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*Prehistoric Hunter-Fishers of Varangerfjord, Northeastern Norway: Reconstruction of Settlement and Subsistence During the Younger Stone Age Volume of BAR International Series, British archaeological reports, ISSN*

Some previous authors have argued for the practice of offshore, deep-water fishing in the European Mesolithic. In this article, various lines of evidence are brought to bear on this question: It is concluded that the existence of deep-sea fisheries cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the available data. However, around much of Europe Mesolithic shorelines now lie below sea level and the study highlights the need for underwater archaeological investigation of submerged landscapes. While much of this activity was undoubtedly confined to coastal and inshore waters, some authors have argued for the regular practice of offshore, deep-water fishing. Such claims have been made for Scotland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Greek mainland, and several Mediterranean islands. In this article, various lines of evidence are brought to bear on this question – the kinds of fishing gear found at Mesolithic sites, the evidence relating to the use of boats and navigation, site location, ethnographic data, and fish biology and behaviour. For the purpose of this study it is assumed that the habitat preferences of pre-historic fish populations were broadly similar to those of modern species, although species distributions are likely to have fluctuated during the Holocene as a consequence of changes in climate, mean water temperature, and oceanic circulation patterns. Much of the confusion surrounding the nature of Mesolithic fishing activities arises from inconsistent or imprecise use of terminology. Oceanographic definitions of marine habitats are based primarily European Journal of Archaeology Vol. Barnes and Hughes Deep-sea regions are defined as waters on or beyond the continental slope, with a depth greater than 200 m. The offshore or neritic zone comprises those waters above the continental shelf with a depth of at least 30 m. The littoral zone includes all shallow waters from the shore down to a depth of about 30 m. However, such depth-based definitions are of little value for assessing prehistoric fishing practices. More relevant from an archaeological perspective is the classification of fishing activities according to distance from the shore irrespective of water depth. Thus in this article we adopt the following definitions: These definitions are based on reports of traditional fisheries<sup>2</sup> e. Murdock ; Worthington and Worthington and do not reflect modern commercial or sport-fishing practices. The latter is defined as any water with a depth of over 30 m, irrespective of distance from the shore. D ISCUSSION Fishing gear In order to determine the range of fishing practices that could have been undertaken by Mesolithic fishermen, it is necessary to assess their navigational capabilities and the fishing technology employed. This can be achieved by comparing the archaeological remains of Mesolithic fishing equipment and watercraft with the gear used in recent traditional fisheries. Four main categories of fishing gear are used in traditional fisheries: The first three can be adapted for use in either inshore or offshore fisheries. However, based on ethnographic parallels and fish biology, active netting and long-lining are more likely to have been employed in offshore fisheries. The long-line, which is used in traditional fisheries throughout the world for regular fishing of deep water, consists of a fishing line set with many fishhooks. Floats and sinkers are used to position the line at the appropriate depth for the prey sought and to ensure the line remains clear of the bottom on rough substrates. Nets have been portrayed as the most efficient type of fishing gear and their manufacture as evidence for a specialized fishing economy Clark ; Coull ; Rostlund The use of nets requires skill, investment of time both in terms of manufacture and maintenance, and considerable raw materials Lindstrom ; Rostlund Seines are the type of net most likely to have been employed in any deep water fishing for pelagic<sup>4</sup> species Pickard ; for specific examples, see Codere ; Feustel ; Netboy ; Rau ; Rostlund ; Silverstein ; Spier Seines are long, narrow nets which hang vertically in the water, sometimes with floats placed along the head-rope and sinkers along the foot-rope. In open water the seine is stretched out between two canoes, the fish are then trapped in the central sag of the net. Spears and harpoons could have been used in deep-water prestige or sport fishing, but are unlikely to have been employed in isolation in offshore subsistence fishing

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Bennyhoff Spears were generally not employed by groups for whom fishing was economically important; harpoons and leisters were preferred Rostlund In traditional fisheries harpoons and leisters were generally used for subsistence fishing only in conjunction with other techniques and gear, such as poisons, lures, ground baits, weirs and barriers, which concentrate the fish Hickling ; Kroeber and Barrett ; Rostlund ; Stewart The use of watercraft also increases the spatial range of fishing activities. The widespread use of watercraft in the Mesolithic is evident from the remains of boats and associated equipment. Paddles, from which the use of watercraft can be inferred, are relatively common finds at inland sites in the circum-Baltic region Albrethsen and Brinch Petersen ; Andersen ; Clark However, finds of actual watercraft are relatively scarce. The majority have been recovered from sites in Scandinavia and the east Baltic. The most complete example, a dugout from Tybrind Vig, Denmark, is approximately 10 m long, 0. This type of long, slender vessel would have required skill to operate. It is unlikely to have been used in rough or exposed waters and was probably confined to lakes and rivers and sheltered coastal waters Andersen ; Burov Skin- and bark-covered watercraft were used by some ethnographically known fishing communities, and were more effective than the dugout in rough waters. They are inherently more flexible, hence better at absorbing wave action. Although forms such as the umiak and the Irish curragh were capable of open-sea travel, they were normally used for inshore fishing including the capture of sea mammals and transport. It is likely that Mesolithic people also used skin boats, but supporting evidence is lacking. Skin boats would leave few archaeological traces, and no definite remains have been identified at Mesolithic sites. There are depictions of what are generally assumed to be skin boats among prehistoric rock engravings in coastal areas of northern and western Norway Clark ; Johnstone , although there is no evidence to link the engravings directly to Mesolithic people. Groups practising fishing within sight of land frequently use visual markers for navigation and to locate fishing grounds Cordell ; Forman , ; Igarashi Negotiating waters out of sight of land would have required additional navigational skills. Similarly, Polynesian peoples exploited their knowledge of bird behaviour and migration patterns in order to navigate the open sea and locate new lands Hornell The Polynesian Austronesian expansion across the Pacific did not begin until c. Site location The presence of Mesolithic sites on offshore islands in various parts of Europe demonstrates that Mesolithic people engaged in deep-sea travel. However, all of these islands are visible from the mainland or from adjacent islands and travelling to them would not have required sophisticated navigational skills. Ethnographic considerations Ethnographic data indicate that hunter-gatherer groups heavily dependent on fish or sea mammals generally used boats in their procurement strategies Murdock However, this need not imply their use in deep or open seas. Few groups practised open-sea or offshore fishing solely for subsistence purposes and most avoided open-sea travel if at all possible de Laguna ; Kroeber and Barrett ; Kvause ; Leach and Boocock ; Olsen and Hubbard ; Renker and Gunther ; Rivallain They were frequently unsuccessful and, therefore, did not make a major contribution to subsistence. Although parallels are often drawn between the fishing practices of the native peoples of New Zealand or the Pacific Northwest Coast and those of the European Mesolithic, the former represent a further to years of cultural development and it is likely that their navigational skills and boat technology were superior to those of the European Mesolithic. Of the ethnographically known groups that regularly undertook offshore fishing, most if not all inhabited regions with limited availability of, or restricted access to, terrestrial resources. For example, the maritime economy of the Maori was influenced by the lack of large terrestrial mammals and eventual extinction of the moa on the islands of New Zealand. A similar situation existed in the Aleutian Islands Johnson and Bonsall Mesolithic groups would have been intimately aware of the dangers of the sea and it seems unlikely that offshore or open-sea expeditions would have been undertaken to exploit resources that could be taken closer to shore. Even on the larger lakes in Europe, weather conditions can become severe enough to be profoundly dangerous for fishermen in small craft. Unpredictable weather conditions restricted the traditional fisheries of the large lakes of Africa to areas within 2â€”5 km of the shore Worthington and Worthington It is possible that offshore expeditions were undertaken in search of certain species of sea mammals or large fish, but it is unlikely that such expeditions would have occurred in the treacherous waters

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of the North Sea or the Atlantic in other than ideal conditions. Such conditions occur on a relatively small number of days each year. In the North Sea and the north-east Atlantic there are on average 50 moderate to severe storm events annually Weisse et al. A storm event is defined as storm conditions that are separated by a period of at least 24 hours. A single event may affect coastal weather conditions, producing winds of Beaufort force 8 and above, for several days. Fish biology and behaviour Most reconstructions of fishing practices among early Holocene hunter-gatherers are based on the faunal remains recovered at archaeological sites e. More than 80 fish species have been identified from over coastal European Mesolithic sites Pickard ; see Table 1. Fish species reported from sites mentioned in the text. The range of species identified attests to the capture of fish in marine, estuarine, and fresh waters. Both the gear and techniques that are most suited to the efficient capture of a particular fish species and seasonal variation in vulnerability to capture are determined by the biological adaptation and behaviour of that species. Temperature, salinity tolerance, and physiological adaptation determine species distribution Nikolsky ; Wheeler and Jones Marine fish are generally divided into three sub-groups relating to their primary habitat: Efficient deep-water subsistence fisheries require a sophisticated knowledge of the movements of the target species. Many marine species that inhabit deep waters may enter shallow, inshore waters to spawn or make temperature-dependent migrations to inshore waters. Predictable migrations of this type make such species especially vulnerable to capture. A number of fish species have been described in the archaeological literature on the European Mesolithic as inhabitants of deep or offshore waters. They include bluefin tuna *Thunnus thynnus* , brill *Scophthalmus rhombus* , cod *Gadus morhua* , golden redfish *Sebastes marinus* , haddock *Melanogrammus aeglefinus* , hake *Merluccius merluccius* , halibut *Hippoglossus hippoglossus* , ling *Molva molva* , pollack *Pollachius pollachius* , porbeagle *Lamna nasus* , tope *Galeorhinus galeus* , saithe *Pollachius virens* , swordfish *Xiphias gladius* , torsk *Brosme brosme* , whiting *Merlangius merlangus* and wolffish *Anarhichas lupus*. The occurrence of these species in Mesolithic sites has often been cited as evidence for offshore or open-sea fishing e. The co-occurrence of turbot *Psetta maxima* , haddock and large specimens of cod led Coles However, this conclusion is based on a limited understanding of the behaviour of these species. Turbot can be taken in shallow inshore waters all year round. Adult cod and haddock are known to enter sea lochs and frequent shingle or rocky shores at various times of the year to feed, and are commonly angled from the shore in winter. Studies of Mesolithic fishing practices in Scandinavia have drawn similar inferences. Although it is impossible to rule out open-sea or offshore fishing, there is no evidence that conclusively supports this argument. Fish species that inhabit deep water can be divided into two groups based on the behaviour of adult specimens: These are bluefin tuna, golden redfish, hake, halibut, torsk and wolffish Table 1. Mesolithic sites mentioned in the text. These sites are restricted to specific locations on the coast of Norway, Sweden and the Aegean Sea Fig. The occurrence of deep-water species at the Scandinavian sites may be explained in terms of the local submarine topography. The sites are located on coasts where deep water occurs near the shore, as in the Varanger fjord. Relevant to the question of whether Mesolithic fishermen practised offshore or open-sea fishing is the fact that many species regarded by modern fishermen as deep-water or offshore species can be caught in inshore waters, and often were in historical times. In Iceland, large halibut are frequently caught from the shore using hook and line. For European waters generally, records indicate that even as recently as porbeagle was caught much closer to shore than today Wheeler and Jones

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### Chapter 2 : M.A.P. Renouf (Author of The Cultural Landscapes of Port au Choix)

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## Chapter 3 : Results for M-A-P-Renouf | Book Depository

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The northern Norwegian example presented here demonstrates marked differences between patterns of faunal exploitation at different sites, which are clearly linked to localised environmental conditions and suggest that people occupying each site utilised restricted hunting territories. Keeley based on the presence of traits such as high population density, a high degree of sedentism, hereditary social hierarchies and defended territorial boundaries are prevalent in the archaeological literature on the late Younger Stone Age YSA of northern Norway Renouf ; Myrvoll ; Olsen ; Schanche This reflects a persistent assumption that the traits attributed to complex hunter-gatherers always co-occur; where one is demonstrated in the archaeological record, the others can be inferred see also Rowley-Conwy However, archaeologists working on the north-west coast of the Americas have begun to disentangle the concepts of storage, sedentism, population growth and social differentiation. They recognise that these traits need not necessarily be linked, and emphasise the importance of understanding the individual developmental histories of different groups. Scholars increasingly recognise the emergent character of landscape, viewing it as an ongoing process of interaction between people, other animals and the land. Thus, archaeological faunal remains, a direct result of interactions between at least some of its human and animal components, should help to elucidate the processes that bring a landscape into being. Prehistory of northern Norway Many archaeologists working in northern Norway have argued for a high degree of sedentism and relatively high population density around BC, which they have linked with hierarchical social organisation Renouf ; Olsen ; Schanche Other researchers have downplayed the degree of sedentism, emphasising inter- and intra- site variation in activities, extrapolating a lower population density from the available evidence and suggesting that social organisation was fluid and lacked formal hierarchies Engelstad ; Helskog ; Johansen Both positions assume a connection between sedentism, population density and complexity. This phase, more than any other, has prompted interpretations of social complexity. It dates from approximately cal BC and is characterised by a relatively high density of known sites, which concentrate primarily in coastal areas but are also known from the interior. These dwellings are typically rectangular semi-subterranean structures with two rectangular stone-lined hearths along the long axis. In almost all cases, these houses are oriented parallel to contemporary shorelines, with an entrance passage facing the water and often with midden deposits outside the entrance and sometimes also at the rear of the dwelling Simonsen ; Schanche Johansen pointed out that there is considerable variability in the house form in terms of size, shape, depth, number of hearths, number of entrances and amount of midden accumulation. There is clearly also variability in the seasonal occupation of the dwellings, with many scholars arguing for a relatively high degree of sedentism at some sites while acknowledging that the degree of sedentism doubtless varied spatially, from year to year, and over the longer term. The sites There are currently 39 known Gressbakken phase sites in Varangerfjord Figure 1 , and the number of house depressions on each ranges from 1 to There are six sites that contain only one or two dwellings, five that contain more than ten, and the remainder contain between three and ten dwellings Schanche There is strong evidence for a difference in the seasonal use of the two areas. The inner fjord sites have deeper house depressions, with far more extensive midden deposits and abundant artefacts. The most intensive occupation of these sites appears to have taken place during winter and spring, with winter migrants well-represented among the bird remains, cod present year round, but most abundant in spring the dominant fish species, and harp seals spring migrants to the fjord the predominant mammal. However, smaller proportions of summer migrants among the birds, summer fish such as saithe, and reindeer which migrate through the area in spring and autumn suggest continued occupation through the summer and autumn by at least some members of the residential group at some point in the life history of the dwellings Engelstad ; Renouf ; Schanche ; Hodgetts At this time other group members may have ventured farther afield, establishing short-term camps to exploit seasonally available resources. In the southern fjord,

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the majority of house depressions are shallower, with limited midden deposition and few artefacts. At such sites, the faunal assemblages are relatively small, but saithe, a summer fish, clearly dominates among the fish remains and there are no indications of winter occupation. These sites contain a mix of cod and saithe in proportions that suggest fishing during the spring and summer or perhaps year round. They also contain an abundance of harp and juvenile ringed seals indicative of spring sealing, and summer migrants dominate among the birds Schanche ; Hodgetts The relationship between the inner fjord sites and the south fjord sites remains uncertain. Clearly, there appears to be a higher degree of sedentism at the inner fjord sites, with strong evidence of at least occasional year-round occupation. Most south fjord sites suggest shorter-term occupation during the spring and summer. These sites could represent different seasonal elements of a single settlement system. Alternatively, Schanche ; has suggested that they may be elements of two separate settlement patterns, one involving relatively permanent occupation in the inner fjord, another involving seasonal transhumance between the south fjord and the interior. The two propositions need not be mutually exclusive - seasonal movements could well have taken place between the inner and south fjord, and between both and the interior. However, it appears that the majority of south fjord sites were used less intensively, if at all, in the winter months. Study sites with faunal assemblages used in this analysis. The excavations were carried out by Povl Simonsen and Knut Odner Simonsen in the s and by Kjersti Schanche in the s and s Schanche This clearly represents an important area for future work if we are to understand the full range of social interactions that constituted these communities. Despite these limitations, the available fauna can provide information about the food use of selected households within these communities. The faunal sample discussed here will include sites from both the inner fjord and south fjord when comparing patterns of faunal exploitation between households at individual sites. However, because of the clear differences in seasonal patterns of use in the two regions, only inner fjord sites are considered when comparing faunal exploitation at the site level in order to reduce the possibility that season of occupation is influencing the observed patterns. All excavated Gressbakken-type dwellings from Varangerfjord with identified mammal remains totalling over NISP are included in this analysis. Six sites meet these criteria table 1. Of these, only two have fauna! The charcoal-based radiocarbon dates from the analysed dwellings cluster between and cal BC at two sigmas Figure 2. Although no dates are available for the Hoybukt dwellings included in this analysis, the associated artefacts bear strong typological similarities with those from the dated dwellings and they can safely be assumed to fall within this range. The faunal evidence At all of the dwellings in the study sample, seals are the most numerous mammal, whilst reindeer and cetaceans whales and dolphins comprise smaller proportions of the assemblage. Their relative proportions are presented in Figure 3. There is considerable variability in the importance of cetaceans and reindeer in the assemblages, but it is notable that the three houses at Gressbakken are very similar to one another. Charcoal-based radiocarbon dates from dwelling included in this analysis. These differences can be explored further through a closer examination of seal exploitation patterns at the inner fjord sites Figure 4; Advik is not included in this analysis because the assemblage contained fewer than identified seal specimens. They suggest very different patterns of exploitation for harp seals and ringed seals. Because harp seals give birth within a restricted period of the year, there are distinct age cohorts within the population at any given time. Among the White Sea breeding population, births peak between late February and mid-March. Two months later, when they can be found in Varangerfjord, there would be clusters of individuals of approximately 2 months of age pups, 14 months juveniles, 26 months etc. As the younger individuals are growing quickly, these age cohorts are visible in the body size of the animals and can be picked up using long bone measurements. The distribution shows a clear break between a cluster of measurements in the lower left of the graph and the remaining points in the upper right. This gap reflects the seasonal absence of harp seals from Varangerfjord during the autumn and winter. The smaller measurements represent individuals in their first year of life pups. The larger measurements include juveniles in at least their second year, and mature adults. By this age, growth has slowed so that it is no longer possible to identify single age cohorts in the measurement distribution. Clearly, adult harp seals outnumber pups at all of the inner

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fjord dwellings Table 2. The margin by which adults dominate varies between the dwellings and. Lisa Hodgetts Table 2. Relative importance of juvenile versus adult seals based on femur measurements. The highest densities of breeding adults are found in areas with stable land-fast ice. Like the harp seal femur measurements, the ringed seal data show a marked break in the distribution, which reflects the absence of these animals from the fjord in summer and autumn. There is a large cluster of young individuals, pups in their first year lower left of the graph, with a smaller number of adults upper right of the graph. The age distribution for ringed seals is the reverse of that observed for harp seals. At each inner fjord dwelling, pups outnumber adults by a factor of at least 2. Discussion A number of trends apparent in the faunal data can help to elucidate the social relationships that mediated subsistence strategies during the Gressbakken phase in Varangerfjord. If there were differences in the choices of prey and the success rates of the hunters comprising individual households, these were balanced out by food sharing, at least between people occupying the larger dwellings. These patterns could also be explained by communal hunting practices, with households sharing equitably in the spoils. Differences between the inner fjord sites In the relative importance of various mammalian taxa further indicate that procurement practices were highly variable around the fjord, and the preferred mammal foods were determined at the social level represented by the site. As outlined below, these differences reflect the micro-environments in which the sites are located, and may also be influenced by different seasonal emphasis in the occupation of the sites. Whether or not season of occupation plays a role, the faunal data indicate that people exploited relatively small hunting areas from each site. Gressbakken and Karlebotn stand out from the other inner fjord sites in terms of the representation of the main categories of mammal. The three dwellings at Gressbakken contain markedly higher percentages of cetacean remains, mostly dolphins, than at any other site. Four thousand years ago, the sea level of Varangerfjord was approximately 12m higher than at present Fletcher et al. The two small islands immediately north-west of the site Figure 7 would have been underwater at high tide, but would have been slightly above water or just below the surface at low tide. Both white-beaked and Atlantic white-sided dolphins are gregarious species, and large groups of these animals could have been driven by hunters in boats between the shore and the shoals just off Gressbakken and then dispatched. This interpretation is supported by the prevalence of dolphin remains at the site of Angsnes, occupied during the period immediately following the Gressbakken phase. Angsnes is located at the mouth of an inlet, which forms a natural trap much like that at Gressbakken Figure 1. The faunal assemblages from Gressbakken are also distinct from others in the study sample because of the higher proportions of ringed seal. As the femur measurements clearly demonstrate, there was a strong emphasis on hunting ringed seal pups versus adults at all of the investigated dwellings. The dominance of pups indicates that ringed seal hunting took place in the spring, following the March-April birthing season. There is a strong direct correlation between the number of ringed seal pups and the quality of land-fast ice in a given area McLaren Ice will form first, be thickest and stay longest in shallow protected bays and inlets such as that at Gressbakken Figure 7. Thus, the higher proportions of ringed seal at Gressbakken likely reflect a higher density of this species in the immediate environs of the site than at the other inner fjord sites analysed here. The Varanger Saami traditionally move their herds between wintering areas south of the fjord, around Lake Enare, and summering grounds on the Varanger Peninsula, north of the fjord. In moving between the two, they must pass through a fairly narrow corridor between the head of Varangerfjord and the Tana River to the west. The Karlebotn site is perfectly situated to take advantage of the marine resources of the fjord as well as the reindeer migration, which concentrated large numbers of animals in the area immediately west of the site each spring and autumn. The emphasis on dolphins at Gressbakken and reindeer at Karlebotn could potentially relate to different seasonal emphasis in the occupation of the two sites. Evidence from all of the inner fjord sites suggests that they were occupied intensively in the autumn through spring, with more sporadic use during the summer. However, the intensity of occupation during any given season may have varied from site to site and from year to year. If Gressbakken had a more intensive summer occupation than the other inner fjord sites, it could result in higher proportions of dolphins, likely hunted in open water during the summer. Such

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potential differences in the intensity of occupation at different times of year are difficult to tease out based on the available faunal evidence. However, whether or not such differences help to account for the observed patterns of faunal exploitation, the relative proportions of mammalian taxa at each site appear to reflect localised differences in the availability of these species. It seems that people exploited very circumscribed hunting territories from each site, which may further imply that systems of land tenure were in place. Conclusion Archaeologists have often been quick to equate high population densities and a high degree of sedentism with marked territoriality and social complexity among hunter-gatherers.

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arkeologi, Universitetet i Myrvoll, E Stil og samfunn. En analyse av materiell symbolisme og sosiale relasjoner i Varanger f. Magistergradsavhandling i arkeologi, Universitetet i. Ottar , Nicolaissen, O Et merkelig fund fra den arktiske steinalder. J Chronological and technological changes in western Norway BP. Acta Archaeologica 62, Nordby, C. C Tyggis fra steinalderen. Ottar , Nordby, C. Organic residue analysis of asbestos ceramics [Poster]. Fangstbosetning og tidlig jordbruk i vestnorsk steinalder.

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