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TWO GREEK WORDS OF A FOREIGN ORIGIN:
   I. ἐλέφας, II. φοίνιξ

I.

Greek ἐλέφας,-αντος means both "ivory" (Il. 5.583 etc.) and later also "elephant" (Hdt. 3.114, 4.191; cf. also ἐλέφαντος ὀδόντες in 3.97). The former meaning is evidently older, judging by the witness of Mycenaean texts where only "ivory" is attested: nom. sg. e-re-pa (KN Sd 4412a, Va 482), acc. sg. e-re-pa-τα (Kn Og 7504), gen. sg. e-re-pa-to (KN V 684.1, Ce 144.1; PY Sa 793), instr. sg. e-re-pa-τε (KN Ra 1028.A, Sd 4401.b, 4403.b, 4408.b, 4450.c; PY Ta 642.2, 708.1), adj. e-re-pa-τε-jo instr. pl. ntr.(KN Sd 4403.a), instr. pl. m. or ntr. (PY Ta 642.3, 707.1, 708.1, 710.1, 715.1, 721.1–5, 722.1), e-re-pa-τε-jo-pi instr. pl. m. (KN Se 891.A,B), e-re-pa-τε-ja nom. sg.f. (PY Ta 713.2, 715.2.2), e-re-pa-τε-ja-pi instr. pl. f. (Py Ta 707.2, 708.2, 722.3.3) etc. — see Aura Jorro 1985: 240–241.

During the last almost 4 centuries there were presented numerous, sometimes rather bizarre etymologies. The origin has been sought in both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages.

A. Indo-European origin:
   a) Saussure, MSLP 3 [1878]: 208 and Lewy 1895: 5 derive "ivory" from the meaning "white" attested in Greek ἄλφος "lepra" (Hesiod and others), ἄλφος·λευκός·&·ἄλφωσ·λευκός, ἄλφινα·ἡ·λεύκη (Hesych.). Lewy l.c. mentions the use of the ivory as a synonym of "whiteness", cf. λευκοτέρην δ' ἄρα μιν θήκε πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος (Od. 18.196).
   b) Osthoff 1901: 281 speculates about the root *el- "horn", seeking it also in ἄλφος "deer".
   c) Kretschmer (1951 & 1952) connects Greek "elephant" with Gothic ulbandus "camel" and reconstructs the heteroclitic paradigm *lébʒ/ *lbʒant-, finding a support for the r-form (*ἐλέφαρ) in the verb ἐλέφαρμοι "destroy" (about the Nemean lion — see Hesiod, Th. 330) and "cheat with empty hopes", used anagrammatically together with ἐλέφας (Il. 562–565).
d) Laroche 1965: 56f proposes a connection of Greek ἐλεφάς and Hittite or Luwian lahp- “ivory”. Following Guterbock & Hoffner (see CHD 12), Ivanov 1984: 68–69 adds Hittite laḥma- & laḥmant- known e.g. from the following context: periš uizzi [...] peran SĪR(coll.)-RU la-ḥ-ma-aš paizzi (KBo 17.43 iv 5–6). Ivanov interprets it as “elephant goes [...] before [him] they sing, laḥma-goes”, where laḥma- should represent a native synonym to peri-, probably a borrowing from Akkadian pēru, pīru, pīlu “elephant”, perhaps via Hurrian (cf. Hurrian šinnipera/ūḫḫu < Akkadian šinni pi(-i)-ri “ivory”, lit. “tooth of elephant” — see AHw 867).

B. Non-Indo-European origin:

e) A borrowing from Semitic *?alp- “ox” (already M. Martinius 1623, G.J. Vossius 1662, S. Bochart 1663 and still B. Hemmerdinger, Glotta 48 [1970]: 52 — see in details West 1993: 126). Pott, ZDMG 4 [1842]: 15 has modified this etymology starting from *aleph Hindi “tauris Indicus”, assuming a Phoenician transmission (this solution is discussed by Müller 1861).

f) Schrader & Nehring 1917–23: 242 separate ἐλα- (“Arabian-like article”) from the root -εφ- which they compare with Latin ebur “ivory”, Old Indic ībha- “elephant” and Hebrew (1 Kings 10.22 = 2 Chron. 9.21) šenhabbīm “δόντων ἐλεφαντίνων”, seeking an origin in Egyptian 3bw “elephant”, beginning from the Middle Kingdom also “ivory”.

g) Lokotsch 1927: 48 assumes for ἐλεφάς the same origin as for Arabic ʿfil “elephant”, Persian pīl id., deriving them from ‘Hamitic’, concretely Tuareg elu, plus prefixed Egyptian article p-!

h) Rössler 1942: 296 has mentioned a similarity of the Greek ἐλεφάς and Berber “elephant”, concretely Tuareg (of Taittoq) ēlū, pl. ēlwan, deriving the Greek word from an early Berber source of the type *eleb.

i) Analyzing (almost) all existing etymologies till 1977, Vallini 1979: 182, fn. 137 adds her own solution, namely Egyptian (Old Kingdom) zoonym ʿrb3, interpreted “rhinoceros” after its determinative (Wb. I: 115).

j) Blažek 1992: 144 proposes an origin of Greek ἐλεφάς and Hittite/Luwian lahp- “ivory” in Egyptian ʿbḥ “tooth, elephant tusk”, Demotic 3ḥḥ (Vycichl 1983: 154), if it is derived from *l-b-h). This idea was independently supported by Hodge (1992: 215).

2. Let us judge the presented etymological attempts.

Ad a) The white color of ivory is undoubtedly its characteristic feature, cf. Greek ἐλεφάντινα · λευκά (Hesych.), Sumerian logographic expression KA x UD [AM · SI] “ivory”, i.e. “mouth + white [elephant]” (Tischler 1990: 14–15) etc. But from the point of view of laws of Indo-European apophony the initial vowels ε- and α- are incompatible. The only solution would be an assumption of assimilation from *όλεφαντο (cf. ἄτερος vs. ἐτερος).

Ad b) The semantic motivation based on “horn” is also quite legitimate, cf. e.g. Sumerian AM · SI “elephant”, lit. “bull” + “horn”, Geez (Old Ethiopic) qarna nage “elephant tusk”, lit. “horn of elephant”, Hebrew qarnōt šēn id., lit. “horns of tooth”, i.e. “ivory” (Ez 27,15). But Osthoff’s separation of the root *el- “horn” is not generally accepted. The explanation of the rest of the word lacks.
Ad c) The reconstruction of the form *έλεφωρ is implied by existence e.g. of τέκμωρ derived from τεκμαίρομαι (Schwyzer 1939: 724). The root ἐλέφω has been compared with ὀλοφώτος “deceptive, tricky; destructive, deadly” (cf. ἔφηρα “cover” vs. ὑφεσσὸς “roof”) and further with Lithuanian vilbinti “to make a fool of”, although not without uncertainty (Beekes 1969: 41).

On the other hand, any connection (cognate or borrowing) of Gothic ulbandus, Old Icelandic ulfalde, Old English olfend “camel” with Greek ἐλέφωντες is improbable in the light of Hittite ḫuwałpant- “humpback, hunchback”, Luwian ḫu-wa-al-pa-na-ti-ar, how Puhvel (1991: 424–426 and 1993: 187–189) has recognized. Already Schrader & Nehring 1917–23: 553 speculated about an influence of languages of Asia Minor on Gothic spoken in the North Pontic area. Puhvel l.c. admits a common heritage of the Germanic and Anatolian words, but regarding the -nt-suffixation typical for Anatolian (‘animates’ or participles of denominative verbal derivatives) he prefers a cultural influence of the late Anatolian civilization. But Pijnenburg (1996: 479–480) has demonstrated that just the -nt-suffix forms some animal names in Germanic, cf. Old High German wisunt, wisant “aurochs”, Old English prowend “scorpion”, slincend “reptile”, Middle Low German ellen, Middle Dutch elent, elling “eagle” etc.

Ad d) The Anatolian words evidently cannot be a source of Greek ἐλέφωντες (and vice versa). Probably, both Anatolian and Greek “ivory” / “elephant” were borrowed independently from a common source.

Ad e) Semitic *ʔalp- continuing in Akkadian alpu “ox, cattle”, Phoenician ʔlp, Ugaritic ʔlp “ox”, Hebrew ʔélep, used in pl. tautum ʔálappid “oxen, bullocks, cows, cattle”, Empire Aramaic ʔlp? “ox”, Soqotri ʔalf “heifer” (Leslau 1938: 62; Cohen 1970: 21) designated “tamed animal”, cf. Arabic ʔalifa “grow tame”, Aramaic ʔallep “get used”, Hebrew ʔallapp “domestic” (Fronzaroli 1969: 28, # 6.41). Masson 1967: 82 mentions that none of the quoted words was used for “elephant” or even “ivory” (similarly already Th. Hyde in 1694!). Recently West (1993: 127–128) tries to rehabilitate this etymology assuming a starting point of the type *alap Hanê “ox of Ḥanû”, as Akkadian speakers from North Syria about 1800–1500 BC could designate the elephant living on the upper and middle Euphrates in the second millennium BC. The Egyptian pharaoh Tuthmos III hunted elephants in the land of Niy, probably east of Aleppo) and even still in the first millennium BC (the Assyrian king Tiglat-Pilesar I killed ten elephants in the land Harran). This region was inhabited in the first half of the second millennium BC by a semi-nomadic people of West Semitic origin called Ḥanû, in Hurrianized texts Ḥaniahē. This undoubtedly tempting solution does not overcome two problems: (i) in semantics — the primary meaning of the Greek and Anatolian words was apparently “ivory”; (ii) in vocalism — Hebrew ʔélep resembling most Greek ἐλέφω reflects the Masoretic vocalization developed in the second half of the first mill. AD; the situation of the second mill. BC is reflected besides Akkadian by Ugaritic ʔlp. Even the borrowing of the beginning of the first mill. BC, namely the name of the letter ʔlípha borrowed from Phoenician (cf. ḥípla ʔβοός κεφαλή ʔΦοινικες, Hesych.), preserves the vowel a- in the first syllable.
Ad f) The Old Indic, at least Vedic, *ibha-* means “Gesinde, Tross, Hauswesen, Hofstaat” (EWAI I: 194). Mayrhofer, KEWA III: 644 confirms that the meaning “elephant” appears only in the later language (Mānava-Dharmaśāstra) probably thanks to misinterpretation of an original Vedic text (cf. further Pali *ibha-*; Prakrit i(b)ha-; Sinhalese *iba* looks like a direct borrowing from Pali — see Turner 1966: 71, # 1587).

The Hebrew *šenhabbîm* is more probably corrupt for *šēn (w)hābnîm* “ivory and ebony” (West 1993: 128; the source of “ebony” was Egyptian *ḥbnj* “ebony(-tree)” (from the 5th dynasty) — see Spiegelberg 1907: 131 (Bancel 1990 tries to find a source of *ḥbnj* in the Niger-Congo languages, cf. Soninke *binne* “black”, proto-Bantu *pînd-* “be black” > Ibali *-peen-* id., i-*vindu* ebony, i.e. black wood); the other conjecture *šēnhalbîm* is discussed by Pictet 1855: 129). Latin *ebur* “ivory” reflects a late Egyptian pronunciation of Egyptian *ḥbw* “elephant” preserved in the name of the island Elephantine known in both Greek transcription Ἐλέφαντινον (the epochs of Ptolemaios VI and X) corresponding to Egyptian Ḥnumw Ṣ nb *ḥbw* “Hnum the great, lord of Elephantine”, and Coptic Sahidic (€)*HNB* “Elephantine” (Vycichl 1983: 61–62). The Egyptian *ḥbw* meant “elephant” beginning from the Old Kingdom, from the Middle Kingdom it was also used in the meaning “ivory”. The consonant 3 represents not only “aleph”, but it frequently serves as a substituent of *t* or *r*. There are remarkable examples demonstrating that the colloquial speech continuing in Coptic sometimes preserves these liquids even in the positions where the Egyptian language written in hieroglyphs used 3 (see also Satzinger 1994: 199):

(1) *ḥbḥ* “burn, be hot” (Coffin Texts) vs. Coptic Sahidic εΩΒΛΥ “be hot, glow” (Vycichl 1983: 95);
(2) *ḥ3b* “a catch (of fish or fowl)” (Pyramid Texts; later *ḥb*) vs. Coptic Sahidic 2ΛΛΒ “casting-net” (Vycichl 1983: 297; Hodge 1992: 209);
(3) *ḥ3b* (Middle Kingdom) “sickle” vs. Coptic Bohairic ΧΠΟΒΙ id. (Vycichl 1983: 246);
(4) *hp3.t* “navel” (Pyramid Texts) vs. Demotic *ḥlpη, Coptic Sahidic 2ΛΠΕ, Bohairic ḪΕΛΠΙ id.; cf. also Argobba *hulufo* “navel” (Vycichl 1958: 389 and 1983: 298);

In other cases only external comparisons allow to determine an original character of 3 (for simplicity the examples are limited to Egypto-Semitic parallels):

(5) *ḥ.t* (Old Kingdom) > Demotic *ḥd* & *ḥ.t* (Middle Kingdom) “field” > Coptic Sahidic εΩΕΣ, Bohairic ιΟΣ id. vs. Arabic *lawḥ* “flower-bed”, Hebrew *luḥ* (Vycichl 1983: 69);
(6) *d3b* “fig” (Pyramid Texts), in Papyrus Ebers “a cake made out of figs”, vs. Hebrew *debēlā* “cake of pressed figs”, Ugaritic *dblt* “fig cakes” etc. (Ember 1930: 17–18);
(7) *ḥ3f* “leave, forsake, pull, let” (Pyramid Texts), Coptic Bohairic ΧΩ, Sahidic ΚΩ id. vs. Arabic *ḥalaتعاون “remove, pull off, depose, dismiss, divorce (wife)”, *ḥalufa* “cast off” (Ember 1930: 20);
(8) *3ls* “brain” (Med.) vs. Arabic raʔṣ, Hebrew rōš, Akkadian rēšu “head” (Rössler 1966: 227);
(9) k3p “cover, hide” (19th Dyn.), Coptic ΚΩΠΠ “hide, be hidden” vs. Arabic kafara “cover”; Hebrew kapar “atone for, make atonement” meant orig. “cover” (Ember 1930: 16);

(10) q3b “entrails, midst” (Med.) vs. Hebrew qereb “midst, interior”, Uguritic qrb id., Akkadian qirbu “inward part, interior” etc. (Ember 1930: 9).

The following step should decide between *l and *r. Without safe Coptic data only the external parallels can answer this question. There are several elephant names in various Afroasiatic branches compatible with 3bw, but they are mutually incompatible (cf. Blážek 1994: 197–198):

(11) East Cushitic *qarb- “elephant”: Somali arba, Rendille arab, Arbob arab, Dasenech ’arab, Elmolo árap, Oromo arba, Konso arpa, D’irayta arp, Burji árba, Dullay arap-ka id., Yaaku arape “large felino” or “carnivorous animal” and South Cushitic: Maa áro “large herbivore elephant”;

(12) Common Berber *Hilīw, pl. *Hilīwan “elephant” (Prasse 1974: 124–125): South = Tuareg: Ahaggar ēlw, pl. ēlwān (Foucauld), Ayr ilw, pl. ilwan, Iullemmiden elw, pl. elwan (Alojaly), Taitoq elw, pl. elwan (Masqueray), Ghat alu (R. Basset); West = Zenaga idjit, pl. adjadan (R. Basset), ėjih, ṭih (Nicolas), īyi* (Taine-Cheikh);

(13) West Chadic: Tangale labata; East Chadic: Mokilko ðelbî “elephant” (Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow 1994: 124–125). The Central Chadic elephant names sometimes connected with the preceding ones (Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow l.c.) are probably of a different origin. Sukur riveri resembles suggestively names of “lion” in other Central Chadic languages: Hwona lifar, Kilba levārî, Higi Dakwa līveri, Hildi lūvari, Higi Futu luvārî, Dghwede rvirē, Laamang ãrvārē etc. In respect to the regular change *-n- > -r- characteristic for most of Central Chadic this zoonym is compatible with West Chadic “leopard”: Kulere ūwān, Daffo rāfān, Hausa râbū, all from *lub-an- (cf. Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow 1994: 222, 226–227; otherwise Stolbova 1996: 89 who reconstructs Proto-Chadic *ʔa-luba-ri). The Kotoko forms as Logone (Bouny) ðarfā, Makeri ārfu, Gulfei ārfu(r), Shoe arfu, Kuseri ārwi “elephant” seem to be similar too. More probably they are related to Ngala ānwe, Yedina ambu, Logone (Lukas) nevi id. The development in Kotoko could look as follows: *nɔwi (cf. Logone after Lukas) > *nɔnwa (cf. Yedina, Ngala) > *ɔrɔwa (cf. Kuseri, Logone by Bouny, Shoe etc.). There are also important parallels outside Kotoko supporting our reconstruction: Nzangi (Mouchet) ńiwa and Sura nîi, Ankwe niye etc. (Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow 1994: 124–125).

The external parallels within Afroasiatic do not solve our question: the Cushitic and Berber data imply *r and *l respectively; our knowledge of Chadic historical phonology allow to confirm the originality of *l only in Mokilko and perhaps in Tangale too:

(14) Mokilko ðilzé “tongue”, Mubi lîsi; Bole lisim (the same group as Tangale, where it was replaced by another word dago ) etc. (Jungraithmayr & Ibriszimow 1994: 328–329) vs. Semitic *lîšān // Egyptian ns, Coptic ΛΣΣ // Berber *Hilis, pl. -*awan (Prasse 1974: 111, 125) > Siwa ilês, Tuareg Ahaggar ỉlɔs etc. (Vycichl 1983: 99);
(15) Mokilko (East Chadic) *ulu * “heart”, Chip (West Chadic) *geb “lungs”, Daba (Central Chadic) *li “belly” (Kraft) vs. Semitic *libb- / *lubb- “heart” // Berber *wil * “heart” / *Hulu “heart” (Prasse 1974: 72) > Taneslemt *ul, pl. ulhaw, Zenaga adj, pl. allun // Cushitic: Beja lew “pylorus” (Roper); Agaw *lob-ak- “heart, soul”; East Cushitic *lubb- “heart, soul” > Afar lubb-i, Konso lupp-oota (Sasse 1982: 136); South Cushitic: Asa *laba “chest” // Egyptian *lubb > *ib, Coptic *yB “heart” (Vycichl 1983: 243). Hodge 1976: 20 and 1992: 211-212 offers another reading. He mentions the word “ax”, in the traditional transcription mlbt & mlnb (Wb. II: 42, 44), which is based on the Middle Egyptian reading ml of the signs MILK-JUG IN NET [W19] and CHANNEL [N36] respectively (the references to signs follow Gardiner 1988). Using the older reading mr instead ml, both the forms become easy compatible: mrbb & mrnb unambiguously indicate *ml-b(-t). The alternative spellings (using r instead i) mr-HEART- AX (coffin of Min-khaf, 4th Dyn.), mn-HEART-t AX BLADE (3rd-4th Dyn.), mr-HEART-b INGOT [N34] (Sarc.) imply the primary transcription of the HEART-sign *nb ~ *rb besides later *j3b > *ib, i.e. *julb ~ *julb > *julb with the prothetic alif (it was already Edel 1964: LVII offering the reading jnb for the HEART-sign).

(16) G. Takács drew my attention to the following possibility to determine the liquid substituted by 3 in Egyptian 3bw “elephant”. The words ‘elephant’, ‘elephant tusk’ and ‘ivory’ were usually spelled 3b-(b)-w ELEPHANT, 3b-b-(w) TUSK and 3b-b-(w) HARPOON POINT (Wb. I: 7; Faulkner 1981: 2). In most cases the sign 3b depicting “chisel” was used (Gardiner 1988: 518, U 23; Faulkner l.c. also mentions the spelling with the sign SPEAR DECKED OUT AS STANDARD [R 15] read as 3b from Dyn. XVIII, but with original value *l3b — see Gardiner 1988: 502). The ‘chisel’ was the main instrument for writing in stone and hence it could serve as a symbol of writing for neighbors of Egyptians. There is at least an undirect support of this idea in the the word 3b.t “brand” (Pyramid Texts) spelled 3b(=‘CHISEL”) -b-w with ideograms SCRIBE’S OUTFIT (determining the words as zš “write”, zšw “writings”, lms “red” etc.) and ‘GLEAN’ (Faulkner 1981: 2; Gardiner 1988: 534, Y 3 & 505, S 15 respectively). Accepting this identification, there are suggestive parallels in Berber beginning from the oldest sources. So in the Numidian inscription from Thugga we read t.rb t-rlb t-n, lit. “sie (-t-) wurde (-n-) geschrieben (vrbb), die Schrift (t-rlb) diese (-n)” (Rössler 1942: 290-92; Woelfel 1955: 117; cf. Augila teturef “it is written” f. after Beguinot — see Wölfel 1965: 462). The root vrbb continues in the living Berber languages too: Ghadames yurab “write”, verbal noun atirab (Lanfray) = aref “write” vs. tiraf “script” (C. Motylinski), Augila arev & ūrev “write”, nom. act. arrav (Paradisi); Zenaga arha “write”, tirekt “script” (R. Basset): Shilha ara “write”, arra & tirra “script” (Wölfel), Nefusi āri “write” (Beguinot), Zayan ali “write”, nom. act. tirra (Loubignac), Senhaja ari “write”, tirra “script” (Renisio), Snus āriy “write”, tira “script” (Destaing), Kabyle aru “write”, tira “script, inscriptions” (Boulifa); Tairoq tirawt, pl. tira “écrit, amulette” (Masqueray), Ayr tirawt, pl. tira “lettre (missive), amulette écrite” (Alojaly), Ahaggar tērawt, pl. tēra (Prasse 1974: 184
reconstructs *t-Hirāw-t, pl. *t-Hirāw, nom. act. of the verb ḫrH “write”; cf. also Prasse 1969: 19, 28 postulating roots ḫtrH₂, ḫhrw, ḫHry). Guanche (Gran Canaria) tarha “marque pour les souvenirs” = tar(j)a “señal para recuerdos” (Wölffel 1965: 461) belongs here too. The old -b- is also preserved in Hausa rubu-tu “write” borrowed (via Kanuri: -tu is the infinitive ending in Kanuri) from some Berber-Libyan source (Vycichl 1934: 40).

The hypothetical connection of the Egyptian sign 3w ‘CHISEL’ and the common Berber-Libyan root ḫ(?)rb “write” implies these probable conclusions: (i) The Berber-Libyan “write” is borrowed from an Egyptian source for its more primitive meaning. (ii) The Egyptian 3 substitutes *r here. Hence, the original reading of the Egyptian word “elephant” should be *r[a]baw or *r[a]rbaw (regarding the spelling ì3b-b-w — see above). (iii) The proposed reading is fully compatible with East Cushitic *?arb- (see # 11). On the other hand, any connection with Greek ἔλεφος is imaginable only via mediation of some stratal language of the Eastern Mediterranean. Let us mention that judging by the Linear B script, the language of the linear A script did not differentiate ṛ and l.

Accepting this tempting idea of Takács, we must conclude: the Egyptian 3b probably is not a direct source of Greek ἔλεφος.

Ad g) The idea of the prefixed (late) Egyptian article p- was first formulated by Hommel (1879: 381) who derived Geez (= Old Ethiopic) bhaṣa, bhaṣa, biḥ/h “hippo” from Coptic εἰςε “cattle; cow” (< Egyptian īb) with the definite article Π-. But the Geez “hippo” is apparently of a substratal, namely Cushitic, origin, cf. (Central) Khamir biwa; (East) Rendille ibeḥ, Arbore yieḥ etc. id. (see Blažek 1994: 202). Arabic ēl “elephant” is related to its counterparts in other Semitic languages: Syrian piḷā, Postbiblical Hebrew piḷ, Akkadian (Old Babylonian, Middle Assyrian) pīru(m), piḷu id. The vacillation ṛ ~ l in Akkadian is perhaps explainable from the protoform *piɾ-l- with following assimilation *piḷ- & *piɾr- and further *piḷ- & *piɾ-. There is a hopeful etymology based on the primary meaning “horn” in other Afroasiatic branches: West Chadic: Kofyar feer; Miya ʔaɾr, Kariya sâr, Pa’a pur-kiti // North Omotic: Shakko fâra id. // ? East Cushitic: Yaaku puria’, pl. puriajn “rhinoceros” (in details — see Blažek 1994: 196). The Akkadian piḷu was borrowed in Old Persian pīruš “ivory” (and New Elamite pi-ri-um-na “from ivory” — see Hinz & Koch 1987: 210) while Middle & Modern Persian piḷ “elephant” probably represent an Aramaic borrowing. The late Old Indic piḷu- “elephant” is borrowed from some Iranian source. Any connection to Greek ἔλεφος is improbable.

Ad h) Prasse’s reconstruction *Hiliw, pl. *Hiliwan “elephant” is based only on Tuareg data (see # 12). In Ghadames, Augila or in Old Libyan, i.e. languages preserving the ‘weak’ *b (Rössler and Militarev use the symbols *b and *b respectively), this word is not known. But the vacillation w ~ h of the final radical in Tuareg vs. Zenaga respectively represents the same correspondence as continuants of Berber-Libyan ḫ(?)rb studied in # 16. This conclusion allows to expect a Berber-Libyan starting-point **piḷib, pl. **piḷiban. Just this reconstruction is in a good agreement with external cognates, especially Mokilko (East Chadic) pesib “elephant” (see # 13) and probably also Semitic *pi bil-
“camel” > Akkadian ibilu “camel”, Syrian hebaltā “herd of camels”, Arabic ḫlib(i)l, Thamudic, Safaitic, Sabaic ḫbl, Šheri iyēl “camel” (Cohen 1970: 3; the sequence of radicals fully corresponding to the skeleton ḫ-l-b attested in the Berber & Mokilko “elephant” could be still preserved in Arabic ḫalaba “rassembler les chameaux”).

A hypothetical source of the Greek ᾶλέφαντες should be sought either in the plural ḫiliban or in the determined form ḫilib-Vn, where ḫ-Vn represents a post-positive demonstrative, cf. Numidian ṭrb-t-n “this inscription”.

In respect to other Greek words which can be of a Berber-Libyan origin, e.g. πίθηκος (from Archil.), Doric -ᾱκος (Ar. Ach.), perhaps also the Mycenaean man’s name Pi-τα-κε-υ (PY Jn 389) = *Pithākeus (Ventris & Chadwick 1973: 572), besides the dim. πίθων (Pi.), vs. Tuareg of Ahaggar ḡibdaw, pl. ḡibdawān, Ghadames biddu “monkey” (cf. Blazek 1984: 443–447; let us mention that ‘monkey’ was known already for the Minoan civilization, judging by the fresco with two grey macacs depicted on the wall of the room 6 of Complex B found on Thera), the Berber-Libyan origin of the Greek ᾶλέφαντες is quite possible.

Ad i) The spelling ḫrb3 can perhaps reflect the skeleton ḫ-l-b or ḫ-b-l (cf. *p-l-g > png3, Coptic ΠΩΛΟ “separate” vs. Arabic ḡalaga “separate in two”, Hebrew pālāg “divide” or *z-b-l > NB3 “fall”, Coptic CBΑ-ΤΕ — see Vycichl 1958: 374 and 1983: 159, 184). In spite of the semantic difference it is tempting to compare it with the isogloss ḫilib - ḫibil- attested in Berber and Chadic in the meaning “elephant” and in Semitic as “camel” (see above ad h). The variant ḫ-l-b in Egyptian looks formally compatible with Greek ᾶλέφαντες, but the semantic difference needs to explain.

Ad j) Besides ‘standard’ spellings l-b-h with various ideograms (TUSK[F18].STROKE[Z2], TUSKS), l-b-w TUSK. PELLETS[N33]and l-b-h-t TUSK.FLESH[F51] Hodge 1992: 203 quotes e.g. HEART[F34]-h TUSK and l-b-KID[E8]-h-w. Just the last two spellings open new readings. Hodge has demonstrated (see # 15) that the HEART-sign [F34] traditionally read ḫb is to be read *nb ~ *rb ~ *i3b. Also for the KID-sign, traditionally read ib [E8] as well, there are alternative variants 3b and ḫb (Hodge 1992: 204 after Edel 1955: 59) indicating the ‘maximum’ reading *i3bh “kid”. The presence of 3 in the word “tooth, tusk” is supported by Demotic 3b & 3bh. Finally, the Coptic continuants agree too (after Hodge 1992: 203–204 with Satzinger’s corrections):

Sahidic ΟΒΣΕ, abzε, ΦΦΙΕ, Ahiminic abzε, Bohairic Οβι < *CVCC-Vt = *3ahhat (after Satzinger this feminine looks as a participle of the type “die Beissende”);

Sahidic ΟΒΣ, Fayumic abz < *CVCC-Vw = *3abhVw (originally perhaps plural);

Fayumic abz, abς < ?V-CCVC = *ʔ3báh (Hodge). Satzinger admits only the accented ḫ in the first syllable, while the vowel of the second syllable should be a ‘Sprossvokal’. The creation of the prothetic syllable ḫ- is natural when the vowel between C, and C, was lost.

The use of the HEART-sign allows to identify 3 = *l (see # 15). Besides this argument of Hodge, there is still an undirect witness: Semitic *l & *r were
regularly substituted by 3 in so called ‘Proscription Texts’ from the Middle Kingdom, cf. the borrowed proper names ḫk3m = ḫagirum, attested in Mari Ḥagī-ruṃ, related to Arabic ḥagīr “be thick”, ’Iw3t = Ullaza, Ṭb3nw = Zabulon, Ḥ3wb3h = Ḥālu-baṛīḥ, M3k3m = Malkī-ilum etc. (Rössler 1966: 223; Vycichl 1990: 209). There are particular cases of the same way of transcription which are older: 3plm = Ra-pī-ū-um (Mari Ra-pī-ū-um, Ugarit Rpū; the place name Nālī3 attested in the tomb of Inti (6th Dyn.) would correspond to Hebrew *nāṭūḏel, parallel to the really attested place name Pānūḏel (the verbs nāṭū and pānū are synonymous — they mean “sich zuwenden” — see Rössler 1966: 225). Another support could be found in Arabic labāha “sensescere” compared with ḫb by Ember 1930: 30–31. In spite of Calice’s scepticism (1936: 116) the meanings “tooth, tusk” and “grow old” are compatible, starting from the primary semantics “white” — cf. Ugaritic ẖbn, Hebrew lāḇān “white” with other third radical. This idea implies the etymology “tusk” = “white”. Starting from the biradical root *l-b, it is possible to imagine its extension by the suffix *-ḥ, serving as a body part marker (cf. Takács 1997: 241–273). The alternative possibility consists in the sign TUSK OF ELEPHANT [F18] appearing as a phonetic determinative hw (Gardiner 1988: 463; Ember 1930: 17 derives hw from *ḥwr and compares it with Semitic *ḥ- w-r “be white” > Arabic ḥawīr, Hebrew, Aramaic ḥawar; cf. also East Cushitic *ḥīr- “tusk of elephant” > Rendille ḥīr, Harso ḥirce — see Sasse 1982: 98). On the other hand, Hodge 1992: 203–206 derives *ḥ3bh from the homonymous biradical base *l-b with a hypothetical meaning “pierce”, including here also 3bw “elephant” and 3b, older ẖ3b (written with the sign R15 — see above #16) “fingernail, claw”, Demotic ḳb, Coptic Ahminic ḳεκε, Sahidic ḳεκ.

Accepting the presented arguments and regardless on the concrete etymology, Egyptian ḫbḥt (attested only in the late language, but certainly older) can reflect *ḏ3ḥat = *ḏalḥat. This form, borrowed in the East Mediterranean substratal language knowing only open syllables (judging by the Linear B script), should be remodelled in *ḏalḥat vel sim. And just this hypothetical reconstruction is well compatible with Greek ḵλέφος < ḵλέφοτ(-ς). Hittite/Luwian laḥpa- could be borrowed from a source of the type *labḥaw or *labḥat.

**Conclusion**

Among the analyzed etymologies just the last solution, i.e. the Egyptian origin of both Greek and Anatolian denotations of “ivory” looks as the most hopeful.

**Appendix:** An overview of the most important mistakes accompanying the etymologies of the zoonym “elephant” in Indo-European languages.

— ‘Coptic ებოქ “elephant”’ does not exist. This ghost-form has an origin in the ‘training’ transcription of J.-F. Champollion of Egyptian 3bw which continues only in the Coptic name of the island Elephantine (see above ad f; already
in 1834 I. Rosselini speculated about the correspondence of the Coptic and Greek names of this island — see Vallini 1979: 158–165). This error is copied from dictionary to dictionary (e.g. Boisacq, Ernout & Meillet, Walde & Hofmann, Chantraine, Mayrhofer in KEWA I, etc.) and even it continues in the recent publications, e.g. Ivanov 1984: 71, Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1984: 524.

— Arabic Ⱆ “elephant” is not borrowed from Modern Persian Ⱆ id. which cannot be analyzed in the Egyptian article ʼ p- plus Tuareg (or even “Hamitic”! — so Walde & Hofmann 1938: 389) ʿlu “elephant” (see above ad g).

— Colloquial Arabic ʿil “camel” cannot be compared with Arabic Ⱆ “elephant”, as Puhvel does (1993: 187). The form ʿil is simply shortened from Ⰼ (see above ad h).

— Ivanov 1977: 161 and Gamkrelidze & Ivanov 1984: 525 have created another ghost-word in ‘Tocharian *alpi “camel”’, a presumable cognate of Greek ἑλεφωνος, referring to Clauson 1973: 40. But Clauson says exactly: “For example, applying the normal rules of Tokharian phonetics to the Indo-European words for “barley”, the Tokharian word should have been something like alpi which is very like Turkish arpa. Again the Chinese word for ‘camel’, which is disyllabic and so a loan-word, might well be Tokharian”. The unattested Tokharian *alpi is postulated on the basis of Greek ἀλπι and Albanian elp, elbi “barley” (Pokorny 1959: 29). Common Turkic arpa represents more probably an Iranian borrowing (the change ʼ > r is regular in Iranian languages, but not in Tocharian or Turkic), cf. Pashto orbašē (pl.), Ishkashim urwus, Sangliči vərwəs, Yidgha yaršī “barley” < Iranian *arbasyā; with other extension Yazgulami xarban “millet” (Steblin-Kamenskij 1982: 23; otherwise Morgenstierne 1927: 11). Today we know the Tocharian word for camel too, cf. B partaktanne pitkesa “Kamelspeichel”. L. Isebaert assumes a Middle Iranian source of the type *partaxt < *par-taxta- “faisant le tour de, circulant, se promenant”. A.J. Van Windekens reconstructs *par(t)- + *āk(to)- < *b’r- + *a-g-to- “load” + “carried” (IF 93[1988]: 99–100). Regardless of the decision which of these etymologies is correct, there is no connection between the Tocharian “camel” and the Greek “elephant”.

— Gothic ulbandus “camel” with its counterparts in other Germanic languages is not borrowed from Greek ἑλέφωνος, but it is connected with Hittite ḫuwalpant- “hunchback, humpback” (Puhvel 1991: 424–426 and 1993: 187–189; see above ad c). The regular Germanic continuants of the Greek “elephant” are e.g. Old English elpend, ylpend, Old High German elpfant, elafant “elephant”, borrowed via Latin.
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TWO GREEK WORDS OF FOREIGN ORIGIN: I. ἐλέφας, II. φοῖνιξ


II.

§1. Greek ἕοινξ “palm”, esp. “date palm-tree” (Od. 163), also “date”, has been connected with the ethnonym Φοίνιξ “Phoenician” (cf. Frisk 1032; Chantraine 1218–19). But in the Greek lexicon there are more homonyms which mean “string instrument, lyre”; “mythical bird, phoenix”; “purple”. Although Mycenaean offers more words which can be connected with φοίνιξ in any meaning, their semantic determination is not definitive (Aura Jorro 1993: 138–41 with literature): po-ni-ke-ja f., dat., ‘women’s name’ [KN Ln 1568] = *Φοίνικεια, perhaps “woman working with purple”; po-ni-ke- + -qe m., instr. sg. [PY Ta 722.1] = *φοίνικει and po-ni-ki-pi instr. pl. [PY Ta 714.2] = *φοίνιγη-(with) date palm-tree(s) or “(with) phoenix”; po-ni-ki-ja f., nom. sg. [KN Sd 4402.b; 4404; 4405.5; 4408.b; 4409.b; 4413.b; Se 882; 965.B; Sf 4428.b, etc.] & po-ni-ke-a f., nom. sg. [KN Se 880.2] = φοίνικος & φοίνικεος, f. -ια, -ηα and po-ni-κι[-jo f., nom. du., probably “purple, carmine”; po-ni-ki-jo n., nom. sg. [KN Bg 834; 992; 1020; 1021; 1040.b; 5584; 8438; 9297.b; 9298; KN Ga 417.a; 423.A; 420.A; 423.A; 424.a; 425.A; 426.A; 427.1; 1335.b; 7425.1; 7429.1; X 9735.b] = *φοίνικιον “nomen herbae”, lit. “[herba] Phoenicea”?

§2. For the Greek ethnonym Φοίνιξ there is not known any source in Semitic onomastics. Sometimes it has been derived from the homonym φοίνιξ “purple” which is derivable from φοίνος “red”, with explanation that the Phoenicians were known as producers and exporters of purple (cf. Chantraine 1219). But it cannot represent an exhaustive etymology for the homonym meaning “date palm-tree” etc. The most natural approach etymologizing such the dendronym is to seek an origin in the languages spoken in the area where the date palm-trees were familiar, i.e. in the North Africa or the Near East. In Aegean region the date-palm was also known but probably imported (Schrader & Nehring 1917–23: 184). It is almost generally accepted that Greek δάκτυλος “date” is of Semitic origin, cf. Mishna Hebrew déqel “date palm-tree”, in Biblical Hebrew attested only in the place name Diqla (Gen. x, 27; 1Chron. i, 22), Aramaic dql, Syrian deqlā, Mandaic diqlā (with a doublet in z-) id., Arabic daqal “dates of low quality” (Lewy 1895: 20; Cohen 1970f: 303; contra: Muss-Arnolt 1892: 107–08). The first attestation by Aristotle (Meteor. I, 4, 9; II, 9, 4) would indicate a relatively late borrowing. But on the basis of evidence of the syllabic scripts of the Aegean region there is a tempting possibility to shift the knowledge of this term to the 2nd mill. BC. In the Linear script B the sign #01 l-“da” corresponds to Cypriote -l or l- “ta” and further to the Linear A sign l- or l’ (see Godart 1979: 39). Unfortunately the signs are too stylized to recognize their primary model. Recently Best & Woudhuizen (1989: 105–06) have identified this sign with a more realistic sign from the inscribed altar-stone from Mallia, depicting probably a palm branch. Accepting this identification, the sign “da” was formed via acrophonic principle on the basis of Semitic *daqal-“palm-tree”.
In the Semitic languages there is no convenient source for Greek φοινιξ “date-palm”. But there are suggestive ‘candidates’ in both the Egyptian (cf. Fournet 1989: 74, fn. 67) and Berber languages:

§3. Egyptian (Old Kingdom) bny “date”, (Pyramid Texts) bny.t “date palm-tree” (cf. Vycichl 1990: 217, referring to Schenkel), with archaizing but not archaic spelling (Middle Kingdom; beginning of the 12th dyn.) bnr “date”, Demotic bn & bn.t “date” & “date palm-tree” respectively, Coptic Sahidic BNN, Bohairic BEH m. “date”, f. “date palm-tree” (for the feminine form Vycichl 1983: 29 proposes the vocalisation *binya.t; the corresponding masculine, although without direct reflexes in Coptic, is reconstructible as *binyu or *binyaw).

The Egyptian origin can be supported by other cases of cultural borrowings from Egyptian into Greek. It is interesting that other two homonyms also represent the Egyptian loans:

§3.1 φοινιξ “phoenix” (Hesiod, Fr. 171,4; Hdt. 2,73) < Egyptian (Middle Kingdom: Book of Dead) bnw, also bnw “phoenix” (Wb. I: 458), cf. Sethe 1908: 84–85; Fournet 1989: 74.

§3.2 φοινιξ “a kind of a lyre” (Hdt. 4,192) < Egyptian (Old Kingdom) byn.t & bn.t “harp” (Wb. I: 457; cf. Fournet 1989: 74), Coptic Sahidic BOIN “harp” (Vycichl 1983: 26 proposes a vocalization *bayna.t).

These apparent borrowings confirm a regular character of the substitutions (i) b > φ and (ii) *-ay- (> Coptic -oi-) > -or-. In the case of φοινιξ “date-palm” the change (i) has operated too but there are no traces of the diphthong in Egyptian. Its creation is probably a result of an inner Greek development, approximately *binyV > *b9niV > *<poivV.

§4. Berber *(w)a-bayn-aw m. / *(t)a-bayn-ay f. (with prefixed articles) > Ghardames abina, pl. bínawen “date”, tabínawt, pl. tbinawin “(date) palm-tree” (Lanfry 1973: 14, 17), Siwa tyni “date” (Laoust 1931: 222); Proto-Tuareg *(t)-Haynay, pl. *(t)-Haynīwîn > Taneslemt tehâyne, Ahaggar téine, pl. teiniwîn “date” (Prasse 1974: 338), Ayr täyne, Awlemidden tine, pl. tinawen id. (Alojaly 1980: 137); Shilha of Sus wainiw / tainiwt m./f. “palm-tree” (Beguinot 1924: 197), Shilha of Ashtuken wainiw “pollen ou fleur du dattier-mâle” (Laoust 1920: 476, 512), Shilha of Tazerwalt tiini “dates”, singulative tiinit, vs. têniwt, pl. téniwîn “palm-tree” (Stumme 1899: 233–34), Tamazight teîini “date” (Cid Kaoui 1907: 68); Zenaga teîini “date” (Basset 1909: 100).

§4.1. A borrowing of the Berber(-Libyan) protoform *bayn- into Greek φοινιξ can also be supported by other Greek words of Berber(-Libyan) origin, e.g. Greek πιθήκος, Doric οικός “monkey”, maybe the Mycenaean man’s name Pi-ta-ke-u [PY Jn 389.5] if reflects *Πιθόκες (Ventris & Chadwick 1973: 572; Aura Jorro 1993: 129); with other suffixal extension πιθόν · πιθηκός (Hesych.), vs. Proto-Berber *(w)ja-bidd-aw “monkey” > Ghardames biddy (Lanfry 1973: 4); Kabyle iddew, pl. iddawen (Dallet 1982: 161), Zuawa iddu, pl. -en (Basset, Journal Asiatique ser. VIII, T. I[1883]: 341); Tuareg of Kel Wi biddu (Basset l.c.), Taitoq abiddô, pl. ibiddwen (Masqueray 1893: 315), Awlemidden pl.

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ibiddauen (Barth 1858: 686), Ahaggar abiiddaw, pl. ibiddawän (Prasse 1974: 326 reconstructs Proto-Tuareg *a-biddaw, pl. *t-biddawän). The substitution of Proto-Berber(-Libyan) *bidd- by Greek πιθό implies intermediates *b'ιθό- > *πιθό-, in agreement with Grassmann's law. If this etymology is correct, it can serve for determination of chronology of this law. Let us mention the depiction of grey monkeys (Cercopithecus) on a fresco from the Room 6 of Complex B discovered on Thera. Together with depictions of papyrus-like plants and antelopes, rhytons from ostrich-egg shells, it represents a witness of early contacts between Minoan civilization and Northern Africa (Doumas 1994: 43, 48, 49, 56).

§5. Recently Danka & Witczak (1998: 139–144) have proposed a tempting etymology deriving both Greek φοίνικς "date palm-tree" and Hittite paini- "tamarisk" (plus Old Icelandic beinn "Baumart") from the same Indo-European stem *bʰoini-. But Hittite GIS pain(n)i-, GIS paeni- "tamarisk" has been interpreted as a Hurrian borrowing, ultimately of Akkadian origin (Laroche 1976–77: 193). Danka & Witczak (1998: 142) express doubts about Akkadian bīnu(m) "tamarisk" (AHw 127) as a primary source of Hurrian paini "tamarisk" (Laroche, l.c.) > Hittite GIS pain(n)i-, GIS paeni-, alternatively written GIS SINIG, i.e. "(tree) tamarisk" (CHD 55–56). Their objection is undoubtedly rightful. In Akkadian the monophthongization attested in *baynu(m) > bīnu(m) is older than the first written records, hence also older than the first historical contacts between Akkadians and Hurrians. But Danka & Witczak are mistaken assuming an isolated position of the Akkadian word within Semitic and consequently a Hittite origin of both the Hurrian and Akkadian dendronyms. Cohen (1970f: 62) found cognates in Aramaic (Yudeo-Palestinian & Syrian) bīnā id. (although probably borrowed from Akkadian, cf. Zimmern 1915: 53) and Arabic bān "arbre qui donne la noix muscade; saule d'Egypte" (*bayan-). But the most probable source of the Hurrian and consequently Hittite denotations of tamarisk was discovered only in seventies, namely in Eblaic *baynu(m) "tamarisk", attested as i-zu ba-ne(-um) / ba-nu = l̄idu baynim / baynu(m) glossed GIS SINIG, i.e. "the tree tamarisk" (Krebernik 1983: 15; Fronzaroli 1984: 131, 138). The spelling a = lāy is regular, cf. ba-du-um = lābytum “house” (Fronzaroli 1984: 137). Let us add that the Eblaic language was spoken (and written) at the city of Ebla in Syria in the second half of the 3rd mill. BC, i.e. in the same area where Hurrians are attested in the 2nd mill. BC.

§6. Conclusion
The analyzed lexical material allows to reconstruct the following scenario:

(1) Proto-Berber *bayn- "date (palm-tree)", Proto-Egyptian *biny- "date (palm-tree)" and Proto-Semitic *bay[a]n- "tamarisk" probably represent a common Afroasiatic heritage.

(2) One of continuants of the Semitic dendronym, Eblaic *baynu(m) "tamarisk", was borrowed into Hurrian paini id. (probably in the end of the 3rd mill. BC) which itself became a source of Old Hittite painni-, paeni- id. (in the first half of the 2nd mill. BC).

(3) The Egyptian or Berber(-Libyan) denotations of the date palm-tree repre-
sent the most promising source of Greek φοινικὲς “date (palm-tree)”. Accepting
the Mycenaean evidence, the borrowing can be dated before the 13th cent. BC.

(4) There are more words, frequently cultural or zoological terms, for which a
North African (i.e. Egyptian or Berber-Libyan) origin can be proposed. Besides
“lyre”, “phoenix”, “monkey” analyzed above (§§ 3.1., 3.2., 4.1.), e.g. ἐλέφαντο
“elephant” studied above.

(5) Another term for the date palm-tree penetrated into Greek and maybe also
into pre-Greek language(s) of the eastern Mediterranean from the Semitic lan-
guages of the Syro-Palestinian region. One of the apophonic variant, viz.
*daqal-, could become the model for the sign “da” in all linear syllabic scripts
of the 2nd mill. BC continuing in “ta” of the Cypriote script of the 1st mill. BC.

(6) The new term for the date-palm (φοινικὲς) of the North African origin
could be used to name the country characterized by cultivation of the date palm-
tree and by export of its products, viz. Phoenicia.

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