

REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

REPORT

PRESENTED TO THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

AT ITS FORTY-FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,

MAY 30, 1881,

WITH AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY,
1880—1881.

* ALSO

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY.

No. XXIII.

BEING No. 1 OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED FOR THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY.
SOLD BY DEIGHTON, BELL AND CO.
AND MACMILLAN AND CO.
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, LONDON.

1883

Price Twelve Shillings.

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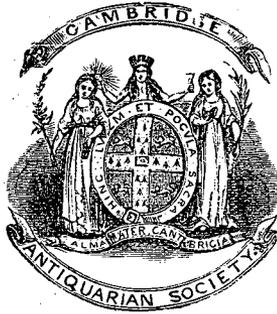
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G. BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON.

1883

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY C. J. CLAY, M.A. & SON,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

CONTENTS

OF COMMUNICATIONS, No. XXIII.

VOL. V, PART I.

	PAGE
I. On two remarkable engraved Gems of early Christian work. Communicated by the Rev. C. W. KING, M.A., Trinity College	1
II. Account of the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Barrington, Cambridgeshire. Communicated by WALTER K. FOSTER, Esq., F.S.A. (With 12 Plates.)	5
III. "Stampare a conio." How did the Romans strike their Medallions? Communicated by the Rev. C. W. KING, M.A., Trinity College	33
IV. On the portrait of Homer upon an unpublished coin of Nicaea in Bithynia. Communicated by the Rev. S. S. LEWIS, M.A., Corpus Christi College	41
V. On the earthen rampart at Perekop, at the entrance to the Crimea. Communicated by the Rev. J. B. PEARSON, D.D., Emmanuel College	47

V. ON THE EARTHEN RAMPART AT PEREKOP, AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CRIMEA. Communicated by the Rev. J. B. PEARSON, D.D., Emmanuel College.

[May 16, 1881.]

THE recent discussion on Offa's Dyke, at the meeting of this Society (November 29, 1880), has induced me to offer a paper on the large rampart stretching across the Isthmus of Perekop at the entrance to the Crimea. Allowing for the uncertainty which surrounds the determination of its age upon such historical *data* as can be adduced respecting it, and admitting that its claims to be pre-historic are not conclusively made out, we still have in it an example of a work of defence to which, so far as I know, the Newmarket Dyke is in respect of dimensions the nearest parallel. Of the latter work, Lysons¹ says that "it is nowhere so perfect as for the space of about a mile, beginning at Reach; the works here consist of a deep ditch, with an elevated vallum, the slope of which measures 52 feet on the west, and 26 feet on the east side: the whole of the works are about 100 feet in width." It is fortunate that while the subject of my paper is so remote, its rival is so completely within reach of most of our members. Not having visited Perekop myself, I felt some hesitation in writing on the subject: but on consideration, I have thought it best to offer in a collected form all that I can find in various writers or travellers respecting it, leaving my readers to draw their own

¹ *Cambridgeshire*, 1810, 4to. p. 74.

inference as to its probable origin. It will be observed that I have not arranged my authorities in chronological order, but rather in such a way as seems to me best to present the facts of the case.

(1) From Clarke, about 1800.

“By the appearance which Perekop makes in all the maps, it might be expected that a tolerable fortress would be found there to guard the passage of the isthmus: yet nothing more wretched can be imagined than the hamlet which supplies a few worn-out invalids with quarters. A very inconsiderable rampart extends from sea to sea, the distance across the isthmus in the narrowest part scarcely exceeding five miles; the water being visible from the middle of the passage on either side. On the north side of this rampart is a fosse twelve fathoms wide and twenty-five feet deep; but it is dry, and destitute of any means by which it may be inundated. The rest of the fortification, which was originally a Turkish work, is in a state of neglect and ruin.” Vol. I. p. 581¹.

(2) From Heber.

“At Perekop are only one or two houses, inhabited by the Postmaster and Custom House Officers, and a little barrack. The famous wall is of earth, very lofty, with an immense ditch. It stretches in a straight line from sea to sea, without any remains of bastions or flanking towers that I could discover. The Golden Gate is narrow, and too low for an English waggon.”—Heber, MS. *Journal of Travels*: quoted by Clarke.

(3) From Broniovius, ambassador from Transylvania to the Tartars, A.D. 1600.

“Et quoniam per universum ut Strabo Isthmum dicit qui inter paludem et mare dimidii miliaris tantum spatio ferè

¹ The references are to the edition printed at Cambridge, 1810, 4to. A biographical dictionary says of Clarke that “neither his observations nor his conclusions can always be relied on.”

continentur, fossa profundissima et lata facta est, oppidum fossae appellationem sortitum est: quod in hodiernam usque diem a Tartaris ac ipsis pariter Turcis sermone illorum retinet." Later on he says, "turres 17 in ea [fossa] excitatae sunt," viz. at the defeat of the Nogay Tartars by Sachiberg. When this occurred, I do not know.

Marco Polo mentions nothing on the road between Soudak, near Aloupka, on the southern coast of the Crimea, and Bolgar, on the Volga, where the Tartar Khan then lived.

(4) But Rubruquis, in the year 1253 (*Hakluyt*, Vol. I. p. 81, ed. 1809), has the following passage:

"Sunt autem alta promontoria super mare a Kersovâ usque ad orificium Tanais: et post illa Montana versus Aquilonem est pulcherrima sylva in planicie plena fontibus et rivulis: et post illam sylvam est planicies maxima quae durat per quinque dietas usque ad extremitatem illius provinciae ad aquilonem, quae coarctatur habens mare ad Orientem et Occidentem: ita quod est unum fossatum magnum ab uno mari usque ad aliud."

Kersova is probably the Chersonese, near Sebastopol: *orificium Tanais* must be, I think, the Straits of Kertch.

A recent French translator turns the end of the passage; "La mer enferme cette terre à l'est et à l'ouest, et la fait ressembler à un large fossé," I think no doubt erroneously. I take it to mean: "The result is that there is a large trench from one sea to the other."

(5) From Pallas.

"The present narrow isthmus was fortified in old times, in order to secure the whole peninsula from inroads of the Scythians. This fortification consisted originally of a wall at some time provided with towers, whence the place has derived its Grecian name *Neon Teichos* or New Wall. The present fortification of the isthmus dates from the Turks, and consists

of a strong wall or rather rampart running from the Black Sea to the Siwasch (or Putrid Sea), and a deep ditch furnished with groins of quarried stone, and still in good condition. If we observe that the stone employed here must have been brought at least 50 wersts, the nature of the work will excite surprise. The ditch is about 12 fathoms broad and 25 feet deep: the wall has lost something of its height in course of time. From the thoroughfare westwards to the Black Sea, the length of the line amounts to five wersts and a half, and on this side were three batteries, the strongest of which lies close to the sea. Eastward to the Siwasch it is three wersts' distance, with only two batteries, one of which lies actually on the Siwasch. This breadth of nine wersts and a half agrees pretty closely with that given by Strabo, of forty stades, reckoning about five stades to the werst: and is an example of the astonishing accuracy which this old geographer has exhibited in his description of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azoph, including the Crimean Peninsula.

“While *Perekop*, the Russian name of the fortress, signifies a trench across or a fortification of the Isthmus, the Tartar name *Or-kapi* indicates the gate of the line or fortification. As a matter of fact, close to the fortress, a bridge with a stone arched gateway leads into the Crimea. Close to the eastern side of the gateway, within and close to the trench, lies the fortress *Perekop* properly so called, an irregular specimen of fortification...

“A very clear view of the fortress, lines and gateway of *Perekop*, giving the usually lively summer traffic, and taken from the side of the Crimea, is exhibited on Plate I.”—Pallas, *Travels*, 1792.

(6) Abstract of Manstein's *Memoirs*, p. 140.

The night march of the Russian forces under Marshal Munich is described. One day near the end of May 1736 they

arrived near the lines, early in the morning, and, surprising the Tartars who were defending them, and aided by artillery, they had no difficulty in becoming masters of them. They are described by Manstein, who was with the Russian army and promoted for his bravery on this occasion. He was afterwards employed by Frederick the Great, in whose service he was killed in a skirmish, shortly after the battle of Kollin, in 1757. He says that the lines were about seven wersts or two French leagues in length, with only one passage through them near the town of Perekop. He says they had six towers of stone, armed with cannon. The ditch was twelve toises by seven, or seventy by forty feet, the height from the bottom of the ditch to the parapet being seventy feet, the parapet being thick in proportion. Five thousand men had been employed on the lines for some years, and the Tartars believed them impregnable; and so, Manstein says, they would have been with any other soldiers. In the year 1738, according to Manstein (p. 276), the lowness of the water in the part of the sea of Azoph, or Siwasch, adjoining the lines, was such that the Russians were able to outflank the lines, and enter the Crimea dry-shod.

Von Hammer (*History of the Ottoman Empire*, xiv. p. 361) compares the lines with those of the Hexamilon on the Isthmus of Corinth, which he says might have protected the Morea against the invasions of the Turks; his description seems in the main to have been borrowed from that of Manstein.

Baron de Toll, about 1780, gives a similar account of them.

Démidoff¹, writing in the year 1839, says;

“Or-Gapy, Porte Royale. C'est ainsi que les Tatars désignaient l'entrée assez mesquine d'un retranchement qui

¹ *Voyage dans la Russie Méridionale*, p. 367; the second edition was published at Paris in 1854.

coupait l'Isthme et qui joignait les deux mers. Lorsque on a passé sur un pont traversant le fossé assez profond, mais très dégradé, qui subsiste encore, on est à Pérécop... Son nom actuel, tiré d'un mot russe dont le sens signifie un fossé creusé entre deux mers, peint tout à fait son rôle dans la géographie taurique... steppes salins qui portent encore l'empreinte d'une ancienne submersion. Hérodote, Strabon, Pline ont émis l'opinion que des âges antiques avaient vu la Tauride séparée du grand continent: la nature des terrains de l'isthme ne dément pas cette hypothèse. Son niveau est si peu élevé que du milieu du passage qui a cependant sept verstes d'étendue, on pourrait se croire plus bas que les deux mers."

I do not know of any other modern traveller who has examined the ditch. Mr Russell states that after the close of the war in 1856 four English officers travelled through the northern part of the Crimea, and reached the bridge at Chongar near Genitchi, where they were surprised at the strong stream of water flowing westward under the bridge there. They also visited Perekop, where they are said to have observed an old wall and parapet, as well as a Tartar citadel; but though they speak of the defences there as facing northwards, they do not seem to have examined them from an antiquarian point of view. The seizure of Kinburn, as will be remembered, was not followed up, so that the place itself never came into the hands of the allies.

Having now obtained a clear notion of the present aspect of this great earthwork, we will proceed to investigate its claims to be considered prehistoric. These claims are founded in great measure upon the identification of it with ramparts mentioned by classical writers.

Herodotus, iv. 3, 20, 28, mentions a trench which he says was made by the sons of the slaves of the Scythians who invaded Asia in pursuit of the Cimmerians; and adds that on

their return they recovered the Crimea. But when he says that the trench extended from the Tauric Mountains to the Palus Maeotis, he appears at first sight to be describing the trench from Theodosia (Caffa) to Arabat (formed about B.C. 50 by Asander, and mentioned by Strabo). It may be added that Herodotus had been at a place, Hexampaei, on the peninsula between the Bug and Dnieper, and so close to Perekop.

Strabo does not mention the trench at Perekop. Perhaps he speaks of a locality named *Ταφροί*, but the MS. reading in this place is *Ταφίοι*. Whether he had visited the Crimea is not quite certain. He says of himself: "Westwards I have travelled from Armenia to the parts of Tyrrhenia adjacent to Sardinia: towards the south from the Euxine to the borders of Ethiopia:" and also he compares the Crimea and the Morea as nearly equal in size. Now the former extends over $3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees of long. by $1\frac{3}{4}$ ° of lat.; and the latter, over $2\frac{1}{2}$ ° long. by $2\frac{3}{4}$ ° lat., which is not a very close resemblance.

Pliny speaks of a place named Taphrae, "in ipsis angustis paeninsulae."

Pomponius Mela also speaks of a place of that name.

Ptolemy, in his Geography, also gives a *Ταφρός*, and its latitude and longitude compared with those of Eupatoria pretty well agree. But none of these four speak distinctly of a trench, or rampart.

Of the modern geographers:

D'Anville (*Mém. de l'Acad. des Inscr.* xxxv. p. 581), identifies Herodotus's trench with that now existing at Perekop.

Mannert iv. 281 (a most careful writer) will not have Perekop, but the ditch from Theodosia to Arabat, to represent Herodotus's trench.

Niebuhr, *V. M.* Vol. i. p. 157, says: "Herodotus does not know of the Crimea as a peninsula: he is quite aware that the promontory runs into the Pontus, but he looks on the land as a promontory like Iapygia or Attica. Consequently, as the

Maeotis, running N. and S., forms the eastern boundary of Scythia, we are to look for the wall which the slaves threw up, in the Crimea: not however at Perekop, but at the Bosphorus, across which the Cimmerians previously fled."

Bähr inclines to the view that the isthmus of Perekop is not the site of Herodotus's trench.

It will be seen that the opinions of the best authorities who have written on the subject support the view that the rampart or trench spoken of by Herodotus is not the one now existing at Perekop.

I am still of opinion that the satisfactory evidence we have as to the alternative site of Herodotus's rampart, viz. the isthmus of Arabat or Kertch, excludes the possibility that it was situated there. We possess published narratives by three travellers, viz., Pallas, about the year 1794; E. D. Clarke, about 1800; and a Frenchman named Dubois, about 1833; all of whom traversed this isthmus; and they entirely agree as to the ramparts of which traces or remains are now to be seen upon it; while they uniformly represent any ditch or trench adjoining either of these ramparts as being on the western side, i.e. that nearest the Crimea. I do not myself see how any of them can be the rampart spoken of by Herodotus.

I have thought it best to print extracts from each of the travellers whom I have named.

(1) Pallas, *Travels in Southern Russia*, II. p. 264 (abstract):

"On the road from Kaffa (or Theodosia) to Kertch (at 22 wersts = 14 miles), near a hamlet named Schibon, we discerned an elevated line with heaps of stone or earth at intervals. It is said to reach northwards to the sea of Azof: at this point it runs E. and W. but farther south seems to turn towards the bay of Kaffa. It is also said to run towards the hills adjoining that place. At intervals of 180 paces are hillocks with remains of stone walls enclosing them, sixty to eighty paces

in diameter. Here and there on the *West* side, are traces of a ditch: and hollows, from which perhaps clay was obtained to build the wall."

pp. 269—270. "Four wersts from the Station Argin (some distance from Kertch), one sees clearly above the undulating plain the strong line consisting of wall and ditch which at one time unquestionably formed the boundary between the kingdom of the Bosphorus and the dominions of the inhabitants of the Chersonese. This enormous wall is at the base about 40 archines (= 90 feet) in thickness, and the ditch on its *west* side about twenty. Near the road are apparently the remains of a gateway." This ditch may certainly be taken to be mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus¹.

(2) Dubois, *Voyage au Caucase*, v. 239—241, specifies the three walls: and at p. 192 we see that the ditch was to the *west* in the third as well as in the two other walls, as he says: "within the rampart, 150 paces to the east of the Mont d'Or:" having previously informed us that the Mont d'Or was at the point of union of the two branches of the long earthen rampart extending from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azof.

(3) Clarke, *Travels*, i. 425.

The tomb of Mithradates, as it is called, "stands exactly upon the vallum which formed the inner barrier of the Bosphorian Empire. This work still exists in an entire state, having a fosse in front, and passing across this part of the peninsula in a northerly direction from Altyn Obo to the Sea of Azof....Beyond the vallum to the west there are no tumuli,

¹ *De administr. imp.* c. 53. He mentions the erection by the Chersonites of two successive *ὀροθεσίας*, one (*ἐν τοῖς τοῦ λεγομένου Καφᾶ τόποις*) in the second generation after Diocletian, the other (which left the Bosphorians only 40 miles of land) somewhat later.

although they are so numerous on its eastern side, that is to say on the Bosporian territory."

p. 436. "After the second station [towards Kaffa] we passed another antient boundary or vallum like that which has been described before, on which may be discerned the traces of turrets which were placed along this second barrier of the Bosporians."

p. 442. "In the last stage to Kaffa we passed the third, that is to say the outer, vallum or boundary of the Bosporians. Its remains, as well as those of the towers placed thereon, were very visible."

There is evidently no trace, on the peninsula of Kertch, of any rampart with the fosse on the eastern or, speaking with reference to the Crimea, the exterior side, as is required by the narrative of Herodotus.

Negatively therefore the evidence leads us back to Perekop: and as there is no evidence that the Tartars or Turks during the times of the Lower Empire executed any other works of the kind, we have some grounds for assigning it to an earlier period. And if we could be sure that the existing rampart was there in the time of Herodotus, whom we know to have been once not more than a hundred miles away from the spot, it would be reasonable to suppose that he was likely to mention so conspicuous a structure.

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