

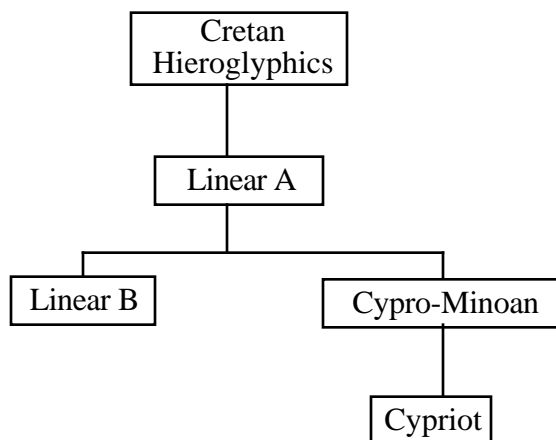
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Overview of the Aegean Scripts

This document provides background material for proposals to encode the Phaistos Disk script, Linear B, and Cypriot in Unicode and ISO/IEC 10646.

There are six writing systems which have come to light as the result of archaeological work in the areas surrounding the Aegean Sea, from Crete and Greece to the west to Cyprus to the East. Five of the six are clearly related to one another, with the following table giving a rough indication of the chronological relationship (and possible genetic relationship) between them.



Cretan Hieroglyphics (ca. 1750-1600 B.C.)

Used on Crete to write an unknown language. Appears to be related to Linear A. Used largely for sealstones. Undeciphered.

Linear A (ca. 1800-1450 B.C.)

Used on Crete to write an unknown language, apparently for accounting records. Appears to be related to Cretan Hieroglyphics and is clearly related to and possibly unifiable with Linear B. Undeciphered, but consists of a syllabary, a set of ligatures, and a set of ideograms.

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Linear B (ca. 1550-1200 B.C.)

Used on Crete and the Greek mainland to write Greek, almost exclusively for accounting records. Clearly related to and possibly unifiable with Linear A. Almost completely deciphered. Consists of a syllabary and related signs, some ligatures, and a set of ideograms.

Cypro-Minoan (ca. 1500-1200 B.C.)

Used on Cyprus to write an unknown language. Related to Linear A and Cypriot. Undeciphered. Consists of a syllabary.

Cypriot (ca. 800-200 B.C.)

Used on Cyprus to write Greek. Probably descended from Cypro-Minoan. Almost completely deciphered; indeed, this is the earliest of the Aegean scripts to be deciphered. Consists of a syllabary and some numerals.

Phaistos Disk script (ca. 1750 B.C.)

Exactly one document is known written with this script, the Phaistos Disk, which was discovered on Crete but is probably not of Cretan origin. Completely undeciphered. Consists of 45 known characters, but possibly as many as sixty total.

Proposals on portions of Cypriot, Linear B, and the Phaistos Disk script are currently before the UTC.