



ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES

ON THE SO-CALLED ANGLO-SAXON ANTIQUITIES DISCOVERED NEAR KERTCH, IN THE CRIMEA.

*By C. Roach Smith, Esq., (in a letter to Joseph Mayer, Esq.)*

(READ 3RD DECEMBER, 1857.)

The attention of students of our Saxon antiquities was naturally attracted, some months since, to statements, which appeared in most of our leading papers, respecting some of the objects excavated by Dr. Macpherson, and now deposited in the British Museum. It was said that they were Anglo-Saxon; and moreover, in order to account for the apparent paradox involved in their appearance on the banks of the Bosphorus, it was suggested that they probably had belonged to soldiers of the Varangian guard, which, as you know, was drawn from the north of Europe, and from the tenth century served, over a considerable period, as a body-guard to the Byzantine emperors. Before I had seen the objects, I expressed a strong conviction both that the appellation of Anglo-Saxon was misapplied, and that the notion of referring them to the Varangian guard was equally untenable. Having inspected the remains I am confirmed in my opinion.

The fibulæ are the objects which have led to the above decision. They are of two kinds, of the types headed "Germany" and "England," in plate L, vol. ii. of my *Collectanea Antiqua*; and in plate XVIII, vol. i. of the same work. The former are rarely found in England; the latter abound in Essex, in Norfolk, in Warwickshire, in Northamptonshire, and in other parts; but you will not find, I believe, a single example in your Kentish collections; and only one specimen of the former kind, which is in Mr. Rolfe's gatherings from the Osengal cemetery.\* Another example from Kent,† that mentioned above as published by me for comparison with the German, exhausts, so far as I can at present recollect, the number found in this country. This kind of fibula may be termed radiated; the more common, cruciform.

\* It is figured in vol. iii. plate VI. fig. 2, of the *Collectanea Antiqua*.

† See *Antiquities of Richborough, Reculver, and Lymne*, for the ornaments and urns found with this fibula, and my remarks on them.

Now after what I have said, it will be obvious that there is a similarity between the fibulæ from Kertch and some which are found with Anglo-Saxon Antiquities, and which have been, and yet may be, called Anglo-Saxon. But it by no means follows that those from Kertch have an Anglo-Saxon, or even a Teutonic origin. On the contrary, it seems to me a rational sequence that the very reverse should be nearer the truth; and that while works of ancient art found in the neighbourhood of Byzantium are in no way likely to be derived from the far north, those of the north may be expected to have been strongly influenced by the fashion of the east.

Had it been necessary to account for the presence of Anglo-Saxon antiquities, such as these fibulæ, in the east, we need not look to so late a period as that of the Varangi: we have evidence of Saxon and other German soldiers quartered in the Oriental parts of the Roman empire centuries earlier, from whom, with more probability, they might have been presumed to be derived.

In referring these objects, as I am disposed to do, to a late Roman or Byzantine manufacture, I can only repeat what I have long maintained, namely, that we must study our Saxon antiquities beyond the shores of Great Britain; and fully to comprehend the influence which has guided the peculiar forms and patterns of the ornamented fibulæ, and other personal decorations, we must trace the antiquities themselves in the parent countries; and then we must study contemporaneous remains in Italy and further eastward. At present this has not been attempted: unhappily the very few who have devoted themselves to the study of our National Antiquities are hardly in the position to undertake tedious and expensive journeys, such as would be indispensable; and our Governments have not yet patriotism enough to give encouragement to such researches.