

Miscellaneous notes on Gothic historical morphology

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Abstract

The contribution addresses three problem areas of the comparative grammar of Germanic languages: a) the historical phonology behind the accusative and the vocative singular of Gothic non-neuter *u*-stems (*-au* ~ *-u*), b) the historical development of the 1st person singular active optative preterit ending in Gothic (*-jau*), and c) the evolutionary history of the two Gothic accusative plural nasal stem endings *-ans* and *-nuns*. The explanation of the Gothic accusative ending *-au* is matched to the problem of the 1st sg. optative in *-jau*, for which an original diphthong as the result of contraction of Proto-Germanic **-jēu* (and subsequent shortening in the prehistory of Gothic) is considered. In the same vein, the accusative singular ending *-au* is traced back to **-ē/ōu*. The explanation offered for the problematic Gothic accusative singular nasal-stem ending *-ans* leans on the possibility of regular apocope in the inherited sequence **-anunz* < PIE **-on-ns* in trisyllables. As far as Proto-Germanic is concerned, the variant ending *-nuns* (attested in *aúhsmuns* to *aúhsa* 'ox') < PIE **-n-ns* is argued to be archaic: although *-ans* appears to represent the regular reflex of amphidynamic inflection inherited from Proto-Indo-European, its vowel is most probably secondary.

Keywords: comparative grammar of Germanic languages, Gothic, morphology, *u*-stems, nasal stems, optative preterit

Iz zgodovinskega oblikoslovja gotščine

Prispevek obravnava tri probleme primerjalne slovnice germanskih jezikov, in sicer rekonstrukcijo izhodiščne oblike a) tožilnika in zvalnika ednine ujevskih osnov, b) 1. osebe aktivnega optativa preterita in c) tožilnika množine nosniških osnov z vidika prežitkov teh kategorij v gotščini (tj. *-au* ~ *-u* oz. *-jau* oz. *-ans* ~ *-nuns*). Pri historičnofonetični utemeljitvi gotskega sklonila *-au* za tožilnik ednine se pri tem prepoznava ista problematika kot v primeru preteritalnega optativnega osebila *-jau* in zagovarja izhodiščni diftong (po internogotski skrajšavi dvo- ali trimornih vokalov v (pokritem) izglasju) kot rezultat kontrakcije v pragermanskih sekvencah **-jēu* oz. **-ē/ōu*, medtem ko se gotsko sklonilo *-ans* utemeljuje s sinkopo v pričakovanem izhodiščnem **-anunz*

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< pide. *-on-*ms* v trizložnicah. Enkrat izpričano variantno sklonilo -*nuns* (*aihsnuns* k *aihsa* 'vol') < pide. *-n-*ms* je ocenjeno kot arhaično, toda -*ans*, ki teoretično sicer lahko predstavlja pričakovano, iz indoevropskega prajezika podedovano obliko sklonila holokinetičnih nosniških osnov, je v pragermanščini verjetno šele sekundaren.

Ključne besede: primerjalna slovnica germanskih jezikov, gotščina, morfologija, *u*-osnove, nosniške osnove, optativ preterita

1

As is well known, Gothic non-neuter *u*-stem nouns display a great deal of variation, with each of the case endings in the singular attested in two competing forms (see, e.g., Loewe 1921, Ebbinghaus 1971[2003], 6, Boutkan 1995, 253–57, Braune/Heidermanns 2004, 100–102, Miller 2019, 61):

N -*us* ~ -*aus*

A -*u* ~ -*au*

V -*au* ~ -*u*

G -*aus* (-*auz*^o) ~ -*us*

D -*au* ~ -*u*

This level of oscillation has no parallel in Gothic synchronic grammar, but although the endings seem at least superficially synchronically interchangeable, they do not actually occur with the same frequency. The nominative in -*aus*, the accusative in -*au*, the dative in -*u*, and the genitive singular in -*us* are limited to a) St Luke's Gospel (13 forms in ch. 1–10, only one in ch. 14–20); b) Codex Ambrosianus A, incl. the Gothic Calendar (18 forms), Codex Ambrosianus B (14 forms); c) St Mark's Gospel (only 2 forms); and d) Codex Bononiensis (1 form), where they are attested significantly more rarely than the alternative forms. Only the vocative forms display a ratio of eight (-*au*) to ten (-*u*) and also occur in St John's (2x -*u*) and St Matthew's (2x -*au*) Gospels, but seven out of the ten forms in -*u* turn out to be Greek names, none of which is ever attested with a vocative in -*au*, so the surprisingly balanced proportion in the vocative might (at least partly) be owed to the imitation of the Greek vocative singular of masculine *u*-stems.

The idea that the double set of endings goes back to two different Proto-Germanic and, by extension, Proto-Indo-European inflectional classes is not novel, and

has been suggested by Ebbinghaus 1971[2003], Schaffner 2001, 493, and Neri 2003, 117–42, *op. cit.* 177–78.¹ Under this view of things the Nsg. *-us*, Asg. *-u*, Voc. sg. *-au*, Gsg. *-aus*, and the Dsg. *-au* would represent regular outcomes (with minor re-modelling of the dative under the influence of the genitival form) of the Proto-Indo-European proterodynamic inflection:

- N *-us* < PGmc. **-uz* < PIE **-u-s*
 A *-u* < PGmc. **-u* < PIE **-u-m*
 V *-au* < PGmc. **-au* < EPGmc. **-ou²* < PIE **-éu*
 G *-aus* < PGmc. **-auz* < EPGmc. **-ouz* < PIE **-éu-s*
 D *-au* < Pre-Gothic **-aui* ← PGmc. **-iui³* < **-eui* < PIE **-éu-i*

To this set one could potentially add the variant dative singular ending *-u*, if it is correct to assume that it represents a later attraction of the old instrumental singular in **-ū* < PIE **-uH₁* into the dative function. As far as the old endingless locative singular is concerned, PIE **-ēu* would regularly yield Gothic *-au* and coalesce with the dative (which represents the PIE *i*-locative form). In a maximal sense one could therefore assume:

PGmc.		Goth.
N <i>*-uz</i> < PIE <i>*-u-s</i>	>	N <i>-us</i>
A <i>*-u</i> < PIE <i>*-u-m</i>	>	A <i>-u</i>
V <i>*-au</i> < PIE <i>*-eu</i>	>	V <i>-au</i>
G <i>*-auz</i> < PIE <i>*-eu-s</i>	>	G <i>-aus</i>
D <i>*-iui</i> < PIE Loc. <i>*-eu-i</i> + <i>*-ēu</i> < PIE Loc. <i>*-ēu</i>	>	D <i>-au</i> (< <i>*-aui</i> ← <i>*-iui</i> + < <i>*-ēu</i>)
I <i>*-ū</i> < PIE <i>*-uH₁</i>	>	~ <i>-u</i> (< <i>*-ū</i>)

Since, however, there is no other nominal category in Gothic in which the old Proto-Germanic instrumental can be shown to have survived long enough to coalesce with the dative, it is unlikely that the variant ending *-u* is old. Likewise unlikely is the survival of PIE **-eu-i* beside **-ēu* in East (and by extension Proto-)Germanic,

1 But see Ringe 2014, 57 ft. 7, id. 2017, 303 ft. 25 for an opposing view.

2 By regular Proto-Germanic rounding of unaccented short **e* to **o* before a tautosyllabic **w* (**e* > **o* / __w\$,#), which is to be dated after the stress shift to the initial syllable and before the merger of **o* and **a* into PGmc. **a*. For the failure of the rounding effect on PGmc. **e* in heterosyllabic position cf. the *u*-stem Npl. **-éu-es* > PGmc. **-iuz* (> Goth. Npl. *-jus*).

3 Via regular Proto-Germanic *i*-umlaut of short *e*-vowels (**e* > **i* / __\$i,j).

given that apart from Gothic (where **-au* is ultimately ambiguous as to its pre-form) there are no traces of the endingless locative **-ēu*, the North and West Germanic forms unambiguously going back to the *i*-locative (> PGmc. **-iui*) of the Sanskrit *sūnāvi* type. As far as the endings *-u* and *-us* (< **-uz*) are concerned, these must have originally displayed apocoped by-forms ending in zero in heavy-stem disyllables and polysyllables (regular apocope of **u* in the context of [V(μ), -accent]C__(z)# and [V̥μ]C__(z)# is proved by nasal stems such as *guman* ‘man’ < **gumanu* < PGmc. **guman-u* and root nouns such as *baúrg* ‘city’ < **bǫrgu* < PGmc. **burg-u*), but these were systematically restored on the basis of light-stem disyllables where **-u(z)* was regularly exempt from apocope.

The only problematic point in the above analysis is the assumed phonetic development of the vocative, namely PIE **-eu* > EPGmc. **-ou* > PGmc. **-au* > Goth. *-au*, since this would require postulating a difference in the behaviour of the Late Proto-Germanic auslauting diphthongs **-au* and **-ai*, the latter of which was clearly inherited into Gothic from LPGmc. as a monophthong **ē* > Goth. *-a*. Since in the prehistory of Gothic long (+/- nasalized) vowels in the absolute auslaut of polysyllables were shortened and merged with the short vowels (**/æ/ ~ */ε/*, i.e. the product of auslaut-induced shortening of **ē¹* and **ē* < **ai* merged with **a* rather than **e*,⁴ as did **/o/* < **ō*), one would in fact expect Late PGmc. **-au* > **-ō* to yield **a* as well. If, on the other hand, *-au* is assumed to be the regular reflex of PGmc. **-au*, Gothic uniquely displays the reflex of a non-monophthongized Late PGmc. **-au*. Since there is no morphological category in which the phonetically regular outcome of **-au* can be checked, the Voc. sg. of *u*-stems being the only potential form to have inherited an ending in **-au*, it is impossible to refute the possibility that *-au* < PGmc. **-au* < EPGmc. **-ou* < PIE **-eu*. The lack of parallelism in the behaviour of **-au* vs. **-ai*, however, makes the above assumption unlikely to be correct. An attempt to salvage the situation by assuming that Late PGmc. **-ō* (< **-au*) yielded **/ɔ/*, graphically represented by <au>, is impossible, because the development of **ē* (< **ai*) clearly shows that the shortening and merger processes predated the creation of mid-low vowels */ɔ/ ~ /ō/* and */ε/ ~ /ē/* in Gothic (if the opposite were true, **ē* (< **ai*) would have surely yielded **/ε/* < *ai* rather than coalesce with **a*). Alternatively, then, Proto-Germanic replaced the inherited vocative in **-eu* with **-u* (as it did in *i*-stems, where

4 Goth. *-ai* in the 3rd person (for expected ***a* < **-ai* < **-ait* < **-oid* < PIE **-o-īH₁-t*) present optative is analogical to 2 sg., as is the nom. pl. ending of masculine strong (i.e. indefinite) adjectives, where *-ai* for expected ***a* copies the form of the demonstrative **paj* < PIE **tōj*.

the Gothic zero ending makes it clear that PGmc. form was **-i* rather than **-ī* < **-ei*). If this is correct, it is in fact Goth. *-u* which is old, while *-au* must represent an innovation.

As far as the rest of the alternative forms are concerned, the gen. sg. ending *-us* can be unproblematically derived from PGmc. **-uiz* (> Goth. *-us* by general apocope of **i*) under the assumption that it preserves the PIE amphidynamic and/or hysterodynamic **-u-és* (cf. Neri 2003, 134–37). The nominative singular by-form *-aus* can continue the amphidynamic nom. sg. sequence **-auz* < **-ouz* < PIE **-ous*, the hysterodynamic nom. sg. **-auz* < **-ouz* < PIE **-eus*, or, alternatively, **-ōus* via shortening by Osthoff's Law. The ending would coalesce phonetically with the reflex of the proterodynamic genitive (PIE **-eu-s* > EPGmc. **-ouz* > PGmc. **-auz* > Goth. *-aus*). If shortening by Osthoff's Law is older than the rounding of PGmc. **e* to **o* before tautosyllabic **u* (which is very likely given the fact that both the latter change and Osthoff's Law must be ordered *before* PGmc. **o* > **a*), PIE hysterodynamic nom. sg. **-ēus* would yield the same result: **-ēus* > PGmc. **-eus* > **-ouz* > **-auz* > Goth. *-aus*. Since PIE *u*-stems nominatives did not originally possess nominative lengthening, the putative PGmc. nominatives **-ōus* for **-ous* in the amphidynamic type and PGmc. **-ēus* for **-eus* in the hysterodynamic variant would have to be seen as copying the length of the respective original accusative singulars **-ōm* / **-ēm* (where the length resulted from the operation of Stang's Law) – a phenomenon that is not without parallels in other ancient Indo-European languages (cf. Vedic *-aus*, Avestan and Old Persian *-aus*).

The remaining problem is thus the alternative accusative form *-au*. Since it is clear that the ending does not go back to the expected PIE acc. sg. sequences **-ōm* and **-ēm* (> PGmc. **-ō* > Goth. ***a*), the easiest solution is to assume a remodelling to **-ōu-m* / **-ēu-m* (cf. Old Persian *-āvam*, Young Avestan *-aom* < **-āu-am*). These would yield PGmc. **-ōuu* / **-ēuu* and by regular *u*-absorption (cf. PIE **néuŋ* '9' → **neuund* > **neun* > **ne-un*) the hiatus sequences **-ōu* / **-ēu*, which would resolve via contraction into Late Proto-Germanic **-ōu* and **-ēu*. By shortening of long vowels before resonants in absolute auslaut in the prehistory of Gothic, both sequences would unproblematically result in *-au*.

One could of course also argue the case that more simply remorphologized endings **-ōum* and **-ēum* (cf. Old/Young Avestan *-āum*, Old Persian *-āum*, Hittite *-āun*) might provide an equally viable starting point, since they would probably result in nasalized long diphthongs **-ō̃u* **-ē̃u*, the Gothic reflex of which would have regularly been *-au* by shortening of long +/- nasalized vowels before resonants in absolute

auslaut, i.e. PGmc. $*-\tilde{\sigma}u \sim *-\tilde{e}u > \text{Goth. } -au$ just as plainly as PGmc. $*-\bar{e}r \sim *-\bar{o}r$ yield Gothic $-ar$. But while the latter proposal is impossible to corroborate, the former does receive a convincing parallel in the Gothic 1st person singular optative preterit ending $-jau$.

1.1

Starting from PIE $*-i\bar{e}H_1-m > *-i\bar{e}m$ (again by Stang's Law), a Proto-Germanic outcome $*-i\bar{e}$ would have yielded Gothic $*-ja$ (under an alternative account, the expected Gothic ending $*-ja$ would actually result from $*-i\bar{q} < *-i\bar{e}$, if one assumes with Ringe (2017, 173) on the basis of the synchronic 1st sg. weak preterite ending $*-\bar{q}$ that auslauting long nasalized $*\bar{e}$ was rounded to $*\bar{q}$). The actually attested ending $-jau$ most likely represents the result of a pre-Gothic structural remodelling of $*-i\bar{e}$ (possibly $*-i\bar{q}$) to $*-i\bar{e}u$ due to the pressure of the 1st person sg. non-preterital ending $*-ai-u (> \text{Goth. } -au) \leftarrow^5 *-\bar{a}i\bar{u} < *-\bar{a}i\bar{u}n < *-\bar{o}i\bar{i}H_1-m < \text{PIE } *-o-iH_1-m)^6$:

1 sg. $*-i\bar{e}m > *-i\bar{e} > *-i\bar{q} \rightarrow *-i\bar{e}u > *-i\bar{e}u > \text{Goth. } -jau$

2 sg. $*-i\bar{e}s > *-i\bar{e}z \rightarrow *-\bar{i}z > \text{Goth. } -is < \text{eis}>$

3 sg. $*-i\bar{e}d > *-i\bar{e}t \rightarrow *-\bar{i}t > *-\bar{i} > \text{Goth. } -i < \text{ei}>$

As such, Goth. $-jau < *-i\bar{e}u < *-i\bar{e}u$ offers a firm parallel for the development of the proposed acc. sg. ending $*-\bar{o}u / *-\bar{e}u (< *-\bar{o}u / *-\bar{e}u)$ to $*-\bar{o}u / *-\bar{e}u > \text{Goth. } -au$.⁷

In a situation where alternative endings were inherited – at least in the case of the nominative and the accusative singular, possibly also the genitive – synchronic neutralization between endings containing au and those containing u would eventually prompt every case form in the singular to develop an alternative by-form, though the reflexes of amphidynamic and hysterodynamic endings as well as those that were created secondarily on the model of the case forms with inherited pairs would logically remain peripheral:

5 Analogically remodelled under the pressure of pre-consonantal forms, which all exhibited $*-aiC < *-oiHC$. The same development is to be posited for the 3rd person plural $-aina \leftarrow *-\bar{a}in < *-\bar{a}in \leftarrow *-\bar{a}i\bar{u}n < *-\bar{a}i\bar{u}nt < *-\bar{o}i\bar{i}H_1-m < \text{PIE } *-o-iH_1-m$. Loss of $*i$ between vowels is regular.

6 Note that Stang's Law only operated on sequences of non-high vowels followed by a laryngeal and $*m$, while $*-iHm$ and $*-uHm$ were regularly resolved phonetically as $*-iHm$ and $*-uHm$.

7 Note that the peripherally attested West Germanic 1st sg. opt. ending $*-ju < *-i\bar{u} < *-\bar{i}u$ (Northumbrian $-o$, Old High German $-u$, Old Saxon $-io \sim -iu \sim -eo$, all from WGmc. $*-ju$), limited to the athematic verb $*u\bar{i}l\bar{jan}$ 'want' ($> \text{WGmc. } *u\bar{i}l\bar{lan}$), instead reflects PGmc. $*-ju < *-\bar{i}u < *-\bar{i}u < *-\bar{i}H_1-m$. The internally Gothic replacement of the latter with $-jau$ for the expected $*-ju$ is modelled on the preterital optative.

N -us ~ -aus	>	N -us ~ -aus
A -u ~ -au		A -u ~ -au
V -u		V -u → -au
G -aus ~ ?-us		G -aus ~ -us
D -au		D -au → -u

2

As is well established, the plural paradigm of Gothic masculine nasal stems displays seemingly archaic forms in the accusative, genitive, and dative, which beside the synchronically regular *-ans*, *-anē*, *-am* are also attested as *-nuns* (*aiúhsnuns* ‘ox’ < **H₂ug-s-n-ŋs*), *-nē* (*abnē* ‘man’ < **H₃ép-n-oHom*, *mannē* ‘man’⁸ < **mon-n-oHom*, *aiúhsnē* < **H₂ug-s-n-oHom*) and *-nam* (*abnam* < **H₃ép-ŋ-mos*, *mannam* < **mon-ŋ-mos*),⁹ respectively (see Braune/Heidermanns 2004, 103–105).¹⁰ Of these the peripheral genitive in *-nē* clearly represents the oldest available form, given that it unproblematically continues the expected ablaut grade of the underlying amphidynamic / hysterodynamic inflection: PIE **-n-oHom* > PGmc. **-n-ô* → Goth. *-n-ē*, while the ubiquitous variant *-anē* is based on the full-grade suffix **-an-*. As far as the dative is concerned, the twice attested *-nam* is transparently older, going back to PIE **-ŋ-mos* > PGmc. **-un-maz*, which via morphologically motivated metathesis based on the accusative **-n-unz* (synchronically reanalysed as being effectively **-nu-ns* on analogy with the vocalic stems) yielded **-nu-maz*.¹¹ The expected Gothic reflex ***num* < **numm*¹² < **numz* was then levelled to *-nam* on analogy with the more standard dat. pl. *-am*,

8 Synchronically, *man* partly behaves as a root noun. Diachronically speaking, however, none of the attested forms require this to be true, since the genitive singular *mans* is plainly derivable from **manns* < **mannz* < **man-n-iz* < **mon-n-es*. The nom. pl. form *mans* (as if from PGmc. **man-iz*) beside *mannans* < **man-an-iz* is most probably modelled on the gen. sg. *mans*, which was reinterpretable as a root-noun genitive singular form, whence also the introduction of *mans* into the acc. pl. (levelling between the inherited nom. pl. and acc. pl. forms at the cost of the old accusative is a Common Germanic phenomenon).

9 In the latter two cases with analogical replacement of inherited **num* < **numm* < **numz* < **nu-maz* (via metathesis triggered by the shape of the acc. pl. ending *-uns* < **-unz* < **-ŋs*) ← **unmaz* < **-ŋ-mos* with *-nam* on the model of the thematic dat. pl. *-am* < **-amm* < **-amz* < **-a-maz* < **-o-mos*.

10 The same phenomenon is attested with the neuters *namō* ‘name’ and *watō* ‘water’ (see Braune/Heidermanns 2003, 105).

11 Cf. the parallel situation in *r*-stems: acc. pl. **-r-unz* = **-ru-nz*, dat. pl. **-ur-maz* → **-ru-maz*.

12 On the evidence of Goth. *mimz* ‘meat’ < **mēm-s*, it needs to be assumed that the Gothic sound change **mz* > **mm* (i.e. a reverse of Proto-Germanic **zm* > **mm*, cf. the masc./ntr. singular oblique stem of the demonstrative pronoun **tōsm* > **þazm* > **þamm*-) only operated in unaccented syllables.

with additional pressure from the side of the dative plural of other nominal stem classes, which collectively end in *-(C)am*. Like the synchronically normal genitive pl. in *-anē*, the variant dative ending *-am* likewise continues a remodelled form, based on the full-grade suffix **-an-*, i.e. **-an-maz* > **-ammaz* > **-amz* > **-amm* > *-am*.

More difficult to assess, however, is the situation in the accusative. As far as the Proto-Indo-European form is concerned, one expects **-on-ŋs* rather than **-n-ŋs*, although the latter variant must reach back as far as early Proto-Germanic as is proven by the metathesis of **-un-maz* to **-nu-maz* in the dative form. A weak rather than strong stem form is also attested in the structurally comparable paradigm of parallel *r*-stems (**-r-unz* < **-r-ŋs*), which makes it likely that it is in fact *-nuns* < PGmc. **-nunz* < **-n-ŋs* that represents the oldest Proto-Germanic accusative plural form, while **-an-unz* is the result of levelling with the nom. pl. **-an-iz*. The alternative of course is that both **-r-unz* and **-n-unz* are retrograde forms based on the zero-grade genitive **-r-ǵ* ~ **-n-ǵ*, just as the younger versions of the genitive and dative plural were, in turn, based on the inherited accusative **-an-unz* < **-on-ŋs*.¹³

Be that as it may, given the distribution of the peripheral forms *-nuns*, *-nē*, *-nam*, it seems likely that Proto-Germanic levelled out the inherited amphidynamic nasal stem class by eventually introducing the strong stem allomorph into all plural forms: nom. pl. **-aniz* (> Goth. *-ans*), acc. pl. ?(**-n-unz* → **-anunz*), gen. pl. **-n-ǵ* → **-an-ǵ* (≥ Goth. *-anē*), dat. pl. **-unmaz* → **-anmaz* > **-ammaz* (> Goth. *-am*). Hysterodynamic stems as well as neuters **naman-* and **watan-* that did not possess nominative / accusative plural forms in **-an-*, however, appear to have preserved the older forms of the gen. / dat. pl. and developed a weak accusative terminating in **-n-unz* > Goth. *-nuns* (in case it is not old).

The remaining problem is the form of the strong-stemmed accusative in Gothic, which is normally claimed to go back to **-anz* and understood as a haplogitized (probably under the pressure of the nominative plural *-ans* < **-aniz*) form of PGmc. **-anunz* (see, e.g., Fulk 2018, 170). What is worth considering, though, is the logical possibility that Goth. *-ans* continues the Proto-Germanic sequence via regular sound change. If we assume that apocope of **u*, which would be expected in final unaccented syllables of trisyllabic words, as well as after heavy-stemmed disyllables (see above), also affected **u* / *nz* in trisyllables ending in **-Vnunz*, a PGmc. sequence

13 Note here that Goth. acc. pl. *mannans* (to *manna* ‘man’), which otherwise uniquely preserves reflexes of the Proto-Indo-European amphidynamic inflection (gen. sg. **man-n-iz* < **-n-és*, dat. sg. **man-n-i* < **-n-í* rather than the usual **-in-iz* < **-én-es*, based on the Germanic outcome of the erstwhile endless locative **-in-i* < **-én*), continues **man-an-unz* (with an analogically extended geminate) < **-on-ŋs*, while there is no trace of a zero-grade suffix form **mannuns* < **mon-n-ŋs*.

*-*anunz* would expectedly yield *-*annz* > *-*anz* > -*ans*. This is neatly supported by acc. pl. -*ōns* / -*īns* <*eins*> of feminine nasal stems, if they go back to, as they would indeed seem to do, *-*ōn-unz* and *-*īn-unz*, respectively.

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