

THE ETYMOLOGY OF EBUR

Ernout-Meillet derive *ebur* from Egyptian *3bw*¹ (used for both „elephant” and „ivory”). A slightly different explanation, which would account for the *r*, has occurred to me.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that *3bw* itself is an African loanword. Suppose the Romans obtained their word from a Nubian rather than an Egyptian intermediary. A feature of Old Nubian is the suffix *l* (*il* after a consonant) which serves as a definite article — e. g. KOCMOC-, „the world”. But Zyhlarz (*Grundzüge der Nubisehen Grammatik im Christlichen Frühmittelalter*, Leipzig, 1928, p. 14) points out that this *l* occasionally appears as *r* — e. g. [αλ or [αρ, definite for [α „son”. Since loan-words are often taken over in the articular form—European borrowings from an Arabic are an obvious example — the Latin language could have acquired *ebur* ready — made from Nubian traders.

Our knowledge of Old Nubian comes, of course, from texts of much later date², but the Sudanese languages seem to exhibit a considerable stability³.

Bedford (England).

G. M. Lee.

J. W. Goethe:

ÜBER ALLEN GIPFELN. . .

Incubat monti requies, nec aurae
commovent ramos, tacet alitum vox
cuncta per dumeta; mane: Frueris
tu quoque somnis.

Bedford (England).

Latine vertit G. M. Lee.

¹ I adopt Sir Alan Gardiner's transliteration. I do not know whether *3bw* is related to *3by* „panther”. Erić Partridge (*A Charm of Words*, 1960, p. 58f.) shows that in several languages the name of „elephant” is given to other large animals.

² Edited by F. Llewellyn Griffith for the Berlin Academy in 1913. They are written in a modified form of the Coptic alphabet.

³ The general character of these languages is described in Meillet and Cohen, *Les Langues du Monde*, II, nous. éd. 1952, p. 237f. — I abstain for the moment from speculation about the origin of ἐλέφανς and its oriental equivalents.