

les langues accordent de l'importance aux notions d'agent, de patient, etc ..., dont il faut tenir compte au-delà des structures syntaxiques formelles. Il nous pousse également à croire qu'il serait fructueux d'appliquer ce type d'explication (ce qui, à notre connaissance, n'a pas encore été fait) à d'autres domaines de la syntaxe latine.

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Semantic Selection Properties and Etymology: *Latin mica*

By MARTTI NYMAN, Helsinki

The structural approach involving a systematic analysis of sound correspondences has made historical linguistics a relatively exact type of Geisteswissenschaft. But insofar as semantic reconstruction is concerned, the basic principle consists in converting synchronic homonymy into dia- or panchronic polysemy. The paragon of this approach is still Benveniste (1954). As today's morphology is yesterday's syntax, today's syntax may be yesterday's pragmatics. The pre-

historical context of situation, which may have occasioned the creation of a word or a more or less drastic change in its prototypical meaning, may have vestigial reflexes in the conventional rules or norms that determine, without any obvious relation to functional reasons, how words have to be colligated in order to get a correct or "grammatical" syntagm. Indeed, one heuristic principle in etymological research consists in utilizing semantic selection properties as a window into the "original" (or rather, prehistorical) contexts of use. In investigations of this kind the „wesenhafte Bedeutungsbeziehungen“ à la Porzig (1934) have vindicated their fruitfulness (witness e.g. Maher 1977).

What tends to make historical semantics a precarious undertaking is that lexical units are not confined within clear-cut semantic boundaries. Rather, the semantics of natural language is bound to be fuzzy (cf. Armstrong & al. 1983, for example). This circumstance will make itself felt all the time in the present study. Yet I hope to be able to bring some order into the chaos.

The case to be discussed in the present paper pertains to the rôle of semantic selection properties in determining the proper input to historical comparison. It will be claimed that the traditional lexicography of the Latin noun *mīca* results from a neglect of contexts of occurrence that are readily gleaned from philological texts. Instead of texts, the etymologists (of *mīca*) have been preoccupied with impressionistic sound-meaning similarities more or less in abstracto. I.e., the concrete philological moorings are lacking.

According to the common opinion among lexicographers, Lat. *mīca* denotes "a crumb, little bit, morsel, grain" (LS 1142), "a particle (esp. of salt), grain, crumb" (OLD 1107), "frustulum, pars minutissima, res minima" (TLL VIII 927,79). Thus, the lexical sign in question is analyzed as consisting of the signifiant *mīca* and the signifié 'SMALL BIT (OF x)'. Indeed, the lexicographical practice of quoting e.g. the syntagm *mica salis* 'grain of salt' along with *mica panis* 'crumb of bread', as if they belonged exactly to the same état de langue, is in accordance with the view that SMALL-IN-SIZE was the dominant semantic feature. However, even a rather superficial glance at the TLL article on *mīca* makes one surmise that, whereas *mica panis* was certainly a correct collocation in late Latin, it would scarcely have been acceptable in archaic or classical Latinity. A careful explication of the semantic selection properties of *mīca* gives the upshot that the semiotically relevant feature of this word cannot be unequivocally extracted from the experience of size (as was the case

in words such as *corpusculum*), nor from the experience of solidity (as in *granum*; Varro, rust. 1,48,1 *granum dicitur quod est intimum solidum*), of shape (cf. *globus*/ROUND/; see *TLL* VI 2051, 47 ff.) or of material composition (e.g. *grumus* /EARTHEN/).

It will be shown in the first part of the present paper (ch. 1) that in archaic and classical Latin the semantic selection properties of *mīca* were not quite the same as in late Latin. Etymological implications of this finding will be considered in the second part (ch. 2).

1. The semiotically primary feature of *mīca*

Typically, *mīca* figures as the head of a material noun in partitive genitive but does not, however, select any material noun as its attribute. The kind of semantic solidarity between *mīca* and its partners diagrammatically indicates the semantic feature in which the "semantic valence" of *mīca* consists. This „wesenhafte Bedeutungsbeziehung“ also gives a clue as to how *mīca* is to be etymologized.

1.1 Salt

In glosses *mīca* is rendered into Greek as *ψίξ* or *ψιχίον* 'crumb' (see *TLL* VIII 927, 69–71), but whereas this is an adequate translation of *mica panis*, it does not do justice to the archaic and classical usage, in which the most frequent colligation was *mica salis* (*TLL* VIII 927, 81 ff.). **ψίξ ἁλός* as a translation of *mica salis* is unattested, and it would probably have been stricken as odd as **crumb of salt* in English. The Greek counterpart was rather *χόνδρος ἁλός*, which refers to the granular (cf. the adjective *χονδρός* 'coarse'), crystalline form of rock salt; cf. Hippocr. ulc. 17 *ἁλὸς χόνδρους* 'granules, crystals of salt'; Phoenix (as quoted in Athen. 8, 359e) *χᾶλα* (= *καὶ ἄλα*) *λήψεται χόνδρον* 'and she will accept a lump of rock salt'. Quite obviously also *mīca* denotes the coarse, granular state of rock salt; cf. Cato, agr. 70,1 *dato salis micas tres* 'give three grains (= "granules") of salt'.

In Greek, *χόνδρος* can be colligated to the adjective *μέγας* 'big, large'; e.g., Herodot. 4,181 *ἁλὸς ἐστὶ τρύφεια κατὰ χόνδρους μεγάλους* 'there are masses of great crystals of salt'. Herodotus also tells us that in Libyan salt mines men live in houses built of big lumps of salt: *τὰ δὲ οἰκία τούτοισι πᾶσι ἐκ τῶν ἀλίνων χόνδρων οἰκοδομέαται* (4,185). That the syntagm *μέγας χόνδρος* involves no contradiction

suggests that SMALL-IN-SIZE is not an inherent, semiotically relevant feature of *χόνδρος*. The same seems to hold for *mīca* as well. When telling about Cappadocian salt mines, Plinius points out that salt is quarried in great lumps or sheets: *caeditur specularium lapidum modo; pondus magnum glaebis quas micas vulgus appellat* 'it is split into sheets like *specularis lapis*; the blocks are very heavy, termed in the usual jargon *micae*' (Nat. 31,77).

This passage contradicts the notion that *mīca* is inherently small in size. To overcome this difficulty, Jones proposes that *mīca* is here used ironically. He translates: "the blocks are very heavy, nicknamed by the people "grains"" (1963:425). Though highly improbable, this interpretation is a deductive reflex of conventional lexicography which represents *mīca* as an inherently small piece of something. Another possibility would be, of course, that Pliny is simply mistaken about the facts. I believe, however, that this passage brings us quite close to the original context of situation in which *mīca* was created. It is very probable that the phrase *vulgus appellat* (= *vulgo appellatur*; cf. Sofer [1936], who does not discuss this passage, though) here refers to technological jargon. The Plinian passage suggests very strongly that the use of *mīca* was not necessarily confined to denote particles that were small in size. As a suggestive parallel consider the following passage which also describes rock salt: *ἔστι δὲ μακρός τε ὁ χόνδρος (ἤδη (δέ) τινες αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ τρεῖς δακτύλους) καὶ καθαρὸς ὥσπερ κρύσταλλος* 'the salt-crystals are large (some of them more than three fingers in breadth) and clear as ice' (Arrian. anab. 3,4,4).

It is more probable than not, indeed, that the syntagm *mīca magna* involved no oxymoron. The sememe SMALL-IN-SIZE, I take it, did not originally belong to the inherent structural features of *mīca*.

Rock salt, or halite, is crystalline sodium chloride (see Ramsdell 1960), the optical qualities of which such as transparency and brilliance are salient enough as to acquire semiotic function; i.e., TRANSPARENT and BRILLIANT are features that could be used by any normal speaker to characterize or describe halite crystals, lumps or sheets of rock salt. As a parallel consider Romance languages, in which rock salt is called "jewel salt" (Fr. *sel gemme*, It. *sal-gemma*, Sp. *sal gema*); cf. Robert III.267. Now, consider the following passages, where the optical qualities TRANSPARENT and BRILLIANCE of salt are referred to: *Quibusdam locis glaebae* (sc. *marmoris*/M.N.) *ut salis micas perlucas habentes nascuntur* 'in certain places there grow blocks of marble having as though transparent

"sparks" of salt' (Vitr. architect. 7,6,1). – *Puri lucida mica salis* 'the glittering grain of pure salt' (Ovid. fast. 1,338).

Plinius describes rock salt as follows: *Circa Gelam ... tanti splendoris ut imaginem recipiat. In Cappadocia crocinus effoditur, tralucidus et odoratissimus* 'It is of such brightness near Gela that it reflects an image. Salt of saffron color is quarried in Cappadocia; it is transparent and very fragrant' (nat. 31,86). – *In Hispania quoque citeriore Egelestae caeditur, glaebis paene tralucentibus* 'in hither Spain too at Egel-esta it is cut in almost transparent blocks' (nat. 31,80).

In an earlier passage Plinius notes that this kind of salt *caeditur specularium lapidum modo* (nat. 31, 77), where the qualities of rock salt are compared to those of *specularis lapis*, the exact meaning of which is not entirely clear ('muscovite', 'mica' and 'selenite' have been proposed). In any case, it is clear that the use of *mīca* was conditioned by the transparency and brilliance of its referent.

1.2 Gold

In Latin, *aurum* 'gold' is very frequently characterized by means of the adjective *fulvum* (André 1949: 135,361), which signifies flashing luster (cf. *fulgere* 'to flash'); suffice it to quote only one passage to this effect: according to Catull. 64,44 Peleus' abodes *fulgenti splendent auro* 'shine with flashing gold'. The syntagm *mica auri* occurs twice; and the variant *mica aurea* belongs here as well.

In Lucretius, *mīca* is used in the exemplification of homoeomerism, ascribed to Anaxagoras, according to which things consist of particles having the same qualities as the thing itself. According to Lucretius,¹⁾ Anaxagoras holds that

*ossa videlicet e paucillis atque minutis
ossibus his et de paucillis atque minutis
visceribus viscus gigni sanguenque creari
sanguinis inter se multis coeuntibus guttis
ex aurique putat micis consistere posse
aurum et de terris terram con crescere parvis,
ignibus ex ignis, umorem umoribus esse*

¹⁾ Lucretius' account reflects the traditional doctrine (originating with Aristoteles' [e.g. de caelo 303 a28] identification of Anaxagoras' *σπέρματα* with his own concept of *ὁμοιομερῆ*; see Teodorsson 1982: 27–29, 44; Rösler 1973: 58), which (mis)represents Anaxagoras' as a kind of Atomist, who is supposed to contradict his system by stressing the principle of infinitive divisibility of matter (cf. Cornford 1930: 14). For an interesting interpretation of Anaxagoras' own system, see Teodorsson (1982: esp. 65–94).

'bones are made of very small and minute bones, flesh of very small and minute particles of flesh, and blood is composed by many drops of blood coming together into union, and he thinks gold may consist of grains of gold ("goldcrystals"), and earth to be a concretion of small earths, fire of fires, water of waters' (Lucr. nat. 1, 835–841).

V. 839 f. is perceptively – from the linguistic (not necessarily philosophical) point of view – translated by Ernout: "il suppose de même que l'or est constitué par des paillettes d'or" (1924:35). Ernout's choice of the word *paillette* 'spangle', which denotes a GLITTER-ING object, was obviously dictated by the optical qualities of gold. And the same holds for Lucretius' choice of *mīca*.

Vitruvius describes the process of amalgamation, whereby gold is separated from ashes: *is cinis coicitur in aquam, et additur eo argentum vivum. id autem omnis micas auri corripit in se et cogit secum coire* 'the ashes are thrown into water, and quicksilver is added; this collects all the particles of gold and combines with them' (architect. 7,8,4).

Brilliance and color are indeed the salient optical properties of gold (cf. André 1949: 135,136; *TLL* II 1526, 77–1527,25). In fact, *mīca* is comparable with *scintilla* 'sparkle', as far as optical properties go. Witness the following passage: (*argentum*) *non nisi in puteis reperitur nullaque spe sui nascitur, nullis ut in auro lucentibus scintillis* '(silver) is found in shafts only and grows with no indications of its existence. It gives off no shining sparkles such that are seen in gold' (Plin. nat. 33,95; Halleux 1975: 73). The *scintillae* in the above passage can be compared with the *mīculae* in the following: *exiguae miculae, quibus nascitur colliquefactis aurum* (Arnob. nat. 2,49 p. 87,3). That the optical properties of *mīca* and *scintilla* are apt to establish a „wesenhafte Bedeutungsbeziehung“ is evidenced in Cael. Aurel. chron. 1,4,63, according to which on the verge of an epileptic attack patients *velut scintillarum micas aut circulos igneos circumferri prae oculis sentiunt* 'see as though flashing sparks or rings of fire spinning before the eyes'.

In Martial, *mīca* is used for refer to a *cenatio*:

*Mica vocor. Quod sim, cernis: cenatio parva:
ex me Caesareum prospicis ecce tholum.
frange toros, pete vina, rosas cape, tingere nardo:
ipse iubet mortis te meminisse deus*

'My name is *Mica*. You see what I am: a small *cenatio*. From here you can see the imperial rotunda. Crush the couch, ask for wine,

deck yourself in roses, oil yourself with nard: The god himself advises you not to forget the death' (Martial 2,59,1).

Here *mīca* is, not a crumb (pace Goldberger 1932:145), but a shorthand for *mica aurea* (Friedländer 1886:267; the linguistic point appears in Richard's 1931:121 translation "On m'appelle "paillette d'or""); not, however, Domitian's *mica aurea* (the exact nature of which escapes us), as the conventional identification has it. Rather, the *cenatio* that Martial is talking about was likely a *caupona*, a "restaurant" named *Mica* or *ad Micam* with a sight to Augustus' mausoleum (Lundström 1912:82–83; 1929:33).²⁾

1.3 Frankincense and myrrh

Resin is thick sticky liquid which upon exposure to air hardens into transparent or translucent tears with a pearly luster (cf. Ovid. met. 15,394). Plinius calls such tears *resinae candidae gemmae* 'jewels of shimmering white resin' (nat. 12,65). These *resinae candidae gemmae* were used by Romans to adulterate the genuine frankincense (*tūs*), in which these optical properties of resin were particularly salient. Plinius (l.c.) states expressis verbis that frankincense is tested for its brilliance (*testatur candore*); cf. also nat. 16,40 *interveniente candida gemma tam simili turis* 'interspersed with shimmering white tears so closely resembling frankincense'. Notice also that the Greek name for frankincense *λίβανος* is a Semitic loan from the root *lbn* '(to be) white, bright' (see Chantraine, *DELG* 639; Müller 1974).

The earliest attestation of the syntagm *mīca turis* is Ovid. trist. 3,13,16 *micaque sollemni turis in igne sonet* '(that) grains of incense would crackle in the solemn fire'. The Ovidian passage is not at variance with our claim that the choice of *mīca* was dictated by optical considerations.

Another resinous product of commercial value was myrrh (*murra*), and given the optical qualities of resinous tears, it is no surprise to see *mīca* colligated to *murra* as well: *adiecta mica murrae* 'with grains of myrrh' (Scrib. Larg. 127).

²⁾ *Mica* as the name of restaurant or casino is attested in Sen. ep. 51,12 *habitaturum tu putas umquam fuisse in mica Catonem* 'do you suppose that Cato would ever have lived in a casino', if Lipsius' correction *in mica Catonem* is accepted (*inimica*, mss). There are other, perhaps better ways of emending the passage (*ibi* or *illic* instead of *in mica*). However, if Lundström's (1912) interpretation of *mica* is accepted, Axelson's (1939:5) objection that "ein kleines Speisezimmer nicht sehr gut zu *habitaturum* passt" loses some of its force.

Several Romance dialects use (reflexes of Latin) *gemma* 'jewel' to denote (gum)resin (see Wartburg IV 94); cf. also Isid. orig. 16,6,2 *gemmae vocatae quod instar gummi translucant*.

1.4 Lead

In a passage dealing with the preparation of minium Plinius makes the following remark: *namque est alterum genus omnibus fere argentiis itemque plumbariis metallis quod fit exusto lapide venis permixto, non ex illo cuius vomerem argentum vivum appellavimus . . . , sed ex aliis simul repertis. steriles etiam plumbi micae; deprehenduntur solo colore, nec nisi in fornacibus rubescentes exustique tunduntur in farinam. hoc est secundarium minium perquam paucis notum multum infra naturales illas arenas*, 'for there exists in fact another kind of minium in almost all silver-mines, and likewise lead-mines, which is made by smelting a stone that has veins of metal running through it; it is not obtained from the stone, whose round drops we have designated quicksilver . . . , but from other stones found at the same time. These stones have not particles of lead. They are detected only by their color, and only when they turn red in the furnaces, and after being thoroughly smelted they are pulverized by hammering. This gives a minium of second rate quality, which is known to very few people, and is much inferior to the natural sands we have mentioned' (Plin. nat. 33,119).

The reading *steriles etiam plumbi micae; deprehenduntur solo colore* is the best that can be gleaned from the oldest and best manuscript c. Bambergensis (= B; 10th c.), whose reading *de micaeprehenduntur* was corrected (= B²) as *micae deprehenduntur*. The reading *deprehenduntur* is supported by the *recentiores* which, however, have dropped *micae*. The reading *micae; deprehenduntur* is that provided by Jan & Mayhoff (1897:146) and Zehnaker (1983:96).

The syntagm *plumbi micae* is quite compatible with our claim that *mica* was originally constrained to select attributes having certain optical qualities. Non-oxidized lead is very well characterized by the feature SHIMMERING. Notice also that *plumbum album* "dead white lead" denotes 'tin' (only Plin. nat. 4,104 has once *plumbum candidum*), whereas lead is *plumbum nigrum* (not *atrum*).

1.5 Marble (quartz)

In another technological passage dealing with vein gold Plinius writes: *Quod puteis foditur canalicium vocant, alii canaliense, marmoris glareae inhaerens, non illo modo, quo in oriente sappiro atque Thebaico*

aliisque in gemmis scintillat, sed micas amplexum marmoris 'Gold dug up from shafts is called "channelled gold", "trenched gold" by others; it is found in a crystalline matrix,³⁾ not in the way in which it gleams in the Oriental sapphire (= lapis lazuli) and the Theban stone and in other precious stones, but joined with quartz crystals' (nat. 33, 68).

The reading *micas amplexum marmoris* '(chemically) joined with quartz crystals' is accepted by (e.g.) Jan & Mayhoff (1897:128) and Zehnaker (1983:74), and rightly so; *micas* is the reading of most manuscripts (incl. B). The alternative reading *micans* (B²) *amplexu* (Salmasius) involves an idle correction. Durand's (1729:207) objection goes to the point: "C'est la Lecture de Venise (i.e. *micas amplexum* in c. Venetianus/M.N.), que Saumaise n'aurait pas dû inquieter, en substituant, *sed micans amplexu marmoris*: comme si c'était le marbre qui fit briller l'or".

Again we have to do with a referent that can be characterized by semantic features extracted from optical qualities. Notice also e.g., Plin. epist. 5,6,38 *marmore splendet* 'it shines with marble'; cf. Gk *μάραρος* "a crystalline rock, which sparkles (*μαρμαρίζει*) in the light" (cf. Chantraine, *DELG* 668).

1.6 Semantic development of *mīca* in historical Latin

1.6.1 We have now surveyed the use of *mīca* from the earliest instances up to the first c. A.D. Syntagms of following types are attested:

- (1)
$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \textit{mīca} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} \textit{salis} \text{ (Cato } \rightarrow, \text{ c. 160 B.C.)} \\ \textit{auri} \text{ (Lucretius } \rightarrow, \text{ c. 60 B.C.)} \\ \textit{turis} \text{ (Ovid } \rightarrow, \text{ c. 10 A.D.)} \\ \textit{murrae} \text{ (Scrib. Largus, c. 40 A.D.)} \\ \textit{plumbi} \text{ (Pliny, c. 70, A.D.)} \\ \textit{marmoris} \text{ (- " -).} \end{array}$$

The above warrants the generalization that originally, or at least in its earliest attestations, *mīca* was inherently restricted to select only crystalline, flashing or glittering, material as its genitive attribute:

$$\underline{\textit{mīca}} / \text{ — } \left[\begin{array}{l} \text{N GEN} \\ \text{GLITTERING} \end{array} \right]$$

³⁾ See Lewis & Jones (1970:182).

As a part of crystalline material *mīca* denoted a glittering crystal or a crystalline particle. It is noteworthy, and likely to be of etymological significance, that only *mica salis* is attested in Cato (agr. 70,1; 135,3; 156,3), whereas 'grain of frankincense', later commonly signified by *mīca turis* (Ov. trist. 3, 13,16; Colum. 6,30,4; etc.), is rendered by Cato as *granum turis* (agr. 70,1; so also Plaut. Poen. 415). It might even be concluded that *mīca* was originally restricted to select *sal* as its genitive attribute, and the other colligations listed in (1) were metaphorical extensions of the original syntagm to other crystalline material. That the original context of situation involved salt mining is also strongly suggested by those technological passages in Plinius quoted in 1.1 above.

The impression that *mīca* was originally a salt-crystal (of whatever size.⁴) is further strengthened by the fact that *mīca* was sometimes used absolutely to denote a grain of salt; e.g. Ovid. fast. 2,24 *torrida cum mica farra* 'dry spelt with salt'; Hor. carm. 3,23,20 *mollivit aversos penates farre pio et saliente mica* (cf. Tibull. 3,4,10 *farre pio et saliente sale*); Paneg. in Mess. 14 *parva ... caelestis placavit mica* (Schulze 1934:468); cf. also Petr. sat. 76,3 *mīcarius* 'salt-licker' (Nyman 1985).

1.6.2 The attested use of *mīca* is remarkably uniform semantically up to the first c. A.D., but then other instances begin to emerge that witness some laxing in its selectional properties, even to the extent that we can speak of "coexistent semantic systems". The coexistence of tradition and creation is best witnessed by the novel syntagm *mica panis* 'crumb of bread' in Christian Latinity (cf. the context of "whose language?").

The Lucretian passage *ex aurique putat micis consistere posse aurum* (1,839) brought forward the notion of a particle that was supposed to be a FLASHING one. In Seneca the Philosopher we find another instance of Atomist usage of *mīca*. Pointing out in a sour tone Epicurus' independence of gods Seneca writes: *te atomi et istae micae tuae forte et temere conglobaverunt* 'you are merely a random conglomeration of atoms and of those particles of your theory' (benef. 4,19,3).

Epicurus' physics consists not only in atoms but also in the notion of minimal part (*τὸ ἐλάχιστον*), and it is rather obvious that *mīcae* here refer to the latter. The theory of minimal parts, put forward in

⁴) In Cato, agr. 156,3 the size of one *mica salis* is compared to that of a grain of vetch (*quasi ervum*), i.e. 2,4–3,2 mm. in diameter (*RE* VI 556).

the *Letter to Herodot* (esp. 55–59), is one of the most controversial issues in Epicurean philosophy. (For some interesting interpretations from different points of departure, see Furley 1967; Krämer 1971:233–249). The minimal parts can be construed as level-specific indivisibles (cf. Pacheri 1975), and so it is not unjustified to suggest that by this notion Epicurus introduces a systems theoretical aspect to his physics. In any case, we here appear to have the first instance in which the meaning of *mīca* as a PART(ICLE) OF A WHOLE comes to the fore without any obvious implications to optical qualities. On the other hand, there may be more to Seneca's choice of the word *mīca* in the present context than just a characterization of Epicurus' philosophical doctrine. We have to reckon with the possibility that the expression *istae micae tuae* was also intended to occasion the association of piquancy of style or exposition (i. e., *sal*, *sales*, *salsum*, on which see Quint. inst. 6,3,19). It was pointed out in 1.6.1 above that *mīca* could be used interchangeably with *sal*, and this holds also for the figurative use of *sal(es)* in the meaning 'piquancy'; cf. Martial 7,25,3f. *nullaque mica salis nec amari fellis in illis* (sc. *epigrammatis*) *gutta sit*. In the case at hand, Seneca may be hinting at Epicurus' cavalier attitude to other philosophers: „Die Ansichten anderer Philosophen werden von ihm, ohne daß er sich auf sie tiefer einläßt, mit Hohn und Verachtung zurückgewiesen, ja seine Geringschätzung erstreckt sich, wo es ihm paßt, überhaupt auf alle Leistungen menschlicher Kultur“ (GLL II 1920:94).

1.6.3 In Petr. sat. 42,5, Seleucus regrets his dead friend Chrysanthus: *quinque dies aquam in os suum non coniecit, non micam panis* 'for five days he didn't put water into his mouth, not a crumb of bread'. As seen by Stefanelli (1962:71–2), this passage shows very nicely the evolution of *mīca* to a negative particle. By now, SMALL had obviously become the dominant semantic feature of *mīca*. The causation of this may very well have been multiple: Firstly, the objects denoted by *mīca* were in practice mostly small in size. Secondly, the *i* sound tends to give the impression of something small (Schieberer 1950:118–119; Mayerthaler 1980:99–102; etc.).

In 73,6 Trimalchio characterizes one of his young slaves as *homo praefiscini frugi et micarius*. The hapax *micarius* is usually glossed 'crumb-saver', "qui micas panis colligit et victum sibi parce comparat" (Forcellini, s. v.). This interpretation comes out very natural in view of the fact that *mīca panis* 'crumb of bread' was the normal colligation in late Latin (see TLL s. v.). Notice, however, that such an encapsulation of the meaning BREAD in the semantic structure of

mīca cannot really be established before the 4th c. A.D. The passage in Petr. sat. 42,5 is not a case in point (pace *TLL* VIII 928,21 ff.), because there *panis* is colligated with the NEG-syntagm as a whole, i.e. *[[non + mīcam] panis]*, rather than with *mīca* alone. Given the fact that *mīca* was more or less interchangeable with *sal* throughout the Latinity (e.g., Ovid. fast. 2,29 *cum mica farra* = 1,28 *farra mixta sale* = 3,284 *salsa farra*), it is certainly more to the point to conceive *micarius* as a "salt-licker" (Nyman 1985). *Salem delingere*, ἄλα λείχειν 'to lick salt' stood proverbially for a thrifty way of living (Blümner 1920:2092): e.g., Diog. Laert. 6, 57 ἄλλὰ βούλομαι ... ἐν Ἀθήναις ἄλα λείχειν ἢ παρὰ Κρατέρῳ τῆς πολυτελοῦς τραπέζης ἀπολαύειν 'I should rather lick salt at Athens than enjoy sumptuous fare of Kraterus' table'; Plaut. curc. 562 *apud me numquam delinges salem* 'at my house you shall never lick salt' (cf. Plt. Pers. 430 *numquam delinget salem*).⁵)

1.6.4 Columella writes: *sunt qui micas alii tepido madefiant oleo et faucibus inferant* 'some people moisten morsels of garlic with warm oil and insert them into their throats' (Col. 8,5,21).

The reading *mica alii* 'morsel of garlic' is attested in the *codices veteres* (= SA, 9th c.), whereas Cato has *spica alii* (agr. 70,1 *dato salis micas tres*, ..., *turis grana tria, alii spicas III*). This appears to suggest that the correct reading in the Columella passage might be *spicas alii* (which is provided by some younger mss.). Cato would scarcely have written *mica alii*, but I think we must give the reading *mica alii* to Columella. Also Palladius (agr. 1,27,2) has *alii mica trita cum oleo faucibus inseretur*. Columella's usage involves a metaphorical extension, but notice that morsels of garlic have the optical quality of shimmering whiteness. Witness the following: *alii candidi spicae capitis tritae* (Scrib. Larg. 231).

2. Semantic input to etymology

2.1 Some "Kling-Klang" etymologies

Except for Brugmann's (see WH II 85) proposal to connect *mīca*, *qua* "Schnitzel", with Gk σμίλη 'Schnitzmesser, chisel', OHG *smid* 'smith', etc. (< **smī* +, i.e. reduced grade of the long-diphthong stem **smēj* + 'schnitzen'), it has appeared more or less self-evident

⁵) Cf. Plin. nat. 31,89 *Varro etiam pulmentarii vice usos (sc. sale) veteres auctor est, et salem cum pane esitasse eos proverbio apparet* 'Varro too tells us that the men of old used salt as a relish, and that they ate salt with bread is evident from a

that *mīca* has to be somehow etymologized with the Gk adjective (σ)μικρός 'little, small, short' and its variant μικρός (Dor., Boeot.) as well as with its more or less probable cognates in Germanic (OHG *smāhi* 'little, low', etc.; WH II 85; Frisk, *GEW* II 237; Chantraine, *DELG*/III/701; Leumann 1977:190; van Windekens 1976:298-9; etc.). The input to the Greek forms is considered to be *μῖχος. The ρ in μικρός has been explained as due to its antonym μακρός 'big'; and μικρός is supposed to have resulted from affective gemination. The inclusion of the Germanic explananda requires the reconstruction of the long-diphthong root *smēik +, of which Latin *mīca* and Greek (σ)μικρός would represent the reduced grade. Although a generalization concerning Indo-European lexicon can certainly be captured by reconstructing the long-diphthong root variants *smēik + / *smīk +, everybody has not been happy with such a solution (on the general problem, see Lindeman 1968). So, Szemerényi (1968:32-33) posits the Indo-European root *mei + / *mi + 'to diminish', which is reflected in e.g. μείων 'smaller' and μινός 'small', Lat. *minor* 'smaller' (etc.), respectively. According to him, "Proto-Gk" *μῖχος and Lat. *mīca* involve "age-group" derivatives from the root variant *mi +; i.e., *mi + iko +. Alternatively, *mīca* might have been borrowed from *μῖχος (similarly already Stowasser, WH II 85). Prehistorical loans as well as other substratum influences involve a serious problem to the epistemology of historical linguistics. Loans and contact influences belong to the life of language communities as social entities. Yet, hypotheses advocating prehistorical loans have perforce the methodological character of "faute de mieux" explanations, because they simply cannot be falsified.

In sum, the semantic link between *mīca* and its putative cognates in Greek is not as granted as it has been taken. It has become evident in the bulk of the present paper that the use of *mīca* was not necessarily tied up with the (small) size of its referent; i.e. the syntagm *mica magna* involved no contradiction. Moreover, the facile etymology, in which *mīca* is taken to be the most probable cognate of Greek μικρός (Chantraine, *DELG*/III/701), cannot account for the fact that *mīca* characteristically denotes a crystalline object.

In light of conventional lexicography it is no surprise that no one has ever got around to suggest an etymological connection between

proverb'; Plaut. Rud. 937 *cum aceto pransurust et sale sine bono pulmento* 'he will take his breakfast seasoned with sour wine and salt without any dainty relish'; Ovid. fast. 2,538 *satis est .../et sparsas fruges parcaque mica salis*.

mīca and the verb *micare* 'to blink, glitter; vibrate'.⁶⁾ Given that *mīca* is invariably glossed 'crumb, little bit, morsel, grain', such a proposal would certainly exemplify the worst type of popular etymology. There is nothing to begin with a crumb or morsel and a rapid intermittent movement or flashing. But the upshot of Ch. 1 is that the input to an etymological explanation of *mīca* is not likely to be 'crumb', but rather 'crystal(line particle), piece of a glittering object'. Given the semantic connection, also the formal resemblance between *mīca* and *micare* cannot be accidental. Thus, it is possible to establish the following formal-semantic correspondence:

(2) Form	Meaning
mīc(a)	'GLITTERing piece'
mīc(are)	'to GLITTER'.

2.2 Utilizing the new input

The variants *mīc-/mic-* in (2) above can be looked upon as reflexes of Pre-Latin **meik* + /*mik* + 'glitter'; i.e. **meik* + *ā* 'that glitters (i.e. a surface consisting of luminous points > a luminous point)' > 'glittering, crystalline particle, esp. (salt-)crystal' > 'particle; crumb' and **mikā* + *se* 'glitter' > *micāre* 'glitter; vibrate'. It is true that the original meaning of *micare* has been said to be 'move rapidly, vibrate' (EM⁴ 402; Cotton 1950:441); it has even been set down as a universal principle that words meaning 'glitter, gleam, shine (etc.)' have always evolved from words that earlier used to denote rapid movement (Wood 1912:305). Such kind of determinism is of course alien to the nature of human language (see Lass 1980; Itkonen 1983). As far as historical Latin is concerned, it may be difficult to tell, which one of the polysemous meanings of the verb *micare* was the original one. In a wider Indo-European perspective the original meaning appears to be 'blink, wink; glitter', as can be gleaned from the cognates (cf. e.g. Pokorny, *IEW* 712–3):

- (3) Middle Persian **mičak* (reconstructable from Persian *miža* and Baluchi *mičāk*) 'Augenwimper'; Welsh *mygr* 'bright'; *dirmygu* 'to despise'; OCS *mičitŭ* 'Schimmern, Flackern (van Wijk 1927); Vision'; Eastern Sorbian *mikać* 'blinzeln, blinken', *mik* 'Augenwink'; Low Sorbian *miknuś* 'blinzeln, blinken'.

⁶⁾ There were certainly folk-etymological associations, e.g. Carm. de mens. 2,2 *aspice ut aris tura micent*, which is miniscent of *mica turis* (Ovid. trist. 3,13,6); cf. *TLL* VIII 929, 58–59.

For a possible parallel to the semantic evolution see Dolch's (1952:162–166) account of the creation of German dialectal nouns for eyelid and eyelash; and Stammmler's (1954:216–220) description of the German verb *blinken* 'blink'. The root **meik + / *mik +* is regarded as a variant of **meigh + / *migh +* (Common Slavic **migŭ* 'Augenblick', **mignoti* 'nictare'; Lith. *užmingù*, *mìgti* 'einschlafen'; etc., see Pokorny, *IEW* 712) that need not involve "independent suffixations" (pace Benveniste 1937:281) of a PIE root **mei + / *mi +*. Rather, the *gh/k* extensions bear evidence for an earlier morphophonological alternation, in which the *k* alternant was conditioned by a following [-voice] segment (cf. *mictum* < **mig(h) + tom*); i. e., the roots **meigh +* and **meik +* are likely to be ex-allomorphs that have lost their complementarity and become semiotically more or less independent signs. This is a natural phenomenon in the morphology of human language (witness Anttila 1975; cf. Nyman 1981:94), and certainly not unattested in Indo-European lexicon (see Stang 1967).⁷⁾

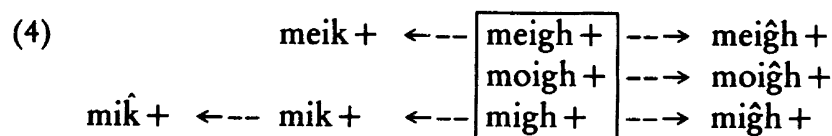
So, of the root variants **meigh + / *meik +* the former is likely to be the older one. The root **meigh +* also encodes the semantic field 'mist, cloud, rain' (**moigh + ós* > OIA *megh + áh* = Avest. *maēya +* 'cloud'; **migh +* > Gk *ὀμίχλη* 'cloud, mist', Lith. *miglà* 'mist', OCS *mǐgla* 'mist'; Pokorny, *IEW* 712). Here we witness also the root variant **meîgh +* (> OIA *mih +* 'mist, rain'), which specialized into encoding the meaning 'urinate' (**meîgh +* > OIA *méhati* = Avest. *maēzaiti*, Gk *ομείχω*, Lat. *meiō*, etc.). The polysemy 'mist/rain/urinate' is supported by examples from various languages. Nor is it true that "Die Sippe für "Wolke, Nebel" ist aus lautlichen Gründen (-gh-: -îgh-) von der für "harnen" zu trennen" (Mayrhofer II 680). Of course, we have to reconstruct the different roots **meigh +* and **meîgh +* from the comparative evidence we have at disposal; but

⁷⁾ As far as the root **mei + / *mi +* (Benveniste 1937:281; van Wijk 1911:124) is concerned, it seems plausible enough to identify it with Pokorny's (*IEW* 710) **mei +* 'wechseln, tauschen'. This would make *micare* (< **mi + k +*) a remote cognate of Latin *migrare* 'to change'; and a conceptual link could be established as well: Whereas *migrare* involves passing from a given state, S¹, into another, S² (cf. Lucr. 2,775 *caerula quae sint/numquam in marmoreum possunt migrare colorem* 'things that happen to be blue can never change into a shining white color'), *micare* can be conceived of as denoting iterative rapid movements between S¹ and S², which is perceived in terms of infinitesimal intermittences. Admittedly this is abstract, yet well within the bounds of possibilities of semantic evolution and diversification.

having done this, we are obliged to try to relate these roots in terms of historical evolution; this is what Kern (1894) did not do, though he has collected a valuable body of comparative input data. As Miller (1976) quite rightly points out, the “kentum” reflexes in “satem” languages are residues of PIE velars in non-palatalizing environments (e.g. before a resonant; cf. Lith. *miglà*, OCS *mĭgla*). I see no reason for not accepting Miller’s (1976:53–54) well-argued claim that, in the last analysis, **meiġh* + ‘urinate’ has evolved from the root **meigh* +.

There is one more word that, in the last analysis, probably has to be subsumed under the root **meigh* +, viz. OIA *miṣāti* ‘opens the eyes’, *ni* + *miṣ* + ‘Augenzwinkern, Blinzeln’. This verb has called for the reconstruction of the + *s* extended entry root **meis* + ‘flimmern, blinzeln’ (Pokorny, *IEW* 714). However, OIA *miṣ* + might be traced to an earlier **miś* +, which in turn would reflect the palatalized variant **miġ* + of the root **mik* +. Though this smacks of an *ad hoc* explanation, it can be supported by the fact that, in OIA, a sibilant (*s*) was neutralized after an *i* as *ṣ*. Now it is conceivable that also a palatalized sibilant could be absorbed by this kind of neutralization, especially if it was considered different enough from another root, which would in this case have been OIA *mikṣ* + / *miś* + ‘blend’ (the latter in *miśrá* + ‘blended’).

In sum, we would obtain the following evolutionary scheme:



3. Conclusion

In the earliest historical use *mīca* denotes ‘grain of salt’; and it is indeed salt that is conceptually “encapsulated” in *mīca*. The prototypical association between *mīca* and ‘salt’ is probably due to the fact that *mīca* was a technical term of salt mining (witness Plin. nat. 31,77).

Whereas salt mining is a necessary ingredient in the pre-history of *mīca*, the original meaning of *mīca*, qua sibling of the verb *micare*, was ‘glitter’. So, in the original collocations *X micat*, of which *mīca* *X*:ii was a nominalization, *X* was selectionally specified as a luminous source or surface (e.g. star, eye [Mugler 1964:273], flash, flame, spark, gold, (salt-)crystal, “gem” of frankincense, ivory, etc.);

cf. Ovid. met. 2,2 *clara micante auro* 'bright with glittering gold', Verg. Aen. 10,134 *qualis gemma micat* 'he glitters like jewel', Sil. 12,22–23 *micat .../... ebur* 'the ivory glitters' (cf. Ennod. carm. 2,133,3–4 *frangunt Marmaricis elephas quod misit ab arvis, / per micas sparsum mox solidatur opus*), etc. It is from this source, I take it, that *mīca* has got its original meaning: *aurum micat* 'the gold glitters' → *mīca auri* 'glitter of gold' ("gen. subiectivus"). Metonymically, *mīca* was probably taken to denote the glittering object itself (cf. "gen. definitivus"), which opened the further possibility to interpret *mīca* as a (glittering) particle (with, say, *auri qua* "gen. partitivus"). Cf. Engl. *glitter* 'a glittering object (e.g. rhinestone, sequin, spangle [cf. also French *paillette d'or, de sel, quartz, de mica*(!), etc.]; or Greek *γλήνεα* 'glittering objects' (< PIE **gel* + 'glitter'; Manessy-Guitton 1972: 93–94); or Greek *αἴγλη* 'glitter; glittering object' (e.g. *χλιδών* 'bracelet'; cf. Chantraine, *DELG*/I/ 30–31).

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