LITH. javai, javiena

Provided that vowel variations lie within the permitted ranges of Indo-European ablaut, there is a tendency to accept a variation within clear cognates without attempting seriously to motivate it morphologically; and that is, after all, the only way in which ablaut can be motivated.

Cognates to javai are found in Indo-Iranian and Greek, as well as in Russ. ovin, Ukr. óvyn. On the last forms see Vasmer REW 2.249, where curiously javienà is not mentioned. Perhaps this omission prevented Vasmer from seeing that Beloruss. jóvna must be a borrowing, or at least a contamination, from the Baltic.

I see no way at present of relating OIr. eórna 'barley' except through speculation on the first ambiguous syllable.

Though the vocalism of the Indo-Iranian forms is ambiguous, that of Greek ζειξί is not. The compounding form – ζοός is of course motivated for its ablaut, and quite regular. We thus reconstruct *ieu-, as is customary; see, e.g. Pokorny IEW 512. Therefore the first vowel of javai requires explaining, beside javienà.

Even though it is not clear that the productive Sanskrit derivative yavya- can be traced in just such form and meanings all the way back to IE, the Lith. jáuja must be a form of some age, and such derivatives must have always been available to speakers. Latv. jaūja assures at least an East Baltic antiquity. Now in these forms the development of the vocalism is quite normal if we start from an e-grade; cf. naūjas and the references in Fraenkel’s discussion Lith EWb. 488. Stang VGBS 32-3 and 73-4 mentions the old problem of *eu only very briefly. The regularity is particularly clear and true for forms with a preceding yod, which would have absorbed the residual palatality of the syllabic. I therefore suggest that it was derivative forms such as jáuja that gave the basis in phonetics for a paradigmatic spread of the a-vocalism to underlying av shapes such as we see in javai. Then the shape of javienà, with following front vocalism, needs no explaining.

In fact, despite Frisk’s (GEW 1.609) hesitation, I am inclined to regard the eι as a diphthong in ζειξί. Because of the change in gender this Greek form is likely in any case to be a derivative; moreover, we seem to have strong evidence for an old stem in -i-. This would be a much more likely explanation for the combining form ζει-
than the assumption of an unusual composition vowel -ɛ-. Whether or not this also explains javidě is another question; but it may. I therefore cannot agree with Frisk that *ξεFt- „leuchtet nicht ein.“

Finally, there is the (later) Greek ζῆνος = ζεῖνος. Whether or not this is of ancient date, and regardless of whether the East Slavic forms are independent of the Baltic, we have a significant agreement in javienā and Avestan yavīn-. These could also point to an ancient stem *ieui-. In that case we may view javienā and jāuja as products of considerable antiquity.

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1 Pace Frisk and Pokorny (IEW 512).