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IX

GUERRE & PAIX – WAR & PEACE



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AN ETYMOLOGICAL NOTE ON THE SLAVIC PARTICLES *LI* AND *LĚ, LE**

Herman SELDESLACHTS

K.U. Leuven

In numerous languages the disjunctive particle ('or') goes back to a form of a verb meaning 'to want', 'to wish', 'to like', 'to choose', most often to its 2nd person singular. A well-known case in point is Lat. *vel* 'or', which has been traced back, in a very plausible way, by SOMMER (1914a: 534; 1914b: 150-151) to **velsi*, the original 2nd pers. sing. of the present indicative of the verb *velle* 'to want', 'to wish'¹. Of similar origin are the words for 'or' in other Italic languages, cf. Oscan *loufir* 'or' (from 3rd sing. pass. in the impersonal use 'does one like')² and Umbrian *heri(s) ... heri(s)* 'either ... or' (from 2nd pers. sing. 'will you ... will you')³. One may also point to parallels in Romance (cf. Romanian *ori* 'or'⁴, Italian *vuoi ... vuoi*, Portuguese *quer ... quer* 'either ... or'), Slavic (OCS *ljubo ... ljubo*, Polish *lub ... lub* 'either ... or'⁵), and other Indo-European languages (cf. Mod. Persian *xvāh ... xvāh*⁶ 'either ... or', Armenian *kam*⁷ 'or'). Outside the Indo-European

* I would like to thank P. SWIGGERS for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article. For any remaining errors I alone am responsible.

¹ Cf. also BRUGMANN (1903-1904: 340; 1904: 655 n. 1; 1906-1913: II/3, 90); JACOBSON (1913: 343-348 [starts from an injunctive **vels*; the simplification **vell* > *vel* is attributed to its proclitic character]); FRAENKEL (1923: 396 [explains the simplification **vell* > *vel* by the "Funktionsschwäche" of the word]); ERNOUT (1953: 181); ERNOUT - MEILLET (1959: 718); WALDE - HOFMANN (1938-1956: II, 743); MEILLET - VENDRYES (1968: 632); LEUMANN (1977: 142, 220, 526); SIHLER (1995: 41, 231, 539); COWGILL (1978: 26-27). The explanations starting from an imperative (WACKERNAGEL [1897: 25 [1953: 786]]: **vele* 'wähle'; MEILLET [1916b]: **velī* < **velī*, allegedly parallel to *nōlī*; the *-i* might be "la particule connue i.-e. **i*") are unacceptable (cf. SOMMER 1914b: 196; WALDE - HOFMANN 1938-1956: II, 743; LEUMANN 1977: 526; COWGILL 1978: 39 n. 25).

² Cf. BUCK (1928: 14, 150).

³ Cf. BUCK (1928: 150).

⁴ Probably from **voles*, 2nd pers. sing. of **volēre* (Rom. *a vrea*) 'to want' (not from a 3rd pers. sing. **volet* as CIORANESCU [1966: 571] seems to think).

⁵ Cf. also Serbo-Croatian *volja ... volja* and Polish *choć ... choć*, mentioned by VONDRÁK (1928: 465 and 552), and Russian *choť ... choť*, e.g., *pridi choť sejčas, choť zavtra* 'come either today or tomorrow' (cf. OŽEGOV 1972: 798). One may further note that *choť* (whose uses partially correspond to those of Lat. *vel*) is thought to have undergone an irregular phonetic reduction (see VASMER 1953-1958: III, 268) with respect to *choťjá*.

⁶ Cf. *xvāstan*, *xvāham* 'to want'.

area, one could cite for instance Hungarian *akár* 'or', which goes back to the 2nd pers. sing. of the adhortative (imperative) mood of the verb *akarni* 'to want' (see ~~BARCZY~~ 1967-1976: I, 115), and Finnish *ta(h)i* (*ta(h)ikka*) 'or', which is related to the verb *tahtoa* 'to want'.

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In view of such parallels, it is understandable that BRUGMANN (1903-1904; cf. also 1904: 611 n. 1) sought the origin of the Slavic interrogative and disjunctive particle *li*⁸ in the 2nd or 3rd pers. sing. of the optative of IE **uel-* 'to choose, to want'⁹, forms which he believed were to be reconstructed as either **u(e)lis/t* or **u(e)lois/t*. Because he furthermore tended to accept the identification of *li* with a Baltic particle represented by Latvian *lai* (used to form the 3rd pers. imperative, which can also express a wish or a concession¹⁰), by Lith. dial. *lai* (functionally equivalent to the permissive particle *te-*, *tegù(l)* of the standard language¹¹), and by the Old Prussian optative mark *-lai*¹², he deemed the reconstruction **ulois/t* to be more probable. Explicitly referring to Lat. *vel*, BRUGMANN suggested to explain the meaning of Sl. *li* starting from 'du magst wählen'/'er mag wählen', whereas for Baltic *lai* he thought a 3rd pers. 'er wolle', or more precisely 'möge er diese Wahl treffen', a more suitable starting point.

However, even after BRUGMANN's article, the etymology of *li* was still reported in some standard works to be uncertain or enigmatic¹³, and also the connection between Sl. *li* and Balt. *lai* has, for good reasons, been doubted by several scholars¹⁴. Indeed, contrary to BRUGMANN's opinion, the traditional interpretation of the Baltic particle as a reduced form of the imperative of the verb 'to let' (Latv. *laišt*, Lith. *lēisti*) seems compelling¹⁵. Recently, though, TOPOROV

⁷ Cf. *kam* 'will', *kamem* 'I want', 'I will'.

⁸ On the diverse functions and meanings of this particle, see VAILLANT (1977: 199-200; 228-229). For a good concise survey, cf. also LYSAGHT (1983: 181).

⁹ We preserve BRUGMANN's notation of the reconstructed forms.

¹⁰ For a survey of the uses of Latv. *lai*, see MÜHLENBACH - ENDZELIN (1953-1956: II, 400-401).

¹¹ E.g., *lai žinos* (= *te-si-žinos*) 'er mag wissen' (we preserve the spelling used by BRUGMANN).

¹² E.g., *ēilai* 'may he go'. On the use of *-lai*, see especially TOPOROV (1984a: 67-69).

¹³ See, e.g., MEILLET - VAILLANT (1965 [1934]: 477 and 484), VAILLANT (1977: 229). For improbable speculations on the origin of *li*, see HAMP (1973: 88), who posits "schématiquement" a Balto-Slavic *li* 'en face' (for which **wli-* is suggested as a possible origin, cf. Goth. *wlits* 'πρόσωπον').

¹⁴ See VASMER (1953-1958: II, 38 ["Ganz unsicher"]), with bibliographical references; cf. already BERNEKER (1924: 716).

¹⁵ See especially ENDZELIN (1911: 295): "Daß Trautmann Brugmanns Hypothese, le. *lai* (= r. *mycma*) gehe auf **uloit* zurück, wiederholt (S. 285 f.), macht sie nicht glaubwürdiger. Die älteren Drucke haben bekanntlich dafür noch *laid*, sodaß

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(1984a: 77-79; 1984b: 418-436) has pointed out a number of analogies in the use of Sl. *li* and Balt. *lai* (e.g., both are sometimes used to introduce conditional clauses), which he thinks could indicate a common origin for both particles¹⁶. But these concordances are clearly secondary. In fact, on closer inspection all the Slavic examples quoted by TOPOROV can easily be accounted for starting from the disjunctive or interrogative function of *li*, whereas in all of the Baltic instances it is possible to see the origin in the imperative 'let!'. Thus, Latv. *Lai viņš duod & es viņam esmu ļoti pateicīgs* 'If he gives, I will be very

Zugehörigkeit des *lai* (man beachte auch den Stoßton!) zu *laišt* »lassen« (als Imperativ dazu; vgl. r. *пусть, пусть!*) sonnenklar ist. Das nordlit. *lai* scheint aus dem Lettischen entlehnt zu sein. Mit diesem *lai* haben die preußischen Optativendungen II. s. *-laisi*, III. s. *-lai* [...] I. pl. *-limai*, II. pl. *-laiti* nichts zu schaffen [...]". For this explanation of Latv. and Lith. dial. *lai*, cf. also ENDZELIN (1909: 375 n. 1; 1923: 690); FRAENKEL (1923: 397-398; 1962-1965: 329); STANG (1942: 245 [and p. 265-266, where *-lai* of the Old Prussian optative is regarded as an original particle and compared, wrongly in my opinion, to the Slavic particle *le*; cf. also STANG 1966: 443]; 1966: 422); VAILLANT (1966: 30; cf. also VAILLANT [1966: 101], who tentatively explains the Old Prussian optative on the basis of an old *-l*-participle). — For TOPOROV's (1984a: 79-80) suggestion that the verb 'to let' might find its origin in the particle I do not know any parallels. Conversely, one may point to numerous parallels for the use of the imperative 'let' in the creation of modal forms with imperative, adhortative or permissive force (as well as for the phonetic weakening of such forms when they become what MEILLET called "mots accessoires"), cf. i.a. Russ. *пуст'* and *пущай*, *нехай* in several Slavic languages (with simplified forms like Pol. *niech*, Serbian and Croatian *neka*, Ukr., Slovenian and kajkavian Croatian *naj* [cf. FRAENKEL 1923: 393; VONDRÁK 1928: 444-445; VAILLANT 1966: 39-40, 42]), Mod. Gr. *ἄς* (from *ἄφες* 'let'), Albanian *le* 'let' (imperative of *lē*), Germ. *laß(t)* (cf. in particular the reduced form *lä* [after which an infinitive *lān* for *lāzzan* was created] in Middle High German), Engl. *let*. — Likewise, in my opinion, the Slavic particle and conjunction *da* (e.g., OCS *da bqdq* 'may I be', 'let me be', *da pridets* = Russ. *пуст' (on) pridēt* 'let him come') is probably originally an aorist imperative of the verb *dati* (Pre-Slavic **dō* 'give, let'; cf. Wilhelm SCHULZE *apud* FRAENKEL [1926: 304-305 n. 3], who, for the semantics, points to Gr. *ῥῆς* followed by the infinitive and to Russ. *davaj* [see also VASMER [1953-1958: I, 325]; RASMUSSEN [1988: 139 n. 4], who thinks of a 2nd pers. sing. aorist injunctive in imperative function **doh₃-s*). The alternative hypothesis, which sees the origin of this particle in a pronoun beginning with *d-* (see TRUBAČEV 1977: 180-181 [with bibl. references]), seems much less likely, given that the existence of such a pronoun in Indo-European is highly doubtful; the 3rd person pronouns Old Persian and Avestan *dim*, *diš* and Old Prussian *din*, *dins* have been convincingly explained as innovations by MEILLET (1916a: 53-55) and more recently by BEEKES (1982-1983: 229-232) and DUNKEL (1987: 13) (see also RASMUSSEN [1988: 126-127 with n. 4 p. 139], who accepts a secondary origin for **dim*, but — rather improbably — thinks this may go back to Proto-Indo-European times). For unfounded speculations about pronominal stems **del_{do}* and **di*, see BADER (1973: 57, 72, 74; 1984: 39-41).

¹⁶ Without foundation is in any case TOPOROV's (1984a: 80-82) attempt to connect with these particles the Tocharian gerunds in A *-l*, B *-lye*, *-lle*, the Slavic and Armenian *-l*-participles and the 1st pers. sing. of the Hittite imperative (voluntative) in *-(a)llu* (on this last form, see footnote 19 below). According to TOPOROV (1984a: 74) the *l*-particle with its unstable vocalism somewhat iconically denotes a situation of chaos, an amorphous or fluctuating mass. In his etymological dictionary TRUBAČEV (1987: 173; 1988: 68) takes over TOPOROV's analysis for Slav. *li*, *lě* and Baltic *lai*.

grateful to him' is in fact 'Let him give, ...'¹⁷, while the conditional clause in Russ. *Priděšb li ko mne, (to) spasibo skažu* 'If you come to me, (then) I will say thanks' is evidently to be understood as an original question 'Do you come to me? (Then) I will say thanks'¹⁸. The use of Latv. *laī* in dubitative questions¹⁹ is of course related to its adhortative function²⁰. The various phonetic variants (*leī, lain, la, ...*) displayed by Latvian dialects for the standard form *lai* (cf. TOPOROV 1984a: 73) can be explained as special developments of the unstressed particle²¹.

Although Balt. *lai* should thus be left out of account, BRUGMANN's explanation of Sl. *li* is still worthy of consideration and might well be basically correct. Of course, the reconstruction **wlois/*wloit* can no longer be upheld today, since an optative in **-oi-* is only possible in the thematic conjugation, whereas PIE **wel[H]*-²² certainly formed an athematic present (cf. Lat. *vult, vultis*). Now, the testimony of Latin

¹⁷ In English a similar use of *let* can be found, cf. *let but this man have his liberty [= if only this man has his liberty], and he will be a thief* (Bunyan, quoted by JESPERSEN [1940: 477]).

¹⁸ Conditional *li* ('if'), going back to interrogative *li*, is known in Old Church Slavonic too (see VAILLANT 1964: 370; 1977: 228). For the evolution of an interrogative clause to a conditional one, cf. Germ. *Kannst du es nicht tun [= Wenn du es nicht tun kannst], so sag es mir*. It is not unknown to English either, cf. NT (Auth. Version), 1. Cor. 7. 27 *Art thou bound vnto a wife? seeke not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seeke not a wife* (quoted by JESPERSEN [1940: 374]).

¹⁹ TOPOROV does mention, for that matter, a similar use of Russ. *pusť, puskaj* 'let'. — The connection of Old Prussian *-lai* with the 1st p. sing. ending *-(a)llu* (e.g., *iyallu* 'que je fasse!, je veux faire') of the Hittite imperative (voluntative) (cf. BENVENISTE 1962: 18-20; TOPOROV 1984a: 71) is unconvincing, as shown by SZEMERÉNYI (1964: 159), who also prefers to regard Balt. *lai* as an abridged form of the imperative of [Latv.] *laist* [with reference to ENDZELIN] and proposes to explain Hitt. *-allu* as a reduced form of **walu* < **welō*, the subjunctive of **wel-mi* (cf. also NEU 1984: 102). EICHNER (1975: 80) suggests to regard *-allu* as a combination of the reflex of the IE ending of the 1st pers. sing. of the active subjunctive with a reflex of **lē* < **leh₁* 'let!' (cf., however, also the criticisms in NEU [1976: 244-245 with n. 23] and MEID [1979: 171]).

²⁰ As regards the emphatic value of *lai*, TOPOROV's (1984a: 72) examples suggest that this use originated in dubitative questions, e.g., *kuo lai vedu?* 'что же мне весту?', 'what then should I carry?'.

²¹ As to the forms *-le, -lei, -lai, -li, -lu, etc.*, occurring in compound particles (*nu-lai, nu-le, ai-le, ai-lu, je-li, juo-li, etc.*; cf. also Lith. *nu-li* 'nun, jetzt' etc.), it is very doubtful whether they are etymologically identical with *lai(d)* as TOPOROV (1984a: 72-73) assumes (cf. FRAENKEL [1962-1965: 360]: "lit. (besonders žem.) *laī*, lett. *laī* haben nichts mit den genannten Partikeln gemeinsam"). BADER's (1984: 26) fanciful combinations of Lith. and Latv. *-li* with i.a. Lat. *ō-lim* 'once (upon a time)', *a-li-us* 'other' cannot be right.

²² We cannot enter here upon the question whether the Indo-European root was of the *set* (as maintained, e.g., by MAYRHOFER [1986-1995: II, 511-512]) or of the *anīt* type (as contended by NORMIER [1977: 211 n. 97] and RIKOV [1986: 48]). The Indo-Iranian evidence is contradictory and the other Indo-European languages allow no definite conclusion.

and Germanic, and probably of Slavic too²³, allows us to reconstruct the optative of the IE root *wel[H]- as *wél[H]-ih₁-m, *wél[H]-ih₁-s, *wél[H]-ih₁-t, etc. As shown by Karl HOFFMANN (1968: 5-9 [1975: 247-249]), we are dealing here with an athematic optative of the acrostatic type²⁴. As seen in footnote 23, the 2nd pers. sing. *wél[H]-ih₁-s (> *welis) may be continued by OCS *veliši* (with remodelled personal ending)²⁵. It is conceivable, then, that at a certain

²³ In all probability OCS *veljq*, *veliši*, *velitʷ*, etc., present tense of *velěti* 'to want, to wish, to allow, to command', is a remodelling of an original optative (cf. HOFFMANN 1968: 5 [1975: 247], with reference to F. SOLMSEN and E. FRAENKEL). NORMIER (1977: 211 n. 97) believes that OCS *veljq*, as well as Goth. *wiljan*, OIcel. *vilja*, etc., represent a present in *-ye/o- (with semithematic inflection in Slavic). But this is impossible, given the fact that the Slavic presents -jq, -iši, etc. normally continue presents in *-eyelo-, whereas the Indo-European presents in *-yelo- are continued by the Slavic presents in -jq, -ješi, etc. One may note that the irregular inflection of the Slavic verb ~~to want~~ 'to want' is also possibly to be explained as based on the optative (cf. TRUBECKOJ [1922: 17-20 [1988: 23-26], who also discusses the inflection of *velěti*], VAILLANT [1966: 251-352 and 403] and KORTLANDT [1979: 53-54]).

²⁴ But whereas HOFFMANN considers these forms to belong to the root aorist, we may better, following JASANOFF (1991: 101), regard them as present forms: an optative *wél[H]-ih₁-m, *wél[H]-ih₁-s, *wél[H]-ih₁-t would correspond to an acrostatic present *wél[H]-mi, *wél[H]-si, *wél[H]-ti just like *h₁éd[H]-ih₁-m, *h₁éd[H]-ih₁-s, *h₁éd[H]-ih₁-t (Lat. *edim*, *edis*, *edit*, the subjunctive [_< optative] of *esse* 'to eat') correlate with a present *h₁éd-mi, *h₁éd-si, *h₁éd-ti (of which Lat. *ēs* 'you eat', *ēst* 'he eats' present clear traces). This is admitted also by RIKOV (1986: 47-49), STRUNK (1985: 509-510), ISEBAERT (1992: 196-197), KELLENS (1984: 362-363); for Germanic, cf. also HOLLIFIELD (1980: 147-148). NORMIER (1977: 204 n. 75 and 211 n. 97) on the other hand regards part of the Germanic forms as old subjunctives and equates the 2nd pers. sing. OIcel. *vilr/vill*, OSax. and OHG *wili* 'you want' and the 3rd pers. sing. OIcel. *vil*, OSax. and OHG *wili* 'he wants' with Ved. 2nd pers. sing. *váras*, 3rd pers. sing. *várat* respectively. But in view of the Gothic forms (cf. also poet. OIcel 1st pers. sing. *vilja* = Goth. *wiljau*) and given the fact that in the verbs for 'to want' it is the optative and not the subjunctive which is often substituted for the indicative, this is less likely than the traditional opinion. — On the other hand, LEUMANN (1977: 526), SZEMERÉNYI (1989: 277-278) and HARDARSON (1993: 85, 86-87; but cf. also the "Zusatz" p. 88, where he is prepared to assume an optative *uélh-i- [sic]) still believe that Latin and Germanic have lost here an old alternation (*wel-yē-/*wel-i-) (as was certainly the case in the optative of the verb "to be"). The full grade *wel- of these forms should then be ascribed to analogy (SIHLER [1995: 540-541] admits *wel-yeh-m > *welyēm > *welyem > Lat. *velim*, but the form *wel-yeh₁-m with double full grade cannot be original in Indo-European).

²⁵ The infinitive *velěti* is analogical of the stative verbs, where an infinitive in -ěti corresponded to a present in -i-; the 1st p. sing. *veljq* is also of analogical origin (cf. also FRAENKEL 1949: 156; HARDARSON 1993: 87). — KORTLANDT (1992: 236) reconstructs a 3rd pers. sing. *w₁-yéh₁t, 3rd pers. pl. *wél-ih₁nt). The first form is in his opinion reflected by OCS. do-*vŭlěti* (3rd pers. sing. do-*vŭljetŭ*) 'to be sufficient', the second by Goth. (3rd pers. pl.) *wileina*. But an alternation of this kind (accent on the suffix in the singular, on the root in the plural) is not, to my knowledge, a usual type in Indo-European. Moreover, in view of the meaning (explained by VAILLANT [1966: 403] from 'vouloir assez, se contenter', but 'se contenter' is not the same as 'suffire'), it seems doubtful whether one is justified in tracing back the form do-*vŭljetŭ* to an old optative (as is also done by TRUBECKOJ

1-choťe

34-36, 74

2-чоч

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moment in the prehistory of Slavic the original 2nd pers. sing. **welis* ... *welis* was used much in the same way as **velsi* ... *velsi* (> *vel* ... *vel*) in prehistoric Latin. Just as happened in Latin, this form subsequently lost its verbal character and was lexicalized as a disjunctive particle. One can imagine that, e.g., *li se? li to?* 'do you wish this, do you wish that' became 'either this, or that', like Lat. *vel hoc? vel illud?* (cf. SOMMER 1914a: 534; LEUMANN 1977: 526)²⁶. In this quality it became proclitic and was shortened to **wlis*²⁷, whose regular outcome was *li* in Slavic²⁸.

If the etymology proposed here is correct, the first function of *li* must have been that of a disjunctive particle ('(either ...) or'). This use is illustrated by the following example: OCS *domъ li bratrijъ li sestry li o[ti]ča li m[ate]rъ li ženъ li čęda li sela* 'οἰκίαν ἢ ἀδελφούς ἢ ἀδελφάς ἢ μητέρα ἢ πατέρα ἢ τέκνα ἢ ἀγρούς', 'home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields' (Mark 10, 29). It was only natural that this particle was then also used in double interrogative clauses (disjunctive questions), as in the following examples: ORuss. *egda kto vēstъ, kto odolęjetъ, my li, onę li? li s moremъ kto svętenъ?* 'does anyone know who will win, we or they? Or who is in alliance with the sea?' (*Nest. Laur. s. ann. 6452*, TSCHIZĚWSKIJ [1969: 45, l. 10-11]); OCS *večerъ li li polu nošti li vъ kuroglašęntę li utro*²⁹ 'ἢ ὀψέ ἢ μεσονύκτιον ἢ ἀλεκτοροφωνίας ἢ πρωί', 'in the evening, or at midnight, or before dawn, or at sunrise' (Mark 13, 35); OCS *damъ li ili ne damъ?* 'δῶμεν ἢ μὴ δῶμεν;', 'should we give or should we not give?' (Mark 12, 14) (cf. VONDRÁK

[1922: 20 [1988: 26]] and VAILLANT [1966: 34-35, 78, 393, 403]; cf., however, the objections of HOFFMANN [1968: 5 n. 6 [1975: 247 n. 6]]).

²⁶ Cf. also the instance, quoted in footnote 5 above, of Russ. *chot' ... chot'* being equivalent to *ili ... ili*.

²⁷ For the irregular shortening, cf. also FRAENKEL's and JACOBSON's explanation of Lat. *vel* for **vell* in front of a vowel by an evolution characteristic of "mots accessoires" (see footnote 1 above). One may also compare the special evolution of the conjunction 'or' in several Germanic languages, e.g., Engl. *or* (from *odder*), Dutch *of* (from *ofte*). It is noteworthy that the words for 'or' in the ancient Germanic languages exhibit certain divergences which can at least in part be attributed to irregular phonetic developments due to their proclitic character (cf. LÜHR 1976). — If, however, those scholars are right who take the full grade of *velim*, etc., to be secondary (see footnote 24 above), there would be no need to admit an irregular phonetic development, and *li* could go back directly to Pre-Slavic **wlis* (a form, as we have seen, already considered by BRUGMANN), a remodelling of **wlyēs* < **w[[H]-yeh]s*.

²⁸ Initial **w-* before *l* disappeared in Balto-Slavic according to LIDÉN's Law (cf., e.g., BRUGMANN 1903-1904; ARUMAA 1964: 122; SHEVELOV 1964: 196-197).

²⁹ The enclitic position of the first *li* suggests that, unlike its Greek model, this sentence is to be interpreted as interrogative.

1928: 456; VAILLANT 1964: 370-371). In such clauses it was easy for the first *li* to be subsequently reinterpreted as an interrogative particle and in the examples just quoted it probably may already be considered such. In this function *li* became enclitic (cf. VAILLANT 1977: 228; VEČERKA 1989: 43-44)³⁰ and, in conformity with WACKERNAGEL's law, shifted to the second position in the sentence³¹. This use of *li* as a question marker was then extended to non-disjunctive questions so that it became a general interrogative particle³².

³⁰ In its disjunctive use *li* is proclitic (cf. VAILLANT 1977: 229; VEČERKA 1989: 44).

³¹ The simple *li* tended more and more to be superseded by *ili* (see VONDRÁK 1928: 465; VAILLANT 1964: 370-371; 1977: 229), which has become the usual form of the conjunction in several Slavic languages. One also finds the combination *ali*, which in popular Russian is equivalent to *ili* (cf. also S.-Cr. *ali* 'but', 'and yet', 'or', Slov. *ali* 'or'; cf. VONDRÁK 1928: 468-469). – The (infrequent) use of *li* for introducing the second term of a comparison in Old Church Slavonic is possibly a *calque* of Gr. η , which is both a disjunctive ('or') and a comparative ('than') particle. (cf. VAILLANT 1964: 371 and 1977: 244). But in view of the combinations *neželi*, *neg(ъ)li* 'than', a genuine Slavic development cannot be excluded (cf. VONDRÁK 1928: 330).

³² Cf. VONDRÁK (1928: 452): "Das *li* dürfte aus den disjunktiven Fragen, wo es wohl zuerst vorhanden war, in die Bestätigungsfragen geraten sein". – One may find some support for the hypothesis that the disjunctive function of *li* is original with respect to the interrogative use in the fact that the Albanian particle *a*, which probably is borrowed from Lat. *aut* 'or' (see ČABEJ 1976-1987: II, 5-6 [p. 417 of the French summary]), functions likewise as a disjunctive and as an interrogative particle (cf. also the combination *a-po* 'or' [*po* 'but'], which typologically may be compared to *ali*, *ili* in Slavic). I would also venture the suggestion that the Gothic enclitic interrogative particle *-u* comes from the enclitic disjunctive particle **-we* (cf. Skt., Avest., OPers. *vā*, Lat. *-ve*, Gk. $\ast\eta\acute{F}\acute{\epsilon} > \eta\acute{\epsilon} > \eta$ 'or'; see POKORNY [1959: 75] and most recently MAYRHOFER [1986-1995: II, 538]); for the vocalisation of the semivowel in Gothic, cf. LÜHR [1976: 87 n. 7]: "Vorurgerm. **-ue* 'oder' hätte mit Schwund des auslautenden *-e* ebenfalls urgerm. **-u* ergeben" (cf. also KIECKERS [1928: 89]). In this context it is interesting to note that KLEIN - CONDON (1993), who recently devoted a thorough study to Gothic *-u* in the combination *-uh* and provided some support for the traditional etymological connection of *-u* with the Proto-Indo-European particle **au*, **u* (cf. LEHMANN 1986: 371 [with bibl. references]), declare that the origin of the interrogative function of this particle is problematic, cf.: "The survival of independent *u* as an interrogative particle represents an unsolved problem in the prehistory of Germanic; see Brugmann ([Grundriss] 1916, II/3: 982): 'Was die Beschränkung des freien **u* auf die Fragesätze veranlasst hat, ist nicht ersichtlich' [...]. Although Brugmann mentions the employment of *u* following interrogative pronouns in Sanskrit, this is not likely to be relevant to Gothic, where *u* is specifically not a marker of *wh*-questions, but rather of yes/no-questions. The actual solution may stretch back deep into the prehistory of Indo-European and involve a syntacticization of distal deictic **u* (opposed to proximal deictic **i*) along an illocutionary axis involving nonvidid or imagined action (question rather than statement), paralleling that reflected in the opposition **h₁estī*/**h₁ésti* 'is/let be' (indicative/imperative). This laryngealless **u* (cf. Sanskrit *ástu*, not **ásthu*) may have been either identical to, a variant of, or originally different, from, **(a)u*" [p. 59 n. 45]. Against this far-fetched hypothesis, the derivation of interrogative *-u* from PIE **-we* has at least the advantage of simplicity. It is interesting to note that this derivation has been considered by LÜHR (1976: 77) for the *-u* of Goth. *þau* which introduces the second term of double interrogative clauses, but was then rejected because "in den germ. Sprachen finden sich sonst keine Spuren von dieser Partikel". But if the *-u* of *þau* is identical with the

hbe

Finally, we have to examine the often assumed (cf. SOLMSEN 1911: 184; TRAUTMANN 1923: 153-154; VASMER 1953-1958: II, 38; JELITTE 1961: 130-131; FRAENKEL 1962-1965: I, 360; ENDZELIN 1971: 288; TOPOROV 1984a: 74-78; TRUBAČEV 1987: 172-173; 1988: 68; KLINGENSCHMITT 1994: 357 n. 88) relationship between Sl. *li* and the particles Sl. *lě*, *le*³³, Balt. *-le*, *-li*³⁴. Semantic differences seem to stand in the way of such a relationship. Whatever the origin of the Baltic particles of the shape *-le*, *-li* etc., we have seen in footnote 21 above that in all likelihood they should be separated from Sl. *li*. As to the particles *lě* or *le* in several Slavic languages (cf. ORuss. *lě* 'hardly' [= *elě* !], Old Pol. *le* 'only', Pol. *ale*, *lecz* 'but', Old S.-Cr. *le*, *lje* 'but')³⁵, they probably represent a reduced form, due to lack of stress, of *jelě* 'as far as, only just, hardly, scarcely, barely'³⁶ (cf. VONDRÁK 1928: 469; VAILLANT 1958: 704; 1966: 101; 1977: 248), which belongs to the group of relative adverbs *jelb* 'as far as', *jelma* 'how much, (in) so far as, as long as', *jeli* 'in so far as' (cf. VAILLANT 1964: 223)³⁷. It is perhaps worth recalling in this context that the first element *jed-* of OCS *jed(ъ)va* 'hardly, scarcely, barely' (*-va* = Lith. *võs* 'hardly, scarcely') and *jedinъ* 'one' also seems to be of relative origin: it is apparently nothing but the neuter form of the relative pronoun (IE **yod*), as has been argued by PEDERSEN (1905: 19-20 [1982: 23-24])³⁸. For the shortening *jelě* > *lě* a nice parallel can be

interrogative particle *-u*, as is also accepted by LÜHR, there seems to be no problem to start from Pre-Germ. **-we ... *to(d)* [or **tō*, *vel sim.*] *we ...*

³³ The attested forms and the various functions (emphatic, limitative, adversative, ...) of this particle in the individual Slavic languages are listed in TRUBAČEV (1987: 171-172).

³⁴ Cf. Lith. *nuli* 'nun, jetzt', Latv. *nule*, *nulei*, *nulai* 'jetzt, soeben', *juõle*, *juoli* 'um so mehr'. — Lith. *keli* 'how many; some', *kõl*, *kõlei* 'as long as, while, until', *tõl*, *tõlei* 'so long', Russ. dial. *tol'* 'only; hardly' etc. do not belong here (pace JELITTE [1961: 130-131], TOPOROV [1984a: 74, 76] and others), but are forms of pronouns in **-li-* inherited from Indo-European (cf. Lat. *quãlis*, *tãlis* etc.; see SZEMERÉNYI 1960: 1-9 [1991: III, 1160-1168]).

³⁵ See the survey of the different extant hypotheses on the etymology in TRUBAČEV (1987: 172-173), who for his own interpretation relies on TOPOROV's questionable views (cf. above).

³⁶ Attested in Old Church Slavonic in the expression *jelě* [some manuscripts have *lě*, cf. VONDRÁK 1928: 469] *živě* 'hardly alive, half-dead', which translates Greek $\eta\mu\theta\alpha\upsilon\eta\varsigma$.

³⁷ Kashubian *le*, Polabian *la*, which can accompany imperatives (e.g., Polabian *zar-la* 'just look') are discussed by TOPOROV (1984a: 77), who compares this with Latv. *laf*. But in fact this use is easy to understand from 'but, just, only' (cf. French *viens seulement!*, Germ. *komm nur!*).

³⁸ As a parallel PEDERSEN points to the similar use of the neuter of the relative pronoun, *kar*, in Slovenian. The traditional explanation, going back to BRUGMANN (1908-1909: 311), according to which we are dealing here with an element **ed-*, of pronominal origin, which allegedly can also be found in Lat. *ecce* 'see!, look!' (cf.

found in Latv. *tik* 'so much; only', Lith. *tik(t)* 'only', which according to ENDZELIN (1909: 375) exhibit a "proklitische Kürzung" of *tiek*, *tiektai*, or in the development of OHG *eckorōdo* 'only', which in later OHG became *ecchert* or *ockert*, to end up as contracted forms *et* or *ot* in MHG (cf. LÜHR 1976: 80). Germ. *nur* (< MHG *ne wær(e)*) and Engl. *but* (< OE *būtan*) will also come to mind. For words meaning 'only' developing into adversative conjunctions, cf. Germ. *allein* and *nur* (cf. BEHAGHEL 1928: 62-63, 233)³⁹.

SUMMARY

It is suggested that the Slavic disjunctive particle *li* 'or' goes back to **wlis*, a reduced form of **welis* < IE **wél[H]ih₁s*, 2nd pers. sing. optative of **wel[H]-* 'to choose, to wish, to want'. The use of *li* as an interrogative particle has its starting point in disjunctive interrogative clauses. Contrary to a widespread opinion, there exists no etymological connection between *li* and the particles *lě*, *le*, which are known, mainly in an adversative function, in some Slavic languages and are just reduced forms of the relative adverb *jelě*. Nor is there — in spite of a recent plea by TOPOROV — any relationship between the Slavic particles *li* and *lě* and the Baltic permissive particle *lai*, which comes from *laid*, the imperative of the verb 'to let'.

VASMER [1953-1958: I, 391 et II, 255] and POKORNY [1959: 284]), is unsatisfactory. In any case, as noted by ERNOUT - MEILLET (1959: 191), the interpretation of *ecce* as coming from **ed-ce* (accepted by WALDE - HOFMANN [1938-1956: I, 390]) breaks down on the fact that a neuter pronominal form **ed* is not with certainty attested in Italic (nor, we may add, elsewhere in Indo-European, in contradistinction to **id*, which is the only form guaranteed by comparative grammar). PEDERSEN's explanation is also more attractive than the one proposed by VAILLANT (1958: 619), who interprets *jedva* as coming from **jedva* < **jedv-a* and *jedin* as based on **jedь (j)ь* the hypothetical **jedь* being regarded as a possible correspondent of Skt. *yádi* 'if'.

³⁹ In closing this article, I would launch the question if not also the enclitic disjunctive particle **we* or **wē* that can be reconstructed for Proto-Indo-European (cf. footnote 32 above) goes back to a form of the verb **wel[H]-*. It would thus constitute another parallel for the etymology proposed here for Slav. *li*. But of course this remains highly speculative and other explanations are possible. DUNKEL (1982-1983: 193) suggests to connect disjunctive **-we* with a comparative particle **-we* (cf. Vedic *iva*).

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