

## Environment and Early Hunting Sites in Arctic-Alpine Areas in South Norwegian Mountains

### *Abstract*

Thirty-seven early mesolithic settlement sites in the southern Norwegian highlands have been radiocarbon-dated. The results indicate that the earliest habitation of the northern parts of the area dates to the middle of the 9th millennium B.P., while the oldest sites of the southern plains are almost 1,000 years younger. At c. 7,500 B.P. there was a sudden increase in the number of southern sites.

Palynological and macrofossil investigations indicate that the southern plains were partly forested from c. 8,500 B.P. to 8,000 B.P. In the northern areas the higher relief left large areas unforested. The southern plain forest disappeared during the first half of the 8th millennium B.P.

During the forest period, the northern areas were the most favourable for reindeer. It is probable that the deforestation caused a rapid expansion of the reindeer population into the southern plains soon after 8,000 B.P.

Reindeer was the most important resource for the early highland hunters. Fluctuations in the reindeer population, caused by vegetational changes, seem to explain the uneven distribution of early highland sites.

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### REFERENCES

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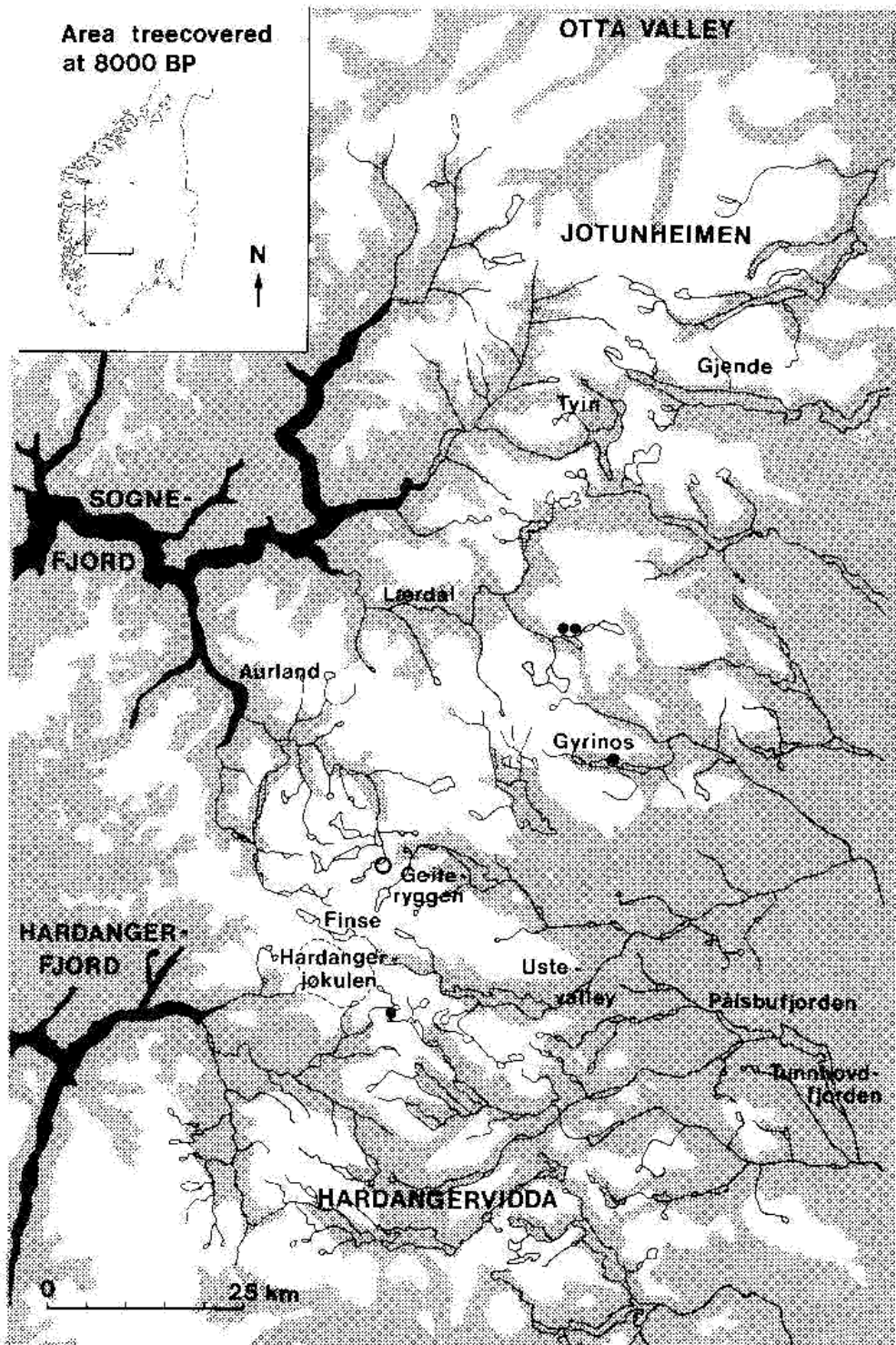


Fig. 1. Reconstruction of the tree-line and forested areas at c. 8,000 B.P. in the western parts of the southern Norwegian highlands. Forested areas are shaded. The map shows large unforested areas in the north, while a major part of Hardangervidda is forested, mainly by pine. (From Moe et al., 1978).