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## ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE LATVIAN COMPARATIVE *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*<sup>\*)</sup>

**Abstract.** Latvian is the only Baltic language that presents a suppletive variation between a positive and a comparative: adverb *daūdz* ‘much’ / *vaīrs* or *vaīrāk* ‘more’. The question arises whether this composite paradigm is an innovative feature of the Latvian language or could be traced back to Proto-Baltic, and any answer to this question is strongly dependent on how we explain the origin of the Latvian comparative *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*. The aim of this paper is to propose a new etymology for *vaīrs* and to shed some light on the prehistory of this suppletive variation that appears to be unique in the Baltic languages.

### 1. Introduction

Comparison of adjectives sometimes appears to be linked with the grammatical phenomenon of suppletion,<sup>1</sup> which, according to a basic definition, consists in the use of formally unrelated stems to supply gaps in a paradigm. This is especially the case with the commonest adjectives that belong to the core lexicon, such as *good* / *better*, *bad* / *worse* or *much* / *more*. In some Indo-European languages, suppletion has been extended to other adjectives, with innovations such as Old Irish *ocus* ‘near’ compar. *nessa*, superl. *nessam* or Swedish *gammal* ‘old’ compar. *äldre*, superl. *äldst*. On the contrary, other languages have reduced the number of suppletive formations, sometimes even to such an extent that suppletion has completely disappeared in those languages. In the Baltic languages, for example, Lithuanian does not present any kind of suppletion whatsoever, even in

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<sup>1</sup> On suppletion in comparative and superlative forms, see especially the monography of Eric Dieu (to appear in 2011, based on a previous dissertation of 2007). My views on Latv. *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk* have been stimulated by this important work.

the adjectives *gēras* ‘good’ (compar. *gerēsnis* ‘better’, superl. *geriāusias* ‘best’) and *blōgas* ‘bad’ (compar. *blogēsnis* ‘worse’, superl. *blogiāusias* ‘worst’) or in the adverb *daūg* ‘much’ (compar. *daugiaū* ‘more’, superl. *daugiāusia(i)* ‘most’). At first glance, Latvian seems to reflect a similar state of affairs, since there is no suppletion even in the adjectives *labs* ‘good’ (compar. *labāks* ‘better’, superl. *vislabāks* ‘best’) and *slihts* ‘bad’ (compar. *slihtāks* ‘worse’, superl. *visslihtāks* ‘worst’). But we find a suppletive variation between the adverb *daūdz* ‘much’ and its comparative counterpart *vaīrāk* ‘more’ (the superlative *visvaīrāk* ‘most’ is derived from the comparative). The question arises whether this composite paradigm is an innovative feature of the Latvian language or is inherited from Proto-Baltic. Any attempt at answering this question is strongly dependent on how we explain the origin of the Latvian comparative *vaīrāk*. As we shall see, the etymological explanation usually found in the scholarly literature is far from convincing; one can go so far as to say that a good etymology is still lacking. The aim of this paper is to propose a new etymology and to shed some light on the prehistory of this suppletive variation which appears to be so untypical of the Baltic languages.

## 2. Philological data

To begin with, a brief survey of the philological data is necessary. In the Latvian modern language,<sup>2</sup> *daūdz* ‘much’ is used either as a substantive (‘plenty of’) followed by a genitive plural (e.g. *daudz cilvēku* ‘many people’) or singular (with a collective meaning, e.g. *daudz maizes* ‘much bread’), or as an adverb determining a verbal form (e.g. *daudz runāt* ‘to speak a lot’). Both functions are also carried out by the suppletive comparative *vaīrāk* ‘more’, which can be used in the same way either as a substantive (with the genitive) or as an adverb. That the relationship of *daūdz* ‘much’ and *vaīrāk* ‘more’ is to be seen as suppletive, is proven by three facts.

First, there is no positive form directly based on the stem of the comparative *vaīrāk* (\**vaīrs* or the like). On the other side, there is no comparative form directly based on the positive *daūdz*. A comparative *daūdzāk* is poorly attested in Latvian. The Dictionary of Karl Mühlenschach and Jan Endzelin (ME I 443 [1923-1925]) presents the comparative *vaīrāk* as regular and reports a variant *daūdzāk* only from the Low Latvian dialect of Kandau (*Kaņdava*) in Kurland – which, by the way, was the birthplace of Karl Mühlenschach himself. I have found one further instance in the High Latvian (Latgalian) dictionary of Jan Kurmin (*Słownik Polsko-Łacińsko-Łotewski*, 1858: 4). In this dictionary, Pol. *więcej* (Lat. *plus*) is translated into Latvian as *Wajrok usto* (p. 237), but Pol. *bardziej* ‘more’ (Lat. *Magis validius, impensius*)

<sup>2</sup> Examples taken from LVV (1984: 170).

is translated as *Wajrok, daudzok*. This distribution seems to have been modelled on the Polish counterparts:

- no suppletion in Pol. *bardzo* → *bardziej*, hence no suppletion in Latg. *daudz* → *daudzok*.
- suppletion in Pol. *dużo* → *więcej*, hence suppletion in Latg. *daudz* → *wajrok*.

The fact that Pol. *bardziej* is translated by both forms *wajrok* and *daudzok* shows that, despite the Polish model that produced a non-suppletive comparative form *daudzok*, *wajrok* was nevertheless the most usual comparative corresponding to *daudz*. I do not know precisely whether this secondary comparative \**daūdzāk* is limited to Kurmin's dictionary or is more widely used in the Latgalian dialects.<sup>3</sup> Except those clearly innovative examples, which, in any case, do not correspond to the common use in Latvian, there is no comparative form directly based on *daūdz*. This is in accordance with one of the main requirements for suppletion to take place, i.e. complementary distribution.

Another point to mention is that *daūdz* and *vaīrāk* have the same lexical meaning, the only difference being the feature [ $\pm$  positive], resp. [ $\pm$  comparative]. This can be proven, among other things, by the fact that they share the same antonym (*maz* 'little, few', compar. *mazāk* 'less'). One may compare e.g.:

- (1) Christian Ulmann (1872: 44, see also ME I 443 [1923-1925]):

*Daudfmafes sei viel oder wenig*

'A lot, a little' > 'more or less'

and:

- (2) ME IV 441 [1923-1925]:

*Labāk vairāk nekā mazāk*

'Rather more than less'.

In addition, it is noteworthy that *daūdz* and *vaīrāk* may occur in similar micro-contexts, with a high degree of paradigmatic interchangeability, as can be seen, for instance, from compound forms such as:

- *daūdzbālsīgs / vielstimmig* 'many-voiced' (ME I 443 [1923-1925]), vs. *vaīrākbālsīgs / mehrstimmig* 'polyphonic' (ME IV 441 [1923-1925]).
- *daūdzkārt / oft, häufig* 'often, frequently' (ME I 444 [1923-1925]), vs. *vaīrakkārt / mehrfach, mehrfach* 'repeatedly, more than once, over and over again' (ME IV 441 [1923-1925]).

All this corresponds to another requirement for suppletion to take place, i.e. lexical synonymy.

Finally, one may note that *daūdz* and *vaīrāk* can be used in the same syntagmatic contexts with only a difference of gradation. I have found on the web two interesting examples that can illustrate this point:

<sup>3</sup> Endzelin (ME Erg. 310 [1934-1938]) reports a comparative *dāudzāk*<sup>2</sup> for the High Latvian (Latgalian) dialect of Auleja (near Krāslava).

- (3) Newspaper *Jūrmalas ziņas* (28.10.2009, p. 3):

*Daudz padarīts, vel vairāk jādara*

‘Much is done, still more is to be done.’

- (4) Latvian news on the web (14.01.2010):

*Daudz sniega – daudz vairāk prieka*

‘Much snow, much more pleasure.’

As is well known, phraseological collocation may be used as a further criterium to identify suppletion cases.

The suppletive variation of *daudz* and *vairāk* is certainly old in Latvian. It is documented since the beginning of the written tradition. In the first Latvian text, the *Catechismus Catholicorum* (1585), the comparative *vairāk* is attested once:

- (5) *Catechismus Catholicorum* (1585, apud Günther 1929: 256):

*Teuw nebues wairak Dewes turret ka manim wen*

‘Thou shalt no longer have any other God than me alone’.

In the *Phraseologia Lettica* of Georgs Mancels (1638a), various instances of *vairāk* may be found:

- (6) Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: IV 240):

*Ich hab heut meer meine Thränen gefressen/ alz Brod /*

*Es āfzmu šhōdeeen wairahk mannus ghāufchus Affarus ehdis nhe ka Mais.*

‘Today I have eaten more my tears than bread.’

- (7) Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: V 248):

*Ich glaub meer den Augen / alz den Ohren*

*Es wairahk ustitzu Akeems / nhe ka Aufseems.*

‘I believe more my eyes than my ears.’

- (8) Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: V 255):

*Deiner Worte eins gilt meer / denn meiner zehen*

*Taws weens Wahrtz wairahk maṛa / nhe ka manni defzmitts.*

‘One of thy words is more worth than ten of mine.’

*Vairāk* is also regularly attested in early lexicographical works such as Georgs Mancels’ *Lettus* (1638b: 123, *meer / wairahk*, 170, *so viel meer / teek wairahk*)<sup>4</sup> or Georgs Elgers’ *Dictionary* (1683: 582, *Więcey. Piùs. Wáirák yfto*).

Beside the regular comparative *vairāk*, there is also a short form *vairš*. Since its first attestations in Old Latvian, this form is usually limited to negative contexts with the meaning ‘not...more, not...any longer’ (Germ. *nicht mehr*). Some instances may be found in the *Phraseologia Lettica* of Georgs Mancels (1638a)<sup>5</sup>:

- (9) Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: V 254):

*Ich kan mich des lachens nicht meer enthalten*

*Efz nhe warru wairs fmeeklus turreht.*

‘I cannot refrain from laughing any longer.’

<sup>4</sup> See Fennell (1988: 101).

<sup>5</sup> See Fennell (1989: 135).

**(10)** Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: V 256):*Ich kan nicht meer Atem holen**Eļš nhe warru wairs atpūhsteefš.*

'I cannot get my breath back any more.'

**(11)** Georgs Mancels, *Phraseologia Lettica* (1638a: XXXVI 387):*Ich wils mein Lebenlang nicht meer thun**Saw muhšcham eļš to wairš nhe darrišču.*

'I do not want to do so in my life any longer.'

In the Dictionary of Christophor Fürecker (before 1685: 292),<sup>6</sup> the German comparative *mehr* 'more' is translated by both forms, *wairs*, *wairak*. This does not mean, however, that they are synonymous, but rather that they correspond to different uses of German *mehr*.

From a historical point of view, it seems likely that the short form *vaīrs* is an older comparative form which could previously have been used more widely, whereas *vaīrāk* is a new comparative formation, following the general pattern of adverbial comparatives, with a suffix *-āk* (< \**-āk-*)<sup>7</sup> and a zero ending (< neuter ending \**-a*), as in the adverbs *labāk* 'better', *sliktāk* 'worse', etc. (< \**-āk-a*). The limitation of *vaīrs* to negative contexts must be secondary. A wider use of *vaīrs* as a comparative form of *daūdz* has left some traces in Old Latvian, e.g.:

**(12)** Gotthard Friedrich Stender, *Augstas Gudribas Grahmata no Pasaules un Dabbas* (1796: 206, modernised orthography according to the edition of A. Sprūdžs, 1988: 307):*Tas Dievs, kas baŗo tārpiņus,**Jo vairs apgādā cilvēkus.*

'The God, who feeds little worms,

Cares all the more for men.'

The same use is known in some modern Latvian dialects; examples are given in ME (IV 442 [1923-1925]). With the same meaning as *vaīrs*, a variant *vāira*<sup>2</sup> is reported in ME (IV 440 [1923-1925]); it is documented in some Eastern dialects, mostly between Vecpiebalga, Vestiena, Madona and Gulbene. Other forms such as *vaīr*, *vāiram*<sup>2</sup>, *vairā* or *vaīs* are even more scarcely attested (see ME IV 440, 441, 443 [1923-1925]).

I assume, thus, that *vaīrs* is an old comparative form and was later replaced by *vaīrāk* in its prototypical use. If so, the ending *-s* of *vaīrs* must be an old comparative ending. It can be compared to an old adverbial ending \**-(i)s* that is still attested in Old Prussian with a comparative meaning, e.g. *mijls* 'better, preferable' (III 89<sub>8</sub>), *tālis*,

<sup>6</sup> See Fennell (1997: 294).

<sup>7</sup> Historically, the Latvian comparative suffix *-āk-* (< \**-āk-*) is identical with the Lithuanian attenuative suffix *-ókas* (e.g. *gerókas* 'quite good' from *gėras* 'good'), cf. Endzelin (1923: 264), Stang (1966: 267). For a parallel in Celtic see Bernardo Stempel (1989).

*tāls* ‘further, farther’ (-*is* III 119<sup>7</sup>, -*s* III 69<sub>21</sub>, 71<sub>11</sub>, 99<sub>22</sub>), *toūls* ‘more’ (III 69<sub>17</sub>, 73<sub>4</sub>).<sup>8</sup> As is well known, this ending *\*(i)s* has a good Indo-European pedigree. It is known in Italic (Lat. *magis* ‘more’, Osc. *mais* ‘more’) and in Germanic (ending -*s* in Goth. *mins* ‘less’,<sup>9</sup> *wairs* ‘worse’,<sup>10</sup> *þanaseiþs* ‘further, more’,<sup>11</sup> ending -*is* in Goth. *mais* ‘more’,<sup>12</sup> *hauhis* ‘higher’, *airis* ‘earlier’, *haldis* ‘more’, *framis* ‘further’, *nehvis* ‘nearer’). It is certainly to be seen as the zero grade *\*-is* of the comparative suffix *\*-je/os-*, which is more widely attested throughout the Indo-European languages. The problem remains, as I already pointed out at the beginning, the origin of the stem *\*vāir-* itself.

### 3. Traditional etymology

Surprisingly enough, the etymology of the Latvian comparative *vaīrs* usually given in the handbooks has not really been challenged until now, although it is obviously far from satisfactory. *Vaīrs* is usually derived from the stem of Lith. *výras*, Latv. *vīrs*, OPr. *wijrs* ‘man’ and compared to the Lithuanian comparative *vyrėsnis* ‘elder, older, more advanced in age’, to which one could add the superlative *vyričiausias* ‘eldest, head, chief’ and the verb *výrauti* ‘to predominate, to have dominion over’. This explanation is already found in the etymological notes of Jan Endzelin in ME (IV 442 [1923-1925]) and it has been since repeatedly advocated by such scholars as André Vaillant (GCLS II 570, 573), Ernst Fraenkel (1950: 29, LEW 1258 [1965]), Konstantins Karulis (1992: II 471) and so on. Endzelin and Karulis give also references to other Indo-European cognates, such as OInd. *váyas-*, Lat. *uīs*, Gr. *ἰς* (Hom.), all with a basic meaning ‘strength’.

This etymology requires us to assume several semantic developments that have to be defined in a more precise way than is usually done. At least, three meanings can be distinguished in the forms allegedly considered to be cognate: ‘more’ (Latv. *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*), ‘elder’ (Lith. *vyrėsnis*), ‘strong’ (OInd. *váyas-*, Lat. *uīs*, Hom. Gr. *ἰς* ‘strength’). ‘More’ is by nature a hyperonymic concept that can equally refer either to quantity (as in Pol. *więcej*) or to intensity (as in Pol. *bardziej*) or to a wide range of features, including strength, age, etc. It is a general intensifier, without

<sup>8</sup> Berneker (1896: 211), Trautmann (1910: 248), Endzelin (1923: 355), Stang (1966: 268), Mažiulis (2004: 91). Despite Forsman (2001: 134, 2003: 215, 249), the Old Latvian comparative *labbis* ‘better’ (ME II 395-396 [1925-1927]) can hardly present the same ending *\*-is*, because this would yield *\*-s* (as in *\*vairis* > *vaīrs*). Endzelin (1923: 355) compares the ending -*is* with the Old Prussian comparative ending -*ais*.

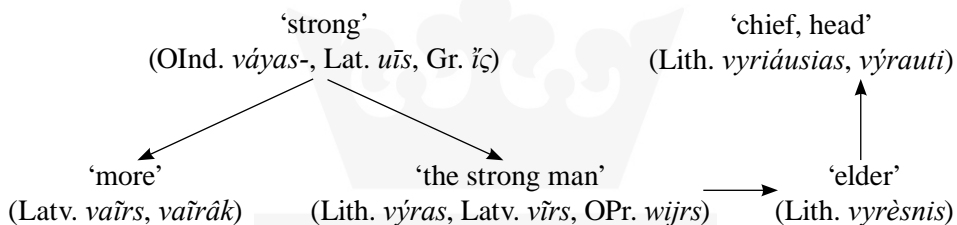
<sup>9</sup> From *\*minw-iz* (cf. OHG *min*).

<sup>10</sup> From *\*wirs-iz* (cf. ONorse *verr*, OEng. *wiers*, OHG *wirs*).

<sup>11</sup> From *\*sīþ-is* (cf. OHG *sīd*).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. OHG *mēr* ‘more’.

any precise specification. Due to its semantic plasticity, it can historically develop from different concepts. It is, for example, not uncommon for an adverb denoting ‘strength’ to acquire a wider meaning ‘much’ or ‘more’, see Pol. *dużo* ‘much, a lot’ compared with *duży* ‘strong’.<sup>13</sup> The positive form *daūdz* itself seems to derive from a neuter substantive *\*daugi* (cf. Lith. *daūg* ‘much, a lot’) with an original meaning ‘strength’.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, historical connections between the notions of ‘age’ and ‘strength’ are not unusual; one could mention, for example, the case of Slav. *staryj* ‘old’ compared with Lith. *stóras* ‘fat, strong’, both probably deriving from an original meaning ‘stable, solid, strong’ (PIE root *\*steh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to stand’). If we try to apply such models to the case of Latv. *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*, a possibility would be to reconstruct the following scenario:



At first glance, this model would probably seem quite convincing. However, if one considers the facts more precisely, it appears not to have any weight. It is primarily based on the comparison of the stems *\*vāir-* ‘more’ (Latv. *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*) and *\*vīr-* ‘man’ (Lith. *výras*, Latv. *vīrs*, OPr. *wijrs*), as if the superficial identity of their derivation sufficed to posit a common origin. This is what I would call a low cost etymology – an etymology built on a global reading of lexical items without any attempt at providing a morphological explanation. In the case of Latv. *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk*, such an approach is particularly misleading, since it does not account for the structure of the word. The comparison with OInd. *váyas-*, Lat. *uīs*, Gr. *ἴς* would suggest that the stem is *\*vāi-*, whereas *\*-r-* would be a suffix, which seems to be most likely. But, even if we reconstruct a PIE root *\*ueiH-* ‘strength’, or the like, this does not explain the kind of formation that would be hidden behind the comparative *\*vāiris*. It would be very unlikely to interpret *\*vāiris* as deriving from *\*vīras* ‘man’. Not that a comparative based on a substantive would be impossible *stricto sensu* (see Lith. *vyrėsnis*),<sup>15</sup> but it would be odd enough to find

<sup>13</sup> Endzelin mentions as a parallel the case of Sl. *bolje* ‘more’ compared with OInd. *bálam* ‘strength’. This, however, is an old etymology which can now be ruled out (for a new proposal see Dieu 2008).

<sup>14</sup> See the etymological account of Kazlauskas (RR II 171-174 [1970]).

<sup>15</sup> Another example in Baltic is Latv. *laīkāk* ‘earlier, more timely’ (from *laīks* ‘time’), see ME II 404 [1925-1927], Forssman (2001: 272). See also Zeifelder (2003: 261-271) for a full account.

stem apophony ( $*\bar{i} \rightarrow *āi$ ) in such an isolated lexem. The parallel of Lith. *gývas* ‘alive’  $\rightarrow$  *gaivinti* ‘to refresh, to enliven, to vivify’ does not prove anything, since it belongs to a regular formation (causative in *-inti*). This is not the case for Latv. *vaĩrs*, *vaĩrāk* the formation of which remains obscure.

Another possibility would be to derive Latv. *vaĩrs*, *vaĩrāk* not from  $*vīras$  ‘man’, but directly from the root  $*\underline{ue}iH-$ , assuming that its formation was created independently of that of  $*vīras$  ‘man’. But the root  $*\underline{ue}iH-$  ‘strength, vitality’ is itself, to a large extent, an abstraction drawn from two nominal stems, a root name  $*\underline{ui}H-$  (with zero grade) attested in Latin (Lat. *uīs*) and Greek (Hom.  $\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ ), and a sigmatic neuter  $*\underline{ue}iH-e/os-$  attested in Old Indic (OInd. *váyas-*), to which one could add the supposed derivative  $*\underline{ui}H-ro-$  ‘provided with strength’ > ‘man’ (OInd. *vīrá-*, Baltic  $*vīras$ , with secondary shortening in Lat. *uir*, Goth. *wair*, OIr. *fer*).<sup>16</sup> This root has no verbal form, and this is precisely the reason why the creation of a derivative  $*vāir-$  in Baltic (something like  $*\underline{uo}iH-ro-$ ) would appear so unlikely.

Another detail disqualifies this etymology. The Proto-Baltic diphthong  $*ai$  regularly yields  $*ie$  in East Baltic, as can be seen from examples such as Lith. *diēveris*, Latv. *diēveris* ‘brother-in-law’ (< PBalt.  $*dāiveri-$  < PIE  $*deh_2iŭ-er-$ , S.-Cr. *djēvēr*, Hom. Gr.  $\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\rho$ , OInd. *devár-*) or more directly Lith. *briedis*, Latv. *briēdis* ‘elk’ compared with OPr. *braydis* (EV 650). However, an old diphthong  $*ai$  sometimes appears to have been preserved without any change in East Baltic; an example is Lith. *káimas* ‘village’ compared with OPruss. *caymis* (but Latvian *cīems* has  $*ie$ ). This is a classical problem.<sup>17</sup> Some scholars assume this difference to have been caused by the presence or the absence of the stress ( $*ai > ie$  under the stress,  $*ai$  preserved in unstressed position). As far as I know, this opinion goes back to Hermann Hirt (1892: 37). More recently, Jerzy Kuryłowicz (1956a and b, 1968: 296-297) claimed that integration into the apophonical system also played a crucial role: the diphthong  $*ai$  is preserved (or has been restored) in East Baltic mostly in secondary formations that were regularly characterised by an  $*o$ -grade, whereas the evolution of  $*ai$  to  $*ie$  normally took place in isolated words that were free from any morphonological pressure.

In any case, it is obvious that both explanations are highly problematic and cannot shed much light on the formation of the Latvian comparative *vaĩrs*. First, the sustained tone of Latv. *vaĩrs* presupposes an originally stressed syllable, which precludes any approach based on Hirt’s theory. On the other hand, if one tries to consider with Kuryłowicz morphonological pressure as a criterium for the preservation of  $*ai$  in East Baltic, it is necessary to suppose that an underlying

<sup>16</sup> Pokorny (IEW 1177 [1959]).

<sup>17</sup> See the insightful account of Mathiassen (1995: 41-53). See also Petit (2003: 96-97) for a discussion.



verbal form did exist, which formed with *vaīrs* what I would call, paraphrasing a famous expression of Trubetskoj, a conjunct apophonical unit. Once again, the crucial difficulty is that *vaīrs* is entirely isolated.

Up to this point, a new etymological approach is clearly needed. Our main task is now to present a new etymology that could account for every difficulty we have been facing so far.

#### 4. A new proposal

To begin with, let me recall that, in Indo-European, primary comparative formations were characterised by a morphological feature that is still represented in some languages and can be roughly defined as suffix deletion. In Greek, for example, *\*-ro-* or *\*-u-* adjectives do not preserve the suffix of their positive form in the corresponding comparative, e.g. *αἰσχ-ρός* ‘awful’ → comparative *αἰσχ-ίων*, or *ἡδ-ύς* ‘sweet’ → comparative *ἡδ-ίων*. In Old Indic, the same feature is abundantly attested, e.g. *dū-rá-* ‘far’ → comparative *dāv-īyāms-*, or *lagh-ú-* ‘light’ → comparative *lāgh-īyāms-*. In Latin, the adverb *mag-is* ‘more’ does not preserve the suffix *\*-no-* of the positive adjective *mag-nus* ‘great’. In the Baltic languages, this feature seems to have been reorganised according to a new distributional principle: consonantal suffixes are preserved, vocalic suffixes are lost. Lithuanian, for example, has *tik-ras* ‘true’ → comparative *tik-r-ėsnis* (preservation of *\*-r-*), but *plat-ūs* ‘large’ → comparative *plat-ėsnis* (loss of *\*-u-*). The same holds true for Latvian as well, e.g. Latv. *skaīd-rs* ‘clear’ → comparative *skaīd-r-āks* (preservation of *\*-r-*), but adverb *lab-i* ‘well’ → comparative *lab-āk* (loss of *\*-i*).

Taking this fact into account, it is likely that the Latvian comparative adverb *vaīrs* ‘more’ is based on a positive adjective *\*vāi-ras* or *\*vāi-rus* the suffix of which was partly preserved in the comparative form *\*vāi-r-is*. There is no such adjective in Latvian, but Lithuanian does have an adjective that looks very similar to this form and could indeed be a very nice candidate for a comparison with Latvian *vaīrs*. The Great Dictionary of the Lithuanian language (LKŽ XVII 927-928) reports the existence of an adjective *vairūs* in some Lithuanian dialects with the following meanings:

1. ‘good’ (= Lith. *geras*), a meaning already attested in the Lithuanian newspaper *Aušra* (1884). Adverbial forms: *vairù* or *vairiaĩ*. A special meaning ‘beautiful’ has left also traces.
2. ‘important, significant’ (= Lith. *svarbus*, *reikšmingas*) and ‘clever, ingenious’ (= Lith. *gudrus*, *sumanus*).
3. ‘separate, different, interesting’ (= Lith. *išsiskiriantis*, *kitoniškas*, *įdomus*).
4. ‘various, diverse’ (= Lith. *įvairus*, *visoks*).
5. ‘variegated, speckled, of many colours’ (= Lith. *margas*, *raibas*).

6. 'slanting, oblique, crooked, curved' (= Lith. *įstrizas, kreivas*).
7. 'difficult, complex' (= Lith. *sunkus, sudėtingas*) within the impersonal construction *vairù* + inf. 'it is difficult to...'
8. 'not serious' (= Lith. *nerimtas*).

Several derivatives are also attested, among which the inchoative verb *vairėti* 'to change, to become more clever' (LKŽ XVII 924) and the factitive-causative verb *vairinti* 'to distinguish, to change' (LKŽ XVII 925) deserve a mention.

The original meaning of the adjective *vairùs* was probably 'flexible, curved' as opposed to 'stiff' or 'direct'. From this basic meaning, which seems to be still preserved in the sense 6 ('slanting, oblique, crooked, curved'), one could derive first a wide range of quantitative meanings ('not direct' > 'not unique', hence 'complex, plural': 'separate, different' 3, 'various' 4, also 'variegated, speckled, of many colours' 5), but also different uses based on a qualitative meaning, either in a positive sense ('clever' 2, 'good' 1, 'important' 2) or more seldom in a negative sense ('difficult' 7, 'not serious' 8).

Needless to say, a comparison with the Latvian comparative *vaĩrs* appears immediately very attractive. As I already pointed out, 'much' or 'more' are general concepts that can equally be seen as quantitative (referring to a number of items or to the complexity of a given item) or as qualitative (referring to the intensity of a given feature).<sup>18</sup> In some languages, both meanings are expressed by different lexemes, e.g. Lat. *plūs / magis*, Gr. *πλέον / μάλλον*, Pol. *dużo / bardzo*, etc. But there is often only a tenuous difference between them, and it is by no means unusual for a word denoting intensity to acquire a quantitative meaning,<sup>19</sup> or vice versa.<sup>20</sup> To judge from the data collected in the LKŽ XVII 927-928, a quantitative meaning seems to predominate in Lith. *vairùs*, this being in accordance with the original meaning 'flexible, curved' > 'not unique, complex'. In this respect, it is noteworthy that the corresponding adverb *vairiaĩ* presents a comparative form *vairiaũ* which is sometimes used with exactly the same meaning as Lith. *daugiaũ* 'more'. In the LKŽ XVII 927, a nice example is given that perfectly matches the use of Latvian *vaĩrs, vaĩrāk*:

(13) Lithuanian (LKŽ XVII 927, from Jablonskis):

*Aš vairiaũ gavau parduodamas kiaušius, t. y. daugiau.*

'I got more by selling eggs.'

As far as I can see, this special meaning seems to be restricted to the Low Lithuanian dialects. I have found further examples in the Dictionary of the so-called

<sup>18</sup> See Buck (1949: 922-925).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Fr. *beaucoup* 'much, many' (< *beau* 'beautiful, fine' and *coup* 'blow') or Goth. *mais* 'more' (< \**meh<sub>2</sub>*- 'great', cf. OIr. *már, mór*, Welsh *mawr*, Bret. *meur* 'great' < \**meh<sub>2</sub>-ro-*).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bret. *kalz* 'much, many' (< 'a heap'), Alb. *shumë* 'much, many' (< Lat. *summa*) or Fr. *plus* 'more' (< Lat. *plūs* 'more, more numerous').

*dūnininkai* dialects collected by Vitkauskas, among which this one is particularly illustrative:

(14) Low Lithuanian dialect of Kuršėnai (Vitkauskas 1976: 422):

*Kuõ çe múoka's / vaīrāũ. nebĩšmúoksi.*

‘Whatever you paid here, you will not pay more.’

The semantic identity is so striking that it is really a wonder that no one has noticed it until now. I assume, thus, that Latvian *vaīrs* represents an old comparative form of an adjective *\*vāi-rus* that itself disappeared in Latvian, but is still preserved in Lithuanian *vairūs*.

From a formal point of view, there is only a slight divergence between Latvian *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk* and Lith. *vairūs*. In Latvian, the stem diphthong is acute (*aĩ*), whereas Lith. *vairūs* has a non-acute diphthong, since it belongs to accent class 4 (*vairūs*, acc. *vaīru*). This divergence could well be secondary. In Lithuanian, adjectives of accent class 3 (this would be here Lith. *vairūs*, acc. *\*váiru*) tend to move into accent class 4 (Lith. *vairūs*, acc. *vaīru*), which is much more productive. It should be noted, by the way, that, if the acute tone is old in this *o*-grade formation, this can be an argument for the claim that the so-called ‘Saussure’s effect’ does not work in Baltic.

I now turn to the question of the underlying verbal root and of the stem apophony. As I pointed out earlier in this paper, the existence of a verbal basis seems to be presupposed by the preservation of the diphthong *\*ai* in Latvian, and this holds true for Lith. *vairūs* as well. Another clue is given by the fact that, beside *vairūs*, Lithuanian has a form *įvairūs*, with exactly the same meaning ‘various, diverse’ (LKŽ IV 274-275). Contrary to *vairūs*, this form is most usual in the standard language. It is attested at least since the third edition of the dictionary of Konstantinas Sirvydas (ca. 1643: DTL<sup>3</sup> 129, 474): *iwayrus*. The presence of a verbal prefix in *į-vairūs* proves, beyond any doubt, that we are dealing with a deverbative adjective. The same analysis should probably be applied to *vairūs* (and to Latv. *vaīrs*) as well. Our task now is to find the verb itself.

To go further, I would like to mention Sirvydas’ description of the adjective *įvairūs* in DTL<sup>3</sup>:

(15) Konstantinas Sirvydas (ca. 1643: DTL<sup>3</sup> 129):

*Kręčacy šie / zátoczysty / kręćisty / Tortuofus, flexuofus, sinuofus. Jwiias / iwayrus.*

‘winding, sinuous’

(16) Konstantinas Sirvydas (ca. 1643: DTL<sup>3</sup> 474):

*Wężykowaty. Sinuofus. Jwayrus / iwijas.*

‘winding, sinuous’

It is striking that *įvairūs* is here presented together with a synonym *įvijas*. In the modern language, both forms have different meanings: *įvairūs* ‘various, diverse’, vs. *įvijas* ‘sinuous, spiral’. But they were obviously still related at the time

of Sirvydas. One could follow this line of thought further by assuming that they actually belong to the same etymological family with a common basic meaning ‘sinuous, not direct’.

The benefit of such a claim is evident. First, it confirms our first impression that Lith. *vairūs* and Latv. *vaīrs* are to be segmented as *\*vāi-* (stem) + *\*-r-* (suffix). Moreover, it shows that the stems *\*vāi-* and *\*vij-* are apophonical variants of the same root. Whereas *\*vāi-* can reflect a PIE *o*-grade (*\*uoiH-*), the other stem *\*vij-* is to be seen as the antevocalic realisation of a zero grade stem *\*vī-*; in laryngealistic terms, it can reflect PIE *\*uiH-*.<sup>21</sup> The question is what would be the verbal root, and what was its basic meaning.

It is obvious that the adjective *īvijas* ‘sinuous, spiral’ is related to the stem of the verb *výti* ‘to twist, to wind’; a preverbal form *īvýti* (pres. *īveja*, pret. *īvijo*) is also attested (LKŽ XIX 818), which could be even more directly seen as the basis of *īvijas*. In Lithuanian, there are in fact two verbs *výti*, one verb with a basic meaning ‘to drive, to chase away, to pursue, to chase, to hunt’ and a second verb with a basic meaning ‘to twist, to wind’. In some lexicographical works, both verbs are treated as a single verb with polysemic uses (e.g. Sereiskis 1933: 1069); other works consider them as homonyms (e.g. LKŽ XIX 805 and 815, DŽ<sup>4</sup> 942). Of course, this second approach is more likely. The first verb goes back to a well known PIE root *\*ueiĥ<sub>1</sub>-*, which is defined in the LIV 666-669 [2001] with the basic meaning ‘sein Augenmerk richten auf, trachten nach’; cognates include OInd. *véti*, Avest. *vaēiti* ‘to enjoy, to desire, to pursue’, Gr. *φιεμαι* ‘to strive’, and probably Lat. *uīs* ‘thou wantest’, *inuītus* ‘unwillingly’. The second verb goes back to a root *\*ueiĥ<sub>1</sub>-* or *\*uieĥ<sub>1</sub>-*, defined in the LIV 695 [2001] as ‘umwickeln, umhüllen’ with cognates in OInd. *vyáyati* ‘to envelop’, Lat. *uieō* ‘to bind, to plait’ and Slavic *\*viti* (OCS *viti*, Isg *vbję* ‘to twist, to wind’). Latvian seems to have preserved only the second verb: *vīt* ‘to twist, to wind’, pres. *viju*, prēt. *viju* (ME IV 645 [1929-1932]). One may note that a preverbal form *ievīt* ‘to intertwine, to plait’ is also documented (ME II 90 [1925-1927]). This form perfectly matches Lith. *īvýti*, which I have just proposed to see as the basis of the adjectives *īvijas* ‘sinuous, spiral’ and *īvairūs* ‘various, diverse’.

This root *\*ueiĥ<sub>1</sub>-* or *\*uieĥ<sub>1</sub>-* ‘to intertwine, to plait’ can explain not only the origin of the verb Lith. *výti*, Latv. *vīt* ‘to twist’ (from a PIE zero grade formation *\*uiĥ<sub>1</sub>-ti-*), but also that of the Lithuanian adjectives *īvijas* ‘sinuous, spiral’ and *īvairūs* ‘various, diverse’ and finally the Latvian comparatives *vaīrs*, *vaīrāk* (from a PIE *o*-grade formation *\*uoiĥ<sub>1</sub>-r-* with secondary full grade I).

It remains for us to account for the derivation that produced these adjectives, both from a morphological and from a semantical point of view. In addition, we

<sup>21</sup> I refer to the monography of Wojciech Smoczyński on the so-called *hiat laryngalny* (2003), where all the relevant material is discussed (on Lith. *výti* ‘to twist’ see p. 43).

still have to explain why Latv. *vaĩrs*, *vaĩr k* was integrated into the paradigm of *daũdz* ‘much, many’.

To begin with the morphological side of the problem, this new etymological proposal requires us to treat Latv. *vaĩrs*, *vaĩr k* and Lith. *vairũs*, *įvairũs* as reflecting a common East Baltic derivative *\*v i-ras* or *\*v i-rus*. The most archaic form of the suffix was certainly *\*-ras* (< PIE *\*-ro-*), whereas *\*-rus* can be seen as the result of a recent extension of the productive ending *\*-us*, as shown for instance by OLith. *stipras* → Modern Lith. *stiprũs* ‘strong’. It is possible that the older form *\*v i-ras* is still preserved in the Lithuanian substantive *vaĩras* ‘steering wheel’ (originally a substantivised neuter of the adjective ‘flexible, curved’?).

The question now is whether a form *\*v i-ras* could belong to a deverbative formation otherwise known in Baltic and whether its *o*-grade could be considered as regular. There are, indeed, good parallels for *o*-grade deverbatives in *\*-ro-* in Baltic, such as Lith. *tamprũs* ‘elastic, resilient’ from *teĩmpti* ‘to pull, to draw’ (<tamp>, vs. <temp>)<sup>22</sup> or Lith. *skaidrũs*, Latv. *skaidrs* ‘clear’ from Lith. *skýsti*, Latv. *šķĩst* ‘to liquefy’ (<sk id>, vs. <skĩd>). Our form *\*v i-ras* beside the verb *\*vĩ-* could be interpreted precisely in the same way (<v i>, vs. <vĩ>); it would thus belong to a formation where, at least to some extent, an *o*-grade would be required, and this could well explain the preservation (or the restoration) of the diphthong *\*ai* in East Baltic.

From a semantic point of view, I have already pointed out that the wide range of uses of *vairũs* in the Lithuanian dialects gives evidence for the evolution of a basic meaning ‘twisted, curved’ to ‘not direct, not unique, complex, various’, and I have shown that, in some uses, this adjective *vairũs* presents a meaning that is very close to that of Latv. *vaĩrs*, *vaĩr k* ‘more’. It is not necessary to develop this point here once again, but I would like to mention, in addition, that a connection of a verb meaning ‘to twist, to plait’ with the notion of quantification is also known in the multiplicative adverbs of several Indo-European languages, such as Lat. *duplex* ‘double’, *triplex* ‘triple’, *multiplex* ‘multiple, numerous’ (and *simplex* ‘simple’) from *plectō* ‘to plait, to intertwine, to twist’.<sup>23</sup> It is thus not unlikely that the adjective *\*v i-ras* ‘complex, various’ (< ‘twisted’) developed a quantitative meaning ‘multiple, numerous’ that can directly explain the meaning of the comparative *\*v i-r-is* ‘more numerous’ > ‘more’ (both quantitative and qualitative).

The development of this general meaning could well be connected with the formation of the suppletive relationship between *daũdz* and *vaĩrs*, *vaĩr k*. It is well known that suppletion regularly implies semantic blending of originally different

<sup>22</sup> Skardžius (1943: 300).

<sup>23</sup> See also Germ. *mannigfaltig* ‘multiple, numerous’ from *falten* ‘to fold’.

meanings; on several occasions, José Luis García Ramón defined ‘semantic adaptation’ (*semantische Anpassung*) as a crucial feature of suppletive formations. It is easily conceivable that, in Latvian, once the comparative form of the adjective *\*vāi-ras* ‘complex, various’ was connected with the adverb *\*daugi* ‘more’, its meaning was adapted to that of its new positive counterpart; the old positive *\*vāi-ras* was then doomed to disappear.

The last question is why suppletion was in this case necessary. In a seminal paper, Klaus Strunk has shown that suppletion is always based on an older defectivity, it presupposes a gap in a paradigm (1977: 3): *Suppletion setzt durchweg Defektivität voraus, ohne daß umgekehrt Defektivität notwendig und immer von Suppletion begleitet wäre.*

The existence of a positive form *\*vāi-ras* still reflected in Lithuanian (*vairūs*) shows that the Latvian comparative *vāirs*, *vāirāk* was originally not a defective form. This means that defectivity must necessarily belong to the other form, i.e. the positive adverb *\*daugi* ‘much’. One could understand why *\*daugi* was a defective form in the prehistory of the East Baltic languages by assuming that it goes back to a substantivised neuter ‘quantity, number’ (<*\*d<sup>h</sup>ouǵ<sup>h</sup>-i* ‘strength’, neuter of an *i*-adjective of the type Gr. *τρόφις* ‘enormous’, cf. *τρόφι κῦμα* ‘enormous wave’ Λ 307), which was by nature not very likely to develop a comparative form.<sup>24</sup> It is only in extreme cases (such as Lith. *výras* → *vyrėsnis*) that such a derivation pattern [substantive] → [comparative] can be realised; substantives are usually unable to develop comparative forms. Exactly for the same reason, Engl. *a lot* does not exhibit any comparative form, unless suppletive (*more*). The ground for suppletion to take place lies in the positive form *\*daugi* and it is only through a secondary process, so to speak by accident, that the adjective *\*vāi-ras* gave its adverbial comparative to supply the uneasy gradation forms of *\*daugi*. In this respect, the regular paradigm of Lithuanian *daũg* → *daugiaũ* is to be seen as innovative, whereas Latvian, confronted with the same problem, has chosen a different solution, in accordance with all the surrounding languages (Est. *palju* → *enam*, Germ. *viel* → *mehr* or Russian *mnógo / óčen’* → *ból’she*), where suppletion is still preserved until now between ‘much’ or ‘more’.

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<sup>24</sup> For a root etymology see Kazlauskas (RR II 171-174 [1970]).

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