

PEASANT HOUSING AND HOLDINGS IN A MARGINAL AREA- MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTTLAND: SOME PROBLEMS

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Scotland is the northernmost country in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Highlands are the mountainous north-western part of Scotland, divided from the rest of the United Kingdom by the geological fault known colloquially as the Highland Line and more formally as the Highland Boundary Fault. The "Western Highlands" is not a closely defined term, and in this paper it will be taken to be the seaboard northwards from the Mull of Kintyre to just beyond the Isle of Skye together with the adjacent mountains far enough inland to include Loch Awe, Glen Coe and Ben Nevis. It is a mountainous region with many lakes - known as lochs - and a deeply indented coastline where the fjord-like indentations are also known as lochs. The "Islands" fall into two groups - the Inner Hebrides, all those islands lying relatively close to the mainland, and the Outer Hebrides, an archipelago situated further out into the ocean and somewhat to the north. The Outer Hebrides are sometimes referred to as the Outer Isles, as the Long Island (from their appearance) or (somewhat confusingly) as the Western Isles (now the name of their local government authority). Many of the Inner Hebrides are mountainous: Jura, Mull, Rhum and Skye distinctly so. The natural soils tend throughout to be poor or worse but, as with all landscapes, there are patches where the situation is rather better and man's attention has produced good soil. It is a rugged and beautiful land with a high rainfall where, until comparatively recently, the sea was the highroad. For simplicity, the Western Highlands and Islands are often colloquially referred to just as "the West", although this designation does not always embrace the Outer Isles. It is an area for which the kind of medieval records which illuminate rural settlement are rare.

Some years ago, *Iain Crawford* (1968) proposed that we should think of the medieval period in Scotland as ending at the Act of Union of 1707 rather than at 1500 or 1540 as in England or 1600 as in Ireland. Nowhere is this more true than in the Highlands and Islands where, indeed, the suppression of the Jacobite rising of 1745 might be seen as a more realistic end date. However, to quote any particular date tends to be misleading as it implies a sharp and uniform cut-off.

There was no town in western Scotland in the Middle Ages but the presence of a substantial medieval population which produced an economic surplus is clearly demonstrated by the survival of castles and pre-Reformation churches as well as by charters and chronicles. The architecture of both the castles and the churches is conservative and more than a little governed by the intractable nature of available building stone: thus it is not always easy to date. The castles, however, seem to cover the period from the very end of the 12th century to the 17th while church building seems to stop rather earlier. Few, if any, new castles may have been built after the first decade or two of the 17th century but the state of society remained unfavourable to construction of unfortified residences. One of the earliest substantial "post-castle" domestic structure to survive in the West is a range at Lochnell House built late in the 17th century (*RCAHMS* 1974, no. 330); thereafter can be seen a sequence, MacDonald of Clan Ranald built Ormacleit on South Uist in 1701; Mac Iain of Glencoe built Invercoe in 1708; a Campbell tacksman, Airds in 1730; a MacDonald, Cara in 1733; a Campbell, Glenure in 1740; a MacDonald, Vallay in 1742; and so on (*Crawford* 1983, 355).

The landscape of the West is littered with the ruins of rural depopulation and it is with these that we must begin an investigation of the peasantry. Ruins have a knack of looking old but peasant housing is inevitably difficult to date and ruins of peasant housing especially so.

It is well known that emigration from Scotland took place in a series of waves from the 1770s on and rural "clearances" began soon after. As a result, all the relics of rural depopulation are often seen in the public eye as being older than this but, if we examine the ruins in the West, we find that, in general, they can be divided on landscape grounds into two main groups or phases: a judgement that is confirmed by pursuing historical and archaeological research.

The most recent phase of relict buildings clearly belongs to the agricultural and settlement system known as crofting (*Symon 1959*, chs. 17 and 18; *Fenton 1976*, 224-225; *Hunter 1976* etc.). The agricultural changes, often known simplicistically and pejoratively as the "Clearances", led in part to extended hill pasture, mainly for sheep, and in part to the establishment of individual or family holdings known as crofts, usually located on the coastal fringe. Crofts were often but not invariably inadequate in size and fertility to support the families to which they were granted. In many cases the niggardly land provision was deliberate: crofters were often supposed to fish as well as to farm and there were large displaced populations to be accommodated (c.f. *Dunlop 1978*). Usually, each tenant of each croft had to build his own peasant farmstead within his holding and these were inevitably modest. The Highlanders were reluctant fishermen and most attempted to survive on their crofts without involving themselves in the sea:

If the inhabitants... can procure the bare necessities of life by their labour from the grounds they possess their ambition leads them to no further effort... This is so much the case that tradesmen of all descriptions are not to be got without procuring farms for them and no sooner is this procured than they become farmers solely (Colonel Alexander MacLean of Coll, quoted in *Dunlop 1978*, 28).

The population continued to rise, frequently requiring the duplication of croft houses and the construction of additional cottages on croft corners. Land-hunger became increasingly acute, at least down to the time of potato famine of the 1840s, despite encouragement given for emigration. Indeed, the population was still rising when the potato blight reached Scotland from Ireland. The result was devastation and famine: partly as a result of this, the crofting system underwent considerable legal and social changes by the end of the 19th century but these are not our present concern (*Hunter 1976*, chapter 5 et seq., and numerous other publications).

In the areas given over to crofting in the early 19th century, some of the crofts survive to the present day but others have themselves been abandoned or suppressed and replaced by an alternative agricultural regime. For example, following a change in landlord on the island of Coll, many crofts established between 1790 and 1810 were aggregated and replaced in the 1860s by well built dairy farms. As dairy farming is markedly less labour-intensive than crofting, this was a move that involved the abandonment of scores of croft houses and further depopulation of the landscape. It is interesting that, when a body of Coll crofters displaced by dairy farming were offered land on which to settle, they abandoned crofting and reverted to the pre-crofting agronomy of their great-grandparents. The dairy farming on Coll was successful (Coll cheese was served in the dining rooms of the Houses of Parliament) but died during World War II and has itself been replaced by store-stock farming, sheep pasture and some arable. Plus the inevitable cash-crop offered by tourism.

Where in Western Scotland crofting has been maintained, houses have been renewed and replaced, and replacement has frequently been on adjacent sites rather than precisely on the same site. There is consequently a progression of croft houses that has been studied giving an architectural sequence, albeit subject to considerable local variation. Byre-dwellings remain common but were certainly not as universal as *Gailey (1962, 235)* claimed. Few, if any, of the first croft houses on Coll, for example, seem to have been byre-dwellings.

The more distant phase of relict housing in the Western Highlands and Islands is from the pre-crofting regime, often inaccurately termed the pre-improvement period. Crofting with a niggardly land allocation against a rising population is an intensive agricultural system that reaches into every corner of the plot and quarries every redundant wall and structure for easily obtained building stone. Consequently, the pre-crofting phase is generally not visible in any landscape where there are or have been crofts. Only when the "cleared" arable farms were replaced by pasture or the earlier system itself survived well into the crofting period can signs of the pre-crofting system be observed (e.g. *RCAHMS 1980*, no. 364).

The pre-crofting agriculture was undertaken in the West using a special variation on the co-operative open-field agriculture seen widely in the British Isles down to the 18th century, albeit a variant with a heavy dependence on cattle breeding rather than arable. Fields were often not fenced or walled and cattle were sent to shielings during the growing season. Joint tenancy arable was based on infield-outfield divided into narrow strips or rigs and the commonest of a number of similar arrangements was known as runrig (*Fenton 1976*, 8-11; *Dodgshon 1972; 1975*). Beast-drawn ploughs were rare in the West and the soil was worked using various forms of spade or foot-plough which continued to the eve of the Second World War (*Fenton 1976*, 36, 43-45). Outfield and common pastures were shared in "soumings", according to the number of run-

rig shares in the infield. In Roxburgh and Berwick, adjacent to the border with England, *Dodgshon* (1972; 1975) has distinguished two types of runrig, proprietary and tenant, with different characteristics and origins, but it is far from certain that this distinction applies to the West.

Infield-outfield has been portrayed by many writers as the ancestral primitive system of farming throughout Scotland. The historian *I. F. Grant* (1930, 108, for example, described it as "a system... which combined the two most primitive types of agriculture - temporary intakes from the waste and constant tillage", while *J. A. Symon* (1959, 22) displayed a similar conviction in his comment that the "infield in Scotland was the primitive "one field" system of cultivation, the outfield a form of "wild field" grass husbandry. Thus these two most ancient types of farming were combined in Scottish agriculture". Both Grant and Symon implied a prehistoric origin for infield-outfield in Scotland and elsewhere, as have other writers. However, as Sir *John Clapham* wisely added to the 1948 version of his great work (p. 49), "the ancient Scottish system is not known to us at first hand from any primitive, or indeed medieval century, but its character plainly points to the next stage beyond that of shifting cultivated fields".

More than twenty years ago *Ferguson* (1960), *Donaldson* (1968, 240) and *Dodgshon* (1973; 1975) seriously challenged the antiquity of infield-outfield in Scotland. *Dodgshon* (1973, esp. 15-19) has further argued that, even in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire, infield-outfield may have developed only from the 15th century onwards - first as a system of land-holding and only subsequently as a distinctive pattern of farming (but c.f. *Uhlig* 1961).

When, towards the end of the 18th century, attempts were made to reorganize the infield-outfield runrig farms, not every landlord was motivated by a desire to clear land for grazing. The Macleans of Coll, for example, seem to have been genuinely concerned to improve farming yields to feed the rising population (*N. Maclean-Bristol pers. comm.*). Joint tenancy farms on Coll were divided into six or eight crofts but the division was not always successful and some of the crofts, like two on the south-eastern side of Ben Hough, the highest point of the island, were impossibly sited and were doomed to early failure. Not only was the location excessively exposed, even for Coll, and distant from supplies of seaweed manure, but all the crop-land (for potatoes and oats) had to be created artificially in the form of lazy-beds, erected by spade on the grass-cover of the peat.

Throughout the West, the population on joint-tenancy farms that preceded the crofts had lived in small nucleated settlements referred to as "ferme-touns". Today these are best known to the public through the uniquely preserved example at Auchindrain near Inveraray (*Fenton* 1979) although others survived along with their field systems down to the 1950s (*Uhlig* 1961, 290). Auchindrain, shorn of its fields, is maintained as a museum and gives an idea of the architecture involved in one particularly prosperous area in the West Highlands. Fair-sized byre-dwellings predominate and these were built of drystone or clay-mortared walls with open hearths and thatched roofs supported on crudely-jointed crucks. Inevitably, the museum gives a highly sanitized view of life at the time.

Less substantial evidence from elsewhere shows that the basic dwelling form at this period throughout the West was probably the byre-dwellings but there was considerable local variation. Different solutions to the problems are found on the Outer Isles, especially on Lewis, and Tiree and the local house form on these islands extends well into the crofting period (*Thomas* 1867; *Fenton* 1978). In fact, the carefully-preserved example displayed by Historic Scotland at Arnol, on Lewis, was not built until the first decade of the present century. This is not, however, the place for consideration of the Lewisian blackhouse.

The byre-dwelling was not universal before the change to crofting. For example few, if any of the pre-crofting buildings at Bourblaige, Ardnamurchan (*RCAHMS* 1980, no. 364) would seem to have been byre-dwellings and personal observation at Grinsary on Coll produces a similar view.

By and large, and inevitably, the pre-crofting buildings are far less well preserved than the croft houses. Where the evidence does survive, constructional methods and building sizes in the ferme-touns seem to have been little if any different from those of the earliest crofts. Building techniques were determined by the available stone; building widths (12 to 16 ft, i.e. 3.6 to 4.8 m) by the available scantlings. This is hardly surprising but is not without significance. In many cases the function of individual buildings cannot be certainly determined without excavation - rectangular footings by themselves are singularly undiagnostic.

The generally high levels of population in the late 18th century and beyond, means that land occupancy at that time was both intensive and extensive. This has led to a near complete obliteration of landscape evidence for earlier periods and, likewise, a great paucity of archaeological evidence. As the oldest rural settlement form readily visible in the landscape is the joint-tenancy ferme-toun with simple stone-built structures, and this strikes most visitors and scholars from outside the area as a primitive combination, there is a natural tendency to regard this arrangement as being the traditional settlement pattern and to imagine that we are looking here at something ancient. It is often assumed that the joint-tenancy farms which we can see so

clearly at the eve of "improvement", and the ferme-touns from which they operated, had existed since time immemorial.

They may have done but, as we have already seen, it should not be assumed that this was so. In practice, neither the field evidence nor the documentation is often found either to sustain or to contradict this assumption. On the whole, the field evidence is fugitive and the written record helps to fill in the background in an uneven way. It is often relevant to 18th-century buildings, sometimes to tenure, but rarely to agrarian practice or settlement pattern. The kind of evidence used by *Dodgshon* (1973; 1975; etc.) in the Borders to demonstrate that infield-outfield and runrig ferme-touns probably began there in the late 15th century is not available in the Highlands and Islands.

What we can see clearly in the second half of the 18th century may, with some justification, perhaps be extrapolated back into the 17th since a series of Scottish Acts in the late 17th century, culminating in that of 1696, deal with lands lying in run-rig and on the division of commonties, establishing a broad legal base for changing the base of agriculture. Their implementation, however, did not come until well through the 18th century (*Fenton* 1976, 17; *Whyte* 1979, chapter 6). In any case, it becomes an increasingly uneasy speculation to push the origin of the joint-tenancy runrig ferme-toun further and further back without corroboration. *Robert Dodgshon*, in three stimulating articles (1993a,b; 1994) has cast doubt on the antiquity of the runrig landscape and has drawn attention to what he sees as traces of early enclosure with a complete absence of nucleation underlying the 18th-century evidence. But they are only traces and *Dodgshon's* evidence comes chiefly from one island, that of Skye.

The stability or continuity of the agrarian or settlement system is not an essential requirement for the stability of township boundaries which contained them. All over Britain, archaeologists are finding they can trace the origin of more and more boundaries back to the medieval period, or even Roman times, with the boundaries often pre-dating by far the settlements that currently occupy them. If the runrig landscape and the ferme-toun are suspected of having a limited ancestry, the baile - the territory within which they operated - may be of greater age, possibly of very great age.

On the Isle of Coll many of the late 18th-century ferme-touns have a single identifiable Iron Age dun within their territory. More rigorous evidence that the township boundaries on South Uist, in the Outer Hebrides, could be prehistoric has been recently found by the archaeological team from Sheffield working on that island (*Pearson* 1996; *Anon.* 1997a,b).

Settlement sites from the period between Viking times and about 1790 have eluded discovery by the Sheffield team. Generally, among the Hebridean islands blankets of sand, dunes and machair have covered settlements of all periods from prehistoric to early modern times. Blown sand led to the abandonment in the late 18th century of many of the townships on the west coast of Tiree, then one of the most densely populated parts of this fertile island, leaving behind a medieval chapel and burial ground at Kilkenneth virtually alone in a sea of dunes (*Cregeen* 1964, XXVII, 2, 18, 89; *RCAHMS* 1980, no. 298). A similar situation prevails on Coll.

Returning to the buildings themselves, we find that, in the Inner Islands and on the mainland, the continuity of occupation and evidence of stone building from the Iron Age to the 17th century uncovered at the well-known site of Udal on North Uist by *Iain Crawford* (*Crawford - Switsur* 1977) has so far proved impossible to replicate. However, the written record helps to explain why this is so even though the documentation is rarely directly relevant to buildings earlier than the 18th century. Fortunately, the sources of 18th-century records are widely dispersed across Scotland and, in general, point to a single conclusion as far as building structure is concerned.

When we examine contemporary literature and other documentary sources, wherever Highland peasant houses are mentioned or described from before 1750 or 1760 almost invariably houses built of some material other than stone are involved. Among the contemporary literature was that produced by travellers such as *Burt* and *Boswell*, who reported on the commonplace and whose comments can hardly be dismissed as references to the curious or exceptional. For example, *Burt* described the typical house of Lochaber as turf-based (*Burt* 1876; Letter XIII), while *Boswell*, travelling through Skye with *Dr Johnson* in 1773, observed that house in Sleat "in general are made of turf" (*Pottle - Bennett* 1936, 119). *Iain Crawford* (1983, 355) has cautioned against placing too much weight on such sources but the case for the use of perishable raw materials is well founded and has been authenticated by a number of scholars from the 1960s on (e.g. *Gailey* 1962; *Fairhurst* 1969; *Allen* 1979; *Fenton - Walker* 1981; *Noble* 1984; *Dodgshon* 1993b).

In the north-east, particularly Speyside, there is evidence that houses were built of real turf (*Noble* 1984, 68-69), but this is mostly unlikely in the West and by "turf" or "feal" the contemporary writers meant what would today be more usually called peat. In the north-east and Caithness clay-biggen was also used (and occasionally still survives) but, in the Highlands and especially in the West, suitable clay is rare and the near ubiquitous peat was used for house-building.

Turf or peat of its own does not make very stable walling. Doubtless what the travellers had seen were what more closely involved writers like estate stewards described as houses of "creel" in which a main structure of wattle hurdling was solidly banked around by turf. The means by which the roof was supported may seem to be problematic but *Gailey* (1962, 232-233) argued that turf-built houses with a width of eight or even eleven feet (2.4 to 3.3 m) could support coupled-rafter roofs and that some narrow stone house ruins found in Kintyre and Ardnamurchan represented a continuation of the narrow-span, turf-walled tradition. *Gailey* (1962, 233-234) also suggested that the widespread persistence of jointed-crucks in stone houses in parts of the Highlands (*Walton* 1957) is a regressive feature representing a similar survival from the turf-building era. This view does not seem to have been challenged. From Speyside in north-east Scotland, there is documentary evidence for turf-walled cruck-framed houses in the 16th century (*Noble* 1984, 69-70).

There is much support for this in the official literature of the time. For example, summarising the Statistical Accounts of the late 18th century, *John Sir Sinclair* (1814, I, 127-128) said of the Highlands generally:

The miserable cottages, built of turf or sod, which are in some districts rapidly and in others slowly disappearing, do not require any particular description... Besides the low and uncomfortable walls of turf, the rounded form of the roof, with the fireplace in the middle, characterises a considerable number of the habitations of the lower classes in the Highlands and Islands.

The dry-stone cottage, where earth is put in place of clay or lime, among the interstices between the stones, and which has generally one foot of turf wall built above five feet of stones, was, till within the past fifty years, in many parts of Scotland the habitations of married servants who were attached to farms. Both in this and in the turf-walled cottages, the couples or supporters of the roof were built in the walls, the feet of the couples resting on flat stones placed in it for that purpose. This sort of cottage, however imperfect, was greatly superior to the Highland shealing, or round-roofed cottage, which was built wholly of turf.

As others have pointed out, the documentation generated by the estates forfeited in the aftermath of the Jacobite rising of 1745 give a number of references and other estate management documents provide similar evidence. *Gailey*, *Allen* and *Dodgshon* have published substantial selections from this material and as a result there is now a strong body of accessible evidence to show that the stone ruins we see are, in fact, the first stages of the movement for "improvement" and that, prior to about 1750 the vast majority of peasant housing in the West must have been of fugitive construction.

Acknowledging the importance of perishable raw materials for construction in much of the Highlands and Islands is only part of the problem. What also comes across from 18th century sources is the extent to which the use of such materials, both for walls and as roofing matter, was integrated with husbandry practices.

The reporters in the Statistical Accounts tell us that roofs were regularly, often annually, stripped as the turf base and the thatch or heather cover - both impregnated with soot - provided a potentially rich fertiliser and were deposited on the infield (*O.S.A. VIII* 1793, 375-376; *XIX* 1797, 266; *N.S.A. XIV* 1845, 268; *Wills* 1973, 64; *Dodgshon - Olsson* 1988). Where walls were built of turf and earth infill, or faced with them, these also were dismantled on a regular cycle. Data for the Barrisdale Estate on the north shore of remote Knoydart (on the mainland opposite the Isle of Skye) suggests a ten-year cycle or a little longer (*Dodgshon* 1993b, 423 cit. S.R.O.¹, Forfeited Estates, E788/42, Barrisdale Estate c. 1755). The report for Groab (a joint-tenancy farm on the Barrisdale estate) stated that "There are Six Creel houses on this farm notwithstanding they have plenty of Stone to build stone houses". When we read (*ibid* cit. S.R.O. Forfeited Estates, E741) that communities built turf houses despite having an abundance of building stone, then it can be deduced that their choice of building material may have been made with the needs of husbandry in mind.

During the 17th century and before, many of the reports of feuding speak not only of the theft of stock and the destruction of field crops but also of the burning and destruction of houses. Indeed reports that whole townships were ransacked and destroyed are found, as when, in 1612, broken men of the Macgregors raised fire in the house and barnyards of the 111 £ 80 land of Luss, on the eastern shore of Loch Lomond (*Macphail* 1934, 219-221). This apparently ready destruction is more easily understood when it is appreciated that many farmhouses and outbuildings were temporary, flimsy constructions, readily demolished and, at least in dry seasons, just as easily torched.

Thus the detailed and, for the most part, objective accounts found in 18th-century estate papers provide us with a picture of ordinary peasant houses being built of perishable materials in many areas. There is plentiful evidence that turf and wattle-walled houses were quite common throughout the Highlands in that century and we can be sure that they were even more widespread at an earlier period. We can deduce that the

1 S.R.O.: Scottish Record Office

physical remains of ferme-touns that we can observe at many locations today are unlikely to be much, if any, older than the second half of the 18th century and to result from a first wave of estate improvement in which traditional creel structures were being replaced in stone. The change from joint-tenancy to crofting belongs to a second phase in the process of improvement. As we seek to penetrate further back towards the medieval period in our search for peasant housing, we are faced with having to find the sites of flimsily-built creel houses. The attrition of medieval masonry buildings in Scotland has been severe (*Stell 1986*): that of peasant housing has been total.

The implications of such flimsy methods of construction for the archaeologist is that any houses built without a foundation course will leave little trace even if allowed to decay: if the roof couples were based on simple padstones as described by John Sir Sinclair, there will not even be post holes to be found. A single modern ploughing may well destroy all evidence. However, what may be the remains of a rare group of one-time turf-built structures of unknown date can be seen alongside Ardtornish Castle in Morvern (*RCAHMS 1980*, no. 332, fig. 201) and one or two similar field monuments are known to the writer in the vicinity of Coeffin an Achanduin Castles on Lismore.

Turf walls that have been torn apart to provide manure for the infield will leave very little trace and the creel houses which were deliberately dismantled will have left archaeological traces that will be extremely difficult to find and may be decidedly fugitive - especially if the area has been subsequently subjected to intensive agriculture or submerged beneath stone-built housing. Dodgshon has proposed some interesting chemical prospecting methods that may help with discovering the location of such housing in open country but, as yet, this has not been used extensively in the field and too much should not be claimed for it. The chances of solving the problems surrounding the history and origin of the ferme-toun seem slight in the short term but we must hope that longer term prospects are brighter. Until they can be resolved there can be little prospect of tackling the more fundamental social and economic problems of the Western Highlands and Islands in the Middle Ages.

LES LOGEMENTS CAMPAGNARDS ET LES TERRES AFFERMÉES DANS UNE ZONE MARGINALE. LES HABITATIONS DU MOYEN ÂGE DANS LE NORD-OUEST DE L'ÉCOSSE ET LES ÎLES ÉCOSSAISES: QUELQUES PROBLÈMES

Les ruines des bâtiments d'habitation qui sont souvent présentes dans le paysage de l'Ouest de l'Ecosse datent rarement d'avant la fin du dix-huitième siècle. Les logements les plus anciens font souvent partie des fermes de location partagée, associées avec l'agriculture "runrig", mais l'hypothèse habituelle que cette disposition est d'une grande antiquité est sans fondement. Il existe moult indices documentaires qui indiquent que les logements campagnards antérieurs étaient construits en majorité de matières périssables, et que ces bâtiments étaient souvent démantelés délibérément. Il en résulte que les maisons campagnardes du Moyen Âge sont difficilement détectables par l'archéologie, amenant à un manque de connaissance en ce qui concerne leur localisations et formes. En conséquence, il est difficile d'établir la disposition des habitations qui précédaient les fermes de location partagée. (Trans. K. J. Turner)

BAUERNHÄUSER UND FLUR IN LANDWIRTSCHAFTLICHEN RANDGEBIETEN. MITTELALTERLICHE SIEDLUNG IM WESTLICHEN HOCHLAND UND AUF DEN INSELN SCHOTTLANDS: EINIGE PROBLEME

Die überkommenen Wohnbauten, die in der Landschaft Westschottlands häufig sind, haben selten ein Datum, das über das ausgehende achtzehnte Jahrhundert zurückreicht. Die frühesten baulichen Überreste gehören häufig zu Gemeinschaftspachthöfen, die mit der Landaufteilung des "runrig" Systems in Verbindung stehen. Die allgemeine Annahme, dass dieses Verteilungsschema weit in die Vergangenheit zurückreicht, entbehrt jedoch jeder Grundlage. Es gibt eine grosse Anzahl von dokumentarischen Quellen, die bezeugen, dass die älteren Bauernbehausungen hauptsächlich aus vergänglichen Materialien erbaut worden waren, und dass solche Bauten später oft absichtlich abgerissen wurden. Daraus ergibt sich, dass mittelalterliche Bauernhäuser archäologisch schwer feststellbar sind. Dies führt zu Unwissenheit über Siedlungsplatz und Form. Daraus folgt, dass es schwer ist, die Siedlungsverteilung, die den Gemeinschaftspachthöfen vorausging, festzulegen. (Trans. K. Aberg)

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