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Phonosymbolism or Etymology:

the Case of the Verb "Cop"

by
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Phonosymbolism or Etymology: the Case of the Verb "Cop"

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William Rozycki has written a stimulating article ("Phonosymbolism and the Verb *cop*") in which he attempts to show that various presumably unrelated languages around the world have independently chosen the syllable *kap*, or some close variant thereof, to convey the following meanings: "take, grasp, grab, seize, capture". He is able to cite an impressive amount of evidence in favor of his contention.

Rozycki explicitly states that he makes no claim for the universality of phonosymbolism, yet the manner in which he presents his argument leads him to come dangerously close to making such an assertion. Here is the distillation of his thesis:

> ...I will present both historic and areal evidence that a tendency or force is at work in the connection of the phonetic shape [kap] and the semantic range of 'catch, seize, snatch.' Like suprasegmentals in relation to the workings of phonology, this phonosymbolic force is another dimension, not yet clearly understood, that exerts influence on the process of word formation.

After reading and rereading Rozycki's paper several times, I have come to the conclusion that phonosymbolism is not at all like suprasements, that it is a mystical concept, that it never will be clearly understood, and that it has no effective or discernible influence on the process of word formation -- except for onomatopoeia (and there only to a limited degree because it is well known that people in different cultures come up with radically different imitative sounds for dogs barking [e.g., English "bow-wow" is *wang-wang* in Mandarin], trees crashing, rain falling, squeals of delight or pain, and so forth).

Let us suppose -- purely for the sake of argument -- that there may be some intrinsic, cosmic connection between the configuration of phonemes we transcribe as *kap* and the galaxy of meanings which cluster around "take / grasp / grab / seize / capture".

This would imply that potentially everyone everywhere would instinctively use this syllable *kap* when they wanted to express the notion of "take / grasp / grab / seize / capture" and that they would equally instinctively understand that this syllable signifies "take / grasp / grab / seize / capture" when they hear it spoken by others. If I understand it correctly, this is essentially the approach to the relationship between meaning and sound adopted by those who subscribe to the concept of phonosymbolism.

A radically opposite view of the relationship between sound and meaning in language is that of the etymologist who concerns himself with the origin and historic development of linguistic forms. The etymologist makes no claim about the intrinsic appropriateness of fit between the sound and the meaning of the earliest forms that he is able to identify, which are called "roots". These roots he takes as the given, elemental building blocks of language; for all he cares they may be totally arbitary. The etymologist is not interested in involving himself in metaphysical or philosophical questions about **why** *kap* signifies "take / grasp / grab / seize / capture".

Rozycki is by no means alone in his advocacy of phonosymbolism. To be sure, it has been a persistent strain in traditional Chinese theories about language for the past two millennia, at least since the time of the *Shi ming [Explanations of Terms]* which was completed by Liu Xi in 200 CE. Similar ideas are to be found in ancient India, in the Hebrew tradition, and in many other cultures around the world. It seems almost natural for people who reflect upon the ultimate origins of words to believe that the conjunction of their sound and meaning (their phonetic shape and semantic content) has some sort of inevitability or even theological sanction. (For example, those who subscribe to such a view might contend that we use the word "book" to describe a certain kind of object because that is what God ordained or because there is an inescapable metaphysical resonance between the physical object and the configuration of phonemes that make up the word. We use the word "cop" to name the action of stealing / pilfering / catching / seizing because it possesses an ineffable and ineradicable rightness or appropriateness for conveying the gist of such an action.)

Yet, in spite of its hoary antiquity and its widespread adherence, I maintain that the phonosymbolic approach to linguistic (especially semantic) evolution constitutes a fundamental fallacy. If it were valid, then all languages -- even those which are unrelated -- would share essentially the same vocabulary because the same sounds everywhere would automatically mean more or less the same thing in all languages. This is patently false, since "boo" in English is an interjection we use (especially at Halloween) to scare each other in spooky situations or a noun / verb expressing contempt, scorn, or disapproval,

whereas it is a negative in Mandarin (depending upon tone, it may also mean "mold", "catch, seize, arrest" [N.B.!!], "divine, foretell, predict", "part, section, headquarters", "step, pace", "cloth", "book" [N.B.!!], "wharf, pier, port", "mend, patch", "a billion", etc.), it is a demonstrative in Uyghur meaning "this", and so forth. Even within one language, phonosymbolism cannot be sustained as a valid explanatory device for the origins of words. On the one hand, the identical configuration of phonemes consituting the word "cap" has many different meanings: a covering for the head, to seize or arrest, a capital letter, a shallow wooden bowl often with two handles, a handicap race, a capsule (especially of heroin), capacity, captain, capitulum, capital, caput. On the other hand, there are many different ways to express each of the various meanings of "cap" (e.g., for "cap" in the sense of "seize or arrest", we have "seize, arrest, take into custody, apprehend, haul in, pick up, nab, pinch [N.B. -- see below under the discussion of the Sinitic word *jia*], bust, bag, nail, corral, run in, put the arm on, capture, catch, detain, hold, secure, collar, take prisoner, imprison, jail, incarcerate," each with its own particular nuance. Consequently, I hold that there is demonstrably no necessary, holy, or sacred sanction for "cop" to mean steal / pilfer / catch / seize or for the cluster of meanings steal / pilfer / catch / seize to be represented by "cop".

Instead of phonosymbolism as an explanatory device for the origins of words, I maintain that the correct approach is through etymological studies. In other words, I believe that the enormous vocabularies of modern languages evolved from core roots in their parent languages, not through some process of recurrent mystical revelation of the innate semantic properties of various syllables. Through historical linguistics (including phonology, morphology, and its other constituent disciplines), we may trace those roots back through deeper and deeper stages to earlier and earlier parents. Hence, for example, we may follow the path of the Modern English word "chin" back through Middle English *chin* and Old English *cin(n)* to a Germanic root **kinn-* and thence to an Indo-European root **genu-* (or **k'en-u-*). Along the way, we find a host of interesting cognates and derivatives, which I shall not cite here, except for: 1. Sanskrit Hanuman / Hanumat / Hanumant ("having [large / slightly broken / misshapen] jaw[s]"), which is one of my favorites because I have for many years studied the impact of this intriguing Indian mythological figure in China;[1] Tocharian A (dual) *śanwe-e-ṃ* 'jaws' because it looks so different from **genu-* (or **k'en-u-*) but may actually be derived from it by precise phonological rules; and "prognathous" (having the jaws projecting beyond the upper part of the face with a gnathic [of or relating to the jaw] index above 98) because of my current

interest in archeology and physical anthropology. There is nothing mystical, intuitive, or arcane about the evolution of words: one stage simply leads to the next.

Rozycki cites Karlgren, *Analytic Dictionary*, no. 345 (no. 630a in *Grammata Serica Recensa*) 'to press from two sides, squeeze', pronounced *jia* in Modern Standard Mandarin (MSM) but reconstructed by Karlgren as *kăp* in Middle and Ancient Sinitic, in support of his contention that words pronounced *kap* and meaning "catch, seize, snatch" spontaneously arose in various languages around the world through phonosymbolic processes. A closer examination of *jia* 'press from two sides, squeeze' reveals that is not applicable to the question of the meaning and origin of "cop".

First of all, the semantic range of *jia* has never been close to that of "cop" < *kap*. In MSM, it is defined as "press from both sides; place in between; mix, mingle, interpserse; clip, clamp, folder; carry something under one's arm". These nounal and verbal meanings are all possible when the sinograph used to write the word *jia* is pronounced in the first (level) tone. A cognate adjective written with the same sinograph is pronounced as *jia* in the second (rising) tone and means "double-layered; lined". Another cognate adjective written with the same sinograph is pronounced *xia* in the second tone and means "narrow, constricted / hemmed in on both sides; petty". Another verbal cognate written with the same sinograph is pronounced *xie* in the second tone and means "clasp / carry under the arm". Still another presumable cognate, also written with exactly the same sinograph, is pronounced *ga* in the first tone and is used in the trisyllabic word *gazhiwo* 'armpit'. It is clear that, to one degree or another, all of these cognates convey the basic notion of "pressing upon (something) from two opposite sides".

The earliest forms of the sinograph for *jia* depict two smaller men standing beneath the armpits of a bigger man (see Fig. 1). The earliest definitions of the word are in agreement with the sinographic rendition: "to flank, be on both sides, (support and) assist, follow close by (in attendance upon)".[2] The same sinograph, when used as a phonophoric component of other sinographs that were devised later for numerous cognates of *jia* 'press from both sides, squeeze', usually conveys some aspect of the basic notion of its simple, early form (see Fig. 2). Whereas *kap* 'grasp / grab / seize' is an action performed with the hand, *jia* signifies an entirely different type of action or condition.

Finally, when we scrutinize the phonological development of *jia* more intently, we discover that originally it was probably not pronounced *kap* after all. Recent reconstructions of the ancient form of *jia* insert a consonant that destroys the possibility of any direct phonosymbolic connection between this word and "cop": *kriap* (Fang-kuei Li), *kəriap* (Axel Schuessler), *kriap* (Fa-Kao Chou), *klap* (Tsung-tung Chang).[3]

Given that both the semantic and phonological properties of *jia* are quite different from those of *kap*, we may reject it as pertinent to the argument for "cop" as an example of phonosymbolism. Nor do I know of any other Sinitic or Sino-Tibetan root that sounds something like *kap* and means "grab / grasp / take / hold / seize".[4]

Similar liabilities are faced by the Korean word *cap* 'seize, grasp' cited by Rozycki in support of his theories about the phonosymbolism of *kap* 'catch, seize, snatch'. Superficially, it looks like an almost perfect match. The semantic fit is uncannily close: "holds, takes hold of, seizes, takes, catches, grasps, grips; captures, catches, arrests; takes (power), assumes, yields; holds (in mortgage, pawn), takes (as security); gets (a room, *etc.*), finds, takes, reserves; takes up, occupies; finds (fault), points to (a shortcoming), harps on, complains about; estimates (puts) at, computes, rates; puts in, consumes, spends; butchers, kills (animals), slaughters; plots against, lays a trap for; slanders; holds (a fire) under control; gets a grip on oneself, steadies (one's mind), settles down, holds (one's passion) under control, collects *or* calms oneself (one's thoughts); unbends, straightens out; gathers into folds."[5] The latter meanings (especially the next to last two), which seem to point to an underlying etymon, are somewhat disturbing, however, for they directly clash with the deep etymology of *kap* 'grasp, grab, catch, seize' which, as we shall discover below, appears to be linked to notions of bend(edness).

The real and immediate problems arise with the phonology of the Korean word. Though transcribed as *cap*, this Korean word is not pronounced with an initial velar (viz., *kap*), as Rozycki apparently believes it was. Rather, it is pronounced *[jap-da* or *chap-da]* and means "to grasp" or "to hold". A typical usage would be *chapssŭmnida* 'I'm holding (something).' It is also listed in dictionaries as *japta* 'capture' (cf. the related word *butjabda* 'seize').[6] Furthermore, the verb stem *cap-* was /*cap*/ (phonetically *[tsap]* in the fifteenth century and it could never have begun with a velar. Other reasons why the initial of the modern Korean word *chaptta* never was a velar are that 1. it is indigenous to Korean and thus would not have followed a Chinese sound shift (palatalization of the velars), 2. a *hangŭl* symbol existed for the sound from the time the alphabet was invented. The only Korean morphemes of the shape /*kap*/ are Sino-Korean (e.g., those for "box", "armor", etc.). There is a common word *kaps* that means "price" and a verb stem *kaph-* 'repay', but that is all, at least as far back as we can trace the phonology of the language. Therefore, the Korean verb *cap* (i.e., *japta*), is totally irrelevant to the matter of the meaning and origin of "cop".

The third East Asian example cited by Rozycki is Japanese *kapparau* 'catch away, pilfer, filch, purloin'. As he points out, this verb is composed of the emphatic prefix

ka(ki)- and the verb *harau* 'clear out, sweep away, wipe off, brush off, drive away, banish; prune; parry; pay; dispose of; wield (a sword) sideways'. Historically, the initial consonant of *harau* was a labial, and this accounts for the assimilation of *ka(ki)*- as ending with a labial. The same two characters may be read as *kakiharau* 'rake (something [e.g., grass]) off'.

Here too there are questions. First of all, the semantic content of *kapparau* 'catch away, pilfer, filch, purloin' is actually rather different from that of "cop" (catch, arrest, steal) and its etymon (or, per Rozycki, its phonosymbolic source [shape-range]) *kap* 'grasp, grab, seize, take'. Even when it is supposedly functioning as a prefix, *ka(ki)*- still retains to one degree or another its basic meaning of "scratch; clear away; rake; comb; lop / cut off". That is to say, whether overtly or not, *ka(ki)*- implies a rustling / ruffling / raking / swiping / sweeping / scratching sort of movement. Thus *kapparau*, like virtually all of the other scores of words formed with *ka(ki)*- as their initial syllable, conveys the idea of sweeping something up or away with a swift, vigorous movement. Whereas "cop" emphasizes the action of taking hold of or apprehending / grabbing / grasping something, *kapparau* indicates the quick, energetic motion with which something is swept up by a thief. Indeed, the closest synonym in English is the slang word "swipe" (steal, filch), which is undoubtedly related to the word "sweep". Finally, Rozycki states that Backhouse recognizes *kapparau* as a typical example of phonosymbolism. Actually, what Backhouse says about *kapparau* is that it belongs to a verb-forming group of expressive prefixes and that, like other expressive prefixes, it is class-maintaining and semantically intensive.[7] This is, to be sure, an accurate assessment of the function of *ka(ki)*- in the word *kapparau* where it reinforces and intensifies the semantic content of *harau*. Hence, for all of these reasons (semantic, structural or morphological, functional), *kapparau* has no bearing on the matter of the alleged phonosymbolism of "cop" < *kap*.

Let us look more closely at the verb "cop" itself. As a noun, "cop" is an informal word for "police officer". It is derived from the slang verb "cop" which means "take unlawfully or without permission; steal, filch", "get **hold** of; gain or win", or "catch, nab".[8] The verb "cop" is used in many colorful slang phrases such as "cop out" (renege; back out of responsibility or duty), "cop a plea" (plea-bargain), "cop a bean" (deflower a virgin), "cop a buzz" (become intoxicated with marijuana), "cop a cherry" (deflower a virgin), and "cop a feel" (touch or feel a woman's sexual parts either as if it were an accident or quite blatantly).[9] Inasmuch as several of these expressions have been coined within recent decades, it is clear that the verb "cop" with the meanings "take unlawfully or without permission; steal", "get **hold** of; gain or win", or "catch" is still highly productive

and well known across broad segments of the American population. There are also a number of other slang expressions employing the verb "cop", some of quite recent coinage, that are unique to British English.[10]

The etymology of the slang word "cop" is not easy to trace. Slang being what it is (often highly ephemeral and largely restricted to the oral realm), we cannot expect to find that it has an obvious and upstanding pedigree. Nonetheless, we may attempt to recover the origin of "cop" through various means.

In the first place, "cop" has been used in the sense of "capture, arrest" since at least 1704 and in the sense of "receive, suffer (something bad) since at least 1884.[11]

The Random House Dictionary of the English Language[12] lists the expression "cop out" as occurring already from the period 1695-1705. Its etymology is listed in the same source as deriving from an obsolete verb *cap* meaning "to snatch" < Scots *cap* 'seize' < dial. Old French *caper* 'take' and ultimately < Latine *capere*.

The first edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 2, p. 967ab) identifies the verb "cop", which it defines as meaning "to capture, catch, lay hold of, 'nab'," as northern dialectical and slang. Its etymological note reads as follows:

> Perhaps a broad pronunciation of CAP *verb*[2] [see just below] (Old French
> *caper* to seize); in nearly all Northern English glossaries; and now of general
> diffusion in the slang of schoolboys, criminals, policemen, etc.

For CAP *verb*[2] (vol. 2, p. 88b), which is defined simply as meaning "to arrest", the etymological note states that it is apparently adopted from Old French *caper* 'seize, take', and the first quotation, dating to 1589, reads thus: "Cap him sira, if he pay it not." The noted British authority on slang, Eric Partridge, agrees with the etymology suggested by the *OED* and adds that *cap* to *cop* is a normal argotic change.[13]

My splendid old *Century Dictionary* (vol. 2, p. 801b) has an excellent entry on the Scots verb cited in the *Random House Dictionary* etymology. It begins by giving the pronunciation *kap* and then offering the following etymology: < Dutch *kapen* (= Swedish *kapa*) 'seize, catch, make prize of, as a privateer or pirate (> Dutch *kaap* 'privateering'); apparently < Latin *capere* 'take, seize, capture': cf. "capable", "captive", "capture", and so forth. This etymology is supported by reference to "caper" (a light-armed vessel of the seventeenth century, used by the Dutch for privateering): = German *kaper* = French *capre*, < Dutch *kaper* (= Danish *kaper* = Swedish *kapare*), a privateer < *kapen* = Swedish *kapa* (cf. German *kapern* = Danish *kapre*, from the noun), 'take, seize, make a prize of at sea'

and another Scotch word, "capper" (seize; lay hold of violently; specifically, to seize [a vessel] as a prize),[14] etc. There are two definitions given by the *Century Dictionary* for the Scots verb "cap". The first is "to arrest", for which Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is quoted twice:

Twelve shillings you must pay, or I must cap you. (iii.2)

Ralph has friends that will not suffer him to be capt for ten times so much. (iii.2)

Beaumont and Fletcher wrote *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* in 1607. The second definition for the verb "cap" in question is "to seize; lay hold of violently; specifically to seize (a vessel) as a prize; hence, to entrap or insnare." The entry closes by identifying the verb as Scotch and provincial English.

I cannot find evidence for the existence of the Scots word *caper* until 1666 when it occurs at least three or four times, so it was most likely borrowed from Dutch around the middle of the seventeenth century. *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, noting that it is also spelled *keaper*, defines the word as meaning "a privateer" or "a captor (in privateering)". The suggested etymology is from Dutch and Flemish *kaper*.[15] After that time, however, its use becomes quite common and is no longer restricted to privateering. From the mid-nineteenth century, *cap* is often encountered with the following meanings: "to seize by violence, to lay hold of what is not one's own; a word much used by children at play"; "to take possession of anything used in play out of season"; "to stop the progress of something that is in motion; to arrest; to prevent". It is possible that some of these usages derive not from the Dutch-inspired *caper / keaper* but are more closely cognate with English "cap" = "to arrest". If so, they would have had to persist solely in the spoken language (which, considering their colloquial nature, is quite possible), since the latter usage became obsolete in English from 1611.[16] Simply because a word is not well documented in the written record does not obviate the necessity of making earnest etymological inquiries concerning its origin.

Among the scores of derivatives from IE *kap* that he cites, Shipley brings to our attention *capias*, a Latin imperative meaning "arrest him!"[17] This he connects with the slang word "copper" and its abbreviated form "cop". Since it is the duty of the "cop" (the policeman) to arrest a miscreant, it certainly would not be surprising if there were a connection between the order of the judge to make an arrest and the officer charged with making the arrest. Here is Fennell's entry for *capias*:

capias, *2nd person singular present subjunctive active* of the Latin verb *capere*, = 'to seize': *literally* 'thou mayest seize', name of several writs authorising the sheriff to arrest or seize. *Capias ad respondendum*, a writ before judgement to take the defendant and make him answer the plaintiff; *capias ad satisfaciendum*, or *ca. sa.*, a writ of execution of judgment for recovery in a personal action on a person who is to be taken and kept in prison until he give satisfaction; *capias pro fine*, a writ lying against a person who does not discharge a fine due to the Crown; *capias utlagatum*, a writ lying against an outlaw upon any action; *capias in withernam*, a writ lying against beasts under distraint which have been driven out of the county, or concealed.[18]

Seventeen citations dating from 1463-4 to 1842 follow, of which I quote only the first: "Also Whele sends you a *capias ut legat* against Harlare." (*Plumpton Correspondence*, p. 9 [Camden Society, 1839].) Practically speaking, a writ for *capias* amounts to an arrest warrant.

Regardless of the specific route that they follow, nearly all authorities now trace the English slang verb "cop" back to Latin *capere* 'seize' and thence to the IE root *kap* 'grasp'.[19]

An extremely interesting alternative (but not entirely unrelated) etymology for "cop" has been proposed by Farmer and Henley:

> COP has been associated with the root of the Latin *cap-io*, to seize, to snatch; also with the Gypsy *kap* or *cop* = to take; Scotch *kep*; and Gallic *ceapan*. Probably, however, its true radix is to be found in the Hebrew *cop* = a hand or palm. Low-class Jews employ the term, and understand it to refer to the act of snatching.[20]

As we shall see later in our investigation, the reference to Hebrew may well not be entirely fortuitous.

According to *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*,[21] "cop" is a slang word meaning "capture, catch, nab, steal" and may be a variant of obsolete *cap* 'to arrest' (1589). The latter, in turn, was borrowed from Middle French *caper* 'seize', perhaps from Sicilian *capere*, from Latin *capere* 'take, hold, seize'; cognate with Greek *káptein* 'gulp down',

Albanian *kap* 'I grasp, seize', Low German *happen* 'swallow', Gothic *hafjan* 'raise, lift', and Old English *hebban* 'heave'. "Heave" itself, meaning "to lift with force or effort", was probably already in use before 1200 in the form *heven*, which developed from Old English *hebban* (about 725, in *Beowulf*), and is cognate with Old Saxon *hebbian* 'raise, lift', Dutch *heffen*, Old High German *heffen* (modern German *heben*), Old Icelandic *hefja*, and Gothic *hafjan*. All of these words are derived from Proto-Germanic **hafjanan*, from the base **haf-* (when originally accented) and **haƀ-* (when originally unaccented) 'take, take hold of' (as found in "heft"). Outside of Germanic, additional cognates are Greek *kṓpē* 'handle', possibly Middle Irish *cachtaim* 'I take prisoner', Old Irish *cacht* 'female slave', Welsh *caeth* 'captive, slave' (cf. English "caitiff" [Middle English *caitif* 'prisoner, captive, wretch', from Old North French, from Latin *captīvus* 'captive', from *captus*, past participle of *capere*, for which see above]), and in Latvian *kàmpt* 'seize', from IE **kap-*, root **kēp- / kōp-* (Pokorny 527).

Devoto, *Origini Indeuropee*, p. 482, no. 535b is KAP (Pokorny 527), under which are listed words such as Old German *haben*, Gothic *hafjan*, Lettish *kāmpju*, Latin *capio*, Greek χώπη and Albanian *kam*; no. 535a is GHABH (Pokorny 406 f.), under which are listed Irish *gaibid*, Old German *kepi*, Gothic *gabei* "riches" (perhaps deriving from the notion of "acquisitions", that is, "things which are taken"), Latin *habeo*, and Umbrian *hab-*. Devoto gives both of these roots the basic meaning of "take". Since their phonemic constructions (velar / *a* / labial) are similar -- although the consonants of the latter are voiced and aspirated while those of the former are not -- and their meanings are very close, it is likely that they both derive from some prior common root. Yet that prior root must have split within Indo-European early enough for Italic and Germanic to have two separate etymological strains derived from it.

The derivation of "captive" from *kap-* was already recognized by Skeat before 1880 when he gives √QAP 'to hold' as its Indogermanic root. Skeat was very conservative and cautious in his identification of roots: "This has only been attempted, for the most part, in cases where the subject scarcely admits of a doubt; it being unadvisable to hazard too many guesses, in the present state of our knowledge.... I have here most often referred to Brugmann, Uhlenbeck, Prellwitz, or Kluge."

Many words for "captive, prisoner" gathered by Buck, *Selected Synonyms*, 20.47 (pp. 1414-1415) are clearly derived from the IE root *kap-*: Latin *captīvus* (> Old French *chetif*, now only in secondary sense and as 'captive' replaced by *captif* > Rumanian *captiv*; Spanish *cautivo*), derivative of *captus*, participle of *capere* 'take'; Old Norse / Icelandic *haptr*, Old English *hæftling*, Old High German and Middle High German *haft* (also

adjective 'taken, seized', New High German *-haft*), beside Gothic *hafts* 'taken, joined', participle of root seen in Gothic *hafjan* 'raise', Latin *capere* 'take', etc. Middle English and New English *captive* come from the French word. At a more basic level, Latin *capere* 'seize, take', Gothic *hafjan*, Old Norse *hafa*, etc. 'have' show up under Buck's 11.13 TAKE, as do Irish *gaibim* 'take, seize', New Irish *gabhaim* but mostly replaced by the compound *tōgaim* (for *tōgbhaim*, Middle Irish *tōcbaim* 'lift', from **to-od-gab-*) : Latin *habēre* 'have', etc., and under 11.11.3,5 HAVE we find a host of cognate words: Latin *habēre* (> Italian *avere*, French *avoir*, Rumanian *avea*) earlier 'hold', whence 'occupy, possess' and finally 'have' : Umbrian *habitu, habetu* 'habeto', but the older sense in *haburent* 'ceperint', etc., Irish *gaibim* 'take, seize', Welsh *gafaelu* 'hold, grasp', perhaps Lithuanian *gabenti* 'carry off, transport', all of which derive from IE **ghab(h)-* (see my remarks concerning the probable relatedness of **kap-* and **ghab(h)-* in the paragraph citing Devoto just above), and Gothic *haban*, Old Norse *hafa*, Danish *have*, Swedish *hava*, Old English *habban*, Middle English *have*, New English *have*, Dutch *hebben*, Old High German *habēn*, Middle High German *haben*, New High German *haben*, general Germanic : Latin *capere* 'seize, take', Gothic *hafjan*, Old Norse *hefja*, etc. 'lift', Lettic *kampt* 'seize, grasp', all of which derive from IE **kap-*. Many of these Germanic words meaning "have" are also listed under Buck's 11.15.4 HOLD. Under Buck's 11.14 SEIZE, GRASP, TAKE HOLD OF we find Irish *gaibim* 'take, seize' (already mentioned under 11.11), Welsh *gafaelu*, from *gafael* 'hold, grasp, grip' = Irish *gabāl*, verbal noun of *gaibim* (see above), and Gothic *greipan*, Old Norse *grīpa*, Danish *gribe*, Swedish *gripa*, Old English *grīpan*, Middle English *gripe*, Dutch *grijpen*, Old High German *grīfan*, Middle High German *grīfen*, New High German *(er)greifen* : Lithuanian *griebti* 'seize, grasp at)', Lettic *gribēt* 'wish' (from 'grasp at'), all of the latter group deriving from IE **ghreib-*. Buck does not mention the English word "grip" in this connection, but it too is derived from IE **ghreib-*. Nor does he mention "grab", which is derived from IE **ghrebh-*. In my view, since **ghreib-* and **ghrebh-* have a similar phonological configuration to that of **kap-* and **ghabh-*, as well as a related semantic field, they too must have derived from the same prior root, although **ghreib-* and **ghrebh-* are obviously more closely linked to **ghabh-* than they are to **kap-* (the insertion of the *-r-* to form an initial consonant cluster allowing for expansion and greater delineation of the fundamental meaning of **ghabh- / ghebh-* 'give, receive', the latter meaning being the operative one in this case).[22]

For **ghabh- / ghebh-* 'give, receive [> take]', see Watkins, *Roots*, p. 20b, which lists numerous Germanic and Romance forms and derivatives resulting in the following English words: GIVE, FORGIVE, GIFT, GAVEL, ABLE, BINNACLE, HABILE, HABIT,

HABITABLE, HABITANT, HABITAT, COHABIT, EXHIBIT, INHABIT, INHIBIT, PREBEND, PROHIBIT, PROVENDER, DEBENTURE, DEBIT, DEBT, DEVOIR, DUE, DUTY, ENDEAVOR. For **ghrebh-*, Watkins lists Sanskrit (also now English) SATYĀGRAHA 'holding firmly to the truth' (the policy of nonviolent resistance advocated by Mahatma Gandhi), GRASP, and GRAB. For **ghreib-*, Watkins lists GRIPE, GRIPPE, and GROPE. And for the far more productive **kap-*, Watkins lists HEDDLE '[device which] grasps [the thread]', HAFT, HAVE, HEAVY, HAVEN, HAWK, HEAVE, CABLE, CAPABLE, CAPACIOUS, CAPIAS, CAPSTAN, CAPTION, CAPTIOUS, CAPTIVATE, CAPTIVE, CAPTOR, CAPTURE, CATCH, CHASE, ACCEPT, ANTICIPATE, CONCEIVE, DECEIVE, EXCEPT, INCEPTION, INCIPIENT, INTERCEPT, INTUSSUSCEPTION, MUNICIPAL, NUNCUPATIVE, OCCUPY, PARTICIPATE, PERCEIVE, PRECEPT, RECEIVE, RECOVER, RECUPERATE, R$_X$, SUSCEPTIBLE, CAISSON, CAPSICUM, CAPSID, CAPSULE, CASE, CHASE, CHASSIS, CHESS, ENCHASE, BEHOOF, BEHOOVE, and COPEPOD. These illuminating collections of cognate forms and derviatives are also to be found in the appendix of "Indo-European Roots" at the back of the various editions of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. **Certainly, there is no simple phonosymbolic explanation that can account for the enormous semantic and phonological complexities of these cognate roots and their multitude of finely nuanced derivatives.**

It can be shown that all of the languages in which there is a word pronounced something like *kap* and meaning "take, seize" are related. The first to demonstrate rigorously and extensively the existence of a super-family of languages extending beyond Indo-European to include languages from the Semito-Hamitic (Afro-Asiatic), Kartvelian (South Caucasian), Uralic, Dravidian, and Altaic families was the brilliant young Russian linguist, V. M. Illich-Svit'ich. This macro-family is called Nostratic. Later Nostraticists would add Dene, Sinitic, and other languages. In my estimation, the case for adding Dene and Sinitic to Nostratic is weak; we have already seen that this is so for Sinitic in the present instance of *kap* 'take, seize'.

Sinitic has not been convincingly demonstrated to be a part of Nostratic. To be sure, there are numerous Indo-European (especially Iranian and Tocharian) words in Sinitic, but these have not been shown to be cognates due to a genetic relationship between Sinitic and IE. Rather, they appear to be borrowings which began from at least the Bronze Age and perhaps even from the Late Neolithic.[23] There is no persuasive archeological, historical, genetic, or anthropological evidence that Chinese and Indo-Europeans were ever part of a single demographic or cultural entity, which would have been necessary if their languages were supposedly organically related through a common ancestor. I do not deny

that Sinitic and Indo-European bear some sort of relationship to each other, but whatever organic linkage they possess would have been at a much earlier stage, probably during the Paleolithic before Caucasoid Nostratics and Mongoloid Pre-Proto-Sinitic speakers had diverged. Indeed, it has yet to be demonstrated by linguistic and other means that Sinitic or its immediate ancestor (the identity of which is still not known) emerged as a discrete linguistic entity before the second millennium BCE. Furthermore, whenever we find IE words in Sinitic (e.g., those for "wheat", "cow", "dog", "wheel", "magus", "grape", "honey", "Buddha", "tank", "tantalum", "watt", "volt", and so forth), they can all more efficiently and convincingly be demonstrated as loans that occurred during historic and late prehistoric times. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is no word derived from *kap* 'take, seize, grasp, capture' in Sinitic.

In his *Op'it Sravneniya Nostraticheskikh Yaz'ikov* (vol. 1, pp. 313-315), Illich-Svit'ich presented abundant and convincing evidence of a Nostratic root *ḳaba / ḳapˤa* 'grab' which manifested itself in each of the Nostratic daughter families and which surely must be the ultimate source of Latin *capere* and all of the other cognates cited above. Since Illich-Svit'ich's treatment is more densely documented and technically argued than is necessary for our present purposes, I shall cite a simplified listing of the same root from another, more recent source.

Bomhard's list of "Common Nostratic Roots" in his *Indo-European and the Nostratic Hypothesis* includes the following items under entry no. 242: PN *$k[^h]ap[^h]$- / *$k[^h]əp[^h]$- "to take, to seize; hand"; > PIE *$k[^h]ap[^h]$- "to take, to seize"; PAA *$k[^h]ap[^h]$- / *$k[^h]ə[^h]$- "to take, to seize; hand"; PFU *kappɜ- "to take, to seize, to grasp", *käppä "hand, paw"; PD *kapp- "to touch, to feel"; PA *kap- "to grasp, to seize".[24] In his *Toward Proto-Nostratic*, Bomhard provides much more data on the Proto-Afro-Asiatic side in entry no. 135 of chapter 9 ("Comparison of Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Afroasiatic"): PAA *kap- / *kap- "to take, seize; palm, hand": SEM.: PSem. *kapp- --> Hebr. *kaφ* "palm"; Akk. *kappu* "hand"; Ar. *kaff, kiffa, kaffa* "palm of the hand"; Ug. *kp* "palm, hand"; Ḥarsūsi *kef* "flat of the hand; claw, paw"; Syr. *kappā* "palm of the hand". EG.: *kp* "to seize; hollow of the hand or foot". CUSH.: PSC. *kīp- or *kip- "handle" --> Iraqw *kipay*; Ma'a -*kupurúya* "to snatch". PIE *kap- "to take, seize": Lat. *capiō* "to take, seize"; OHG. *haft* "captivity".[25]

In Turkic, *kap-* means 'to grasp, or seize'.[26] I consider Turkic to be a relatively young group of languages within Altaic, which is itself a somewhat problematic and relatively young family. Therefore, it is difficult to tell to what extent Nostratic cognates

such as *kap-* may actually be the result of massive borrowing during the formative stages of PA and Proto-Turkic.

The equivalent root of comparable words in modern Dravidian languages manifests itself as Tamil *kavar* 'seize, grasp, catch, steal, get control of, receive, experience, desire, have sexual connexion with', Kannaḍa *kavar* 'take away by force, seize, strip, plunder', Telegu *kamucu* 'hold, seize', and so forth.[27]

After this brief investigation of IE *kap-*, its derivatives in the various daughter languages of the IE family, and its precursors in Nostratic, I shall now make an effort to accommodate the science of etymology with the mysticisim of phonosymbolism.[28] To wit, when the Paleolithic predecessors of Nostratic who first decided that they needed a word meaning roughly "take / grasp / grab / seize", perhaps they were governed by phonosymbolic constraints that caused them to pick only a word sounding like *kap-* and nothing else. Maybe, at that stage, the first person to create a root that sounded something like $**k[^h]\partial p[^h]$- and meant approximately "take / grasp / grab / seize" was inspired by some ineluctable cosmic phonosymbolism which caused him to choose $**k[^h]\partial p[^h]$- and nothing else. I doubt this, however, since his ancestors undoubtedly had already come up with a word for "hand" that sounded something like $**kup^h$-. The minor genius who decided to make a useful derived verb out of the elemental body-part noun simply worked a slight phonological (and perchance also morphological) change upon the latter. In essence, then, when the first human being proclaimed "I take / grasp / grab / seize it", he / she was merely saying "I hand it" (noun -- verbalized noun --noun). (Actually, the first noun [the personal pronoun] was probably not necessary because the subject or agent may have been morphologically present in or implied by the verb.)

Given our realization of the origins of *kap-* 'take / grasp / grab / seize' in a prior word for "hand" sounding something like $**kup^h$-, we are obliged to investigate the derivation of the latter. As we shall also see below in our discussion of the Semitic cognates, the base of this root would appear to mean essentially "[that which is] bent". Much to our astonishment, we find that the English word "cup", which sounds very much like the Semitic words for "hand", goes back to an IE root *keu-* that, lo and behold, means "to bend / be rounded", whence "a round or hollow object". In Modern English, we still talk about the "cup" of the hand; the hand is that part of the body which we "cup". I suspect, therefore, that there exists a deeper layer of semantic and phonological affinity between *kap* 'take / grasp / grab / seize' and *keu-* 'bend / be rounded > round or hollow object' than meets the eye.

The affinity between *kap* 'take / grasp / grab / seize' and *keu-* 'bend / be rounded > round or hollow object' becomes more apparent when we examine the extended forms of the latter which are **keub-, *keup-*. The zero-grade form of the latter is **kup-* 'vessel'. This shows up in suffixed form *kup-s-* as Greek *kupselē* 'chest, hollow vessel' (English "cypsela"), in long-vowel suffixed form **kūp-a* as Latin *cūpa* 'tub, vat' (cf. English "cupola", in expressive form **kupp-* as Late Latin *cuppa* 'drinking vessel' (English "cup"), and in many other nuanced manifestations. That "cup" is well grounded in Germanic is evident from the following: Old Frisian *kopp* 'cup, head'; Middle Low German *kopp* 'cup', Middle Dutch *coppe* (Modern Dutch *kopje* 'cup, head'), Old High German *kopf*, *chuph* 'cup' (Modern German *Kopf* 'head'). In the Romance languages, Late Latin *cuppa* was the source of Italian *coppa*, Provençal, Spanish, and Portuguese *copa*, and Old French *coupe*, all meaning "cup".

All of this recalls to us the interesting conjecture of Farmer and Henley that the true root of "cop" is the Hebrew word for "hand". Let us explore what possible support there may be for the assertion of such a remote connection.

The name of the eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *kaph*, meaning "the hollow of the hand". This letter is so called in allusion to its ancient form (see Fig. 3), which the Phoenicians and other Semites of Syria began to use as a graphic sign around 1000 BCE. The name *kaph* is related to *kāphaph* 'he bent'.[29] In Hebrew, *kaph* also has the following connotations: palm of the hand, hand; sole of the foot; pan, censer; handle; branch (of palm -- so called from its shape); spoon; crest over the female genitals (Post Biblical Hebrew); glove (Post Biblical Hebrew). The Hebrew word *kaph* is related to Aramaic-Syriac word *kapā'* 'hollow of the hand, pan, bowl, censer, scale of the balance', Ugaritic *kp* 'hollow of the hand, bowl', Ethiopian *kappu* 'hollow of the hand, scale of a balance', Syriac *kephētā'* 'hollowed place, arch, vault'. All of these words derive from base *khphph* and literally mean 'that which is bent / curved'.[30]

It is, of course, technically incorrect to state that the root of the English slang word "cop" is the Hebrew word *kaph* 'palm of the hand' as claimed by Farmer and Henley (see above), since Hebrew and English belong to different language families and hence are on separate lines of linguistic development. Nevertheless, the observation that there is some sort of connection between English "cop" and Hebrew *kaph* is a great insight and helps us to see beyond the Hebrew word to Proto-Semitic, thence to PAA, and thence back to a Nostratic stage where it is possible to speak of an etymological connection between the ultimate root of "cop" and *kaph*.

Thus we have followed the long and convoluted path of "cop" not only through Latin *capias* 'arrest' and *capere* 'take' back to IE **kap-* 'grasp' and Nostratic ***k[ʰ]ɘp[ʰ]-* 'take / grasp / grab / seize', we now find ourselves faced with the very real possibility of some more profound connection with a Pre-Nostratic (perhaps Proto-World?) root ****kɘp* meaning "bend, curve(d)". We have arrived at this point strictly by applying the rules and laws of the science of etymology. Beyond this, however, we may begin to ask whether phonosymbolism was operative in the choice of ****kɘp* to convey the notion of "bend, curve(d)". I do not know. Perhaps Professor Rozycki can help us to answer this difficult question; I cannot. It is beyond me. It is in the realm of metaphysics and mysticism, at which I am very poor.

In terms of the emergence of civilization and the development of elemental human concepts, however, we may roughly sketch out the derivation of the English slang word "cop". Before human beings used vessels of any sort for drinking purposes, perhaps even before *Homo sapiens sapiens* (judging from observation of hominid behavior), they cupped their hands to bring water from a pond, stream, river, or lake to their lips. This we still do -- quite naturally -- when we go out into the wilderness ill-equipped. When humans began to acquire the ability to speak, one of them referred to the bending of the palm and fingers to form a hollow for containing the liquid with a word that sounded something like ******kɘp*. They probably already had a general word for bending branches and other objects that sounded something like ******kɘ*. Later, they learned to use bottle gourds and other cucurbits for ladling and containing liquids (there are no native IE words for gourds and cucurbits since these plants are normally tropical or sub-tropical),[31] then still later they discovered how to make vessels from clay and other materials. But they retained derivatives of the old word ******kɘp* to designate hollow objects that can contain things, hence, to mention only a few cognates in IE languages, Old Icelandic *hūfr* 'ship's hull', Latin *cūpa* 'tub, cask', Greek *kypellon* 'cup', Sanskrit *kupa-s* 'cave, hole'.[32]

Once they had a word for designating "hollow of the hand", humans could use it to describe actions carried out with that part of the body, hence "grab" and "grasp". Subsequently, they could extend the usage of the derived verbs to specify various different kinds of grabbing and grasping, thus "capture". Finally, in accord with their playful propensities and fecund inventiveness, it was inevitable that they would create new nouns and slang terms based on the derived verbs, hence "caper" (a privateer or his vessel), "cap", and -- at long last -- "cop".

Let us return once more, however, to *kap*, which is the main focus of our investigation. If we wish to determine why many languages use a word that sounds like

kap to mean "take / grasp / grab / seize / capture", we are forced by the science of etymology and all of the rules of historical linguistics to trace that word back at least to the stage of Nostratic, which is already very remote and still poorly understood. In any event, when we reach back in time beyond the Neolithic daughter languages (PIE, PAA, PFU, PD, and perhaps PA) of Nostratic, we find that we cannot simply concern ourselves with $**k[^h]əp[^h]$- 'take / grasp / grab / seize' alone; we are compelled to explore the derivation of that root from a prior root meaning "hand", and, beyond that, we cannot escape the duty of determining the origins of the root for "bend[edness]" which resulted in the word for "hand". Thus, there seems to be almost an infinite regression from word to word and from root to root until we arrive at the moment when the first human being uttered a semi-intelligible word.[33] But here we are confronting the problem of the very invention of language, and when it comes to that, I have no idea why our remote ancestors chose the sounds they did to convey the various meanings they had in mind.

At this point in our deliberations, a host of even BIGGER QUESTIONS assails us. We must seriously ask, "What is human?" Were Neanderthals human? Are only *Homo sapiens sapiens* human? Did language begin only with Cro Magnons? Were there precursors to human language in the grunts, groans, and expostulations of the early hominids? Did the early hominids mimic the barks, calls, and cries of the wild animals among whom they lived? I cannot pretend to have even the beginning of an answer to any of these perplexing questions; they are far beyond my capacity and resources to discover. Consequently, I shall content myself with the more mundane task of figuring out etymologies and leave the mysterious paths of phonosymbolism for others to explore.

Be that as it may, I shall close, with the following observations: 1. Even if phonosymbolism is a valid linguistic tool for the elucidation of some words besides those which are obviously onomatopoeic (where I do believe that it is patently applicable), it can only have been so at the earliest stage of the invention of human language (a stage which is beyond our present ability to recover). 2. At best, phonosymbolism can be used to explain merely a tiny portion of the vast lexicons belonging to human languages. 3. Only the science of etymology can clarify the development of the subtle nuances differentiating the words which constitute the enormous lexicons of modern languages from ancient roots (i.e., *kap* alone cannot illuminate the vast proliferation of useful derivatives -- including the verb "cop" -- stemming from it; *kap* is only the beginning [within IE languages] of any search for the origins of its derivatives; to understand them fully, one must employ precise, elaborate concepts of morphology, phonology, affixation, and other analytical tools of linguistics). 4. If phonosymbolism were valid (whether universally or not), all human

beings would tend to speak the same language and would continuously reinvent the same language even in isolation from each other. Since this is not the case, the value of phonosymbolism in linguistic inquiry would appear to be extremely limited.

ABBREVIATIONS

PN = Proto-Nostratic; PIE = Proto-Indo-European; PAA = Proto-Afro-Asiatic; PFU = Proto-Finno-Ugrian; PD = Proto-Dravidian; PA = Proto-Altaic;

NOTES

1. Mair, "Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat?"

2. Schuessler, *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese*, pp. 285b-286a.

3. For Li and Schuessler, see Schuessler, *ibid.*, p. 285a; Chou, *Pronouncing Dictionary*, p. 57; Chang, "Old Chinese", p. 5.

4. Coblin, *Handlist.*

5. Martin, *Korean-English Dictionary*, p. 1397b-1398a.

6. Proctor, *Illustrated International Dictionary*, pp. 88 and 476.

7. "The Expressive Stratum in Modern Japanese", p. 74.

8. By far the most elaborate account of the verb "cop" and its development in the United States is to be found in Lighter, ed., *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, pp. 480b-482a. Lighter and his colleagues show little interest in the etymology of

the verb, however, other than to mention that it may be traced back to Dutch *kapen* 'to take' via Early Modern English *cap* in similar senses. The early history of the verb "cop" in Britain is covered extensively in Partridge, *A Dictionary of the Underworld*, p. 148b.

9. Spears, *Slang and Euphemism*, p. 84b. *The American Thesaurus of Slang* by Berrey and van den Bark (p. 967bc) lists dozens of additional expressions which I shall not bother to define individually: cop an out, cop a bag, cop a creep, cop a deuceways, cop a gander, cop a getaway, cop a heat, cop a lam, cop a leather, cop a lift, cop a listen, cop a look, cop a nod, cop a phinney, cop a sight, cop a sneak, cop a snooze, cop a Sunday, cop a win, cop the bacon, cop the bunting, cop the coin, cop the crown, cop the title, cop the curtain, cop the flag, cop the pennant, cop the laughs (laffs), cop the lead, cop the pot, cop the race, cop the sack, cop the works. Jonathon Green, in *The Slang Thesaurus* (p. 173b) offers a number of other expressions used primarily in Britain: cop a decko, cop a dose, cop a drop, cop a heel, cop a moke, cop a packet, cop a sight (of), cop a squat, cop an attitude, cop one's bird, cop one's joint, cop out (on), cop shop, cop (some) Zs, cop the lot. The combined lists of Green and Berrey & van den Bark, though lengthy, are not exhaustive, since I have also come across other expressions such as cop a fiver, cop a goose, cop a joint, cop a mope, cop a quim, cop a register, cop a slave, cop a walk, cop for, cop it hot, cop off, cop on, cop on the cross, cop-bumper, cop-out man, cop(-)simple, cop-shop, cop-sop, cop (someone's) drawers, cop that lot!, cop the borax, cop the brewery, cop the bullet, cop the coin, cop the drop, cop the edge, cop the needle, cop the tale, and copbusy in various sources.

10. Ayto and Simpson, *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*, p. 42a.

11. *Ibid., loc. cit.*

12. *Op. cit.*, unabridged, 2nd ed., p. 447b.

13. Partridge, *Slang*, p. 253e.

14. Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 354a, informs us that *kapern* was borrowed into German from Dutch during the 17th century, so we cannot trace the word back any further in German.

15. Craigie, ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 432b.

16. Grant and Murison, ed., *The Scottish National Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 32b.

17. *Origins*, p. 157.

18. *Stanford Dictionary*, p. 200b.

19. E.g., Onions, *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, p. 213b.

20. *Slang and Its Analogues*, vol. 2, p. 178b.

21. *Op. cit.*, pp. 219a, 143a, and 472a.

22. Shipley, *Origins*, p. 118.

23. Cf. Mair, "Language and Script: Biology, Archaeology, and (Pre)history" and "Old Sinitic *$m^y ag$, Old Persian *magus*, and English 'Magician'"; also Chang, "Indo-European Vocabulary in Old Chinese"; Østmoe, "A Germanic-Tai Linguistic Puzzle"; and Lubotsky, "Tocharian Loan Words in Old Chinese".

24. *Op. cit..*, p. 168.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 233. For his references, Bomhard cites Buck 1949: §4.33, §11.14; Pokorny 1959: 527-28; and Walde-Pokorny 1973.I: 342-45. He states that he owes this etymology to Gary Rendsburg.

26. Clauson, *Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, p. 580a.

27. Burrow and Emeneau, *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary* p. 123b-124a.

28. For the legitimate role of phonosymbolism within etymology, see Malkiel, *Etymology*, pp. 13, 81, 88, 125-6, 146, 149, 169.

29. Klein, *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 399c.

30. Klein, *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*, p. 282a.

31. Mair, "Southern Bottle-Gourd (*hu-lu*) Myths."

32. *Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*, p. 484a.

33. At the same time there was a linear progression of words from roots to derivatives and from earlier derivatives to subsequent derivatives, there was also a lateral expansion of related meanings from early roots. For example, there seems to be some sort of relationship between *kap* 'seize / grasp / grab' and the English word "keep" which means "hold on to, retain possession of, detain," etc. The latter word can be traced back to Middle English *kepen* and Old English *cēpan* 'seize, hold, guard'. Beyond this, the word "keep" is generally considered to be of obscure origin, but already it appears that there is some semantic and phonemic overlap with *kap* 'seize / grasp / grab'. *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology* (p. 562b) dates *kepen* to 1127 and defines it as "watch for, observe, retain, hold, take, keep; developed from Old English (about 1000) *cēpan* (from Proto-Germanic **kōpjanan*), possibly related to *capian* to look. Old English *capian* is cognate with Old Saxon *capen* in *upcapen* stand out, be visible, Middle Low German *kapen* to gape, Old High German *kapfēn* to look, and Old Icelandic *kōpa* to stare, gape, from Proto Germanic **kap- / kōp*, Indo-European **ĝab- / ĝāb-* watch, look out for (Pokorny 349)." Barnhart then goes on to quote and summarize Murray's long etymological note on "keep": "'The word probably belonged primarily to the vulgar and nonliterary stratum of the language; but it comes up suddenly into literary use about 1000, and that in many senses, indicating considerable previous development.' Murray felt the original sense may have been 'to lay hold' in the literal sense and so extended figuratively to 'keep an eye on, watch,' citing its use to render Latin *observāre* to watch, take note of, and Latin *servare* to watch, observe. He states further that there is an underlying semantic relation between *keep* and *hold*, and further with *have* explaining that the same senses have alternated in use among these words." It seems to me that Murray, without explicitly saying so, has put his finger on a very important, underlying relatedness between "keep" and *kap*.

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published by the Catholic Mission Press in 1927; enlarged and revised according to the 4th French edition. The first English edition of *Chinese Characters* was published in 1915.

FIGURES

Fig. 1. Ancient forms of *jia* 'press from two sides, squeeze'.

*jia*1 夾   to press; to squeeze; double

*jia*2 裌   a lined coat

*jia*1 鋏   pincers; blacksmith's tongs; sword handle; sword;
          two sides of sword; sword with blades at either end
          (now normally pronounced *jia*2)

*jia*4 蛱   a butterfly (insect with wings on either side of its body)

*jia*4 梜   pincers, chopsticks; torture instruments; a box

*jia*4 䀸   to twinkle (of eyes)*

*jia*4 郏   name of a place in Henan (now normally pronounced *jia*2);
          room(s) at side(s) of gate

*jia*4 荚   pods; husks

*jia*1 𥮲   pincers; to pinch

*xia*2 峡   a mountain pass

*xia*2 狭   narrow; strait

*xia*3 陕   a gorge; a defile

*sia*4 浃   moist; soaked; a circuit; a period

*xia*4 硖   a place in Hubei (literal meaning "gorge"; now usually pronounced *xia*2)

*xia*4 颊   cheek(s), jowl(s), jaw(s)

*xie*2 挟   to pinch; press; clasp under the arm; carry; cherish; protect

*xie*1 侠   a hero (normally explained as one who **carries** with him

vitality / strength and / or righteousness that he employs to
aid / support / succor others; etc.). Now usually pronounced
*xia*2.

*jie*1 佽   brave; a hero

*qie*4 怢   pleased; cheerful

*qie*4 匧   a trunk; a chest; long and narrow box; portfolio (two halves
        fold together to store objects placed within)

*qie*4 愜   pleased; satisfied

*qie*4 篋   a trunk; a satchel

*yi*4 瘱   to bury

*yi*4 庡   peace; respect; retired

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*This sinograph is now considered to have the following pronunciations and meanings:

*jie*2   lashes (on either side of the eye)

*zha*3   blink (bringing together the upper and lower eyelids)

*she*4   blink

*jia*2   take a glimpse of

*ya*4   cast playful / flirtatious glance

N.B.: Many of the characters in the main list have multiple pronunciations and meanings. To save space, I have only listed the variant pronunciations and meanings of a few of them.

Fig. 2. Instances of the sinograph used to write the word *jia* 'press from two sides, squeeze' being used as a phonophore in other graphs (except for the last two examples where it is said to be radical). The numerals following the transcriptions indicate the tones of Modern Standard Mandarin. The information presented in this figure is drawn primarily from Wieger, *Chinese Characters*, p. 454ab with a few additions from Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, no. 630 and other sources.

Fig. 3. Early forms of the letter *kaph*.