

NORWAY IN THE MIDDLE AGES: FARMS OR HAMLETS – AND VILLAGES TOO?

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Traditionally the separate farm has been regarded as the predominant form of medieval settlement in Norway. In the best agricultural districts in the south and east Scandinavia village settlement with a comparatively well-developed system of cultivation in common was usual. Topographic conditions have been considered as decisive for this pattern: villages grew up where it was possible to cultivate larger, contiguous areas of land, and isolated farms where cultivated land was more dispersed, especially in the forest and mountain areas. Lately, this view has been challenged (e.g. *Widgren 1997a*, 38). There are reasons to look more closely into - and perhaps also revise - the rather stereotype ideas of sharp distinctions between separate farms, hamlets and villages in the different regions of medieval Scandinavia.

State of research

Largely, research concerning rural settlement and agrarian development in medieval Norway has been the field of historians, while medieval archaeologists for the last three decades have been mainly concentrating on urban conditions. This trend has, however, been slightly reversed in the last years, which have seen a renewed archaeological interest in rural conditions.¹

In a project initiated by the *Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture* in Oslo in the 1940s the relationship between separate farms and different types of nucleated settlement was placed on the agenda for the first time (cf. *Holmsen - Bjørkvik - Frimannslund 1956*). As a consequence, several case studies were implemented to throw light on the structure of the old nucleated farms, of which a few also have survived. Some of the most characteristic settlements have been reconstructed in perspective drawings (fig. 1; *Berg 1968*).

While separate farms predominated in eastern and mid-Norway, clusters of subdivided farms were more common in the coastal areas in western and northern Norway before the large reapportionment of farm lands from the mid-nineteenth century set in motion by a new enclosure law in 1857. Only at Jæren in south-west Norway have nucleated farms been studied over a wider time-span, including medieval and prehistoric farms (*Rønneseth 1974*). However, these studies from the 1950s and 1960s have not had great impact on later research into medieval farms and settlements.

The so-called 'retrospective' or regressive method of historical research has had a strong position in Norwegian agrarian studies since the 1930s, that is, the method by which inferences about medieval conditions are drawn from later records, land-registers, tax-lists, public accounts, enclosure maps, etc. The method

¹ Studies on farm mounds in Northern Norway in the 1960s and 1970s (*Munch 1966; Bertelsen 1979; Holm-Olsen 1980*); cultural landscape and farming systems in East Norway: *Pedersen 1990; Østmo 1991; Holm 1995; Jerpåsen 1997*; western Norway: *Rønneseth 1974; Kaland 1979; Randers 1981* and the interdisciplinary research project 'The traditional western Norwegian farm' with archaeological contributions: *Julshamm 1998; Valvik 1998; Åstveit 1998*.

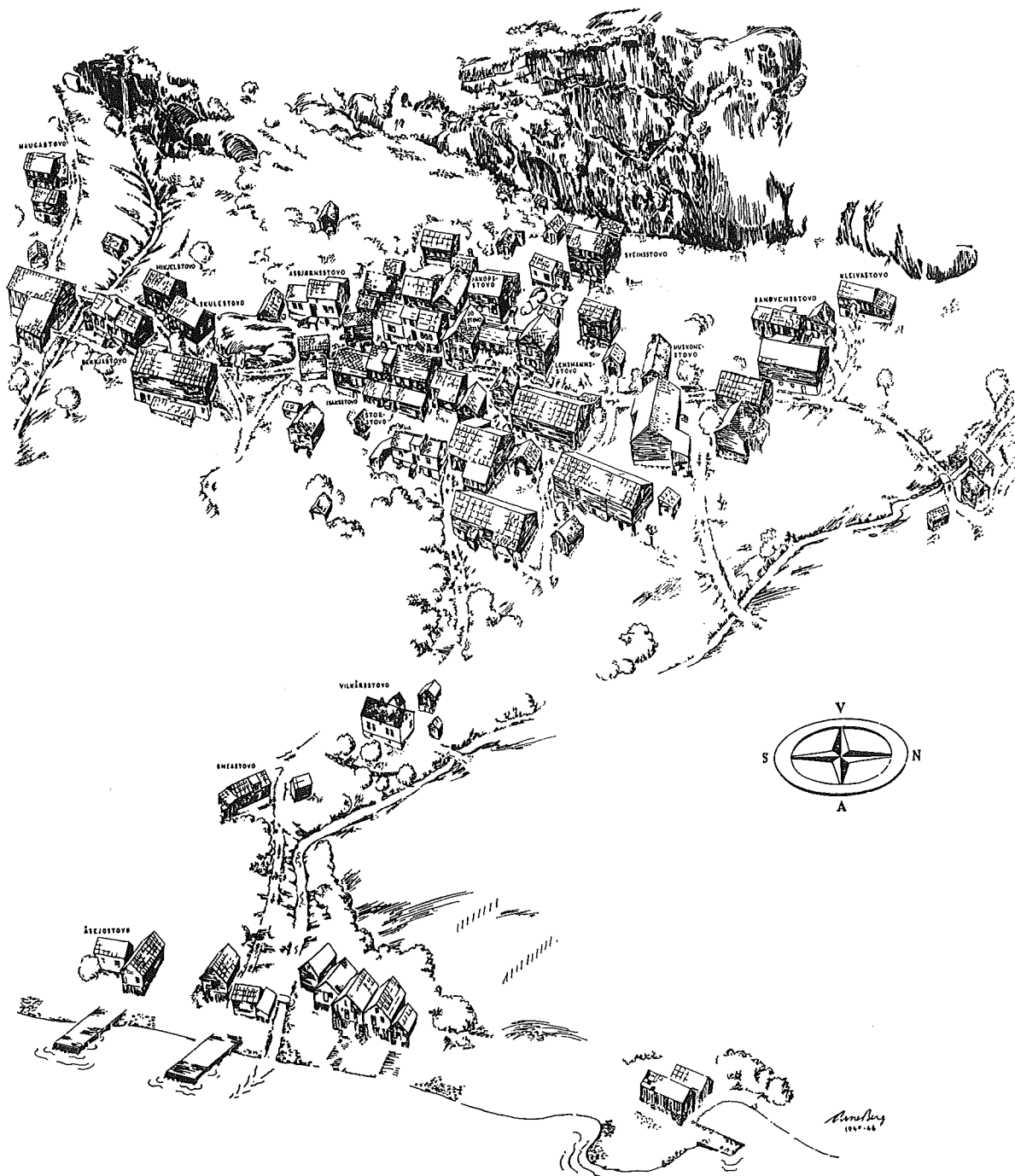


Fig. 1. Aga in Hardanger c. 1900 – a multiple farm with clustered settlement. Perspective drawing by Arne Berg (Berg 1968).

has been regarded as particularly suitable in Norway, as the overall theoretical and methodological framework of Norwegian agrarian historical research has been a high degree of structural *continuity* in a peasant society based on subsistence farming. Also the personal freedom enjoyed by medieval Norwegian peasants has been emphasised - a social structure without sharp distinctions between tenants and freeholders in legal and economic matters (cf. *Salvesen 1982*).

Archaeological research into medieval rural settlements has concentrated on abandoned and rather marginal, dispersed and small individual farms in the south-western and western part of Norway. The question of agglomerated settlement has not so far been central in medieval archaeological research. Until the 1970s archaeological investigations mainly dealt with house constructions and the layout of farmhouses; less attention was paid to the farmland. New interest in ecological processes then led to a closer co-operation between archaeologists and natural scientists, resulting in investigations of the farmland, - fences, lynchets, deserted fields (fossilised fields), meadowlands, outfielders - and of the utilisation and the carrying capacity of the natural resources (*Kaland 1979; Randers 1981; Pedersen 1990; Holm 1995*). In northern Norway so called farm mounds, that is huge middens or deposits of household refuse, ruins of buildings etc, accumulated at the farm yards, have been archaeologically investigated since the 1960s (*Bertelsen 1979*, 48 pp). These settlements, dating back to at least AD 1000 (*ibid.*, 52), were dispersed and consisted of single or double holdings with a common yard or multiple abode (*tun*) (*Bertelsen - Lamb 1995*, 44). However, agglomerated medieval settlements also occur in this part of the country and a few have been excavated from the 1950s (*Simonsen 1980*).

The development of farms has to a large extent been regarded as an organic evolution from larger to smaller units, conditioned by demographic and economic fluctuations. Farms were subdivided when the population increased and the process was reversed when it decreased. A farm could also be divided when the distance to the natural resources became too long, the result being farms of more or less equal size.² A more or less implicit premise has been that the family and the kin group held ownership or had more or less free disposal of land with access to the commons as a reservoir for cultivation. Breaking up and clearing of new land was not initiated by magnates and entrepreneurs, as on the continent (*Holmsen 1966*, 82).

In Scandinavian and European research the development of crop rotation has been seen as a decisive factor for both settlement agglomeration and division of farmland (e.g. *Porsmose 1981*, 457). The same systems cannot, however, be documented in Norwegian medieval agriculture. The development of Norwegian agriculture and settlement and the nature of the evidence for it have traditionally been regarded as so unique that Scandinavian and European experiences have been considered to be of minor relevance.

In this paper this view will be looked more closely into. Some scholars have suggested that the differences in settlement patterns between Norway and the rest of Scandinavia may be exaggerated due to different terminology, source materials, and research traditions (*Widgren 1997a*, 40).

Terminology

The terminology for various agrarian settlement structures is often confusing. Different terms are used for the same phenomenon, and have various meanings. Moreover, the concepts used to denote the rural settlements vary from time to time, from place to place, and among scholars, such as archaeologists, geographers and historians. It is also clear that differences of terminology between the Scandinavian countries and different meanings of the same terms - such as farms, holdings, hamlets and villages - have created some confusion (*Ambrosiani 1974*, 42).

The Old Norse terms for a farm were *bær*, *býr* and *garðr*, the last denoting the fenced-in settled and arable land (etymologically identical with English 'yard'). Both terms could denote: (1) a single, separate farm or holding, (2) a clustered, agglomerated farm, or (3) a tax object - a land-assessed farm (*Bjørkvik, KLNMM V*, 625).

Terms corresponding to 'village' and 'hamlet' are neither in Old Norse nor modern Norwegian used to denote settlements in the home country. Instead, the farm concept covers a whole range of different rural set-

² *Salvesen 1996*, 44; This view has been criticised by *Widgren 1990*, 34.

tlement structures - from a small dispersed holding inhabited and run by one family to large subdivided agricultural units, partly clustered together.

The general framework and the conceptual and analytical tool in Norwegian agrarian studies has been the *farm denoted by a name of its own* in written sources - equivalent with the later land-assessed farm - regardless of its structure, size and degree of subdivision into holdings, that is, units of production occupied by a medieval household, normally a family. The farm is generally defined as a limited area or territory comprising all land used for agricultural purposes: the farmhouses, infield and outfield, including forest and mountain areas (Sandnes 1979, 166). But as we have seen, the concept covers a whole range of rural settlements - from the small, dispersed separate farm or holding to large subdivided multiple farms.

What, then, is the difference between farms in the Norwegian sense, hamlets and villages? The criteria are not all that clear. In Sweden the concept 'by' has been seen as an equivalent to the English hamlet (Salvesen 1979, 51, with reference to Erixon 1960), although the area of a 'by' needs not comprise more than two farms (Sporrong 1990, 468) or even holdings (Salvesen 1979, 52). Etymologically Swedish *by* corresponds to ON *býr/bær* and the terms may thus denote basically the same structures, but, as we have seen, the Norwegian term also covers single, separate farms. Villages are generally larger and more regular than hamlets, and have often been classified according to both structure and function (Adams 1977, 64). But all Scandinavian countries lack the linguistic distinction between village and hamlet. Quantitative as well as structural criteria have therefore to a large extent been used to distinguish between the two types of units. However, such criteria vary from one country to another. In Scandinavian as well as European research the lower limit of a village has been set at about 10-15 farms (Hybel 1989, 188; Widgren 1997, 41). But in recent archaeological and also historical research the line between hamlets and villages has been blurred (e.g. Porsmose 1981, 23; Liebgott 1989, 26), defining the minimum size of a village to three farms. The terminological dividing lines between farms, hamlets and villages are thus rather vague and fluid in Scandinavia, and the differences between them may have been exaggerated. We have already seen that the Norwegian land-assessed farm with its own name and the Swedish *by* or hamlet may overlap. Below, I shall therefore pay less attention to the terms as such and rather discuss and compare different structural aspects and degrees of clustered settlement.

The extent and degree of rural agglomeration in medieval Norway

The concept *farm* has potential for considerable regional variation both in settlement structure and economy. The system of separate farms has been regarded as characteristic of the main part of Norway (fig. 2), especially in Trøndelag and in the eastern part of the country further south (Østlandet). The holdings on a multiple farm might each have their own settlement or they might be together in a common multiple *tun* (etymologically parallel to 'town'). Such subdivided, agglomerated farms with their houses built close together in a common *tun* - resembling hamlets or even villages - were more frequent in western and also northern Norway, and in the border areas towards Sweden in Trøndelag and Østlandet. The wide definition of a farm being common in modern agrarian studies may, however, conceal such differences and variations.

The total number of medieval farms with separate names has been estimated to about 36 500 and the number of holdings to ca 60 000 (Sandnes - Salvesen 1978, 58), perhaps about 70 000 (Lunden 1976, 261 pp), within the present-day boundaries of Norway. The number of holdings or farmsteads is more difficult to calculate and is rather uncertain. Estimates of the average rate of subdivision into holdings of a normal farm vary from 1,2 to 2,5, being at its lowest amount in the interior parts of Østlandet and the highest to the west, in Vestlandet. A quantitative approach using average numbers may, however, conceal important differences in settlement structures within local communities and regions and also exaggerate the differences between regions.

In the community of Sogndal in the fjord district of mid-western Norway, for example, the average number of holdings per named farm has been estimated to 2,1 by using the retrospective method. But in fact only about 20% of the medieval farms appear to have had more than one farmer. A subdivided farm then, had 3 households in average, but the actual number varied from 2 to 6-7 households or more per farm. The subdivision into holdings seems to be rather fluid and temporary. In Sogndal there is a clear correspondence between the size and productivity of the farm and the degree of subdivision into holdings.

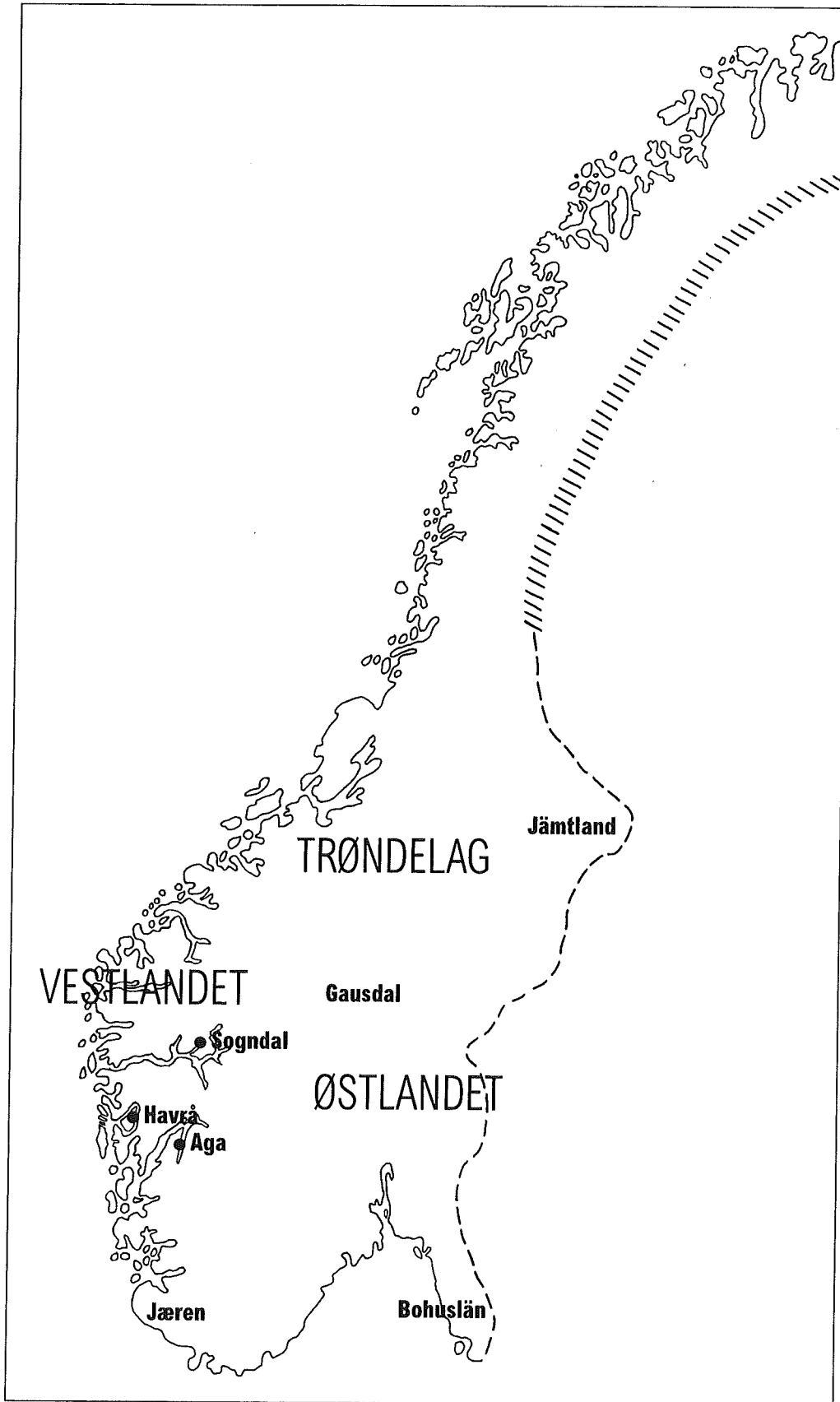


Fig. 2. Norway with its medieval boundaries: Regions and places mentioned in the text.

Sometimes it is possible to get glimpses of these farms. In the year 1314 one of the largest farms in the community of Sogndal, Kvåle, was divided between three heirs. The arable land and farmland is not mentioned, only the cluster of farm houses, altogether 20-30: several dwelling houses, both old and new, and out-houses, a church and several houses belonging to the priest. At this time Kvåle was a residential farm for local nobles (*DN VI*, no 84; *Øye 1986*, 411) and was probably farmed by hired labour. In the late Middle Ages and in the 16th and 17th centuries, as many as 6-7 tenants with their households worked the farm. The structure of this residential settlement is not unique, and resembles other agglomerated settlements, known through later sources (*Rønneseth 1974*, 209).

Neither Østlandet nor Trøndelag - regions generally characterised by separate farms - were homogenous. In the community of Gausdal in Oppland, for example, about 15 % of the medieval farms had more than one holding. Some of the biggest farms were actually subdivided into three or four holdings in the high Middle Ages, some of them large units, but for the most part the farms were rather small and had only one household (*Andersen 1989*, 86 pp). Whether these holdings were allocated in one cluster or constituted separate settlements is, however, unclear. Farms with multiple abodes are, however, also known from this part of the country (*Bjørkvik 1956*, 48). Parallels to the clustered farms in western Norway are especially to be found in the valleys and mountain areas in Østlandet and Trøndelag, especially in the areas bordering on Sweden (*Salvesen 1996*, 47).

In the old Norwegian districts of Jämtland and Bohuslän, now belonging to Sweden, there were also clustered settlements. In Bohuslän about 40% of the farms is estimated to have been clustered in hamlets, some of them with a structure resembling the west Norwegian agglomerated farm (*Widgren 1997a*, 10, 116).

In northern Norway some agglomerated medieval settlements have been excavated, comprising house clusters belonging to about 10 households (*Simonsen 1980*, 14). Whether they can be classified as farms, is uncertain - and even doubtful. Only the built-up areas have been investigated, not the farmlands, but obviously they were rather small.

These scattered examples show that the settlement pattern has not been homogenous, neither spatially nor temporarily. In western Norway we find both separate farms and settlement clusters of varying size, corresponding to hamlets - and even resembling villages in some cases. Norwegian medieval farms may comprise as many agglomerated holdings as Swedish or Danish hamlets and even villages. The clusters do, however, seem to be less regular than e.g. Danish medieval villages. Altogether, the Norwegian settlement pattern seems to have been more complex and heterogeneous, including greater variety within regions, than traditionally assumed.

Functional aspects

The difference between farms, hamlets and villages is not only a question of size and settlement structure, it also concerns use of arable land, degree of co-operation and community of property. The development of the Scandinavian village has traditionally been seen in an evolutionary perspective, connected with two-course and three-course rotation. The agrarian economic and technological level has been regarded as essential for settlement clustering and the division and organisation of the fields (e.g. *Porsmose 1989*, 229). This view has, however, been somewhat modified. The connection between special farming systems and the development of hamlets and villages may be overrated as explanatory factors since there were hamlets in areas without these field structures (*Widgren 1997b*, 76).

A traditional difference between hamlets, villages and farms has been the degree of social and economic co-operation and obligations of the inhabitants. Although the clustered settlements in Norway were not dependent on common cultivation and subject to fixed rules of the treatment of the soil at the same degree as hamlets and villages in southern Scandinavia, collective forms of cultivation can be traced. They include rules about temporary and permanent enclosures, time for sending the cattle to pastures, etc, and according to the general rural law-code from 1274, the so-called 'Landlaw', this should be settled between the neighbours at a special meeting. We even find traces that resemble organisatory systems of hamlets and villages in other parts of Scandinavia, with appointed farm bailiffs and farm courts (*Frimannslund 1956*, 80). The age and extent is, however, unclear.

The subdivision of a farm territory was often carried out in several stages. The provincial law of western Norway from the 12th century and the Landlaw refer to two principles of field division: (i) a division into two compact parts, and (ii) a division into stripes of equal length and breadth. The latter principle has led to a complicated field system that prevails in the hamlet-like farms in the west and north (*Bjørkvik 1956, 50*). The form and size of the fields could vary from long narrow strips to open fields or plots without systematic arrangements (*fig. 3*). This system was partly based on common ownership and partly on an intricate division of territory, which gave each farmer a large number of scattered and intermingling strips and plots. But they could also be allocated so that one group of holdings would have its strips and plots in one unit (*ibid., 52*). In northern Norway both fields and meadows could be owned and used in common by the holders of a multiple farm. Ploughing and sowing could be done jointly, and also the harvest was reaped jointly and crops shared according to a system of lots (*ibid., 54*). This is a classical infield-outfield system with the fields and meadows of each farm within a single enclosure. There is a marked difference between the field systems in the west and north of the country and those of mid- and south-eastern part of the country, Trøndelag and Østlandet (*ibid., 55*). There an old rotational field system of farming can be traced, dating back to the Middle Age and mentioned in the provincial law of Frostating (*Øye Sølvsberg 1976, 111*). The Norwegian field systems were altogether more irregular, but flexible and on a smaller scale than the two- and three-course systems in southern Scandinavia. But as we have seen, the dichotomy between Norway and the rest of Scandinavia may be exaggerated. Agglomeration was therefore not necessarily determined by or dependent on a special farming system, rotational or not, or on agricultural technology such as the wheel plough.

Some of the larger agglomerated farms had central place functions in the early and high Middle Ages. This was the case with e.g. Kvåle in Sogndal and Aga in Hardanger. Kvåle had its own private church – later a parish church. In the community of Sogndal there were five medieval churches and two chapels. With one exception they were standing on clustered farms with several holdings. Locally, such farms normally had a high social and economic standing (*Ingvaldsen 1996; Buckholm 1998*).

Genesis?

Why agglomeration - or rather, under which socio-economic conditions did settlement agglomerate? And, when did it start and how did it evolve? It is still an open question whether any of the Norwegian multiple farms spring from original clusters or if they originate from successive sub-divisions of single farms. Archaeological investigations of recent years have shown that the south-western part of the country had early Iron-Age settlements consisting of clusters of similar structure as found in Denmark (cf. *Løken this volume*). In Norway splitting-up and subdivision of farms has generally been seen as an early medieval process, starting in the Viking period. A general theory has been that the old kin-based society with extended families with collective property rights was broken up, leading to a more individual and private settlement orientation. Population growth led to subdivision into even smaller units, especially where arable land was limited (e.g. *Holmsen 1966, 2*). The question has been posed whether the prehistoric multiple settlements were reduced as a result of the inhabitants moved out establishing new single farms. Archaeological investigations have, however, documented that both dispersed and village-like clustered settlements co-existed. Single farms could also have developed into subdivided multiple farms, which has been documented.

The question of continuity or discontinuity in settlement structure and farming systems in Norway is still open. Investigations at Jæren in south-western Norway may indicate major restructuring of both farm land and settlements in the Viking period or the high Middle Ages (*Rønneseth 1974, 251*). Investigations in other areas tend to show continuity (*fig. 4*). At the nucleated farm Havrå in the western fjord districts, the farmland has recently been partially archaeologically investigated (*Julshamn 1998*). The investigations documented continuous settlement and farm structure from ca 200-400 AD, but analyses of lynchets show even older farming. Clustering started in the 13th century at the latest, probably earlier. In this case a separate farm was the origin of the multiple and nucleated farm. Many of the large prehistoric separate farms - central places and nuclei in bigger estates - became agglomerated farms or hamlets, perhaps even villages, in the high and late Middle Ages. The subdivision of the farmland at Kvåle and Aga occurred as late as the 14th century,

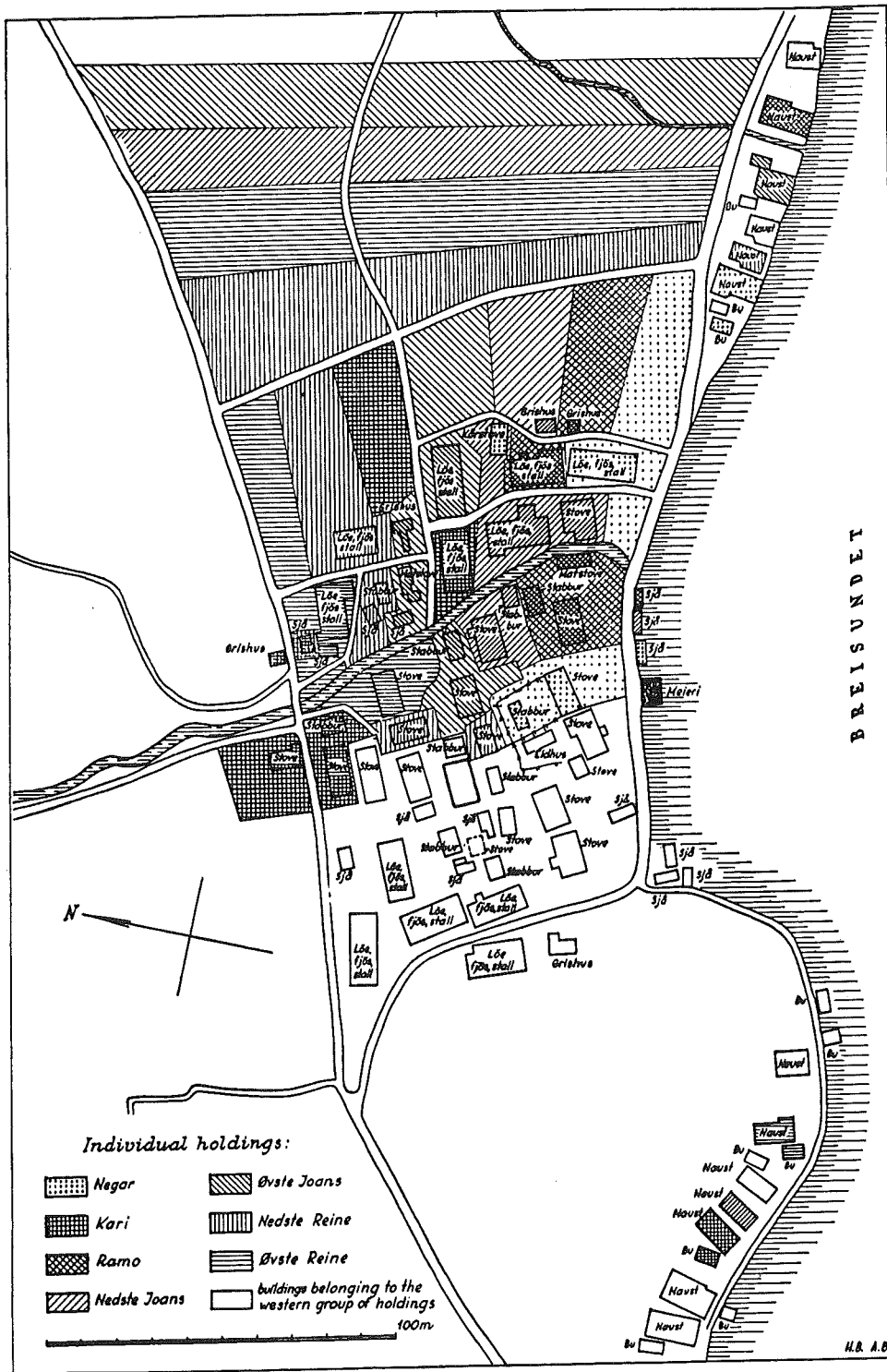


Fig. 3. Clustered settlement and adjoining infield before the enclosure c. 1900, Godøy in Giske parish, Sunnmøre on the western coast of Vestlandet. The holders formed two groups who lived in separate parts of the tun. The hatched parts show how the buildings belonging to the holders in the eastern group were located and how the nearest cultivated fields were divided between the holders (Bjerkvik 1956).



Fig. 4. The clustered farm Havrå c. 1950 (Photo: Bergen Museum). Archaeological investigations were carried out at the farm 1995-1997, and lynchets, fences etc. were excavated.

when tenants worked the farms (*Øye 1986; Frimannslund 1960*). The splitting-up in several holdings of such central place farms seems to have taken place in the high or late Middle Age. But not all clustered farms, e.g. Havrå, were large and had central functions. At other farms this process started even later (*Holmsen 1956, 31*).

We have seen that the development in Norway can hardly be explained as due to technological changes, such as rotation systems or ploughing. And the old view of the kinship society based on extended family groups and a system of dominantly freeholders, has been questioned (*Iversen 1994; Skre 1997*). Population growth and changing socio-economic conditions are, however, still valid as general explanations. The relationship between ownership and different settlement structures and field systems may also be relevant, and should be looked closer into. How did ownership to land and property rights influence settlement structures and farming systems? Unfortunately, there are no comprehensive studies analysing these relations. It is, however, interesting to observe that regions with large and extensive clustered settlements, like western and parts of northern Norway, correlate with regions with larger estates, dating back to the Viking period or earlier (*Berglund 1995; F. Iversen 1999*). This concurrence may not be accidental. The system of tenancy may generally have favoured clustered settlements and partition of the farmland within a more or less open infield. This system was flexible in processes of both subdivision and amalgamation of farmland and could better respond to demographic fluctuations and economic changes than a physical division in separate farmsteads - a flexibility, which also comes clear in later sources. The system was able to preserve the farm as an economic entity, making it easier to administer, collect rents, etc. even if there were several owners.

The origin of the nucleated settlements in Norway is still somewhat vague, and should be seen as a process over a longer period. The variation in settlement forms in time and space should urge for caution against monocausal explanation. Farms and settlements should be studied in a wider socio-economic context, including agricultural systems as well as social and economic conditions. Manorial tenure and the social stratification in the landscape may be more important than has come forward in previous research in Norway.

Concluding remarks

Was Norway really unique, then, with regard to rural settlement structure? We have seen that differences in terminology, source material and research traditions may to some degree explain the traditional conception of a different settlement structure in Norway as compared with the rest of Scandinavia. The parallels and similarities have been underestimated and the differences may have been exaggerated. One of the reasons could also be that the regional heterogeneity in Scandinavia as a whole has not been taken into full consideration. Clearly, Norwegian farms and Scandinavian hamlets in some regions have many similarities, but there are differences too, especially in the organisation of the arable land. The agglomerated Norwegian farms were also generally smaller, more irregular and with more limited arable land than the villages and hamlets in southern Scandinavia.

Perhaps time is ripe for looking more closely into the present wide use of the concept 'farm' to get a better grasp at its many-sided and varied contents both temporarily and spatially. A qualitative approach differentiating between different types of settlements and agrarian structures, including subsidiary occupations, will be needed as a methodological framework and a better tool for comparisons between communities and regions in both the home country and between countries.

RÉSUMÉ

Traditionnellement la ferme individuelle a été considéré comme la forme d'habitation prédominante en Norvège médiévale. Le concept de village ou hameau n'a donc été utilisé que rarement dans la littérature traitant de cette époque de l'histoire Norvégienne. Dernièrement cette vision des choses a été remise en cause. Il y a des raisons pourquoi on devrait regarder de plus près et peut-être aussi reconsidérer, cette façon un peu stéréotypée de distinguer entre fermes individuelles, hameaux et villages dans les différentes régions de la Scandinavie médiévale.

Les modes d'installation n'ont été ni homogènes, ni spatiales, ni temporaires. Dans la région occidentale de la Norvège on trouve des fermes individuelles ainsi que des groupements d'habitations de tailles différentes; certains correspondent à des hameaux, proches des villages dans certains cas. Il y a des cas où les fermes médiévales norvégiennes incluent autant d'exploitations agricoles que les hameaux et villages Suédois et Danois. Ces groupements en Norvège semblent quand même moins réguliers que par exemple les villages médiévaux Danois. Tout compte fait le modèle des groupements d'habitations norvégiens semble avoir été plus complexe et hétérogène incluant d'avantage de variations entre les différentes régions, qu'on a pu le penser traditionnellement.

Des différences dans la terminologie, les sources d'information et les traditions de recherche peuvent dans une certaine mesure expliquer pourquoi la conception traditionnelle de la structure d'habitation norvégienne est différente de celle du reste de la Scandinavie. Les parallèles et les similarités ont été sous-estimés et les disparités exagérées. Une des raisons pourrait aussi être que l'hétérogénéité régionale de la Scandinavie n'a pas été pris en compte. Les fermes norvégiennes et les hameaux scandinaves ont dans certains régions beaucoup de similarités, mais aussi des différences; particulièrement dans l'organisation des terres arables. Les fermes norvégiennes étaient généralement plus petit, plus irrégulières, avec moins de terres arables que les villages et hameaux de la Scandinavie de Sud. L'origine des groupements d'habitations en Norvège est encore un peu vague, et son développement devrait être considéré comme un processus de longue durée. Fermes et habitations devraient être étudiés dans un contexte socio-économique plus large, incluant les systèmes agricoles ainsi que les conditions sociales et économiques.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Einzelgehöft wurde gewöhnlich als die dominierende Form der mittelalterlichen Siedlung in Norwegen angesehen. Die Begriffe "Dorf" und "Weiler" tauchen deswegen nur sporadisch in der Literatur über die Geschichte der norwegischen Siedlung auf. Diese Ansicht hat sich in jüngster Zeit geändert. Es gibt Gründe, die doch eher stereotypen Ideen einer scharfen Trennung zwischen Einzelgehöft, Weiler und Dorf in den verschiedenen Regionen des mittelalterlichen Skandinaviens näher zu betrachten oder sogar neu zu überdenken.

Das Siedlungsmuster war nicht homogen, weder räumlich noch zeitlich gesehen. In Westnorwegen gibt es sowohl Einzelgehöfte als auch Siedlungskonzentrationen verschiedener Größe, die einem Weiler entsprechen oder in einigen Fällen sogar Dörfern ähneln. Mittelalterliche Höfe in Norwegen können ebensoviele dicht aneinander liegende Höfe einzelner Familien umfassen wie schwedische oder dänische Weiler oder sogar Dörfer. Trotzdem scheinen diese Anhäufungen weniger regelmässig aufzutreten als beispielsweise dänische mittelalterliche Dörfer. Zusammenfassend ist festzuhalten, daß das Siedlungsmuster in Norwegen komplexer und mehr heterogen gewesen zu sein

scheint - größere Unterschiede innerhalb der Regionen eingeschlossen - als bisher angenommen. Unterschiede in der Terminologie, dem Quellenmaterial und den Forschungstraditionen mögen zu einem gewissen Grad die traditionelle Auffassung einer andersartigen Siedlungsstruktur in Norwegen im Vergleich zum Restlichen Skandinavien erklären. Die Parallelen und Ähnlichkeiten wurden unterschätzt und die Unterschiede zu sehr betont. Ein weiterer Grund könnte darin liegen, daß die regionale Heterogenität in Skandinavien als ein Ganzes nicht genügend beachtet wurde. Deutlich ist festzuhalten, daß norwegische Höfe und skandinavische Weiler in vielen Dingen Gemeinsamkeiten aufweisen, es aber trotzdem Unterschiede gibt, vor allem in der Organisation des bebaubaren Landes. Die dicht aneinander liegenden norwegischen Höfe waren also generell kleiner, unregelmäßiger und ihr Land nur begrenzt bebaubar im Vergleich zu den Dörfern und Weilern in Südkandinavien.

Die Entstehung der Kernsiedlungen in Norwegen ist noch immer etwas unklar und sollte als ein sich über eine lange Zeitperiode erstreckender Prozeß betrachtet werden. Höfe und Siedlungen sollten in einem weiteren sozio-ökonomischen Zusammenhang untersucht werden, der die landwirtschaftlichen Systeme ebenso umfaßt wie soziale und ökonomische Bedingungen.

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