

Summary

Askaken and Åskaken

A West Swedish–Norwegian group of lake names

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In western Sweden and Norway we find a group of lake names, probably originally homonymous, deriving from an OWScand. and OSw. **Afskaki*, the first element of which is the adverb *af* ‘of’ and the second a short-stem weak masculine. The lakes are now called *Askaken, Åskaken* etc. There are two main possible explanations as to how this name type was formed: either as a compound of *af* ‘of’ and a noun **skake*, cognate with *skage* ‘point’ etc. and possibly the word forming the basis for *skekill* ‘corner, edge, fringe’; or as a derivative of the phrasal verb *skaka av* ‘shake off’. The first alternative has several semantic parallels in words of the type *avkrok* ‘out-of-the-way spot’, but the chief objection is that there is no definite evidence of the assumed noun **skake* in the Scandinavian languages. The second alternative is associated with a group of words with an original concrete sense of ‘something removed or discarded, waste’, e.g. *avfall* ‘rubbish, waste’, *avskräde* ‘refuse, offal’, *avskum* ‘dregs, scum’. Some words of this type show a semantic development to ‘remote place, out-of-the way spot, backwoods’. A dialect word *avskak(or)*, recorded in Dalarna with the sense of ‘flax waste’, i.e. strictly ‘something that has been shaken off’, could thus form the starting point for the lake names. Both alternative interpretations must be considered possible, and it is difficult to decide definitely in favour of either of them. In topographical terms, the two interpretations point to the same probable basic sense: ‘lake on the fringes’ or ‘remote lake’.