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Abbreviations:

A	Ahmimic dialect of Coptic	NE	New Egyptian
AA	Afrasian	NK	New Kingdom
Akk.	Akkadian	OK	Old Kingdom
Ar.	Arabic	PAA	Proto-Afrasian
Aram.	Arameic	PIE	Proto-Indo-European
B	Bohairic dialect of Coptic	PS	Proto-Semitic
BD	Book of the Dead	Pyr.	Pyramid Texts
Berb.	Berber/o-Libyan/	S	Sahidic dialect of Coptic
Copt.	Coptic	Sem.	Semitic
Cush.	Cushitic	SH	Semito-Hamitic
Dem.	Demotic	Syr.	Syrian
Eg.	Egyptian		
Eth.	Ethiopian		
fem.	feminine		
Gr.	Greek		
Hebr.	Hebrew		
IE	Indo-European		
LP	Late Period		
masc.	masculine		
Med.	Medical Texts		
MK	Middle Kingdom		

GÁBOR TAKÁCS

THE AFRASIAN ORIGIN OF EGYPTIAN nbw "GOLD"

Eg. nbw (*nābaw > Coptic Sahidic NOYB) "gold" (OK, Wb II 237—239; FD 129) is evidently a derivative from the verb nbj "to melt metal" (OK, FD 129; Wb II 236, 6—7) as already noted by Osing (1976, 214) etc. This word was probably borrowed into Nubian: Fiadik'k'a, Mahassi nab "Gold", cf. also Eg. nbj "brennen" > Nub. Kunūzi, Dongolāwi nib "braten" (Abel 1933—1934, 303, 305). The Eg. word nbj. t "Perlenkollier, Brustschmuck" (OK, Vycichl 1958, 394, no. 51) seems not to have etymological connection to nbw "gold" if one accepts the former's proposed comparison with Ar. lubb-at- "der obere Teil der Brust", labab-, pl. 'albāb-, talbīb-, "ein Kragen, der die obere Brust bedeckt", Eg. Ar. libbe "Kollier, Brustschmuck" (Vycichl), which ultimately originate in PAA *libw- "heart" > N. Om. *ulw- "belly" etc. (see Blažek 1989, 7, no. 11; Blažek 1992, 136—137).

Unfortunately, so far no reliable etymology has been offered for Eg. nbw "gold" and nbj "to melt metal" in the Afrasian lexical stock. However, it seems that some typological parallels can yield a solution: in several cases designations of various metals originate in verbal roots with the basic sense "to burn", cf. Akk. *wēriy- "copper" ~ PS *r, var. *wr "to burn, kindle": Ar. wry "to kindle, set fire", ry "to burn", rr "to set fire", ir(r)-at- "fire", Tigre 'arwa "to flame, blaze", Hebr. ry "to burn", ūr "fire, flame", Akk. ūr- "fire, flame", Phoen. r "fire, flame", Ug. 'ar "fire, flame"; PS *awr- "light", *nawir- "luminoso" (prefixation by n-) ~ Eg. jr. t "flame" (Gr., Wb I 114, 20), rwj "flame" (NE, Wb II 508, 1), w3j (< *wrj) "to roast (?) grain" (Med., FD 52), wr. t "flame" (Gr., Wb I 332, 7) ~ E. Cu. Boni *war- "to dry in the sun" ~ N. Om. Malo ware "warm" ~ W. Ch. Dera wuri "to roast" ~ C. Ch. Pidlimdi vara "to burn" (Vartanov 1983, 85; Belova 1993, 54; Blažek 1991, 366; Zaborski 1971, 54, 5. §; Fronzaroli 1965, 138); or

cf. PS *nahš-, diminutive *nuḥāš- "copper" ~ Ar. nuḥās- "copper" but also "thick smoke" (Vartanov 1983, 87); further PIE *(a)u-es-(k^h)- "gold" ~ *eu-s- "brennen", *(a)u-es- "leuchten" (Gamkrelidze-Ivanov 1984, 713, 876; Pokorny 1959, 86—87, 347—348, 1173); still there is PIE *ai-os- "metal" (originally "copper", cf. Gamkrelidze-Ivanov 1984, 709) < *ai- "brennen, leuchten", *ai-d^h- "brennen, leuchten", *ai-er-/ *ai-en- "Tag, Morgen" (Vartanov 1983, 85; Pokorny 1959, 11—12, 15); or cf. Prussian vargien (< *vāryan) "copper", Lithuanian vārias "copper" ~ Hitt. war- "brennen", warnu- "verbrennen", wariwarant- "burning", Russian varit' "to cook", etc. < PIE *uer- "to burn" (Ivanov 1976, 75—76; 1977, 234—235; 1983, 105—106), and old Indic tapanīya-(n) „gold” < tap-, to heat, burn, etc.”

I suppose that similar origin can be suggested for Eg. nbw "gold" (*nābaw < *nabjaw, act. "melted metal"), which seems to be a derivative from PAA *bl "to be burning, boiling" with a prefix *n- attested in Sem., Eg., Cu. and Ch. (though in the latter two branches it is assimilated to the following labial):

Semitic: Akk. nabl- "flame", Geez nabal, nābālbāl "flame", 'an- bālbālā "emetter fiamme, infiammare", Amhara tāmbālābbālā "fiammeggiare, ardere", balabala "to be burning" (the Eth. forms are considered loans from. Cu.), (?) Ar. nabl- "Pfeil" (cf. Akk. kabābu "brennen", PS *kabkab- "star" ~ Syr. kubbō "thorn", see Fronzaroli 1965, 138), (?) Akk. bulā-, bulū "Dürrholz, -rohr",

Egyptian: n-bj "brennen" (Pyr., FD 130), n-bj "flame" (Pyr., FD 130), n-bj-bj "to be not" (Med., FD 130), s-n-b (< *s-n-bj, caus.) "verbrennen" (Gr., Wb IV 161, 4), (?) bj. t "Art Gebäck (Brotfladen ?)" (Med., Wb I 433, 1—10),

Berber: Šenwa a-bəl "to be boiling", Ahaggar e-bawīl "place for setting fire", Air e-bewil "baking on coal",

Cushitic: N. Cu. Beḍawye balol- "to be boiling" ~ C. Cu. Hamir bil- "to be boiling", Kwara bāl- "to be warm", bel- "to be boiling", Kemant bulu y- "to be boiling", Kwara em-bel-aū "to be warm", Kemant ām-bāl-āu "to be warm", Hamir eblaw- "to be warm", Bilin embel-aū "to be warm", Hamir em-bel-aū "to be warm", Bilin belk^w- "to be boiling" ~ E. Cu. Saho bolol- "to be burning", Ammar'ar bālool "flame", Afar boli- "to burn, be boiling", Somali Isaaq bēlbel "flame", belel "id.", Galla bulug- "to be warm",

Omotic: N. Om. Wolamo bola "flame",

Chadic: W. Ch. *b[H]l- "to burn": Hausa bālbālā "to burn down", Sura bēl "to light fire", Angas bel "to light fire", Ankwe bial "heat" ~ C. Ch. Margi mbū "to burn", mbəmbū "burning" (< *mV-bVI-bVI), (?) būrūl "to burn" (if < *bullul), Gisiga bəl "to burn down" (see Albright 1927, 202; Orel-Stolbova 1992, 178; Dolgopolskij 1973, 198; Stolbova 1987, 156; Illič-Svityč 1966, 17; Dolgopolskij 1966, 51; Conti 1980, 50—51; SISAJa I 95, 117. §; AHW 137, 698).

Abbreviations:

Akk. Akkadian, Ar.: Arabic, C. Ch.: Central Chadic, C. Cu.: Central Cushitic, Ch.: Chadic, Cu.: Cushitic, E. Cu.: East Cushitic, Eg.: Egyptian, Eth.: Ethiopian, Gr.: Greco-Roman Period, Hebr.: Hebrew, Hitt.: Hittite, Med.: Medical Texts, N. Cu.: North Cushitic, NE: New Egyptian, N. Om.: North Omotic, Nub.: Nubian, OK: Old Kongdom, PAA: Proto-Afrasian, Phoen.: Phoenician, PIE: Proto-Indo-European, PS: Proto-Semitic, Pyr.: Pyramid Texts, Sem.: Semitic, Syr.: Syrian, Ug.: Ugaritic, W. Ch.: West Chadic.

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