Unde venisti? The Prehistory of Italic through its Loanword Lexicon
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5   Semantic Analysis

The relevance of semantic category to the study of substrate words has been mentioned several times (cf. Schrijver 1997: 295, who notes that words denoting economically and culturally unimportant animals and plants are possibly more likely to have a substrate origin). As argued in §1.4.2.1, semantic considerations are best kept for after non-inherited material has been identified rather than used to identify it. Now that the non-inherited material has been identified, it will be worthwhile to examine the semantic categories to which it belongs. While it is difficult to know exactly what semantic classifications to assign certain objects and technologies from an ancient culture, I have tried the following:

Animals		**21**	
	Domestic	4 (*caballus*, *asinus*, *cant(h)erius*, *mūlus*)	
	Birds	6	
		Aquatic	2 (*ardea*, *fulica*)
		Other	4 (*columba*, *hirundō*, *merula*, *turdus*)
	Other Wild	10	
		Aquatic	3 (*ballaena*, *excetra*, *raia*)
		Insect	3 (*arānea*, *asīlus*, *tabānus*)
		Other	4 (*aper*, *lepus*, *sōrex*, *talpa*)
	Unspecified	1 (*catulus*)	

Plants		**44**		
	Domestic	11 (*ālium*, *avēna*, *cēpa*, *cucumis*, *cucurbita*, *ervum*, *faba*, *far*, *lēns*, *nāpus*, *rāpum*)		
	Other	33		
		Tree	17	
			Fruit	6 (*arbutus*, *citrus*, *cotōneum*, *fīcus*, *pirum*, *sambūcus*)
			Other	11 (*alnus*, *buxus*, *carpinus*, *cerrus*, *cupressus*, *laurus*, *sappīnus*, *taeda*, *tamarix*, *tilia*, *ulmus*)
		Wild	8 (*alaternus*, *filix*, *genista*, *hedera*, *malva*, *menta*, *sirpe*, *viscum*)	
		Flower	2 (*līlium*, *rosa*)	
		Berry	2 (*bāca*, *vaccīnium*)	
		Plant part	2 (*rādīx*, *trabs*)	
		Nut	1 (*nux*)	
		Fruit	1 (*bolunda*)	

Metallurgy		**4** (*faber*, *ferrum*, *plumbum*, *raudus*)
Textiles		**4** (*carbasus*, *lacerna*, *laena*, *pannus*)

Tool	**7** (*ascia*, *baculum*, *baiulus*, *caulae*, *corbis*, *funda*, *hasta*)
Vessel	**3** (*calix*, *calpar*, *orca*)
Viticulture	**5** (*fracēs*, *faex*, *lābrusca*, *racēmus*, *pampinus*)
Geography	**5** (*calx*, *grūmus*, *lapis*, *sabulum*, *sulpur*)
Culinary	**3** (*adeps*, *frīgō*, *simila*)
Color	**2** (*badius*, *burrus*)
Body Part	**3** (*barba*, *caput*, *grãmiae*)

Other words are more difficult to classify: *casa* is architectural, *focus* domestic, and *fascinus* magico-religious. *Fungus* is a fungus and could serve as a tool. *Caupō* is an economic profession (cf. *baiulus* classed under tool due to its relationship to *fascis* as well as *faber* classed under metallurgy) and *paelex* a person specified by their role in society. *Farciō* and *gubernō* are actions, the latter nautical.

It is clear that the non-inherited lexemes of Latin are indeed overwhelmingly plants (40%) and animals (19%), though they are certainly not all economically unimportant. Beyond being unable to say with certainty which animals and plants would have been economically unimportant to ancient peoples, several of the words refer to domesticated or otherwise edible species. There are also several words referring to items of material culture, including tools, vessels, and textiles.

One further piece of evidence that may allow us to identify to which sort of contact situations the different identified strata belong is the consideration of the semantic categories present in the different strata. This is partially difficult given the greatly unequal distribution of the lexemes in the different strata. Given that 62% of non-inherited Latin lexemes have Greek comparanda (and 42% of lexemes have Greek comparanda to the exclusion of Germanic and Celtic), it is statistically more likely that strata involving Greek will attest to more semantic categories. Even so, there are some potential patterns in the data.

Firstly, amongst the 15 non-inherited words limited to Latin (and the Romance languages) are found 3 of the 5 viticultural words (*faex*, *lābrusca*, *pampinus*). As to the other 2, *racēmus* is (probably) only shared with Greek and *fracēs*, with comparanda in Albanian, Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic, can also refer to other sorts of sediment in liquid. Thus it might not be a strictly viticultural term after all. Interestingly, 2 of the 3 insects (*asīlus*, *tabānus*) are also restricted to Italic.

Another pattern is found amongst the words attested in Celtic and Germanic to the exclusion of Greek. In §4.3.2.3.1, it was shown that many of the non-inherited words with this distribution likely belonged to languages at least related to those with which Greek had contact. But interestingly, in this group there are no words for domesticated

animals or ceramic vessels. Of 11 non-inherited words for domesticated plants, the only one in this group is *far*. It is unclear how much faith to place in this pattern. There are few confirmed loanwords for domesticated animals in Latin (an interesting fact on its own), thus it is perhaps not surprising that this stratum group does not attest to any. As to the lack of ceramic vessels, all 3 of those words are shared with Greek (*calix* and *orca* exclusively, *calpar* along with Celtic). This might suggest that any borrowed ceramic terms were replaced due to later heavy cultural participation in the Mediterranean sphere. All 3 culinary terms and 3 of 4 textile terms (*carbasus*, *lacerna*, *laena*) likewise show a Mediterranean distribution. The lack of words for domesticated plants seems more likely to be significant and to perhaps indicate the sort of contact situation in which these words were borrowed.

In fact, *far* has further comparanda in Slavic, indicating that the 12 words in the Italic-Celtic-Germanic (non-Greek) group do not all attest to the same contact situation. If only the isoglosses are considered (*fulica*, *merula*, *caput*, *nux*, *hasta*, *corbis*), the pattern of the absence of domesticated semantics is stronger.

The 11 non-inherited words for domesticated plants as a group are important, in that they seem to confirm that a portion of the non-inherited vocabulary in the Indo-European languages was indeed borrowed from a population practicing intensive agriculture (cf. Kallio 2003, Schrijver 2007: 21-2, Kroonen 2012a, Iversen & Kroonen: 516-18, Šorgo 2020: 461-8). As noted in §4.5, the stratification of contact phenomena represented in Latin loanwords prior to the arrival of Proto-Italic in the Mediterranean region is difficult. It is not made any clearer by the distribution of the lexemes for domesticated plants. Some of the words show a Mediterranean distribution (*cucumis*, *ālium*, *cēpa*, *nāpus*, and even the founder crop *lēns*). Others attest to a wider European distribution (always including Germanic, often Baltic and Slavic) more in line with what one might expect from loans originating in a Europe-wide agricultural substrate. That sometimes comparanda do not exist in Greek (*faba*, *cucurbita*) or Celtic (*faba*, *cucurbita*, *ervum*) suggests that these absences might be due to later lexical replacement.