

TOWARDS THE AFRICAN ETYMOLOGY OF GREEK ἔβενος*

by

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*Dedicated to my dear Mother's¹
Mediterranean ebony-black hair*

ABSTRACT: This paper seeks the ultimate origin of our European term for ebony. The line of a number of borrowed forms has long been well known down to Egyptian, but all the problems surrounding the source of this term itself have so far not been subject to a careful investigation. First, we try to locate the Coptic reflex of Eg. hbnj in order to verify its supposed vocalisation. Secondly, all the diverse approaches to resolving its puzzling origin are critically evaluated. Thirdly, we present abundant linguistic evidence for an entirely new derivation from the ancestral Common Afro-Asiatic root stock itself with unavoidable implications on the mid-Holocene past of this oldest neolithic macrofamily.

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¹ Boós Erzsébet *ἔβενοτρίχη, a lady of a strange southerly beauty, the only link in my family to Classical studies. It is here that I have a modest opportunity to recollect her Latin studies (1959–1963) in the famous Leőwey Klára College at Pécs (= Sopianae of Pannonia province with the catacombs of the earliest local Christians), whose unusual sub-Mediterranean climate and atmosphere she has recently re-discovered in her present home in the fabulous Balaton uphills, on whose southern slopes above this unique lake (Pelso), several Roman *villae rusticae* were and are scattered all along the ca. 70 km long coastline.