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The historical derivation of Gothic *aba* 'husband'

1. Semantics

Gothic *aba* has 29 attestations in the fragments of Wulfila's translation of the Bible. 27 of these are in passages where *aba* is used to denote the other member in the pairs *qēns* 'woman, wife' – *aba*, *qinō* 'id.' – *aba* and *magaþs** 'young woman' – *aba*. From this it is clear that it designates a male person, usually the husband. The two remaining attestations are equally transparent in that meaning. *aba* is further without exceptions translated from the Greek original ἀνήϱ 'male person; husband', so we have double evidence for this meaning of Gothic *aba*.

2. Germanic cognates

A Gothic *aba* would correspond to ON *afi*, and such a word is attested with two different meanings, 'male relative in direct line' and 'grandfather'. The meaning most interesting to us here, 'male relative', is not as well attested as the other meaning, but it is nevertheless surely used. Examples from Norwegian prose: *Nú skal þær jarðir telja, er óðlum skulu fylgja. Sú er ein, er afi hefir afa leift*. 'Now those estates will be mentioned, which are patrimonial. That is one, which *afi* has left for *afi*' (Gul^{I} 91^{2}). Middle Norwegian: *mitt hafuum enghe annat høyrt att þat hefuer fylkt afue eftir afwa þat sem fira syster aatto [...] efttir fadur siin*. 'we have not heard anything else than what the four sisters […] got from their father had followed *afi* after *afi*' (DN IV 620).

A phonological correspondence in Western Germanic appears only in male personal names: OHG *Abo*, OS *Aƀo* and OE *Afa*. There is no compelling reason to reject these as perfect correspondences, but they obviously allow other interpretations, e.g. as hypocoristic formations.

3. Morphology

Gothic *aba* has the following declension:

	Sg	Pl
Nom	*ab-a*	*ab-ans*
Acc	*ab-an*	–
Dat	*ab-in*	*ab-nam*
Gen	*ab-ins*	*ab-nē*
Voc	–	–

The singular declines as a regular masculine *n*-stem, whereas the oblique plural declension differs from the regular pattern, illustrated through *atta* 'father'.

	Sg	Pl
Nom	*att-a*	*att-ans*
Acc	*att-an*	*att-ans*
Dat	*att-in*	*att-am*
Gen	*att-ins*	*att-anē*
Voc	*att-a*	*att-ans*

The special trait of Gothic *aba* is the form *-n-* of the *n*-stem suffix before the endings *-am* and *-ē* in the dat. and gen.pl. respectively. This has its parallels in other *n*-stem formations in Gothic.

1. The word for ‘ox’, m. *auhsa**, is attested in the following cases:

	Sg	Pl
Nom	–	–
Acc	*auhs-an*	*auhs-ṇuṇs*
Dat	*auhs-i̯ṇ*	–
Gen	–	*auhs-nē*
Voc	–	–

2. The word m. *manna* ‘man’ (the forms in non-bold types are analogical formations from the bold type forms, and therefore put in parenthesis):

	Sg	Pl
Nom	*(manna)*	***man-s***
Acc	*(mannan)*	*(mans)*
Dat	***man-n***	*(mannam)*
Gen	***man-s***	***man-nē***
Voc	*(manna)*	–

The gen.sg. and nom.pl. *mans* are synchronically the output forms of underlying /man-n-s/, as geminates are shortened before a consonant.

4. The Germanic *n*-stem

OHG agrees with Gothic in the regular declension of the *n*-stem in having *-in-* in the dat./gen.sg., elsewhere **-an-* (here disregarding the much disputed fact that this **-an-* shows up as *-un-* and *-on-* in OHG). Most of the other Germanic languages have generalized *-an-* outside of the nom.sg. Most of the languages outside of Gothic show similar deviant forms with only *-n-*, though.

1. The m. words for ‘ox’ declines with generalized *-n-* in the plural in both OE and ON:

	OE		ON	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	*ox-a*	*øx-en*	*ux-i*	*yx-n*
Acc	*ox-an*	*øx-en*	*ux-a*	*yx-n*
Dat	*ox-an*	*ox-num*	*ux-a*	*yx-num*
Gen	*ox-an*	*ox-na*	*ux-a*	*yx-na*

Compared to the regular paradigm, exemplified through *guma* ‘man’:

	OE		ON	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	*gum-a*	*gum-an*	*gum-i*	*gum-ar*
Acc	*gum-an*	*gum-an*	*gum-a*	*gum-a*
Dat	*gum-an*	*gum-um*	*gum-a*	*gum-um*
Gen	*gum-an*	*gum-ena*	*gum-a*	*gum-a*

2. The OE *manna* ‘man’ has almost entirely crossed over to the consonant stem, but preserves *n*-stem features in the sg.:

	OE		Pre-OE	
	Sg	Pl	Sg	Pl
Nom	*mann-a*	*men*		**man-ni*
Acc	*mann-an*	*men*		**man-ni*
Dat	*men*	*man-num*	**man-ni*	
Gen	*men*	*man-na*	**man-ni*	

ON shows the same pattern in the plural, with nom./acc.pl. *menn* < **man-niʀ*, dat.pl. *mǫn-num*, gen.pl. *man-na*. The singular follows the *a*-stem.

3. Where other Germanic languages show a regular *n*-stem in *-C-an-*, ON has sometimes *-C-nu-*, a sequence which only can have originated from **-C-n-N̥C-*, where the syllabic nasal **-N̥-* triggers an anaptyctic vowel and becomes **-uN-*, hence **-C-n-N̥C-* > **-C-n-uNC-*. An ON *nu*-stem is therefore indirect evidence of *-n-* in the *n*-stem. The best examples of this are ON *ǫrn* < **arnu-* vs. OHG *aro* 'eagle' and ON *bjǫrn* < **bernu-* vs. OHG *bero* 'bear'.

4. Across the Germanic languages, especially in Nordic, some *n*-stems have undergone paradigm split, where one original word has split into two, and where the two words now can either show the same meaning, or two slightly different. These splits have occurred where the stem formant *-n-* was used, which in one of the words originating from the split has become a part of the stem, with the re-addition of the *n*-suffix **-an-*, or by giving it a vocalic inflexion in *-na-* or *-nu-*, i.e. **-C-an-/-C-n-* → 1. **-C-an-* 2. **-C-n-an-* 3. **-C-n-V-*:

a) PG **ber-an-/ber-n-* 'bear' → 1. OHG *bero*, Old Swedish PN *Bjæri* 2. ON *Bjarni* 3. ON *bjǫrn*.
b) PG **ar-an-/ar-n-* 'eagle' → 1. ON *ari*, OHG *aro* 3. OE *earn*, ON *ǫrn*, OHG *arn*.
c) PG **sef-an-/seb-n-* 'mind' → 1. ON *sefi* 2. ON *sjafni*.
d) PG **hers-an-/herz-n-* 'head, skull' → 1. ON *hjarsi* 'crown of the head' 2. ON *hjarni* 'brain'.
e) PG **urz-en-/urz-n-* 'the male' → 1. ON *orri* 'heathcock' 2. Old Swedish *orni* 'boar'.

5. There are several pairs of words, especially in West Germanic, with and without a geminated root final consonant, and this is generally taken to indicate a paradigm split, and the sequence **-C-n-* is said to be responsible for the gemination to **-CC-*. As with the paradigm splits under 4, the *n*-stem suffix might be re-added, i.e. **-C-an-/*-C-n-* > **-CC-* → 1. **-C-an-* 2. **-CC-an-*:

a) **bul-an-/*bul-n-* > **bull-* 'bull' → 1. ON *boli* 2. ME *bulle*, MLG *bulle*, German *Bulle*.

b) **knab-an-/*knab-n-* > **knapp-* 'boy'→ 1. OHG *knabo*, OE *cnafa* 2. OHG *knappo*, OE *cnapa*.

The conclusion must therefore be that the use of **-n-* of the *n*-stem suffix was more proliferate in earlier stages of Germanic than what it was at the attested stages of the individual Old Germanic languages.

5. The PIE *n*-stem

The animate PIE *n*-stem came in four distinct types:

1. The amphikinetic type with accented *e*-grade of the root and *o*-grade of the suffix in the strong cases, and accented ending in the weak cases with zero grade in the root:

	Amphikinetic		
Strong cases	R (é)	S (o)	E (ø)
Weak cases	R (ø)	S (ø)	E (é)
Loc.sg.	R (ø)	S (é)	

			Vedic
Nom.sg.	**éh₁tm-ō*		*ātmā́*
Gen.sg.	**h₁tm-nés*	>	
Loc.sg.	**h₁tm-én*		*tmán*

			Latin
Nom.sg.	**kérH-ō*		*carō*
Gen.sg.	**kr̥H-nés*	>	*carnis*
Loc.sg.	**kr̥H-én*		

2. The hysterokinetic type with zero grade of the root, and accented *e*-grade of the suffix in the strong cases, and accented ending in the weak cases:

	Hysterokinetic		
Strong cases	R (ø)	S (é)	E (ø)
Weak cases	R (ø)	S (ø)	E (é)
Loc.sg.	R (ø)	S (é)	

			Greek
Nom.sg.	**wr̥h₁-ḗn*		ἀρήν
Gen.sg.	**wr̥h₁-n-és*	>	ἀρνός
Loc.sg.	**wr̥h₁-én*		

3. The individualizing type, where an amphi- or hysterokinetic ablauting *n*-suffix is added to another stem. If this stem is athematic, it will decline as type 1 and 2. When added to a thematic stem, they produce two different types:

a) Original hysterokinetic:

			Greek	
Nom.sg.	**-C-ḗn*		-ήν	
Acc.sg.	**-C-ḗn-m̥*		-ήνα	Greek ἄριστος 'best' → Ἀριστήν 'the best one'
Gen.sg.	**-C-en-és*	>	-ῆνος	
Loc.sg.	**-C-én*			

b) Original amphikinetic:

			Latin	
Nom.sg.	**-C-ṓ*		*-ō*	
Acc.sg.	**-C-ṓn-m̥*		*-ōnem*	Latin *catus* 'sharp' → *Catō* 'the sharp one'
Gen.sg.	**-C-on-és*	>	*-ōnis*	
Loc.sg.	**-C-ón*			

4. The Hoffmann-type, where a possessive suffix **-h₁en-* was added to another stem to form a possessive. The suffix had amphi- and hysterokinetic ablaut, and when it was

affixed to an athematic base, it eventually collapsed with type 1 and 2 in most cases. The affixation to a thematic base has left more distinct traces in the languages.

a) Athematic amphikinetic:

			Vedic	
Nom.sg.	**h₂i̯éw-h₁ō*		*yúvā*	
Acc.sg.	**h₂i̯éw-h₁on-m̥*		*yúvānam*	Vedic *áyu-* 'life' → *yúvān-* 'having life'
Gen.sg.	**h₂i̯u-h₁n-és*	>	*yū́nas*	
Loc.sg.	**h₂i̯u-h₁én*			

b) Athematic hysterokinetic:

			Vedic	
Nom.sg.	**koni-h₁én*		*kanyā̀*	
Acc.sg.	**koni-h₁én-m̥*		*kanyánām*	**koni-* 'freshness' → *kanyā̀-* 'virgin, girl'
Gen.sg.	**koni-h₁n-és*	>	**kanīnas*[1]	
Loc.sg.	**koni-h₁én*			

c) Thematic amphikinetic:

			Latin	
Nom.sg.	**-e/o-h₁ō*		*-ō*	
Acc.sg.	**-e/o-h₁on-m̥*		*-ōnem*	*nāsus* 'nose' → *Nāsō* 'having a (big) nose'
Gen.sg.	**-e/o-h₁n-és*	>	*-ōnis*	
Loc.sg.	**-e/o-h₁én*			

d) Thematic hysterokinetic:

			Greek	
Nom.sg.	**-e-h₁ēn*		-ήν	
Acc.sg.	**-e-h₁en-m̥*		-ήνα	φαλλός 'penis' → Φαλλήν 'Dionysus'
Gen.sg.	**-e-h₁n-és*	>	-ῆνος	
Loc.sg.	**-e-h₁én*			

[1] Gen.pl. *kanī́nām* < **koni-h₁n-*.

6. Expected outcome of the PIE types in Proto-Germanic

Type 1, amphikinetic:

Nom.sg.	**-ō*
Acc.sg.	**-anun*
Gen.sg.	**-niz*
Loc.sg.	**-ini*

Type 2, hysterokinetic

Nom.sg.	**-ē(n)*
Acc.sg.	**-inun*
Gen.sg.	**-niz*
Loc.sg.	**-ini*

Type 3a), individualizing hysterokinetic:

Nom.sg.	**-ē(n)*
Acc.sg.	**-ēnun*
Gen.sg.	**-iniz*
Loc.sg.	**-ini*

Type 3b), individualizing amphikinetic:

Nom.sg.	**-ō*
Acc.sg.	**-ōnun*
Gen.sg.	**-aniz*
Loc.sg.	**-ani*

The athematic Hoffmann-types have not left any clear traces in Germanic, so we go to type 4c), Hoffmann thematic amphikinetic:

Nom.sg.	**-ō*
Acc.sg.	**-ōnun*
Gen.sg.	**-ōniz*
Loc.sg.	**-ōni*

Type 4d), Hoffmann thematic hysterokinetic:

Nom.sg.	**-ē(n)*
Acc.sg.	**-ēnun*
Gen.sg.	**-ēniz*
Loc.sg.	**-ēni*

Type 1 is the general type reconstructed for the Germanic *n*-stem, and was surely continued in Germanic. The nom.sg. in **-ō*, the acc.sg. in **-anun* and the loc.sg. in **-ini* are all directly continued in the daughter languages, and the zero grade **-n-* that would be used in the other weak cases is needed in order to explain words like ON *ǫrn*, OHG *arn* 'eagle', a word that we know was a PIE amphikinetic nom.sg. **$h_2$érō*, gen.sg. *$h_2$ernés* on the strength of Hittite *haras – haranas*.

Type 2 would coincide with type 1 in the weak cases. An acc.sg. in **-inun* cannot be established for Germanic. That it nevertheless was continued in Germanic is made probable by two facts: 1) That Proto-Norse has a nom.sg. ‹-**a**› (/-ǣ/ > ON *-e/-i*) in addition to ‹-**ō**› 2) That the *Paradebeispiel* for a PIE type 2, **$h_2$uksén – $h_2$uksnés* (Vedic *ukṣá – ukṣnás*) is continued in Germanic with the zero grade **-n-* in weak cases.

Type 3a) would coincide with type 2 in the nom.sg. An acc.sg. in **-ēnun* is surely not continued anywhere. The other weak cases would show the same development as what we would expect from type 1 and 2 after the generalization of the stem variant **-in-* from the dative to the genitive. A continuation of type 3a) cannot be established.

Type 3b) would coincide with type 1 in the nom.sg. The weak cases with **-an-* are the ones found throughout North Germanic and Ingveonic, whereas an acc.sg. in **-ōnun* can nowhere be found. The fact that weak case forms in **-an-* was generalized in great parts of the Germanic area shows that this type must have been prominent, and it concurs with the fact that individualizing *n*-stems in Germanic were especially frequent. Type 3b) surely continued.

Type 4c) would be homonymous with the newly created feminine *ōn*-stem in Germanic. Masculine nouns do not show any such declension with very rare exceptions like ON *Sturla*. Probably not continued.

Type 4d) not continued.

The probable *n*-stem classes in Proto-Germanic were thus:

	Amphikinetic	Hysterokinetic	Individualizing
Nom.sg.	**-ō*	**-ē*	**-ō*
Acc.sg.	**-anun*	**-anun*	**-anun*
Dat.sg.	**-ini*	**-ini*	**-ani*
Gen.sg.	**-(i)niz*	**-(i)niz*	**-aniz*

7. The origin of *aba*

Now that we have established three different Germanic *n*-stems, we need to find out which group it belonged to in order to pinpoint its derivational history.

Individualizing

The one group that stands out as most different is the individualizing class, where **-an-* was used in all cases outside the nom.sg. Since *aba* shows *-n-* in the weak cases in the plural, *aba* could only come from this group if it can be shown that original individualizing *n*-stems could secondarily acquire suffix ablaut in analogy with the two

other types. We know that this individualizing group could develop Verner variants like **hasan-*, **hazan-* 'hare', an individualization from PIE **ḱasó-* 'grey'. Verner variants appear in classes like the m. *a*-stem too, where we don't posit any ablaut for Germanic, and a mobile accent does anyway not prove suffix ablaut. The only prime example of suffix ablaut for an original individualizing stem is **beran-/bern-* 'bear', as it is practically uniformly taken to be derived from an underlying PIE adjective **bʰero-* 'brown', but this derivation carries with it major difficulties.[2] Regardless the etymological history of Germanic **beran-*, if it did secondarily acquire suffix ablaut, it would rather be in analogy from all the other examples of animal names showing original ablaut in the *n*-stem suffix as **aran-/arn-* 'eagle', **bulan-/buln-* 'bull', **urzen-/urzn-* 'the male animal' and **uhsen-/uhsn-* 'ox', an explanation that possibly could apply to **hasan-/hazn-* 'hare' also, but not to *aba*.

Hysterokinetic

If *aba* had an original hysterokinetic inflection, it would straightforwardly account for the cases with *-n-* in the weak cases. However, as the given examples of hysterokinetic inflection have shown (**wr̥h₁én* 'lamb', **h₁r̥sén* 'the male', **h₂uksén* 'ox'), the root would appear in the zero-grade, which should have given us Germanic **fen-* or **ben-* (< PIE **Hpén-* or **Hbʰén-*), unless we invoke an ad hoc 'anti-monosyllabicity' constraint on this development.

[2] This thematic adjective shows up only in Baltic, but there as underlying **bʰēro-*. This form with a long vowel can underlie the Germanic forms only if we posit an Osthoff-shortening after the analogical introduction of zero-grade forms of the suffix. In all other Indo-European forms, there are only reduplicated and/or suffixed forms with zero-grade of a root **bʰer-* that appear, which indicates that there is some underlying **bʰer-* 'be brown?' 'brown color?' instead, from which Baltic **bʰēro-* then would be a regular vrddhi-formation. The Germanic **beran-* is then better taken as a primary *n*-stem or Hoffmann-formation to this root, after which the Germanic ablaut is regular, and which removes it from the Germanic individualizing class altogether. It's further possible that **beran-* is the individualized form of the athematic PIE **gʰʷer-* 'wild animal', which also would make it an amphikinetic type.

Amphikinetic

As with the hysterokinetic inflection, an amphikinetic inflection would account for the weak cases with *-n-*, and we wouldn't have any problem with the structure of the root, as an original amphikinetic inflection would give us **Hép/b^{h}on-/Hep/b^{h}n-´* > Proto-Germanic **aban-/abn-*. The evidence in Germanic suggests therefore that *aba* belonged to the amphikinetic type in Proto-Germanic.

8. PIE etymology of *aba*

The best assumption for the etymology is to treat it as a primary amphikinetic *n*-stem as it surfaces in Proto-Germanic. It has long been root etymologized to **h$_3$ep-* 'do, make' without an explanation of its derivation. It could be taken as a nomen agentis formation from the verbal root seen in the Sabellic perfect **ǭps-* in the same way as the PIE amphikinetic **tétḱon-/tetḱn-´* 'carpenter' is derived from **tetḱ-* 'to pound, carpenter', as seen in Vedic *tákṣ-* → *tákṣān-*, Greek τέκτων. **h$_3$épon-* would then have a meaning 'performer' or similar. The problems with such a derivation are first that a nomen agentis derivation straight from the verbal root with a primary *n*-suffix has not been established for PIE, second that the underlying verb is not attested in Germanic, in fact nowhere outside Sabellic.

There is an acrostatic heteroclitic **h$_3$óp-r̥/*h$_3$ép-n-* "wealth, riches, possession" with numerous derivatives in Anatolian alongside Latin *opulentus* 'rich' and Vedic *ápnas-* 'property'. We know through good examples that these neuter heteroclites with a stem ending **-r̥* in the strong cases and **-(e)n-* in the weak cases could have animate (masculine) amphikinetic *n*-stems made to them by means of internal derivation, giving the derivative a possessive meaning:

- **h$_3$rḗg-r̥/h$_3$rḗg-n-* 'power' (Old Avestan *rāzarə*) → **h$_3$rḗg-on-/*h$_3$rḗg-n-´* 'having power' → 'king' (Vedic *rā́jān-/rā́jñ-*)
- **h$_1$óu̯Hd^h-r̥/h$_1$éu̯Hd^h-n-* 'udder' (Greek οὖθαρ) → **tri-h$_1$éu̯Hd^h-on-/*-h$_1$uHd^h-n-´* 'having three udders' (Vedic *tri-ū́dhán-*)

- **péi̯H-wr̥/piH-wén-* 'fat' (Greek πῖαϱ) → **péi̯Hw-on-/piHu-n-´* 'having fat' (Greek πίων)
- **h₂érh₃-wr̥/*h₂r̥h₃-wén-* 'grain' (Old Irish *arbar*) → **h₂érh₃w-on-/h₂r̥h₃u-n-´* 'having grain' → 'field' (Armenian *harawownk'*)

If we do the same with **h₃óp-r̥/*h₃ép-n-*, we would get an amphikinetic derivative *h₃ép-on-/*h₃ep-n-´* 'having wealth, riches, possession', where 'the one possessing the riches (in the family)' naturally would designate the pater familias. The PIE base would give Proto-Germanic **afan-/abn-*, which after the regular generalization of one of the Verner-variants would precisely give Gothic *aba* (*abn-*) as well as comply with its meaning 'husband' and the Old Norse meaning 'male family member with hereditary status'.

This derivation gains strength from the fact that **h₃óp-r̥/*h₃ép-n-* seems to have served as the base for other derivations in Germanic, as seen in **h₃op-r-ó-* 'having riches, property' > Germanic *abra-* 'powerful, strong' (Gothic *abrs*, ON *afr-*) and **h₃ep-n-i̯o-* 'that of property, possession' > Germanic ** af/bnija-* 'stuff, material' (ON *efni*).