NOTES ON LATIN NOUN FORMATION

1. lüridus, lütum

lüridus denotes the pale colour of bile or of jaundice. The regularly formed noun which went with this was lüror. It seems reasonable not to divorce this stern from lütum, a plant used for yellow dye. As LEW> 1.837 suggests, it seems also likely that an earlier *lürro was characterized more strongly as a colour name with the suffix seen in lüridus on the model of liuidus and its congeners from *(s)li-uo-.

lütum is itself ambiguous but could plausibly be an ancient nomen instrumenti (cf. Vesta; Ériu 25, 1974, 259) *loutom (cf. niun-: nounem). Thus we have two correct IE formations *lou-to- and *lür-ro- < *luH-rő-. The root here must be different from Pokorny’s 1. lew- IEW 681. The alternation is reminiscent of λο(∅)ε-οα-, λο(∅)ε-των (GEW 2.139).

2. lüstrum, mònstrum

There is no agreed account of lüstrum (LEW³ 1.839, DÉLL³ 661–2) or of mònstrum (LEW³ 2.110, DÉLL³ 733–4), either for the base of the former or for the formation of both. Semantically both must be in origin nomina instrumenti, and lüstrum would be well explained as *lou-s-tro-m to lauō (cf. februum : februários). It is true, as LEW³ 1.839 claims, that *louestrom is phonologically unacceptable; cf. Glotta 59, 1981, 228–9. The trouble with such a reconstruction is the unexplained morphology, however, as well as the incorrect phonology.

If we assume archaic formations of the type of OPruss. dalptan ‘chisel’ and hortus < *ghor-to-, we arrive first at *lou-to- and *moun-to- ‘a means of washing, purifying’ and ‘of reminding, warning’. As such formations became moribund in Latin, and easily confused with -to- participles (thus perhaps explaining the unsyncopated monitus), *lout-o- and *kont-o- were segmented as thematically suffixed; then they were reinforced with the productive *-tro-m. Thus *lout+tro-/mont + tro- → *loussro-/monssro-. These then simplified the geminate -ss- by rule and developed an intrusive -t-: *loustr-, *m monstro-).

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1) Cf. with root- or stem-final dental, claustra neut.pl.: claudō, rāstrum < *rāssrom : rādō, on which see Niedermann Phonétique historique (1945) 219f., whose account is more precise than that of Sommer Handbuch 241. It is not essential – pace Niedermann – that the t develop before *ss simplified to s. What is essential is that *ss was distinctive in relation to *s before *sr at the time when *sr began to move towards -br-; on the last, see E. P. Hamp, Glotta 50, 1972, 290–1.

The distinctive behaviour of *ss and *s in clusters is confirmed by *kert-snā > *kessna (cf. Osc. kessnaí) > *kes(s)na > cesna (Festus) > cēna, versus Skt. pārṣm-, Goth. fairznα : *persna > perna. See Sommer’s excellent account Handbuch 253, 260.

Leumann’s account, Lat. Gr. (1977) 197 § 198 (b), whereby -str- would be the direct continuation of *t-tr → *tstr > *sstr, seems to me inherently less likely