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The Lithuanian nouns in *-muõ*

Among the productive categories of Lithuanian nouns, the group of nouns formed with the suffix *-muõ* (Indo-European **-men*) is of great importance from a linguistic point of view, for an ancient pattern of derivation is still used in recent times.

In this lecture, I will discuss the general features of these nouns and present several significant examples.

As already said, the productivity of this formation is generally very recent and can be seen in many neologisms, but in large part — in contrast to what happens, for example, in Greek and Latin — it follows an ancient pattern (verbal root + suffix) and does not show other means of derivation (e.g. it is not realized from derivative verbs or with the occurrence of a dental extension).

In order to judge the productivity of the category and the status of each noun, I have divided the Lithuanian nouns in *-muõ* into three groups: nouns that have cognates in other Indo-European languages, nouns that have cognates only within Baltic languages and nouns attested only in Lithuanian.

Among the 14 Lithuanian nouns in *-muõ* that have cognates in other Indo-European languages, only few can be judged as old inherited forms (e.g. *akmuõ*, *piemuõ*, *sõmuõ*, *õelmuõ*); others are of doubtful antiquity (e.g. *s(t)raumuõ*, *õarmuõ*), while others are definitely recent (e.g. *augmuõ*, *dõmuõ*, *duomuõ*, *juosmuõ*, *raumuõ*, *stomuõ*). This analysis shows that an ancient structure and the presence of cognates do not assure the antiquity of these formations.

As regards the second group, there are no nouns that have cognates in Old Prussian.

The 10 nouns that have cognates in Latvian are in most cases independent and parallel formations in the two languages, since they belong to families well attested both in verbal and nominal forms.

The third group, formed by nouns attested only in Lithuanian, is the biggest (about 75 nouns). It includes very recent words, among which there are many neologisms of the scientific and technical terminology (e.g. *dalmuõ*, *kryõmuõ*, *õilmuõ*).

As an appendix to the discussion of the formations in *-muõ*, I will consider another Lithuanian formation, the nouns in *-mõ*, that are often attested, with a related meaning, besides the nouns in *-muõ*. These parallel formations constitute a productive pair; although the relative chronology of the elements of this pair is hard to establish, I will present a couple of interesting cases in order to elucidate the problems one has to deal with.