Chapter 9: Adjectives

https://doi.org/10.1075/sigl.3.c9

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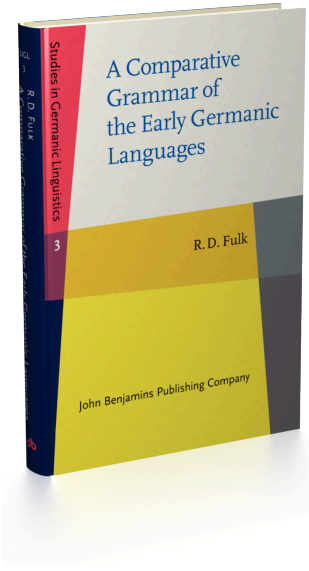

Pages 208–221 of
A Comparative Grammar of the Early Germanic Languages
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[**Studies in Germanic Linguistics**, 3] 2018. xv, 420 pp.

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CHAPTER 9

Adjectives

9.1 Adjective inflection in Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic

PIE adjectives had stems corresponding to those of the classes of nouns, i.e. *o*-, *i̯o*-, *u̯o*-*ā*-, *i̯ā*-, *u̯ā*, *i*-, *u*-, and a limited variety of consonant-stems.[1] To these were attached the same inflections taken by the corresponding noun stems. Most adjectives were inflected like *o*-stems when masc. or neut. and like *ā*-stems when fem.; other stem classes did not distinguish masc. from fem. inflections, though these uters were distinguished from neuters in some case forms. PIE adjectives took on suffixes to form the comparative and superlative degrees, and these are reflected in the Gmc. comparison of adjectives, along with some other suffixes expressing properties of degree whose original function is more difficult to ascertain (§§9.11, 10.7).

Four significant changes in PGmc. disrupted the regularity of this system of adjective inflection: (1) Just as in the nouns, in late PIE the distinction between stem and inflection was beginning to undergo obscurement, and in PGmc. this process was greatly accelerated, with the result that many stem-final segments came to be analyzed as inflectional. Thus, for example, as illustrated by the paradigm in §9.2, PGmc. *a*-stems no longer recognizably had stems ending in *a*, which segment instead had become part of the inflection; more radically, the suffix used to form *n*-stems was re-analyzed as part of the inflection, or as the sole inflection in some cases (§9.8), as with Go. acc. sg. masc. *-an* < PIE suffix **-on-* plus inflection **-m̥*, the reflex of the latter of which (PGmc. **-um*) was lost. (2) In all the Gmc. languages (and presumably already in PGmc.) there is a tendency for adj. stems other than *a*-, *ō*-, and *n*-stems to lose their distinctiveness and acquire the inflections of *a*- and *ō*-stems, so that even in Go., though a few case-forms may remain distinctive, most of the idiosyncratic inflections have been replaced analogically. (3) In a number of case forms, the nominal inflections employed by *a*- and *ō*-stems were replaced by pronominal inflections, as discussed in §9.2. (4) Adjectives inflected as *n*-stems came to be associated with definite constructions (as defined in §9.7), and as a result, nearly any adjective could be inflected as an *n*-stem. The remaining stem classes were thus associated with indefinite constructions. This is the origin of the distinction between the so-called strong and weak adjectives of Gmc.

1. Aside from the *n*-stem (weak) adjectives, the only significant consonant-stem adjectives in Gmc. are present participles (§9.9, not inflected identically to root-stem nouns). Other types were infrequent in PIE: Beekes (2011: 219) finds only rare instances of PIE adj. suffixes ending in *k*, *t*, *s*, h_2, and *n*, never *r*, *l*, *m*. But possessive adjective compounds (*bahuvrīhi*, exocentric) were very commonly formed of adj. or noun plus root-stem noun, e.g. Skt. *cátuṣpad* 'four-footed' (cf. Gk. *τετράπους*, neut. *τετράπουν*, OE *fiðerfōt*-), inflected like a root-stem noun. For an etymological dictionary of inherited Gmc. adjectives, see Heidermanns 1993.

I. Indefinite (strong) adjectives

9.2 The unmarked strong declension of monosyllabic heavy stems

Just as in PIE, in which masc. and neut. adjectives were most commonly inflected as *o*-stems and fem. as *ā*-stems, the PGmc. reflexes of these remained the norm in indefinite constructions (as defined in §9.7), except that inflections of pronominal origin came to replace some of the original nominal inflections. It should be plain from the discussion below that the influence of pronominal inflection on the paradigms of strong adjectives was not solely a PGmc. phenomenon, but it continued in force in the individual languages. The usual patterns of inflection may be illustrated by the paradigms of Go. *laggs* 'long' and its cognates in the oldest Gmc. languages:

		Go.	OIcel.	OE	OS	OHG	PGmc.
m. sg.	**nom.**	laggs	langr	lang	lang	lang, langēr	*-az
	acc.	laggana	langan	langne	langan	langan	***-anō^{n}**
	gen.	laggis	langs	langes	langes	langes	*-as(a)
	dat.	laggamma	lǫngum	langum	langum	langamu, -emu	***-azmai**
	instr.			lange	langu	langu	*-ī (?)
n. sg.	**nom.**	lagg, laggata	langt	lang	lang	lang, langaz	*-a^{n}, ***-at-**
	acc.	lagg, laggata	langt	lang	lang	lang, langaz	*-a^{n}, ***-at-**
	gen.	laggis	langs	langes	langes	langes	*-as(a), ***-es(a)**
	dat.	laggamma	lǫngu	langum	langum	langamu, -emu	***-azmai**
	instr.			lange	langu	langu	*-ī (?)
f. sg.	**nom.**	lagga	lǫng	lang	lang	lang, langiu	*-ō
	acc.	lagga	langa	lange	langa, -e	langa	*-ō^{n}
	gen.	laggáizōs	langrar	langre	langera	langera	***-(a)izōz**
	dat.	laggái	langri	langre	langeru	langeru	***-(a)izai**
m. pl.	**nom.**	laggái	langir	lange	lange, -a	lang, lange	***-ai**
	acc.	laggans	langa	lange	lange, -a	lange	*-anz
	gen.	langáizē	langra	langra	langaro	langero	***-aiz(j)ō^{n}**
	dat.	laggáim	lǫngum	langum	langum	langēm	***-aimiz**
n. pl.	**nom.**	lagga	lǫng	lang	lang	lang, langiu	*-ō
	acc.	lagga	lǫng	lang	lang	langiu	*-ō
	gen.	laggáizē	langra	langra	langaro	langero	***-aiz(j)ō^{n}**
	dat.	laggáim	lǫngum	langum	langum	langēm	***-aimiz**
f. pl.	**nom.**	langōs	langar	langa	langa, -e	lang, lango	*-ōz
	acc.	langōs	langar	langa	langa, -e	lango	*-ōz
	gen.	langáizō	langra	langra	langaro	langero	***-aiz(j)ō^{n}**
	dat.	langáim	lǫngum	langum	langum	langēm	***-aimiz**

The PGmc. forms in boldface are borrowed from pronominal forms: compare especially the paradigm of Go. *sa* and cognates (§8.10). The remainder reflect PIE *a*- and *ō*-stem endings. In Go., nom./acc. sg. neut. *-ata* (pronominal in origin: cf. *þata* §8.10, and see Ratkus 2015) is less frequent than the zero-inflection, and the form is almost always attributive.[1] Likewise, in OHG, the alternative endings nom. sg. masc. *-ēr*, pl. *-e*, nom./acc. sg. neut. *-az*, pl. *-iu* (Franconian *-(i)u*), nom. sg. fem. *-iu* (Franconian *-(i)u*), pl. *-o*, are pronominal in origin, and in attributive use the sg. pronominal endings alternate indiscriminately with nominal inflections, whereas in the pl., nominal forms

are rare; in predicative use the nominal forms are commoner.[2] The OE inflections are those generally found in EWS, whereas in LWS the nom./acc. plural inflection is usually *-e* for all genders. PGmc. *-*ō* became *-*u* in North and WGmc., and this is preserved as such (or lowered to *-o*) in OE after light stems in the nom. sg. fem. and the nom./acc. pl. neuter, e.g. light-stemmed *hwatu* 'active' (nom. sg. masc. *hwæt*), beside heavy *lang*, with *u*-mutation of roots in *a* in the corresponding forms of Old Icelandic. OS and OHG show the usual, expected spelling alternants, e.g. OS acc. sg. masc. *-an*, *-on*, *-en* and OHG dat. sg. fem. *-eru*, *-ero*, but also OS dat. sg. masc. *-umu*, *-omu*, *-emu*, *-emo*, etc., beside *-um*, *-un*, etc.

Since the origin and development of the nominal and pronominal inflections are discussed elsewhere (§§7.8, 7.15, 8.10), just a few adjectival forms require comment:

Nom. sg. masc. Although OHG *-ēr* (like neut. *-az*) is plainly pronominal (cf. *der*, *daz*, §8.10), there is no consensus as to why *-ēr* has a long vowel. Comparison can be drawn to the possessive pronouns (Franconian) *unsēr*, *iuwēr* (§8.5), which Johansson (1890, with a summary of prior scholarship) argues have *-ēr* by analogy to the identical gen. forms of the corresponding personal pronouns (§8.2); but *-ēr* in the latter can be explained as etymological only on a speculative basis. The most commonly accepted explanation is that of Sievers (1875: 122; so, e.g., Krahe & Meid 1969: II, §50), that *der* is a weakened form of earlier **þēr*, to the latter of which the ending *-ēr* is analogical. Comparison to OS *thĕ* (and OE *sĕ*) renders it plausible that **þe-r* and **þē-r* (with *-r* extended from *er* 'he') should once have coöccurred in OHG, the latter eventually driven out by the continued analogical influence of *er*. Boutkan (1995b: 296–7) tentatively proposes that *ē* in *-ēr* is analogical to the dat. plural.

Dat. sg. masc. Beside OS *-um* there are many variants, e.g. *-u(n)*, *-emu*, *-omo*, and similar endings with different vocalism; likewise OHG *-emu*, *-emo*, *-amu*, *-omo*, the forms with *e* no doubt by analogy to pronouns. The ending *-um* in OIcel. and OE (and in part in OS) is probably analogical to the corresponding plural noun inflection (note that dat. sg. and pl. of pronominal OIcel. *sá*, OE *sē* also agree in these languages, §8.10): so Prokosch 1939: §95, but cf. Krahe & Meid 1969: II, §37, and see further Stiles 2013: 22–3. OHG *-emu* (for more original *-amu*, *-amo*) is by analogy to dat. sg. *demu* (§8.10).

Dat. sg. neut. OIcel. *-u* is usually assumed to be instr. in origin, like OS OHG instr. sg. *-u*, though it is not plain why *-u* was not apocopated: cf., e.g., nom. sg. *grǫf* 'pit' < PGmc. **ɣraƀō*. Boutkan (1995b: 302–3) argues that *-u* may be analogical to the vowel in **hū* (Old Swedish *hū* 'how').

Instr. sg. masc. & neut. Certainly OS OHG *-u* is the same desinence found in *a*-stem nouns. OE *-e* appears to be the reflex of the ending *-i* of *a*-stem nouns found in some early texts in instr. function and reflecting PGmc. *-*ī* < PIE loc. *-*e̯i̯* (§7.8; A. Campbell 1977: §640). If so, the umlaut that it should have caused must have been leveled out of the paradigm.

Nom. pl. masc. Go. retains *-ái* (which should have changed to *-a*) by analogy to the pronoun *þái*. ON *-ir* reflects *-*eir* by analogy to *þeir* 'they', *tveir* 'two', which in turn have *-r* by analogy to the corresponding nominal inflection (Sievers 1875: 114; on alternative explanations, see Syrett 1994: 92–3). In WGmc., the acc. pl. inflection has been replaced by the nom. pl., as in nouns (outside of OHG: §7.8).

Nom./acc. pl. neut. OHG *-iu* is analogical to the corresponding ending of pronominal *der* (§8.10), *dese* (§8.12), etc.

Nom. sg. fem. OHG *-iu* is entirely parallel in origin to the identical neuter inflection (*supra*).

Acc. sg. fem. OIcel. *-a* reflects the original inflection **-ō^{n}*, whereas in the *ō*-stem nouns (§7.15) the corresponding inflection has been made identical to that of the nom. sg. Rather, Kortlandt (2005: 2) regards *-a* as pronominal in origin.

Gen. sg. fem. According to Sievers (1875: 111–14), Go. *-áizōs* has borrowed *-ái-* from the gen. & dat. pl., with similar developments in OS and OHG, and *i* in PGmc. **-izōs* was syncopated in ON and OE. It is notable, however, that there is no trace of umlaut in the gen. or dat. sg. fem. in NWGmc.; it is usually assumed to have been leveled out (e.g. by Prokosch 1939: §90). Rather, it has been argued that the ending was already **-aizōz* in PGmc., and that *ai* in this and other endings in **-aiz-* (dat. sg. fem., gen. pl. all genders) was replaced by *e* by analogy to the anaphoric pronoun and others similarly inflected. See Stiles 2013: 31–2, Ringe & Taylor 2014: 22–3. In addition to explaining the lack of umlaut, the latter hypothesis obviates the need to assume early shortening of *ai* > *ē* > *e* in OS and OHG.

Dat. sg. fem. According to Sievers (1875: 111), Go. *-ái* is by analogy to the nominal inflection, and again ON and OE may be assumed to have lost *i* from PGmc. **-izai*, with analogical removal of umlaut, though OS and OHG have *e* < **-ai-* leveled from the plural. But see under **gen. sg. fem.** above. In OS OHG *-eru* the final diphthong of PGmc. has been replaced by the dat. ending of the substantive *ō*-stems.

Gen. pl. The PGmc. diphthong **ai* is etymological in the corresponding masc. and neut. pronouns, with analogical extension to the fem. form. In the view of Sievers (see above), ON and OE *i*, later lost, has been taken over from the fem. sg. and extended to the masc. and neut. inflections, though once again analogy must be assumed to have eliminated umlaut.[3] These contrary analogical changes are not simple and obvious, and so the view that *ai* has been replaced by *e* (see above under **gen. sg. fem.**) is to be preferred.

Dat. pl. The original inflection **-aimiz* is reflected in Go. and OHG, whereas the other Gmc. languages have substituted the ending *-um* found in *a*-stem nouns.

The distinction in Gmc. between strong and weak adjective inflection is paralleled in Balto-Slavic (see §9.7), where adjectives in indefinite constructions are inflected like nouns, and those in definite constructions are compounds of the adjective plus a pronominal element. The earliest approaches to explaining the Gmc. development of adjectives relied on comparison to Balto-Slavic, and hence the influx of pronominal endings into Gmc. strong inflection was likewise most commonly understood to be a matter of compounding of the thematic adj. stem with a pronominal stem PGmc. **ja-* plus its normal pronominal inflections. Yet the Balto-Slavic compounds are definite, whereas the Gmc. adjectives with pronominal inflections are indefinite, and it is not plain why the attachment of pronouns to indefinite adjectives should have occurred at all. Ever since the critique of the compounding theory by Sievers (1875), preference has been accorded his alternative view, that Gmc. has simply borrowed many of the indefinite inflections from pronouns.[4] Sievers (1875: 107–9) points out that in Skt. quite a few words that are adjectival in origin sometimes take pronominal inflections, since they may be used in pronominal function (i.e., they are substantivized), e.g. *nḗma-* 'another' and *pū́rva-* 'foremost'. It is in fact common in IE languages for words of this sort to acquire pronominal inflections, e.g. nom./acc. sg. neut. Gk. *ἄλλο* = Lat. *aliud* 'other', reflecting pronominal **-od* (cf. Skt. *tád* 'it', and compare the nominal inflections Gk. *-ον*, Lat. *-um*, Skt. *-am*), in comparison to nom. sg. masc. Gk. *ἄλλος*, Lat. *alius*, with non-pronominal **-os*, though Sievers himself argues that such mixture of inflections was to be found already in PIE. It is natural enough to assume, then, that the Gmc. strong adjectives that first acquired pronominal inflections were adjectives like

indefinites and numerals (i.e., pronominal adjectives), such as ‘some’, ‘any’, ‘such’, and ‘one’, which were normally inflected as adjectives but which could be used in pronominal function.[5] Explaining the precise distribution of nominal and pronominal endings in Gmc. strong adjectives thus becomes a matter of lesser import, seeing as the competing forces of analogical influence in the direction of both pronominal and adjectival use remained in effect throughout the history of the Gmc. languages, with the result that new pronominal inflections were added to adjectival paradigms after the PGmc. period, e.g. OHG nom. sg. masc. *-ēr* and nom./acc. sg. neut. *-az*.[6]

1. Ringe (2017: 314–15) observes that although Go. *-ata*, ON *-t*, and OHG *-az* have the same pronominal source, they must have been borrowed independently in the three languages, given that Go. *-ata* is borrowed from the specifically Go. form of the pronominal ending. This is probably correct, though of course it is possible that the pronominal ending was extended to adjectives in PGmc. and subsequently reformed in Go. in tandem with the addition of *-a* to the pronoun.

2. The endingless forms in the plural are not etymological but arose in predicative use.

3. The reflex of PGmc. medial **-ai-* is not normally syncopated in ON and OE: cf., e.g., OIcel. *erfiði*, OE *earfeþe* ‘labor’ < **arbaiþ-*. The circumstance that **ai* was preceded by **e* in a form like **anþeraizô^{n}* ‘other’ should have rendered it less, not more, susceptible to syncope.

4. Compounding has again been advocated by Birkhan (1974) and Haudry (1981); cf. Bammesberger 1990: 226–7.

5. Compare the analysis of Prokosch (1939: §89b): “It is not impossible that this transfer of pronominal endings to the ‘strong’ adjective declension was at least part due to the fact that ‘weak’ adjectives are usually preceded by pronominal forms: on the pattern of *þana blindan guman* there may have been formed *blindana guman*; *þata blindō barn* may have been the starting point for *blindata barn*.”

6. Sievers (1875: 111, 114) in fact argues that PGmc. pronominal inflections could be replaced in the individual languages by nominal ones. See further McFadden 2003.

9.3 Variant stem types in the unmarked strong declension

Certain stem alternations are to be observed in indefinite adjectives.

Gothic. Voiced fricatives are usually devoiced finally and before final *-s*, as in *frōþs* ‘wise’, *gōþs* ‘good’, *liufs* ‘dear’, *saþs* ‘full’ (gen. *frōdis*, *gōdis*, *liubis*, *sadis*), but *láus* ‘empty’, gen. *láusis*.

Old Norse. In OIcel., *r* at the start of an inflection was dropped when added to a stem ending in postconsonantal *r*, e.g. nom. sg. masc *vitr* ‘wise’, *fagr* ‘beautiful’, gen. sg. fem. *vitrar*, *fagrar*; cf. nom. sg. masc. *súrr* ‘sour’, gen. sg. fem. *súrrar*. Such an *r* was assimilated to a preceding *l* or nongeminate *n*, as in nom. sg. masc. *heill* ‘hale’, *kœnn* ‘wise’, gen. sg. fem. *heillar*, *kœnnar* (acc. sg. masc. *heilan*, *kœnan*), but *sannr*, *sannrar* ‘true’. Disyllabic stems ending in a single consonant generally show syncope in the stem-final syllable before inflections beginning with a vowel, as illustrated by the paradigm of *gamall* ‘old’:

	singular			**plural**		
	masc.	**neut.**	**fem.**	**masc.**	**neut.**	**fem.**
nom.	gamall	gamalt	gǫmul	gamlir	gǫmul	gamlar
acc.	gamlan	gamalt	gamla	gamla	gǫmul	gamlar
gen.	gamals	gamals	gamallar	gamalla	gamalla	gamalla
dat.	gǫmlum	gǫmlu	gamalli	gǫmlum	gǫmlum	gǫmlum

Exceptions to the rule are stems in *-ligr* and weak second participles in *-aðr*, which show no syncope. In accordance with the change that produced forms like *batt* ‘bound’

< **band* (§6.14), *sannr* has nom./acc. sg. neut. *satt*. Stems ending in a vowel likewise have *-tt* in the nom./acc. sg. neut., e.g. *fátt* to *fár* 'few', and *a* or *u* at the start of an inflection is elided after such stems, hence acc. sg. masc. *fán*, fem. *fá*, but nom. pl. masc. *fáir*. Possessive adjectives and adjectives in *-inn*, including strong second participles, have *-n* rather than *-an* in the acc. sg. masc., and to this *-n* is assimilated a preceding *l*, hence acc. *fundinn* 'found', *þinn* 'your', *einn* 'one', *várn* 'our', *mikinn* 'large' (nom. *mikill*), *lítinn* 'small' (nom. *lítill*).

Old English. Disyllabic stems with a heavy initial syllable followed by a light regularly show syncope before a vocalic inflection other than *-u*, as illustrated by the paradigm of *hālig* 'holy':

	singular			plural		
	masc.	**neut.**	**fem.**	**masc.**	**neut.**	**fem.**
nom.	hālig	hālig	hāligu	hālge	hāligu	hālge, -a
acc.	hāligne	hālig	hālge	hālge	hāligu	hālge, -a
gen.	hālges	hālges	hāligre	hāligra	hāligra	hāligra
dat.	hālgum	hālgum	hāligre	hālgum	hālgum	hālgum
instr.	hālge	hālge				

The syncopated vowel is usually restored by analogy in LWS, but the meter in poetry often indicates the earlier value (e.g. *Beowulf* 336b: *Ne seah ic elþēodige*). Syncope of original non-high vowels is also regular after a light syllable (e.g. *manges* < **manaɣas* beside nom. *manig* < **managaz*), whereas the change less regularly affects high vowels (§5.6). Disyllabic stems with a light initial syllable originally apocopated the inflection *-u*, but it is frequently restored, e.g. *yfelu* beside *yfel* 'wicked'. Syncope and the alternation of front and back vowels resulted in consonantal alternations within paradigms, e.g. [j] (*vel sim.*, §§6.17–18) in *hālge* but [ɣ] in *hālgum*, and [ɣʲ] (*vel sim.*, *ibid.*) in *micel* 'large' but [k] in *micles*, the latter due to anteconsonantal deaffrication (§6.18). Alternation between *æ* and *a* was originally regulated by whether or not a back vowel followed, but in the historical period *a* appears in open syllables, otherwise *æ*, e.g. *blæc* 'black', gen. *blaces*. Stems with final *h* lose this before vowels, resulting in either contraction or compensatory lengthening (§4.13), e.g. *hēah* 'high', *þweorh* 'crooked', gen. *hēas*, *þwēores*. These regularities are much altered by analogical developments, especially in the later period.

Old Saxon. There should in Old Saxon have been patterns of apocope (but not syncope) like those in OE, but they have been eliminated: heavy and light stems are alike inflectionless in the nom. sg. fem. and nom./acc. pl. neut., e.g. *ald* 'old', *hol* 'hollow', though the neuters may also have *-e*, *-a* by analogy to the uters. The only regular paradigm variation in regard to syncope is that disyllabic adjectives like *hēlag* 'holy', with a heavy initial syllable and a light second, have acc. sg. masc. *-na*, whereas all others have *-an*. There is no comparable alternation in OHG.

9.4 The *ja-* and *jō*-stems

For the most part, in Go. these adjectives add the same inflections found on *a-* and *ō*-stem adjectives to a stem ending in *j*, hence, e.g., acc. sg. masc. *midj-ana* 'middle', gen. *midj-is*, dat. *midj-amma*. In the nom./acc. sg. neut., where the *a*-stems may be endingless, *j* in the *ja*-stems is vocalized to *i*, hence *midi*, *wilþi* 'wild' beside *midjata*, *wilþjata*. An exception is nom. sg. *midjis*, parallel to the noun *harjis* (§7.10, *q.v.* in regard to the

origin of the desinence). Also, just as in the *ja*-stem nouns, a distinction is maintained between light stems like *midjis* and heavy like *wilþeis*: wherever the former has *-jis*, the latter has *-eis* (nom. sg. masc., gen. sg. masc.), with the possible exception of the gen. sg. neut. (cf. §7.10 *ad fin.*).[1] Likewise, to nom. sg. fem. *midja* cf. *wilþi*, comparable to *jō*-stem nouns like *bandi* 'band' (§7.16).

In ON the inflection of the *ja*- and *jō*-stem adjectives is indistinguishable from that of *a*- and *ō*-stems, except that *-j-* is preserved before back vowels after a light syllable or after a velar consonant, hence *miðr* 'middle', *ríkr* 'powerful', *villr* 'wild', gen. sg. masc. *miðs*, *ríks*, *vills*, nom./acc. sg. neut. *mitt* (< **miðt*), *ríkt*, *villt*, acc. sg. masc. *miðjan*, *ríkjan*, *villan*, dat pl. *miðjum*, *ríkjum*, *villum*. The *-j-* element is reflected as *-i-*, however, even after a heavy stem ending in a non-velar consonant, in certain compounds, e.g. *villi-sauðr* 'wild sheep'.

The originally light-stemmed *ja*- and *jō*-stem adjectives in OE (of which none with a stem ending in *r* is preserved) are inflected the same way as *a*- and *ō*-stem adjectives, with a stem-final geminate except where degemination takes place before a consonantal inflection, e.g. *midd*, *middes*, *midne*, *midra*, with apocope of *-u* in the nom. sg. fem. and nom./acc. pl. neut., hence *midd*. The heavy-stemmed adjectives of this class are also inflected like the *a*- and *ō*-stems, except that wherever the latter are endingless, the former bear the inflection *-e* (< **-i*, from *j* syllabified upon loss of the inflection), e.g. nom. sg. masc. *wilde*, acc. *wildne*, gen. *wildes*. In addition, as in the corresponding noun class, *-u* is not apocopated after a heavy syllable, hence nom. sg. fem. and nom./acc. pl. *wildu*.

In OS and OHG there is no distinction between the inflection of originally light and heavy *ja*- and *jō*-stems: both are inflected the same way as *a*- and *ō*-stem adjectives, but with *-i* wherever the latter are endingless. In addition, OS retains *-i-* elsewhere in the paradigm, though it may be spelt *-e-*.

1. David Fertig has kindly supplied the information that the gen. sg. neut. of heavy *ja*-stem adjectives appears to be unattested in Gothic. The *wilþeis* cited as gen. sg. neut. by Kiparsky (2000: 21–2) seems to be due to a misunderstanding of an example given by W. Streitberg. The syntactic context (Romans 11:17) demands a weak adj., in which event the form is presumably a scribal error for *wilþeins*, and at all events it must be masc. rather than neut.

9.5 The *wa*- and *wō*-stems

The few stems of this class that are preserved in Go. have the same inflections as the *a*- and *ō*-stem adjectives attached to stems ending in *w*. Aside from forms of *triggws* 'true', the only surviving forms are *lasiws* 'weak' (for expected **lasius*, stem *lasiw*-), nom. pl. *qiwái* (to **qius* 'alive'), *fawái* (to **fáus* 'little'), and *usskawái* (to **usskáus* 'vigilant').

In ON these bear the usual adjective inflections, with stem-final *-v-* (< **-w-*) preserved only before non-rounded vowels. When a root vowel is subject to back mutation, it is mutated throughout the paradigm. Examples: nom. sg. masc. *fǫlr* 'pale', *tryggr* 'true', gen. *fǫls*, *tryggs*, acc. *fǫlvan*, *tryggvan*.

Only light stems remain distinctive in OE, where the usual adjective inflections are added to stems in *-w-*, which becomes *u* (> *o*) finally or before a consonantal inflection, e.g. nom. sg. masc. *gearu*, acc. *gearone*, gen. *gearwes*. Such stems without a consonant before *-w-* usually have *-w-* throughout the paradigm, e.g. nom. sg. masc. *glēaw* 'wise' (for etymological **glēa* < **ɣlēau* < **ɣlauwaz*), acc. *glēawne*; but exceptional is dat. pl. *fēam* 'few' (< **faum* < **fawum(i)z*, beside analogical *fēawum*), also

nom./acc. pl. neut. *fēa* < **fau* < **fawu* < **fawō*. The situation is similar in OS and OHG: cf. OS nom. sg. masc. *garo*, *-u*, gen. *garowes*, OHG *garo*, *gar(a)wes*; but unlike in OE, *w* is not extended throughout the paradigm in stems like OS OHG *glau* 'wise', acc. *glauwan*. Throughout WGmc., stems like **þraŋgwaz* 'narrow' (cf. ON *þrǫngr*), with *-w-* after a heavy consonantal stem, lose *-w-* entirely, hence MLG *dranc*.

9.6 The *i*- and *u*-stems

These remain distinctive in Gothic only, and even there the number of forms peculiar to this category has been curtailed. Most case forms have adopted *ja*- and *jō*-stem inflection, including nearly all those forms in which the light and heavy *ja*- and *jō*-stems are inflected identically, and so all plural forms.[1] The remaining distinctive forms are the nom. sg. of all genders (e.g. *i*-stem masc. and fem. *hráins* 'clean', neut. *hráin*, never **hráinjata*; *u*-stem masc. and fem. *hardus* 'hard', neut. *hardu* beside analogical *hardjata*), the acc. sg. neut. (*hráin*; *hardu* and analogical *hardjata*), and the *i*-stem gen. sg. masc. and neut. (*hráinis*; the case is unattested among *u*-stem adjectives). The remaining distinctive inflections are thus identical to the corresponding inflections of *i*- and *u*-stem nouns, except that there are no neuter *i*-stem nouns attested in Gothic.

In ON the *i*- and *u*-stem adjectives have generally lost their distinctiveness. The former are mostly indistinguishable from *a*- and *ō*-stems; only the Finnish loanword *tiuris* (OIcel. *dýrr* 'beast') and the name element NWGmc. **-mariʀ** (Thorsberg chape, ca. 200; OE *mære*, OIcel. *mærr* 'renowned'), as well as the lingering effect of front umlaut, attest to retention of *i* in the prehistoric period. But some *ja*- and *jō*-stem adjectives with a stem ending in a velar consonant were originally *i*-stems, e.g. *fleygr* 'able to fly' and adjectives in *-fengr*, such as OIcel. *bráðfengr* 'hot, hasty'. The *u*-stems have almost entirely fallen together with the *a*- and *ō*-stems, e.g. *harðr* 'hard' (Go. *hardus*), with loss of *u* early enough to prevent back mutation. But *u*-stems ending in a velar consonant have become *wa*- and *wō*-stems, from which they differ only in that they evince by-forms with and without front mutation, e.g. *ǫngr* beside *øngr* 'narrow' (cf. Go. *aggwus*, acc. *aggwjana*).

In WGmc., *i*-stem adjectives are inflected identically to *ja*- and *jō*-stems, with only non-gemination in a few OE light stems indicating the original distinction, hence OE *bryce* 'brittle', *freme* 'excellent', *gemyne* 'mindful', *swice* 'deceitful'.[2] The WGmc. *u*-stem adjectives are mostly inflected as *a*- and *ō*-stems (e.g. OE OS *hard*, OHG *hart*), with just a few relic forms otherwise surviving, including OE nom. sg. (all genders) *cwicu*, *cucu* 'alive' (beside *cwic*), acc. sg. masc. *cucone*, *cucune*, etc. (beside *cwicne*, *cucne*), nom. sg. (all genders) *wlacu* 'tepid' (beside *wlæc*), and indeclinable noun and adj. OE (Northumbrian) *feolu*, OS OHG *filu* 'many, much'. Some *u*-stems are inflected as *ja*- and *jō*-stems (cf. Go. *aggw*-, *aggwj*- above), including OE *egle* 'troublesome', *enge* 'narrow' (OS *engi*), *myrge* 'pleasant', *smylte* 'tranquil' (beside *smolt*), *strenge* 'strong' (beside *strang*; OHG *strengi* beside *strang*), *swǣr(e)* 'heavy' (OHG *swāri* beside *swār*), *swēte* 'sweet' (beside *swōt*), *þyrre* 'dry', and compounds in *-wintre* 'years old'; also OHG *herti* 'hard' (beside *hart*). Compare also OE adv. *tulge* 'strongly' (OS *tulgo*) to Go. adj. *tulgus* 'firm'.

1. Snædal (2002) argues that Go. *i*-stem adjectives are *ja*-stems in origin.

2. It may be that origin as *i*-stem adjectives is indicated by the endingless forms adv. *(ge)fyrn* 'formerly' noun and adv., and (rarely) indeclinable adj. *lȳt* 'little': so A. Campbell 1977: §654.

II. Definite (weak) adjectives

9.7 Definitions, distribution, derivation

Definite or 'weak' adjectives bear a PIE *n*-suffix and are for the most part identical to the corresponding forms of *n*-stem nouns, with the exceptions noted below (§9.8).[1] They are used in constructions in which the noun that they modify is definite, i.e. contextually specified, non-hypothetical, or otherwise not introduced as a new entity in terms of information structure. Thus, definite adjectives accompany nouns modified by a definite specifier, i.e. a definite determiner (demonstrative or possessive) or a definite quantifier, or (often: see Stiles 1984: 23–6) those used in direct address. They are used also in the comparative degree, even though, for example, "a higher purpose" (as opposed to "the higher purpose") would appear to be indefinite. The definite declension is also common in the superlative degree, and it is the rule with ordinal numerals above 'second' and, with exceptions in WGmc., active participles. In WGmc. poetry the definite form may appear even without a specifier, especially when the adj. is used as a substantive, as is the rule in Gothic. Most pronominal adjectives are declined only strong, but a few are only weak, including Go. *sama* 'same' and *silba* 'self', though ON *sjálfr* is always strong. Usage is thus not identical in all the Gmc. languages; the handbooks should be consulted for details.

In the classical languages there is a pattern of forming proper names as epithets derived from adjectives (or nouns) by the addition of *-ōn-, hence, e.g., Lat. *Catō*, *-ōnis* 'the sly one' to *catus* 'sly', *Rufō*, *-ōnis* 'the redhead' to *rufus* 'red', Gk. *Στράβων* to *στραβός* 'squinting', and *Σίμων* to *σιμός* 'snub-nosed' (see Schwyzer 1977: 487, 637; Jasanoff 2002: 40). Certainly, there are Gmc. weak nouns derived the same way, e.g. Go. *weiha* 'priest' beside *weihs* 'holy', OE *þearfa* 'pauper' beside *þearf* 'in need', *geſā* 'foe' < **-fāha* beside *fāh* 'hostile' The individualizing nature of the *n*-suffix thus parallels the particularizing function of the Gmc. definite declension, and it is generally thought that the class of weak adjectives arose in some such model.[2] The distinction between strong and weak inflection, though not inherited from PIE, is paralleled in some other IE languages, most notably in Balto-Slavic, where indefinite adjectives are inflected like nouns of the same class, whereas definite forms have attached an ending equivalent to a pronoun.[3] The Balto-Slavic distinction is thus roughly opposite that of Gmc., where it is the indefinite declension that has acquired pronominal inflections, whereas the definite corresponds in its inflection to a class of nouns (*n*-stems).

1. On the historical use of the terms 'strong' and 'weak', see §7.29 and n. 1.

2. Perhaps not incompatible with this explanation is the idea of Hirt (1931–4: II, §81) that the weak *n*-suffix reflects a postpositive pronoun *en* (comparing OCS *onъ* 'he') attached to the nom. sg. masc. of definite adjectives in use as an article. Shields (1979) proposes a particularizing nasal suffix in PIE.

3. Examples (from Prokosch 1939: §89a) are Lith. *gẽras žmõgus* 'a good husband', *gerà žmonà* 'a good wife' : *geràsis žmõgus*, *geróji žmonà* 'the good husband, the good wife'; OCS *dobrъ rabъ* 'a good servant', *dobra žena* 'a good woman' : *dobrъjь rabъ*, *dobraja žena* 'the good servant, the good woman'.

9.8 Inflectional patterns

The declension of definite adjectives is for the most part congruent with that of *an-* and *ōn*-stem nouns (§7.30, 7.32):

		Go.	OIcel.	OE	OS	OHG
m. sg.	**nom.**	lagga	langi	langa	lango, -a	lango
	acc.	laggan	langa	langan	langon, -an	langon, -un
	gen.	laggins	langa	langan	langen, -an, -on	langen, -in
	dat.	laggin	langa	langan	langen, -an, -on	langen, -in
n. sg.	**nom.**	laggō	langa	lange	langa, -e	langa
	acc.	laggō	langa	lange	langa, -e	langa
	gen.	laggins	langa	langan	langen, -an, -on	langen, -in
	dat.	laggin	langa	langan	langen, -an, -on	langen, -in
f. sg.	**nom.**	laggō	langa	lange	langa, -e	langa
	acc.	laggōn	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langūn
	gen.	laggōns	lǫngu	langan	langun	langūn
	dat.	laggōn	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langūn
m. pl.	**nom.**	laggans	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langon, -un
	acc.	laggans	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langon, -un
	gen.	lagganē	lǫngu	langra, -ena	langono	langōno
	dat.	laggam	lǫngum	langum	langum, -un, -on	langōm, -ōn
n. pl.	**nom.**	laggōna	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langun, -on
	acc.	laggōna	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langun, -on
	gen.	lagganē	lǫngu	langra, -ena	langono	langōno
	dat.	laggam	lǫngum	langum	langum, -un, -on	langōm, -ōn
f. pl.	**nom.**	laggōns	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langūn
	acc.	laggōns	lǫngu	langan	langun, -on, -an	langūn
	gen.	laggōnō	lǫngu	langra, -ena	langono	langōno
	dat.	laggōm	lǫngum	langum	langum, -un, -on	langōm, -ōn

The Go. endings are identical to those of *n*-stem nouns. Aside from minor variations in OS, the WGmc. inflections are also the same as for the nouns, except that OE gen. pl. *-ra*, adopted from strong inflection, is commoner than etymological *-ena*. In ON, too, the sg. has the same inflections as *n*-stem nouns, whereas in the plural the ending *-u*, originating in the nom./acc. fem. and neut., has spread to the masc. nouns and to all cases but the dative.

When *ja/jō*-stems, *wa/wō*-stems, and *i*- and *u*-stems are given definite declension in Go., the weak ending is added to the formative element of the stem, for which *-j-* serves in the *i*- and *u*-stems, for example nom. sg. masc. *niuja* 'new' (*ja*-stem), *wilþja* 'wild' (*ja*-stem), *triggwa* 'true' (*wa*-stem), *hráinja* 'clean' (*i*-stem), *hardja* (*u*-stem). In ON, *ja/jō*-stems have stem-final *j* before back vowels (*a*, *u*) after a light syllable or a velar consonant (e.g. nom. sg. masc. *miðr* 'middle', *rīkr* 'powerful', gen. *miðja*, *ríkja*), and *wa/wō*-stems have *v* before non-rounded vowels (*a*, *i*; e.g. nom. sg. masc. *fǫlvi* 'pale', *tryggvi* 'true', pl. *fǫlu*, *tryggu*); otherwise, just as in the strong declension, original *ja/jō*-stems have become indistinguishable inflectionally from *a/ō*-stems. Those *i*- and *u*-stems that are inflected like *ja/jō*- and *wa/wō*-stems when strong (i.e., those ending in a velar consonant) pattern like *ja/jō*- and *wa/wō*-stems when weak, otherwise like *a/ō*-stems. In WGmc., *j* of the *ja/jō*-stems is preserved in OS and (written *e*, *i*) in the earliest OHG; otherwise it is lost, and the weak stem is indistinguishable from the strong, hence, e.g., nom. sg. masc. *ja*-stem OE *mǣra*, OS *mārio*, OHG *mār(e)o* 'renowned'. As in the strong declension, stem-final *w* in the WGmc. *wa*-stems is preserved after a light syllable or a vocalic stem, hence, e.g., OE *gearwa*, OS *garwo*, OHG *gar(a)wo* 'ready'. As with the corresponding *n*-stem nouns (§7.31), OHG *-in* should have caused umlaut, with restoration of *a* outside of the earliest texts.

9.9 The declension of participles

Second (past, passive) participles to all verbs are inflected the same way as adjectives, with both indefinite and definite endings. First (present, active) participles were *nt*-stems in PIE, as with Gk. *φέροντ-*, Lat. *ferent-*, Skt. *bharant-* 'bearing', and so masc. and fem. forms were not originally distinguished. Subsequently, however, a fem. declension was formed, not with nom. *-*ā* but with *-*ī* or *-*i̯ā* (see, e.g., Szemerényi 1996: §7.8.1), as with *i̯ā*-stem (Gmc. *jō*-stem) nouns (§7.17). This situation was altered considerably in Gmc. In Gothic, masc. and neut. first participles take only weak inflections—that is, they are inflected like masc. *lagga*, neut. *laggō* (§9.8), except that beside weak masc. nom. sg. *-and-a* there is preserved a strong form in *-and-s*, an analogical formation, as PIE nom. sg. *-*ent-s*, *-*ont-s* can hardly have remained as such in PGmc. (cf. nom. sg. Gk. *-ων*, Lat. *-ēns*, Skt. *-an*, and see §7.28 on the nom. sg. of root-stem nouns).[1] The Go. fem. declension, however, is like that of *īn*-stems (e.g. *managei*, §7.34), a change that must have started in the nom. sg. fem. *-*and-ī*, prompted by the use of *n*-stem inflections in the other genders. In ON, too, first participles are inflected only weak, but instead of *-u* they take *-i* in the nom./acc./gen. pl. of all genders, a pattern which must have spread from the fem. forms, assuming *īn*-stem inflection, as in Gothic. In WGmc. these participles may be declined either strong or weak, and when strong they take the inflections of *ja/jō*-stem adjectives, a pattern again originating in the fem. forms.

1. Skt. also demonstrates that the *nt*-suffix originally showed quantitative ablaut alternations in addition to the qualitative one evident in Lat., Gk., and Gmc.

III. Comparison of adjectives

9.10 The comparative degree

The comparative of adjectives was formed with a suffix PIE *-*i̯os-* in the nom. and acc. (lengthened to *-*i̯ōs* in the nom. sg. uter under Szemerényi's law, §1.6 n. 1) in alternation with *-*i̯es-* and, presumably in the weak cases (§7.4), reduced-grade *-*is-*: see Szemerényi 1996: §7.8.4. It is the last of these that was generalized in PGmc.,[1] yielding *-*iz-* under Verner's law (§6.6). Uninflected, it was used to form adverbs, e.g. Lat. *magis* 'more' (cf. *magnus*), Go. *máis* 'more' < **ma-iz*, *mins* 'less' < **minn-iz*. Beside this there arose another comparative suffix *-*ōz-* peculiar to Gmc. and of uncertain origin. By far the most widely credited explanation is that *-*iz* was added to Gmc. adverbs in *-*ō* to form comparatives, with subsequent development of *-*ō-iz* to *-*ōz* and later extension of this adverbial *-*ōz* to adjectives.[2] In Gothic, either *-*iz-* or *-*ōz-* may be added to *a/ō*-stem adjectives (but consistently one or the other), whereas the other stem classes take *-*iz-* only. In the other Gmc. languages, i.e. the languages with front umlaut, *-*iz-* became unproductive, replaced exclusively by *-*ōz-*, which posed no umlaut complexities, and forms derived from *-*iz-* remain only as relics: see the examples below (§9.12). Note that Go. stems in *ja/jō-*, *i-*, and *u-* lose the stem formative before the comparative (and superlative) suffix, e.g. *alþiza* 'elder', *reikists* 'most powerful' (*ja/ō*-stems), *spēdiz-*, *spēdists* (to *i*-stem **spēþs* 'late'), *hardiz-* 'harder' (*u*-stem).

Adjectives in the comparative degree take only weak endings, in the case of ON the same set of endings used with first participles (§9.9). Exclusive inflection of Gmc. comparative adjectives in the definite declension has an intriguing parallel in Greek, where to the likewise reduced-grade suffix *-*is*- is added an *n*-stem suffix to form comparative adjectives, as in *ἡδίων* 'sweeter' < **su̯ād-is-ōn*, to *ἡδύς*.

1. Prokosch (1939: §91a) regards PGmc. *-*is*- as a Gmc. reduction of *-*i̯os*-, but it is difficult to see how this could be. Cf. Szemerényi *loc. cit.*

2. Such is the explanation of Brugmann (in Brugmann & Delbrück 1897–1916: II, 1.560–1, with refs.), who does not claim *-*ō-iz* > *-*ōz* as a phonological development, rather *-*ō-iz* > *-*aiz*, the diphthong of the latter then being replaced by analogy to the positive degree in *-*ō*. Compare Cowgill's explanation of weak verbs of the second class (§12.43). See further Kuryłowicz 1954: 252–4 and 1964: 233, also postulating an adverbial origin.

9.11 The superlative degree

In PIE, one method of forming the superlative was by the addition of a suffix *-*to*- to the comparative suffix, a method particularly common with *u*-stem adjectives, as with Gk. *ἥδιστος* 'sweetest' (pos. *ἡδύς*; cf. OE *swētest* < **swōtistaz*), Skt. *náviṣṭha*- 'newest'. The same construction characterizes Gmc., e.g. Go. *háuhists* < **xaux-is-ta-z*. With the rise of the new comparative suffix *-*ōz*- in PGmc., this, too, added -*t*- to form the superlative of adjectives that took *-*ōz*- in the comparative degree, e.g. Go. *armōst*- 'poorest'.

In PIE, some adverbs formed the superlative by the addition of a suffix *-*m̥Ho*-, e.g. PIE **h₂n̥dh-m̥Ho*- in Skt. *adhamá*- (to prep. *adháḥ* 'below') and Lat. *infimus* 'lowest', or with an extended form of the suffix *-*t-m̥Ho*-, as in Skt. *ut-tama* 'uppermost', Lat. *ex-timus* 'outermost'. A few such adverbial stems formed adjectives in Gmc., and thus there survive some superlatives in -*m*- in Go. and OE, the Go. forms conveying either comparative or superlative sense:[1] Go. *aúhuma* 'higher', *fruma* 'the former, prior, first' (= OE OS *forma* 'first'), *innuma* 'inner(most)', *aftuma* 'the following, next', *iftuma* 'the following, next', *hleiduma* 'left(hand)', OE *hindema* 'last'. These are declined weak, the Go. fem. forms taking *īn*-stem inflections (§7.34). In Go. and, more extensively, OE the superlative sense could be reinforced by the addition of the adj. suffix *-*ist*-, hence Go. *aúhumists* 'highest', *aftumists* 'last' (OE *æftemest*), *frumists* 'first' (OE *fyrmest*, *formest*, Anglian *forþmest*), *hindumists* 'hindmost', *spēdumists* 'last', OE *innemest* 'innermost', *ȳtemest*, *ūtemest* 'outermost', *norþmest* 'northernmost', and so forth.

Aside from the superlatives in PGmc. *-*um*- (without added *-*ist*-), superlative adjectives may be declined strong or weak except in OHG, where they are always weak.

1. The mixture of comparative and superlative senses probably resulted from a combination of two influences, the growing opacity of -*m*- as a superlative marker, esp. on adjectives, and the tendency not to distinguish carefully between comparative and superlative use in dyadic comparisons, which are especially relevant to locational adverbs (e.g. 'the nearest' vs. 'the nearer' of two). Although OE *forma* retains its superlative sense, cf. OE *medemest* 'most moderate', with the superlative stem *medem*- extended to positive *medeme* and comparative *medemra* (cf. also OS *Medema-hēm* in the *Vita S. Willihadi*).

9.12 Distribution of suffixes

As noted above, Go. -*iz*- and -*ist*- may be attached to adjectives of any stem class, including *a/ō*-stems, whereas -*ōz*- and -*ōst*- are used with *a/ō*-stems only. Elsewhere in

Gmc., where they had caused umlaut, *-*iz*- and *-*ist*- ceased to be productive in the early period, leaving a few comparatives and superlatives with these suffixes as relics, along with a tendency to substitute for them forms containing the suffixes in *ō*. Thus, in OIcel. the normal endings (i.e., derived from *-*ōz*-, *-*ōst*-) in the nom. sg. masc. are comp. -*ari* (but simply -*ri* after the adj. suffix -*lig*-, as in *áligri* 'more reserved') and superl. -*astr* (or weak -*asti*).[1] The corresponding endings in WGmc. are OE -*ra* and -*ost*/-*ast*,[2] OS -*ora*/-*ara*/-*era* and -*ost* (or weak -*osto*), OHG -*ōro* and -*ōsto* (weak only).[3] In addition to adjectives with suppletive comparison (§9.13), some forms typical for the comparison of OIcel. adjectives reflecting stems in *-*iz*- and *-*ist*- are the following: *djúpr* 'deep' (*dýpri*, *dýpstr*), *fagr* 'beautiful' (*fegri*, *fegrstr*), *fár* 'few' (*færi*, *fæstr*), *langr* 'long' (*lengri*, *lengstr*), *seinn* 'slow' (*seinni* < **seinri*, *seinstr*), *stórr* 'large' (*stœrri*, *stœrstr*). For a fuller accounting, see Noreen 1970: §§438–9, with a list of adjectives compared in both manners, i.e. with and without umlaut. The only very common OE adjectives of this sort are *eald* 'old' (*ieldra*, *ieldest*), *geong* 'young' (*gingra*, *gingest*),[4] *hēah* 'high' (*hīer(r)a*, *hīehst*, §5.6), *lang* (*lengra*, *lengest*), *sc(e)ort* 'short' (*scyrtra*, *scyrtest*), all of which may also lack umlaut and/or have superl. in -*ost*. In OS and OHG the irregularities caused by the umlauting suffixes are less apparent, since only the umlaut of *a* is indicated in the orthography, and it may be leveled out in such forms. Examples in OS reflecting *-*iz*- are infrequent: they occur to *ald* 'old', *engi* 'narrow', *lang* 'long', *mildi* 'mild, generous', *spāhi* 'wise'; also in *furđiro* 'greater'.[5] OHG -*ir*-, -*ist*- are much more widely attested, and although there is no regular pattern to their distribution, they are almost always the rule in *ja*-stems and infrequent with stems of more than one syllable (Braune 2004a: §261). One and the same *a*/*ō*-stem adj. may take either these or -*ōr*-, -*ōst*-.

1. Rarely is *j* or *v* preserved in the comp. or superl. of ON *ja/j*

2. OE -*ost*- reflects -*ust*- < PGmc. *-*ōst*- with raising (and shortening) before *u* in the next syllable (§5.5), whereas OE -*ast*- reflects *-*ōst*- without raising, in cases without a following *u* (Hogg 1992: §3.34).

3. The assertion of Krahe & Meid (1969: II, §56) that the WGmc. superl. is declined weak only is mistaken.

4. Compare Go. *juggs*, comp. *jūhiza*, showing that the PIE root was accented in the comparative.

5. OS -*er*- may also reflect -*ir*-, but the examples of -*er*- alternating with -*or*-, -*ar*- within paradigms cited by Gallée (1993: §353) probably reflect weakened forms of -*or*-.

9.13 Suppletive comparison

In PGmc. a few very common adjectives used a stem in the comp. and superl. degrees different from that in the positive. The attested forms are these:

	Go.	OIcel.	OE	OS	OHG
pos.	gōþs 'good'	góðr	gōd	gōd	guot
comp.	batiza	betri	bet(e)ra, sēlra, sella	betera, -ara	bezziro
superl.	batists	beztr	bet(e)st, best, sēlest	bezto, besto	bezzisto
pos.	leitils 'little'	lítill	lȳtel	luttil	luzzil
comp.	minniza	minni	lǣssa	minnera, -ara	minniro
superl.	minnists	minztr	lǣst	minnista	minnisto

	Go.	OIcel.	OE	OS	OHG
pos.	mikils ‘large’	mikill	micel	mikil	mihhil
comp.	máiza	meiri	māra	mēro	mēr(ir)o, mērōro
superl.	máists	mestr	mǣst	mēst(o)	meisto
pos.	sineigs ‘old’	gamall	eald	ald	alt
comp.		ellri	ieldra	aldiro, eldiro	altiro, eltiro
superl.	sinista	elztr	ieldest	eldist	altisto, eltisto
pos.	ubils ‘bad’	illr, vándr	yfel	ubil	ubil
comp.	waírsiza	verri	wiersa	wirsa	wirsiro
superl.		ve(r)str	wierrest	wirsisto, wirristo	wirsisto
pos.		margr ‘many’			
comp.		fleiri			
superl.		flestr			

Compare also the *ἅπαξ λεγόμενον* Go. *iusiza* ‘better’ (or possibly ‘different’: Galatians 4:1). Grammars of the individual languages should be consulted for the development of these forms, but a few general observations may be offered. Suppletive comparison is found very commonly in the IE languages for the same basic concepts expressed by these Gmc. adjectives, e.g. Lat. *bonus*, *melior*, *optimus* and Gk. *ἀγαθός*, *ἀμείνων*, *ἄριστος*. The positive stems may vary widely across the IE group: to Lat. *bonus*, Gk. *ἀγαθός* cf. Skt. *vasu-*, OIr. *maith*, *dag-*, Go. *gōþs*. Rather, it is the comparative and superlative forms that have the securest cognates: to Go. *batiza* cf. Skt. *bhad-rá-ḥ* ‘excellent’; to Go. *minniza*, *minnists* cf. Lat. *minor*, *minimus*; to Go. *máiza*, *máists* cf. Oscan *mais* ‘more’, Umbrian fem. *mestru* ‘larger’; to OE *wierrest* cf. Skt. *várṣiṣṭhaḥ* ‘highest’. Even when the positive forms do have obvious cognates, they tend to be formed differently: to Go. *mikils* cf. Lat. *magnus*, Skt. *maha-* (but also Gk. fem. *μεγάλη*). This pattern suggests that the positive forms are generally younger than the others, and that is what might be expected, since it is likelier that a new positive form should have replaced the original, given the way that new manners of expressing basic concepts like these are some of the commonest lexical innovations in modern languages, than that suppletive stems should have been chosen for the comp. and superl. of preëxisting positives. The same development can be observed in Gmc. itself, with the substitution of ON *gamall* for the positive degree of ‘old’ (where comp. *ellri* = Go. *alþiza*, OE *ieldra*; the WGmc. forms show no such suppletion) and the use of *vándr* beside *illr*.[1] There is, however, no scholarly consensus about these matters.[2]

1. OE *lǣssa*, *lǣst* would appear to contradict the pattern, but plainly these are not innovative forms but old formations, as shown by their irregular form. They would originally have been close in meaning to ‘smaller’, ‘smallest’, to judge by the cognates Crimean Go. *lista* ‘little’, OHG *līso* ‘mildly’ (see also Pokorny 1959–69: I, 662), and if they were perceived as meaning the same as **minniz-*, **minnist-*, there would have been no reason not to regard them as suppletive forms of *lȳtel*, esp. since the initial consonants agree.

2. For example, in explanation of suppletive comparison Krahe & Meid remark, “Der Grund für dieses Verhalten ist darin zu suchen, daß die durch solche Adjektiva ausgedrückten Begriffe gegenüber den durch die Steigerungsformen bezeichneten Bedeutungsdifferenzen besonders empfindlich sind, so daß sie nicht durch den gleichen Wortstamm wiedergegeben können.” Cf. also Hirt (1931–4: II, §84): “Zu erklären ist die Erscheinung dadurch, daß gewisse Adjektive zunächst nicht steigerungsfähig waren, und daß anderseits zu Komparativen und Superlativen der Positiv verloren ging.”