



**Every breath you take:
notes on the etymology of *ài***

(Wolfgang Behr, UZH)

1. History of the graph (cf. Zhào Jǐnyún 2016)

1.1 First attestations late: Warring states bronzes from Zhōngshān 中山 and in excavated texts from Chǔ 楚



1.1 essentially four forms

𤝵	𤝵	𤝵		愛		爰
---	---	---	--	---	--	---

a. (楚, 晉)	b. (齊)	c. (秦)
-----------	--------	--------

d.

e.

1.2 analyzed by Xǔ Shèn as

- (1) 愛，行兒。从女𤝵聲。(《說文》3350) ~ c./d.
 “*ài*, a manner of walking, derived from 女 (*suī*) ‘walk slow’, *ài* 𤝵 (MC **’ojH* < **q¹əp-s*) is phonophoric.”

OBI BI XZ



- (2) 𤝵，惠也。从心先聲。。(《說文》6743) ~ a.
 “*ài* means ‘to be kind’, derived from ‘heart’, *xiān* 先 (**senH* < **s¹ər-s*) is phonophoric.” [sic!]

1.3 aside: d. → e., a “草书楷化” process beginning in the Sòng-Yuán period, not treated here, cf.:



Cf.

- Chén Shuāngxīn 陈双新, Wáng Zhìqiáng 王强军, “‘Ài’ shì rúhé jiǎnhuà wéi ‘ài’ de” “愛”是如何简化为“爱”的, *Guāngmíng Rìbào* 光明日报 2016.6.12: 7.
- Zhào Jǐnyún 趙瑾昀, “Suǒwèi de jiǎnhuàzì ‘ài wú xīn’ guǒzhēn rúcǐ ma?” 所谓的简化字「爱无心」, 果真如此吗?, *Zhīhū Rìbào* 知乎日报 (<http://daily.zhihu.com/story/8446704>, last acc. 26.VIII.2016)

1.4 earliest character attestations consists of



- a phonophoric 𠄎 (**kj+jH* < **[k]ə[t,p]-s*), glossed as ‘to choke’ in the *Shuōwén* (飮食气并不得息曰𠄎。从反欠。(...) 今變隸作𠄎。SW5567)
- a semantic classifier 心 ‘HEART’ (for an emotion term)





to which much later was added:



- an embellishment element *suī* 攴 ‘to walk slowly’, i.e. the mirror inverted form of *zhǐ* 止 ‘foot’

1.5 meaningless foot embellishment is known since the OBI period (Liú Zhāo 2006: 51)

 (《合》582) —  (《合》581)

 (《合》18319) —  (《合》3195 乙)

 (《合》18077) —  (《合》33284)

 (《合》28129) —  (《合》28982)

1.6 if the “foot” element is reversed and combined with depictions of a standing human body (legs) this results in a well-known type of variation, reflected in *kǎishū* 楷書 doublets like

允 ↔ 𠂔 無 ↔ 舞
 兇 ↔ 𠂔 𠂔~𠂔 ↔ 憂
 [由儿] ↔ 鬼 (厶~止/攵) etc.

• ài belongs to the same type:



𠂔 ↔ 愛

1.7 because Xǔ Shèn has to isolate and explain graphic constituents “at any cost” (cf. Bottéro & Harbsmeier 2008, 2016), he reanalyzes the “foot” element as semantic, giving the complex character a completely forced unetymological “movement” semantic, nowhere attested in texts.

Cf. for a parallel case

- (3) a. 惓，愁也。从心从頁。(《说文》 6899)
 “*yōu* means ‘to worry’, derived from ‘heart’ and ‘leaf’.”
- b. 憂，和之行也。从攴惓聲。《詩》曰：『布政憂憂』。
 (《说文》 3349)
 “*yōu* means ‘a harmonious way of walking’, derived from *suī* ‘to walk slowly’, ‘leaf+heart’ is phonophoric. In a [lost] *Ode* it is said: *Bounteously he spread correct order.*”

1.8 the transition c. 𦍋 → d. 愛 is a simple graphic corruption process reinterpreting 𦍋 as [𠂇+𠂇], which must have occurred in the early medieval period (cf. 𦍋 → 舜). It proceeded from the Qín form which has probably misinterpreted the lower stroke of the phonophoric as a human figure and mechanically added an embellishment “reversed foot” to it:

a.  睡簡 · 日甲 · 82 正
 口臭
 睡簡 · 日甲 · 83 正 →

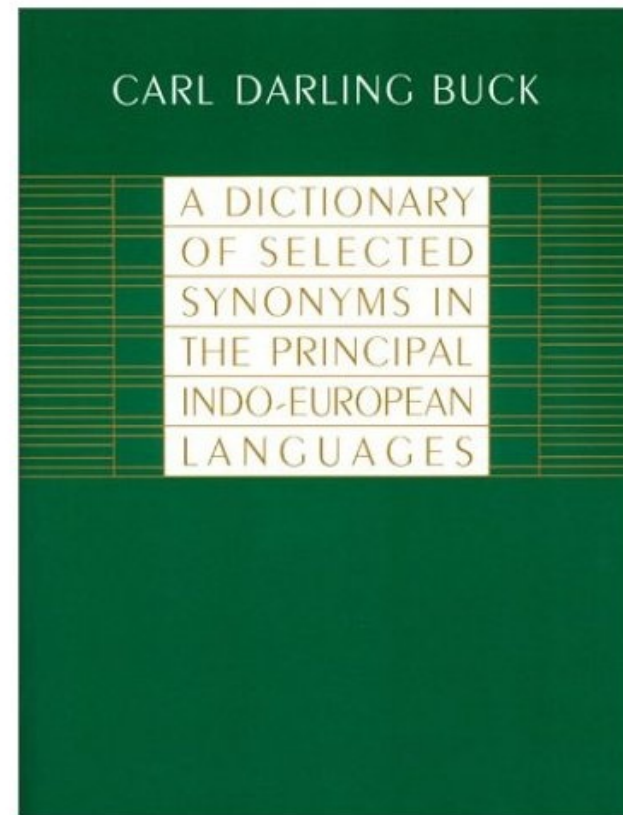
b. 

2. Semantic Typology

What are typical derivations for the word ‘to love’ in **unrelated** language families?

2.1 Indo-European no shared etymon reconstructable!, cf.

Carl Darling Buck,
A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.



2.2 most common semantic developments

APPROVE, PRAISE, BELIEVE IN

HAVE REGARD FOR

NOURISH

FLATTER, CARESS

DESIRE, WISH, LONG FOR

STICK TO, ADHERE

BE FRIENDS WITH

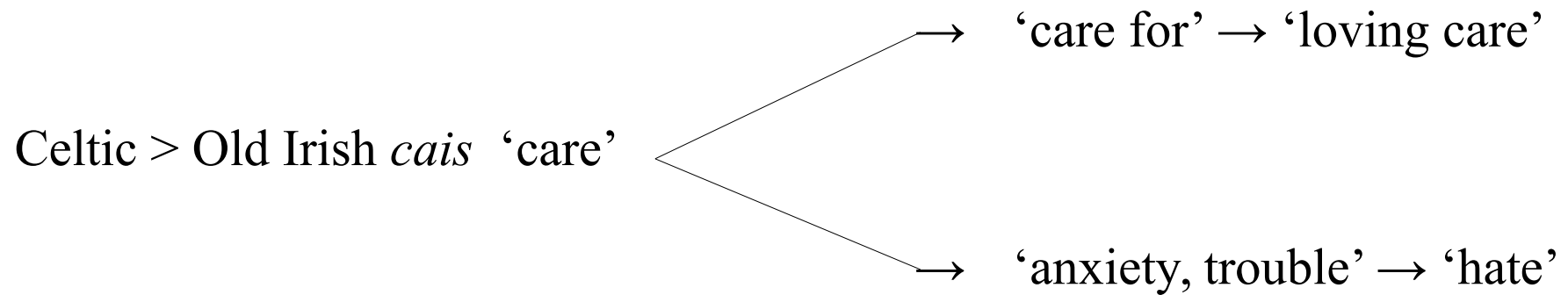
REMEMBER



LOVE

Buck's word-family
16.27 'love' (vb.)

2.3 but notice also:



2.4 in other language families (cf. STARLING etc.):

- . Altaic: BE BEAUTIFUL →
HAVE FUN →
ESTEEM, VALUE, BUY & SELL →
- . Uralic: BE ATTACHED TO, HOLD DEAR →
- . Semitic: WANT, DESIRE, HAVE INTERCOURSE WITH →
FAVOR, FOSTER →
- . Eskimo: PITY, FEEL COMPASSION →
- . Mon-Khmer: PITY, FEEL COMPASSION →

3. Phonology & Morphology

3.1 愛 has the *Guǎngyùn* speller: 烏代切, 影哈上一開 (OC rhyme 隊 1), i.e.

MC $*'ojH < *q^fət-s < *q^fəp-s$ (Baxter & Sagart 2014, accepting Pān's uvular hypothesis)

3.2 homophones in the phonetic series $*'ojH < *q^fəp-s$ mean

- a. 蔓 ‘to cover, hide, conceal’
- b. 僂 ‘to pant, lose the breath’

(cf. 曖 $< *'ajH < *q^fat-s$ ‘to cover, shelter, be dim’, ablaut variant of a.)

all of which occur in loan relationships in the early edited literature.

3.3 morphologically the word must be an exo-active or medio-passive derivation from a verbal root $*q^{(f)}\text{əp-}$ – but which root is that? Given the uvular reconstruction (Pān Wùyún 1997) of the phonophore, the *only* possible root comes from the word families

a. SUCK IN, INHALE, BREATHE

type B

$*q^h(r)\text{əp} > *xip > xī$

吸 ‘inhale’

歙 ‘contract, suckin , inhale’

噏 ‘draw in, together’

翕 ‘draw together, be united’

type A (pharyngealized)

$*q^{hf}\text{əp} > *xop > hē$

歔 ‘sip drink’

b. *-s-exoactive: EXHALE → SIGH AT, BE ANGRY ABOUT

愾 *q^həp-s > *xj+jH > kài ‘sigh with regret, be angry, detest’

僂 *qəp-s > *ojH > ài ‘pant, loose the breath’ (cf. Above)

c. early (probably WZ) merger of *-əp-s/*-ət-s, such that many contacts with the series of 既 (GSR 515) *kət-s, such that

既 *q^hət-s > *xj+jH > xì ‘to rest’ (← ‘take a breath’ ?)

嘸 *q^hət-s > *xj+jH > xì ‘to sigh’ (嘆也。...詩曰：「嘸其嘆矣。」)

etc.

d. prefixed derivation from the same verbal root “exhale, breathe”

氣 *C.q^həp-s > *khj+jH > qì ‘cloudy vapors, odem, pneuma ...’

cf. “etymologizing” late orthography of 既: OBI 𠄎 > DZ 𠄎 > XZ 𠄎

- e. possible **external** parallels in Tibeto-Burman (cf. Schuessler, EDOC, Matisoff, HCSTB, SETC, Jīn Lǐxīn 2013 etc.) include

WT *rngub* p {brngubs} f {brngub} {rngubs}! ‘suck, inhale, breath in’

Jingpho *ma-zop* 31, Dulong *sup* 55, W. Burmese *hrup* ‘snuff up, sip, sup’;

Dimasa *surup* ‘sip, lap, smoke’

Lepcha *hup* ‘a sip, gulp’ etc.

- but high probability of irregular onomatopoetic root!
- to be definitely rejected (Benedict, STC; Matisoff, HCBT 220)

TB *ŋ-(w)a:y ~ ai 愛

3.4 interim summary

- the most likely etymology for *ài* ‘to love’, if not a lexical prime, is its medio-passive derivation from a root **q^(h)əp-(s)* ‘draw in, breathe’

4. Texts

How is this etymology reflected in early texts (if at all)?

4.1 paronomastic puns in the edited literature?

- (4) 孝子之有深愛 [**q^fəp-s*] 者，必有和氣 [**C.q^həp-s*];
 有和氣者，必有愉色；有愉色者，必有婉容。(《禮記:祭義》)
 “Whenever a filial son cherishes deep love [for his parents], he will surely have a harmonious *odem*. When he has a harmonious *odem*, he will surely have a pleasing look, if he has a pleasing look, he will have a compliant demeanor.”
- (5) 謂聲氣 [**C.q^həp-s*] 不同，則恩愛 [**q^fəp-s*] 不接。(《鬼谷子:中經》3)
 “This means that if the *qi* of the sounds are divergent, that benevolence and love will not be connected ...”

4.2 but not at all in the excavated texts, where we find the following lexical range

4.3 bronzes from Zhōngshān

(6) 天子建邦中山（侯）愛（愛） || 乍（作）兹（兹）軍鉞以敬（警）畢（厥）眾。（《中山侯愛銅鉞》）

“The Son of Heaven established a fiefdom in Zhōngshān and made **Ài** its margrave. || He made this martial battle axe to overawe his soldiers.”

(7) 昔者先王綏（慈）悉（愛）百每（民），竹（篤）胃（育）亡疆（疆）。日夜不忘。（《好蚤壺》 JC 9734）

“Formerly, the early kings were kind and **caring** towards the hundred *mín*, sincere and (nourishing=) supportive without limits, day and night not forgetful.”

- (8) [32] 夫古之聖王徃（務）才（在）見（得）擊（賢），其即見（得）民。[33] 旂（故）諱（辭）豐（禮）敬則擊（賢）人至，[34] 廬（愿）**悉（愛）**深則擊（賢）人寤（親），伎（作）斂中則庶民筐（附）。（《中山王方壺》 JC 9735）

“Now, the sage kings of old were assiduous in winning worthiness and, by consequence, won over the people. Therefore, by transmitting traditions and respect, the [quality of being] a worthy person was reached, if prudence and **love** are deep, the [quality of being] a worthy person will be close; by levying taxes with moderation, the common people will be attached [to the ruler].”

4.4 Chǔ manuscripts

a. CARE

(9) □□氏之有天下,厚**恣** (愛) 而薄斂焉,身力以勞百姓。

“[When ...] the clan of [...] possessed the empire, he reinforced the **caring** (=for the people) and made levies lighter, making a personal effort at toiling for the people.” (《容成氏》 35B)

(10) 孔子曰：「夫祭，至敬之本也，所以立生也，不可不慎也，夫喪至**愛**之卒也，所以城（成）死也，不可不慎也...」 (《仲弓》 23)

“Confucius said: ‘As for sacrifices, they are the basis of utmost reverence. Since it is through them that the living are stabilized, one can not afford to be careless about them. As for mourning ceremonies, they are the endpoint of utmost **caring**. Since it is through them that one completes the dead, one can not afford to be careless about them. (...)’”

b. BE SPARING

(11) 汝毋慙（愛）珪璧幣帛於山川,正刑與{德}[...] (《魯邦大旱》)

“*You* should not **be sparing** with (offerings of) *guī*-tablets *bì*-rings, raw and processed silks for the mountains and rivers, but you should [also] correct punishments {and virtue}.”

c. HOLD DEAR, LOVE (?)

(12) 昔周文王問於閔天曰：“余有子四人，惑（或）貴惑（或）愛，惑（或）長惑（或）賢，吾將誰置？（《北大簡：周馴》43-47, cf. Láo Xiǎosēn 2016）

“Once, King Wén asked Hóng Yāo: ‘I have four sons, one of them I treasure, one of them I love, one is the oldest and one the most capable – who of them shall I install (as my heir) in the future?’”

(13) 後余勿然。雖我愛爾、吾無如社)】 稷何。而[爾]必良慎之。（《王居 & 志書乃言》NY7, cf. Chén Jiàn 2011）

“In the future, I will not behave like that. Even if hold you dear/love you, how would I consider you as important as the (gods of the soil and grain=) the state?! You will have to be really careful about that!”

5. some conclusions

- *ài* 愛 is likely to be a derivation from a verbal root ‘to draw in, inhale, suck in’.
- this root is shared with *qì* 氣~气 ‘odem, pneuma’, whose prefix or preinitial we are unable to reconstruct building exclusively upon internal evidence
- the etymology may be reflected in the early edited literature, but is absent in the oldest paleographic record
- the very late appearance of the term *ài* is most likely due to the availability of another word for “love”: *rén* 仁, famously defined as 愛善之謂仁 in 《語叢一》 (92) “Love of the good, this is called humanheartedness” or as 愛人 “to love others” in *Lúnyǔ* (12.22), i.e. since the mid-ZG period

- the Sino-Tibetan etymon reflected by the Written Tibetan (WT) noun *snying* ‘heart, mind, breast’, also used verbally as ‘to love, show affection towards’, was gradually replaced by *xin* 心 ‘heart’ as a noun in Old Chinese (OC).
- *snying* is cognate to OC *rén* 仁 ‘to show affection for others, love’ (Baxter 1991)
- probably the Confucian appropriation of *rén* 仁 (~ 忞, 忞, 懸, OC *niŋ) as an ethical category and the semantic narrowing of its exoactive derivation *niŋ-s represented by 佞 ‘be eloquent’, left a lexical gap for the activity of ‘loving’, this was slowly filled by *ài* 愛 (OC *q¹əp-s).