

Latin *pappa*

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All too often forms are dismissed as nursery words as if that were an adequate or principled or ultimate explanation. Of course, like other social labellings, that merely purports to specify the social conditions of use (on the part of older native speakers). It is then our task to trace the history of words, constructions and sounds under these conditions and constraints. Thus, having declared a form a "nursery word", we must still identify its origin and development, including its Lautgesetze.

Ernout-Meillet (3rd. ed, 851) calls Latin *pappa* 'food' a "mot expressif du langage enfantin". They continue, to remark that "et la forme et le sens de ces mots enfantins different d'une langue à l'autre." But of course the same can be said of many, many words from all strata of the lexicon; more specifically, there is no a priori reason to suppose that two homonyms even from "the nursery" must be related or of the same origin.

In what follows we expressly leave aside words for 'father'.

It would seem reasonable that *pappa* 'food' could be a nursery apocopation of *pā-bulum/-nis*, with a normal colloquial gemination replacing vowel length. This noun *pappa* would then have a pedigree in the most ancient IE patrimony of Latin.

The noun *papilla* is well explained as derived from *papula* 'pimple'. The meaning 'nipple' would result from a reapplication of the sense of 'pimple' on the basis of physical appearance; the meaning 'teat' would represent a semantic extension of 'nipple' by metonymy or synecdoche. We read at CGL V 622, 37 *pappa uel papilla est mamma*. I regard this *pappa* as not strictly related to *pappa* 'food', but as a back-formation, through the law of degemination known as „*mamilla*“, from *papilla*.

It has been suggested that Latin *papula* be related to Lith *pāpas* 'nipple'. Perhaps a more distant relation is also to be seen in Slavic *popъkъ* 'navel'.