THE CIRCLE AND THE CROSS.

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Chapter V.

THE ACHEAN MOOT.

Circles Fossed and Unfossed—Various Views as to the Stone Circles—The Moot in Homer—The Shield of Achilles—The Moot in Phaeacia—The Posideum—The βοθρός*—The Posideum a Prytaneum—The* Θῶκος*—Formalism in the Homeric Moot—The* σκῆπτρον*—Peristaliths of undressed stone not necessarily of Bronze Age—No significance in the number of stones in the Circle—The Acheans of Homer a Celtic Race—The Homeric Moot modelled upon a Grave—The Greek Theatre and the* ἱερὸς κύκλος*—The Square Agora of historical Greece—The Athenian* Πνύξ*—Curtius' Excavations—Plutarch on the reconstruction of the Pnyx—Achean blood in Athens—The Agora in Thessaly.*

In the evolution of the sepulchral barrow the peristalithic ring was shown to be one of the latest forms. There is another class of megalithic monuments, the great stone circles, of which the form was obviously determined by that of the peristalithic ring-barrow, although repeated efforts have failed to establish their sepulchral purpose. Many *small* circles have been proved to be sepulchral, and of these a large proportion are fossed, some of them heavily fossed; while there are a few very large circles such as those of Stonehenge and Avebury and Arbor Low, Stenness and the Ring of Brogar, all conspicuously fossed, of which the purpose cannot be proved sepulchral. It is the differentiating feature of the circles now to be considered that they have no fosse whatever.

In no part of the world are such circles so numerous

and so well preserved as in the British Isles,[1] yet their age and their purpose are still matters of dispute. Authority is all but unanimous in attributing them to the age of Bronze at the latest, while there are three theories of their purpose more prominent than the rest : some writers, despite the lack of evidence, still maintain that they were sepulchral ; many believe them to have been built as astronomical observatories ; while the third party believe them to have been the moots of their builders. It is the purpose of the following chapters to provide proof that the last is the correct view, and to show also that their date is, as archaeology counts dates, very recent. Possibly there exist a few sepulchral cromlechs of the Bronze age or even earlier, but there is no evidence at all to show the circles now under consideration to be of such antiquity. On the other hand there is a mass of evidence, historical, documentary, linguistic, and archaeological, to prove that most of them, and probably all the more important of them, belong to the Iron age.

Homer explicitly tells us that the Acheans, and the various related tribes of the Greece of their time, used stone circles as moots. The Acheans were a Celtic people, specifically Cimbric Celts from the neighbourhood of Jutland, who entered Greece *circa* 1300 B.C. and dominated the country for more than 300 years.[2]

In Homeric Greece (*circa* 1000 B.C.) war and the moot divided between them the interests of the ruling class, and in these two arenas alone was distinction to be won.[3] The position of a leader (*βασιλεύς*) was gained indeed by strength of arm in battle, but it was retained only by eloquence in the moot.[4] Of the weapons and the art of war in that age there is nothing left to be said. Of the Homeric polity—a curious polity in which democracy was at issue with monarchy, and the aristocratic principle

[1] The total number has been put at 'some two hundred' (R. Munro, *Prehistoric Britain*, p. 192), but any estimate which fails to distinguish between the fossed and the unfossed circle is necessarily otiose.

[2] Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece* (1901).

[3] See for example *Il.* i, 490, of Achilles in his wrath—

οὔτε ποτ' εἰς ἀγορὴν πωλέσκετο κυδιάνειραν
οὔτε ποτ' ἐς πόλεμον. . . . . .

and *Il.* ii, 202, where the mere commoner is described as being

οὔτε ποτ' ἐν πολέμῳ ἐναρίθμιος, οὔτ' ἐνὶ βουλῇ.

[4] This, a commonplace of historical Athens, was equally true of all Greek communities at all times. Cp. Hesiod, *Theog.* 79, *sqq.* It was just as true of Saxon England ; *vide* J. R. Green, *Making of England* (1882), pp. 193-4.

of heredity was at issue with the democratic principle of election—little can be said that is new. To the importance of the moot much attention has been given, as also to its very peculiar rules of procedure; but little or no notice has yet been taken of its plan.

Apart from incidental allusions, Homer twice sketches for us the moot of his day. In the *Iliad* is a *genre* picture, descriptive of a typical moot in a typical community of the time. In the *Odyssey* is a sketch of the particular moot of a particular city of exceptional importance. It could be wished that both descriptions were more detailed, but that is no reason why due weight should not be given to the little that is said.

The essential feature was the session of the notables[1] in a circle. They sat upon seats of stone, the ἱερὸς κύκλος,[2] the commonalty gathering around outside the circle[3] to look and listen. The circle of seats might be further provided with a peristalith of standing stones, but this was unnecessary and exceptional.

Engraved upon the shield of Achilles were two scenes of civic life. The one shewed a community (πόλις) at war, the other a community at peace; and as types of the happenings of peace the artist selected a wedding and a court of law. Called to adjudicate in a case of repudiated debt, the notables 'were sitting upon the smooth stones in the sacred circle.'[4] It was 'in the *agora*,' and the commonalty swarmed round to watch the proceedings. There was therefore no impediment to their sight or hearing, no wall or fosse about the ἱερὸς κύκλος. As heralds were needed to keep back the throng,[5] there was

[1] Γέροντες. The word has here no necessary reference to age, albeit age gave a natural priority; *e.g.* *Odyss.* ii, 15, where the debate is opened by Aegyptius 'bowed with years.' It means no more than the Latin *senatores* and the Anglo-Saxon ealdormen.

[2] So in Euripides occurs (*Orestes* 919) ἀγορᾶς κύκλος, and in Sophocles (*Oed. Tyran*, 161) κυκλόεντ' ἀγορᾶς θρόνον θάσσει (Ἄρτεμις).

[3] It is usual and convenient to speak of the whole as the ἀγορά, but the κύκλος was a separate thing. The term ἄγορα (from the root of ἀγείρειν) is exactly parallel with 'moot' (from 'meet'); and from ἀγορα came ἀγορεύειν, 'to debate, make a speech,' exactly as from the substantive 'moot' comes the verb 'to moot,' and exactly as the word 'ring' has produced the verb 'to harangue.'

[4] *Iliad* xviii, 497, ἥατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῷ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ. 'Polished,' the usual rendering of ξεστός, is misleading. It is the stock Homeric epithet of dining-tables, but no one would maintain that those tables resembled polished mahogany. The word rather means 'knapped,' *i.e.* rough-dressed, and Homer would doubtless have applied it to the stone-dressed sarsens of Stonehenge.

[5] *Iliad* xviii, 504, κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαον ἐρήτυον. Cp. *Iliad* ii, 96.

no barrier of any sort.[1] Moreover as heralds were unarmed and controlled the crowd by voice only,[2] it appears that it was not permitted to carry arms in the moot.[3] We are explicitly told that the court was circular and that it was a *locus consecratus*. The account further implies that the primary purpose of the civic moot was that of a court of law, for there could hardly be a more frequent matter of dispute than a repudiated debt. The whole purpose of the imagined artist of the shield was obviously to portray a *typical* scene, not one that was in any detail unusual.[4]

The moot of the sea-faring Phaeacians in Scheria lay close beside their port[5] and immediately without the city's gates, beside the only road leading thereto.[6] There was the usual circle of smooth stones[7] to serve as seats for the moot-men, but further there were other great stones bedded in the soil around it.[8] These were different from those which served as seats, for they were untouched.[9] There was no vallum, fosse, or any sort of screen or barrier between the ἱερὸς κύκλος and its surroundings, and as

[1] The same follows from the scene with Thersites in *Iliad* ii, 211, *sqq*. Thersites was one of the crowd outside the κύκλος, but he was able to intervene in the debate of the elders.

[2] *Iliad* ii, 97, βοόωντες. The requirements of the moot are sufficient explanation of the value attached in Homer to the possession of a powerful voice. The name of κηρυξ literally signifies 'crier,' and the stock Homeric epithet is λιγυφθογγος.

[3] The sword might be worn, but it might not be drawn. Had Achilles drawn his sword, the act would have broken up the moot (*Iliad* i, 190). Telemachus again comes to the moot armed with sword and spear (*Odyss.* ii, 1-11), but he brought with him also a couple of hounds. Even on the occasion of a moot of the Trojans during the siege of Troy, the commonalty at any rate were unarmed (*Iliad* ii, 808).

[4] Bishop Browne (*Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Dunecht*, 1921, p. 34) declines to accept the Homeric picture as evidence that the ἱερὸς κύκλος was the normal judicial moot, averring that repudiation of a debt was a matter beyond the competence of the head of the community, and for that reason referred to the collective elders. If the 'head of the community' were not competent to deal with so commonplace a matter as this, it is not obvious that he was competent to deal with any case whatever, and *every* case must have required the judgment of the elders; in which event the elders certainly constituted the normal court for *all* offences, and the picture of the shield is a normal and typical scene of civil life. The 'head of the community' in Achean times was not an autocrat, but a *princeps* (Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* i, 31). Alcinous was βασιλεύς in Phaeacia, but there were twelve other βασιλεῖς (*Od.* viii, 390) who were his unquestioned assessors.

[5] *Odyss.* viii, 5, παρὰ νηυσὶ τέτυκτο. Cp. *ibid.* vi, 266.

[6] The city is described as built upon a promontory accessible by one road only, on right and left of which the sea formed bays which served for harbours (*Odyss.* vi, 262-7).

[7] *Odyss.* viii, 6, καθῖζον ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοισι.

[8] *Odyss.* vi, 267, ῥυτοῖσιν λάεσσι κατωρυχέεσσ' ἀραρυῖα. The word ἀραρυῖα means 'provided with,' not 'walled.' Cp. *Il.* xv, 737, πολις πυργοῖς ἀραρυῖα; *Odyss.* vii, 45, τείχεα σκολόπεσσιν ἀρηρότα.

[9] The seats are λίθοι, the other stones are λᾶες, and the different words imply a difference in size. The big stones are

before the townsfolk crowd all the vicinity[1] to watch the proceedings. As before the heralds are present.[2] The proceedings comprised the formal introduction of the stranger Ulysses to the notables, and thereafter a programme of entertainment, foot-races, discus-throwing, ball-play, dancing, and music. In the centre of the ἱερὸς κύκλος was a καλὸν Ποσιδηΐον.[3] What was this?

It was something consecrated to the god Poseidon, but it certainly was not a 'temple of Poseidon,'[4] for any such structure, however primitive, if it stood anywhere within the ἱερὸς κύκλος, would have interrupted the sight and the hearing not of the onlookers only, but of the notables in session, and would have completely spoilt for some of them the various items in the programme. It was rather an 'altar of Poseidon,' and even so no altar as that is commonly envisaged, but the earlier kind of altar which was rather a hearth or a pit (βοθρός). A construction of this kind would allow every member of the council to see and hear every other, and it would not materially interfere with any such sports as Homer's account describes. Speaking of the dance the poet expressly tells us that as a preliminary 'the dancing-floor was smoothed,'[5] and the reference is probably to sweeping

not called ξεστοί; the stone seats are always so called. In front of Nestor's palace in Pylos were stone seats (ξεστοὶ λίθοι) so highly finished that they 'glistened as if oiled' (*Odyss.* iii, 406); but the big stones (λαες) were natural blocks taken (ρυτοί) as they were found. Cp. *Odyss.* xiv, 10, where Eumaeus' hog-yard is built ρυτοῖσιν λάεσσι, *i.e.* of 'Cyclopean' masonry, not of squared stone. One may see just such 'Cyclopean' pig-styes and cow-sheds in West Cornwall to-day. The epithet κατωρυχής certainly suggests that the stones at Scheria were set pillar-wise rather than in a contiguous ring, though examples are forthcoming (ch. x) to shew that either way was permissible in a moot-circle.

[1] *Odyss.* viii, 16, ἀγοραί τε καὶ ἕδραι, 'every place where men could gather and sit.' So the κύκλος was merely the central space (μέσση ἀγορή, *Odyss.* ii, 37), and all the surrounding ground could be included in the name of ἀγορα. From other passages it appears that the circle could specifically be called also βουλή (*Iliad* ii, 53, 84) or θωκος, 'session' (*Odyss.* ii, 26). Even the commonalty sat (cf. *Iliad* ii, 96, 99, 211), which Curtius (*Hist. Greece*, Eng. trans. 1868, i, 151) mistakenly took as a proof of their growing political importance. More correctly it was a survival from an importance already largely lost. Only the notables were provided with something to sit upon.

[2] *Odyss.* viii, 8, 107, 261, 418.

[3] *Odyss.* vi, 266.

[4] It is so rendered in Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*.

[5] *Odyss.* viii, 260, λείηναν δὲ χορόν, καλὸν δ' εὔρυναν ἀγῶνα. Cp. the term κονίστρα, 'sanded floor,' sometimes applied to the orchestra. The θυμέλη was at times boarded over, so that it should not interfere with the dancers (Guhl and Koner, *Life of the Greeks and Romans*, Eng. trans., p. 130). The word χορός is used again in *Odyss.* vi, 65 with plain reference to the ἱερὸς κύκλος. In *Iliad* xviii, 376 ἄγων is used as the equivalent of ἀγορά (θεῶν), and according to the grammarian Eustathius ἄγων was the usual term for ἀγορά amongst the Boeotians.

up the heap of loose ashes which would necessarily accumulate about the central 'altar': they would be swept into the βοθρός, or scattered evenly about, so as to leave a dancing-floor that was at once wide and smooth, as we are told it was.

It is doubtful whether any passage in Homer of necessity implies any other kind of 'altar' than this. On the other hand the poet was quite familiar with the βοθρός, for he makes Ulysses 'dig' one and offer sacrifice therein when desirous to call up the ghost of Tiresias.[1] It was merely a hole in the ground, dug for the occasion.[2] One is told that such pits were necessary in the cult of the dead and the gods of the dead; but if authority be right in identifying the βοθρός in the court of the palace of Tiryns with the altar (βωμός) of Zeus Herceius of the Homeric poems,[3] such pits must have been used in the Homeric age even in the cult of the *Di Superi*.[4]

In the centre of the court of the palace at Tiryns was a small rectangular pavement of limestone slabs rising some ten inches above the general floor.[5] In the centre of this pavement was a circular hole (diam. $45\frac{11}{16}$—$47\frac{11}{16}$in.) steined with rudely fashioned blocks of sandstone to a depth of 35 inches. Below this 'were neither side-walls nor masonry nor any artificial floor,' but the natural rock had been excavated to a depth of 3 ft. more, so as to form a rough bowl-like cavity. The discoverer, who unfortunately has not put on record the character of the filling of this cavity, at first imagined that he had found a well, but on further investigation rightly pronounced it to be a sacrificial pit, the Homeric βωμός of Zeus Herceius. The kerb of the βοθρός was flush with the surrounding pavement.[6]

[1] *Odyss.* x, 517, xi, 25, βοθρὸν ὄρυξε. It was in the remote West, 'where is the people and the city of the warrior Cimmerians, lapped in mist and cloud.' We shall presently find (ch. viii) just such βοθροί in just such a land of the remote West.

[2] So Periander burns, as an offering to his dead wife Melissa, the finery of the women of Corinth ες ὄρυγμα συμφορήσας, *i.e.* in a βοθρός dug for the occasion (Herod. v, 92).

[3] *Odyss.* xxii, 334, in the palace of Ulysses in Ithaca.

[4] So they were subsequently. There was one in the Asklepion at Athens, another in Samothrace, and yet others in the theatres at Peiraeus and Epidaurus.

[5] As βωμός (from the root of βαίνειν) originally meant 'a step, something to stand on,' it was naturally applied to such a platform as this, and as naturally extended in later times to the familiar pedestal-altars which took the place (in many rituals) of the sunken βοθρός. So in *Il.* viii, 48, βωμὸς θυήεις. Intermediate are its uses for the 'pedestal' of a statue (*Odyss.* vii, 100), and for the 'platform' or 'pavement' whereon stood the war-chariot when not in use (*Il.* viii, 441).

[6] Schliemann, *Tiryns* (1886), pp. 337-40.

The *βοθρός* which Ulysses dug 'in the land of the Cimmerians,' as we are twice told, was some 15 inches only in diameter.[1] Such things therefore might be very small, and a pit very much smaller than that at Tiryns might quite legitimately be spoken of as a 'fine' one

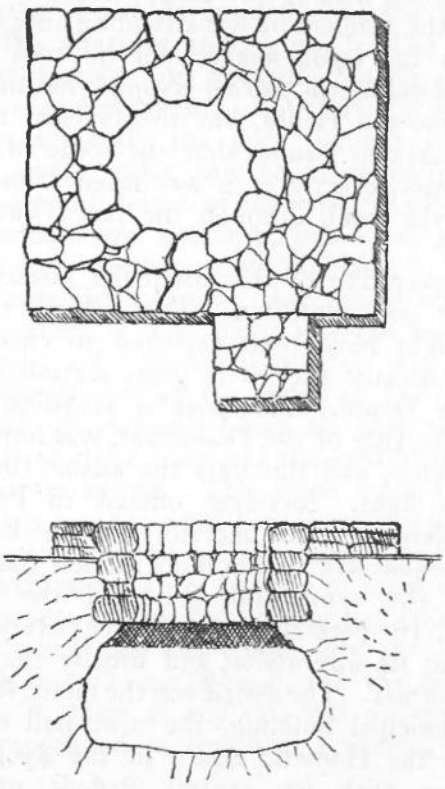


FIG. 1. THE *Bothros* OF THE PALACE OF TIRYNS: PLAN AND SECTION
(After Schliemann, by kind permission of Mr. John Murray).

(*καλόν*). Homer's narrative does not admit of the presence, in the sacred circle of Scheria, of anything bulky or obtrusive. He does not mention any *βοθρός* at all in the *κύκλος* figured on the shield of Achilles; it was doubt-

[1] *Odyss.* x, 517, *πυγούσιον ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα*; cp. *ibid.*, xi, 25. The precise length of the *πυγων* is given as 1·2135 ft., practically 1 ft. 2½ in.

less there, for that also was a ἱερὸς κύκλος, but it was insignificant, like the πόλις to which it belonged. Some sort of βοθρός was as essential to the κύκλος as is an altar to a church, and like the latter it would commonly be taken for granted. It would be mentioned only when, like the βοθρός of Scheria, it was of unusual size or elaboration.

Agamemnon, making the oath, seals it by the blood of a ram. At the moment he was attending an *agora*,[1] and was therefore in the ἱερὸς κύκλος, for he took part in the debate.[2] Standing ἐν μέσσῃ ἀγορῇ[3] he slew the ram, invoking Zeus and Helios, but also Ge and the Erinyes.[4] It is reasonable to assume that the scene of the sacrifice was the βοθρός, exactly as it was when Ulysses sacrificed his ram to the dead, although the fact is not specifically mentioned.

The consecration of this particular κύκλος of Scheria was to the god Poseidon. That deity the men of Phaeacia might have been expected to choose for their patron god because they were great sea-folk.[5] But there was another reason. The poet is at pains to explain[6] that Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, was himself a grandson of Poseidon, and this puts the καλὸν Ποσιδήϊον in a wholly new light. Sacrifices offered to Poseidon were sacrifices offered to the ancestors of the king, and the καλὸν Ποσιδηϊον was neither more nor less than the Achean πρυτανεῖον, the symbolical grave of the founder[7] of the State. In post-Homeric Greece every πόλις had its ἀγορά and its πρυτανεῖον, and usually the latter stood within the former. The ἀγορά was the moot, the πρυτανεῖον was the municipal building, the town-hall of that time. Even so in the Homeric Age: in the ἀγορά stood the ἱερὸς κύκλος with its central βοθρός or symbolical founder's tomb. The ἱερὸς κύκλος was the town-hall of its day: the ἱερὸς κύκλος was modelled upon the barrows or graves of great men.

[1] *Iliad* xix, 249.

[2] *Ibid.* v, 78.

[3] *Ibid.* v, 249.

[4] *Ibid.* v, 258-260.

[5] *Odyss.* vi, 270-1.

[6] The actual founder was Nausithous, son of Poseidon, and father of Alcinoüs, (*Odyss.* vii, 56-66), but in *Odyss.* xiii, 130 Poseidon claims the Phaeacians as his own.

[7] There are traces of a time when Poseidon was regarded as a Chthonic deity (*e.g.*, *Odyss.* iii, 6, where Nestor sacrifices to him black bulls) and also as peculiarly the builder of cities (as when he built Troy), *i.e.* god of the 'founder's tomb' upon which the city was reared.

The Trojans had an *agora* upon their citadel-hill, at the gates of the royal palace.[1] Even the forces which sailed with Agamemnon to Troy had each their own, and it lay close beside the spot where was beached their leader's vessel. Those of the Danai,[2] the Myrmidons, and the Pylians are mentioned. But there is nothing said to add to our knowledge of the form of the thing, save that the *agora* of the Myrmidons was the place 'where stood also the altars of their gods.'[3] The altars of an expeditionary force would assuredly not be anything very imposing or very permanent. But the point of importance is that very evidently the poet thought of a moot as essential to every πόλις and to every body of civilised beings. It is proof indeed of the savagery of the Cyclopes that they neither sow nor reap, but a yet greater proof is that they have neither moots nor laws.[4] 'Moot' and 'law' were correlative terms; there could not be the one without the other.[5] The moot was the necessary scene of every public act. Its usual position was at the gates of the community or at the gates of the chieftain—at the threshold of authority—and all that was necessary was the circle of stone seats and the central βοθρός which made the circle sacred. The stone seats were tooled: so much at any rate the word ξεστός must imply, though it says nothing of the kind of tool used. Probably all the other seats were much alike, but one of them was of special dignity, for when Telemachus at long last asserts his birthright as prince in Ithaca and comes into the ἱερὸς κύκλος, he 'sat in his father's seat (θῶκος), and the notables made way for him.'[6] Here at any rate was one particular seat which was recognised as the King's throne, the 'chair.'

[1] *Iliad* ii, 788, Ἰλίου ἐν πόλει ἄκρῃ. . . . παρα Πριάμοιο θύρῃσι. Cp. *ibid.* vii, 345, *Odyss.* viii, 503-4.

[2] *Il.* vii, 383, νηὶ παρα πρύμνῃ Ἀγαμέμνονος.

[3] *Il.* xi, 808, τῃ δῃ καί σφι θεων ἐτετεύχατο βωμοί.

[4] *Odyss.* ix, 112, τοῖσιν δ' οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουληφοροι οὔτε θέμιστες.

[5] Cp. *Il.* xi, 107, ἵνα σφ ἀγορή τε θέμις τε. In *Odyss.* ii, 69 Themis is called the presiding deity of the *agora*, and in *Il.* xx, 4 she actually convenes the assembly of the immortals in Olympus. In *Theog.* 430, *sqq.* Hesiod agrees with Sophocles (*O.T.* 161) in making Hecate (Artemis) the presiding goddess; but in *ibid.* 901 he calls Themis the mother of Dike (Justice), and in *ibid.* 434 he uses δίκη as a synonym for the moot itself, ἐν τε δίκῃ βασιλεῦσι πάρ αἰδοίοισι καθίζει (Ἑκάτη). On the significance of δίκη, see Harrison, *Themis* (1912), p. 482.

[6] *Odyss.* ii, 14, ἕζετο δ ἐν πατρος θώκῳ, εἶξαν δὲ γέροντες. The word θωκος suggests something different from the ordinary run of the seats. It is used again of the council of the gods in Olympus (*Odyss.* v. 3, θωκόνδε καθίζανον; cf. *Il.* viii, 439, θεων δ' ἐξίκετο θώκους), and generally of the 'seats of

Ulysses and Diomede, being severely wounded and therefore unfit to walk more than is imperative, 'sit down at the entry of the moot.'[1] As Ulysses presently takes part in the ensuing debate, it is clear that he was sitting within the ἱερὸς κύκλος. It is perhaps permissible to infer that the moot had but one entrance, that the wounded men took the seats immediately next the entrance, and that such a procedure was not usual with men of such distinction,[2] *i.e.*, that the more honourable seats were those furthest from the entrance. If so, the most honourable seat of all, the θῶκος, was that directly opposite to the entrance, at the middle point of the whole penannular circle of seats.[3] Such was its position in the κύκλος at Ithaca, for Telemachus, rising from the θῶκος to speak, was ἐν μέσσῃ ἀγορῇ.[4]

Very remarkable is the suggestion of rigid formality pervading all mention of the moot and of the procedure therein. Every smallest detail is the outcome of long tradition, and all is done according to precedent. Every one attending it must be seated,[5] but anyone addressing the moot must rise, and no one else might do so.[6] Any speaker might plead privilege if in debate he traversed the wishes of those who elsewhere were his superiors in authority.[7] No business could be done after sundown, and to call a moot after that hour entailed disastrous consequences.[8] It was proper to attend the moot, whether as an elder or as an athlete, in one's best clothes.[9] Even

the mighty,' gods, nymphs, kings and high officials. See Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon*. That it was a regular feature of the ἱερὸς κύκλος is suggested by *Odyss.* ii, 26; for many a long year there had been in Ithaca οὔτε ἀγορὴ οὔτε θῶκος, as we might say 'neither court nor bench.' Sophocles (*O.T.* 161) calls it θρόνος.

[1] *Il.* xix, 50, καὶ δὲ μετὰ πρωτῃ ἀγορῇ ἵζοντο.

[2] Ulysses was himself a σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς (*Odyss.* v, 9).

[3] Such appears to have been the rule amongst the ancient Germans, as it is to this day in England in the case of formal banquets. So it was in the Greek theatre.

[4] *Odyss.* ii, 37.

[5] Therefore ἀγορὰν καθίζειν is the contrary of ἀγορὰν λύειν (*Odyss.* ii, 69). It is expressly mentioned that when the Trojans assembled in moot to discuss the reappearance of Achilles, they were too scared to sit down: ὀρθῶν δ' ἐσταότων ἀγορὴ γένετ', οὐδέ τις ἔτλη ἕζεσθαι (*Iliad* xviii, 245).

[6] From *Il.* ii, 211 it is clear that even Thersites stands up to speak. The same rule prevailed in historical Athens (Demos. *De Corona* 169, πᾶς ὁ δῆμος ἄνω καθῆτο), and apparently even in Sparta (Thuc. i, 87, ἀναστάντες διέστησαν).

[7] *Il.* ix, 33, where young Diomede moves to reject the resolution moved by his generalissimo Agamemnon, ἡ θέμις ἐστίν, ἄναξ, ἀγορῇ.

[8] *Odyss.* iii, 138, viii, 417. So in historical Athens: nothing could be done at the moment of the receipt of the news of the fall of Elatea, ἑσπέρα μὲν γὰρ ἦν (Demos. *De Corona*, 169). So also in Rome: *solis occasus suprema tempestas esto.*

[9] *Odyss.* vi, 60-65.

the number of the heralds is apparently fixed: they are nine,[1] and nine also is the number of the 'stewards' who superintend the games at Scheria.[2] Most of all does formality shew itself in connexion with the mace (*σκῆπτρον*). It is synonymous with judgment,[3] a thing of divine provenance.[4] The moot cannot be convened save by virtue of this symbol,[5] and no man may refuse to obey its summons. No speaker may 'address the House' without it: a herald places it in the speaker's hand, and presently passes it on to another.[6] To throw it down marks the end of a speech.[7] It is 'golden,' 'set with studs of gold.'[8]

It is impossible not to recognise in it 'that mysterious, but often highly ornamental object, the so-called *bâton de commandement*,' known as early as the so-called Solutrean age, and a common find in the Magdalenian period.[9] It is equally impossible not to recognise in it the ancestor of the mace which holds so essential a place in the moots of modern England, in parliamentary and in civic business.[10]

It is abundantly clear from Homer's language that the stones which served for seats were dressed to fit them for that purpose. It is equally clear that the circle of standing stones which was to be seen in the moot of Scheria was not essential. It was merely a decorative accessory[11], an exceptional feature, not to be looked for in the typical moot. And it is clear also that these standing stones were not tooled.

Now as the Acheans were well acquainted with the use of iron, it follows that circles of untooled standing stones were habitually constructed by a people who were familiar with iron; and that the same people used tooled stones

[1] *Il.* ii, 96.

[2] *Odyss.* viii, 258, *αἰσυμνῆται δὲ κριτοὶ ἐννέα.* They seem to be distinct from the heralds (*κήρυκες*) and of greater dignity. The style of *αἰσυμνήτης* survived into classical times as that of the chief magistrates of certain Greek communities, and in some cases their number was again nine. It was the number also of the Athenian archons. What is the connexion between these facts?

[3] *Il.* ii. 206, *σκῆπτρόν τ' ἠδὲ θέμιστας.*

[4] *Il.* ii, 101.

[5] *Il.* xviii, 498, xxiii, 507; *Odyss.* ii, 37.

[6] *Il.* i, 245; *Odyss.* ii, 80.

[7] *Il.* ii, 268, i, 246.

[8] In historical times it was replaced by the bugle; cf. the Roman *buccina* and the Saxon moot-horn.

[9] R. Munro, *Prehistoric Britain*, p. 95.

[10] The original also, in all probability, of the staff carried by the verger before any of the clergy who may be about to address the congregation either from the lectern or from the pulpit.

[11] Had there been any hidden meaning in the peristalithic stones, *e.g.* in their number, the poet could scarcely have passed by the opportunity for enlarging upon it.

(ξεστοὶ λίθοι) and untooled stones (ῥυτοὶ λᾶες) in one and the same construction. Therefore the fact that a circle is built of unhewn stones is no proof that it belongs to the age of Stone, or even to the age of Bronze. The use of untooled stones for such monuments may have been, and probably was, a survival from the age of Stone; but that is quite another matter.

Further, as the untooled standing stones were no essential feature of the moot, but an adjunct only, it follows that all the care and study which have been expended upon them have been beside the mark, and there is no likelihood that any significance attached to their number, size, or precise arrangement. These would vary with the means, ambition, and whim of the community which reared them, possibly with tribal custom, assuredly with the locality and the kind of stone available. The essentials were the circle of stone seats and the βοθρός only. It is for these that archaeology must search, and seeing that time has dealt so hardly with the mightier unhewn stones of the peristalith, there is little chance that the smaller stones of the ἱερὸς κύκλος will have escaped very often. They offered themselves too readily to the road-mender and to the builder, not only because of their handier size, but because also they were dressed into convenient shape. There will be adduced later indisputable cases of their survival, albeit not on Greek soil. Meanwhile it is to be remembered that wherever is found the peristalith, there may have existed also the circle of seats within it. The peristalith is not itself the moot, nor any necessary part thereof, but it may mark the spot where once was a moot. Probably there were many moots even in Greece, which, like that of the little πόλις of the shield, never boasted a peristalith at all. Such indeed must have been the case wherever suitable stone was scarce. So far from typical was the elaborate moot of the Phaeacians that even Ulysses, with all his wide experience of men and cities, viewed it with admiration.[1]

Where had Homer seen or heard of a megalithic circle? There are few or none to be found in Europe to-day out-

[1] *Odyss.* vii, 44, θαύμαζεν.

side the lands in the north-west of the Continent once occupied, if not still occupied, by Brythonic peoples. Sir William Ridgeway has established the fact that the Acheans of Homer were actually a Brythonic tribe of invaders from the north-west of Europe, and this without calling in as evidence these pictures of the Achean moot, which entirely corroborate his conclusions. The Homeric poems were composed about 1000 B.C. So early then the stone moot-circle was so familiar to the poet's mind that he could neither envisage moots of any other kind, nor conceive a civilised community which had not its own ἱερὸς κύκλος.

It was shewn in an earlier chapter (ch. iii) that, while the peristalithic mound is in point of evolution earlier than the flat peristalithic cromlech, both forms might be expected to be in simultaneous use. Homer confirms the statement, for while his ἱερὸς κύκλος, of the later type, is represented as being in customary use for moots, his heroes are buried under peristalithic mounds of the older type.[1] His moot-circle is merely the peristalithic cromlech adapted to a special purpose. The sepulchral cromlech, because it was a private place, was frequently, if not invariably, fossed; the moot-circle was always unfossed, because it was a public place. The consecration of the sepulchral cromlech is the actual grave of the person therein buried; that of the moot-circle is a symbolical grave. Paganism knew of no necessary distinction between an altar and a grave. The actual grave of the sepulchral cromlech might also be an altar, and the altar of the moot-circle was the βοθρός which symbolised a grave.

Sir W. Ridgeway has demonstrated[2] that the Greek theatre was developed out of the barrow, was in fact a symbolical barrow of highly specialised design to accommodate a great concourse of spectators assembled to witness a peculiar kind of performance in honour of the dead. Its central point was the θυμελη, 'a true altar for offering burnt-sacrifice to the gods,' but on occasion serving to represent a tomb. About it lay the flat circular ὀρχήστρα where the chorus performed its ceremonial dances; and round this again rose one behind another the seats of the

[1] For example, of Patroclus' barrow (*Iliad* xxiii, 255), θεμείλιά τε προβάλοντο.

[2] *Origin of Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1910).

cavea. The theatre was commonly constructed in the sloping flank of a hill[1] and at the lower side of the whole rose the stage.

Who can fail to recognise in the plan of such a theatre that of the ἱερὸς κύκλος of Homer ? The βοθρός answers to the θυμέλη, or in some cases, as for example at Peiraeus, remains unaltered.[2] The κύκλος itself is intact in the

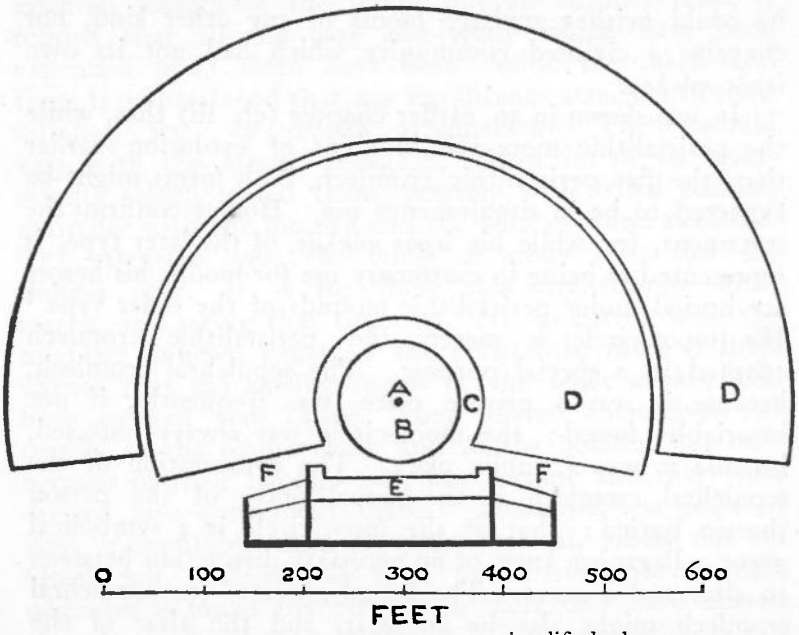


FIG. 2. THEATRE OF EPIDAURUS : simplified plan.

A, Θυμέλη (βοθρός) ; B, Ὀρχήστρα ringed by circle of flat stones ; C, Εὔριπος (canal) ; D, Tiers of seats in *cavea* ; E, Stage ; FF, Παροδοί.

[1] One of the very few Greek examples to the contrary is the theatre of Mantinea, 'where the natural height has been supplied by an artificial one, which simply consists of an earth wall propped by surrounding walls of polygonal stones' (Guhl and Koner, *Life of the Greeks and Romans*, Eng. trans., p. 123). From the method of construction it followed that the floor of the theatre was normally sunk below the natural surface, a characteristic also of the Latin *circus*.

[2] See Haigh, *Attic Theatre* (1907), pp. 103, 108. It has been usual to regard these small pits as the sockets in which were placed altars. Sir W. Ridgeway suggested (*Origin of Tragedy*, p. 43) that they 'may well represent a βοθρός in which the offerings to dead heroes were placed.' It is not impossible that the peculiar diamond inlaid about the θυμέλη in the orchestra of the Dionysiac theatre in Athens may be a conventional survival of such a rectangular pavement as surrounded the βοθρός in the palace of Tiryns.

fully circular ὀρχήστρα. Of the ξεστοὶ λίθοι about a third have been supplanted by the stage, but the residue remain in the chairs of office round the *podium*, where sat the civic dignitaries, as they had sat in Achean times in the only formal seats provided. Midmost, in the place of honour, was the chair of the high priest of Dionysus, answering to the Homeric θῶκος. Behind was gathered the general audience upon ἀναβαθμοί, mere steps in the slope out of which was hollowed the *cavea*. The Greek theatre was but the ἱερὸς κύκλος revived,[1] after a long interval perhaps, for a special purpose, precisely as the amphitheatre of Italy was the primitive *circus* revived after a long interval for a special purpose (ch. vi). In Greece the purpose was the expression of a highly spiritualised form of ancestor-worship, the abstract cult of Death under the name of Dionysus replacing the concrete cults of many individual dead each in his own locality; and again we have a parallel in that βοθρός which Alcinous had consecrated to his reputed ancestor Poseidon. The parallelism becomes complete when it is recalled that the theatre subserved many other municipal purposes: presentations were made therein, public meetings on various matters were there convened, the theatre almost completely superseded the Pnyx as the municipal moot before the close of the fourth century B.C., and yet later generations actually made use of it as a place of burial.[2]

This view of the ultimate origin of the Dionysiac theatre is corroborated by excavation. Beneath the fourth-century ὀρχήστρα (diam. 64 ft. 4 in.) Dr. Dörpfeld found the remains of an earlier one, a mere circle (diam. 78 ft. 9 in.) without accessories; and the ὀρχήστρα of the theatre of Epidaurus, a structure in size practically identical with that of Athens, is still 'a complete circle defined by a ring of flat stones.' It gives point also to the otherwise meaningless remark of Pollux (viii, 132) that the Pnyx was

[1] The Dionysiac theatre, usually regarded as the oldest of the series, assumed its final form only towards 340 B.C., though there had been some sort of theatre on the site for many years before.

[2] Smith's *Dict. Classical Antiqs.* (1890), ii, 820*a*. Sepulchral inscriptions have been found within it, which would seem of necessity to presume actual interments. Plutarch (*Timoleon* 38) speaks of the use as a moot of the theatre of Syracuse in the last years of Timoleon, who died 339 B.C. So Cornelius Nepos (xx, 4): *veniebat in theatrum, cum ibi concilium populi haberetur.* For the use of the theatre for municipal purposes in Antioch in first century A.D., see Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* viii, § 3, v, § 2.

'built in accordance with the simplicity of the past rather than with the elaboration of a theatre.' Clearly Pollux knew moot and theatre to be most intimately related.[1] And this again is illustrated by the very latest discoveries on the site of ancient Sparta, which shew that the place selected for the inscriptions recording the names of the community's yearly magistrates was the eastern retaining wall of the theatre.[2]

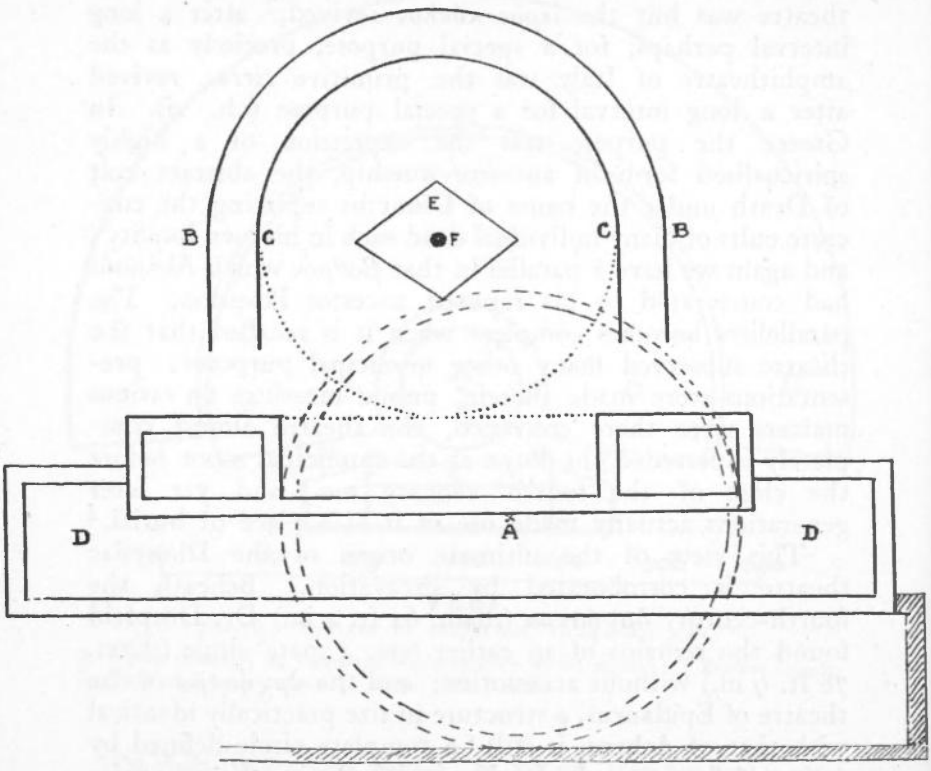


FIG. 3. DIONYSIAC THEATRE, ATHENS: THE OLDER AND NEWER ORCHESTRAS.

A, Centre of the older orchestra (radius 78 ft. 9 ins.); BB, podium of Dionysiac theatre (340 B.C.) with seats of state; CC, Dionysiac orchestra (radius, 64 ft. 4 ins.); DD, Stage buildings; E, the 'Diamond'; F, Θυμέλη.

[1] Miss Jane Harrison (*Mythology and Monts. of Ancient Athens*, pp. 108-110) remarks, as a fact 'of the utmost importance,' that 'an ancient place of assembly and an ancient theatre had much in common, and were in structure practically the same in construction.'

[2] *The Times*, 13 Aug., 1924. The lists discovered to date 'early in the second century of our era.'

The normal *agora* of historical Greece was of rectangular plan,[1] as for example at Olympia, where one might look to find preserved the most archaic tradition in such matters. The reason for the difference is obvious: the circle-moot of the Acheans was an alien thing, forced upon Greece for a time, but ultimately supplanted by the native rectangular form, which is to be seen as far back as the theatral areas of Cnossos and Phaestos in Crete.[2] But in places, and probably in many of the smaller communities, the Achean circle-moot would certainly persist as the scene of all communal business and all communal ritual. The traditional wagon-stage of Thespis was in all likelihood drawn up at the entrance-way of these local circles[3] for the recurrent celebration of the great deeds of the local hero, and so originated that which has to this day remained the essential plan of all theatres the world over. When Peisistratus substituted for these unrehearsed performances at the multitude of local centres one pan-Athenaic performance (the *Dionysia*) in Athens, he was but repeating the action of Theseus in regard to the *prytanea* and with precisely the same purpose, *i.e.* the suppression of all local ancestor-cults.

Greece provides one unquestionable case of a circle-moot surviving into historical times, and that is the meeting-place of the Athenian *ecclesia*, the Pnyx.

There is no saying when the Pnyx first began to be used as the place of assembly. Its precursor was the Old Agora, upon which was later built the Odeum of Herodes Atticus. This was a roofed theatre, but its ground-plan was almost

[1] Vitruvius v, i. 1, *Graeci in quadrato . . . fora constituunt.*

[2] If references to the circle-moot in historical Greece are few, references to *loca consecrata* of the inevitable Celtic circular plan are numerous, especially in Pausanias: II, iii, 6-7, a *περίβολος λίθων* near the river Cheimarrhus, consecrated to *Chthonic* deities; II, xxxiv, 10-11, 'enclosures of large *unhewn* stones,' sacred to Demeter *Chthonia*, near Hermion; IX, viii, 3, a small *περίβολος λίθων* 'with pillars in it' between Thebes and Potniae; IX, xix, 2, 'a place surrounded by *unhewn* stones' near Glisas (a ruinated fortress of Mycenaean character). His references to open-air sanctuaries on hill-tops are many; usually they were sacred to Helios, to Apollo, or to Demeter, but there was one *ἱερὸν ἐν ὑπαιθρίῳ* (IX. xxxiii, 1-3) sacred to the Praxidicae on Mt. Tilphusius. Stone circles were not likely to interest a Greek, because of their lack of architectural merit. Pausanias' pages abound in references to tombs of every kind and to the customs thereto attaching, some of them the precise doubles of customs lately surviving in connexion with similar tombs (barrows, etc.) in England. Stukeley made use (*Abury*, p. 5, etc.) of some of these to support his own theories about *dracontia*, occasionally straining Pausanias' words to that end.

[3] As in Italy the *circus* was the accustomed scene of the annual *exodium*. See Juvenal iii, 106, and below, p. 323.

identical with that of the unroofed Dionysiac theatre, and very possibly the shape of the Old Agora suggested its being thus utilised. It lay in the usual position of an Homeric moot, close to the entrance of its community, the original πόλις on the Acropolis.[1] The growth of that community presently demanding a more spacious place of assembly, this was found in the Pnyx; and this latter name, of uncertain origin,[2] came to be the specific name of the new moot, while the name of *Agora* was applied to the intervening space between the Pnyx and the Acropolis, where was gathered most of the market-business of Athens. In this area stood the original shrine of Dionysus ('in-the-marshes') on a spot known as the Old Orchestra, upon which was later built another Odeum (of Agrippa).[3]

The new moot, the scene of the triumphs of the Attic Ten, lay upon the north-eastern slope of the hill of the Pnyx. The highest part of its area was on the south side, whence it fell gently away to the Agora on the north-east, its outer edge built up with a semicircular wall of polygonal stone, still standing to a height of some 15 ft., so as to secure a more nearly horizontal surface.[4] Along the upper side the outcrop of natural rock was dressed and faced with another wall which formed at the middle point a re-entering angle of 158°, in which stood the βῆμα, the platform from which the speakers addressed the assembly. This was a block of natural rock shaped to a rectangular figure, which from a base of three successive steps rose to a height of some 20 ft. above the ground. The area in front of it had the figure of three-fifths of a circle, the distance from the *bema* to the edge of the area varying from 60 yards at the sides to 80 yards at the centre. The area would accommodate the whole electoral population of the city, for the floor-space was some 6,230 square

[1] Within it is thought to have stood the *Prytaneum* of the Athens of the Theseian synoecismus (Smith, *Dict. Classical Antiqs.*, ii, 514*a*), and the *prytaneum* was the founder's tomb (Ridgeway, *Origin of Tragedy*, p. 27), or at any rate the symbol thereof.

[2] The name is thought to be related in some way to πυκινός. Is the precise reference to be seen in the phrase in *Iliad* ii, 55, πυκινην ἠρτύνετο βουλήν?

[3] Harrison, *Primitive Athens*, pp. 97-8. The various parts of the Agora, where assembled the various branches of trade, were spoken of as κύκλοι. Of these the Old Orchestra was apparently one, and devoted to the vendors of books (Plato, *Apol.* 26 E).

[4] The same feature is found in some of the British stone circles, *e.g.* at Cadster, near Whaley Bridge (*Memorials of Old Derbyshire*, p. 83).

yards.[1] The measurements were in fact very much the same as those of the great theatre of Epidaurus, and only slightly larger than those of the Dionysiac theatre in Athens. There were a few wooden seats in front of the *bema* for the use of privileged persons; the rest of the audience stood, or sat on the ground. The *bema* was commonly known to the Athenians merely as 'the Stone'

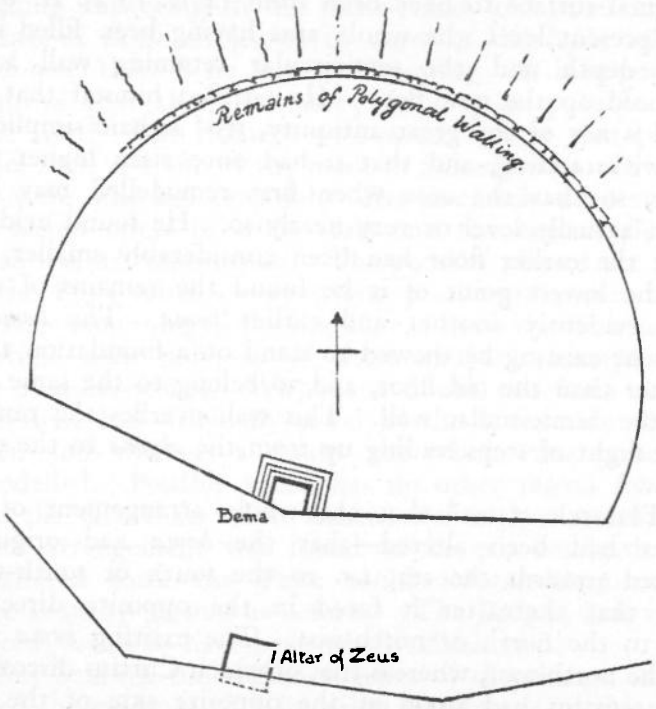


FIG. 4. DIAGRAM OF THE PNYX (FOURTH CENT. B.C.).

(ὁ λίθος), and the wall was remarkable for the 'archaic simplicity' of its construction.[2] The Pnyx was under the special tutelage of Zeus Agoraeus,[3] whose altar stood on

[1] Dyer, *Ancient Athens*, who adds 'we have the authority of an eminent architect for saying that such an area would accommodate about 11,000 persons seated.' Gustave Fougeres (*Guide Joanne*, 1911) calculates that it would hold 18,000 persons seated and more than 25,000 standing.

[2] Pollux, viii, 132, παλαιὰ ἁπλότης.

[3] Aristoph. *Knights*, *v.* 410, and Schol. thereon. In later (Roman) times, when the Pnyx was no longer used as an *agora*, this dedication was altered to Ζεὺς Ὕψιστος. It will be recalled that Zeus was an intrusive Celtic divinity, and not the general tutelary of Athens.

the summit of the rocky terrace behind the *bema*. The assemblies began at dawn and, as in the Homeric times, might not be continued after sundown. They were preceded by the sacrifice of sucking-pigs, ceremonial lustration, the burning of incense, and a form of prayer.

Curtius conducted a series of excavations on the site, of which the upshot was to prove that the whole had been reconstructed at a relatively late period. He found the original surface to have been from 14 ft. to 20 ft. below the present level, the whole area having been filled in to this depth and the semicircular retaining wall added to hold up the new floor. He satisfied himself that this wall is not of any great antiquity, its 'archaic simplicity' notwithstanding, and that it had once risen higher than now, so that the area when first remodelled may have been actually level or very nearly so. He found evidence that the earlier floor had been considerably smaller, and at the lowest point of it he found the remains of what was evidently another and earlier *bema*. The *bema* at present existing he shewed to stand on a foundation 14 ft. higher than the old floor, and to belong to the same date as the semicircular wall. This wall overlies the remains of a flight of steps leading up from the *Agora* to the older *bema*.[1]

Plutarch states[2] that the whole arrangement of the Pnyx had been altered—that the *bema* had originally looked towards the sea, *i.e.* to the south or south-west, and that thereafter it faced in the opposite direction, *i.e.* to the north or north-east. The existing *bema* faces to the north-east, whereas that of which Curtius discovered the remains had stood at the opposite side of the area facing southward towards the sea. Thus, as Dyer urged, the evidence of the spade entirely bears out the statement of Plutarch.[3]

In an earlier form, therefore, the place of meeting upon the Pnyx was a sloping area facing to the north-east.

[1] An abstract of Curtius' work is given in Dyer's *Ancient Athens* (1873), appendix ii. Curtius, as Dyer shows, entirely misconstrued a great part of the evidence.

[2] *Vita Themistoclis*, c. 19.

[3] *Ancient Athens*, pp. 470, *sqq.* Plutarch says the alteration was made by the Thirty Tyrants (404-403 B.C.), and supplies a reason after his own fancy. It may not at present be possible to fix the actual date, but admittedly it was late. It is impossible to believe, with Forchammer, Mure, and others, that no such alteration was ever made. Plutarch can scarcely have invented a tale of the kind, and Curtius' discoveries prove that it was no invention.

It was backed by the natural outcrop of rock, from the foot of which the ground fell away gently, forming a theatral area of circular plan.[1] At the lowest point was the original *bema*, so placed that the orator addressing the assembly had them ranged in front of him upon the sloping hill-side. This, as will presently appear, was precisely the arrangement in a great number of stone circles in the British Isles.[2] Whether there was ever on the Pnyx anything answering to the pillar-stones and other salient features of those circles, or to those of the ἱερὸς κύκλος of Homer, there is no means of knowing. It is impossible to prove that there was not; it is quite possible that there was.[3] But Homer's own words tell us that pillar-stones such as those of the moot in Scheria were not usual and were still less essential. The essentials were simply the sacred circle of stone seats and the central βοθρός which was its consecration. The peculiar plan of the work on the Pnyx raises a very strong presumption that there was once something of the kind here, a circle that is, whether of stone seats only, or of these and an accompanying ring of pillar-stones. Without a doubt the *bema* or its equivalent had originally stood at the lower side of the arena, and without a doubt the whole was presently remodelled. Possibly there was no other reason for this than the fact that, when Athens was at her zenith, the earlier arrangement was found to be too confined. In its altered form the Pnyx could accommodate nearly twice as many persons as before.[4] The βοθρός, it is to be noticed, seems to have been wholly eliminated.

But beneath the radical violence of the change can be traced the evidence of a lingering attachment to the older

[1] So truly theatral is the site that Wheler mistook it for the site of the Odeum of Pericles, which he believed to have been a circular building, Stuart for that of the Odeum of Herodes (the Regilla). Miss Jane Harrison speaks of it as a 'semicircular amphitheatre' (*Mythology and Monts. of Ancient Athens*, p. 109).

[2] When a speaker addresses an open-air assembly, his audience spontaneously arrange themselves in a circle so that the speaker's position is exactly that of the *bema* in the Pnyx; and the relation of the *bema* to the earlier Pnyx was precisely the same as that of the *scena* to the *cavea* of the theatre, and as that of the recumbent stone or dais to the circles of Aberdeenshire (ch. viii).

[3] Curtius' explorations were hindered, and at last stopped, by the enormous size of some of the blocks of stone which formed the filling of the later floor.

[4] Most of what is known about the Pnyx, and of the *loci* for that knowledge, is summarised in Sir John Frazer's *Pausanias' Description of Greece* (1898), ii, pp. 375 *sqq.* He ignores, however, Plutarch's statement as to its reconstruction, nor does he seem to attach any importance to Curtius' work.

way. It is to be seen in that ' archaic simplicity ' which Pollux noted, in the absence of any provision of seats for the multitude, in the ceremonies attending the opening of the assembly, in the avoidance of any roof, in the cessation of all business at sundown, and most of all in the fact that the new *βῆμα*, like the old, was still a mass of native rock. But despite all this the change entailed such consequences as are bound to follow upon any abrupt breach of an ancient tradition. The remodelled Pnyx had not the same hold upon the people as had the old one. Within a century or so it was abandoned altogether, except for electoral business, in favour of the Dionysiac theatre.

The evidence shews that through a long series of centuries the Athenians affected a moot of one and the same plan ; that this plan was theatral ; and that, as the growth of the community required it, they altered first the position, and then the size and other details of their moot. There was continuity in the evolution of the Pnyx, and evolution in its continuity. The point will be of importance when we come to deal with the stone circles of Britain.

There is evidence that Athens came under the influence of the dominant Acheans of the Homeric age, notably in the tradition that Achaeus was the son of Xuthus, or that (as Euripides has it) Xuthus was himself an Achean.[1] It is still more plainly implied in the famous assertion of the Spartan king Cleomenes[2] (508 B.C.) that he was entitled to enter the Athenian sanctuary of the Acropolis, ' because he was no Dorian, but an Achean,' that is to say, a blood-relation of the Athenians.

The habitual tendency which led other business, and particularly that of buying and selling, to gather about the centres of municipal life and worship, explains how the term *ἀγορά* came so generally in Greece to denote a ' market-place ' or ' market ' ; but it is clear from Aristotle[3] that in some localities there was made the same distinction as certainly prevailed in Athens. Especially was it the practice amongst the Thessalians, who relegated all trade to a meeting-place of its own, the *ἀναγκαία ἀγορά*, reserving

[1] Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, i, pp. 141, 151.

[2] Herod. v. 72.

[3] *Politics* iv (vii), 12, 3 *sqq.*

more elevated matters for the 'Free Agora' (ἀγορὰ ἐλευθέρα)[1] though they still very properly permitted the association of this latter with athletic exercises, as had been the case in Homeric Greece.

Chapter VI.

THE LATIN MOOT.

The 'Circus' and the 'Circus Maximus'—The 'Circus' coeval with the City—The 'Circus' of Romulus—The 'Circus' in first century A.D.—The 'Ara Consi'—Who was Consus?—The 'Circus' modelled on a grave—Consus derived from 'condere'—The Amphitheatre and the 'Circus'—The 'Circus' originally a Moot—The 'Circus Maritimus'—Games 'in Circo'—Latin 'Circus' and Greek theatre—The Latin 'Curia'—Varro on 'Curia'—The 'Comitia Curiata'—Synoecismus in Rome—'Curia' derived from 'curuus'—The 'Thirty Little Pigs.'

It has been shewn (chap. iv) that at a very early period the circle was the sacred figure of the Latin peoples, as it was of the Homeric Greeks. Superseded largely amongst the Latins by the square, the circle yet remained with them throughout history in the plan of certain of their temples and of many of their tombs. In a modified form it remained with them also to the end of their imperial history in the *circus* and the amphitheatre. To the average Roman of the later republic and of the empire the *circus* was nothing more than a place of amusement, and probably not one in a thousand of those who frequented it remembered that it was a *locus consecratus* of very peculiar sanctity, or paused to enquire why its central feature should be an altar, the *Ara Consi*.

To a Roman of the days of Augustus the word *circus* meant necessarily the *Circus Maximus*. Though used

[1] *I.e.* the moot of the freemen, for only freemen could take part in the administrative *agora* (the moot). This would seem to have been the rule wherever the moot is found, and is reaffirmed even to this day so often as a municipality makes any one a 'freeman of the city' by presenting him with the 'freedom' thereof.

occasionally for displays of other kinds, this was primarily the national racecourse, an immense hippodrome,[1] which occupied a large part of the floor of the narrow Vallis Murcia separating the Palatine and Aventine hills. Successive alterations through many centuries had made it ever longer, until at this date the track measured some six hundred yards in length, and was lined on either side by seats, balconies, and *loggie* of most elaborate masonry. Along the centre of the arena ran the long barrier called the *spina*, terminating at the south-eastern end in the *meta* or turning-post. From the *carceres*, or starting-gates, at the north-eastern end, which was to all intents square, the chariots raced the length of the *spina*, rounded the *meta*, and returned to the *carceres*. The term *circus*, says Cicero, denoted any rounded figure,[2] but in the Augustan *Circus Maximus* there was no trace whatever of such a figure save in the apsidal form of its south-eastern end. Under later emperors there were built throughout Italy and the provinces other *circi*, as at Bovillae and at Circeii, modelled upon that of Rome and as little like any ' rounded figure ' as was the *Circus Maximus*. One surmises that in its earlier form the latter had been more truly a *circus* and less of a race-track—that its peculiar shape was the outcome of continued efforts to make it more and more suitable for the purpose of a race-track.[3]

All tradition declared that Romulus made Rome's first *circus*—that indeed it was the first thing he made after the building of the city's wall,[4] unless the legendary Asylum be excepted. He made it, says the legend, as a means to ensnare the Sabine women, and he dedicated it to the god Consus. There are two points of importance in the legend : firstly, the implication that the *circus* was as old as the city[5] ; secondly, the assertion that it was a *locus*

[1] Dion. Hal. commonly speaks of it as ὁ μέγιστος ἱππόδρομος.

[2] *Omnis in gyrum ambitus* (*Arat.* § 248) He adds that, in his time, *circulus* was more commonly used in this sense. Probably because *circus* had come to denote more particularly a race-track like that of the *Circus Maximus*.

[3] Varro (*L.L.* v. 153) would derive the name of *circus* either from the circuits made by the racers round the course, or from the amphitheatral shape of the *circus*. He must have had in his mind *circi* of very different plan from the *Circus Maximus*, which in his time had no resemblance to an ampitheatre.

[4] Cf. Vergil, *Aen.* v. 758, of Acestes' first proceeding on taking over the city founded by Aeneas in Sicily, *Indicitque forum et patribus dat iura vocatis* ; for in purpose and in significance *forum* and *circus* were identical.

[5] The assertion of Gellius, quoted by Dion. Hal. (ii. 31), that it was made only

consecratus dedicated to a divinity otherwise unknown. Tradition further declares that the *Ara Consi* within the *Circus Maximus* was so old as to be taken for one of the fixed points of the *pomoerium antiquissimum*,[1] and that it was constructed by the first Etruscan king, Tarquinius Priscus. In other words the *circus* of Romulus and the *Circus Maximus* were not the same.

Ovid, speaking of the original first *circus* of Romulus, is at pains to insist that even in form it was quite different from the *Circus Maximus* of his own time. It was innocent of anything in the way of building, even of any provision of seats other than those afforded by the turf :—

In gradibus sedit populus de caespite factis.[2]

Propertius also had heard of a remote time when the *patres* had constantly assembled in the open field :—

Centum illi in prato saepe senatus erat.[3]

As Ovid envisaged the *circus* it was a mere earthwork at most, and the name of it implies that it was circular. Its purpose likewise implies that it was theatral, and Ovid actually calls it *theatrum*.[4] He was no antiquary. What reason had he for so calling it ?

Juvenal provides the answer. Writing about A.D. 100, he explicitly declares that in the little country-towns of Italy at that date the municipal dignitaries went about their small official business ' in their shirt-sleeves,' and when now and again there recurred a holiday, kept Lilliputian state in the ' theatre,' a structure which made so little pretence to architectural dignity that it was merely turfed :—

dierum
Festorum herboso colitur siquando theatro
Maiestas, tandemque redit ad pulpita notum
Exodium.[5]

in the 4th year of the city, stands alone. Plutarch (*Romulus* xiv) quotes Fabius Pictor as asserting that it was made in the fourth *month*, *i.e.*, in August, the traditional date of the foundation of the city being in April. Fabius was evidently guided by the fact that the *Consualia* recurred in August, and Gellius probably substituted ' year ' for ' month ' by inadvertence.

[1] Tac. *Ann.* xii, 24.

[2] *Ars. Amat.* i, 107.

[3] *El.* iv, 1, 14, 'Their only senate was the Hundred meeting in a field.' The number is noteworthy : there is evidence (below, ch. xii) that it was the theoretical number of the primitive Teutonic and Gallic moots, and all Roman tradition averred that it was likewise the number of the original Roman senate, in token whereof the senators in after-times still wore the *lunula*—the letter-numeral C—upon their shoes.

[4] *Ars. Amat.* i, 89, 103 &c.

[5] *Sat.* iii, 173. The epithet *herboso* is usually rendered 'grass-grown,' the ' theatre ' being conceived as necessarily mason-built and the epithet taken to suggest its infrequent use. The natural rendering is

That which in pure Latin speech was called a *circus* Juvenal here calls by the borrowed Greek name of *theatrum*, and Vergil had used both terms convertibly nearly a century before him.[1] We know what 'theatres' were in plan and construction, and there would be none as yet in those unpretentious Latin towns of which Juvenal is expressly speaking. He is thinking of precisely such a turf *circus* as Ovid had in mind, and he implies that such things were common enough in the Italy of his time. 'There is no country on earth where there are so many of these turfy theatres as in modern Italy,' wrote Gifford[2] a century ago. So Ovid had all around him examples of the thing which he attributes to Romulus, and Juvenal incidentally tells us that such little turf *circi* were even in his day the scenes of municipal functions in provincial Italy. He elsewhere calls them *municipales arenae*, and tells us that they were the customary scenes of sports.[3] The absence of seating need occasion no surprise, for well into the first century it was argued in Rome that to provide seats in the large amphitheatres then coming into fashion was an undesirable innovation.[4]

If the *Circus Maximus* was developed out of some such theatral *circus* as this, there is sufficient reason for its having retained a name—*circus*, 'the ring'—which otherwise was utterly inappropriate.

At the south-eastern end of the *spina*, just in front of the turning-post (*ad primas metas*), was the 'altar' of Consus so called. It was not an altar at all, as that word is usually understood, but rather a flat paved area beneath the surface of the arena, from which the soil was removed as occasion

'made of turf.' This translation in no wise weakens the force of the lines: just as the provincial mayor and aldermen made shift with *tunica* in lieu of *toga*, so they made shift with a *circus* of earth in lieu of the mason-built magnificence of the *Circus Maximus*. We have the converse attitude in the *insanus scriba* who greeted Horace and Maecenas at Fundi with all the paraphernalia of *praetextam et latum clavum prunaeque batillum* (Hor. *Sat.* 1, 5. 36).

[1] *Aen.* v. 288, *mediaque in valle theatri circus erat.* Vergil was presumably thinking of that *circus* which, as will presently appear, was an essential item in the foundation of a new *civitas*, though he may not have been aware that *circus* and *theatrum* were in origin the same. So also Statius, *Theb.* vi, 562, 702, 714.

[2] *Translation of Juvenal* (1802), note *ad loc.* Gifford had spent some years in Italy.

[3] *Sat.* iii, 34. Comparing Horace, *Ep.* i, 1, 49, one gathers that the sports were such as boxing and wrestling, and further that the *municipalis arena* and the *compitum* of the smaller communities (*pagi*) were alike used for this purpose.

[4] Tac. *Ann.* iii, 72.

required, and again replaced.[1] This happened but thrice a year, and especially upon the festival of the *Consualia* (xii kal. Sept.=Aug. 21st). In all likelihood, the pavement surrounded a βοθρός. Its position was in effect the actual centre round which was described the apsidal portion of the *circus*, the spot at which would be found the grave of a ring-barrow. There can be little question that the original *circus* was nothing but a ring-barrow, that the altar of Consus was the symbolical survival of an original grave, and that the *ludi in circo* were developed from the sports which had at a remote period been solemnised about a dead man's grave, or about a spot which was the symbol of such grave.

The cult of Consus admittedly belongs to the oldest part of the complex religion of Rome.[2] It was so old that all knowledge of the meaning of the name was lost. Some connected it with *consilium*, as it were the God of Good Counsel. Their etymology was wrong, but as will be presently seen, the guess was otherwise by no means absurd, and is indeed a valuable bit of evidence. The generality believed that it was a title of Neptune; Neptunus Equester was felt to be a very appropriate patron of an arena mainly devoted to horse-games. But a critical writer like Dionysius of Halicarnassus had doubts: whoever, he asks, heard of an underground altar to that God? and he says that others had told him that the altar was that of 'some nameless god who guides and guards dark counsels.'[3] Upwards of a century later Plutarch heard the same different explanations: some declared Consus to be Poseidon Hippios, while others said he was the god of counsel (βουλαῖον) and that his name was of the same derivation as *consilium*.[4]

[1] Dion. Hal. ii, 30. He twice remarks upon its underground position (ὑπόγειος, ἀφανης), and says that the ritual included burnt offerings (ὑπέρπυροι ἀπαρχαί). So Plutarch (*Romulus* xiv), βωμὸν ὑπο γης κεκρυμμένον. . . . ὁ βωμὸς ἐν τῳ μείζονι των ἱπποδρόμων ἐστὶν αφανης τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον, ἐν δὲ τοις ἱππικοῖς ἀγωσιν ἀνακαλυπτόμενος.

[2] Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 206–7. Outside the *circus* beyond the *carceres*, stood another of Rome's most ancient monuments, the *Ara Maxima*; see *ibid*, pp. 138, 193–7.

[3] Dion. Hal. ii, 31. The principal altar in the Hippodrome of Olympia was that of Poseidon Hippios. The ultimate origin of hippodrome and stadium is probably to be found in the games celebrated at a grave, and the same probably is true of some present day race-meetings. Whether it was an actual grave, as Sir W. Ridgeway maintains, or merely a symbolical one, as argued by Miss Harrison in *Themis*, chap. 7, is of no particular moment.

[4] *Romulus* xiv. So too Ausonius, writing some three centuries later still, speaks of *duplicem cultum quem Neptunalia dicunt, et quem de Conso consiliisque vocant* (*Eclogar. de Feriis Rom.* vv. 19, 20).

If Tertullian[1] (*circa* 200) declares that he had seen the altar, and that it bore an inscription CONSUS CONSILIO POTENS, he certainly did not invent the etymology. So closely was this unknown divinity associated with the *Circus Maximus*, that when the number of *circi* came to be multiplied each was dedicated to the same tutelary. The *Circus Flaminius* in the Campus Martius, built in 221 B.C., had likewise its *Ara Neptuni*,[2] and every later *circus* bore the same dedication.[3] There was in Rome at least one other which was possibly as old as the *Circus Maximus* itself, namely that attached to the circular temple of the Dea Diva in the Arval grove on the Aventine hill, where were held ceremonial races of *bigae* and *quadrigae*, and exhibitions of *desultores*; and the Aventine had also its own *Ara Consi*, the scene of ritual observances on Aug. 21st and Dec. 12th.

The *Ara Consi* in the *Circus Maximus* was an underground altar, and underground altars belonged to the gods of the underworld, the gods of the dead: their correct Latin name was *mundus*,[4] and Plutarch[5] implies that *mundus* and βοθρὸς were one and the same thing. Here in the *Circus Maximus*, admittedly one of the oldest things in Rome, we have a circular earthwork surrounding a central chthonic altar and used for the exhibition of annually recurring games. From the days of Hector and Patroclus to those of Beowulf, alike in Greece, in Italy, and in the British Isles, we know that such games were habitually celebrated in and about earthworks of analogous kind in honour of a dead hero there buried; and we know that horse-races were in a particular way associated with such occasions. Inevitably arises the suspicion that the *circus* and its games had their origin in the same custom, and other facts confirm it. The plan of the whole recalls immediately that of the ἱερὸς κύκλος of Homeric

[1] *De Spectaculis*, quoted p. 330 below.

[2] Livy xxviii. 11.

[3] So Salvianus (fifth cent.) could write (*De Gubern. Dei* vi, 129), *Colitur et honoratur . . . . Neptunus in circis.* On the other hand Cassiodorus (*Var. Ep.* iii, 51) and Laurentius Lydus (*De Spectac.* 8), both writers of sixth cent., assert that the *circus* was primarily dedicated to the Sun. There is no hint of this in earlier days, and certainly nothing to suggest that Consus was in any way related to Sol. Changes of dedication are a familiar fact in classical antiquity, just as they are in Christianity, and something of the kind may have occurred in the *circus*; but if so, it was at a very late date.

[4] Servius on *Aen.* ii, 134, *aras inferorum vocant mundos.*

[5] *Romulus* xi, καλοῦσι δὲ τὸν βοθρὸν τοῦτον μοῦνδον.

Greece, with its central βοθρός representing an ancestral tomb. Like the Homeric κύκλος, the *circus* lies without the walls of the community to which it originally belonged, and just as no arms, and *ergo* no bloodshed, were allowed within the Homeric κύκλος, so one is told that none were allowed within the *circus*; nay, even the passage through the arena of a slave on the way to execution brought down the anger of the gods.[1]

The peculiar, and decidedly inconvenient, position occupied by the *Ara Consi* shews that the *circus* was not originally designed merely as a place of games. So does the further fact that the floor of the *circus* was not the natural surface of the ground, but was almost invariably sunk, like that of a Greek theatre. There would seem to be no reasonable way of explaining the curious, but rigid, practice, save as a ritual survival from the digging of an actual grave.

What then is the real origin of the god-name Consus? Modern writers incline to connect it with the verb *condere*, and to interpret the *Consualia* as originally a festival of harvest-home, the underground altar representing possibly an underground store-house in which the year's harvest had once been stored.[2] It is more probable that Consus is derived from *condere*, either in the sense of 'to found' or in that of 'to bury.' These two meanings were in the circumstances bound to become confused, for every community must have its founder (*conditor*), and every such founder was of necessity buried (*conditus*); and though originally the *Ara Consi* may have been generally regarded as the monument of one particular person, there would probably be a tendency to extend it to all and sundry of the community's forbears—that 'majority' whom Apollo warned the Megarians to keep in mind.[3] Consus, one concludes, was 'the departed'—whether *conditus* or *conditi*—a personification of the dead. It is therefore not surprising that from *conditor* was formed a further word *conditorium*, which was used in classical Latinity for a 'burial-vault,' or even a 'grave' generally.[4] It will be shewn in a later

[1] See the story in Cicero, *de Divin*, i, 26. By implication this story tells us that the *circus* had a road through it, and therefore two entrances.

[2] This is the view of Preller and of most later writers. But the sacrifice made to Consus was a *burnt* offering, which does not represent the storing of anything in some place for its safe-keeping.

[3] *Arch. Journ.* lxxvii, 289, note.

[4] See the Dictionaries, and Du Cange.

chapter that the Saxon verb *stowan* in exactly the same way produced the substantive *stow* in the sense of a 'shrine,' 'place of burial.'

As for the popular Roman belief that Consus was another name for Neptune, it probably arose from some wiseacre's studies in Greek. Noticing that the ἱερὸς κύκλος of the Phaeacians was consecrated to Poseidon, and that the chief altar in the Hippodrome at Olympia was that of Poseidon Hippios, he possibly drew the inference that all such constructions in old Greece had the same consecration[1]; and finding that all Roman *circi* were in fact consecrated to Consus, he proceeded to identify that unknown god with Poseidon, *Latine* Neptune. If one could be sure that this so happened, it would be no small proof of the present thesis, that the Latin *circus* was in reality the Homeric κύκλος. The proof, however, is forthcoming without the aid of any such assumption.

It should be added here that the great *ludi saeculares* were also associated with an underground altar of a *deus inferum*, that of Dis in the Campus Martius; and that, according to Caesar, the whole Gallic race regarded as their *conditor* some *deus inferum* whom he calls by the Roman name of Dis.[2]

Vitruvius[3] is evidence that *circus* and *amphitheatrum* were not the same thing. They were not. The Latin peoples had had *circi* from the beginning of their existence as peoples, whereas even Rome herself had no amphitheatre before the year 50 B.C. The one was an essential of communal existence, the other an accidental accretion. The one, with its consecration to Consus, took rank amongst the holiest of *loca consecrata*; the other lacked any such sacred character.[4] The one retained its native name of *circus* unaltered through the centuries; the other, as if

[1] Poseidon is invoked also in *Iliad* xxiii, 584, in connexion with the first horse-race ever described.

[2] *B.G.* vi, 18, 1.

[3] Below, p. 330.

[4] Various writers, chiefly Christian apologists like Tertullian, Augustine of Hippo, Prudentius, Lactantius, and Minucius Felix, to whom the amphitheatre of Flavius was the concrete embodiment of all that was most abominable in paganism, speak vaguely of altars of Mars, Diana (cf. Martial, *De Spectaculis* xii, 1) and Pluto, and of sacrifices to Jupiter Latiaris, but probably such passages are metaphorical only. There was seemingly nothing at all corresponding to the *Ara Consi*. On the other hand it was not unusual to use the amphitheatre as a *bustum* for burning the bodies of condemned malefactors, as it was proposed to do with that of the hated Tiberius (Suetonius, *Caligula* 27, *Tiberius* 75).

confessing itself a *parvenu*, bore an alien name. Yet withal the amphitheatre, at least in plan, far more closely resembled the typical Latin *circus* than did the *Circus Maximus* of its day. It reproduced correctly the circular plan and the significant sunken floor under all the disguise of wonderful masonry. As the Greek theatre was but a revival of the ἱερὸς κύκλος of earlier times, so the Flavian Amphitheatre, which was inaugurated only in 79 and which became the model of all the long series of such buildings throughout the Roman world, was in the main simply a reversion to the original Latin *circus*,[1] albeit colossal in dimensions, as its name of Colosseum suggested,[2] and anomalous in purpose. The Romans knew this, and confessed it tacitly when they declined for the most part to use the new-fangled alien name, and spoke of it not as an amphitheatre, but as a *circus*, Like the *Circus Maximus*, the Flavian Amphitheatre was and yet was not a *circus*.[3] Centuries of humanity have taken the two as types, so that to modern ears the term 'circus' suggests only performing horses and the term 'amphitheatre' conjures up visions of immensity. The horses and the immensity were not essentials, but accidentals, and neither the *Circus Maximus* nor the Colosseum has any right to the position of a type. Both are so far from being types that both are aberrations. They are highly specialised developments of the same humble original, due to the Roman appetite for sports and shows; and we should no more expect to find similar monuments in the generality of Italian towns than we should look to find a Dionysiac theatre in every village of old Greece or an Avebury on every prehistoric site in Britain.

If the Latin *circus* was indeed so closely related to the Achean κύκλος, it must originally have served the same purpose. The next task is to find any evidence that the *circus* was ever used as a moot.

References in the classics to the *Circus Maximus* are

[1] Its builder, the emperor Vespasian, was remarkable for his antiquarian tastes.

[2] The popular story is that it was called Colosseum because it stood near the site of the Colossus of Nero. J. H. Parker says that it is 'certain' that there was no such allusion, the Colossus having been demolished years before the Amphitheatre was built (*Archaeology of Rome*, pt. vii, p. 5).

[3] Like its Italian prototype, the genuine *circus*, and like the Greek theatre (p. 313), it was on occasion used for municipal business, *e.g.* in Alexandria (Josephus *De Bello Jud.* II, xviii, § 7).

endless, but references to the typical *circus* and its proper uses are singularly few. The thing was too common and too well understood to call for much comment. Nevertheless, there remains enough to prove the case. Vitruvius mentions the *circus* but once, but the passage is invaluable: he remarks that the proper site for a temple (*area*) of Hercules 'in any self-governing community (*civitas*) which has no gymnasium and no amphitheatre, is near the *circus* (*ad circum*).'[1] The language proves that *circus* and *amphitheatrum* were different things; but it proves also that Vitruvius could no more conceive a *civitas* which had not at least a *circus* than Homer could envisage a πόλις without an *agora* (ch. v.). Even more conclusive is that clause of the *Lex Colonica Ursonensis* which enjoins that the Aediles shall give *ludi scenici* 'either in the forum or in the *circus*.'[2] This is the language of a legal document embodying the constitution of a Roman colony in the year 44 B.C., and it implies that such a colony must have a *circus*, even if it did not rise to the dignity of a *forum*. It might make shift without a *forum*; it could not without a *circus*. The two things were two different expressions of the right of self-government, of communal existence; whereof we know the *forum* to have been the later, the *circus* therefore the earlier. The *amphitheatrum* was a place for sports only, but the *circus* was not more a place of sports than was the *forum* itself. The proper purpose of both was that of municipal *business*, and more particularly debate. The fact is confessed even in the false etymology whereby the Romans, wholly ignorant of the true meaning of the name of Consus, sought to explain it as derived from *consilium*.[3] 'Good Counsel' was a suitable deity to preside in a place of deliberation and debate, but only flippancy would maintain that he was desirable on a race-track. And that the *circus* was actually used as a moot we know

[1] *De Architectura*, I. vii, 1. The expression *ad circum* (not *in circo*) is to be noticed. There could no more be a 'temple' of Hercules, of of any other divinity, *in* the *circus* than there could be a temple of Poseidon in the *ἱερὸς κύκλος* (p. 303).

[2] Bruns, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antiqui*, 7th ed. (1909). Ursona is now Osuna in Spain.

[3] Above, p. 325. Tertullian (*de Spectaculis*, 5) says that the *Ara Consi* bore an inscription reading *Consus Consilio Mars duello . . . potentes*. This merely confirms what Dion. Hal. had heard (above, p. 325) as to the meaning of Consus, 200 years earlier. Whether the alleged inscription be a fact or not, it is clear that there existed an idea that there was some connection between *consilium* and the place sacred to Consus.

from Livy, who records[1] that the *populus* of Anagnia convened (305 B.C.) a *concilium* of the sixteen states of the Hernican League in the *Circus Maritimus* near Anagnia. Even in Rome, there survived traces of this earlier use, as when the *Comitia Tributa*, at the period the one effective civil moot of the entire *populus*, met on occasion within the *Circus Flaminius*. Juvenal has been quoted to prove that in provincial Latium, so late as his own days, the *circus* was still the scene of certain official municipal proceedings.

The essential thing in the *Circus* was the *Ara Consi*, the founder's tomb. Essential to the *forum* was the *Lapis Niger*, the slab of stone which covered the reputed grave of the founder, where met the assemblies of the *populus*, and beside which stood both the *Curia* (senate-house) and the *Rostra*. The word *forum* actually bore in Latin speech the generic sense of 'an open space in front of a tomb.'[2] Thus the parallelism between *circus* and *forum* is exact. As the *forum* was a moot, so also was the *circus*. The sole difference was that, whereas the one (*forum*) belonged to an age or race whose sacred figure was rectangular, the other (*circus*) belonged to the earlier race and age whose sacred figure was the circle.

The evidence is enough to show that it is an error to regard the *circus* as only, or even primarily, a place for games; and even the *Circus Maximus* in Rome was devoted to games of certain very limited kinds. The programme of the first *Consualia*, says Dionysius,[3] consisted of feasting, horse-racing, and athletic contests. Livy asserts[4] that when the first Tarquin built the *Circus Maximus*, the games were horse-races and displays by boxers brought from Etruria. In the days of the free republic gladiatorial games had no proper place in it; these, says Vitruvius,[5]

[1] *Hist.* ix, 42. The Latin League had a moot at Ferentinum, but we are not explicitly told that it was a *circus*. See Niebuhr, *Hist. Rome* (1838), ii, 16–37. Niebuhr laboured under the usual misapprehension that a *circus* was necessarily 'a place only fitted for a concourse of thousands.' There is reason for believing that the moot of the Hernican League consisted primarily of 160 *principes*(senators), ten from each of the member-states.

[2] So Festus and Cicero (*de Divin*, ii, 20, 65).

[3] Dion. Hal. ii, 30. He calls the assembly ἀγορά and πανηγυρις Ποσειδῶνι. The feasting is an important point.

[4] Livy i, 35, *equi pugilesque, ex Etruria maxime acciti.*

[5] Vitr. v, i, 7, *a maioribus consuetudo tradita est gladiatoria munera in foro dari.*

were traditionally given in the Forum; for he was dead long before the building of the Colosseum, though he had seen the earlier amphitheatres of Curio and Taurus. But in his time such structures were still so unusual, and had about them so little that was architectural, that he has nothing to say of their building. Neither has he anything to say of the making of a *circus*, because this, a mere excavation in the ground, gave no scope to an architect. The only sense in which the thing at all interested a Roman of the period was as the meeting-place of the local administration: its doings might now and again be matter for comment, even as to-day happens occasionally with a vestry; but no Roman would waste his time in describing the *circus* itself, any more than an Englishman would think of describing the vestry of a church.

The turfed *circi* of the little unconsidered towns of Latium, which never soared to the ambitious dignity of horse-racing, to say nothing of gladiatorial games, were even in the days of the empire the scene of their seasonal merry-makings. They were to the Italian peasantry what until lately the village-green was to rural England. But in earlier times they had been more than that; they had been the moots and council-chambers of their communities —what the village churchyard used to be to England. There survived even in Rome one clear trace of the forgotten time when the city fathers had met in council in the *circus* of Romulus, viz., the indefeasible right of all senators to front-seats in the *circus*.[1] Probably the apsidal recess, or speaker's platform of the *rostra* was itself a reminiscence of the form of the primitive Latin moot.

The games of the *Circus Maximus* were merely the recurrent funeral-games of some unrecorded hero, taken over by the state at large and developed until all memory of their origin and purpose was lost. What may by contrast be called the private funeral-games of the individual citizen flourished unimpaired through the centuries. In the course of time even gladiatorial shows came to be a prominent feature in the programme, and the apologists would have us believe that these were an exotic importation from Etruria or from Thurii. The most that we can

[1] Livy, i, 56.

reasonably believe is that Etruscan example revived, or at any rate stimulated, a barbaric practice which had been in a fair way to disappear. When Patroclus is buried before Troy there are human sacrifices indeed, but there are also other less savage games.[1] When Aeneas celebrates the anniversary of Anchises' death, there are no longer any human victims, but the rest of the programme has been expanded to include contests in archery, rowing, wrestling and foot-racing, as well as the famous 'Troy-game' of young Iulus and his fellows.[2] When a great man died in the Rome of Cicero's century, the programme included gladiatorial games and theatrical performances; and as the former were probably stimulated by Etruscan, so were the latter by Greek example. The analogy between the obsequies of a Roman and those of an Irish or Gaelic funeral with its attendant 'keening,' plays, games and feasting, is not wholly a thing of accident. One is justified in tracing in both the influence of an element we find again asserting itself in the funeral-rites of the Teutonic Beowulf. It should be added further that in the Forum, in Cicero's time the customary scene of gladiatorial games, was the legendary tomb of Romulus, just as that of Adrastus guarded the *agora* of Sicyon, and that of Battus the *agora* of Cyrene.[3]

Thus it appears that in early Italy, as in Achean Greece, every community had its own moot, and that these moots were remarkably similar. Both were circular, both were sacred, and the central feature of each was a *bothros*. All tradition asserting that there was in the Latin people a large element which had immigrated from Greece[4] at a period either synchronous with or a little later than the Homeric age, this is precisely what was to be expected. Even the names of the two moots were very similar, for *circus* can hardly be altogether unrelated to κύκλος.[5]

Thus the most characteristic structural achievements of the Greeks and of the Romans appear to have been both

[1] Homer, *Iliad*. xxiii.

[2] Vergil, *Aen*. v.

[3] For a long list of similar examples see Sir J. G. Frazer, *Pausanias' Description of Greece*, ii, p. 533.

[4] Servius (on *Aen*. x, 179) cites from the lost *Origines* of Cato the assertion that, prior to becoming Etruscan, the city of Pisae (Pisa) had been occupied by *Teutones Graece loquentes*. The explicit mention of Teutones is to say the least of it curious.

[5] Dio Cassius uses κύκλος to render *amphitheatrum*, while Polybius transliterates *circus* to κίρκος (*e.g.* xxx, 14, 2).

evolved from the same original, the circular barrow, and in both is traceable an intermediate stage when each served as a moot. The round hut produced the round barrow, the round barrow produced the circular moot. Further specialisation produced in Greece the theatre, in Rome the *Circus Maximus* and the amphitheatre. The proof is yet to be given, but it may be added in anticipation that from the same original by steps very similar was developed that characteristic structure of Christianity which we call a church.

But the Italian moot had an alternative name, viz., *curia*, and in Rome at any rate, the term *circus* coming to be more and more identified with a place of sports only, *curia* eventually replaced it wholly in the sense of a place of municipal business, and derivatively of the officials who there assembled. In Rome itself *curia* was the legal term for a 'senate-house,' and throughout the western world every Roman colony and *municipium* had its *curia*, its *curiones* and *decuriones*. All members of a self-governing community were *curiales*, whence it follows that the presence of a *curia* implies the capacity for self-government.[1]

Inasmuch as the sign visible of self-government was in Achean Greece the ἱερὸς κύκλος, in old Latium the *circus*, it follows that *curia* was but another name for the same thing.

In Rome were to be found a number of survivals of no less than 30 *curiae*—the *curiae veteres*—said to date back to the time of Romulus and admittedly so old as to have formed 'the basis of the earliest religious and military organisation whereof we have any knowledge' in Rome. It was the name also of the several spots at which these 30 *curiae* held their meetings and transacted all their business. These meetings were chiefly in celebration of the festivals of the *Fornacalia* ('Feast of Ovens') and the *Fordicidia* ('sacrifice of the Cow-in-calf'), two of the most archaic religious events of the year, and ranking as *publica sacra*, although each *curia* conducted its own celebration under the direction of its own *flamen curialis* at its own accustomed place, which was a *locus consecratus*.[2]

[1] Festus: *Curiales eiusdem curiae, ut tribules et municipes.*

[2] Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 303–4.

O. Gilbert[1] argued that the *Curiae Veteres* represented so many distinct communities which ultimately amalgamated to form Rome. Cuq[2] compares them with modern parishes. Both are right, for Rome was formed by synoecismus, as surely as were Athens, Sparta, and Mantinea; but the term *curia* meant originally not a territory, but a township, or rather the actual moot of a township. Strabo explicitly says that the sparse inhabitants of the environs of the original Rome dwelt, as Thucydides believed the earlier Greeks to have dwelt, in small independent villages,[3] and that it was the same throughout old Latium[4] and Samnium.[5] Paulus declares that there were in Rome certain *municipalia sacra* which had existed before Rome was; and Festus again tells us that Rome, in absorbing a community, did not abolish the pre-existing *municipalia sacra*. The independence of the various *curiae* in regard to the *Fornicalia* and the *Fordicidia* are illustrations in point.

Varro says[6] that *curiae* were of two kinds: of the one kind were the *Curiae Veteres*, of the other he cites as an example the *Curia Hostilia*. The implication is that *curiae* of the second kind were newer.

The latter were roofed rectangular buildings, and all roofed moots are of late evolution. Tradition referred the name of the *Curia Hostilia*, the first of its kind, to King Hostilius, who seems to have been no Latin,[7] but an alien, to whom the sacred figure was the square. If the new *curia*, meaning specifically a place wherein a senate met, was so entirely unlike the 'old' *curia*, the name can only have been extended to the new *curia* because the old *curiae* had likewise been places where senates met. By the time of Augustus some at any rate of the *curiae veteres*

[1] *Geschichte und Topographie Rom. in Alterthum.*

[2] *Les Institutions Juridiques des Romains*, i, 22.

[3] § 230, ᾤκουν καθ' αὑτούς. Cp. Thucydides, i. 5, πόλεσιν ἀτειχίστοις καὶ κατὰ κώμας οἰκουμέναις.

[4] § 229, κατὰ κώμας αὐτονομεῖσθαι. How small such villages were, and how closely dotted upon the map, is shewn by Pliny's assertion that in his day more than 70 had utterly disappeared. If an area of 25 square miles in Cranborne Chase to this day shews as many as 8 *circi*, representing as many villages (ch. ix), it is easy to believe that the so-called original *Ager Romanus*, some 70 square miles in extent (Strabo, § 316), may have contained thirty villages.

[5] § 241. The same has been inferred of the Sabines from Horace, *Ep.* I, xiv, 1–3.

[6] *De Lingua Latina*, v, 32. The passage shews that Varro derived the term *curia* from *curare*. So Mommsen.

[7] For he is said to have razed Alba Longa, the metropolis of the Latin League.

had come to be, or at least to include, buildings, probably by a natural assimilation to the newer kind of *curia:* we are told that they were 'sacred buildings,'[1] that their doors were decorated on occasion with laurel-leaves,[2] and that the *Curia Saliorum* on the Palatine, wherein was preserved the sacred *lituus*, had been burned down.[3] But in their original form they cannot have been roofed, and all analogy suggests that they were not square, but circular. There is a possible hint of this in the assertion of Laurentius Lydus[5] that, on the festival of the *Fordicidia*, the chief priests scattered flowers among the people 'in the theatre.' No Greek or Roman theatre was ever anything but circular, and the *Fordicidia* long antedated any theatre at all. Lydus probably used 'theatre' for the native theatral *circus*, exactly as Juvenal had done, and the original *curia* was probably nothing but a small turfed *circus*. To this there had been added 'sacred buildings' in the course of the long 600 years between Hostilius and Augustus. By that time each *curia* included its hearth and its banquet-hall.[4] Each, in fact, had come to be a Greek *prytaneum* under a Latin sky. But the words of Lydus seem to imply that the old *circus* still remained, so that the whole was possibly analogous to the open-air theatre of Dionysus in Athens, with its annexed group of buildings.[6]

The *curiae* gave name to the oldest of the Roman assemblies, the *comitia curiata* (or *calata*), which remained to the last the only assembly competent to deal with certain special matters, albeit reduced to a mere formality and represented only by 30 lictors.[7] Chief of the items

[1] Dion. Hal. ii, 23, ἱεραὶ οἰκίαι.

[2] Ovid, *Fasti*, ii, 514.

[3] Cicero, *de Divin.* i, 17, 30; Dion. Hal. xiv, 5.

[4] *De Mensibus*, iv, 49. Lydus wrote in the sixth century.

[5] Feasting was an essential feature of early moots; *e.g.* Homer, *Odyss.* iii, 7, and Vergil, *Aen.* vii, 176, *perpetuis soliti patres considere mensis*. So too in the Greek *prytaneum*. In the Iguvine Inscriptions (tab. II *a*, 17) occurs *Menz(e)ne curçlasio*, which Newman (*Text of the Iguvine Inscriptions*, 1864) translates *apud mensam circularium* (*sic*); while Grotefend rendered *curçlasio* by *quiritia*, Huschke by *curuli*. Is it not perhaps equivalent to *curiali*?

[6] This was the normal evolution. The roofed moot commonly came into being upon the actual site of its forerunner, the unroofed moot.

[7] The *lictores* ('summoners') themselves correspond to the κήρυκες who summon the people to the Homeric ἀγορά. According to Dion. Hal. (ii, 8) and Propertius (iv, 1, 13, *Buccina cogebat priscos ad verba Quirites*) the commonalty were convened originally by trumpet, but the notables by special summons of the king, whose agent would be the *lictor*, *Graece* ῥαβδοῦχος; and the ῥαβδός would be identical with the Homeric σκῆπτρον. The horn has its analogue in *e.g.* the moot-horn preserved in the museum at Canterbury and that in Dover Castle; the *sceptrum* survives in the maces of all ancient English municipalities.

with which it dealt were the devolution of the *imperium*, the declaration of an aggressive war, all transfers of property by will, and all adoptions involving a consequent *detestatio sacrorum*. These are precisely the matters which would naturally belong to the representatives of the communities which formed a synoecismus. In historical times its one place of meeting was the *comitium* in the Forum. Tradition declared the *comitium*, like the *Curia Hostilia*, to have been instituted by Hostilius. Before that date the *comitia curiata* had met in the *Circus Maximus*, for this is said to have been expressly constructed to accommodate the 30 *curiae*.[1] It was therefore the first moot of synoecised Rome of the Palatine hill. This city, the outcome of the fusion of the 30 independent communities of an earlier time, required a new and larger moot[2] wherein might meet the representatives of the 30 communities for purposes of debate and administration, precisely as those of the 16 peoples of the Hernican League met in the *Circus Maritimus* of Anagnia. As the Hernican peoples sent each 10 *principes* to their moot, so would the 30 *curiae* send each 10, making a total of 300; and it is the consistent Roman tradition that the same Tarquin who built the *Circus Maximus* also raised the number of the Roman senate to 300, *i.e.*, brought its number into direct relation with that of the *curiae*. The *Circus Maximus* acquired its distinctive epithet from its being so much larger than any of the *curiae veteres*. The express provision that the senators, throughout history, were entitled to front seats in the *Circus Maximus*[3] corroborates this view of the age and purpose of that institution. The transfer of the *comitia curiata* to the *comitium*, and the synchronous provision of a new moot for the senators in the *Curia Hostilia*, belong to a

[1] Dion. Hal. iii, 68. It was not itself one of the 30 *curiae veteres*, for Consus had no *flamen* of his own. The sacrifices to him were performed by the *flamen quirinalis* (Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, p. 209).

[2] Homer provides an illustration of how a synoecismus might come about. In *Il.* ii, 591, *sqq.*, we are told that Nestor, lord of Pylos, was also overlord of 8 adjacent towns. In *Od.* iii, 7, Telemachus, coming to Pylos, finds afoot a feast in honour of Poseidon: there were 9 ἕδραι, and at each sat 50 feasters. So the 8 subordinate towns joined on a footing of numerical equality with Pylos in celebration of the feast. But according to Homer every one of them must have had its own ἱερὸς κύκλος, and of course its own gods. And Homer does not say that the feast was held in the ἱερὸς κύκλος of Pylos. It was apparently held in a new *locus* instituted for the purpose. Further the new *locus* is consecrated to Poseidon, just as was the individual ἱερὸς κύκλος of Phaeacia.

[3] Livy, i, 56.

later period, when the swamp of the Forum had been drained and there had occurred yet another 're-founding' of the city, whereof the symbols were the *mundus* in the Forum and the mysterious *Lapis Niger*. The latter was the symbolical 'Founder's tomb,' and beside it naturally met the senate and the assembly of the newly founded, *i.e.* enlarged Rome.[1] This event is put in the days of the Etruscan conquest, and the tradition which finds in the name of the *Curia Hostilia* that of the pre-Etruscan king Hostilius, is probably at fault, for that *curia* clearly belongs to a period when the circle had ceased to be the sacred figure, and the augural science demanded a square *templum*. To the same period belonged the fortifications of *Roma Quadrata*, when the earlier circular city of Plutarch's story was replaced by the four-sided city on the Palatine[2]; but the *Circus Maximus* was already in existence then,[3] for the *Ara Consi* was chosen as one of the four corners of the *pomoerium* of *Roma Quadrata*. Another of these corners was that among the thirty old *curiae* which was specifically known as *Curiae Veteres* or *Curia Prisca*.[4] This was possibly the moot of that one amongst the thirty which was looked upon as being the ultimate original of Rome. The *Curia Prisca* stood near the *Porta Mugonia*, and beside what must have been the only road of approach[5] to the Palatine, in the days when the Forum and the Velabrum were alike swamps.

Such a view of the origin of the *curiae* is quite consistent with the little else that is known about them, as for instance that every *civis* was expected to belong to one *curia* or another, and that tradition declared all members of one *curia* to have been kinsmen, as with the Athenian φράτραι, by which word Dionysius of Halicarnassus renders *curiae*. It finds again a curious parallel in the English 'township,' which is a place which has or has had its own church, or in Latin phraseology its own *sacra*. What the church—the symbol of a certain inherent power of self-government—

[1] The term *forum*, had in Rome the particular meaning of an open space *in front of a tomb* (Cicero *De Legg.* II, xxiv, 61; Festus); and this is the precise situation of the *Forum Antiquissimum* with reference to the *Lapis Niger*.

[2] The traditional Pallanteum.

[3] No writer identifies the first *circus* of Romulus with the *Circus Maximus*.

[4] Ovid, *Fasti* iii, 140.

[5] Cicero (*De Repub.* II, vi, 11) mentions that there was but one approach and that it lay in this quarter.

was to the township, that also was the *curia* or *circus* to its *curiales* or its *municipium*.

Every *circus* we know to have been dedicated to Consus, but the *curiae veteres* are said to have been sacred to Juno. If this be a fact, there would seem to have occurred in Rome something precisely parallel with the supersession of all and sundry local cults by the exclusive worship of Dionysus in the Athenian theatre. If the identification of Consus with the god of the dead be correct, then the parallel is closer still, for Dionysus was likewise god of the collective dead.

The derivation of the word *curia* is still in debate. Any connection with *curis* (*quiris*) is unlikely. Some, following Varro, have imagined a connection with *curare*, others with the Greek κῦρος. Corssen, abandoning an earlier suggestion, finally sought its origin in a root meaning 'shelter,' 'house.' Archaeology points pretty clearly to a direct connection with *curvus* (*curuus* for *curcuus*) and a possible relationship of both to the Celtic *cor*, 'circle.' There would seem to be a sub-conscious idea even at the present day that a Roman council-chamber should be more or less circular. Thus, speaking of the 'larger apse or apsidal western chamber, raised three steps above the body of the hall,' or *basilica*, which formed the western side of the Forum of Silchester, Dr. Haverfield wrote that 'it was probably the council-chamber of the governing body of the city'; and in his plan it is lettered CURIA.[1] Yet the *Curia Hostilia*, the oldest of all the newer kind of *curiae* in Rome, was, as we know it, uncompromisingly square.

Whether the *sella curulis* derived its peculiar name from the same word *curia* is a further question. The theory that it rather signifies 'chariot-chair' cannot be called convincing, and on the other hand we have the undeniable facts that a seat was a necessary privilege of the elders of the community assembled in the original *circus* or *curia*, and that subsequently, although in Rome it was confined to the so-called Curule magistrates, outside the city the *sella* confined to the *curulis* was used by the chief official of every *municipium*.

[1] *V.C.H. Hampshire*, i, 361.

If the *curiae* were indeed originally no more than so many circular moots of the thirty constituents of the subsequent city of Rome, a meaning is at last found for the unintelligible story of the thirty little pigs (χοῖροι) which served Aeneas for a sign where to build his new city.[1] The thirty little pigs, albeit subsequently interpreted to mean the 'thirty Latin cities' and used as a convenient excuse for Rome's mothering them all, possibly had reference rather to the thirty *curiae*, the free 'townships' of the *Ager Romanus* prior to the synoecismus.[2] The sacrifice of a sucking-pig was even in historical times a necessary part of the ritual preceding every meeting in the Athenian Pnyx, as in Rome of the *Compitalia*, *Terminalia*, *Ambarvalia*, and a number of other most ancient rituals. According to Varro[3] pigs were the earliest animals to be offered in sacrifice to the gods.

Niebuhr noticed, though he could not explain, 'how uniformly this number, thirty, prevails in the legends as well as in the institutions of ancient Rome.'[4] The theory here advanced for the origin and nature of the *curiae* may claim to offer an understandable explanation of the fact.

In the previous chapter it was shown that the Achean moot must be of circular plan and open to the sight and hearing of all, that it was a holy place, and that it stood at or near the gate of its community. The Italian moot appears to have been identical in all these points, differing only in that it was excavated in the soil, not a stone circle, but an earthwork of similar plan. In subsequent chapters it will be shown that England presents examples of constructions of both kinds, which cannot reasonably be accounted for except as moots, and it will further be shewn that England has examples of every intermediate form between the stone circle of Phaeacia and the earthen *circus* of Romulus.

[1] Vergil, *Aen.* iii, 385, *sqq.* The syllable *cur-* would normally appear in old Latin as *coir-*.

[2] A coin now in the *Cabinet de France* shews *obv.* a club and the word ROMA, *rev.* a sow suckling a crowd of little pigs, with legend KVPI (Babelon, *Monnaies de la Republique Romaine*, I, p. xvii; *Revue Numismatique*, 1859, pl. xiv.) The Duc de Luynes (*Rev. Numism.*, 1859, p. 364) believed it to belong to the time of Servius, and explained KVPI as *Curitium* (*Ouiritium*). It is now generally condemned as a forgery, but it is to be remembered that even forgers act upon probabilities.

[3] *De Re Rustica*, ii, 4.

[4] *Hist. Rome*, , note 58

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 people[1] 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, ἔνδειξις ('impeachment'), and in the Latin *indicere*,[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. 307.

[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 *blōtstein*, 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 statue[7]—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; Conder, *Heth and Moab*, pp. 198-9.

[3] Stefansson, *Iceland* (Revkjavik, 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 *burh* 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 sanctuary[3]; 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 ἱερὸς 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 Acheans 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 Tryggvison*, 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. Boreal.* i, 409-10. Cp. *Story of Olaf Tryggvison*, 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. xlvi-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 seat[1]: 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 moothill 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.

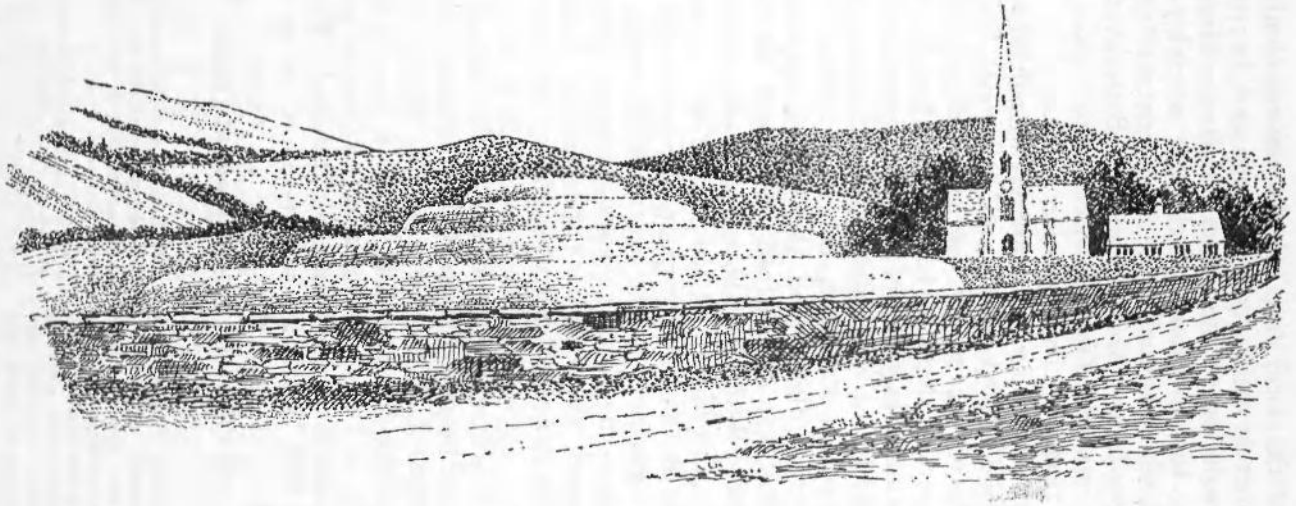


FIG. 5. THE TYNWALD HILL AND CHURCH OF ST. JOHN.

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 54¾ 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 ruinated, 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. 326).

[2] The measurements are taken from George Low's *Tour through Orkney and Schetland* 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 Acheans. No such stones were used in the *tings* of Shetland, where, however, there are sometimes found *flat* stones so arranged as to serve for seats[4]; 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 Gothric 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 *Eigils 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 ἱερὸς 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.

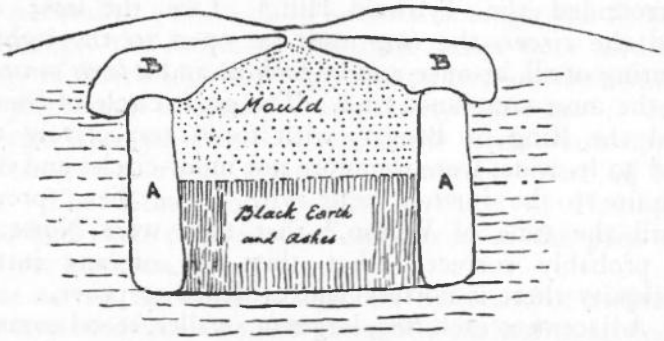
Adjacent to each *ting*, larger or smaller, stood commonly an artificial mound, the *Ting-brekka* or Law hill, from which the decisions of the moot might be proclaimed. A similar mound, the Hangman's hill, in other cases served as a place of execution. One of these in South Unst still bears the name 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 ἱερὸς 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 chamber[1] 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 Ποσιδήϊον 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 Acheans 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 *blōtstein*. 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

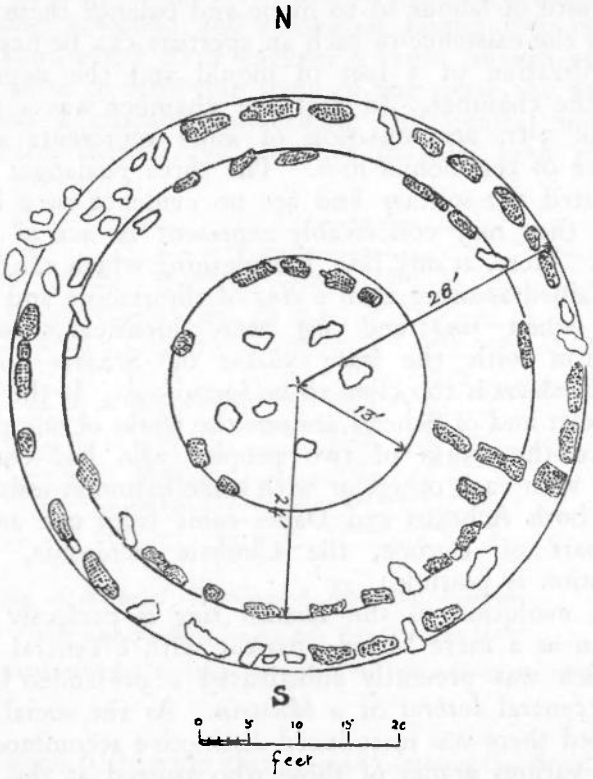


FIG. 7. STONE CIRCLE, WARTHILL OF QUENDALE, SHETLAND.
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries.)

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]

Chapter VIII.

THE CIRCLES OF ABERDEENSHIRE.

Stone Circles not all sepulchral—Various theories as to their purpose—The Aberdeenshire type—King Bridius of the Picts—Details of Aberdeenshire Circles—Hector Boece's account—Theories and difficulties—The Central Fires—The βοθρός *at Old Rayne, etc.—The Circle at Garrol Wood—Intrusive Burials—Tullynessle—Analogy with the Greek Theatre—The Horizontal Stone*

[1] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxi (1887), p. 382.

a θῶκος—*Celtic Fire-ritual—Beltane—Altar of Zeus at Olympia—The Pelopeum at Olympia—The Pyraethi of Strabo—Stone Circles of Inverness-shire—The* ἱερὸς κύκλος *of Pendine.*

A considerable number of British stone-circles have been explored, and the outcome is that, some of the number—for the most part of small size only—having been proved to be sepulchral,[1] it has been sweepingly asserted that all were constructed to serve as burial-places. If this were so, one would expect the evidence of such purpose to be abundant and indubitable, and especially so in the case of such great works as Avebury and Stonehenge, Arbor Low, and the great circles of Swinside and Salkeld. But the facts are these : the Swinside circle disclosed no burial at all ; none has been proven at Salkeld ; the whole area of Arbor Low yielded but one interment, and certain high authorities hold that to be intrusive ; no burial has ever been found within Stonehenge, none at Avebury, and none in any of the great Cornish circles.[2] And the list might easily be extended. It is a just statement of the facts to say that, while small circles, *i.e.* of 50 ft. diameter or less, have frequently been found to contain interments which warrant us in believing that such circles were built as grave-monuments, there have been no such discoveries in the larger circles, where, if interments of any kind have come to light, they bear no proportion either in dignity or in number to the size of the circles. It is quite true that these greater circles are commonly associated with barrows in greater or less numbers, and that Avebury and Stonehenge in particular are, or were, surrounded

[1] *E.g.*, the circles enclosing cist-burials at Addington in Kent, and in Devonshire, those at Hartford Tor near Ivybridge, Hound Tor near Shavercombe, and elsewhere. But not by any means all the smaller circles have yielded traces of interments, *e.g.* four on Rumbald's Moor, Yorks. (the diameter of which were respectively 40, 43, 80, and 93 ft.) were all drawn blank.

[2] Yet one is told for example, that ' with hardly an exception every primary interment that has been found within a megalithic circle in Britain was made in the Bronze Age ' (Rice Holmes, *Ancient Britain*, p. 215). Of the circles which have yielded remains which may be held to prove their sepulchral purpose only the smallest fraction are megalithic as that word is commonly understood, *e.g.* Duloe in Cornwall, and as a rule, wherever such evidences of burial have been found, if the stones be big, the circles themselves are very small. That of Duloe itself is but 30 ft. in diameter. As for the assertion that the burials there found were ' made in the Bronze Age,' this is quite unwarranted.

with barrows in vast numbers; but it is equally true that the circles themselves are not crowded with the interments which we should expect to find within them if their purpose was in any sense sepulchral.[1]

It is a remarkable fact that, with the possible exception of Arbor Low, there have not been found within the great circles traces of even intrusive interments; and the inference is firstly, that while these circles enjoyed a certain sanctity, it was not sepulchral, and secondly that their sanctity was so great, and so well remembered, as to safeguard them from intrusive burials through centuries of time when, whether their real purpose was or was not forgotten, their use at any rate was discontinued. And this points to the conclusion that their real purpose, and possibly even their use, may have been recognised at a date far later than is usually supposed.[2] The lesser sanctity of lesser circles, erected originally for the very same purpose, may have failed in some cases so to safeguard them, and of the burials found in these some at any rate may quite well be intrusive and no part of their original design.

The theory that the larger circles had a different purpose from the smaller was suggested long ago.[3] It is endorsed by Déchelette.[4] But while all are agreed that the smaller circles, the true cromlechs, were usually sepulchral, about the purpose of the great circles there is no agreement, nor even any well-supported theory. They are written down, according to the preference of the individual, as temples, as astronomical observatories or sun-dials, as burial-places, as a British equivalent for the Zoroastrian 'tower of silence,'[5] and as moots. It is

[1] E. Gibson remarked the fact as long ago as 1772, *apropos* of the great circle of Rollright (100 ft.) in Oxfordshire, which had been vainly searched, he says, by Ralph Sheldon for bones or other relics (Camden, i, 293). Nothing has transpired since to upset his conclusion.

[2] A. L. Lewis, arguing from different data, arrives at the same conclusion; *Arch. Journ.* xlix (1892) p. 140. He thinks the evidence 'tends to shew that, however old these monuments may be, ceremonies of some kind were carried on in them up to the introduction of Christianity.' 'Tradition . . . connects them with a period which cannot be considered distantly prehistoric' (*ibid.* p. 147).

[3] *E.g.*, by Llewelyn Jewitt, *Grave Mounds and their Contents*, p. 71.

[4] *Manuel d'Archéologie préhistorique* (Paris, 1908), vol. i, p. 446. This writer found himself quite unable to pronounce upon the purpose of the great circles, and shared the general assumption that they are of vast antiquity (*ibid.* i, p. 447).

[5] Dr. H. Colley March in *Proc. Dorset N.H. and Antiq. Field Club*, xxix (1908) p. 225; *Trans. Lanc. and Ches. Ant. Soc.*, 1889. He sought to make good the theory (first mooted perhaps by Blight in 1868 and approved by F. C. Lukis in *Proc. S.A.* 1885) that the interspaces of the peristaliths had originally been filled in with dry-walling or with wattles, so as to form enclosures,

possible that there were individual circles subserving almost every one of these various purposes, and that some of the circles may have combined several of these purposes ; there is no reason to think that all the circles were built with any one purpose only. Some of them served as moots. This and no more than this, is the point to be established here. The evidence that stone circles were built and used for this purpose by a Celtic people domiciled in Greece, and by Danes and Northmen in many lands, has been stated. It remains next to enquire whether there is anything in the case of the British circles to suggest that these also were used as moots.

Stone circles are especially abundant in Aberdeenshire and the adjoining counties of Scotland. They are of various types, but of those in Aberdeenshire the larger number are of one peculiar type, viz., circles of free-standing stones in variable numbers, of which the distinguishing feature is the presence, usually close to the south-western or southern point of the circle, of a great monolith placed horizontally in such a way as to block the interspace between two of the standing stones. These ' flankers ' are usually the tallest pair in the whole peristalith. Notable examples of the type are or were to be seen at Candle Hill of Old Rayne (diam. 60 ft.), Sinhinny[1] (87 ft. by 81½ ft.), Hatton of Ardoyne (81 ft.), Ardlair (35 ft.), Castle Fraser[2] (65 ft.), Auchquhorthies[3] in Banchory-Devenick (97 ft. by 74½ ft.), Aquhorthies in Inverurie (120 ft.), Fiddes Hill (46 ft.), Old Keig (66 ft.),[4] Balquhain (70 by 60 ft.), and Tyrebaggar in Dyce (61 by 56 ft.).[5]

within which were exposed the bodies of the dead until the flesh had disappeared. The theory has found little favour with archaeologists, and is wholly unsupported by evidence. The few examples forthcoming of stone-circles apparently thus built-in with dry-walling appear to be later attempts to make use of the circles by converting them into enclosures. An example is the circle at Tredinnick in Gulval, Cornwall. Homer is conclusive evidence that, at any rate when constructed for moots, the peristaliths were designedly left open.

[1] Otherwise Sinheany or Sunhoney.

[2] Otherwise Balgorkar, but now known as West Mains.

[3] There are two circles here, one shewing the horizontal stone, the other too much damaged to be determinable.

[4] Maclagan, *Hill Forts*, p. 74.

[5] See the series of articles by F. R. Coles, who has systematically surveyed them all, in *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv-xli ; others *ibid.* i, 141 ; v, 130 ; xiv, 295 ; xviii, 319 ; xix, 370. Also A. L. Lewis in *Journ. Anthrop. Inst.* 1900, p. 67 ; Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times* (*Bronze Age*) ; Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* ; Maclagan, *Hill Forts and Stone Circles of Scotland* ; Fergusson, *Rude Stone Monuments* ; Robt. Munro, *Prehistoric Scotland* ; *Archaeologia*, v. 246 ; xxii, 202, 410 ; *Proc. Brit. Assoc.* 1871 ; *Proc. S.A.*, 2d ser., x, 302 ; Bp. Browne, *Antiquities in the Neighbourhood of Dunecht* (fine plates).

The part of Scotland where is found this type of circle was close to the headquarters of Pictish sovereignty in the sixth century, when King Brude (the Bridius of Bede[1]) had his seat of government near Inverness. In the seventh century, the royal seat was moved southward to Fortrenn in Strathearn, Perthshire. King Brude is a historical figure.[2] He was, says Bede, 'very powerful.' He represents the last period of Pictish paganism, for though he died a Christian, he had been bred up in Druidism. The old belief that the Romans penetrated even to this part of Scotland has been proved correct by the recent exploration of two of their fortified stations, at Raedykes near Stonehaven in Kincardineshire, 16 miles south-west of Aberdeen, and at Mailen, Ythan Wells, in the heart of Aberdeenshire, nine miles east of Huntly.

The type is strictly local, replaced in the shires of Nairn and Inverness and the adjacent areas by a different type of complex and concentric circles, commonly triple, shewing nothing analogous to the horizontal stone of the Aberdeenshire type.[3] From this fact A. L. Lewis would infer a racial difference in the builders.[4] Perhaps it was rather a local difference. The difference in the two types of circle has possibly a close parallel in that which is often to be seen between the typical churches of two adjacent English counties. There are undoubtedly cases where this corresponds to a racial difference in the builders, as for example in Cornwall by contrast with Somerset, but it would be difficult to establish any such racial difference in the majority of cases.

The circles of the Aberdeenshire type, though varying considerably in size, are in no case large. The smallest (Ardlair and Esslie no. 2) have a diameter of 35 ft. only; the largest (Aquhorthies in Inverurie) has a diameter of 120 ft.[5]; the majority would seem to be somewhere between 60 ft. and 80 ft. Of 20 circles taken as they come, 11 (55%) are of this size, 14 (70%) have diameters

[1] *Bridio filio Meilochon, rege potentissimo, H.E.* III, iv, § 159. He died in 565, immediately after his conversion by St. Columba. His Scottish name is Brude Mac-Mailhon, and MacBride and Macmillan are good Scottish names to this day.

[2] Stokes, *Ireland in Early Christian Times*, p. 120.

[3] *Proc. S.A.S.* xviii, pp. 328, *sqq.*

[4] *Journ. Anthrop. Inst.* 1900, p. 67.

[5] The circle at Wester Echt also had a diameter of 120 ft., but there is no trace of any recumbent stone (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv 187).

between 50 ft. and 80 ft., while four (20%) are bigger and only two (10%) are smaller. Some few are perfect circles, while others are not; and F. R. Coles emphatically declares[1] that they shew no regard for any systematic orientation.

The number of standing stones seems commonly to have been from 10 to 12, and they are of no very great size. The circles usually stand upon rising ground commanding an extensive view, and are mostly set upon a southward slope, but not invariably.[2] The largest pillar-stones are commonly found at the lower side of the circle, the smallest at the upper side. At the lower side, adjacent to the tallest stones, is found the horizontal stone, which is the characteristic of the whole series.[3] This is usually bigger than any other of the monoliths employed. At Sinhinny it measures 16 ft. in length and 4½ ft. in breadth, and is calculated to weigh some 18 tons; that at Old Keig F. R. Coles calculates to weigh as much as 30 tons. Not infrequently the horizontal stone is of a different kind from the pillar-stones: at Sinhinny it is of grey granite, whereas all the other stones of the circle are of red granite[4]; at Ardoyne the horizontal stone and the two contiguous pillar-stones are alike 'foreign,' brought at vast labour from Bennachie, some miles away.[5] Other cases are at Raes of Clune and at Garrol Wood.[6] At Loanheid in Daviot there is a second recumbent stone set close behind the first and parallel with it,[7] seemingly an unique arrangement. This circle had eight stones besides the horizontal blocks and the two contiguous pillars, and was not large (65 ft. by 60 ft.).

The horizontal stones seem to have been set upon their edges rather than upon their faces, and the smaller stones which adjoin them may have served to hold them in that position. Dr. John Milne would see in the whole arrangement a 'ghost-door,' the smaller stones representing bars

[1] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, 197.

[2] *Archaeologia*, v, 246.

[3] It is therefore usually *at or near the south* point of the circle, but not invariably. That of the Tomnaverie circle is much nearer west than south (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxix, 211), and that of Ardlair (fig. 9) is due south. That of Strichen, on N. side of the circle, is not original (Bp. Browne, *Antiqs. of Dunecbt*, p. 90).

[4] Stuart, *Sculp. Stones of Scotland*, i, p. xxxi.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, 154.

[7] *Ibid.* xxxvi, 517. It is possible that these are merely the two parts of a single original stone which has split in two.

to keep the door closed. He believes the circles to be without exception sepulchral, and finds a parallel for their construction in those peculiar circles, open with the exception of one bay, which Dr. Greenwell observed within the mass of certain barrows.[1]

In some instances there are distinct remains of a kind

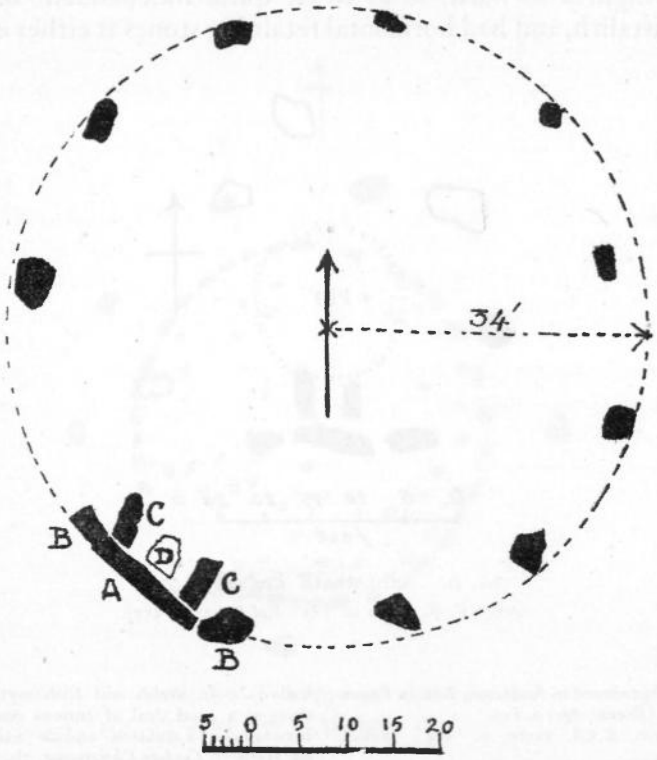


FIG. 8. AUCHQUHORTHIES IN MANAR.

A, Horizontal stone; BB, Flankers; CC, 'Arms'; D, Level with ground.

of paved dais in front of the horizontal stone, as at Fiddes Hill, Castle Fraser and Tomnagorn, five miles north of the railway station of Torphins; and at Fiddes Hill are found also, besides the two main pillar-stones of the peristalith at either end of the horizontal stone, two

[1] Above, ch. iii.

smaller stones at what may be described as the front corners of this dais.

Dalrymple's sketch of the circle at Ardlair[1] shews the dais as veritably a long seat with monolithic back and arms. A second example of the same kind was at Tomnagorn,[2] and yet a third is at Auchquhorthies in Kenmay (fig. 8.)

At Auchquhorthies in Banchory[3]-Devenick the dais is set slightly forward, so as to be quite independent of the peristalith, and had horizontal retaining stones at either end.[4]

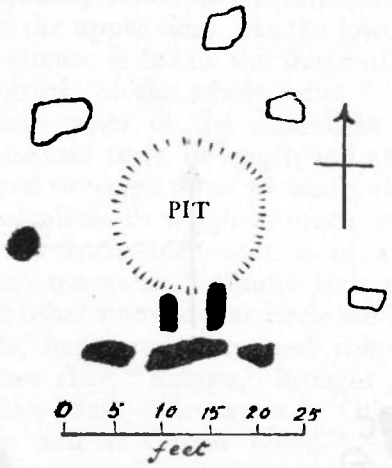


FIG. 9. ARDLAIR IN KENNETHMONT
(After F. R. Coles in *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxvi, 557).

[1] Reproduced in Anderson, *Scot. in Pagan Times* (*Bronze Age*) p. 110.

[2] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, p. 174; xxxvi, p. 556.

[3] Auchquhorthies, a common name in this part of Scotland, has been explained as 'Field of Prayer' (*Arch.* xxii, p. 103), or 'Field of the Pillar Stones' (Bp. Browne, *Antiqs. of Dunecht*, p. 69). The name of Banchory (cf. Welsh Bangor) is suggestive: there are two fine circles in the parish. In Kincardineshire is Banchory-Ternan, where are three circles, with diameters of 75 ft. and 45 ft. Both Ternan and Devenick are names of saints, and St. Devenick is said to have been buried at the Banchory named after him, 'where a church was founded in his honour,' says Mackinlay, who explains Banchory as *ban coire*, 'white cauldron (*i.e.* hollow).' In Welsh and Irish mythology there is a good deal of curious confusion between *coir* 'a cauldron,' and *cor* 'a circle'; see Herbert, *Cyclops Christianus*, ch. vii. A double concentric circle (diam. 57 ft. by 36 ft.) on Machrie Moor, Arran, is called 'Fingal's Cauldron Seat' (Bryce, *Book of Arran*; cf. Martin, *Description of Western Isles*). Johnston (*Place-Names of Scotland*) would interpret Banchory as 'Pointed Hill.' 'Cauldron' seems in fact to have been used in the sense of 'circle.' Herbert quotes from the *Sons of Llyr*: 'Is there not protection in the *cathedra* of Ceridwen's cauldron?' and concludes that 'cauldron,' in the language of Bardism, actually meant 'stone circle.' If so, the *cathedra* referred to is clearly the *θωκος*.

[4] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, p. 145.

The central area is usually flat, but occasionally raised This rise as a rule is slight, but at Candle Hill of Insch the centre rises to a pronounced cairn. At Ardlair, Auchquhorthies, Tomnagorn, and in many other examples, there is a sort of kerb or ring of small stones within the peristalith, set closely side by side and rising but a few inches above the turf. Stuart records,[1] after Dalrymple, a more elaborate variation at Ardoyne, where he says

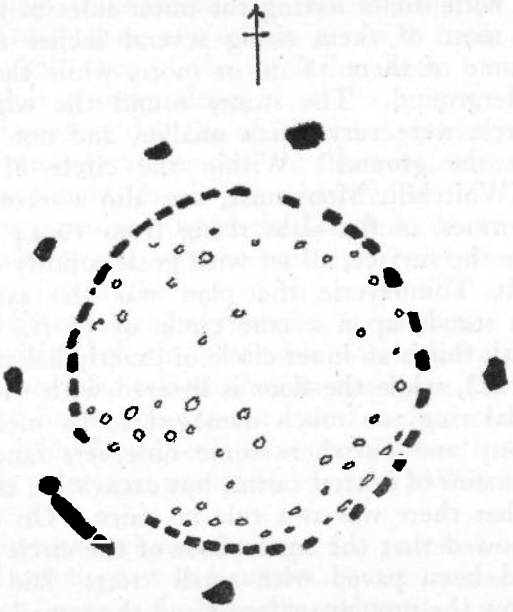


FIG. 10. HATTON OF ARDOYNE
(After Miss C. Maclagan, 1875).

[1] *Sculp. Stones of Scotland*, i, p. xxiii; *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxv, 246. In Maclagan's *Hill Forts* (1875) the outer kerb is shewn (pl. xxx) as a continuous ring of blocks, save for an opening opposite to the horizontal stone, as wide as the stone is long. As Miss Maclagan had a theory to establish, viz. that all these circles were but the ruins of *brochs*, too much weight must not be attached to her plan; but on the other hand she would not have selected this particular circle to illustrate her theory, had there not been visible something which seemed to support her case, *i.e.*, an inner ring of blocks with dressed faces, resembling the inner footing of the great ring-wall which she postulated. She gives the diameter of the peristalith as 81 ft., that of the kerb as 61 ft., and took the two to represent the remains of a wall 10 ft. in thickness.

A curious analogy to these circular pavements is to be seen in the *intihuatanus* of Peru, described and figured in Squier's *Peru*, where a circle of standing stones is surrounded *on the outer side* by a 'massive paved platform.' In Peru, as in Britain, *small* cromlechs were used as burial-places, but the purpose of the larger *intihuatanus* is not determined.

there were two such rings or kerbs, one within the other, concentric with the main circle : the interspace between the inmost and the medial ring was 2½ ft. ; that between the medial ring and the peristalith was 6 ft. ; and the diameter of the last-named was 81 ft. In section this work strikingly resembled the typical *ting* of the Shetlands, for the area of the medial circle was raised about a foot above the outermost, that of the central area again about a foot above the medial circle. This latter was ' faced all round with stones having the outer sides in most cases flat, and most of them rising several inches above the surface, some of them 18 in. or more, while they extend 2 ft. underground. The stones round the edge of the inmost circle were very much smaller, and not so deeply sunk into the ground.' Within the circle of standing stones at Whitehill, Monymusk, was also a second ' circle or kerb formed of flat slabs rising from 10–14 inches to 2 ft. above the surface, all set with great solidity and firmness.'[1] At Tomnaverie the plan was the same. The peristalith stands upon a true circle of 56 ft., and concentric with this is an inner circle of exactly half the radius (diam. 28 ft.), while the floor is littered with the remains of a medial ring too much damaged to be measurable.[2] At Sinhinny and elsewhere some observers fancied they saw the remains of central cairns, but excavation established the fact that there was as a rule no cairn. On the other hand it showed that the entire floor of the circle at Castle Fraser had been paved with small ' setts ' laid some six inches below the present surface,[3] and the same is recorded of the circle called North Stone, Alford.[4] A circle in Clatt (diam. about 75 ft.) was ' entirely paved with stones to the depth of about 3 ft.'[5]

There are other local variations. The circle at Whitehill, Monymusk, has the appearance of a raised circular barrow, the top rising as high as the peristalith which encircles it, and the centre of the mound sunk to form a shallow pit of 9 ft. in diameter. The annular mound thus produced is described as being supported

[1] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxv, 206.

[2] *Ibid.* xxxix, 211.

[3] Precisely the same thing has been found on Moor Divock, parish of Ashham, Westmorland (Greenwell, *British Barrows*, p. 400).

[4] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxvi, 494.

[5] Bp. Browne, *Antiqs. of Dunecht*, p. 147, citing *New Statistical Account* (1840).

without and within by retaining stones set kerb-fashion.[1] At Castle Fraser this central pit is represented by a circular area (diam. 13 ft.) similarly ringed by a kerb.[2] The circle called Greystone, in Alford, has a flat floor ringed about by a pronounced earthen vallum in which the stones of the peristalith are set (diam. 33 ft.).[3] The same was the case with the circles at Tullynessle,[4] and those of Loanheid, Ardlair and Tyrebaggar had sunken basin-like floors.[5] Similarly in the circle of Auchquhorthies 'the space included by the stones is hollowed out in the form of a shallow saucer. The stones are set on a raised bank or ring,'[6] and the whole area of the circle has been built up to a level[7] against a sharp slope.

At the present day the characteristic horizontal monolith is commonly spoken of as the 'altar-stone.'[8] The name is not new, for it was apparently in use when Hector Boece was writing in the first years of the sixteenth century, who would seem to have inferred from the name something of what he says of the origin and use of these circles. His own language makes it perfectly clear that he was talking of the veritable 'Aberdeenshire type,' but most writers, taking their matter not from Boece's Latin—and he was one of the best Latinists of his time—but from John Bellenden's loose paraphrase, have entirely missed this point, and a good deal more.[9] What he actually said is as follows :—

'To promote religion amongst his people King Mainus instituted certain new and customary ceremonies in honour of the gods, over and above the older ritual. In various

[1] *Proc.S.A.S.* xxxv, 203.

[2] *Ibid.* xxxv, 199.

[3] *Ibid.* xxxv, 208.

[4] *Ibid.* xxxv, 211; *N.S.A. Aberdeenshire.* This, a characteristic feature of the Roman *circus* (p. 327), is suggestive of Roman influence, but cp. the circle on Pwll Mountain (ch. x.).

[5] *Archaeologia* xxii, 410.

[6] Bp. Browne, *op. cit.* p. 70.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] A. L. Lewis in *Journ. Anthrop. Inst., loc. cit.* F. R. Coles prefers to call it the recumbent stone.

[9] *Ut populum ad religionem moveret, priscis sacris novas quasdam solemnesque ceremonias superaddidit diis immortalibus peragendas, ut immensis saxis variis in regionum locis (ut res exposcebat) in coronam admotis, eorumque maximo ad meridiem porrecto, cuius pro ara foret usus, victimae ibi diis immortalibus sacrificium cremarentur. Extant in rei fidem vel hoc nostro aevo ingentia ea saxa ducta in circos; prisca deorum fana vulgus appellat. Mirabitur profecto quisquis ea spectaverit, qua arte, quibus corporis viribus, lapides tanta mole in unum locum fuerint congesti. Erat ea aetate gentis victima rei frumentariae pecuniariaeve diis immortalibus gentili debitae instituto portio, quae sacerdotum (bi tum rarissimi erant) victui superfuerat. Hist. lib.* ii (Bellenden's Version, ii, 3), Parisiis, 1575.

localities of his territories, according as the circumstances required, huge stones were assembled in a ring, and the biggest of them was stretched out on the south side (of the ring) to serve for an altar, whereon were burnt the victims in sacrifice to the gods. In proof of the fact to this day there stand these mighty stones gathered together into circles (*circos*)—" the old temples of the gods " they are commonly called—and whoso sees them will assuredly marvel by what mechanical craft or by what bodily strength stones of such bulk have been collected to one spot. The " victim " of those days was that portion of grain or of cattle[1] which was by heathen custom due to the gods, or so much of it as was not required for the maintenance of the priests, who were in those times very few.'

The new ritual, he adds, included a monthly sacrifice to Diana,[2] and ' that is why the new moon was hailed with certain words of prayer, a custom which lingered very late.'

Boece's *Chronicles* were first printed in 1527. Their author (1465–1536), born in Dundee, and for many years principal of the university of Aberdeen, was in the best of positions for becoming acquainted with the local type of circle, and his language shews that he had noticed its characteristic features. He explicitly says that the biggest stone in the circle was the horizontal stone, and that its usual position was on the south. Among all the circles of this type and district there is but one, and that a doubtful case, in which the horizontal stone occupies another position. Boece, it will be noticed, calls the circles *circi*. He felt them to be pagan, but Bellenden with fine prolepsis speaks of their priests as ' Kirkmen.'[3]

James Anderson could write in 1777 that circles of this peculiar type abounded in Aberdeenshire. He had seen, he says, ' some hundreds ' in Scotland, but had ' never seen or heard of any in Scotland to the south of the Grampians or to the north of Inverness.'[4] He speaks of the characteristic dais as ' the stage,' and suggests that

[1] The text has *pecuniariae*. Boece undoubtedly meant, if he did not actually write, *pecuariae*.

[2] In Sophocles (*Oed. Tyr.* 161) Artemis the moon-goddess is addressed as tutelary of the *agora*. Tacitus (*Germ.* 2) says the German tribes held their moots at new and full moon.

[3] ' The offerings,' he says, were ' Gevin to Kirkmen for their sustentatioun.'

[4] *Archaeologia*, v. 246.

it was intended for the officiating priest, the huge recumbent stone serving as an altar. It is not needful to endorse the latter suggestion. What is of interest is that Anderson was struck by the resemblance of the dais in such circles to the stage of a theatre ; and the resemblance must strike every observant archaeologist. Fergusson, who reproduces[1] Anderson's plan of the circle on Fiddes Hill, puzzled by the admitted fact that no interment had been found elsewhere in the circle, surmised that 'the sepulchral deposit here is no doubt in the raised part in front of the great stone' ; but nothing has transpired to confirm this arbitrary guess.

Ingenuity has exhausted itself in suggesting the purpose of these peculiar circles of Aberdeenshire. Miss Maclagan would have them all to be the remains of *brochs*, the horizontal stones being the lintels of the supposed doorways. Lukis imagined them to be the rim-stones of cairns which have been destroyed. Many present-day writers argue them to have been sun-temples or observatories. A great number of earlier antiquaries, led away by the characteristic horizontal stone, spoke of them as either Viking temples of Odin and Norse courts of justice (Macculloch, Hibbert, Barry and Sir Walter Scott) or Druid altars of sacrifice (Aubrey and Stukeley). F. R. Coles,[2] while rejecting each of these views, writes down all the circles as sepulchral, and this is the current view to-day.

Even Dr. Anderson was satisfied, mainly upon the evidence from Crichie and similar cases, to conclude that all the Aberdeenshire circles were sepulchral. 'We have so many circles which upon proper investigation have proved themselves burying-places that it is impossible for us to conclude that those which are still investigated will disclose a different purpose for this type of structure.'[3]

[1] *Rude Stone Monuments*, p. 263.

[2] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, 197 : 'We have no record,' he writes, summarising fifteen cases in the south of Aberdeenshire, 'of any excavation having been made in seven of the sites above described, but in regard to eight other sites in which excavation was rightly conducted, we possess distinct descriptions of remains found ; and these remains indicate burnt burials, sometimes in cists, at other times without cists.'

[3] *Scotland in Pagan Times* (*Bronze Age*), p. 118. So late as 1917 James Ritchie ventures to say (*Proc. S.A.S.* lii, 120) that it is 'abundantly proved' that Scottish stone-circles, whatever other purpose they may have served, were undoubtedly used for the burial of the dead. Macbain (*Celtic Mythology and Religion*) takes the same view, and like the rest ignores the dais. After specifying other groups of circles in Badenoch and about the river Ness, with

If this comment is intended—and it seems to be intended—to include the circles of the dais-type, it begs the question, for these are emphatically of different type from those like Crichie and Tuack, which have ' proved themselves burying-places.' He seems to have attached no significance either to the absence of a fosse or to the presence of the dais. But is it reasonable to hold that this very special type of circle, found so frequently over a comparatively small area and bespeaking such very peculiar care in the provision of the dais, should yet have had no special purpose ? Why then was the dais made at all ? Why is it found constantly at the same point in the circle, and that exactly the position which would be chosen for the platform of a theatre as commanding the whole arena ? Why was so much labour expended in procuring the immense monolith which invariably backs it, and why were there provided as it were arms for the seat ? Why was stone of ' foreign ' kind sometimes used for this part, and for only this part, of the whole circle ? To ignore such points is to ignore the essentials which distinguish these circles from all others.

Again, if circles of this type were constructed only to be burial-places, whether of one person or of many, how is it that the results of excavation accord so ill with that purpose ? Interments of various degrees of dignity, and relics apparently sepulchral, have been found *near* the circles,[1] but not within them. In not one single case is there recorded anything in the way of the solitary but imposing burial which is the proof of the purpose of the funereal monument of an individual ; there is no central grave, no dolmen or menhir, no grave-furniture. Just as little is there any such crowd of minor interments as was to be expected if the circles were the burial-places of families or clans. The two outstanding conclusions to be drawn from the excavations made by C. Elphinstone Dalrymple—which Dr. Anderson admitted to be ' one of

average diameter of 96 ft., he admits that, the Clava mounds excepted, no burial deposits have been found in them ' excepting in the doubtful instances of Druid Temple and Gask. An urn was found in a gravel-pit near the former, and bits of bone have been found in the *debris* which lies in the interior of the latter ' (*op. cit.* p. 193).

[1] For example at Cairn Riv circle (80 ft. diam.) : ' In the near vicinity a stone axe-hammer, bronze armlets, flint chips and a button of jet ' (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxvii, 122).

the most important contributions to the materials of Scottish archaeology ever made'[1]—and by various others are, that firstly, in no case is there discoverable any single conspicuous burial within these circles, and secondly, rarely is there any trace of a plurality of deposits of any kind. Under this head the one common feature is the presence in and about the centre of the circle of a deposit, larger or smaller, of burnt earth mingled with scraps of bone and very occasional fragments of pottery. These have been repeatedly labelled as the proofs of sepulchral interments, but they are nothing of the kind. They are the *vestigia* not of one solemn burning, but of many; and there is no evidence whatever that those burnings were sepulchral.[2] In certain well-authenticated cases the ashes fill or conceal a carefully constructed pit, which has no resemblance to any known form of ancient grave.

At Old Rayne the central pit is described as being

[1] *Scotland in Pre-Historic Times* (*Bronze Age*), p. 101.

[2] In the great circle at Esslie (diam. 89 ft. by 73½ ft.) were found in 1873 certain 'dark marks . . . about the length of a not tall human being.' These were assumed to be the graves in which had been laid three or four bodies to form a circle round the central point, where was found 'a cist, if we may call it so, built of common boulder-stones, little more than ½-ft., *i.e.* from 8 to 10 inches in diameter. In the grave were found black marks and pieces of bone, but no more.' There does not seem to be anything here to justify the name of a 'grave,' and certainly nothing to suggest that in that central spot was buried some great person (*Proc. S.A.S.* xiv, 302; xxxiv, 165). In the second and smaller circle at Esslie (diam. 35 ft.) the same explorer found at the centre '*apparently* the remains of some structure broken and tossed into a hole . . . *probably* a large stone cist' (*Proc .S.A.S.* xiv, 303; xxxiv, 167). The language shows that nothing in the way of an indisputable grave was found. It is the same in all cases: wherever the recumbent stone is present, the proof of anything in the way of an interment having any due proportion to the scale of the circle is wholly lacking; and such small traces of anything of the sort as are forthcoming even their discoverers can only describe with hesitation as proving the presence of an interment. In the circle of North Stone, Alford, were found 'seven ancient graves lying east and west . . . one contained some bones and part of a clay urn with incised decorations; another had several pieces of bone and tooth, and two bits of flint; and in the rest only the outlines of the skeletons could be traced' (*Proc .S.A.S.* xxxiv, 494; *Scot. Notes and Queries*, May, 1897, p. 178). This circle has a diameter of 67 ft. by 62 ft., and the typical recumbent stone. Moreover it was paved throughout 'with rough stones set close together.' The graves were probably intrusive, a conclusion with which the scanty furniture and the east-to-west position very well agree.

At Castle Fraser (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxv, 199) there was black mould and charcoal under the paving of the circle right down to the subsoil; while at Sinhinny Dalrymple remarked that 'all the soil, a deep black loam, appeared to have been brought into the circle and seemed to differ from that outside the circle.' Compare the local tradition quoted in connexion with the circle at Auchincorthie (*Arch.* i, 339). Such facts seem to suggest that in the building of some of these circles there was formed a level floor of fine soil upon which were burnt certain ceremonial fires, possibly by way of consecration, the whole being finally covered over with a rough paving, save for the βοθρός in the centre. Or possibly in such cases the whole of the paving is a later addition. Similar pavements, or their analogues, will be cited later from Wales and England.

regularly steined 'like a draw-well,' 2½ ft. deep, and 2 ft. wide at the mouth.[1] The similarity of this structure to the βοθρός of the palace in Tiryns (fig. 1) admits of no question: excepting for the difference in size they are identical, and it were to be expected that that of the palace of one of the most powerful sovereignties of ancient Greece would be the bigger. The pit at Old Rayne was filled with the usual accumulation of burnt earth, bones, and shards, and the same material was found scattered over the adjoining floor of the circle to a distance of 2 ft. or so all round the pit. At Cothie Muir[2] in Keig also there was a central βοθρός, and another at Ardlair.[3] At Bognie, Aberdeenshire, was a double concentric circle. When dug out it 'shewed traces of pavement, under which were layers of bones in a pulverized state, and burnt matter.'[4] The 'traces of pavement' were perhaps the remains of something like that found at Tiryns, and the burnt matter found 'under' it was probably the filling of the *bothros* below.

F. R. Coles thoroughly excavated the circle in Garrol Wood, in Durris, Kincardineshire (figs. 11-14).[5] It consists of ten pillar-stones so set as to form a figure curiously like the plan of a Greek theatre, save that its base is slightly convex instead of straight.[6] At the middle point of this base, that is, at the southernmost point of the whole figure, is the recumbent stone, set as usual between two pillars. Two other pillars mark the respective ends of the base, and the remaining six are set with fair regularity round the circumference.[7] The extreme east-to-west diameter is 63⅓ ft., and that from north to south is 51 ft. The

[1] *Sculp. Stones of Scotland*, i. p. xxi. From this pit came one of the very few finds which this type of circle has produced, viz. a portion of a bracer (wrist-guard) of polished stone *Proc. S.A.S.*, xxxvi, 530).

[2] Wrongly called Old Keig in *Statistical Account*. See Bp. Browne, p. 78. There must have been something equivalent however at Old Keig, for 'some persons who are yet alive declare that, many years since, they did see ashes of some burnt matter digged out of the bottom of *a little circle, set about with stones standing close together in the centre*' of the circle at Old Keig; *Archaeologia*, i (1779), p. 320.

[3] *Sculp. Stones of Scotland* i, xxii.

[4] John Stuart in *Proc. S.A.S.* iv (1863), p. 448. The account avers 'that in the centre of the innermost circle was found an urn, the fragments of which were sent to the Museum.' It remains uncertain then whether the excavation disclosed a complete urn, or merely some fragments of one.

[5] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxix (1905), 190 *sqq.*

[6] In Dodwell, *Views and Descript. of Cyclopean or Pelasgic Remains in Greece and Italy* (1834), pl. 29, are shewn the ruins, on an unnamed site near Missolonghi, of a theatre, 'one of the smallest in Greece,' which was apparently of this precise plan.

[7] Not one of these standing stones was bedded more than 16 in. in the soil.

FIG. II. GARROL WOOD CIRCLE IN DURRIS: GENERAL VIEW FROM THE EAST
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries).

excavator, thinking that originally the figure was a perfect circle described on a radius of 31 ft. 9 in., failed to find any evidence to support this theory. At the central point he found a small pit, and on its floor ' small slabs of granite, rudely wedge-shaped, set round a cavity scooped out of the subsoil, with their edges contiguous so as to form a funnel-shaped pit, which measured 2 ft. 2 in. in diameter across the mouth, 10 in. in depth, and 4 in. across the base.'[1] Of these peculiar slabs six were *in situ*,

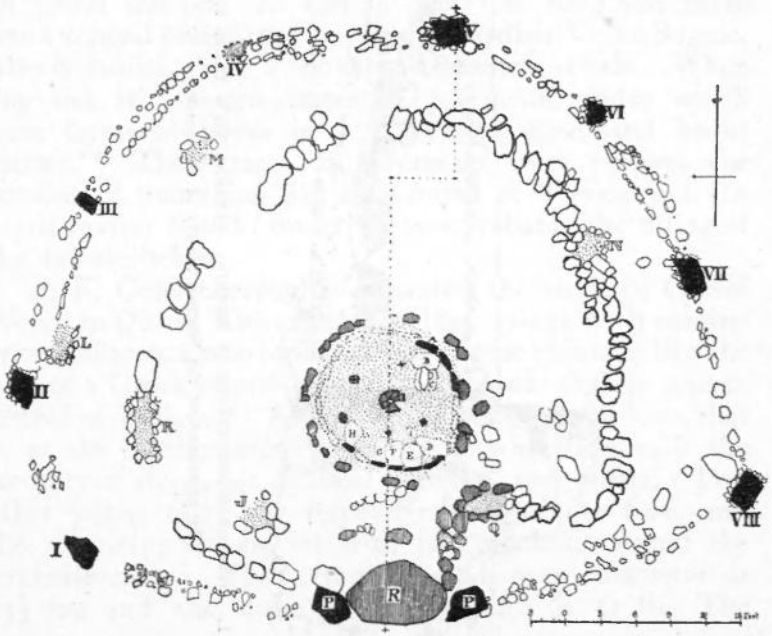


FIG. 12. GARROL WOOD CIRCLE: PLAN
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries).

and a seventh had disappeared. The pit ' was full to the brim of comminuted burnt bones and fragments of charcoal.' Its upper edge was ' flush with the surface of the subsoil.' It formed the central feature of a circular area 12½ ft. in diameter, which was ringed by ' thick squat

[1] Each slab was therefore approximately 14 in. long and 11 in. wide at the broader end, tapering to 2 in. at the narrower end. This, it will be noticed, proves the use of tooled and untooled stones in one and the same circle.

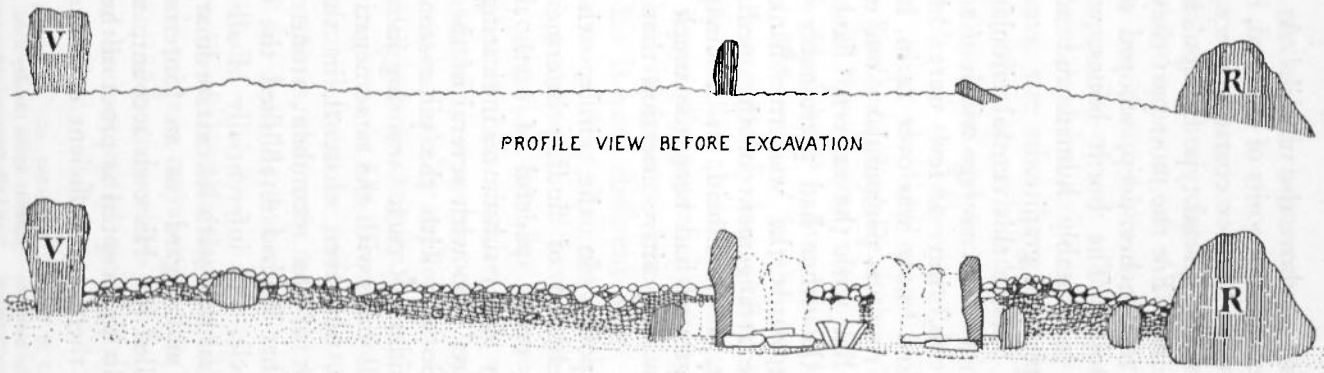


FIG. 13. GARROL WOOD CIRCLE: SECTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER EXCAVATION
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries).

stones' rising some 13 in. above the subsoil. At five points within this area were found deposits of charcoal, incinerated bones, and fragments of 'rather coarse pottery, too small to be identified as of any special type of sepulchral vessel, and without ornament.' For the most part they were laid in shallow holes a few inches deep, scooped out of the surface of the subsoil. The burnt bones, which were pronounced to be indubitably human and adult, were found resting on a piece of granite.

At 12 to 15 ft. outside this central circular area was 'a broad ring of stones' of an average width of 2 ft. 'The majority were flattish,' but a few were 'bulky and rounded boulders,' and 'none was over 14 in. high.'[1] As the plan shows, this ring was penannular: one end turned sharply outward in line with the eastern 'flanker' of the recumbent stone; the other had presumably turned in the same fashion towards the western 'flanker.' This at any rate was the arrangement of the medial ring at Hatton of Ardoyne, at Loanheid, at Tomnagorn and elsewhere, but the ground had been too much disturbed by planting to allow of positive assertion that it was so at Garrol Wood.

Six particular points in the circle, where there appeared to be likelihood of finding interments, were 'carefully searched, every spadeful of earth sifted, but without the discovery of any substances indicating deposits of a sepulchral nature.' So with several of the stones of the boulder-ring. So also with the pillar-stones: 'the ground on all four sides' of each 'was dug into down to the subsoil, but in all cases with the same negative result.' There was nothing, not even charcoal, in the ground immediately in front of the recumbent stone. Yet the excavator believed that he had established the sepulchral character of this circle, and inferentially of all circles of this type. The central hole with its extraordinary features he calls a 'grave,' and regards as an 'interment' the heap of ash which filled it. His own account, as quoted above, cannot possibly be accepted as proof of the presence of any grave, nor is there any sufficient evidence to shew

[1] There were several gaps in the boulder-ring on the western side, to be accounted for by the removal of the stones in recent years to build the dry dyke of which were found the remains between every two pillar-stones of the peristalith.

that this circle had been constructed to be a place of burial.

Only in one or two cases has there been found an unmistakeable sepulchral deposit within any circle of the Aberdeenshire type, as at Ardoyne and Sinhinny, and these were but mean deposits. It was not, so far as we know, the practice of any ancient people of these islands to burn their dead indiscriminately at one common *bustum* and to leave the ashes lying in one promiscuous heap. Rather the ashes of each individual were most carefully collected into an urn and as carefully laid in earth. Of this the 61 circles of the Aberdeenshire type show but the rarest and most doubtful traces. When he wrote his *Prehistoric Scotland* (1899) Dr. Robert Munro was definitely in favour of the current view that all Scottish circles alike were sepulchral[1]; but when he wrote the article on 'Stone Monuments' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1909) he was evidently less confident, for he said, 'that most of the smaller circles have been used as sepulchres has been repeatedly proved by actual excavations, which shewed that interments had taken place within their areas.' This is very different from his earlier assertion. Nothing is more likely than that circles originally intended for no such purpose should have been 'used as sepulchres,' for, when once their peculiar purpose was forgotten, the sacred symbol of their circular *limes* would inevitably lead other generations, or even other races, to use them as burial-places, as Stukeley explicitly declares to have occurred even in the eighteenth century.[2] Very much more accordant with the evidence is Dr. Rice Holmes' verdict that 'the one statement that can be positively made about the object of stone circles is, that very many of them were erected in honour of the dead'[3]; but these 'very many' are mostly also very small.

Very much of the difficulty attending a true determination of their purpose may very well arise from the presence within them of burials which are in reality intrusive, but which have been accepted as original. When Dr. Munro

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 317: 'the sepulchral character of the Scottish stone circles has been established beyond a doubt.'

[2] The tenant of the land about Ardlair told F. R. Coles that he remembered having seen the headstone of a grave 10 or 12 yards to SW. of that circle (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxvi, 559).

[3] *Ancient Britain*, p. 211.

goes on to say[1] that it is difficult to believe that large circles such as Mayburgh (372 ft. by 363 ft.) near Penrith, and the Giant's Ring (580 ft. diam.) near Belfast, were likewise mainly sepulchral, and that 'it is more probable that such enclosures were used, like many of our modern churches, for the double purpose of burying the dead and addressing the living,' he hints at a line of thought which is very different and very much nearer the truth.

The author of *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, after citing the fact that the bishop of Aberdeen held a court at the Fiddes Hill circle in 1349, remarks oddly that this 'clearly proves not only the sepulchral nature of the circles, but the use that was subsequently made of them.'[2] It is not explained why he regarded it as proof of their 'sepulchral nature,' but the fact that the circle served as a court so late as the fourteenth century is of very great importance.[3]

Taking barrows of every kind and in all localities, it is a rare thing to fail to find within them indisputable traces of purposed interments, whether primary or secondary; and as a general rule, the more imposing the monument, the more indisputable are the finds in that kind. Here however in Aberdeenshire is a series of sixty-one monuments which on the face of them represent immense toil on the builders' part, yet out of the whole series there is not one which has so far yielded conclusive evidence of anything that may be called an imposing burial, and (unless we except the case of North Stone, Alford) not a single one which can be thought to have been used as a general burial-ground. Is it conceivable that this should be the case if these were verily the burial-places of the dead? It is not. It would be almost as much in accord with the evidence to write down the whole series as 'cenotaphs.'

Here and there, scattered amongst the circles of 'Aberdeenshire' type, are found others which have yielded definite evidence of their sepulchral purpose. Thus at Rappla Wood, Burreldales[4] (diam. 50 ft.), were several cists, scraps of an urn with peculiar ornamentation, and

[1] *Encycl. Britann. s.v.* 'Stone Monuments.'

[2] *Op. cit.* II, p. xli.

[3] See further below, ch. xi.

[4] This name is suggestive, one derivation of Burrel being from AS *byrgels*, 'burial-place.'

fragments of a bronze dagger of so-called 'Bronze Age' type. But there is no recumbent stone here and the circle is obviously a peristalithic barrow. So again at Crichie and Tuack[1]: both have been proved sepulchral, but neither shews the recumbent stone. Moreover both of these are formidably fossed, whereas circles which have the recumbent stone are uniformly unfossed.[2] The tiny monument at Glassel (diam. 21 ft. by 10 ft.) has no recumbent stone, and to judge from its small size was probably sepulchral.[3] A 30-ft. circle at Cairnwall was of peculiar plan: an outer peristalith surrounded a continuous ring of small stones, and this again enclosed a similar but smaller ring of 9 ft. in diameter. Within this last were found five several interments, arranged quincunx-fashion and each accompanied by its own urn. But again there was no horizontal stone.[4] From yet another such circle without horizontal stone, at Waulkmill near Tarland, were taken a number of beads and roundels of coloured glass, a silver buckle, and 'two or three pieces of steel or wrought iron, apparently the remains of a weapon.'[5] If this record be reliable it suggests that the circle may have been erected in the Iron Age.

Not merely do these circles of the Aberdeenshire type fail to reveal anything to justify their being called generally sepulchral, but, like their congeners elsewhere, they for the most part fail to yield anything at all to the excavator. Their sterility, be they searched never so carefully, is as uniform as it is exasperating. There is, however, record of one or two finds, and if there be no means of deciding the true date of those finds, it is scarcely possible to argue them of definitely sepulchral character.

The 50-ft. circle at Tullynessle, specifically known as Crookmore, was found to be approached by a roadway, paved with unsquared stones neatly fitted together, which

[1] *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxvii, 103.

[2] F. R. Coles concerned himself to find traces of any fosse about circles of this particular type, and he failed. He thinks there may 'probably' have been fosses at Old Keig and Cothiemuir Wood (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxv, 247). It is quite clear from his own language that in no case whatever is there anything like an unquestionable, not to say formidable, fosse, though there may very well have been now and again a superficial drainage-trench, like that at the Stripple Stones (ch. x.).

[3] F. R. Coles excavated it and found nothing conclusive, but it had been opened before (*Proc. S.A.S.* xxxv, 203).

[4] *Ibid.* v, 131-2, xxxiv, 147.

[5] *Ibid.* xxxviii, 215, where the finds are illustrated.

could be traced for a distance of 500 yards.[1] It left the circle at the south-east, and was 12 ft. wide. Its surface near the circle was covered with ashes. The arena had been partly levelled out of the side of the hill, which sloped towards the east.[2] The observer who records these facts says nothing of any human remains or other traces of interments, those things which would be most certain to attract the attention of a labourer who was demolishing the circle, or of an onlooker; so there is no ground for writing down the circle as sepulchral. On the other hand the presence and the character of the road of approach mark it as a place of resort, a moot of some kind, and the name of Crookmore—'the Great Moot'—says the same. Underneath the paved causeway were found (1828) two of the peculiar stone bowls with handles perforated vertically, of which several have been discovered in Scotland 'usually associated with monolithic structures or other works of contemporary date.' One was dug up within the area of the stone circle on the farm of Whiteside, Aberdeenshire; another (1832) in the circle at Loanheid, and a third within a now destroyed ring-work on the hill called the Damil in Alford,[3] a century ago. Such vessels are said to be almost peculiar to Scotland, but their purpose is quite unknown.[4] There is at any rate little to suggest that their purpose was in any way sepulchral. Within a circle at Leys, Inverness-shire, was found another anomalous relic, 'a sceptre or rod of office . . . It consisted of a rod of pure gold, bent at the top like an episcopal crosier or a Roman *lituus*.'[5] There is no record that it was associated with any interment. From the description it seems to have closely resembled a Scotic

[1] Cp. *Mabinogion*, *Story of Pwyll Prince of Dyfed*, 'a highway led from the Gorsedd' of Yn Arberth.

[2] *Proc. S.A.S.* i, 116; xxxv, 211; Wilson, *Prehist. Ann. Scotland* (1851), p. 111, from MS. letter of John Stuart, 1838. It is not stated whether the circle showed the horizontal stone or not. Like others in the locality, it has been entirely destroyed in the name of agriculture.

[3] *Proc. S.A.S.* iv, 1863, p. 385.

[4] Wilson, *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, p. 148. In his time they were called 'Druidical *paterae*.' The author of *Ancient Stone Implements* said (2nd ed. p. 444) that similar utensils were at that date still in use in the Faroe Isles, either as lamps or as chafing-dishes for carrying embers, and thought that the Scottish examples 'probably belong to no very great antiquity.' In *Proc. S.A.S.* for 1916, J. Graham Callander, describing three that were found in an Aberdeenshire cairn, mentions those from Tullynessle and Whiteside, and another found within the area at Callernish. He doubts their attribution to the Bronze Age, but believes they may go back to the early Iron Age. He scouts any connexion with Druidism, or even with the stone circles, to which he appears to assign a Bronze Age date.

[5] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

pastoral staff, and it at once recalls the 'sceptre' of the Homeric ceremonial (p. 309).[1]

The dais-circles in fact cannot be called sepulchral except in the sense that each probably has or had, somewhere within its periphery, the necessary consecration-burial. The central deposits of burnt matter, scraps of bone and pottery, represent nothing sepulchral, but a long series of ceremonial fires; and if in exceptional cases there has been found within the circles anything more in the way of interment than the consecration-grave, the sufficient explanation is that these are intrusive interments, made when the proper purpose of the circles was

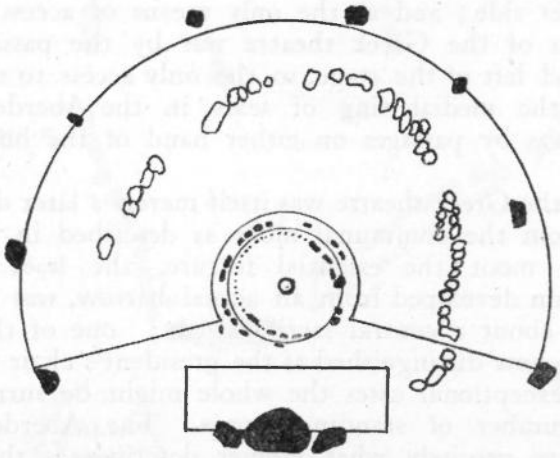


FIG. 14. THE STONE CIRCLE (GARROL WOOD): SUPERPOSED UPON THE GREEK THEATRE.

forgotten. A generation that knew not what that purpose was, might naturally see in them sepulchral precincts and nothing more, even as modern opinion has mostly seen nothing more.

The analogy between the circles of this type and the

[1] One of these staves, the Bachul More (*Baculus magnus*), traditionally reputed to be the pastoral staff of St. Moluag, bishop of Lismore, is in the possession of the Duke of Argyll. It is 'probably the actual blackthorn carried by the bishop 1300 years ago,' says James Dowden (*Celtic Church in Scotland*, p. 313, where it is figured). It is 2 ft. 10 in. long, and has at one time been covered over with metal plates secured by studs of metal. The head is slightly curved like that of a Roman augur's *lituus*, from which it has been suggested that the Christian pastoral staff was derived (Smith, *Dict. Christ. Antiqs.*). But possibly it has a yet older pedigree.

ancient Greek theatre is so close as scarcely to be explained by mere coincidence. For *scena* take the horizontal stone which James Anderson termed a stage; for *orchestra* take the circular floor within the ring of smaller stones as seen at Garrol Wood; take for θυμέλη the central hearth or pit; and in lieu of such a construction as the Dionysiac theatre in Athens we have at once such a circle as that of Ardoyne or Fiddes Hill. There are further points of analogy; the theatres, like the circles, were normally constructed in and upon the gentle slope of a hill, and the circle of Tullynessle was excavated in the hill-side precisely like a Greek theatre; the stage of the one and the horizontal stone of the other are invariably upon the lower side; and as the only means of access to the orchestra of the Greek theatre was by the passages on right and left of the stage, so the only access to the ἱερὸς κύκλος, the medial ring of seats, in the Aberdeenshire circles was by passages on either hand of the horizontal stone.

But the Greek theatre was itself merely a later development from the communal moot as described in Homer. Of that moot the essential feature, the ἱερὸς κύκλος, itself again developed from an actual barrow, was a circle of seats about a central sacrificial pit; one of the seats was somehow distinguished as the president's chair (θῶκος), and in exceptional cases the whole might be surrounded by a number of standing stones. The Aberdeenshire circles are precisely what Homer describes as the moot of the Phaeacians: the medial ring is the ruinated remnant of the circle of ξεστοὶ λίθοι, the central pit is the βοθρός, the horizontal stone marks the θῶκος, and the standing stones are Homer's ῥυτοὶ λᾶες. Parallelism could scarcely go further. They are the moots of those 'Warrior Cimmerians' who dwelt in the land of mist and fog at the edge of the river of Ocean.[1]

It is an inference from Homer that the peristalith of untooled stones was no essential, and those of Aberdeenshire bear out the inference. Rarely is the peristalith truly circular or truly concentric with the medial ring, whereas this and the central βοθρός are uniformly

[1] Homer, *Od.* xi, 14.

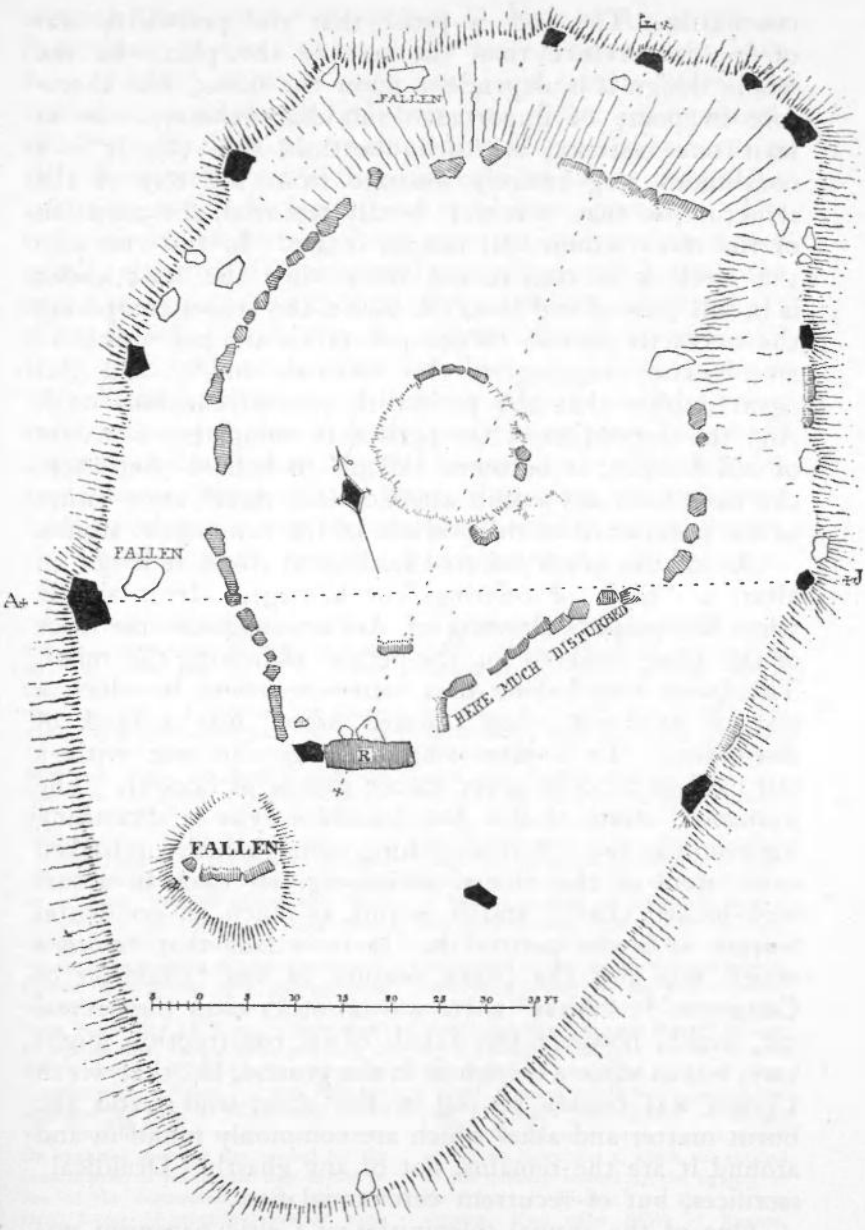


FIG. 15. AUCHQUHORTHIES IN BANCHORY-DEVENICK
(By permission of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries.)

concentric. The fact is proof that the peristalith was of less importance than the rest of the plan. In the whole design it is dependent upon the θῶκος, and therefore in point of importance subsidiary thereto. In at least one instance, at Auchquhorthies (fig. 15), it is a continuous ring entirely separate from the rest of the structure, so that, if it were bodily removed, the essentials of the moot would still remain intact. In this case also the circle is so constructed that, while the ἱερὸς κύκλος is in full view of and from the θῶκος, the stones composing the northern portion of the peristalith are not visible to an observer standing at the southern end[1]; and this again implies that the peristalith was adventitious only. And the disposition of the peristalith being thus a matter of indifference, it becomes difficult to believe that there can have been any occult astronomical significance either in the number or in the position of the component stones.

As for the much debated horizontal stone, it is not an altar, a 'table of offerings' or a stage. It is simply what Dalrymple's drawing of Ardlair suggests—the back of the place reserved for the person addressing the moot. The ξεστοὶ λίθοι belong to a state of society in which a seat of any sort, even a naked stone, was a mark of distinction. To a later stage belongs the seat with a tall back to betoken a yet higher degree of honour. The horizontal stone of the Aberdeenshire type is something between the two; it is something more than the unbacked stone stool of the elders, something less than an actual high-backed chair; and it is just as much an accidental feature as is the peristalith. It is in fact that *cathedra* which was also the prime feature in the 'cauldron of Ceridwen.'[2] 'Altar' there was no other than the central pit, which, however the details of its construction might vary, was in effect a mere hole in the ground, like that which Ulysses was bidden to dig in the ghost-land; and the burnt matter and ashes which are commonly found in and around it are the remains, not of any ghastly 'Druidical' sacrifices, but of recurrent ceremonial fires.

One of the annual solemnities of Celtic paganism was the formal extinction of all fires and their rekindling from

[1] See the section in *Proc. S.A.S.* xxxiv, p. 146. [2] Above, p. 362, note 3.

a special flame lit by the priests.[1] Now as fire is not an easy thing to carry about,[2] the sacred flame must have been kindled at some spot not very remote from the community whose hearth-fires had been extinguished, and probably in a place where it could easily be seen by all. As a solemn act of ritual it required a *locus consecratus*, and this, we have learnt, was a circular precinct. The stone circles of Britain, lying upon sites always open and usually elevated, were admirably suited for such ceremonies, and the remains of fires so frequently to be found at their central points may be in part the result thereof.[3] If so, each such circle must have been the *locus consecratus* of a distinct community, or at any rate of a definite area; and for the performance of the ritual there must have been a priest of the proper degree to each such circle and its appurtenant community. Celtic paganism in fact must have developed something curiously similar to the parish, the parish-church, and the parish-priest.[4] No impartial

[1] Apparently the rite occurred twice a year, in November and in May, the latter surviving in the Easter fire of the Roman Catholic Church. It survived also in the 'need-fires' of Scotland, the virtues whereof depended upon their being produced by the friction of wood, or from flint and steel. Dr. Borlase suggested that these were a relic of Druidism (*Antiqs. of Cornwall*, p. 135); they were certainly survivals from the pre-historic time.

[2] This suggests a probable explanation for the perforated 'incense cups' found in so many barrows (Greenwell, *Brit. Barrows*, p. 78, and references there collected). They were thuribles, and vessels precisely similar were used in classical Roman ritual for the identical purpose in Vesta's temple on March 1st, the old-style New Year's Day at Rome. They would be buried with their owners precisely as later a chalice was buried with a priest and a crosier with a bishop. It was long ago suggested (by Hon. A. Stanley and Albert Way) that they were used for carrying to the required spot the fire needed for the funeral pyre, in which case they should be one of the commonest, rather than the rarest forms, of sepulchral potters' ware.

[3] Does this throw light upon the curious name of Candle Hill? F.R. Coles (*Proc.S.A.S.* xxxvi, p. 536) asserted that there are 'four Candle Hills, each with a stone circle, in the central portion of the northern division of Aberdeenshire,' *viz.*, those of Old Rayne, Insch, Ellon and Hatton of Ardoyne. He hazards no explanation of the name. Bishop Browne (*Antiqs. of Dunecht*, p. 92) declares that there is no such name in Ellon. In the remaining three cases of its occurrence he suggests that it refers to Druidical fires, from the Gaelic *coinneal* (pronounced *cannel*). In Lincs. is a hundred of Candleshoe, in Leic. another of Sparkenhoe. Dr. Grundy cites (*Wilts. Arch.* and *N.S. Mag.* 1921, p. 341) a Spirt-Hill in Bremhill which he would explain as 'Spark Hill.'

[4] For survivals of this practice in Ireland, see Wood-Martin, *Traces of Elder Faiths*, i, 261. It is there associated now only with the coming of May, and the peasants take the signal for relighting their fires from the smoke ascending from the chimney of the parish-priest's dwelling. In some districts the new fire is kindled by the priest in the porch of the church by means of flint and steel; 'to use a match would be considered improper.' Wood Hill, Athboy, co. Meath, used to be the scene of an annual *Aenach* or fair on November 1, which was notified to the country around by the lighting of the 'fire of Tlachta' on the previous evening. Two miles SSW. of Raphoe, co. Donegal, is a circle of stones (150 ft. diam.), 67 in number, with a pronounced entrance to the east. It stands upon the summit of a hill and bears the name of Beltany. In Lancashire, the Celtic Strath-

judge will hesitate to admit that the evidence for these fires is vastly more positive than is the evidence of any sepulchral purpose in these circles.

One may cite in illustration certain known facts in the ritual of ancient Greece. In the whole Greek world was no more holy spot than Olympia. Here was the great altar of Zeus Olympius. It was nothing but a gigantic pile of accumulated ashes, standing like a barrow upon a circular platform known as the πρόθυσις. The 'altar' itself was 22 ft. in circumference, *i.e.* presumably at the top. The platform had a circumference of 125 ft. Platform and altar together rose to a height of 22 ft. Steps of stone led up to the platform, but to reach the summit of the 'altar' one had to climb a path trodden in the ashes which had fallen from it; yet we are told that only the thigh-pieces of the victims were offered upon the altar. Masonry was there none about it.[1] There were similar mounds of ashes serving as altars of the Samian Hera and at Didyma of Miletus; and Pausanias remarks that the blood of the sacrifices of ages 'had not swelled the altar to any excessive size.'[2]

Almost in the centre of the gathered temples and altars of the Hellenic Pantheon at Olympia stood the Pelopeum. Later ages had greatly altered its form, and had surrounded it with a pentagonal concrete wall. This

clyde, 'up to a generation ago the Teanla fires were still burnt . . . on All Saints' night, and the old pits for them, with ashes and calcined stones, may be found in every township' (Murray's *Guide to Lancashire*). This was written of the parish and neighbourhood of Kirkham near Lytham. The neighbourhood abounds in remains Roman and earlier, and the name of Kirkham is significant. So too is the provision of *pits* for the fires. See Brand's *Popular Antiquities* for the 'Tingles' or 'Tindley' fires. In Scotland similar customs prevailed in the Beltane fires lit on Midsummer (St. John's) Eve, *i.e.* at the summer solstice; but, as in Ireland, the dates varied in different parts of the country, from May-day (old style) to June 29 (St. Peter's day). The essentials of the celebration were a fire and a feast and games, ('at Beltane, when ilk body bownes To Peeblis *to the play*'). The derivation of Beltane is still *sub judice*: most writers believe the second syllable to signify 'fire,' but Macbain would divide *Bealit-ain*, and find a connexion with *Balder*. He gives (*Celtic Mythology and Religion*) some curious details: at Callander the rite entailed the construction of a circular trench; in other cases the ashes must be arranged in a circle marked with stones, one for each person participating. The fire must be kindled with a flint, and he who kindled it must have no metal about him. Ridgeway (*Early Age of Greece*, i, p. 428) says that the St. John's fire is still lit in Carniola on tumuli associated with prehistoric sites. Fifty years ago both the Easter fires and the Midsummer fires were regularly lit in Sardinia, but in the *piazza* of each town, (Forester, *Rambles in Corsica and Sardinia*, pp. 334, 342) or at crossroads (*compita*).

[1] Pausanias v. xiii, 8.

[2] *Ibid.* He tells us that there was a sacrifice offered upon this altar daily throughout the year.

wall was found to have been built over a soil made up of the ashes of immemorial years, and the Pelopeum itself, the traditional *heroön* of Pelops, was nothing but a depressed oval barrow, towards the south-east of which was a βοθρός, a pit filled with blackened soil and ashes.[1]

If one will but rid one's mind of any adventitious ideas of 'altars' and similar matters, realising that down to the latest times of Hellenic freedom, and indeed even later,[2] the temple of Olympia's greatest hero and the altar of the greatest god of all the Hellenes were nothing but the mounds which Pausanias describes, it will hardly be reasonable to look for anything more elaborate amongst the Celts of pagan Britain, or to deny that some at least of the British circles bear a remarkable resemblance to such *al fresco* ashen altars as those of Zeus Olympius and Pelops.

Strabo[3] interrupts his account of the ritual of the Persians and of their priests the Magi to mention that 'in Cappadocia too is a swarm of the class of Magi called the Pyraethi, and numerous temples of the Persian gods.' He has previously specified among these gods the Sun (Mithras), Moon, Aphrodite, fire, earth, water, and the winds. Here, too, 'are some notable σηκοί, called *pyraetheia*, having in the midst an altar (βωμός) heaped with ashes, and a perpetual fire.' Fosbroke asked[4] whether these σηκοί were stone circles. No certain answer can be given. Part of Cappadocia was in Strabo's time included in Galatia, and peopled by Gauls who had entered the country in the third century B.C. They were Brythonic Gauls, and Thierry believed them to be Belgae[5]; and Strabo's 'swarm of Magi' in Cappadocia might very well be their priests, known to the Romans as Galli, to the western world as Druids. The Galatae of Strabo's time were rapidly losing their nationality, but not their religious fervour. He gives us no further details of the *pyraetheia*, whence one infers that they were not what a Greek or a

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Pausanias, *loc. cit.*, says that in his time there was still offered a yearly sacrifice of a black ram to Pelops. The fact, as Sir John Frazer remarks, proves that Pelops was regarded, not as a god, but as a departed mortal.

[3] Strabo § 732, *fin.*

[4] *Encyc. of Antiqs.* (1825) ii, 922. Strabo (*loc. cit.*) says there were similar things to be seen in south-eastern Arabia, the modern 'Oman.

[5] St. Jerome (fourth cent.) says the Galatae still kept their own language in his time, and it was 'almost the same as that of the Treviri.' As he had himself lived at Treves he ought to know (*Epist. ad Galatas*, bk. ii, preface).

Latin would call temples. He had indeed already said that the Persian Magi had no temples.[1] The word σηκός, literally a 'sheep-fold,' is curious.[2] It at once recalls the Welsh and Cornish *corlan* meaning either 'fold' or 'churchyard,' and suggests not so much a free-standing circle as a ringwork. Here, however, the point of interest is that the only thing worth remarking within these 'notable' σηκοί was the altar, apparently a mere pile of ashes, with its perpetual fire. Again there is a curious analogy between these *al fresco* altars of the Pyraethi in Gallo-Graecia and the circles of Brythonic Aberdeenshire with their central hearths and their piles of ashes.[3]

The central βοθρός representing the altar, the 'holy of holies' of the pagan moot, it is no matter of surprise that in many cases it appears to have been purposely and violently destroyed.[4] As on the other hand the peristalith and the θῶκος, albeit far more conspicuous objects in the whole structure, and because of the slight emplacement of the stones, easily destructible, seem frequently to have escaped any such purposed demolition, one infers that these were not regarded as embodying to the same extent any *religio loci*. This fact alone should have given pause to those who would interpret the horizontal stone as an 'altar' or a *blōtstein*. The destruction of these larger features is due, not to any purposed campaign against them as symbols of paganism, but simply to the incidental requirements of the farmer anxious to clear the ground or to find building-stone; and naturally he first attacked the small stones which formed the medial ring of seats. Of handy size and of serviceable form, these were the first to go; but it is probably safe to believe that wherever there remains to-day a non-sepulchral

[1] Similarly Pausanias (above, p. 315, n. 2) when speaking of the open-air enclosures in Greece, some of which were certainly *loca consecrata* (*e.g.*, that at Hermion), never calls them 'temples.' At the most he says that he 'understood them to be temples' of Apollo (II. xxxvi, 1).

[2] It is used by Aristotle for the nest of a partridge (*H.A.* VI, viii, 4), which certainly is round. It is also used of 'sacred enclosures,' 'chapels,' 'shrines,' 'sepulchres'; see Liddell and Scott, *Lexicon*. The grammarian Ammonius (390 A.D.) says it meant a *heroon*, whereas ναός was the temple of a god. The normal shape of the Greek *heroon* was round.

[3] Something analogous is recorded from yet further east: 'Sir John Chardin relates that nearly two days' journey from Tauris in Media, towards Sultania, he saw large circles of hewn stones; and the Persians affirmed that certain giants called the *Caous*, waging war in Media, held their council in that place, each bringing with him a stone to serve as a chair' (Herbert, *Cyclops Christianus*, p. 239). The modern Welsh for 'giant' is *cawr*.

[4] So Bp. Browne, *Antiqs. of Dunecht*, p. 76.

peristalith of untooled stones, there was originally within it a circle of ξεστοὶ λίθοι and a central βοθρός.

The arrangement of the circle at Hatton of Ardoyne (p. 363) is precisely that of an Orcadian *ting*, with the solitary difference that it also shews a θῶκος of the Aberdeenshire type. The circles of Strathnairn and Inverness-shire,[1] of which there are more than thirty, are of a type intermediate between the two: they resemble the Aberdeenshire type in being commonly *flat*, the Orcadian type in having no horizontal stone; but they resemble both in having three rings, the only differences being that the outer ring is here a fully developed peristalith, and the central ring, which represents the βοθρός, is larger in proportion to the whole structure. At Tordarroch for example the peristalith has a diameter of 115 ft., the medial ring is 70 ft. in diameter, the inner circle (now destroyed) was 24 ft. over[2]; and at Gask, the largest circle of the whole series, the peristalith measures 126 ft. across, the medial ring 88 ft., while the inner circle is 32 ft. over.[3] If these circles have so far revealed no such elaborate βοθρός as those of Old Rayne and Garrol Wood, it is probably for lack of seeking; they shew at any rate the familiar traces of fire—ashes and black soil—in and about the central ring.[4] Like the Aberdeenshire circles they show also considerable minor variations, and in particular at Culdoich the whole annular area between the inner and the medial rings has been paved with small stones.[5] James Frazer remarks that 'in those cases in which three different rings are clearly defined, about one third are decidedly eccentric—that is to say, the outer and interior rings are not drawn from one fixed centre.'[6] Here therefore, as in Aberdeenshire, the outer ring (peristalith) is subsidiary to the rest of the structure. It may be added that the work at Tordarroch lies in a hollow, and that one of the stones of the medial ring at Midlairgs bears what may be interpreted as a rude cross.[7]

Where it is traceable, the entrance to circles of this type seems to have been towards the south, and it is on

[1] *Proc. S.A.S.* xviii, pp. 328 *sqq.*
[2] *Ibid.* p. 331.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 334.
[4] As at Gask, *Proc. S.A.S.* xviii, p. 334.
[5] *Op. cit.* p. 340.
[6] *Op. cit.* p. 356.
[7] *Op. cit.* p. 337.

this side that the largest stones of the peristalith are usually found. Sir James Frazer particularly notes that there is no discoverable means of access to the inner ring, and when the true character of this as a βοθρός is realised, one understands why there was none. The same writer gives the average diameter of the type as 93 ft., which is a little larger than that of the Aberdeenshire type.

Here then in North Britain is a series of circles all closely related one to another, of which the most elaborate variety, that of Aberdeenshire, is, so far as the evidence goes, the exact replica of that described by Homer as the moot of the mighty Phaeacians in Scheria. But Homer suggests that the moot of Scheria was not the type of its time; it was an exceptional structure which drew the wonderment of even the far-travelled Ulysses.[1] The normal type was rather the humbler thing pictured on the shield of Achilles, a mere ring of stone seats surrounding —so we may suppose—an 'altar' of very perfunctory fashion. The parallelism between the circles of Aberdeenshire and of Scheria will be greatly strengthened if there can be adduced from the British Isles a like parallel to the typical circle of the shield. The parallel is forthcoming, albeit not at present from Aberdeenshire.

On the craggy summit of Pendine Head, Carmarthenshire, excavation has shewn that there was once a settlement of a culture, though not necessarily of a date, extremely early, the hut-circles examined having produced nothing but scraps of the rudest pottery, spindle-whorls of stone, stone mullers, antlers of red-deer, and rude implements of bone. On the northern side of the position, by which alone it is accessible, still remains the major part of a rudely circular ring of limestone blocks enclosing an area of 150 ft. by 140 ft. (fig. 16).[2] This area, which seems to be the natural surface of the soil, has a very slight slope upwards from north to south. The limestone blocks, from 3 ft. to 3½ ft. long, and from 14 in. to 24 in. above the turf,[3] have been obviously chosen with

[1] *Od.* vii, 44.

[2] In *Inventory, Carmarthenshire*, no. 701, the circle is named Napps Circle, the settlement Gilman Camp. The *Inventory* misleadingly speaks of the stones as 'boulders.'

[3] The vertical measurements are almost precisely those of the so-called 'kerb' stones within the Aberdeenshire circle of Whitehill, Monymusk (above p. 364), and if ever a circle of stones was constructed to be sat upon, it is this.

care, and laid flat upon the ground so as to be almost contiguous. At the north-east of the circle is an unmistakable entrance, which opens direct upon the only roadway leading to the settlement; and at the point on the south-west immediately opposite, just within the

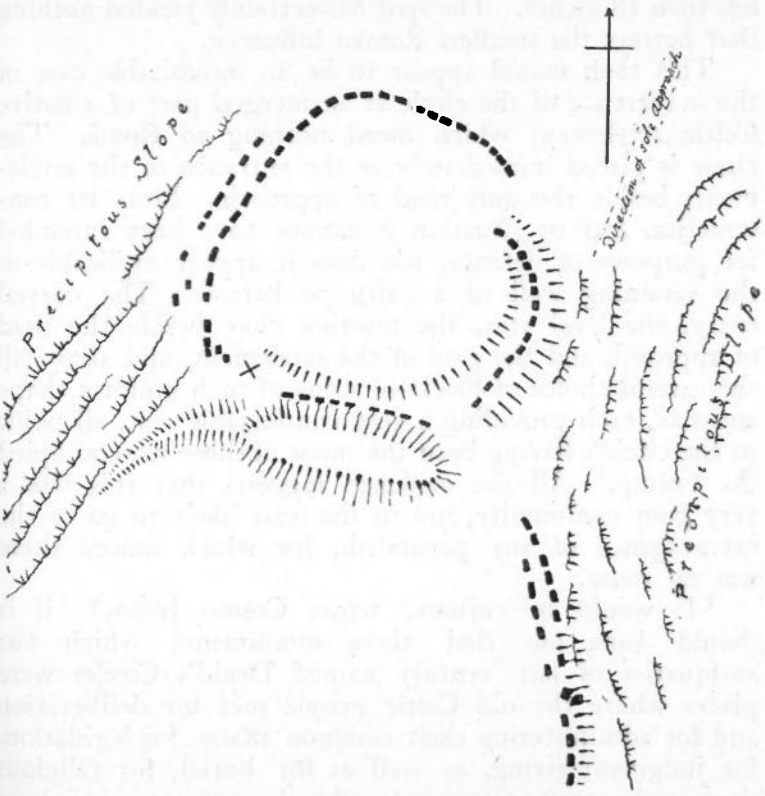


FIG. 16. MOOT CIRCLE, PENDINE HEAD.
From survey by Guy Clarke, April, 1907: scale 1/2000. X=site of cup-stone (destroyed).

circle, used to lie a larger recumbent block (4 ft. 10 in. long by 2 ft. wide), having upon its upper surface two saucer-shaped hollows[1] respectively six and eight inches in diameter.[2] The circle is incomplete on the southern (higher) side, where a considerable vallum (9 ft. high)

[1] Toland, *Hist. of Druids*, (1704), p. 304, says that a trough or laver was an adjunct of every religious circle, and compares the περιρραντήριον of Greek ritual. Cp. Bishop Browne, *Antiqs. of Dunecht*, p. 55.

[2] See a rubbing in *Trans. Carmarth. Antiq. Soc.*, 1916-17. The stone was wantonly destroyed in 1908. For particulars of the excavations here I am indebted to the late G. G. T. Treherne, who personally made them (1906-9) with the collaboration of John Ward, F.S.A., W.

with an external fosse has been constructed at a later date.[1] A few of the missing stones were found to have been bedded into the vallum's face. The number of stones remaining is 72, which means that the circle, when complete, consisted of about 100 stones, the interspaces averaging less than 18 inches. The spot has certainly yielded nothing that betrays the smallest Roman influence.

This then would appear to be an indubitable case of the occurrence of the circle as an integral part of a native Celtic settlement which owed nothing to Rome. The circle is placed immediately at the entrance to the settlement, beside the only road of approach. From its construction and its situation it cannot have been intended for purposes of defence, nor does it appear explicable as the retaining wall of a cairn or barrow. The curved entry, the level area, the position close beside the road of approach and the gate of the settlement, and above all the careful choice of blocks of stone of such uniform shape and size, each providing a very comfortable seat, all point to the circle's having been the moot of those who occupied the 'camp.' All the evidence suggests that this was a very poor community, not in the least likely to go to the extravagance of any peristalith, for which indeed there was no room.

'It would be curious,' wrote Cosmo Innes,[2] 'if it should turn out that those monuments which our antiquaries of last century named Druid's Circles were places where the old Celtic people met for deliberation and for administering their common affairs, for legislation, for judgment-giving, as well as for burial, for religious rites and ceremonies, and solemn contracts—in short fulfilling the idea and the original purpose of the Church.' The sentence might stand, with but little alteration,[3] as the argument of the present pages.

Clarke and others. Trenches cut across the vallum exposed a number of the missing blocks of the circle. Unhappily no investigation was made in the centre of the area, the crucial spot, and no report of the work has yet appeared.

[1] It bears a decided analogy to the much finer vallum and fosse forming the main defence of the analogous position of Castell Lloyd, 2 miles further east, works which, from the few finds made and the tradition of the locality, appear to be due to the Norman Milo de Cogan. There is no question that the vallum and fosse at Pendine are no part of the original settlement's defences, which are wholly different in character and in condition. According to Fenton, the Norman Arnulf de Montgomery fortified many of the headlands of this coast, albeit he fails to give his authority for the assertion.

[2] *Scottish Legal Antiquities* (1872), p. 98.

[3] It would be needful only to omit the words 'for burial.'