

CHAPTER VII.

THE DANISH MOOT.

Long Continuance of Danish Moot—Its Names: 'Ting,' 'Ring,' and 'Dom-ring'—Danish Barrows—The Three Royal 'Tings' of the Danes—Judicial 'Tings'—The 'Hof'—'Hof' and 'Ting' originally identical—The Icelandic 'Gode' and his 'Tingmen'—'Ting-Soken'—The Christian Church supplants the 'Hof'—Three Grades of Icelandic 'Tings'—Tynwald Hill—The 'Ting' developed from a Barrow—Crucifield in Unst—The Peristalith in the 'Ting'—Procedure in the 'Ting'—No fosse or fence—Law Hill and Gallows Hill—The 'Ting' of Arraclet, Shetland—Stone Circle of Quendale—Evolution of the 'Ting.'

The moots of the Danes, commonly known as *tings* or *things*, are traceable wherever that people¹ have settled, in Denmark, in Sweden and Norway, in the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and the north of Scotland, in the Isle of Man, in Ireland, in Iceland, and at isolated spots in England itself.² Introduced into the Orkneys and Shetlands in the latter half of the ninth century, they remained in continuous use there until the seventeenth century. In Iceland they held their own until 1800,³ as does the Tynwald hill in the Isle of Man to this day. The moot might vary in elevation and in minor details of its construction; in plan it never varied. It was uniformly circular. Hence it might be spoken of also as a *ring*, whence the name of Ringsted in Zealand, where was one

¹ The name of Danes is here used for all and sundry of the peoples who between the fifth and tenth centuries occupied the modern Denmark and thence passed into Sweden and Norway, etc. There is no question that all were of the same Nordic race and of the same culture.

² In Thingoe, 'Moot-how,' the name of a hundred of Suffolk, and in Thingwall (Thing-vallr) in Cheshire and Lancs.; cf. Thingwall in Shetland and in Isle of

Man, Tinwald in Dumfriesshire, Dingwall in Ross-shire. Records preserve the memory of similar names elsewhere which have now vanished, e.g. Thingvala near Whitby. Nothing Hill, near Highclere in Hants, was long the scene of the moot of its hundred.

³ The *Althing*, the folk-moot of the island, first instituted in 930, was abolished only in 1800, to be revived in name only at Reykjavik in 1845.

of the oldest and most important of the series, and where to this day is the mausoleum of Danish royalty. Some English place-names of similar form have the same origin.¹ Yet another synonym was *Dom-ring* ('circle of judgment'). The word *dom*, 'doom,' is etymologically identical with the Greek θέμις, which was itself synonymous with 'moot.' *Ting* again is identical with the Greek δική, and δική is another synonym for 'moot.'² Both come from the root seen in the Greek δείκνυμι, ἐνδειξις ('impeachment'), and in the Latin *indicare*,³ *condicere*, *diem dicere*⁴ ('to impeach'), *dicis causa*. The term *ting* points to the primary purpose of the moot as a court of justice. The term *ring* (*krink* in Low Dutch dialects) etymologically identical with the Latin *circus* and related to the Greek κύκλος, emphasises the essential circularity of the moot.

The Danes built mighty barrows—*howes*, Norwegian *haughr*—for their illustrious dead, and if suitable stone was available they sometimes added peristaliths thereto.⁵ They had also developed the ring-barrow and cromlech.⁶ That they should have moots of designs corresponding to these various types of barrow is to be expected, and there is ample evidence that it was so. There is evidence too that, as the various types of barrows co-existed, so did the various types of moots.

So early as the ninth century the Danes had no less than three centres of royalty, at Ringsted in Zealand, at Viborg in Jutland, and at Lund in Scania. At each of these centres was a stone circle, in which it was the custom to elect and proclaim the sovereign, and to debate all matters of state. There were others elsewhere, and commonly they stood in positions commanding a wide outlook and numbered twelve stones, but some had fewer and others more. That of Diething had as many as forty-six. So wrote Olaus Wormius,⁷ court-physician to the King of Denmark, who died in 1659.

Olaus Magnus, archbishop of Upsala and metropolitan

¹ Below, chap. xxiv.

² Above, p. 88.

³ Cf. Vergil, *Aen.* v, 758, *indicitque forum*.

⁴ *Ting* is said to signify originally 'the appointed day.' Cf. the modern German *Reichstag*, Swedish *Riksdag*.

⁵ So Olaus Wormius.

⁶ They are abundant in Scandinavia,

in diam. from 20 to 40 ft., and excavation has proved that they belong to the Iron Age.

⁷ In *Monumenta Danica*, lib. i. His book was largely used by Walter Charleton, court-physician to Charles II of England, in writing his *Stonehenge Restored to the Danes* (1663); in which he speaks (p. 50) of Viborg as being 'in the Cimbric territory.'

of Sweden, who died in 1558,¹ says that the election and proclamation of the kings of Sweden took place at a spot called Morasten—'the Moor-stone'—not far from Upsala, where was a circle of twelve stones, surrounding a central monolith which served as throne for the person elected. This practice long survived the downfall of paganism, when the election still took place in the accustomed way, but 'was afterwards confirmed with more solemn ceremonies by the Catholic bishops.'² King Eric of Sweden was thus elected as late as 1396.³

But the more frequent use of the *ting* was for judicial purposes, as a 'circle of judgment.' A particularly fine example remains near Blomsholm in Bohuslän (now the Län of Gothenberg), 4½ miles NW. of Stromstad. It has a diameter of 100 ft., and is formed of eleven stones, one fallen, about a central block—'Thor's Stone'—which measures 9 ft. by 7 ft., and rises 5 ft. above the ground.⁴ This central stone is the *blötstein*, upon which were slain those condemned by the judges seated in the circle around it, the commonalty watching the proceedings from without the *dom-ring*.⁵ The procedure obviously goes back to a state of society which as yet made no distinction between ritual and judicature; but such confusion is evidence of backwardness only, not of great antiquity, for while Caesar found it prevailing in the Gaul of his time, it prevailed also in Danish Iceland a thousand years later. In both cases the practice of offering human sacrifice was tolerated, but in both it was customary to use as victims the convicted undesirables of the community.⁶ 'A circle of stones in the village of Oye near Flekkefjord, adjoining the Naze of Norway, was, according to oral tradition, used by the people of that village for judicial proceedings.'⁷ These instances, it will be noticed, belong to the coastal regions immediately adjacent to Jutland, and the district of Bohuslän has been called 'the cradle of the northern Sagas.'

¹ *De Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (1555), viii. 1; cp. Keysler, *Northern Antiquities* (1720), p. 93.

² Olaus Magnus, *op. cit.* i, 28.

³ *Archaeologia* xxii, 409.

⁴ Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, i, 370.

⁵ Mallet, *Northern Antiquities*, p. 291. The book abounds in similar passages of the like import.

⁶ Caesar *B.G.* vi, 16, 5; Dasent, *Saga of Burnt Njal*, i. xxxix.

⁷ Gomme, *Primitive Folk-moots*, p. 29; *Arch. Journ.* i, 249.

As in old Greece and in old Italy the northern moot was also the scene of less serious occupations: 'wherever a *ting* was held some adjoining site was selected for the celebration of games and for public revelry.'¹ In the case of the Althing of Iceland the session gradually assumed all the importance and variety of an old-world fair, and in particular the occasion gave opportunity for a good deal of match-making. This is the probable origin of the association of stone-circles, in popular tradition and practice, with the plighting of troths.² Those attending the session built booths for their accommodation. The ruins of these booths are still visible, and in many cases 'the names of the former occupants are known. Thus it is known where was the booth of Thorgeir of Ljosvatn, the booths of Njall, Snorri Godi, and Snorri Sturluson, and dozens of others of the Saga period and after.' They were rectangular, built up of stone and turves laid in alternate courses, and for such period as they were occupied, were provided with temporary roofs of cloth.³

Danish settlers occupied Iceland about 900. Pagans, their first proceeding was to build a *hof* to the national god Thor. *Hof* was the Danish name for a *locus religiosus*, and it was originally an area of circular plan enclosed within some sort of fence, but having no roof. In this particular case the fence consisted of 'a circular range of upright stones.'⁴ Circularity was the essential feature, and to this day in Danish speech *moonshof* means a lunar halo, *hof om solen* the sun's parhelion.⁵ The Danes therefore, like the Celts, used the circle as the symbol of sanctity. But the word *hof* is closely related to the English 'hovel,'⁶ and both derive from the root seen in 'heave' and 'heaven'; and the use of the word 'hovel' in a number of technical senses—a 'rick' of corn, the 'hood' of a smith's forge, the conical building enclosing a potter's kiln, or a 'niche' for a statue⁷—shews that the original sense was something, of circular plan indeed, but of

¹ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 148.

² This association is found in countries as far apart as India and England; Condor, *Heib and Moab*, pp. 198-9.

³ Stefánsson, *Iceland* (Reykjavik, 1911), p. 157.

⁴ *Erbyggia Saga*, cited by Hibbert in *Arch. Scot.* iii (1831), p. 109.

⁵ Similarly a halo round the moon is commonly spoken of in Scotland as the moon's 'barrow,' in Ireland as a 'brock'; but in this case the original was probably *burb* and the metaphor from the ring-wall of a *defensum*.

⁶ So Skeat (*Concise Etymol. Dictionary*).

⁷ *N.E.D.*

domical elevation. The *hof* therefore was originally a circular mound, and analogy suggests that it was in its first form merely a 'bowl' barrow, a *haugr* or *howe*.¹ As in matters of sepulture the mounded 'bowl' gradually gave place to the unmounded 'ring' (ch. iii), so in the *hof* the mound gradually disappeared, leaving only a circular *enceinte* such as that spoken of in the *Erbyggia Saga*,² and seen in the non-sepulchral peristalithic circles of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Moreover, before their arrival in Iceland the Danes had adopted the foreign habit of building roofed 'temples,' oblong wooden structures with an apsidal end which enclosed the sanctuary³; and the apsidal plan of the structural *hof* was as surely derived from the circular form of an original barrow as was the apsidal form of the *Circus Maximus* in Rome or that of the Greek theatre. The earthen *howe* and the structural *hof* were the earlier and the later forms of the same thing, a holy place which had originally been a grave only, but later became also a place of worship. When the first Icelandic colonists made their first concern to build a *hof*, they were but doing as did Romulus when he built his *circus*, and as did Greek colonists of the historical time when they built their *prytanea*.

For the *hof* had once been the original and only scene of the Danish moot or *ting*,⁴ precisely as was the Greek *ἱερός κύκλος* or the Italian *circus*; but the introduction of the structural temple necessarily led to the differentiation of *hof* from *ting*, for at that date no moot could be held under a roof. It does not follow that such differentiation was universal and uniform. It would be found in more progressive communities while it was still unknown to those less progressive. In the tenth century the differentiation seems to have become universal, and in Iceland at any rate every community had from the outset its own *hof* and its own *ting*. A community without a moot was as unthinkable to the Danes as to the Achæans or the Latins. The *gode* or chief

¹ Cf. Welsh *crugnyth*, 'hovel,' from *crug*, 'a circular heap, a barrow,' and *nyth*, 'nest.'

² Thorolf Mostbeard bodily removed to Iceland from Norway the timbers of his *hof*. Morris and Magnusson, *Story of the*

Ere-Dwellers (Saga Library) pp. xxxi-iv, 7-9; *Story of Olaf Tryggvason*, c. 65.

³ Du Chaillu, *Viking Age* (1889), i, p. 356.

⁴ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 131.

man of the community was at once priest of the *hof* which he owned and maintained, and president of the *ting*, which was its necessary complement and stood close beside it.¹ The men of the community were 'bound to suit and service to' his *ting*, which, like a manorial court, was a recognised source of profit to its owner; they were styled his *ting-men*; 'and the district where his jurisdiction was exercised was named a *ting-soken*.²' But the original identity of *hof* and *ting* was betrayed by the fact that the two were often exactly similar in outward appearance, and 'this explains why the circles are not always found solitary.'³

Upon the introduction of Christianity the church took the place of the pagan *hof*, not impossibly sometimes occupied its actual site,⁴ and there was no break of the intimate connexion of the *ting* with religion.⁵ On the contrary the connexion became always closer, for the church gradually came to supersede the *ting*—even for the purposes of a moot. 'At Tingwall in Shetland a circle of great stones is very specifically stated by report to have marked the site of the old Lawthing,' but so early as 1307 the court is recorded as sitting under the roof of the kirk of Tingwall.⁶ The older custom did not always die so early, and some of the Orcadian *tings* continued in use as *al fresco* courts until the seventeenth century, for in the year 1602 Earl Patrick Stewart held his assize at the *tings* of Sunburgh, Burray, Birsay, Walls, Aisthing, Fetlar, Daleting and Unst. It is clear that Christianity had no quarrel with the *ting* where that was no longer identified with the *hof*.

The Icelandic *tings* were of three grades. Lowest in

¹ Vigfusson and Powell, *Corpus Poet. Boreale*, i, 409-10. Cp. *Story of Olaf Tryggvason*, cc. 75, 76.

² *Arch. Scot.* iii, pp. 133, 138. The Icelandic *gode* was in fact to his community what in England the rector originally was to his parish. See Dasent, *Story of Burnt Njal* (1861) i, pp. xlvii-li.

³ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 139. It follows that what would nowadays be called clerical influence was paramount in the moot, as indeed it still was in the reformed *Althing* of the last century.

⁴ Worsae, *Pre-history of the North* (Eng.

trans. 1886), p. 93. Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, i, 358, cites from Verelius the assertion that the present old church of Upsala stands upon the remains of the older *hof*.

⁵ Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, i, 517.

⁶ J. Storer Clouston in *Blackwood's Magazine*, April, 1920. So in the Isle of Man the court to-day sits in the south transept of the chapel of St. John, about 140 yards distant from the Tynwald hill. The fenced path uniting the chapel and the hill is apparently the direct analogue to the stone avenue which is so pronounced a feature of the stone circles of Devonshire.

dignity were the local *tings* of the several communities, concerned merely with local matters and in particular with the devolution of the communal land. Highest was the *Althing*, the paramount legislative assembly of the whole island, which annually met at the centre of the island in the *Tingvallr* or 'Moot-meadow.' Between the two ranked the quarter-*Tings*, answering to the judicial assizes of modern circuit-justices. The three grades correspond in everything but name to the familiar sequence of *tun*-moot, hundred-moot, and folk-moot in Saxon England. According to its degree of dignity the *ting* might shew certain slight variations, but the type had two concentric banks of earth, or of earth and stone, so disposed that the central area which they enclosed was the highest part of the whole structure, the inner circle somewhat higher than the other; and the general appearance of the whole was that of a greatly depressed mound with terraced sides. With the Danes a man's dignity was betokened by the higher or lower position of his seat¹: lesser folk sat in the outer ring, in the inner ring sat the twelve 'doomers,' and in the centre of all, upon a small cairn of rude stones, his face always turned towards the east, was seated the Lawman or president.² Superior *tings* might have a third concentric ring, still lower than the second.

It is again clear that the original of the *ting*, as of the *hof*, must have been a simple *howe* or *haugr*. The fact is indeed confessed in the name of the Suffolk hundred of Thingoe (*Ting-howe*) and in that of Hogg's Green,³ still attaching to the spot where stood the *haugr* which served as moot-hill to the Danes of Dublin.⁴ The great mounds near Old Upsala are so flat-topped as to suggest to Birger Nerman that they were so designed 'surely for assembly, and especially for purposes of justice.'⁵ One

¹ Cf. *Heimskringla Saga, Story of Harald Hairfair*, c. 31. Harald, after dividing his realm with his sons, 'gave them seats in the high seat, a step higher than the earls and a step lower than himself.' This is the precise arrangement of the *ting*; and apparently 'high seat' might be used synonymously with *ting*, as *θῶκος* with *ἀγορά* (ch. v).

² *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 170.

³ The same word *haugr* survives in that of La Hogue, the French port of la Manche, and has reference to the great mound which carries the citadel.

⁴ Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, pp. 278-280, 369. The *howe* was proved, on demolition, to have been sepulchral.

⁵ In a private letter to Rev. J. W. Hayes, 1923.



FIG. 5. THE TYNWALD HILL AND CHURCH OF ST. JOHN.

Sketch from a Photograph.

mound of similar form in the same locality is still called the Tingshogen or Thing-mound. Intermediate between the simple *howe* and the typical *ting* of later times is the flat terraced mound of the Tynwald hill, of which the form stamps it as a modern structure, built to replace an older *ting* in a less convenient position.¹ An artificial mound at Tinwald in Dumfriesshire is possibly the original *ting* which gave a name to the parish. It is noticeable that it stands close beside the church which presently supplanted it.

The average *ting* was of very small size. Of three yet existing on the high ground of Crucifield in Unst the outer ring of the largest, which is triple, has a diameter of 67 ft. only, the other rings measuring respectively 54½ ft. and 40 ft. Yet the triple form shews that this was a *ting* of the highest grade. A mile away from this is another with an outer diameter of 55 ft. The third, only 80 ft. away from the last-named, is 22 ft. in diameter over all, with an inner ring of 17 ft. only.² Possibly this was nothing but the *hof* of its neighbour,³ but it is evident that the moots of the Danish communities, particularly in the outlying colonies, were not commonly of impressive size. Those of Fetlar are about 30 ft. in diameter. The moots of all peoples have always been strictly limited by the reach of the speaker's voice and the listener's hearing. In places such as the northern isles there were the added limitations of a thin population and narrow means.

When Low saw these remains, the outer ring of the second circle was marked by a ring of small stones continuous except for the entrance, which was at the SE.; and a similar ring, much ruined, was recognisable about the largest of the three. He notes that there was no trace

¹ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 197. The island at one period had two such Tynwalds, one of which remains (The Hill of Raneurling) in Glen Wyllin. A moot was held here as late as fifteenth century (Herbert, *Isle of Man*, p. 156). The present-day Tynwald Hill is strictly circular, 80 ft. in diam. at the base, rising in four stages. As each successive platform is 3 ft. above the last, the total height is 12 ft. only (*op. cit.* p. 37). The local tradition that it was built up of soil brought from every parish in the island may very well contain some truth, for this

(like the similar howes in Sweden and elsewhere) having no fosse, the materials must of necessity have been gathered from a distance. Cf. also Plutarch's assertion (*Romulus*, xi) that each man cast into the *mundus* a handful of the soil of his own land (above, p. 107).

² The measurements are taken from George Low's *Tour through Orkney and Scheiland* in 1776 (Kirkwall, 1879) pp. 156 sqq.

³ Low remarks that the largest of the three *tings* is 'near the church.'

of it around the smallest. The outer rings were in each case 'shallow circles cut from the live earth.'¹ There was no tradition of their age or purpose, and the central heap of stones, which was a feature of all, had been 'so much teized over that it is hard to say whether it had been intended for a burial-place or what else.'

If standing stones were used in the construction of a *ting*, the number was usually twelve, that being the number of the jurors.² A circle of stones 'half buried in the morass' was still visible in 1860 near to Reykholt in Iceland, and was believed to mark 'the site of the provincial assembly before this was removed to Thingvallr.'³ But such a peristalith was no more essential amongst the Danes than amongst the Achæans. No such stones were used in the *tings* of Shetland, where, however, there are sometimes found *flat* stones so arranged as to serve for seats⁴; for those who were privileged to enter the circle—and none might enter save those who were 'named'—must all be seated. The Norse gods, who, like those of Homeric Greece, had their own *ting*, sat on stools, as the gods of Homer sat on θῶκοι.⁵

The sacred circle was marked off by a cord of twisted withies stretched from stone to stone, if a peristalith existed, or if not, on rods of hazel which served instead.⁶ If this encircling cord was broken, the proceedings of the moot were *ipso facto* made null and void.⁷ It was called the *vebonde*, or 'Bond of Peace,' and symbolised the sacrosanct character of the moot, which was held under a 'truce of God.' In some cases this privilege of sanctuary (*grid*) seems to have attached to the spot in perpetuity. 'Two or three *tings* in Shetland are still called the *Grid Ting*,'⁸ and at Kirkwall the *grid*-oath was still sworn so late as 1514.⁹ Any breach of the *grid* or of the 'truce of God' entailed the penalty of outlawry or death, and to avoid

¹ 'A foot or two above the surface of the ground,' says Hibbert, p. 140.

² *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 139.

³ Forbes, *Iceland* (1860), p. 219. This was the 'Holy Ting of the field of Thorsness (called Helgafell)'; *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 135.

⁴ As at Crucifield in Unst: Black's *Scotland* (1898), p. 538. George Low, of the Tingaholm: 'the stones of the Ting or Forum are torn up and displaced. They

have been of the kind which authors call 'Stones to sit on' (*Tour*, p. 77).

⁵ *Saga of Goibric and Rolf*, cited in *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 137.

⁶ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 141.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 149, citing the case of Queen Gunhilda from the *Egils Saga*.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 162.

⁹ *Ibid.*

the risk of it the bearing of arms in a *ting* was early prohibited by law.¹ Even in journeying to and from the moot all men were inviolable.² To enter a *hof* in arms was likewise punishable by outlawry, and the same penalty was visited upon all who refused to appear in the *ting* when summoned. The shedding of blood might cause the site of a *ting* to be completely abandoned; it was for this reason that the 'Holy Ting called Helgafell' was transferred to Tingvallr.

There is no evidence that the *ting* was ever fossed or otherwise demarcated save by the *vebonde* or by such a merely formal *limes* as the ring of turf which anciently surrounded the Tynwald Hill.³ Like the *ἱερός κύκλος* and the *circus*, the *ting* must be open to the sight and hearing of all, at once a *locus publicus* and a *locus consecratus* of the most sacrosanct kind. The great circle of Stenness, and the Ring of Brogar, with fosses respectively 50 ft. and 30 ft. wide, were therefore not moot-circles and do not require to be further dealt with. The view, prevalent until the time of Wilson,⁴ that they were Norse work is probably correct; that they are of any immense antiquity there is no sufficient evidence to prove.

Adjacent to each *ting*, larger or smaller, stood commonly an artificial mound, the *Ting-brekka* or Law hill, from which the decisions of the moot might be proclaimed. A similar mound, the Hangman's hill, in other cases served as a place of execution. One of these in South Unst still bears the name of Gallows Hill, and another in Scalloway was so used as late as the seventeenth century.⁵ Two mounds near the church of Petty, Inverness-shire, were known respectively as Tom-a-Mhoid ('Moot-Hill') and Tom-a-Chroich ('Gallows Hill').

The separation of *hof* from *ting* had begun so early that one would not expect easily to find an undisturbed *ting* of the original type in which religion was not yet differentiated from other matters—a type which in point of evolution corresponds to the *ἱερός κύκλος* of Homer;

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 159-60.

² Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, i, 578.

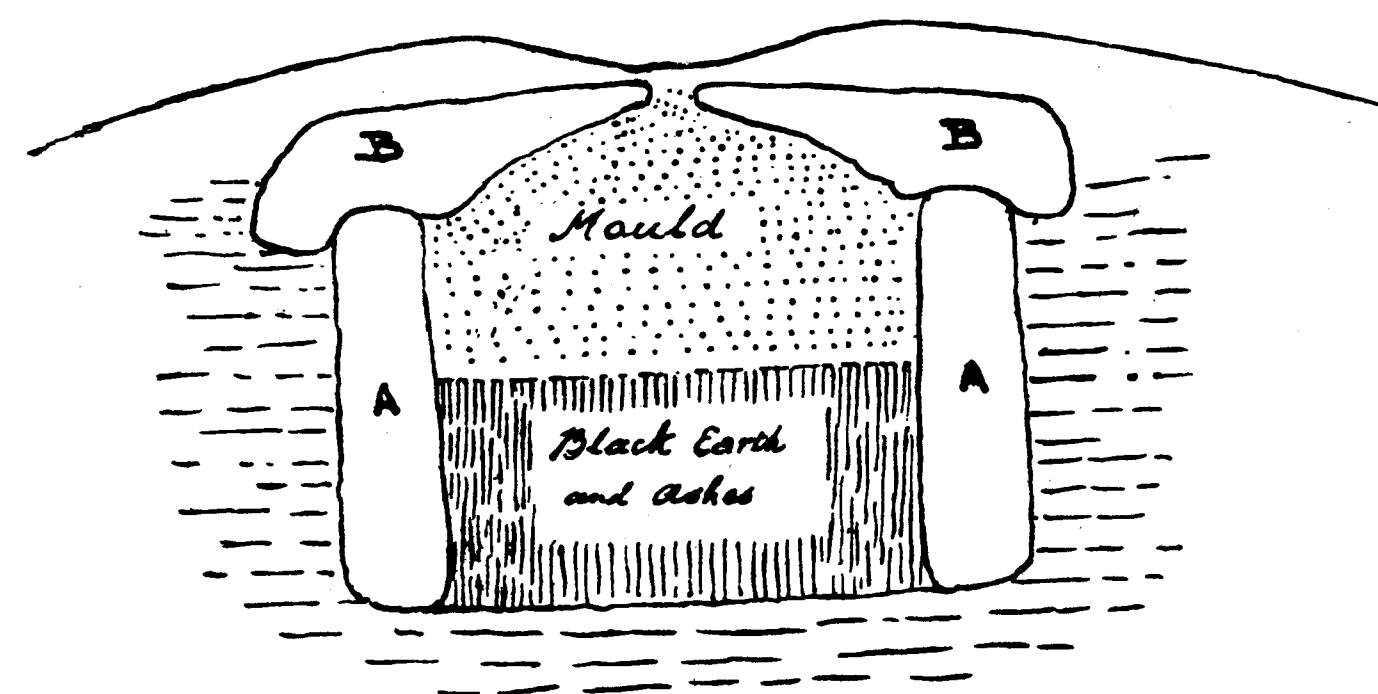
³ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 140.

⁴ *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland* (1850), p. 109.

⁵ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 195. A 'Hangman's Acre' seems to have been a necessary item in the municipal properties of many Old English communities.

and the less so because there seems to have been very little attempt made at scientific excavation of the *tings*. Therefore the case now to be described is of very peculiar interest.

At the spot known as Arraclet ('Cliff') near Bixter, Mainland of Shetland, are the remains of what appears to be a typical *ting*,¹ viz., a lower ring of piled earth and stone surrounding a second and somewhat higher ring of the same fashion, which itself encloses a slight mound of soil. In the course of removing some of the stone the natives broke into a chamber underlying this central mound. Investigation shewed the chamber to have been rudely



Ting of Arraclet, Mainland of Shetland, diagram.
AA Upright slabs lining pit BB Covering slabs.

FIG. 6. DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION OF THE 'TING' OF ARRACLET, SHETLAND.

circular, some 6 ft. wide and as many in depth, lined and roofed with rude slabs of the local schist. The arrangement of the roof was very remarkable: each covering-slab was in plan rudely wedge-shaped, and the butt-end, much wider and thicker than the other, had been roughly tooled in such a fashion as to fit securely upon the side-stone beneath it, its heavy butt serving as a counterpoise. On the floor of the chamber (native rock) were found three human phalanges. The filling of the chamber was ashes (3 ft.) below and mould (3 ft.) above. The upper edge of the side-stones came within 3 ft. of the surface, where

¹ The natives call it, as they call every anhistoric structure, a 'Pict's house.'

was a slight circular depression corresponding with the chamber¹ below.

The facts put it beyond question that the chamber had originally been so roofed as to leave a central aperture, for had the roof-blocks met in the centre it would have been waste of labour so to shape and balance them; and only by the existence of such an aperture can be explained the infiltration of 3 feet of mould and the depression above the chamber. In fact the chamber was a *βοθρός*, and the 3-ft. accumulation of ashes represents a long sequence of ceremonial fires. The three phalanges which constituted the solitary find are no evidence of a burial, though they may conceivably represent an act of consecration. Here, at any rate, is something which can hardly be explained as other than a *ting* of the remote and pagan period when *ting* and *hof* were identical; and the parallelism with the *ἱερὸς κύκλος* of Scheria and its *καλὸν Ποσιδῆϊον* is too close to be fortuitous. If the moots of Arraclet and of Scheria are not the works of one people, they are the works of two peoples who had come in contact with each other, or with some common influence; and as both Achæans and Danes came from one and the same part of Europe, the Cimbric peninsula, either explanation is possible.

The evolution of the Danish *ting* is perfectly clear. It began as a mere 'bowl' barrow with a central grave, for which was presently substituted a pretended barrow with a central *bothros* or a *blötstein*. As the social order developed there was introduced distinctive accommodation for the various grades of those who assisted at the moot. In time the more peculiarly religious part of the ceremonial was transferred to a special *hof* adjacent, without its entailing any divorce of the moot from religion. The *bothros* now disappeared, and in its place was set a cairn to provide a seat for the Lawman, who, be it remembered, was also priest of his *harad*, or community, and as such had always had his place beside the *bothros* which served as altar. When a Christian church succeeded to the pagan *hof*, it inevitably drew to itself all the communal functions

¹ The writer had these facts in 1919 from the lips of the person who had observed them only a few months previously. It is

to be regretted that the latter has not put the facts on record in his own words.

of the *ting*. Why this was so will transpire in the sequel. For the moment it will suffice to say that the first Christian churches of this part of the world were themselves neither more nor less than barrows. The

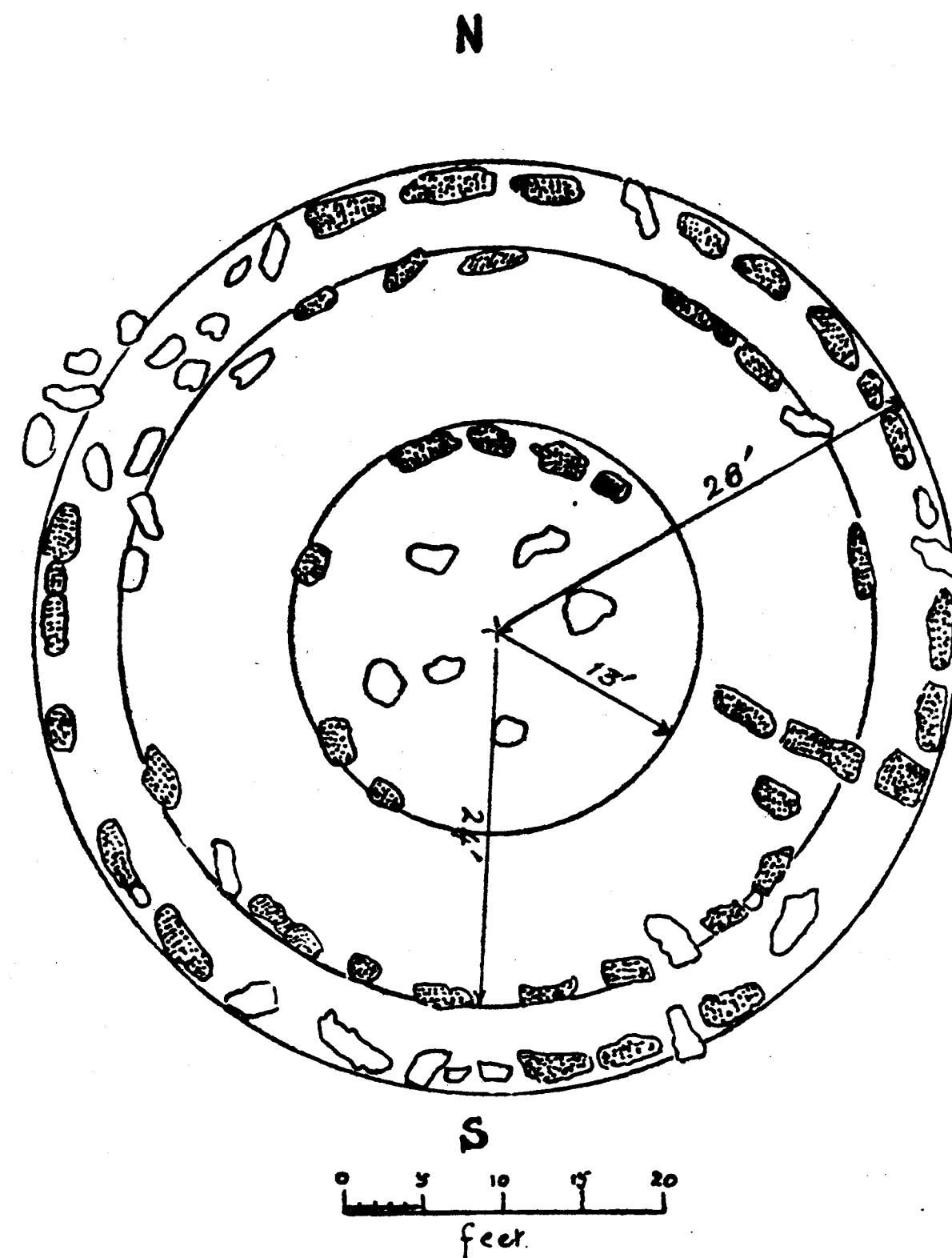


FIG. 7. STONE CIRCLE, WARTHILL OF QUENDALE, SHETLAND.
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries.)

Christianised *ting* had reverted to its original form, a circular place of assembly that was also an actual place of burial and of ritual.

The Tynwald hill is clearly developed from the type exemplified by the *tings* of Unst and by that of Arraclet. But there are, or were, in the Isle of Man, 'several stone circles, the sites of the very ancient *tings* of that country,' and traditionally known as such.¹ There was, then, no

¹ *Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 152.

rigid uniformity in the fashion of *tings*—the stone circle and the turfen mound were in simultaneous use within one small area. There is evidence that the same was the case in other Danish areas. On Erne's Hill, Quendale Bay, at the southern edge of Mainland of Shetland, is a striking illustration of the close relationship of the two types. A triple concentric ring of remarkable exactitude (fig. 7), it stands at the central point of 'a perfectly level plain of 2 or 3 acres' on the south-west slope of the hill, and 'considerably below the top.' The central ring, as is usual with stone circles, is less well preserved than the others, but enough remains to shew that it was a true circle of some 26 ft. in diameter, practically half the size of the medial ring (50 ft.), from which the outer ring is separated by an interspace of some 3 ft. only. The stones of the two larger rings—'common sandstone of the district,' from 2 to 6 ft. in length, 2 ft. wide, and rarely rising more than 18 ins. above the turf—are 'so smooth as to appear water-worn,' and excellently adapted for seats. Like one of the three *tings* in Unst (p. 349), this work also shews a definite entrance way on the south-east; diametrically opposite to this entrance the mass of stone lying about—though there is a 'noteworthy absence' otherwise of the small stone which litters most of the ground in the vicinity—suggested that they might be 'the remains of some more elaborate structure.' Possibly there was once a *θῶκος* here. In the neighbourhood are the ruined remains of other structures which speak of a once considerable population.¹