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A FEW SAMPLES FROM THE *A*-SECTION OF THE PROSPECTIVE ANALYTIC DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH ETYMOLOGY (*ache*, *akimbo*, *aloof*, AND *askance*)

Abstract. *Ache*, *akimbo*, and *askance* are words whose etymology has not been discovered despite numerous attempts to trace their initial form and country of origin. By contrast, the derivation of *aloof* is known, but it is instructive to watch researchers' groping in the dark for more than two centuries and sometimes even now looking for a better solution. The etymologies offered below are entries in my prospective dictionary of English etymology. Each of them opens with an abstract of its own.

Keywords: etymology, analytic dictionary, etymological dictionary, English

Since bringing out a showcase volume of *ADEE* (Liberman 2008), I have been busy writing the dictionary from *A* to *Z*. This dictionary features only words without established cognates and therefore of disputable or unknown origin. No solutions I offer (in so far as I can do so) have a chance of becoming final. If a word has defied generations of scholars, it will probably keep doing so in the future. Quite naturally, I am interested in comments on the chosen format, the completeness of the surveys (I strive to make them exhaustive, but it is hard not to miss the most recent publications), and the cogency of the arguments. The genre of the article does not pretend to break new ground; for many years von Wartburg was offering to *Festschriften* and journals only prospective entries from *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Harold Whitehall, who devoted a good deal of time to *Middle English Dictionary*, spoke about "interim etymologies." This label can be applied to the samples selected for the present publication.

A note on the bibliography is in order here. In the surveys, numerous dictionaries are mentioned. Their full titles with dates and publishers would have swamped the references and nearly doubled the size of the article. Some dictionaries are well-known, others are partly forgotten, but the necessary information (which is of no great consequence in this context) can be easily regained

from WorldCat, *ADDE*, and my *Bibliography of English Etymology* (2010). These are the authors left out of the references appended to the present article: *AEeW* (Ferdinand Holthausen, *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*), *AEW* (Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*), Bailey (1721), Casaubon (1650), *CD* (*The Century Dictionary*), Cotgrave (1655), Joseph Wright, ed., *The English Dialect Dictionary* 1898–1905, Florio (1659), FT (Falk-Torp, *Norwegisch-dänisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*), Feist, *Gazophylacium Anglicanum* (1689), Grose (1785), Halliwell (1855), *ID* (*The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language*, 1850 and 1882–87), *IEW* (Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*), Junius (1743), (Samuel) Johnson (1755), Johnson-Todd (1827), KM and KS (Mitzka's and Seebold's latest editions of Kluge), Lemon (1783), *MED* (*Middle English Dictionary*), Minsheu (1617), *NEW* (Jan de Vries, *Nederlands etymologisch woordenboek*), *ODEE* (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*), Eduard Mueller (Müller) (1865–67; 1878), *OED*, Palsgrave (1530), Richardson (1858), *SAOB* (*Svenska Akademiens Ordbok*), *SEO* (Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok*), Serenius (1737 and 1753), Skeat (from 1882, etc.) Skinner (1671), Stormonth (1885), Tooke (1798–1805), W (*Webster's New International*...), Wedgwood (*A Dictionary of English Etymology,* 1859–65, 1872, 1878, 1888), Weekley (*An Etymological Dictionary...,* 1921 and 1924), WHirt (Hirt's edition of Weigand, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1909–10), and (Thomas) Wright's *DOPE* (*Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English*...). Superscripts refer to the consecutive editions.

The abbreviations are self-explanatory: Bav. – Bavarian, Du. – Dutch, E. – English, G. – German, Go. – Gothic, Gk. – Classical Greek, Ir. Gael. – Irish Gaelic, L. – Latin, LG – Low German, MLG – Middle Low German, ModE. – Modern English, ModG. – Modern German, OE – Old English, OF – Old French, ON – Old Norse, Sw. – Swedish, WFr. – West Frisian.

ACHE (1000)

Although ache *was recorded in Old English, its origin remains undiscovered. A few German words, notably* Ekel *'disgust,' may be related to* ache, *but all of them were attested late, and their origin is also unclear. No direct path leads from Classical Greek* ἄχος *to* ache, *but it is not entirely improbable that in various languages a sizable group of words for pain, loathing, and the like had a symbolic value and that their vaguely definable base was* akh- ~ ak- ~ ag-. *One should therefore avoid a rigid derivation of* ache *from the Indo-European root* *ag- 'drive.' *If* ache *and a few similar-sounding Low German words are related, we are dealing with a limited North Sea isogloss. It is likely that the settlers of Britain brought the noun* *akiz *and a corresponding strong verb from the continent.*

The sections are devoted to 1) the date of the appearance of ache *in English and some of its more obvious cognates, 2) attempts to trace* ache *directly to Classical Greek, 3) a few improbable etymologies of* ache, *4) possible ties between* ache *and the interjection* ach, *5) derivation of* ache *from the root* *ag-, *and 6) the role of taboo and the vowel* a *in words for pain and physical deformities; this is followed by a general conclusion.*

1. The date of the first occurrence of *ache* cannot be determined with absolute precision. The word turned up in *Lechdoms* and in Aelfric. 1000 is the year given in the original edition of *OED*. The online edition says only 'early Old English' and 'Old English.' The noun (*æce ~ ece*) and the strong verb of the sixth class (*akan*) go back to the preliterate epoch, but it remains unclear whether the settlers of Britain coined both in their new homeland or brought them from the continent. All the German and English look-alikes, which are frequently given in dictionaries, are of disputable origin. Among them are G. *Ekel* 'disgust, loathing' and early ModG. *erken* 'loathe,' which, in turn, resembles E. *irk*. None of them predates the middle or early modern periods, and *irk* may be an Anglicized reshaping of ON *yrkja* 'work' (verb). If so, it does not belong with LG *erken*. The age of LG *ekel* (adjective) is also beyond reconstruction. Still another look-alike is G. *heikel* 'tricky; persnickety,' known since the end of the sixteenth century. To the extent that the words under consideration are as opaque as E. *ache* (cf. their different treatment in KM and KS, among others), setting up their protoforms is pure algebra; see an excellent discussion of *Ekel* in WHirt. If the first *e* in *ekel* arose by umlaut, the word may be related to E. *ache*, but their affinity would shed no light on their etymology. Junius, a native speaker of Dutch, hesitatingly compared *ache* and *eckel* (his spelling) 'ulcer, sore,' but Jellinghaus 1898:463 listed *ache* among the words lacking correspondences in Low German.

2. Most of the old etymologists (Minsheu, Casaubon, Skinner, Lemon, and others) derived *ache* from Gk. *ἄχος* 'grief, pain.' Johnson shared this opinion and (as *OED* explains) was responsible for the spelling *-ch-*, which allowed him to point out the common origin of the two words. This explanation recurs in all the later 'thick' etymological dictionaries and in the most authoritative books on the history of English, for example, Skeat 1887 (1892):354 and HL:832. In the noun, *k* was palatalized before a front vowel, and in some dialects, for instance, in Cheshire and Shropshire, but not in Standard English, the phonetically regular *ch* prevails. Skeat (loc. cit.) wrote: *ache* has final *-k* "by confusion with the verb, for which the pronunciation *eik* is correct. The hardening of the *ch* to *k* was also partly due, in my view, to a pedantic derivation of the sb. [noun] from the Gk. *ἄχος*, with which it has no connection whatever. See Murray's Dictionary, where the author observes the 'the "O.P. rioters," ignorant of the Shakespearean distinction of *ake*, verb, and *ache*, substantive,

ridiculed the stage-pronunciation of the sb. by giving it to the vb. in 'John Kemble's *head-aitches'*." For early evidence concerning Cheshire see Wilbraham 1821:19 and for *-k* elsewhere cf. A Constant Reader 1816. Since the post-radical consonants in *ἄχος* and *ache* do not match, the words cannot be related. Borrowing such a word from Classical Greek into Old English was out of the question; also, Old English had a spirant that would have corresponded to Greek *χ* much better than the stop *k*. Consequently, if there was a Proto-Indo-European etymon of *ache*, it would have had postvocalic **g*. This conclusion led to looking for words with radical *ag-*.

3. Untraditional and improbable etymologies of *ache* are relatively few. In a tribute to folk etymology, *ache* was connected with *aitch-bone*, "that part being much subject to a distemper called *ischias* we corruptly call sciatica" (*Gazophylacium*).Whiter 1822–25, II:723–24 said that *ache* is not related to either *itch* or *ouch* but offered no suggestions. Thomson 1826 cited the Greek word and G. *Ecke* 'corner', as related to *ache*. The early editions of Webster (until 1864) referred to the 'Oriental' verb *ozek* 'press.' It made its way into *ID*[1] but soon disappeared from dictionaries. Diefenbach 1851, I:5 thought that *ache* might be related to Go. *agls** 'disgraceful' (unless it is a noun meaning 'punishment': see Feist[4]), but the Modern English cognate of *agls** is *ail*, not *ache*. Richardson compared *ache* and OE **eacan* 'increase' (verb; ModE. *eke*), because *ache* is 'a prolonged, continued pain.' Mackay 1877, who attempted to trace most English words to Irish Gaelic, derived *ache* from Ir. *acaid*. As usual, Makovskii offered a farrago of fanciful hypotheses on the subject. First, he contended that *ache* is a so-called letter word, derived from the first letter of OE *hearm* 'pain,' as though in early Old English *H* was pronounced *aitch* (1980:55; cited approvingly by Shchur 1982:154). Later he discovered that words meaning 'suffering' are often connected with those for 'going' and listed Sw. *aka* 'go' as a congener of *ache* (1988:141). This guess yielded to another one. Words for 'big,' from 'swollen, he noted, are associated with words for 'pain'; hence the possibility of connecting *ache* and OE *eacnean*, Go. *aukan* 'increase,' and so forth (thus was Richardson's etymology reinvented, with no concern for the non-matching vowels). Finally, he formulated an all-encompassing theory of "a pagan vision of the universe." In those pagan times the root **ak-* allegedly meant 'tear apart.' The Supreme Being is said to have torn apart Chaos and universal Harmony (Order), but human beings strive to tear apart the mortal body in the hope of coming closer to the Supreme Being and creating harmony on earth. This is said to be the origin of *ache*; cf. E. dial. *aichan* 'a small bivalve' (1991:141, and the 1999 dictionary; judging by its distribution, *aichan* is a Celtic word, and *EDD* notes that its etymology is unknown).

4. According to a much more realistic idea, *ache* goes back to an interjection resembling G. *ach!* (so very doubtfully, Johnson-Todd, at *ake*). Cf. anonymous 1861:673: "… the German *ach*, 'alas,' is etymologically the same as the English

substantive *ache* – the mere animal cry being uttered only in rare instances of the sharpest bodily pain." But the protoform of OE *æce ~ ece* must have been **akiz*, and *ak*- lacks the spirant necessary for the production of the likes of *ach*. (The Danish interjections *ak!* and *ok!* are believed to be an adaptation of G. *ach!* Danish does not have a velar spirant. *Ok!,* presumably of the same origin, also occurs in Swedish.) By contrast, Go. *auhjan* 'make a noise,' if it was *aúhjan*, could be derived from a word like *okh!* Wedgwood did not find the Greek derivation of *ache* wrong but, true to his general views on the development of language, decided that an interjection was its more probable source. From him this etymology became widely known. It occurs in *ID*[2], and even the cautious Holthausen endorsed it, but *CD* denied the existence of a path from *ach* to *ache*.

5. Gradually, the lines hardened. It was decided that *ache* must have an Indo-European root and that this root is **ag*-. In the supplement to the first edition of his dictionary, Skeat, with reference to Curtius and Fick, noted that *ache* could not be related to *ἄχος* and cited L. *agere* 'drive' as a true cognate of the English word. He subsumed *acre* and *acorn* under the same root **ag*-. Möller 1879:503 offered an early variation on the same etymology. Similar suggestions can be found in Wood 1907:353, more in Wood 1914:499/1, and in Loewe 1918:99–100. Wood's net (1914) was, as always, cast very broadly: alongside *ache*, he mentioned Gk. *ἄγος* 'a great sin incurring a curse; guilt,' Go. *akran* 'fruit, produce' (related to E. *acorn*); MLG *eken ~ ecken* 'fester' (verb), and *ek ~ ak* 'puss, boil' (perhaps from the idea of swelling), and Proto-Slavic **aga* 'berry.' In this list one can easily recognize fragments of various etymologies. It is unlikely that all the words he mentioned belong together. The **ag*- etymology has the support of *IEW* and recurs in numerous later dictionaries, though some prefer to stay on the fence. W[1,2] were noncommittal, but W[3] cited LG *äken* 'hurt, fester' and "perhaps" Gk. *ἄγος*. Polomé 1999:132 was also uncertain whether *ache* is allied to words for 'sin, guilt' (guilt as a feeling giving pain) or for loathing, but found the second alternative less attractive.

The frequentative form of L. *agere* is *agitare* 'agitate,' which seems to provide a link between 'drive' and 'pain.' Seebold 1970:75 found the connection between *ager* and *ache* quite probable, especially in light of ON *aka* 'to be pressed, beset.' Anttila 1986:19–20 cited the familiar Low German verbs and Bav. *acken* 'hurt.' The Bavarian example is problematic, for nowhere else in southern dialects do we encounter cognates of LG *äcken*. As an especially telling semantic parallel he gives (from *SEO*) Sw. *värka ~ köra i tänderna* 'the teeth ache.' *Köra* is a synonym of *aka ~ åka* (ON *aka*). *It drives in the teeth* means 'my teeth give me pain.' Similar phrases occur in Finnish (can they be adaptations of their Swedish analogs?). In my opinion, this metaphor does not go too far. The word *ache* designates such a basic feeling that tracing it to a verb meaning 'drive' carries little conviction. We say *he drives me crazy*, but it does not follow that the concept of driving underlies *crazy* or *mad*.

6. Our chances of finding the etymology of *ache* are slim. Words for 'ache' and 'pain' are often changed under the influence of taboo, so that we may be dealing with an alteration of the original form. As de Saussure 1912 pointed out, in Indo-European, words for physical deformities often have the root vowel *a* (see also a detailed discussion of this idea by Specht 1940:114–15; neither paid attention to *ache*, though de Saussure mentioned G. *heikel*). Gk. *ἄχος* and *ἄγος* may belong with OE *æce* (< **akiz*) not as cognates but as sound symbolic formations whose ultimate history we are unable to penetrate (cf. *AEW*, *aka*). The importance of the factor de Saussure noticed remains unclear. Attempts to ascribe a certain role to individual phonemes, rather than groups of phonemes, have often been made. An association between short *i* and small size need not be questioned; whether similar ties exist elsewhere is very much in doubt (see some notes on this question in Panagl 1981–83:153). On the other hand, E. *yucky*, G. *Ekel*, and the Low German verbs cited above, along with some related adjectives, despite their late attestation, are probably related to *ache*. They and their likes (such as E. *irk*, G. *heikel*, and early ModG. *erkel*) are hard to etymologize. They tend to have a symbolic origin, may interact with one another, and are easily borrowed (in today's German they trace, with some regularity, to Low German or Dutch, and see what is said above about Danish and Swedish). It is anybody's guess whether some interjections belong with them. They may, and even Gk. *ἄχος* may have a comparable origin. The vaguely defined base would be approximately *akh- ~ ak- ~ ag-*. *Ache*, it seems, is a limited North Sea isogloss without ties to the rest of Indo-European.

AKIMBO (1400)

The numerous attempts to find the etymology of akimbo *have failed. The word has been traced to It.* asghembo *'askance, obliquely', Ir. Gael.* cam *'crooked', to the phrase* can-bow *(suggesting a vessel with two handles)*, keen bow *(with reference to sharp elbows), Icel.* kengboginn *'crooked-crooked' (a tautological compound), and a few other words. Each hypothesis has been discussed at length and rejected. Perhaps* a kembol(l), *the puzzling synonym of* akimbo, *should have been given more attention. A successful etymology of* akimbo *should explain where that synonym came from, why it was ousted by the form now current, why in the earliest recorded example the man put one hand (and not even an arm) akimbo*, *and why this word was in former times considered colloquial or vulgar.*

The sections are devoted to 1) the pronunciation and meaning of akimbo *and its alternate form* a kemboll, *2) suggestions that* akimbo *is a word of Italian or Irish Gaelic origin, 3) the idea that* akimbo *developed from a simile 'a man with his arms on the hips is like a vessel with two handles', 4) the alleged derivation of* akimbo *from ON* kengboginn 'crooked', *and 5) the possibility of deriving* akimbo *from* a kembol.

1. The corresponding entries in *OED* and *CD* offer long, even if incomplete, surveys of the attempts to discover the origin of *akimbo*. For a long time, beginning with 1400, the main verb used with *akimbo* was *set*. Minsheu listed *kem-Bow*, *ken-Bow*, *kem-Bol*, and *ken-Bol*. Thus, he recognized the fact that the word was a compound and took the otherwise incomprehensible *bol* for a variant of E. *bow. Kembol* had sufficient currency in the seventeenth century to merit our attention. *OED* quotes a 1652 sentence with *kenbol*. Cotgrave, Minsheu's contemporary, wrote: "*Se quarrer*, to strout, or square it, looke big on it, *carrie his arms a kemboll* braggadocio-like," and Torriano, "an Italian and Professor of the Italian Tongue in London," has, in the English part of his dictionary, *kemboll, with armes set one* (sic) *kemboll*, *le braccia in croce* (his gloss of *akimbo* 'with one's arms crossed', rather than 'on one's hips' looks unexpected). The variant with the vowel *e*, apparently, from *kemboll*, seems to have been prevalent even a hundred years after the publication of Torriano's work. Serenius gave only the form *kembo*, possibly, a blend of *kimbo* and *kembol*. Especially characteristic is Lemon's remark: "Kembo: commonly pronounced *he set his arms akimbo*, but it happens to be neither, for it evidently derived à καμπύλος, curvus, bent. Root *καμπύλω* 'flecto, curve; to bend'." We may disregard Lemon's Greek etymology (he traced most words of English to Greek) but should note his almost apologetic tone. In his opinion, the English word was a corruption (to use the verb in vogue another hundred years later) of a Greek one. Around him he heard people say *akimbo* but considered it to be a perversion of *kembo*.

Zero 1879:212 offered the following comment: "Turning to *Cambre*, we find 'crooked, boughtie, bowed, cambrell-like; vaulted, arched, bent, or built arch-wise'. Now a *cambrell*, of which, I suppose, *kemboll* is another form, means the hock of a beast ('Topsell's Beasts,' see Halliwell), a sufficiently good analogy for persons squaring their elbows. *Gambrill* also meant the stick placed by butchers between the shoulders of a dressed sheep to keep the carcass square and open, where the analogy to *akimbo* may also, though more faintly, be discerned." *OED* lists *camber*, *cambrel*, and *gambrel*, but not *kembol* or *kemboll*. The word appears only among the variants of *akimbo*. Zero's reference to Halliwell is correct, but there we find only *kemboll*: "Arms on kemboll, i.e. a-kimbo." The suggestion that *kembol* is a variant of *cambrell* can, to my mind, be entertained. See more about this word at the end of the entry.

The exchange between *m* and *n* in the first element must have been due to either assimilation (*nb* to *mb*) or dissimilation (*mb* to *nb*), depending on whether the first element had final *n* or *m*. The meaning of *akimbo* has not changed over time, though the word expanded slightly its sphere and acquired such occasional senses as 'askew, awry; in disorder'; it can also be used with reference to other limbs than arms. In the 1400 example from Beryn we read ... *set his hond in kenebowe*. If such was the original context for *akimbo*, with *hond* in the singular, it weakens the idea

Weekley defended with special vigor (*akimbo* = 'a vessel with two handles', see below), especially because he (1926:2–3) was among those who emphasized the fact that early lexicographers (Bailey, Johnson, Todd, and Richardson) called *akimbo* a colloquialism or vulgarism (see also the quotation from *CD* below); Grose described it as cant (cf. Weekley 1926:2–3). "Setting one's arms *a kinbaw*, vulgarly pronounced *a kimbo*" was, according to Grose, a bullying attitude. I would like to suggest that it may even have been interpreted as a sexual innuendo, comparable to putting one's finger to the nose or biting one's thumb in the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. Perhaps the insult was suggested by the elbow(s) sticking out. In such a case the crookedness would have been important: cf. giving the finger, nowadays, a universally understood scurrilous taunt. Also, if we take seriously the fact that in the earliest recorded example *one hand* was "set akimbo," the hand may have been put on the person's crotch.

In *The Tale of Beryn*, which at one time was erroneously attributed to Chaucer and circulated in the scholarly literature as "The Second Merchant's Tale," we read about a wager between the protagonist and 'the gentil hoost'. Beryn asks the sergeants (*seriauntis*) to leave him alone, whereupon "The hoost made an hidouse cry, in gesolreut þe haut, / And set his hond in kenebowe…" (Beryn, 1837–1838: "The host gave a terrible cry at the top of his voice [in going up the scale, he did not miss a single note] and put his hand *in kenebowe*"). He responded violently: "Do you dare challenge me? Whatever you may say or assert, is of no avail," etc. Braggadocio and defiance are evident. The host did not put his hand *in kenebowe* (wherever it was) for nothing. The French original has no word corresponding to *in kenebowe*, so that we cannot judge how the host defied Beryn, but he evidently tried to bully and perhaps offend him.

2. Very early *kimbo* began to be used as an independent adjective, and in many dictionaries *akimbo* appears under *kimbo*. Skinner derived it from It. *a schembo ~ a sghembo* 'crookedly, obliquely'. Mackay 1877 dismissed *a schembo* as a ghost word, but *aschembo ~ asghembo* 'aslope, askance', *schibiccio* 'a crackling or crooked winding in and out' and *sedere a schimbiccio* 'to sit crooked upon one's legs, as tailors do' (Wedgwood[1]) exist, and at first sight *ashembo* looks like a possible etymon of *akimbo*: both the sounds and the sense match tolerably well. That is why Skinner's etymology had a long life. Not only Samuel Johnson, who followed Skinner in most cases, but also Mueller (Müller) supported it in both editions of his dictionary (even though he wondered what had happened to initial *s*-), and so did Wedgwood[1]. The well-known drawback of an etymology like Skinner's is that we are not told why an Italian word became popular in Middle English and acquired a sense it never had in the lending language (cf. a similar dilemma encountered in the search for the origin of *aloof*). We may therefore dismiss *asghembo* from consideration.

Another solution connected *akimbo* (or rather *kimbo*) with Ir. Gael. *cam* 'crooked', the alleged source of It. *asghembo*. In Webster's dictionary, *cam* was cited as the etymon of *akimbo*, alongside of It. *sghembo*, through 1874; a typical statement along these lines will be found in *ID*[2] (1882). Yet the sum of Ir. *cam* and E. *bow* does not inspire confidence. *CD* pointed out that the phrase was invented for the sole purpose of explaining *akimbo*, but, even if it existed, 'a crooked bow' sounds odd, because a bow is always bent or 'crooked'. Skeat[1] (the main text and 1879) defended the Gaelic etymology, but Skeat was too astute a scholar to pass by without comment the gloss 'crooked-crooked'. He added an interesting paragraph on tautological compounds: "This is quite a habit of the English language, especially in place-names. Thus *Derwenwater* means 'white water-water', *lukewarm* means 'warm-warm' and so on." He was quite right (see Liberman 2007; the entry *slowworm* in *ADEE*, and the etymology of Víðarr in Liberman forthcoming, Chapter 2), but reference to tautological compounds does not save a hopeless etymology.

The idea that *akimbo* goes back to *keen* and *bow* is also old. *CD* declared it the only acceptable one, with the previous explanations rejected as "certainly erroneous." I will quote *CD* at length (the abbreviations will be expanded or slightly changed): "… < ME (once) in *kenebowe*, i. e., 'in keen bow', in a sharp bend, at an acute angle, presenting a sharp elbow…; *kene*, E. *keen*, sharp-pointed, sharp-edged (in common use in Middle English as applied to the point of a spear, pike, dagger, goad, thorn, hook, anchor, etc., or the edge of a knife, sword, ax, etc.); *bowe*, E. *bow*, a bend. … In its earliest use, and often later, the term connotes a bold or defiant attitude, involving, perhaps, an allusion to *keen* in its other common Middle English sense of 'bold." Skeat, in the supplement to the first edition of his dictionary, noted that ME *kene* "is not used to denote 'sharp' in such a context, and *OED* echoed Skeat's verdict: "This sense of *keen* would be unusual in Middle English, where it overwhelmingly designates objects that are able to cut or pierce, such as weapons."

3. Todd (in Johnson-Todd) wrote: "Serenius considers the Icel. *kime*, *kimpell*, ansa, the handle of a pot or jug, as likely to have suggested our word; and in our old lexicography, the word is *kembol*, which Sherwood renders in the following phrase, comfortably to this etymon, with arms set on *kemboll* les bras courbez en anse." (Robert Sherwood and James Howell were the editors of the posthumous edition of Cotgrave's dictionary.) The reference to Serenius 1757 is correct (the etymology appears in the entry *kembo*, in a footnote). Icel. *kimi* 'hook, *etc*.' and *kimpill* 'haystack' are also bona fides words, but no dictionary I have consulted glosses either of them as 'handle of a pot or jug'. Yet the idea that a person with arms akimbo looks like a vessel with two handles bore fruit. Weekley devoted several publications to its defense (1907–10:354–55; 1908; 1926:2–5, and see the

corresponding entries in both of his dictionaries), without referring to Serenius or Todd. The analogies are fully convincing, but the derivation has several drawbacks. Weekley suggested that the original form had been *can-bow*: *bow*, as in *elbow*, *rainbow*, *saddle-bow*, and so forth, with *can* meaning 'vessel for liquids'. He failed to find a Middle English variant *kin* for *can* and referred to the pronunciation *min* for *man*, *demnition* for *damnation* (Dickens), and *kin* (the modal verb) for *can*, recorded in American English (1926:5, note 2). *Rainbow* and the rest are transparent compounds, while **canbow* and **kinbow*, allegedly used only in a figurative sense, look like forms reconstructed to justify the existence of *akimbo*. Initial *a* needs an explanation too. Perhaps we should also remember that Grose called the pronunciation *kimbow* a vulgar alteration of *kimbaw*. There is no certainty that we understand even the second element of *akimbo* correctly. Finally, to repeat, in the 1400 example, one hand (not even an arm) was set akimbo, and nothing in a vessel having the shape of an amphora invites obscene allusions. Weekley's etymology is the only one cited with a question mark in *MED*.

4. In the supplement to the first edition of his dictionary, mentioned above, Skeat referred to the form *a-kingbow*, which he found in Thomas Wright's *DOPE*, set up its etymon as Icel. *í keng* 'into a crook', and cited Icel. *kengboginn* 'bent into a crook'. *Keng*, the accusative of *kengr*, is a cognate of E. *kink*, and *boginn* is the past participle of *bjúga* 'to bow, bend' (masculine). The change of *e* to *i*, which Skeat did not discuss, would have been the same as in the word *England* and a few others. The author of this etymology was Eiríkr Magnússon, who shared his idea with Skeat before he made it public (anonymous 1881). At that time, Skeat accepted the Scandinavian derivation of *akimbo* with enthusiasm. Björkman 1900:245 and 292, note 2 supported Skeat, but Scott, the etymologist for *CD*, dismissed it without giving any reasons (it ended up in the group of "certainly erroneous" conjectures). And indeed, the Skeat-Magnússon etymology has few advantages over the previous ones. Given *kengboginn* as the original form, we cannot help wondering how *a-* appeared in *akimbo* and how final *-inn* turned into *-o*. The no longer felt colloquial (vulgar) connotations of *akimbo* remain unaccounted for.

In connection with the Scandinavian hypothesis, it is instructive to follow Wedgwood's treatment of *akimbo* over the years. In the first edition of his dictionary, he cited It. *asghembo* and added Gael. *cam* 'crooked, curvy,' It. *gibbo* 'crooked, arsy-varsy', and Gk. *σκαμβος* 'crooked, esp. applied to the legs' (Florio; not in Classical Greek!). His propensity for an indiscriminate heaping up of forms from various languages overshadowed the strong sides of his work. For example, we are not told whether the Gaelic, Italian, and the Greek words are related to one another and to *asghembo*. From the second edition he expunged all of them and added Du. *schampen* 'to slip'. In the next edition, the text underwent no alterations.

In the fourth (and last) edition, Wedgwood quoted Beryn, added *anse* 'the handle or ear of a pot, cup, &c, with arms akemboll, Cotgrave', and, most surprisingly, removed *asghembo*. Usually, when he introduced changes, he added an asterisk before the entry; yet no sign accompanies *akimbo* in any of the consecutive editions. He returned to *akimbo* in his book *Contested Etymologies* (1882:1; polemic with Skeat). His objections to *kengboginn* are valid. This word, he said, "does not appear ever to have been applied to the position of the arms in the sense of akimbo, and it is extremely difficult to suppose that such a word would have been caught up out of Icelandic or Norse into English and used exclusively in a special application which it never had in its native language." However, as late as 1969, *ODEE* favored the Old Norse etymon of *akimbo*.

5. In the last edition of his dictionary, Skeat repeated the Scandinavian etymology of *akimbo* and added: "Very doubtful, a guess." In the online text of *OED*, the etymological part of the entry *akimbo* has been rewritten. Weekley's examples of vessels with two handles have been incorporated, but the editors offered no solution. Nor is there enough evidence for discovering how *akimbo* was coined. Contemporary dictionaries, if they do not say *origin unknown*, either favor 'keen bow' or the 'kingboginn' etymology. Sometimes they list both as equally feasible. At present, one can only risk another shot in the dark. All the conjectures offered so far seem to be inadequate. A native etymon of *akimbo* (*keen bow*, *can bow*, and so forth) hardly existed; it is safer to look in the direction of French. The word surfaced in 1400, which means that, most likely, it was borrowed (if indeed it was borrowed) some time after 1350. Then *akimbo* disappeared from texts for two centuries and, when it became widely known, it was felt to be low or vulgar. Perhaps *akimbo* was 'low' from the start and became stylistically neutral only in the nineteenth century.

It may have been a mistake to treat *kembol ~ kemboll* as an alteration of *kenbowe*. Wedgwood said in *Contested Etymologies* that *kimbo* or *kembow ~ kenbow* might "well be developed out of *kemboll*, but hardly the converse." This is true. Perhaps *kenbowe* was a folk-etymological alteration of *kembol(l)* 'the hock of a beast' (assuming that it was a variant of *cambrell*). Putting one's hand on the lower part of one's leg may have been an obscene gesture. *Kembol* is an opaque word and was such in Minsheu's days. A search for its derivation cannot be easy, because *kembol* did not surface in Middle English. At any rate, *MED* does not list it. Folk etymology may have been active in turning **in ~ on kembol* into *in kenebowe* or some similar form, but a more or less transparent *kenebowe* would not have become *kembol* (unless at one time it enjoyed great popularity but found no reflection in any extant text and was later completely forgotten – an unlikely scenario). When **in ~ on kembol* changed into **akembol*, *akimbol*, *akimbaw*, and *akimbo*, *bow* aroused an association with *elbow*, and the modern meaning

established itself. Sometimes folk etymology went even further. *EDD* mentions *kingbow* 'akimbo'. All this is even less than Skeat's "very doubtful, a guess," but it seems that, as long as we stay with the form *akimbo*, we will never discover its etymology, while, starting with *kembol*, we may perhaps see some light.

ALOOF (1549)

Aloof*, originally a nautical term, seems to have been borrowed from Dutch. Swedish, sometimes proposed as the lending language, is less likely. The element* loof *refers to a luff, a contrivance for altering the ship's course. Skeat was the first to explain the origin of this word. Although almost obvious, this derivation baffled researchers for more than two centuries. The entry discusses various old conjectures, which are interesting as a chapter in the history of etymological science.*

The etymology of the adverb *aloof* has been solved once and for all, but dictionaries, for no serious reason, still sometimes say *probably* before giving the solution. Though nowadays *aloof* is used only in the figurative sense, it originated as a nautical phrase and occurred in the forms *a loofe*, *a luf*, *alowfe*, and so forth (*OED*). In the earliest extant examples, it appears as an order to the steersman to go to windward, and in 1867 *aloof* was explained as the old word for 'keep your luff in the act of sailing to the wind' (*OED*; see also S.G. 1912). The luff was a contrivance for altering a ship's course. *Aloof* is undoubtedly *a-loof*, and *probably* in contemporary dictionary entries reflects the uncertainty only about the language from which *luff* was borrowed: Dutch or Scandinavian. We have no evidence to solve the question, though Dutch seems to be a more realistic choice.

As a matter of curiosity, the older hypotheses may be mentioned. Skinner derived *aloof* from *all-off*, and his derivation remained lexicographers' favorite for two centuries. It can be found in Bailey, Johnson, Johnson-Todd, and *ID*[1], but *ID* also suggested *aloft* as a possible etymon. Mahn (in Webster-Mahn, 1864) too vacillated between *all of* and *aloft*. Webster 1855 and 1860 wondered whether *aloof* was related to the verb *leave*, and Dwight 1862:833 echoed this question. Hoppe 1859 and Browne 1870 knew no other etymology of *aloof* than *all off*. Browne's statement aroused Skeat's ire (1871), but Skeat was wrong in ascribing this etymology to Keightly: it is much older. Dasent 1865 wrote a scathing review of Latham's revision of Johnson (see more about it in the entry *askance*) and proposed numerous etymologies of English words. The review appeared without a signature in a journal, but he included it in his book (Dasent 1873) and thus revealed his authorship. A brilliant translator from Icelandic and Norwegian and an amateur philologist, he often saw Icelandic roots where they did not exist. Latham traced *aloof* to "A.-S. *on lyfte* = windward: see Aloft." Dasent's review is remembered

so little (if at all) that a quotation from it may be of some interest: "… in the first place the Anglo-Saxon 'on lyfte' does not mean to windward, and in the next 'aloof' has no connexion with 'aloft' in any of its senses. It has nothing to do with the 'lift' or air. It comes from 'á hlaupi' or 'á löpi', for … ö is only another form of writing 'au', the pronunciation being very nearly 'aloof'. But 'hlaup' or 'löp' is the act of running, and 'hlaupa' or 'löpa' is to run, near akin to our Saxon 'leap'… A man who holds himself 'aloof', then, is not one who… gets to windward of you, or goes out of your way, but merely one who… runs away, and keeps at a respectable distance from you" (316–17 of the original review). Dasent treated the difference between the vowels too lightly and did not bother to explain the discrepancy between the final consonants (*f* and *p*). The admiring reviewer of his book (anonymous 1875) cited many of such discoveries with exaggerated reverence.

The now widely recognized etymology of *aloof* appeared first in Skeat[1]. *OED* accepted it, and since that time no new conjectures have been offered; nor are they needed, though the Middle French analogs of *aloof* (*au louf du vent ~ oloft!* and *au lof!)* suggest the popularity of the phrase and of the interjection in the lingua franca of European sailors in the late Middle Ages. It cannot be decided whether E. *aloof* experienced the influence of *aloft*. *OED* does not exclude this possibility while dealing with the obsolete preposition *aloft* 'far from; apart or way from; beyond'. Such putative folk etymological ties are beyond reconstruction. The Dutch for 'to windward' is *te loef*. English replaced the preposition with the familiar *a-*, as, for instance, in *aboard* and *aground*. If the lending language happened to be Danish or Swedish, the mechanism of the change was the same.

Wedgwood's correction (1885–87:14) concerns the interpretation of the phrase, not its origin: "Dr. Murray gives rather a hazy account of the original metaphor. 'From the idea of keeping a ship's head to the wind, and thus *clear of* the leeshore or quarter towards which she might drift, came the general sense of 'steering clear of' or 'giving a wide berth to' anything with which one might otherwise come in contact'. The metaphorical sense is simply and universally 'out of reach'. Being a nautical metaphor, it naturally supposes the speaker to be on board a ship, when any object to windward of him or on his loof, will be comparatively out of his reach." The authors of two etymological dictionaries that contain fairy tale-like derivations of English words have also experimented with *-loof*. Ebener and Greenway 1871 compared the root LUF with G. *laufen* 'run' and interpreted the English word as meaning 'in the run, in the channel, not out of the safe road', though this gloss is immediately followed by 'out of the common run, out of the channels'. Ebener was obviously unaware of Dasent's guess. In 1999 Makovskii traced *loof* to the root **leu-* 'cut', as allegedly in G. dialectal *luppen* 'cut'. Since 'cut' often acquires the sense 'deceive', *loof* is said to be akin to *bluff*, for *be-luff*. No branch of knowledge develops in a straight line (compare what is said below about *askance*). The etymon of *aloof* is almost in plain view, but finding it was not easy.

ASKANCE(S)[1] (1386), ASKANCE[2] (1530), ASKANT (1633, 1695, 1791)

In English, the now obsolete conjunction askance[1] *'as if' and the adverb* askance[2] 'aside' *have been recorded. It is rather probable that* askance[2] *is an extension of* askance[1]. *The conjunction has been discussed especially often. According to one point of view, it has a Romance etymon: French, Italian, or Latin; according to the other, it is an alteration or a cognate of Du.* schuins *'obliquely' or LG* schün. *The conjunction seems to have been derived from L.* quamsi, *possibly, but not necessarily via Old French. The complicating factor in the search for the origin of* askance is *the multitude of Middle and early Modern English words of similar form and meaning. Some of them are etymological doublets; others were individual coinages. All of them may have interacted and influenced one another.*

The sections are devoted to 1) the relation between askance[1] *and* askance[2], *2) attempts to find a Romance etymon of askance, and 3) attempts to trace askance to Dutch or Low German. Section 4 is the conclusion.*

Of the three words in the title of this entry only the second (*askance* 'aside, askew; with an indirect meaning,' nowadays used chiefly or mainly in the phrase *look askance*), is still alive, but its etymology cannot be discussed without reference to its alleged homonym. The connection of *askance* 'aside' with *askance*(s) 'as though, as if, (?) 'on the pretense,' as much as to say' (those are the definitions in *OED*) is problematic. Their origin has been discussed in numerous publications, also since the time Murray sent the letter *A* to print. *OED* calls the origin of the entire group unknown.

1. Since *askance* 'as though' is obsolete, modern dictionaries do not have to bother about its relation to *askance* 'aside, sideways.' Even some etymologists confine themselves to treating one of them, but a persuasive hypothesis on this word (or these words) will be achieved only if we discover the sources of both senses. *OED* and *CD* (the latter ventures no etymology) devote special entries to *askance[1]* and *askance[2]*. However, the gulf between 'as if, on the pretense' and 'sideways' is not unbridgeable. 'Aside' might be a figurative extension of 'as if; on the pretense,' with 'obliquely' serving as their semantic common denominator. Even though *askance* 'sidewise' was recorded a century and a half later than *askance* 'as if,' we may be dealing with the same word. Irrespective of the sense, the word is not frequent, and its occurrence in preserved texts cannot be used as a strong argument for establishing the date of its appearance in the language. Spitzer 1945:23 referred to a similar case in French: from 'as if' to 'dissimulation': "The man who dissimulates, moved… by disdain, envy or distrust, generally avoids looking his interlocutor squarely in the face: hence the meaning 'side-ways; obliquely.' Thus, the sequence of meanings given by Webster: 'sideways; obliquely;

hence, with disdain, envy or distrust' should probably be reversed." In a more general way, he followed Jacob Grimm and objected to multiplying the number of etymological homonyms unless absolutely necessary. Furnivall 1873a also treated *askance*[1] and *askance*[2] as two senses of the same word.

By contrast, Wedgwood, Skeat, and Chance believed that *askance* 'as if' and *askance* 'sideways' are different words. Chance 1875a:472 wrote: "… if I am right, and I have no doubt that I am, *ascances* = *as if* is, as Mr. Wedgwood surmises, an altogether different word from *ascance* = *obliquely* or *askew*, for the former word must be divided *as cances*, and the latter *a scance*." Note: "*Ascance*, when = *ascances*, is, therefore, merely a corrupted form, and was adopted probably in consequence of the accidental, almost complete, identity of form between *ascances* and *ascance* (obliquely)." Chance's etymological solution (*a-scance* for the adverb versus *as-cance* for the conjunction) will be discussed below, but one would not often catch him begging the question. Obviously, when one searches for origins, the unknown etymology of a word cannot be used for reconstructing its relation to a quasi-homonym; only our knowledge of the history of *askance*[1] and *askance*[2] can shed light on their derivation. It was equally rare for Chance, despite his typically assertive style, to say something like "… if I am right, and I have no doubt that I am."

2. With regard to the origin of *askance*, two 'schools' – Romance and Germanic – have offered different solutions. I will reverse the chronological order of the investigation and begin with the conjectures that trace at least one of the words to French or Italian. In *Troylus and Cresseyde*, Chaucer says about the heroine: "Hire loke a lite aside, in suiche manere / Ascaunces, 'What! may I not stonden here?'." Mätzner (according to Mueller and Furnivall 1873a; I could not verify the reference) showed that this *ascaunces* corresponds to *quasi dicesse* (*e no ci si può stare*) of Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, but he had doubts about the derivation and meaning of the English word. In any case, the earliest attested indirect connection of *askance* 'as though' is with Italian, for the implication in Boccaccio and Chaucer appears to be the same. R.N.J. 1873 may have been the first to point to It. *schiancio* 'oblique, sloping' and *aschiancio* 'across, athwart' as the possible etymons of *askance*, and his idea appealed to many. Not only Stormonth but also Skeat (with less and less conviction as the years went on) referred to It. *scansare* 'avoid' in his entry on the English word. Especially similar to the English word is It. *a scansa (di)* 'obliquely'. For quite some time Skeat connected *askance* with OF *escance* 'perchance,' from L. *excadentia*.

Another hypothesis pointed to a French etymon. "*Ascant* is for Old Fr[ench] *escant*… meaning, literally, *out of the corner*, *out of the square;* therefore, *on one side, aside, askew, awry*. The word, if I am right, is connected with O[ld] Fr[ench] *eschantel*, which is from *cantel*, a diminutive of *cant*, a corner. We have in English

a *cantle*, or corner of a thing. The only difficulty is that *escant* is not to be found, though *eschantel* is" (Payne 1873a). Payne did not have "the slightest doubt" that the word was independent of Germanic. He did not know that some time before him Diefenbach had also traced *askance* to the root of *cant* (see below). James 1873 partly supported Payne but believed that the home of the French word was Italian, while Payne 1873b contended that *schiancio* is a cognate of *askance* and that the French word was its immediate source.

The strongest case for the French derivation of *askance* was made by Weekley 1909. He listed *askance*, *askew*, *asquint*, and *aslant*, with their numerous variants, such as *askant* and *askile*, and argued that they were similarly formed: allegedly, their *a-* represented F. *à*, not E. *on*. As far as *askance* and *askant* are concerned, he detected their etymon in OF *escons(e)* 'hidden', that is, in *à escons*, "which has certainly given E. *sconce*, a lantern, a screen, and probably a redoubt" (316). He treated *askew* and *eschew* as etymological doublets, both from F. *esquiver* (this derivation is at variance with Diensberg's). In his discussion of *askant*, F. *échant-*, and others (familiar from the previous exposition), "all containing the general concept of corner, slant, edge" (317), Weekley did not specify which of the two senses he meant, but it is clear that he was interested in *askance* 'sideways', rather than *askance* 'as though'. The same etymology appears without any comments in his 1921 dictionary.

The phrase *à escons* does resemble *askance*, but Weekley's reconstruction has several vulnerable moments. First, the fact that *askance* resembles many other words of similar meaning and structure has often been noticed, but membership in the *askance – askew* group is fluid, and several groups of this type exist. Since the model was productive, it need not be taken for granted that all such words were borrowed from the same language or even that all of them are borrowings. Second, the dogmatic tone of his essay, especially from a scholar of his stature, has little to recommend it. By 1909 the origin of *askance* had attracted considerable attention, and one could not offer a radically new hypothesis without refuting or at least calling into question the previous ones. Third, the pronouncement that *sconce* was "certainly" derived from an Old French verb sounds needlessly provocative in light of the disagreement on this point among etymologists (see his own note 2 on p. 316). Finally, Weekley's position on two senses of *askance* remains unknown. Spitzer 1919 supported Weekley in very general terms but wondered where Skeat's It. *di schiancio* belongs.

Two postscripts to the French etymology of *askance* are in order. 1) In the second edition of his dictionary, Wedgwood misunderstood Palsgrave's *a scanche* for an Old French prepositional phrase and traced *askance* to it. Furnivall 1873a, Addis 1873, and Skeat[1], in the first installment of his dictionary, copied from Wedgwood, without consulting his source. Payne 1873a published a mocking note in which he explained that in Palsgrave's "*a scanche*, de travers, en lorgnant"

(see p. 831) *a scanche* is an English phrase. Wedgwood corrected the mistake in the third edition, and Skeat in the supplement to the first edition of his etymological dictionary and in all the editions of the *Concise*. Unfortunately, his dictionary was reset only in the fourth edition, and for a long time the main text reproduced the mistaken version. I can only guess that Wedgwood used the original text of Palsgrave, which is rather confusing to a modern reader. See the relevant form on p. CCCC XXX VIII, left side, the middle of the right-hand column. The full text of the example is: "a syde halfe as one casteth his eye by scoyne de trauers." On the next page, *a quynte* is also glossed as 'en lorgnant'. Payne looked up the word in the convenient 1853 reprint, as does everyone now.

The main early work pertaining to the French origin of *askance* was done by Frank Chance. In his edition of Chaucer's *The Tale of the Man of Lawe*, Skeat 1877 (see Skeat 1894) declared the previous discussion of the word ineffective but reproduced Chance's etymology without giving him credit. The unusually long note in the glossary runs as follows: "… Tyrwhitt (note to C.T., 17327, refers us to the present passage, to Tro. and Cress., I. 285, 292, and to Lydgate. It clearly means perchance, perhaps. The etymology was discussed, ineffectively, in Notes and Queries, 4 S. XI. 251, 346, 471; XII. 12, 99, 157, 217, 278. The difficulty has arisen from confusion with the modern *askance*, with which it may have nothing to do. The present word is related rather to some form in Old French; and, since the publication of vol. VI. of Godefroy's O.F. Dictionary, I can now solve the word entirely. The fact is, it is a hybrid compound, made up of E. *as*, and O.F. *quanses* or *qanses* (with *qu* or *q* pronounced as *k*), signifying 'as if.' The E. *as* is, accordingly, redundant, and merely added by way of partial explanation. The M.E. *askances* means 'as if' in other passages, but here means, 'as if it were,' i.e. 'possibly,' 'perhaps'; as said above. Sometimes the final *s* is dropped, as here; see examples of *Askance* or *Askances* in the New E. Dictionary; noting, that the 'O. Du. *quantsís'* there mentioned seems to be the O.F. word borrowed. The examples in Godefroy make the sense 'as if' quite certain. He refers us to Gaston Paris, in *Romania*, XVIII.152; to Fœrster's edition of *Cliges*, 4553, and the note; and to *Partonope*, ed. Crapelet, l. 4495." (Thus, while *askance* 'as if' *may* have nothing to do with *askance* 'sideways', MDu *quantsis seems* to be a borrowing from Old French!) This oversight resulted in Chance's rejoinder (1880) and Skeat's apology (1880). However, the Clarendon Press kept printing the same text, and later impressions repeated the 1877 version (see Skeat 1894a:214). In the same year Skeat's edition of Chaucer's complete works appeared (Skeat 1894b). The glossary gave the old etymology without any references to the scholarly literature, except for Godefroy. Despite the evidence of the West Flemish forms, cited at the end of this section, such hybrids were extremely rare in Middle English, as pointed out by Livingston 1925:72, who returned to the idea of *ex-* becoming *e-* and later *a-* in Anglo-French, but, since the redundancy (two prefixes: *ex* + *qua*) remained, he concluded that *e-* had been added for reinforcement.

Skeat never came to terms with the origin of *askance*. Close to the end of his life he said: "Hardly from Ital. *scansare*, 'to go a-slope or *a-sconce*, or a-skew, to go sidelin;' (Florio)" (so, for example, in the 1911 edition of *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*). Note *hardly*. The curious thing is that I have two impressions of the last *Concise*, both printed in 1911, and in the other one the sentence quoted above is missing!

Further attempts to find the origin of *askance* 'as though, as if' (but not of *askance* 'sideways') lead us to Latin. The clue seems to be provided by Du. *kwansuys* 'for the look of the thing,' formerly spelled *quansuys* (the same meaning), with exact analogs in Swedish and German (Wedgwood 1873a; Chance 1875a:473). Their etymon is L. *quamsi* 'as if,' which had a rarely occurring reflex in Old French. This is now common knowledge (see, for example, *NEW*; FT, *kvantvis*; *SAOB*, under *quansus*, offers what seems a needlessly involved discussion). The English conjunction is, most probably, another reflex of the Latin phrase, but initial *a-* and final *-ce* have to be accounted for. It cannot be decided whether the learned (or at least bookish) conjunction reached all the languages from Latin or via Old French. Wedgwood (as above) cited the German dialectal forms *quantsweise* and *gewandswis*. Chance wondered whether *-ce* in *askance* is the remnant of *-wise* or an adverbial suffix, as in *besides* alongside *beside* (1873:472 and 1875b). But in the beginning he was positive that the word goes back to French and dates to the period before the change of initial *c-* to an affricate (from 'perchance' to 'as if'). In 1875 he changed his opinion and wrote: "I now think it probable that *ascances* [sic] is of Teutonic, or it may be of Scandinavian, origin, and that it came in with some of our Low German ancestors, or, less probably, with the Danes." (He cited Dutch *kans* 'chance' and an identical form in the dialect spoken near Bremen.) The origin of initial *a-* poses graver problems. Chance 1873:472, as long as he believed in the French derivation of *askance*, suggested the form *as cance* 'as by chance.' Later he thought of *as* ~ *als* used adverbially before *kans* (see also Chance 1875b). Elsewhere, the related forms exhibit numerous ludic forms. Especially typical are West Flemish *als kacks* ~ *alskacks* (Franck 1908:300). Initial *als* seems to confirm Chance's reconstruction. Spitzer 1945:23 did not object to the derivation of *a-* in *askance* from *on-*, but there is no need to do so. The 'Danes' will reemerge in our exposition below. Here it should only be added that Sayers 2010, who was unaware of the long history of attempts to explain the origin of *askance*, derived the word from Anglo-Norman *achant* 'the state of being tilted, on edge'. He did not comment on final *-c* or discuss the relations between the adverb and the homonymous conjunction.

3. We should now turn to the Germanic school, whose conclusion was partly anticipated above because of Chance's changing his mind. Todd (in Johnson-Todd) cited Du. *schuin* 'oblique' and referred to E. *squint* as related to *askance*

(in both senses). This etymology also survived its inventor by a century and a half. See *ODEE* (*squint*): "Aphetic of *asquint*; cf. late ME. *of skwyn*, analytic var. of *askoyne*." Skeat (the 1911 *Concise*): "**Squint**, to look askew. The same as prov. E. (Suffolk) *squink*, to wink. Of obscure origin. Cf. M. Du. *schuyn*, cross, oblique, byas-wise,' Hexham; E. Fries. *schün*, oblique, awry; Du. *schuin*, oblique; *schuinen*, to slant; *schuinte*, a slope, obliquity." Webster 1828 also mentioned only Du. *schuin* in the entry *askance*, and there it stayed through W^{1}. $W^{2,3}$ removed *schuin* and made do with "origin uncertain." Even Tooke, I:471 found no better cognate of *askance* but, as usual, hoped to detect a participle (here *aschuined*) in the English adverb. Mätzner 1878–85 contains no etymology of the adverb *askance*: "of unclear descent." Diefenbach 1861:279 painted an especially broad background of the adverb *askance*. His *Origines*…, unlike his Gothic dictionary, has no index (I compiled an index of English words in it for my own use), so that not many interested researchers could have seen the relevant passage, especially because Mueller, contrary to his usual habit, referred to Diefenbach and Koch without indicating the pages; Koch's grammar was published with an index to the section on word formation, and the necessary place was easy to find.

Diefenbach's starting point was *kant-* 'border, edge' (cf. Payne and Weekley, above!). He cited E. *cant* 'inclination, slope, etc.,' G. dial. *Schanze* 'side-pole of a cart,' It. *scancio* ~ *sciancio*, Jutlandic *aa-skands*, and many other forms, including Du. *schuins*, LG *schüns*, WFr. *schean*, and various words from the Slavic languages. Evidently, he looked upon all of them as related and did not comment on the origin of individual nouns and adjectives. Koch 1868, III/1:150 referred *askance* to ON *á ská* 'across; askew.' Mueller/Müller listed the same *schuin*, *aa-skands*, *ashean*, and ON *skán*. In a note, he, following Diefenbach, made a special point of mentioning numerous similar forms. *OED* (*askance* 'sidewise', different from *askance* 'as though') featured, without references, only Skeat, Koch, and Diefenbach in the etymological part of the entry. It gave the same forms as Mueller (the paragraph repeats Mueller's entry almost verbatim) and, as said above, concluded that the etymology of *askance* is unknown. Through an oversight, *OED* copied *aa-skands* with a typo: *ad-* instead of *aa*. Franck 1908:301 consulted neither Diefenbach nor Mueller but realized that the form did not look Danish and suggested the correct spelling.

If we add Du. *schuins* to *schuin*, the similarity between the Dutch form and *askance* will increase. Logeman 1931:37 asserted that *askance*, *askant*, *askew*, *askyne*, *askoyne*, and *asquint* correspond to Du. *schuin* or LG *schüns*, with the prefix going back to ON *á*. He seems to have been unaware of the long history of research into *askance* and its look-alikes. Diensberg 1985:114–16, with numerous references to the literature, showed great caution and refrained from making generalizations in the spirit of Logeman. But at present he is more positive on the problem at hand. His recent statement on *askance* (Diensberg,

forthcoming) can be summarized so. *Askance*[1] and *askance*[2] are said to be unrelated. In *askance* 'sideways' he detects the "semi-prefix" *as* (the same as in *askew*, *asquint*, *aslant*, and others) and a reflex of the root *cant* 'corner' (a familiar starting point, as he admits). He continues: "Thus, OF *a(d) les kanz*…, used as an adverbial phrase, would yield OF *askanz*/*ascanz askans*/*ascans ascaunz*/*ascauns*, meaning 'along the corner/angle > obliquely, sideways' and ultimately crop up in Early Modern English as **askance**[2] 'aside'…, about a century earlier than the variant *askant* 'aside', which was obviously derived from **cant** *n*[2] 'slant, slope', alternatively prefixed on the model of the **askance** group." "As regards *askance*[1] 'as if, pretending that', I would connect this conjunction with the noun **chance** which goes back to the neutral form of the present particle of L *cadere* to fall." This, as shown above, is also a familiar idea, but the history of etymology can be likened to a pendulum: old conjectures return and win the day. It happened *by chance* that Diensberg and I were working on the history of *askance* at the same time and exchanged our papers in the process of editing them, but neither found it necessary to change his opinion.

De Vries (*NEW*, *schuin*, and especially *AEW*, *skár*) listed a multitude of *sk*-words meaning 'oblique.' His idea that all of them are ultimately related to ON *sax* 'sword' should probably be rejected. Considering that even the historical unity of two senses of *askance* poses grave problems, haste in referring five or more (De Vries offers many more) words to the same etymon cannot be right. However, nothing stands in the way of admitting that at least some of them influenced the others, especially if a symbolic association between the initial group *sk*- and cutting arose (cf. the history of initial *kr*-, *fl*-, *gl*-, and *sl*-in English). *Askoyne* and *askyne* are obvious phonetic variants, and the affinity of *askance* 'sideways' to *askant* cannot be denied. Each of the other words has to be studied in detail before they end up as related in our dictionaries. It will be seen that the 'Germanic school' still has a strong footing in the attempts to find the beginnings of *askance*. (Ebener and Greenway's medley of German, Greek, and Sanskrit forms can be ignored.)

In the entry *aloof*, Dasent's vituperative review of Johnson-Latham (1865) has been mentioned. In the same review he discussed the origin of *askance*: "Of this word Dr. Latham gives no derivation of his own, but after the quotations comes a long extract from Mr. Wedgwood, who, after throwing a good deal of etymological rubbish in our eyes, which makes such a dust that we can scarce see where we are, seems to consider its connexion with 'scant and scanty' as undoubted, and suggests that the Icelandic 'skammr' 'short,' may have something to do with the 'scance' of 'ascance' [sic], after it has undergone such a change of consonant as it exhibited in the Italian 'cambiare' and 'cangiare'." A long passage of offensive derision follows. "This is the more odd, because in the passage about 'askew' which Dr. Latham has also embodied in the dictionary, Mr. Wedgwood quotes the very Icelandic word from which 'askance' [sic] comes, but which he is as wrong in referring to

'askew' as he is in referring 'skammr' to 'askance'." This word is 'skakkr', which, as Dasent explains, comes from **skankr*. "But the meaning of 'skakkr' or 'skankr' is not that of shortness and haste as shown in 'scant', scanty' and 'scamp' from 'skammr', but of motion 'sidelong' or 'aside'; it is the Latin *obliquus*, and the Icelandic 'at lita á skakkt', or 'á skant' would exactly answer to our 'look ascance' both in form and sense (317–18). This is followed by an explanation of the origin of *askew*, also allegedly from Icelandic. Dasent enjoyed the bully's part, but in 1865 he did not know how complicated the etymology of *askance* is and preferred to cut the Gordian knot instead of trying to untie it. One can see that E. *askance* resembles several phrases in many languages.

To the familiar *sk*-group ME *ashore* 'at a slant' should be added. In this adverb, *-shore* is a homonym of *shore*, as in *seashore*. McIntosh 1971:260 compared ME *stand ashore* with Scots *stand askar* and wrote the following: "Despite the similarities of meaning…, the two phrases have different origins. One belongs to a group of 'slope' words, like *aslant*, the other to a group of 'shy' – words like *a-skie*. It may be worth while to note that a third semantically closely similar group of adverbs and phrases, usually somewhat more restricted in meaning, derives from words meaning 'squint' or 'glance sideways'; examples are *askile*, *asquint*, *agly*, *of squint* and perhaps *askance*. Yet other similar adverbs and phrases, of which there are a quite astonishing number in English, derive from still other bases." He suggested the existence of "many inextricable etymological tangles even in the three groups mentioned, because of the frequency and close formal similarity of a number of the words standing for the three different bases 'slope,' 'shy' and 'squint,' and the consequent likelihood of a considerable amount of cross-influence." I doubt that *askance* belongs here, but I fully share McIntosh's etymological restraint.

4. *Askance(s)* 'as if, as though' is an analog of a similar continental form, derived from Latin, possibly, but not obviously, via Old French. Consequently, its derivation from Italian or directly from some common Old French adverb should be rejected. The same holds for Dutch or Low German. Nor can the mismatch between the vowels (short [a] versus [øy] ~ [ü]) be ignored; strangely, this circumstance has not attracted any attention. Although the similarity between the English word and its proposed Italian, several Old French, and Dutch/Low German adverbs is astounding, most probably, it was the result of a coincidence. The idea that *askance*[1] (allegedly, from **as-cance*) and *askance*[2] (allegedly, from **a-scance*) are, from an etymological point of view, different words cannot be refuted once for all, but at the very least it should be treated with a grain of salt. More likely, the path led from the bookish conjunction 'as if' to the concept of dissimulation and looking askance at one's interlocutor. Some points remain unclear, while others need not bother us any longer. On the whole, as already

noted, it is usually preferable to follow Jacob Grimm's dictum that homonyms should be traced to the same etymon wherever possible. In this case, the possibility seems to exist. Be that as it may, when all is said and done, the origin of *askance* is not quite 'unknown.'

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