Gender and plurality: Variation and change

These questions are asking you to apply and build on what you’ve learned in the book and in class. They are intended as challenging assignments.

You need to have access to a couple of good dictionaries (recall that the Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* is available online and Duden or Wahrig would be useful as well.)

1. Gender and sound patterns. Assemble sets of 20 or more monosyllabic German nouns that end in:
   - nasal+obstruent (-nd, -nk, -ns, etc.) and
   - fricative+?: (/ft/, /çt/, /xt/)

   Can you see patterns for either?
   Can you account for nouns that don’t match the patterns you’ve found?

2. Variation in plurals. Below are some variants of German plural forms for nouns. For each pair:
   - Using dictionaries, try to establish parameters of variation (new vs. old, regional, standard vs. non-standard).
   - Using web searches or Ngram Viewer, provide some basic data on frequency of some variants, along with indications of change over time.
   - If you feel brave, you might try to suggest why any changes you find appear to be taking place.

   die Böden / die Boden
   die Kästen / die Kasten
   die Magen / die Mägen
   die Bürgermeister / die Bürgermeisters
   die Mädchen / die Mädchens
   die Kumpel / die Kumpels
   die Bestecke / die Bestecks
   die Wracke / die Wracks

   Are there any possible generalizations? Can you find other examples that might support them?