

JAN BEST

THE MANY FACES OF *JABU-RE* AND *BINI-RE*

The present contribution is a continuation of my article ‘The Lotus Flower in Cretan Hieroglyphic’.¹

jabu-Re

For the scribes of Cretan Hieroglyphic there were six ways of stressing the importance of the Egyptian sun-god Re as the key element in the Minoan throne-name *jabu-Re*, ‘Heart of Re’ (Fig. 1a; no. 162).² One way of doing so was to add to the syllabic sign with the value *re* an identical, but smaller syllabic sign or, alternatively, to add to the logogram of the lotus flower with the value *re* an identical, but likewise smaller logogram; in both cases, the smaller, identical adjunct was added to focus the reader’s attention upon the last part of the throne-name (Fig. 1b and 1c; no. 242, no. 214).

Another, more simple way of reaching this effect was to render thrice the same logogram for Re, in this particular case three pectorals of equal size from which sun-disks hang down (Fig. 1d; no. 228). An elaboration of the way of thrice repeating a sign standing for Re is most interesting. In this instance the syllabic sign with the value *re* is the central one and is flanked to the left by a sun-disk and to the right by a lotus flower, both logograms representing Re and as such functioning as adjuncts to the syllabic sign (Fig. 1e; no. 300). The smaller size of the sun-disk and the lotus flower as compared with that of the syllabic sign with the value *re* underline their function of

¹ Kadmos 41 (2002), pp. 131–136.

² See J. Best, loc. cit., p. 132. The numbers preceded by “no.” solely refer to the illustrations, not to the transcriptions and interpretations of the texts on Cretan seals with corresponding numbers in the *Corpus Hieroglyphicarum Inscriptionum Cretae* (CHIC) edited by Jean-Pierre Olivier and Louis Godart (Paris, 1996). In the author’s opinion, a more careful analysis of the inscriptions on Cretan seals by non-Hellenists will break the Minoan code within the next few years.

adjuncts. Whether the writing direction is from left to right or from right to left, in the two instances so far known the standard order of extending the notion of *Re* in this way is 1. sun-disk, 2. syllabic sign with value *re*, 3. lotus flower (Fig. 1f; no. 166).

A third way of drawing the reader's attention to the name's element of *Re* is simply to put the logogram of the sun-disk for *Re* in the centre and let it be flanked to the right by the syllabic sign with the value *ja* (leg) and to the left by the syllabic sign with the value *pu* (gate) (Fig. 1g; no. 260). Thus the two syllabic signs for *jabu* are made subservient to the central sign for *Re*, as if they were adjuncts themselves, which in reality they are not, because notwithstanding their position in the text they still do represent the notion of *jabu*.

A fourth way is to render a huge, perfectly round circle, ornamented with a checkerboard pattern of the same construction as often used in sun-disks hanging from an eyelet and representing the sun-disk of *Re*, and to make it encapsulate the two signs for *jabu*, this time being written in the right order (Fig. 1h; no. 181).

The fifth way of representing *Re* is to put behind *jabu* the logogram of a cross whose four endings consist of as many sun-disks, together suggesting the continuous rotation of, as it were, a perpetuum mobile; adjuncts of small suns may surround it (Fig. 1i; no. 268).

Finally, the sixth way of making the name's element *Re* the most important one in the text is just combining the principles of the previously discussed ways of doing so (Fig. 2; no. 262). The sign in the centre of the scene with *jabu-Re* is that with the syllabic value *re*, underneath the adjunct of a winged sun with the same meaning attached to it. This ligature is flanked by two syllabic signs with the value *pu* in antithetical order, but to be read as one. On the outside next to these, the adjuncts of two small sun-disks are visible, whereas the horizontally rendered syllabic sign with the value *ja* is flanked to the left and right by a lotus flower. The composition of the outer syllabic signs for *jabu* is suggestive of the circular form of the sun in rotation, i.e. *Re* himself. The winged sun, the two sun-disks, and the two lotus flowers are all adjuncts with the meaning *Re*, whereas the two leg-signs and the door-sign for *jabu* are just used as ornamental elements to form a circle around the syllabic sign with the value *re*. For completeness' sake it should be remarked that another side of the same seal conveys a similar idea. To both sides of the logogram for town gate three sunrays are added in ligature, from the twice antithetically rendered syllabic signs with the value *ru* springs a lotus flower, whereas the whole scene is dominated again by the syllabic

sign with the value *re*, but this time not put within but above the other signs (translation: “Re protects the town of Rukusawa”). The insect on the third side of this seal is a bee, the Minoan, from the Egyptian hieroglyphic signary derived logogram for *bity* ‘king’, written out on other Cretan seals inscribed with Cretan Hieroglyphic. The bee precedes the name of the king who used *jabu-Re* as his first name on another side of this seal. His last name reads either Bizu or Pizu, whatever an expert reader may prove it to be.³ What the texts on the different sides clearly show, is that the use of *jabu-Re* as a first name was a royal prerogative. The first syllabic sign of the trowel, if read with the value *bi* in the king’s name, leads us to *bini-Re* on other royal seals inscribed with signs of Cretan Hieroglyphic.

bini-Re

After succeeding in reading on tablet RS 20.25 from Ugarit/Ras Shamra *pi-ni*, the Hellenist Emilia Masson identified this combination of two signs as *bini* and equated it with its later Phoenician equivalent *bn* with the meaning of ‘son’ without paying any attention to the case of this word.⁴ After noticing that the first word in the first line on tablet RS 20.25, *a-ka-mi*, has the apposition *bi-ni ma-li*,⁵ but that on another tablet with Cypro-Minoan writing the combination *a-ka-mu i-lu* is attested,⁶ the author concluded that, whereas the latter combination would show the Semitic endings of the nominative singular on *-u* for ‘Akamas the Ilian’, the first one would have the three Semitic endings of the genitive singular on *-i* for ‘Of Akamas, son of Ma(l)los’ (an ancient town in the Troad near Ilion).⁷ Although there exists a time gap of eight hundred years between the two parent signs in Cretan Hieroglyphic of those representing *bi-ni* in Cypro-Minoan writing,

³ The syllabic value *zu* for the second sign corresponds with that of its counterpart L 101 in Linear A (cf. on tablet HT 11b.3 *ru-zu-na* > *rôzên*, *râzôn* ‘prince’ in Hebrew).

⁴ E. Masson, *Cyprominoica* (= *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* 31,2), Göteborg 1974, p. 39.

⁵ See for the syllabic value *ma* of sign 46 and the other values Fred C. Woudhuizen, *Tablet RS 20.25 from Ugarit: Evidence of Maritime Trade in the Final Years of the Bronze Age*, *Ugarit-Forschungen* 26 (1994), p. 514 ff. and p. 532 (Fig. 2).

⁶ Cf. Jan Best – Fred Woudhuizen, *Ancient Scripts from Crete and Cyprus*, Leiden etc. 1988, p. 104 (Fig. 7). If anything at all, a Hellenist would presumably read with the Linear B and Cypriot syllabic values of the corresponding signs in these scripts *a-ka-mo i-ro*.

the reader may still recognise the genetic relationship of these signs in the two scripts (Fig. 3). Thus the ownership of a royal seal with inscriptions in Cretan Hieroglyphic is absolutely guaranteed when the scribe wrote *bi-ni re* 'Of the son of Re' (Fig. 4; no. 308). The use of the Egyptian expression *s3-R^c* 'Son of Re' by Minoan dynasts might have been interpreted in Egypt as sheer blasphemy against the divine status of pharaoh. For emulating dynasts in the region wishing to avoid political troubles the equivalent of this Egyptian title in the Phoenician language might have done as well to express the same notion. The occurrence of a Phoenician expression does not imply that the proper language of Cretan Hieroglyphic is Phoenician: the only long sentence in this script tells us otherwise.

The variety of forms in which the scribes could express the notion of *bini-Re* was even greater than that for *jabu-Re*. A significant difference is that, whereas the god's name Re in *jabu-Re* is accentuated in most cases and *jabu* is only secondary, *bini* now clearly predominates and Re often is reduced to a sketchy adjunct. On the clay label from Mallia, on which the text runs from right to left, the logogram of the lotus flower represents Re, but on the seal, on which the text runs from left to right, it is the small, final adjunct of a winged sun behind the sign for *ni* – turned 90° and barely recognisable as such – which does so (see Fig. 5; nos. 089, 221). On another seal, on which the logogram of the bee seen from above (= *bity* 'king'⁸) precedes *bi-ni*, this is followed by the small logographic adjunct of a sun-disk representing Re (Fig. 6; no. 157). Five small winged suns and a small sun-disk may surround the first syllabic sign for *bi*, but two lotus flowers and a volute – itself being a simplified form of the logogram for the rising and setting sun⁹ – may either precede or follow *bi-ni* as well (Fig. 7; nos. 287, 161, 295). Sometimes the sun-volute is provided with sunrays, is accompanied by two small winged suns as adjuncts, and stands as the most important sign in the centre between the signs for *bi* and *ni* (Fig. 8; nos. 300, 301, 314). To be viewed from left to right, a plain sun-disk, a winged sun turned upside down, and the originally Egyptian sign for the sun-disk may accompany *bi-ni* to make the message 'Of the son of Re' clear (Fig.

⁷ J. A. Cramer, *A Geographical and Historical Description of Asia Minor*, Amsterdam 1971, p. 88.

⁸ Fred C. Woudhuizen, *The Bee-Sign* (Evans No. 86): *An Instance of Egyptian Influence on Cretan Hieroglyphic*, *Kadmos* 36 (1997), pp. 97–110.

⁹ Jan Best, loc. cit. (n. 1), p. 133, p. 136 (Fig. 7).

9; no. 170), but connecting a plain sun-disk in ligature with either the first or the last sign of *bi-ni* is more subtle (Fig. 10; nos. 210, 284, 211). A complete volute may precede the sign for *bi*, but two volutes or even the two halves of these may flank the same sign as well (Fig. 11; nos. 217, 220, 213, 216). The logogram of the sun-disk may possess the same size as the syllabic signs for *bi* and *ni* and precede these, but it may also be put in between the two signs, either as a modest, much smaller adjunct or as a huge sun surrounded by eight satellite suns (Fig. 12; nos. 230, 231, 261). And so on and so further in sheer endless variations of *bi-ni* with either one or several signs signifying the notion of *Re*.

Finally, some attention should be paid to a variation of *bini-Re* consisting of mere logograms. A seal from Mallia shows two identical persons freely floating in space and rotating around a sun-disk (Fig. 13a).¹⁰ Their heads are surrounded by sunrays which suggest their close relation to the sun. In fact, the way in which the same figure is rendered twice is meant to enhance the impression of rotation we already got. A comparable scene is to be seen on another seal from Mallia (found in Sitia), in which a man stretches his hand out towards a sun-disk around which he rotates (Fig. 13b).¹¹ Remarkable is that his lower arm and the hand with the expressly accentuated three fingers instead of five have the same form as the logogram for the lotus flower which would later evolve into the identical Linear A and B signs with the syllabic value *re*, another way of indicating the close relation of this person with the sun around which he rotates. The spear following upon this scene symbolizes the royal power of the person in question. Between two sun-disks ('*Re* protects') his name is rendered by what seems to be a ligature of a cat's head (above) and a cobra's head (below): 'Cat-Snake'. A third scene makes clear how the two scenes treated above must be interpreted (Fig. 13c; no. 240). In between the syllabic signs for *bi* and *ni* the logogram of a winged sun is visible. Towards this sun a person, freely floating in space, turns his face. In other words, in this scene both the logographic and syllabic version of *bini* is represented.

¹⁰ See Jan Best, The ancient toponyms of Mallia: A post-Eurocentric reading of Egyptian Bronze Age documents, in: Wim M. J. van Binsbergen (ed.), *Black Athena: Ten Years After* (= *Talanta* 28–29 [1996–1997]), p. 115 (Fig. 8).

¹¹ See n. 9, *ibidem* (Fig. 9). For a completely different interpretation see Fred C. Woudhuizen, A Minoan Royal Seal Issued at Malia, *Kadmos* 41 (2002), p. 125.

In order to satisfy their royal patrons the scribes of Cretan Hieroglyphic played with the script, passing back and forth from the purely semantic dimension to the purely phonetic, with intermediary stages between. To meet aesthetic demands, signs could occasionally be switched around, changing their order. Two contiguous signs could be conflated into one at the whim of each individual scribe. Although the scribes could have used only the syllabic signary, they did not. The logograms of Re just had too much prestige to abolish. In fact, writing and pictorial representation were, as the reader will have noticed, not distinct. In this respect the mental world of the scribes of Cretan Hieroglyphic differed from that of the scribes of both Linear A and B for whom only writing mattered. Structurally Cretan Hieroglyphic is almost identical with Maya writing. As just the same conclusion has been reached for Luwian Hieroglyphic,¹² one should carefully consider the possibilities that either Cretan Hieroglyphic is an insular branch of Luwian Hieroglyphic written in Anatolia and Syria or that the latter script is a continental branch of Cretan Hieroglyphic.

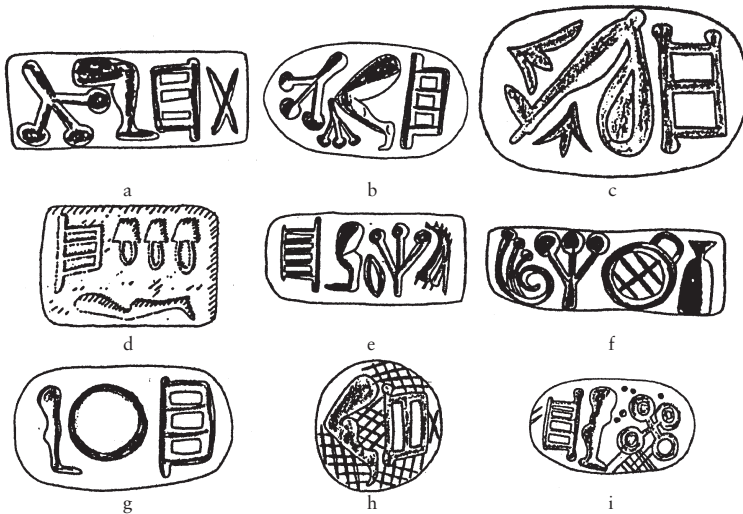


Fig. 1

¹² Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, London etc. 1994, p. 245.



Fig. 2



Crete



Ugarit

Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 6



Fig. 5



Fig. 7

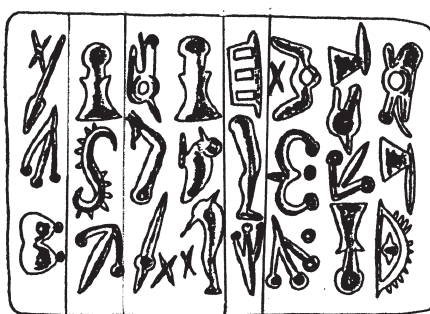


Fig. 8

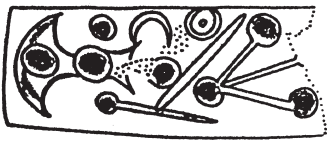


Fig. 9

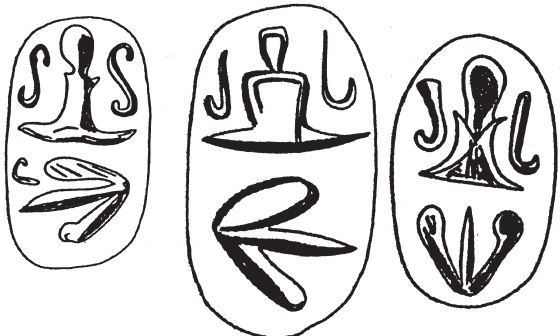


Fig. 11

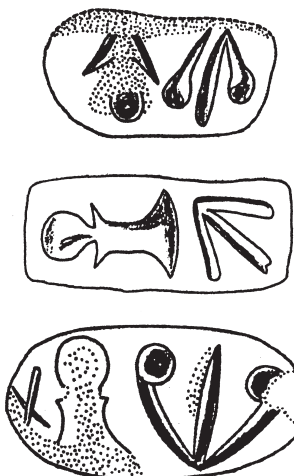


Fig. 10

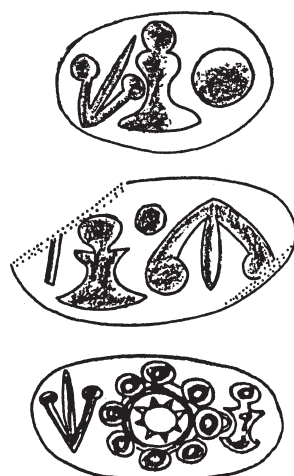


Fig. 12



a

b

c

Fig. 13