, with a maximum of 8 syllables. Since the script remains undeciphered, it is impossible to read the texts, or to interpret their function with precision. Nonetheless we can make several informed observations.

This contribution aims to cast new light on the role played by these objects, by analysing both their archaeological settings and re-evaluating their epigraphic characteristics in light of recent evidence relating to clay balls found outside Cyprus. Cross-comparisons will be detailed with regards to two typologically identical objects recovered at Ras Shamra-Ugarit in Syria, inscribed in cuneiform rather than Cypro-Minoan, and the ball from Tiryns. In order to clarify the role of clay balls in general, another Cypriot text, a relatively large (in comparison to the small balls) clay cylinder found at Enkomi (##097) will be integrated in the discussion, together with cuneiform texts found in kilns at Ugarit.

Past scholarship has offered a variety of interpretations on the clay balls, suggesting their function as gaming marbles (Dikaios 1969, 1971), divination pieces (Rutkowski 1979), coins (Persson 1946), votive pebbles (Evans 1935), and ballots/tokens (Masson 1973, 1974). Most of these interpretations have already been treated elsewhere (Ferrara 2012, 90-124; Vetters 2011), and this contribution will thus develop from Masson's interpretation, using it as its point of departure, namely that the balls represent 'fiches d'identité' (Masson 1973, 92) or name-tags. That the inscriptions may record personal names now seems to be very likely (Masson 1974; 2001; Vetters 2011; Ferrara 2012; Steele 2014),

¹ Note that both catalogues include uninscribed specimens of balls too.

on the basis of a close analysis of the patterns revealed by the sign-sequences forming the inscriptions, and several attestations of repetition. Masson's contribution offers the opportunity for further fine-tuning, in light of new evidence relating to the ball recently found at Tiryns, and of a new comparative reading of the two balls from Ugarit presented in this paper. From such complementary perspectives, additional considerations can be made to refine our understanding of the precise use, subject matter, and cultural significance of these objects. While some aspects related to these issues pivot on work already published elsewhere (Ferrara 2012, 90-124), the aim here is to advance the scope of the analysis as a result of a closer examination of the evidence. The discussion will take into account both archaeological and epigraphic data related to the clay balls from Cyprus, Greece and Ugarit, starting from Masson's premise.

MIXED CONTEXTS, SINGLE FUNCTION?

Of the clay balls recovered at Enkomi, fewer than half can be examined within a secure context, as it emerges from details in the excavation reports. The specimens that come from concentrations in the industrial area excavated by Porphyrios Dikaïos (Quarter 1W, called Area III by Dikaïos, see Dikaïos 1969, 1971) and those uncovered in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God, excavated by the French mission directed by Claude Schaeffer (Schaeffer 1971) have received thorough treatment, but others found dispersed in several spots in the settlement are reported with little attention paid to their contexts, such as the scattered specimens from Quarter 5 and 6 in the east section, or the ones from the House of the Bronzes further south, for instance (Courtois and Webb 1987; Courtois, Courtois and Lagarce 1986). The loci of concentrations of balls are shown in the highlighted sections in Fig. 2. The fact that the published contexts are so patchy makes assessing the function of these objects very problematic, and, accordingly, the conclusions all the more tentative.

From a close examination of the secure contexts of recovery that are today available, the objects seem to be distributed throughout the site in what appear to be sacred, residential or industrial settings, in unequal percentages (Fig. 3). Despite the uncertainties of context, we can rule out that a funerary setting was ever attested for any



Fig. 1. Clay ball from Enkomi bearing inscription in Cypro-Minoan writing, 97.4-1.765 (##021). Photograph by Silvia Ferrara, drawing by Dimitris Tsouris. Published in Ferrara 2013.

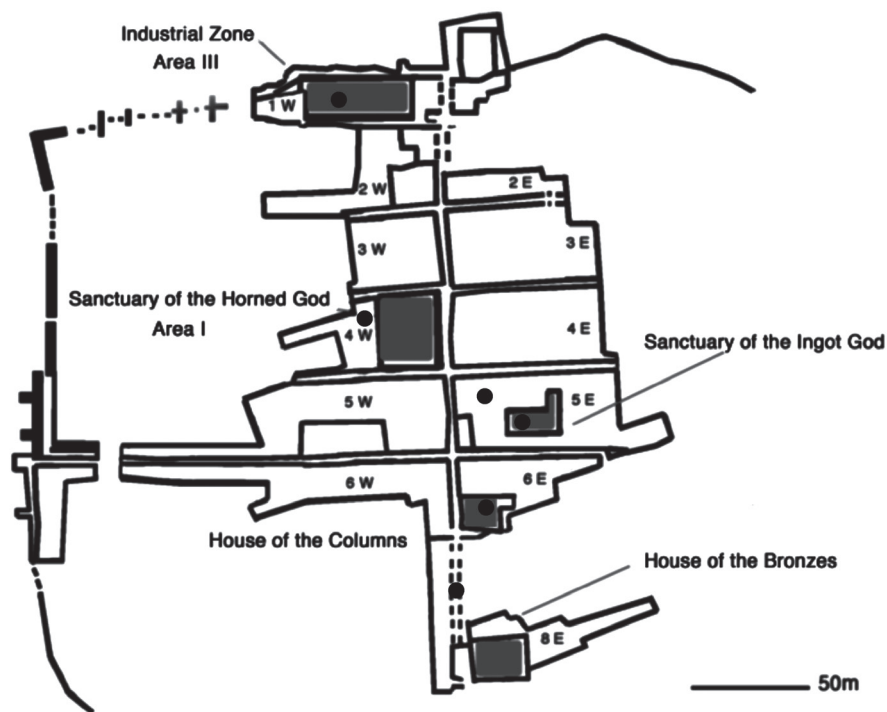


Fig. 2. Distribution of the clay balls within Enkomi, concentrations marked by black dots. Adapted from Courtois, Courtois and Lagarce 1986, 6, fig. 2.

ball. The array of contexts in which they have been uncovered is particularly significant for the specimens found in concentrations, for instance those located in the western section of the industrial area in the north of the town, those from the vicinity of the Sanctuary of the Ingot God in Quarter 5E, and those found next to the House of the Bronzes. The concentrations of balls can further corroborate inferences that can help to identify their function—balls found in substantial numbers within the same setting are likely to have been used for the same purpose.

Fewer than 20 balls excavated by Porphyrios Dikaios in the industrial area of Enkomi in Area III corresponding to Level IIB (dated to the Late Cypriot IIC period, roughly the 13th century BC) belong to extensive copper workshops, located in the western portion of the quarter which was closely involved in intense metal-working activities (Dikaios 1969, 54). In the successive level, corresponding to the Late Cypriot IIIA period, the building underwent architectural redesigning to include a large hall (room 77 in the plans) and the copper workshops were sealed off (Dikaios 1969, 89–91). The balls attested from this hall (4 specimens in total) were found in the same exact spot where the concentration from the previous level is reported. In a room slightly northeast of the hall, another set of balls was found, with some uninscribed specimens. The use of the balls continued across time in two subsequent levels of occupation, despite the fact that the more recent level corresponding to IIIA seems no longer involved in copper production.

The balls recovered in relatively high concentration in other parts of the town belong to this later period. They were found in the proximity of a sacred setting, and also directly inside the Sanctuary of the Ingot God (Schaeffer 1971). It must be noted that metallurgical activity in the Late Cypriot IIIA period continues to be very dynamic in these sections of Enkomi, which are closely connected to the Sanctuary (Q4E and Q5E), at a time when the workshops in the industrial quarter in Q1W, mentioned above, cease to be active (Courtois 1982, 160–162). North of the Sanctuary of the Ingot God, in Q4E, and directly west of it, there is evidence for the production of bronze objects in the so-called *atelier nord* and *atelier sud* (named thus by the French mission of 1961–1967, see Courtois 1982, 162, fig. 3; Webb 1999). *Atelier nord*, in Q4E, is characterised by what Courtois defines as ‘industrie de transformation’, given the presence of several moulds used for the fashioning of axes, adzes and sickles. In the latter workshop, a remarkable quantity of slag was recovered, a crucible fragment, and a set of three juxtaposed concrete areas forming a small canal, destined to channel the water used for washing the mineral (Lagarce 1971, 389, and 384, fig. 3). These features are all part of a bronze-working installation, which also contained a deposit of bronze weapons, tools, a cult object, *i.e.* a miniature chariot (Schaeffer 1969), and other objects destined to be melted. According to the excavators, there appears to have been a direct connection between this workshop and the Sanctuary of the Ingot God (Lagarce 1971). Communication between the two installations seems to have been possible through the north and west entrances to the Sanctuary. Incidentally, the latter is the exact location where the concentration of balls (namely that within the Sanctuary area) is attested (Courtois 1971, 152, ff.). Three more balls, whose precise details of recovery or whose exact relation to the Sanctuary escape us, seem to have been found in a sector in its vicinity, but with no more detailed indication related to their context, or number, than the fact that they were found ‘sur sue du temple’ (as written on boxes storing the balls in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia) and that they totalled at least 15 specimens (Masson 1971b).

It is indeed undoubted that a close association between metallurgic and cult activity can be observed elsewhere on the island. At Kition-*Kathari*, large-scale structures (Temples 1 and 2, Temenos A) are found in the proximity of metalworking areas. The only two examples of clay balls from this site relate to cultic activity, as they were found close to, or within, a temple (Smith 2009, 65). One specimen appears to be part of a votive deposition, as it was found among ostrich egg shells, beads, bronze fragments, etc. (Karageorghis, Demas 1985a, 74–76; Veters

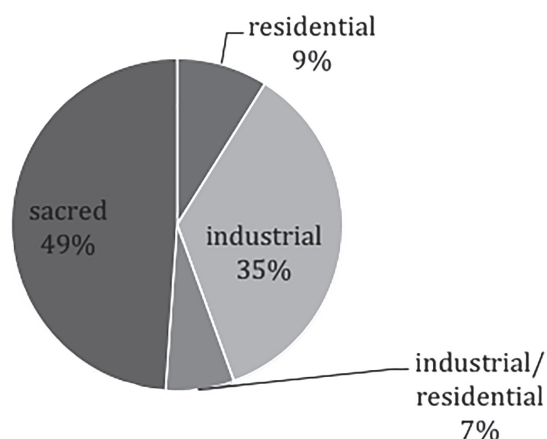


Fig. 3. A schematic chart of the contexts of the balls found at Enkomi, based on the published reports (only half of the material has a secure context).

2011, 13, note 116). A link, which may have characterised certain urban sites, between copper production and religion is therefore evident. This has been explained through the intervention of cult managers in the direction of copper production, and this would justify the spatial nearness between the locations of workshops and ceremonial installations (Knapp 1986). Such a connection may be indicative of a process involving the ‘sanctification’ of copper production and of a distinct domination of the industry at the hands of the same elite that controls the temples. In such light, boundaries between secular and religious spheres are indistinct and seamless, embedded in an elite ideology that constructs and legitimises itself through the symbolic exploitation of copper resources. This ideological manipulation is evidently embodied in the statuette of the Horned God, or the Bomford figurine, individuals who stand on miniature ingots, but also in several iconographical instances of ingot representations.

What about the role that the balls played in this intertwined activity? It seems that their presence in different settings plays along the blurred lines between industrial and cultic activity. Their function was integrated in high-profile contexts of communal activity, whose nature may have been tied to administrative managing of industrial production, but may have not been merely utilitarian. Masson suggested that the balls functioned as tokens, or as personal identity tags, and that they were used to identify ‘ouvriers engagés temporairement’ (Masson 1973, 92), integrated in the ‘cadre d’entreprises ou ateliers de travail’ (Masson 1974, 114). Veters, who seconds Masson’s interpretation, stresses again the function of balls as administrative tags in the metallurgical industry, but disregards their attestations in religious spheres at Enkomi, and connects the temple attestations of the two balls at Kition to their being contained within the overall precinct that encloses metallurgical workshops (Veters 2011, 13-14). Industrial activity is mirrored neatly in the context of recovery of the single example coming from Greece, in the Lower Citadel at Tiryns, found in a workshop of small-scale metallurgical activity (Veters 2011). That balls in reliable contexts of recovery have some evident correlation to metal workshops should not be the definitive line of argument to interpret their general use. Their attestations in cultic settings both at Kition and at Enkomi should not be excised from the discussion, especially if we consider temple and industry as closely tied together.

In fact, it is precisely the variety of the contexts of recovery that can be read as an indication of the objects’ ultimate function. In virtually all settings, the balls tend to be found in buildings marked by monumental architecture, generally in association with the same artefacts (mostly loomweights, faience pieces, spindle whorls, pierced stones, bronze objects), and, crucially, in the proximity of textile and metallurgical workshops (Enkomi Area III, Enkomi Quarter 5E, Kition and Tiryns are clear examples). The exception to the high profile environment of recovery is represented only by Area 22 in Hala Sultan Tekke, where one ball was found (##089): according to the excavator, Area 22 was a periphery section of town inhabited by humble people (Öbrink 1979, 21). That clay balls may have had an administrative function, linked to the management of industrial activities of considerable importance seems, therefore, to be quite plausible. However, they appear to be more versatile than that, as they are found in contexts somehow connected to the sacred sphere, although we cannot prove that they were used for a ritual purpose. This suggests that they had a fundamentally polyvalent role, which does not imply that they were tied only to production or to the mere identification and management of specific workers. We can say with a certain level of confidence that balls are objects employed in the organisation of communal activities, but along what lines? And if the inscriptions represent personal names, whose names are they? An examination of the nature of the sign-sequences on the balls, their structure, the patterns of repetitions and the contexts in which these repetitions can be incorporated, will prove enlightening.

PATTERNS OF REPETITION, ISOLATED SIGNS

Inscriptions on the clay balls from Cyprus are normally structured around one or two sequences, and the latter are divided by the normal division marker used in Cypro-Minoan, which is represented by a small upper vertical stroke. The specimens that bear one sign-sequence represent 37% of the total; those with two sequences represent 62% (the remaining percentage is related to illegible balls). It is notable that 45% of the balls have an isolated sign appended to their sequence of one or two words, which is separated from the rest of the inscription by the usual division marker. This isolated sign is always at the end of the inscription, with the exception of ball ##022, in which the isolated sign is

at the beginning of the text (Olivier 2007, 74). As for the sequences that do not have an isolated sign, 22% have one-word (19 in total, if we count, as we should, the inscription from Tiryns, which belongs to this one-word group). The remainder of the inscriptions on the balls has two words. The data outlined above is summarised in Fig. 4.

	Number of clay balls (89 total)	
	Isolated sign present	Isolated sign absent
1 sequence	42	23
2 sequences	---	13
Reconstructed division marker (1 sequence + isolated sign)	3	---
Illegible inscription/Uncertain sequence		8

Fig. 4. Patterns in sign sequences viz. instances of isolated signs.

Indeed, inscriptions of two sequences never have an isolated sign,² the only exception being ball ##024, where we should restore a separation marker to divide the inscription in two sequences, the third being represented, through the normal division, by the isolated sign. This means that the isolated sign is significant when one word is recorded, rather than when two words are. It must be noted that 22 different signs are attested in isolated position, as shown in Fig. 5.

Ლ	Მ	Ნ	Ო	Პ	Ჟ	Რ	Ს	Ტ	Უ	Ფ	Ქ	Ღ	Ყ	Შ	Ჩ	Ც	Ძ	Წ	Ჭ	Ხ	
2	1	4	4	2	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	2	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2

Fig. 5. Signs attested in isolated position on the clay balls and their relative frequencies.

It is remarkable that some of these signs attested on clay balls are found, within the Cypro-Minoan repertoire, only on clay cylinder Enkomi ##097, first published by Masson in 1971 (Masson 1971a). The close tie between the texts on the balls and that on the cylinder had already been pointed out in their original publication. Furthermore, three sequences are repeated, as can be evinced from the numbered sequences transcribed in the table reported here in Fig. 6 (sequence numbers 5, 6 and 15).³ Indeed, even more remarkable is the fact that several isolated signs can be observed on the cylinder, especially in the initial portion of the text (on lines 5, 6, 7, 8, see Olivier's transcription, (Olivier 2007, 123-132)). These are signs $\mathcal{M}$, $\mathfrak{z}$, $\mathfrak{z}$, and $\mathcal{Y}$, respectively, all invariably recurring also in the repertoire of isolated signs on the balls. Can the isolated sign represent a specific commodity, recorded through the initial syllable of its spelling, thus through an acrophonic principle? Can this be evidence for a hitherto unexplored aspect, namely a possible attestation of Cypro-Minoan logography?⁴ Before we develop this line of argument, let us turn to the repeated sequences in the whole corpus of Cypro-Minoan inscriptions.

The patterns of repetition are not just relative to balls and clay cylinder, since in several cases they can be observed on other material, such as half a dozen hemispherical bowls, and ivory or metal objects. Also particularly significant is the fact that recurrent sequences are not just relegated to inscriptions on balls uncovered at Enkomi, but they involve Kition, Hala Sultan Tekke and Idalion, and also Tiryns in Greece. This is particularly significant, as it means that certain sign-sequences were not only inscribed on media other than clay, a material allegedly used for classes of objects destined to the administrative sphere, but that they also travelled beyond the confines of the island, to be unearthed as far as the Aegean.

² These are ##012, ##013, possibly ##015, but it is damaged, ##020, ##021, ##025, ##027, ##035, ##037, possibly ##064, but there is no division marker, ##066, ##068, ##070, possibly ##080, but it is damaged, very likely ##088, if we restore a division marker between the first sequence and the second, 𐎶𐎺𐎠𐎢𐎽𐎧𐎺𐎠𐎥𐎵𐎫𐎲𐎡𐎴𐎠𐎤𐎪𐎠𐎣𐎰𐎱𐎠𐎩𐎨𐎠𐎭𐎠𐎬𐎠𐎦𐎠𐎩𐎠𐎮𐎠𐎯𐎠𐎳𐎠𐎴𐎠𐎵𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎷𐎠𐎸𐎠𐎹𐎠𐏀𐎠𐏁𐎠𐏂𐎠𐏃𐎠𐏄𐎠𐏅𐎠𐏆𐎠𐏇𐎠𐏈𐎠𐏉𐎠𐏊𐎠𐏋𐎠𐏌𐎠𐏍𐎠𐏎𐎠𐏏𐎠𐏐𐎠𐏑𐎠𐏒𐎠𐏓𐎠𐏔𐎠𐏕𐎠𐏖𐎠𐏗𐎠𐏘𐎠𐏙𐎠𐏚𐎠𐏛𐎠𐏜𐎠𐏝𐎠𐏞𐎠𐏟𐎠𐏠𐎠𐏡𐎠𐏣𐎠𐏤𐎠𐏥𐎠𐏦𐎠𐏧𐎠𐏨𐎠𐏩𐎠𐏪𐎠𐏫𐎠𐏬𐎠𐏭𐎠𐏮𐎠𐏯𐎠𐏰𐎠𐏱𐎠𐏲𐎠𐏳𐎠𐏴𐎠𐏵𐎠𐏶𐎠𐏷𐎠𐏸𐎠𐏹𐎠𐏺𐎠𐏻𐎠𐏼𐎠𐏽𐎠𐏾𐎠𐏿𐎠𐐀𐎠𐐁𐎠𐐂𐎠𐐃𐎠𐐄𐎠𐐅𐎠𐐆𐎠𐐇𐎠𐐈𐎠𐐉𐎠𐐊𐎠𐐋𐎠𐐌𐎠𐐍𐎠𐐎𐎠𐐏𐎠𐐐𐎠𐐑𐎠𐐒𐎠𐐓𐎠𐐔𐎠𐐕𐎠𐐖𐎠𐐗𐎠𐐘𐎠𐐙𐎠𐐚𐎠𐐛𐎠𐐜𐎠𐐝𐎠𐐞𐎠𐐟𐎠𐐠𐎠𐐡𐎠𐐣𐎠𐐤𐎠𐐥𐎠𐐦𐎠𐐧𐎠𐐨𐎠𐐩𐎠𐐪𐎠𐐫𐎠𐐬𐎠𐐭𐎠𐐮𐎠𐐯𐎠𐐰𐎠𐐱𐎠𐐲𐎠𐐳𐎠𐐴𐎠𐐵𐎠𐐶𐎠𐐷𐎠𐐸𐎠𐐹𐎠𐐺𐎠𐐻𐎠𐐼𐎠𐐽𐎠𐐾𐎠𐐿𐎠𐑀𐎠𐑁𐎠𐑂𐎠𐑃𐎠𐑄𐎠𐑅𐎠𐑆𐎠𐑇𐎠𐑈𐎠𐑉𐎠𐑊𐎠𐑋𐎠𐑌𐎠𐑍𐎠𐑎𐎠𐑏𐎠𐑐𐎠𐑑𐎠𐑒𐎠𐑓𐎠𐑔𐎠𐑕𐎠𐑖𐎠𐑗𐎠𐑘𐎠𐑙𐎠𐑚𐎠𐑛𐎠𐑜𐎠𐑝𐎠𐑞𐎠𐑟𐎠𐑠𐎠𐑡𐎠𐑣𐎠𐑤𐎠𐑥𐎠𐑦𐎠𐑧𐎠𐑨𐎠𐑩𐎠𐑪𐎠𐑫𐎠𐑬𐎠𐑭𐎠𐑮𐎠𐑯𐎠𐑰𐎠𐑱𐎠𐑲𐎠𐑳𐎠𐑴𐎠𐑵𐎠𐑶𐎠𐑷𐎠𐑸𐎠𐑹𐎠𐑺𐎠𐑻𐎠𐑼𐎠𐑽𐎠𐑾𐎠𐑿𐎠𐒀𐎠𐒁𐎠𐒂𐎠𐒃𐎠𐒄𐎠𐒅𐎠𐒆𐎠𐒇𐎠𐒈𐎠𐒉𐎠𐒊𐎠𐒋𐎠𐒌𐎠𐒍𐎠𐒎𐎠𐒏𐎠𐒐𐎠𐒑𐎠𐒒𐎠𐒓𐎠𐒔𐎠𐒕𐎠𐒖𐎠𐒗𐎠𐒘𐎠𐒙𐎠𐒚𐎠𐒛𐎠𐒜𐎠𐒝𐎠𐒞𐎠𐒟𐎠𐒠𐎠𐒡𐎠𐒣𐎠𐒤𐎠𐒥𐎠𐒦𐎠𐒧𐎠𐒨𐎠𐒩𐎠𐒪𐎠𐒫𐎠𐒬𐎠𐒭𐎠𐒮𐎠𐒯𐎠𐒰𐎠𐒱𐎠𐒲𐎠𐒳𐎠𐒴𐎠𐒵𐎠𐒶𐎠𐒷𐎠𐒸𐎠𐒹𐎠𐒺𐎠𐒻𐎠𐒼𐎠𐒽𐎠𐒾𐎠𐒿𐎠𐓀𐎠𐓁𐎠𐓂𐎠𐓃𐎠𐓄𐎠𐓅𐎠𐓆𐎠𐓇𐎠𐓈𐎠𐓉𐎠𐓊𐎠𐓋𐎠𐓌𐎠𐓍𐎠𐓎𐎠𐓏𐎠𐓐𐎠𐓑𐎠𐓒𐎠𐓓𐎠𐓔𐎠𐓕𐎠𐓖𐎠𐓗𐎠𐓘𐎠𐓙𐎠𐓚𐎠𐓛𐎠𐓜𐎠𐓝𐎠𐓞𐎠𐓟𐎠𐓠𐎠𐓡𐎠𐓣𐎠𐓤𐎠𐓥𐎠𐓦𐎠𐓧𐎠𐓨𐎠𐓩𐎠𐓪𐎠𐓫𐎠𐓬𐎠𐓭𐎠𐓮𐎠𐓯𐎠𐓰𐎠𐓱𐎠𐓲𐎠𐓳𐎠𐓴𐎠𐓵𐎠𐓶𐎠𐓷𐎠𐓸𐎠𐓹𐎠𐓺𐎠𐓻𐎠𐓼𐎠𐓽𐎠𐓾𐎠𐓿𐎠𐔀𐎠𐔁𐎠𐔂𐎠𐔃𐎠𐔄𐎠𐔅𐎠𐔆𐎠𐔇𐎠𐔈𐎠𐔉𐎠𐔊𐎠𐔋𐎠𐔌𐎠𐔍𐎠𐔎𐎠𐔏𐎠𐔐𐎠𐔑𐎠𐔒𐎠𐔓𐎠𐔔𐎠𐔕𐎠𐔖𐎠𐔗𐎠𐔘𐎠𐔙𐎠𐔚𐎠𐔛𐎠𐔜𐎠𐔝𐎠𐔞𐎠𐔟𐎠𐔠𐎠𐔡𐎠𐔣𐎠𐔤𐎠𐔥𐎠𐔦𐎠𐔧𐎠𐔨𐎠𐔩𐎠𐔪𐎠𐔫𐎠𐔬𐎠𐔭𐎠𐔮𐎠𐔯𐎠𐔰𐎠𐔱𐎠𐔲𐎠𐔳𐎠𐔴𐎠𐔵𐎠𐔶𐎠𐔷𐎠𐔸𐎠𐔹𐎠𐔺𐎠𐔻𐎠𐔼𐎠𐔽𐎠𐔾𐎠𐔿𐎠𐕀𐎠𐕁𐎠𐕂𐎠𐕃𐎠𐕄𐎠𐕅𐎠𐕆𐎠𐕇𐎠𐕈𐎠𐕉𐎠𐕊𐎠𐕋𐎠𐕌𐎠𐕍𐎠𐕎𐎠𐕏𐎠𐕐𐎠𐕑𐎠𐕒𐎠𐕓𐎠𐕔𐎠𐕕𐎠𐕖𐎠𐕗𐎠𐕘𐎠𐕙𐎠𐕚𐎠𐕛𐎠𐕜𐎠𐕝𐎠𐕞𐎠𐕟𐎠𐕠𐎠𐕡𐎠𐕣𐎠𐕤𐎠𐕥𐎠𐕦𐎠𐕧𐎠𐕨𐎠𐕩𐎠𐕪𐎠𐕫𐎠𐕬𐎠𐕭𐎠𐕮𐎠𐕯𐎠𐕰𐎠𐕱𐎠𐕲𐎠𐕳𐎠𐕴𐎠𐕵𐎠𐕶𐎠𐕷𐎠𐕸𐎠𐕹𐎠𐕺𐎠𐕻𐎠𐕼𐎠𐕽𐎠𐕾𐎠𐕿𐎠𐖀𐎠𐖁𐎠𐖂𐎠𐖃𐎠𐖄𐎠𐖅𐎠𐖆𐎠𐖇𐎠𐖈𐎠𐖉𐎠𐖊𐎠𐖋𐎠𐖌𐎠𐖍𐎠𐖎𐎠𐖏𐎠𐖐𐎠𐖑𐎠𐖒𐎠𐖓𐎠𐖔𐎠𐖕𐎠𐖖𐎠𐖗𐎠𐖘𐎠𐖙𐎠𐖚𐎠𐖛𐎠𐖜𐎠𐖝𐎠

3 Note that the table reported here is an updated and corrected version of Table 3.1 (Ferrara 2012, 114), comprising the ball from Tiryns and eliding the last entry, which had a Cypro-Minoan typo.

4 This line of analysis should include the attestations of isolated signs on potmarks, which is yet to be pursued in full detail.

Sequence (no.)	Sequence (CM)	Attested (times)	Attested on	Variations
1	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶	4	Enkomi ball BM97.4-1-768 (##024) Enkomi ball 33 (##048) Kition plaque 4252 (##163) Enkomi pithos rim (##109)	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##048) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##163)
2	𐎶𐎶𐎶	4	Enkomi ball 4.091 (##029) Hemispherical bowl Met 207 (##179) Enkomi ball 19.05 (##080) Enkomi ball 19 (##059)	For the pattern 𐎶𐎶 see sequence above
3	𐎶𐎶𐎶	4	Enkomi ball 5.523 (##027) Enkomi ball 53.6 (##030) Hemispherical bowl 25 (##180) Enkomi anvil(?) 19.26 (##168)	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##180) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##168) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##027 and 30)
4	𐎶𐎶𐎶	2	Enkomi ball 1604 (##018) Enkomi ball 1611 (##004)	
5	𐎶𐎶𐎶	2	Enkomi ball 54 (##032) Enkomi cylinder 19.10 (##097): line 16	Sequence 𐎶𐎶 also on cylinder (##097): lines 15-16 and 18-19
6	𐎶𐎶𐎶	5	Enkomi ball 74 (##034) Enkomi cylinder 19.10 (##097): lines: 2, 9, 26 Kition ivory pipe 4267 (##161)	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 on the 3 occurrences on Enkomi cylinder 19.10 (##097)
7	𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Enkomi ball 25 (##043) Enkomi ball 16.31 (##069) Enkomi ball 16.29 (##067)	
8	𐎶𐎶𐎶 ⁵ 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶	6	Enkomi ball 16.26 (##064) Enkomi ball 27 (##045) Enkomi ball 16.25 (##063) Enkomi ball 16.34 (##072) cf. Enkomi ball 30 (##055) and Hala Sultan Tekke ball BM98.12-1.204 (##088)	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##064) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##088) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##063-##072) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##055). Likely homophony between sign 𐎶 and sign 𐎶.
9	𐎶𐎶𐎶	2	Enkomi ball 29 (##054) Enkomi ball 20.05 (##085)	
10	𐎶𐎶𐎶	2	Enkomi ball 32 (##047) Enkomi ball 36 (##051) Enkomi ball 702 (##020)	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##020)
11	𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Enkomi ball 73 (##036) Enkomi ball 4 (##057) Enkomi ball 18 (##058)	𐎶𐎶 (##036) 𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##057) 𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##058)
12	𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Enkomi ball 16.29 (##067) Enkomi ball 16.31 (##069) Enkomi ball 25 (##043)	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##069) 𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##067 and ##043)
13	𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Enkomi ball 16.32 (##070) Enkomi ball 17.14 (##076) Hala Sultan Tekke ball N6035 (##089)	
14	𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Enkomi ball 24 (##042) Enkomi ball 16.33 (##071) Enkomi ball 19 (##039)	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##042) 𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##071) 𐎶𐎶𐎶 (##039)
15	𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶𐎶	3	Tiryns ball TN 241 (##244) Enkomi cylinder 19.10 (##097): lines: 10-11 Idalion pithos OR 853 (##123)	Most likely the same sequence is represented, 𐎶𐎶𐎶. This applies also to the <i>pithos</i> from Idalion, sequence 𐎶𐎶𐎶, the third sign likely representing a badly drawn sign 𐎶.
16	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶	2	Enkomi hemispherical bowl A1227 (##183) Hemispherical bowl Met 207 (##179)	

Fig. 6. Patterns of repeated sign-sequences across the Cypro-Minoan repertoire of clay balls and other inscribed objects.

5 Olivier (2007), 95 has sign 78 𐎶 in final position on this ball, which he only attests in CM2 (ibid., 415), thus providing us with contradictory evidence, since all balls are claimed to be CM1.

The repeated sequences that are not found either on balls or on the Enkomi cylinder occur on prestige objects that may well have marked personalisation through sequences that bear the owner's name. This is, of course, speculative, but it may be especially relevant for those inscriptions that are borne on bronze hemispherical bowls (##179 and ##180, sequences nos. 2 and 3, see Olivier 2007, 252-253) and ivory objects such as the Kition pipe and plaque (##161 and ##163, see Olivier 2007, 231 and 236). On such objects, the inscriptions are relatively longer (three sequences on ##179, two on ##180, three sequences on the Kition ivory plaque, four sequences on the Kition pipe). While it cannot be proven with confidence that all these sequences register personal names, could there be a possibility that some, especially the repeated ones, do indicate ownership specifying the name of the owner? This proprietorial marker is not unparalleled in other cultures, when high-status objects are involved (Etruscan, see Bonfante, Bonfante 2002, early Greek, see Guarducci 1975, and on Cyprus, inscriptions written in the Cypriot syllabary of the first millennium, see Masson 1983). Moreover, if the repeated sequences in the repertoire point to personal names, is there a coherent pattern in their being associated with the isolated signs?

It is intriguing to note that isolated signs occur elsewhere in the corpus. The inscription on the Kition pipe ends with an isolated sign, namely sign number 102 $\mathbb{W}$, already attested twice in isolated position in the repertoire of balls. Isolated signs are also registered on other objects, which are all typologically similar. These are bronze hemispherical bowl A 1227 (##183, see Olivier 2007, 256), which has sign 112 $\mathbb{W}$, one of the most frequently attested signs in isolated position on the clay balls, another bronze bowl (##181, albeit slightly damaged, see Olivier 2007, 254), and pithos ##111 (Olivier 2007, 178), which bears an isolated sign 110 $\mathbb{W}$, already found three times in the same position on the balls. Even more intriguing is the fact that the pithos was found in association with a concentration of balls found in the Sanctuary of the Ingot God at Enkomi, and that all instances of isolated signs on objects other than balls are attested on vessels, be they pithoi or precious metal specimens. This is significant in trying to assess the nature of the isolated sign. Before we proceed further in understanding its role, it must be noted that there is a single inscription on the clay balls that diverges from the one- or two-sequence pattern already described above. This is clay ball ##061, which has a two one-sign sequences separated by the usual division marker, $\mathbb{W}^1 \mathbb{Z}$. This pattern mirrors that found on two copper miniature ingots, which register the inscription $\mathbb{W}^1 \mathbb{A}$ (##174 and ##176, see Olivier 2007, 247 and 249). A third miniature ingot bears the same text (##175, Olivier 2007, 248) at the beginning, but does not record the division marker, which most likely needs to be restored between the two signs.

The fact that, together with the balls, metal vessels and prestige items carry occurrences of isolated signs points to the possibility (but this is obviously tentative) that each isolated sign represented a different commodity produced on Cyprus. Of the seven hemispherical metal bowls uncovered in the whole of the island ##182 (Olivier 2007, 255) and possibly ##181 (Olivier 2007, 254) carry numerals. It is not inconceivable that this numeral notation is relevant to the contents of the vessels themselves, and thus, in parallel, that the isolated signs may refer to the commodity carried inside. In this way, it seems tempting to speculate that the isolated sign could point to a logographic rendering of, perhaps, at least 23 different commodities, or abbreviated designations of a specific kind. This is admittedly a considerable number of commodities produced, mainly, at Enkomi, but all the same, if this suggestion stands, then the initial recurrence of four isolated signs on the clay cylinder from Enkomi and the sign-sequences that are repeated on it and elsewhere (here taken to be personal names) may indicate, at least partially, a list. This assumption is reinforced by Olivier's suggestion that a special enclitic marker, sign $\mathbb{T}$, is used for coordination, and recurs 20 times only on this inscription, transcribed as & (Olivier 2007, 123). Masson had defined this sign as a 'diviseur en spirale' (Masson 1971a), but it may have a syllabic value (viz. Mycenaean $-qe$ or Akkadian $-ma$).

Given the coherence of these patterns, which encompass repeated sign-sequences and occurrences of isolated signs, can we make any suggestion on their interrelationship? If the repeated sequences record personal names, the fact that we see their attestations on precious objects, such as metal vessels and ivory paraphernalia, points to individuals of high status within Cypriot society. Are we to believe that they may be simple workmen in the metallurgical industry, in charge of producing or, accounting for, specific commodities? If they are, why would a workman be mentioned three times on the Enkomi cylinder, and at the same time appear on the ivory pipe from another site, Kition? And why would another individual be mentioned both on a pithos at Idalion and on a ball from Tiryns? Finally, what to

make of another, whose name is possibly repeated on balls recovered both from Enkomi and Hala Sultan Tekke? It remains the case that we cannot prove that the repetition of what appears to be a personal name may refer to the same individual, but it still appears plausible that these are individuals of very high profile, whose names may have been part of a common Cypriot culture diffused beyond the confines of a single community or centre, known elsewhere on the island and identifiable as a distinct culture as far as the Greek mainland. But how recognisable were they, and what was their socio-political standing? We might be able to outline a possible answer to the question through an analysis of epigraphic evidence from outside Cyprus, namely from the Syrian site of Ras Shamra-Ugarit.

THE UGARIT CLAY BALLS

Two clay balls recovered at Ras Shamra-Ugarit are typologically identical to the Cypriot specimens. They were excavated by the French mission in the 1960s, but little contextual detail is available, apart from the fact that one of them was found in a funerary setting. This is specimen RS 24.132.⁶ The ball was only recently analysed and published (Dalix 2008). It measures 2.1cm in diameter. The other ball, RS 20.109, was found in the Residential Quarter in 1966, not in a funerary context, and measures 1.7 cm in diameter.⁷ They are both inscribed in the cuneiform script. It is likely that the inscription on RS 24.132 is written in the alphabetic script from Ugarit, and that the language is Ugaritic. The script and language on inscription RS 29.109 are less clear, as this ball may be written either in Ugaritic alphabetic cuneiform or in Akkadian syllabic cuneiform. It is very difficult to ascertain which script was employed without autopsy, and I could not find the ball in the museum of Aleppo in 2006 when I autopsied the Cypro-Minoan inscriptions preserved until then in Syria.

These inscriptions are worth analysing in detail, both philologically and typologically. Let us start with the former. RS 24.132 bears three signs in Ugaritic, that spell *šmn*. There are two alternative interpretations for this root. It can either point to the Ugaritic root for 'oil', *šmn*, or refer to an anthroponym. The anthroponym *šmn* occurs on other tablets from Ugarit, RS 15.007, RS 19.044, RS 15.084, RS 18.080A (= KTU 2.15, KTU 4.617, KTU 4.170, and KTU 4.371, respectively), also attested as *bn šmn* ('son of *šmn*) on tablets RS 16.355 and RS 18.303 (KTU 4.232 and KTU 4.432). The other ball, RS 29.109, also has two possible interpretations, because it can be read in two different languages and scripts. If it is written in the Ugaritic alphabetic script, it would register the repeated sequence *pg pg*; conversely, if it records Akkadian, it would refer to the repeated logogram *giš giš* (wood). If Ugaritic is the language, the inscription may point in the direction of an anthroponym, namely *pgn* with hypocoristic *-nu* (Gröndal 1967, 193-194). The same *pgn* is perhaps also mentioned in a tablet found in a kiln used for baking tablets at Ugarit, and dating to the final occupation of the site before its destruction. This tablet bears the letter of *ydn* (RS 18.148=KTU 2.47, l. 21, PRU V, no. 62), but the context is too fragmentary to ascertain whether the sequence *pgn* attested there records an anthroponym. Within the same series of *tablettes du four*, a set of tablets in Ugaritic that were translated copies of Akkadian originals, which were recovered in the kiln mentioned above (all published in PRU V), we find another text, tablet RS 18.147 (= KTU 2.46, PRU V, no. 61), which attests the same sequence *pgn* and which will be discussed in more detail below. Conversely, if the sequence on the ball records an Akkadian logogram, it would register a commodity, 'wood'. This commodity would, perhaps, provide a parallel for the interpretation of the text on the other ball, RS 24.132, which would in this case be read as 'oil', as proposed by Dalix (2008, 237). The reason for a repetition of the sequence would still need to be explained, but in any case, if both balls record commodities, they would work as labels.

Aside from philological considerations, even contextually, it would be quite surprising to find a label, inscribed with the word 'oil', in a funerary setting. And this directs the discussion to the second aspect, related to the typological

6 Bordreuil, Pardee 1989, 299, state that it was found in a tomb, in the 'ville sud', but the exact find-spot has been corrected, and it is a tomb in the south acropolis. I am grateful to Dr Valerie Matoian for supplying the correct information. The object comes from a tomb in 'tranchée Sud-acropole, (et non pas de la "Ville Sud")', topographic point 3455. There will be an amendment in the *Études ougaritiques* IV (forthcoming, see also Marchegay 1999, 637, and KTU 3rd ed., 6.102, 642).

7 Found in trench 108W, topographic point 4701, now stored in the Museum of Aleppo.

and functional aspects of these objects. That they closely resemble the Cypriot specimens had already been noticed (Masson 1974; Hirschfeld 2001), but it is also interesting to note that they do not bear any resemblance with any other type of inscribed object recovered at Ugarit. Labels (or ‘etiquettes’) from the site, inscribed both in Ugaritic alphabetic and in Akkadian syllabic (van Soldt 1990; Postgate 2014, 406) are of two kinds: one is half-cylindrical in shape, and was tied with a string to the document to which it relates. The other type, shaped into a flattened cone, bears short texts that reference commodities and quantities, and was attached to the commodity they named. In light of all this, it seems the case that the two balls could not have worked as labels, for several reasons. The first is typological: the balls are spherical and smaller than Ugarit labels. The second is functional and tied to their shape: it would be impossible to envisage a spherical un-pierced object being attached to either clay tablets or commodities. The third is epigraphic: the balls from Ugarit have single sign-sequences, while Ugarit labels have whole sentences. The fourth is a corollary to the previous one: when Ugaritic or Akkadian texts mention commodities, numerals are always attested, and such is not the case for the clay balls. If we were to accept the interpretation of their inscriptions as a record of ‘wood’ and ‘oil’, we would need to explain the absent quantities. This points, quite forcefully, to the likelihood that the two balls register anthroponyms. This conclusion would harmonise with the linguistic and graphic evidence, as both balls would be written in Ugaritic alphabetic, and the various occurrences of parallel attestations of these sequences as anthroponyms on other tablets from the site further corroborate this inference. And this, in turn, takes us to the evidence offered by the important attestation of the anthroponym *pgn* on tablet RS 18.147, mentioned above.

The text in question is probably a translation in Ugaritic of an Akkadian original, and relates a message on behalf of *pgn*, an individual who mentions dispatches of provisions of food and the preparation of ships. *Pgn* labels himself as ‘*ab*’ (father) to the king of Ugarit, Ammurapi, whom he addresses as *bny*, ‘my son’ (PRU V, 87, no. 61, line 9). Astour, who mentions this text (Astour 1965, 255),⁸ assumes that this terminology may indicate that *pgn* indicates the very same king of Alashiya whom Ammurapi calls ‘my father’ in his response, written in Akkadian (RS 20.238, Nougayrol 1968, 87, no. 24, line 2, addressed as *a-bi-ya qi-bi-ma*). The register is informal, and the warmth of the greetings points convincingly in the direction of the king of Alashiya/Cyprus as the sender, since this register is the same that can be observed in the rest of the correspondence between the two countries, where the father-son designation is normally employed (Bordreuil, Malbran-Labat 1995). This marks a contrast from the hauteur that generally characterises relations with Hatti, which has been also identified as a contender in the role of sender of this tablet (see Hallo 2014 for details).⁹ That ships are needed to transport the food requested indicates a sea-faring country, and Cyprus certainly fits the bill much better than Anatolia.

ROYALS AND LAYMEN?

If the original version of tablet RS 18.147 (which we have in its translated form in Ugaritic) originated from Cyprus, with the individual named *pgn* as its sender, could we envision a direct relationship with the Ugaritic inscription on the clay ball, where an identical sequence is recorded? Could we be facing the same name? We could never ascertain that the two attestations are related to one and the same person, even if the inscriptions are conclusively identical. But if we hypothetically speculated that they do refer to the same person, could we be confronted with the possibility that a Cypriot royal name had been inscribed on an object that is characteristically diagnostic of Cypriot culture? The personal name *pgn* may have spelt several different names in Ugaritic, making such a particular correspondence coincidental, but to find pointers to ‘Cypriot’ individuals on typically ‘Cypriot’ material culture would, all the same, make this coincidence quite striking, even if circumstantial. Indeed, we could venture further on conjecturing the roles played by the individuals named on Cypriot and Ugaritic balls in general. There has been no attempt in the literature on the topic to advance this far, with an eye to investigating the possible correlations between the names of individuals and

⁸ I am grateful to Miguel Valerio for having directed me to Astour’s article.

⁹ There has been an attempt to identify *pgn* with a Hittite official named Pukana (Klengel 1974, 169; 1992, 149; Singer 1999, 718), but the informal register does not fit the normal tone used in the correspondence with Hittite officials.

the functions they may have held in Cypriot society. There is always an argument to be made, and praise to be sung, for a guarded exercise of intellectual caution, but there is equally a case for the possibility that some individuals named on balls may have held positions of the highest importance in the society. The argument here presented allows us to contribute in corroborating the cautious positions of Masson, who suggests that Cypriot balls may have been ballots for industrial workers (bearing their names, although she is tentative with the idea, Masson 1974, 47), or Vettters' inference that names, rather than nouns, are recorded (Vettters 2011, 13-14).

If the sequences repeated on clay balls and on other objects do represent onomastics, and if they do refer to the same individuals, then the status of these individuals must have been more high profile than hitherto assumed, and connected to a higher position in society, than that related to industrial workers alone. Even more meaningful, if the onomastic equations are plausible and the named individuals are the same, would be the fact that these repeated onomastics recur in different locations. As a consequence of all of the above, if some of these names travelled across sites on the island, from Enkomi to Hala Sultan Tekke, to Kition, and even beyond its confines, all the way into Greece, this mobility may reinforce not only their role in society as crucial managers of important foci of activity, overseeing production and cult, but also their recognisability outside the discrete context of recovery of the balls. This in turn may point to a common cultural substratum that was likely to be identifiable on a pan-Cypriot scale, and even beyond. Typologically identical clay balls from Ugarit, written in the local script, may corroborate this conclusion, and open up the possibility that at least one name, if the postulated correspondence with *pgn* is correct, belonged to the highest sphere of office, that of the Cypriot king. As already stressed, this remains a working hypothesis whose validity cannot be proven, but such uncertainty still remains meaningful to redress the role that the balls may have played in the internal workings of two coeval cultures. Rather than being mundane tools of the administrative machine, these small unassuming objects made of clay may, instead, have been the ultimate statement of personal tagging, playing alongside objects of more obvious status and prestige, as signature statements of identity.

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Abbreviations

PRU V = Ch. Virolleaud, *Palais royal d'Ugarit* V, Paris 1965.

KTU = M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartín (eds), *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, Kevelaer-Neukirchen-Vluyn 1976.

KTU 3rd ed = M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartín 2013 (eds), *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*, Münster 2013.

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