The Alphabet

- Borrowed from Phoenician, represented the consonant sounds of Greek, used other Phoenician letters to represent vowels—phonetic instead of syllabic
- 800, writing down epic poetry? Commercial? No evidence for the latter, 8th-7th century still oral
- Second half of eighth century—verses scratched on vases, ‘Homeric’
- 650, inscription from Dreros in Crete
- Regional variations in letter forms
- Easier to learn and read than Linear B
Now the Phoenicians who came with Cadmus... introduced into Greece upon their arrival a great variety of arts, among the rest that of writing, whereof the Greeks till then had, as I think, been ignorant. And originally they shaped their letters exactly like all the other Phoenicians, but afterwards, in course of time, they changed by degrees their language, and together with it the form likewise of their characters.”

Herodotus *Hist. 5.58.1* (trans. Rawlinson).
Phoenician Alphabet

Zayin Weapon
Waw Hook
He Window
Daleth Door
Gimel Camel
Beth House
Aleph Ox

Nun Fish
Mem Water
Lamedh Ox-Goad
Kaph Palm of Hand
Yodh Hand
Teth Unknown
Heth Fence

Taw Mark
Shin Tooth
Resh Head
Qoph Monkey
Sadhe Fishhook
Peh Mouth
Ayin Eye
Samekh Support