

Summary

The Gotland parish name *Hemse*

By Lennart Elmevik

Hemse is the previously uninterpreted name of a parish in southern Gotland. According to the author, its Old Gutnish form may be assumed to have been *Hemsi*, containing what was originally the dative singular of an OGutn. **hems*, corresponding to OWScand. *hams* < **hamisa-* ‘shell enclosing a seed or fruit’, ‘snake skin’. In the first of these senses, the word is also known for example from Swedish dialects. The author shows that an old meaning of **hamisa-* was probably ‘skin, hide’. On that basis, and with support from several parallels, he assumes that the topographical background to the name in question was that some feature of the terrain in a central part of present-day Hemse parish was compared, for instance, to a stretched-out animal skin. Finally, the author notes that he does not rule out the possibility of *Hemse* instead being a primary name formation, PrScand. **Hamisia* neut., derived from **hamisa-* using the suffix *-ia* in its function of expressing ‘similarity to something’.