



## The issue of infield and outfield

The physical landscape of the outfield/wasteland (*utmark*) and its cultural usage demonstrates a high degree of variation. It can, indeed, be questioned whether the use of outfield/wasteland resources actually can be described by the common concept of 'utmark'. The vast landscapes in question show too great a variation, ecologically and geomorphologically, as do their cultural usages. Furthermore, presented within a chronological framework of two thousand years, a common overall concept can be problematic. The concept 'utmark' probably represents the use of many different cultural landscapes that need to be explained within their own conceptual frameworks.

This paper is, however, not going to be a postmodernist debate on the issue of semantics. As I see it, the concept of outfield/wasteland (*utmark*) should be understood according to its relation to the concept of the infield (*innmark*). In Norway, the term *utmark* is traditionally used both as a topographic and a cultural concept, in opposition to the concept of 'innmark', the infield. In my opinion the concept of *utmark* cannot be described in geographical terms – it is primarily a cultural concept.



**Figure 1.** A traditional mountain summer farm and pastures in a Norwegian mountain landscape. The geographical qualities are obvious, but this type of 'outfield' (*utmark*) is a cultural construction formed by human activities.

This means that *innmark* and *utmark* cannot serve as independent concepts. It is, in fact, difficult to separate the two, and it is probably not even possible to define valid variables for classification. The two are closely interrelated, being the result of a complex resource management of the whole landscape. In areas with ethnic or cultural dualism, this becomes even more obvious. For instance, in districts with both Norwegian and Sámi habitations one cannot define the Sámi population as an *utmark* settlement. Although they may be located in what would be the *utmark* of a Norwegian agrarian settlement, it is certainly not an *utmark* from a Sami point of view.

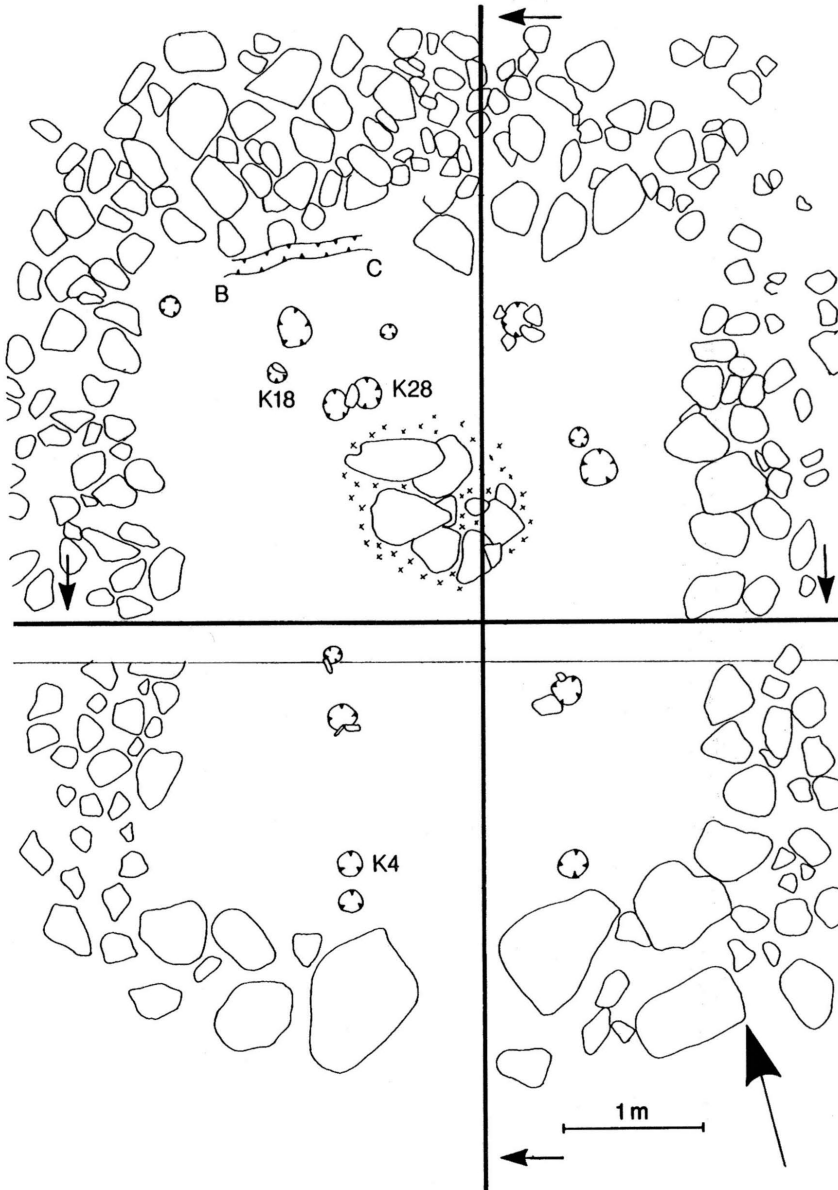
Although the study of the *utmark* may turn out to be a difficult project, it still makes sense to pay special attention to the cultural activities in 'marginal' areas outside of the habitation core areas. In fact, it may turn out that the social and economic development of agrarian settlements are better demonstrated in the *utmark*. The extent of landscape utilisation and the social organisation of the labour reflect the potential and the complexity of the society. This is also true for the study of early farming communities in western Norway. The development of complex social structures in the period from late Bronze Age to late Roman Iron Age is clearly reflected in the use of the *utmark*.

### **Resource management in the outfield/wasteland area during the early Iron Age in western Norway**

In western Norway, the *utmark* is traditionally considered to encompass the unreclaimed areas of the coastline and the mountain region. This was the land of the Stone Age hunters, and remains of their settlements are numerous. With the introduction of early farming in the late Stone Age, things changed. People moved inland and settled along the fjords, in mild landscapes suited for farming. Stockholding and corn cultivation may have been the primary production, but it was a mixed economy, which was always supplemented by fishing and hunting (Indrelid 1994). However, for a period in the early Bronze Age, the use of the *utmark* in central farming areas may have been only temporary.

### **Summer pastures in the mountain region**

In the course of the last millennium BC, the use of the *utmark* became more intensive (Prescott 1993). This is clearly observed in the mountain areas where a new type of settlement can be observed. Stone-packed wall banks reveal huts connected with farming. These dwellings are often located at some distance from lakes and rivers, and pollen analyses show that the surrounding areas have been used for pastures (Kvamme et al. 1992:127). The datings go back to the late Bronze Age and show an intensification in the late Roman Iron Age (Bjørøgo *et al.* 1992:288).



**Figure 2.** House site from Nyset Steggje. Similar building remains have been excavated at numerous sites in the mountain areas. Many are dated to the late Iron Age, but several go back to the late Roman period. The buildings measure 8-9 x 5-6 metres with a floor space of approximately 15-30 square metres. They have a central fireplace and the roof was supported by two rows of posts. Graphics Bjørgo et al. 1992

Dwellings like these could hardly have been settled all year around, they were probably used as summer dwellings. The activities reflected most likely correspond with the *seter* system (shielings) known from late prehistory and the Middle Ages. As the *seter* was not used throughout the year, people and livestock must have

come from a lowland farm. Unfortunately, the relationship between farms in the lowland and dwellings in the highland is difficult to establish in an archaeological context. The question has been dealt with in the research project 'Vestlandsgårdsprosjektet', supervised by Professor Ingvild Øye, University of Bergen, 1995-1998 (Øye (ed.) 2002). The project studied four farms, two in the lowland and two at higher altitudes, respectively 300 and 450 m.a.s.l. It was concluded that the farms in the lower mountain areas generally followed the same pattern as the farms in the lowland. The question of shielings, however, could not be fully answered. The oldest radiocarbon datings are from the Roman Period onwards, but are mostly from the Viking period and early Middle Ages. The use of summer pastures probably dates back to the late Bronze Age. There is, however, a question as to whether this can be compared directly with shielings. One of the problems related to the question of highland occupation is the scale of the research. Test pits and trial ditches may not be sufficient to solve the question, but at least they provide interesting perspectives.



**Figure 3.** Without full-scale excavations it can be difficult to distinguish between different types of highland occupations. As an example, it would not be possible to differentiate the small huts of the Viking Age-early medieval farm at Ytre Moa (Bakka 1976) from contemporary and earlier seter huts like the ones from Frikisdalen (Magnus 1991, Skrede 2002), both in the Sognefjord area. Photo S. Diinhoff.

### **Hunting and fishing in the *utmark* in the early Iron Age**

A changing pattern also characterises hunting and fishing in the *utmark*. For a period in the early Bronze Age, the two activities seem to stagnate, and the use of old fishing grounds along the coast and rivers and around lakes in the high mountains decreases. The old way of life was on retreat, and though it never ended, it was absorbed into

the traditions of agriculture. Later, towards the end of the Bronze Age, hunting in the mountain area flourished again (Prescott 1993:227). It is still difficult to determine the character of this activity. It is questionable whether the hunting was organised by herdsmen from the shieling huts, or whether hunting bands from the lowland would seasonally visit the mountains, independent of the summer dwellings. From the late Roman period onwards, hunting seems to have been organised by larger groups, or at least they seem to have caught more game than that which a single household could consume. Archaeological surveys have revealed elaborate constructions for hunting purposes. Systems of fences, pitfalls and stone built shelters made up traps for hunting game on a larger scale (Solberg 2000:102). Radiocarbon dating and archaeological finds date these constructions to the late Roman period and onwards.

Along the coastline, the same rhythm of resource management can be described. For a period the old fishing grounds were used less frequently but then, at a later stage, regained new importance. Old sites were revisited, and in caves and shelters people would seasonally make use of marine resources. More than 50 caves and shelters are known to have experienced prehistoric occupation (Solberg 2000:73). Traditionally, these sites were thought to have housed surviving bands of hunter-gatherers, maintaining their traditional ways of living into the Iron Age. Modern archaeology, at least in the southern part of Norway, finds it more likely that the caves and shelters represent seasonal occupations organised by the agricultural settlements (Solberg 2000:88). As an example, one can refer to the archaeological finds from Skjonghelleren in Sunnmøre. The preserved bone material clearly exhibits the hunting of prey such as seabirds, fish, seal, deer and reindeer, but also domesticated goats, sheep, cattle and pigs are found. The occupation of Skjonghelleren was most likely on a seasonal basis.

Specialised Iron Age fishing huts can, in addition, be found on islands or remote areas along the outer coast (Magnus 1974, Alsaker 1989). The majority date from the late Iron Age or the Middle Ages, but some of them originate from as far back as the late Roman period (Johannessen 1998). Archaeological excavations indicate that they were in seasonal use by small groups of men. Spread around a central fireplace, tools and implements for fishing, such as iron hooks, grindstones, and wedge stones for line- or net fishing can be found.



**Figure 4.** Iron Age fishing hut from Hjartøy on the west coast of Norway. The preserved stone wall indicates the hut in the landscape of today. Photo L. Johannessen.

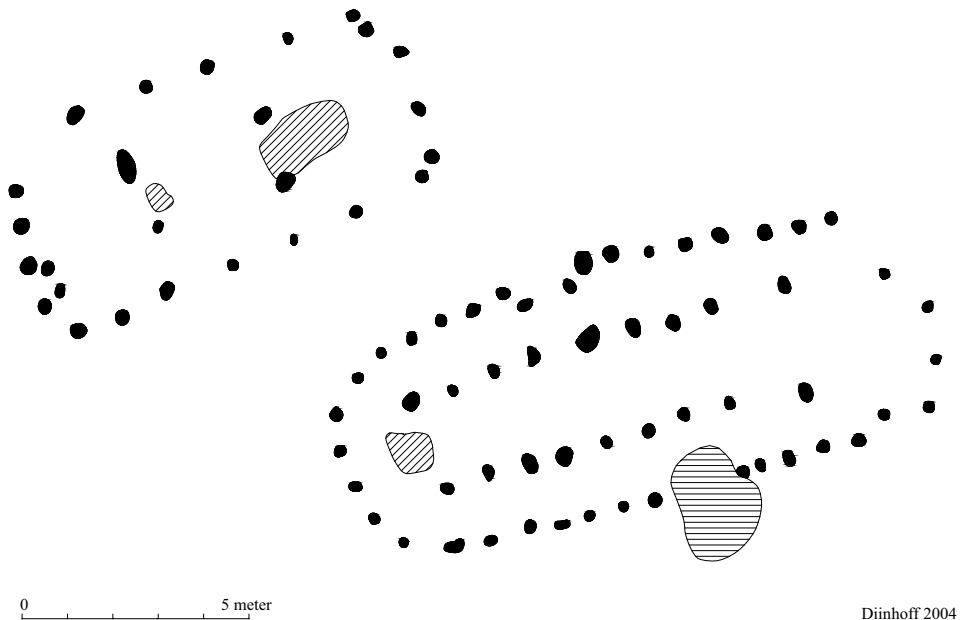
The use of these fishing sites increased. In the late Iron Age, more fishing huts were built, and these were often located in clusters. The sites were abandoned during the Middle Ages, probably due to change in ownership and fishing rights.

### General trends in the use of the *utmark* in the early Iron Age

Some general trends appear in the use of the *utmark* of western Norway in the early Iron Age. With the introduction of agriculture in the late Stone Age, the extent and the frequency with which the *utmark* was used declined for a period in the early Bronze Age. When the usage expanded again in the late Bronze Age and the early Iron Age, it is no longer likely that this was due to surviving hunter-gatherer bands. Hunting, fishing and herding in the *utmark* must now be explained within the framework of the agricultural settlements in the lowland.

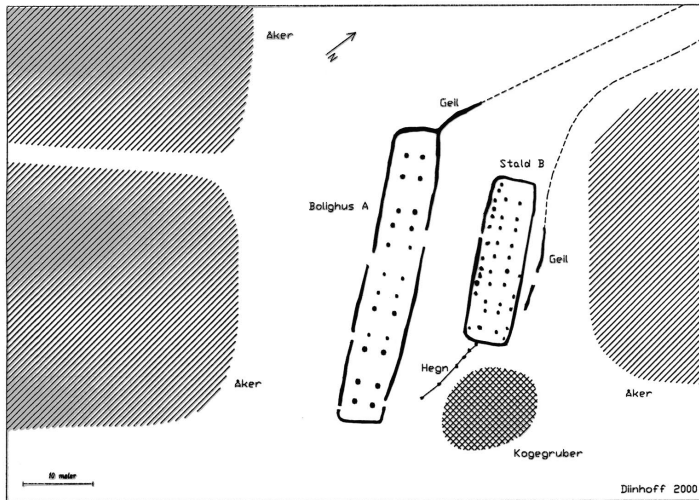
### Early Iron Age farms in western Norway

In the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, western Norway was characterised by a highly developed agriculture (Diinhoff 1999a:27). On south facing slopes and terraces, from the outer coast to the inner fjords, extensive settlements and intensively cultivated field systems can be found.



**Figure 5.** A pre-Roman single farm from Ørsta in Sunnmøre (Diinhoff 1999b). The longhouse with dwelling and stable and the adjoining outhouse /workshop cover an area of about 150 square metres. The size of this farmstead corresponds to that which is normal in western Norway. Graphics S. Diinhoff.

Archaeological excavations have mostly revealed even-sized farmsteads, at a size which would be expected of an independent farm run by a single family unit (figure 5). In the late Roman period and the Migration period, however, this changed. A stratified society had emerged, and with it, an aristocracy of wealthy families had come to power. They had gained control of production and trade, and on manors they were now in charge of political, religious, and military affairs (Herschend 1993). This is clearly signified by the presence of richly furnished graves and large farmsteads with hall-houses (figure. 6).



**Figure 6.** A chieftain's manor at Eide in Nordfjord (Diinhoff 2001). The 45 metre longhouse is a multifunctional hall building. The stable is placed in a separate building. The two buildings cover an area of almost 500 square metres, considerably larger than the pre-Roman farmstead. Graphics S. Diinhoff.

More recently, some larger farmsteads have been excavated and dated to the late pre-Roman period (Løken 2001:53). Possibly, these larger farmsteads, like the one from Hovde in Sør-Trøndelag (Grønnesby 1999), mark the very beginning of a socially stratified settlement pattern.

## The infield-outfield system of the early Iron Age



**Figure 7.** Archaeological profile from Kvåle in Sogndal. With changing colours different prehistoric cultivation layers can be seen. The profile shows continued use and probably permanent field systems in the early Iron Age. Photo S. Diinhoff.

The agrarian habitation of western Norway shows a stable pattern. Because of the limited arable land, the settlement areas are concentrated to certain areas. Although single farms seem to be the common settlement pattern, the farmhouses were rebuilt within limited areas, resulting in a considerable accumulation of archaeological remains, especially agrarian structures. In the district supervised by Bergen Museum, many well-preserved prehistoric field systems have been uncovered and dated to the late Stone Age onwards (Diinhoff 1999a). From the middle of the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, thick cultivation layers indicate an agricultural expansion (figure 7). Stone clearing, fertilisation and possibly crop-rotation made permanent fields possible (Diinhoff 2003). These intensively cultivated fields are located close to the farms.

In addition to the intensively used fields, another field type can be observed, located at some distance to the settlement. These do not show the same degree of cultivation, and they seem to have been used more extensively, probably with long fallow rotation and no fertilisation apart from dung from the grazing cattle. It may indicate an early 'infield – outfield' system, as early as from the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age.



It has, however, been difficult to locate well-preserved field systems in western Norway later than the early Roman Iron Age, at least not on the same scale as from earlier periods. There seems, however, to be a pattern that the remote and extensively cultivated fields were no longer used for corn cultivation but instead used for grazing. This change was most likely caused by a further intensification of the 'infield-outfield' system (Myhre 2002:160). Although it is difficult to trace the economic growth in the late Roman farming of western Norway, it should be noted that the farms were in general much larger and thus representing units with an increased production and an expanded household.

### **The emergence of a stratified settlement system in the late Roman period and the Migration period**

The agricultural expansion of the late Bronze Age continued through the following centuries. The tribal system of the early Iron Age was not an egalitarian society, but social and economic differences did not make a strong impact on the settlement pattern. Common matters were still resolved on a collective tribal basis. In the late Roman period, society had been changed, and social stratification had resulted in a hierarchical settlement pattern and in a changed landscape resource management.

This cultural change was based on an expanding economy. Exchange of luxury trade goods demanded a higher production surplus, and the Iron Age society would respond (Näsman 1991:168). The agricultural production was increased by intensified crop growing in the infield, and by herding more livestock in the outfields (Øye 2002:54). Game would additionally supply important trade goods. The extended use of the *utmark* was possible because the economy demanded a higher production. It was also possible because complex social structures organised the means of production and provided a stable trade network. On the other hand, without the *utmark* in western Norway, it would be impossible to produce the necessary surplus which the new complex society would have needed as a foundation in the first place.

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