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The Celtic roots of King Matruk and Saint Augusta in Veneto, Italy

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Matruk, Madrucco, Matrucus, St. Augusta, Ceneda, Serravalle, Mount Altare, Mount Antare, Veneti, Carni, Celts, Lugh, Taranis, Brigid, Brigantia, bear cult, Mercury Artaio	*King Matruk is a well-known character in the Vittorio Veneto area: Archbishop Minuccio de' Minucci, in full swing Counter-Reformation, narrated that Matrucus, a Germanic-speaking barbarian warrior king, persecuted Christians and did not scruple to torture and kill his daughter Augusta, later Saint Augusta. I believe that Matrucus was not a Germanic warrior, but a Celtic character possibly connected with the archaic cult of the bear and the feasts related to the spring equinox and the end of the harvest, in which the battle between spring and winter was celebrated. An analysis of the legend of St. Augusta and King Matruk shows that Augusta and Matruk belong to the much older Venetic and Celtic layers, which left us a number of toponyms as well as sanctuaries in the area. There are aspects of the landscape that are also connected with Matruk and Augusta. In sum, we have a multi-layered tradition of remarkable antiquity, which shows the merging of Venetic, Celtic and Roman traditions in a border territory, as well as their continuation in both the Christian hagiographic legend and Saint Augusta's cult.*

Introduction

Vittorio Veneto is a city located in the north-eastern region of Veneto, Italy, and is a merger of two former municipalities, Cèneda and Serravalle, which were united into a municipality in 1866 and named Vittorio in honor of the king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele II. The Meschio river, whose source is located in the Lapisina Valley, a few kilometers north of the city, passes through the town from Serravalle through the district that bears its name. The area was occupied in ancient times by Veneti (Venetkens) and Celts. A pagan sanctuary was in use on Mount Altare frequented by Veneti, Celts and Romans.

Ceneda, located right at the confluence of a number of traffic lines, was the most important Venetic center of this territory. The presence of the Venetic necropolis in locality 'ai Frati', with finds that document a continuity of depositions from the 8th to the 1st century BC, confirms the existence of one of the most important centers of the ancient Veneti. Towards the end of the Iron Age, the area was dotted with places of worship, votive *stipe* or sacred deposits, located on the slopes of Col Castelir in Villa di Villa (Cordignano), in the karst spring area of Pra della Stalla in Orsago, at Castello Roganzuolo (San Fior), on the hillsides of Scomigo near the Cervada stream, in Tarzo, and on the top of Mount Altare in Ceneda (Arnosti 1993: 2). The important sanctuary on Mount Altare

was connected with divination practices, and in relation to the salty-bromine iodine and sulphurous medicinal waters it was continuously frequented from the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. Despite this important evidence, there is no mention in the historical sources of the name of the citadel until the 6th century A.D. How Ceneda came to have a certain urban relevance in the 6th century can be explained by the characteristics of its location, which became strategic between the Late-Ancient and Early Middle Ages (Arnosti 1993) (Fig. 1)

The Carni (in Greek Καρνίοι) were a tribe of the Eastern Alps in classical antiquity, settling on the mountains that separate Norico and Veneto (roughly corresponding to the more modern Triveneto). Devoto (1974: 56) considered them a Celtic people who entered the Italian territory from the Alpine passes in the 4th century BC. Their area of settlement is not precisely known: Strabo borders them on the mountains, while Ptolemy assigns them two cities near the Adriatic coast. The first historical date relating to the arrival of the Carni is 186 BC, when they descended towards the plain (where they previously used to winter) and on a hill they founded a defensive settlement, Akileja (Aquileia) and spread in the Treviso foothills and in the plain, occupying Venetic areas, until reaching the coast at Altino and the Brenta river, and the border with the territory of the Cenomanes Celts. In late antiquity, under the pressure of the Germanic and Slavic peoples, the mountainous area populated by the Latinized Carni gradually narrowed down to Carnia and the Friulian plains, accepting migratory contributions from Carniola, Carinthia and other areas. The phenomenon probably stabilized under the Lombard domination of Friuli.

During the 4th century BC the contact with the Carnic and Halstatt area gravitates around the Piave valley and some transversal valleys. During the La Tène B2 period (325 / 300-250 BC) Cadore (from the Latin Catubrium, a clearly Celtic name) is part of a wider scenario involving Carnia and Carinthia, while Gaulish weapons appear along the Piave valley between Mountbelluna and Altino. During the La Tène C2 period (200-130 BC), Cadore appears stabilized and Celtic weapons are located at the terminals along the Piave valley axis, in Lagole and Altino. On Mount Altare and in Villa di Villa (Vittorio Veneto) during more or less the entire period La Tène B2 and C2, Celtic offerings appear at the sanctuaries. Celtic material continues to show a stabilization of Celtic populations in the Treviso foothills area also during the periods La Tène D1a-2a, 130-100 BC and D1b-2a, 100-49 BC (Gambacurta and Ruta Serafini 2019) (Fig. 2).

In the 1st century BC, Emperor Augustus established a castrum at the foot of an important pass in what is now the heart of Serravalle, to defend Opitergium (Oderzo) and the Venetian plain to the south. South of the *castrum* a *vicus* developed in what is now Ceneda which later became a city on the Via Claudia Altinate.

At the beginning of the 5th century AD Ceneda and Serravalle were devastated by Attila the Hun, but later were re-fortified under the dominion of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths. In the 6th century AD, the Byzantine writer Agathias Scholasticus recounts how during Justinian's Gothic War, Ceneda changed hands between the Ostrogoths, the Franks and the Byzantines. The Lombards built the castle of S. Martino near the heart of Ceneda, and in 667 the Duchy of Ceneda grew in size when, according to Paul the Deacon, it acquired part of the territory of Oderzo after the destruction of that city by the Lombards. The fortification on the heights of Ceneda is documented by finds and burials all with West-East orientation typical of late antiquity. There was a widespread and stable settlement with defensive fortifications on the hilltop and on the immediate slopes of San Paolo hill (what will be the medieval fortress of Ceneda, also called castrum S.cti Eliae) starting from the end of the 4th-beginning of the 5th century AD.

This settlement nucleus, which was the fulcrum of the emerging castrum (in the medieval meaning of castle) of Ceneda, was backed by a series of other fortified areas in the surrounding hills, while the buildings of the Roman citadel in the plain were left to their fate. An effective barrier of the Serravalle bottleneck had to provide protections up to a certain altitude both on the Mountsel to the west and on the hill of Saint Augusta to the east (so in the Late Middle Ages). From the mid-5th century AD, the late Roman strategies proved inadequate to protect the area from the pressure of the peoples on the northern border.

The Bear King: Matruk

King Matruk or Matrucco/Mandrucco is a well-known character in the Vittorio Veneto area: he was supposed to be a Visigothic commander of Alaric's in the 5th century AD, at the head of a garrison in Ceneda and then made king or duke, according Mgr Bechevolo (2010). In the 16th century archbishop Minuccio de' Minucci from Serravalle, secretary of Card. Madruzzo, bishop-prince of Trento and later Pope Paul III, in full swing Counter-Reformation, in 1581 wrote the story that justifies Saint Augusta's two feasts, on March 27th and August 22nd, and narrated that Matrucus, an Alemannic warrior and father of the virgin and martyr Augusta, as a worshiper of Odin, persecuted Christians and did not scruple to torture his daughter: she had two teeth torn out, then he had her condemned to the stake, then tied to a hooked wheel and thrown down a slope, to no avail, finally he had her beheaded with a sword blow. Once she died, he repented, built a sanctuary in her honour, and went away to Germany. Note the possibility that Minucci linked the lineage of his patron, Madruzzo, to that of the saint through the name of Augusta's father, since there is a similarity, if not an identity, between the name Madrucus / Matruk and the surname of the bishop-prince Madruzzo. The text was included first in the *De provatis sanctorum historiis* by L. Surius and J. Mosander, Coloniae Agrippinae ap. G. Calenium and haer. Quentelios 1581, and then in *Acta Ss.* IX= Mae III Venetiis ap. S. Coleti 1726, col. 685s. at the day March 27th, mistakenly considered the saint's birthday, and not the date of the discovery (*inventio*) of her relics in 1450. The date 410 AD, year of Augusta's birth was supported by Andrea de' Minucci in 1754, based the writings of a local scholar, Guido Casoni (1561-1642) and a 18th century memorial stone (Roman 2011:274-75, n.4)

Why did Minucci, whose patron was the very powerful bishop-prince of Trento, later Pope Paul III, supported the opinion that Augusta and her father Matruk, the villain of the story, belonged to a Germanic-speaking people? The so-called barbaric invasions had been a traumatic event, but we should not forget a more traumatic event for the contemporaries, the Protestant Reformation; the Council of Trento, held between 1545 and 1563, was still fresh in the memory of the participants. Even the *Beneficio di Cristo* by Marcantonio Flaminio from Serravalle, considered the most popular devotional work in 16th-century Italy, published in Venice in 1543, had been heavily influenced by John Calvin's *Institutes* of 1539, and condemned by the Inquisition. Most Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and Anabaptists spoke Germanic languages such as German, English and Dutch. Therefore, a nefarious heathen, a German-speaking king who tortured to death his Christian virgin daughter was a good piece of propaganda.

Saint Augusta's story unfolds around two mountain fortresses: according to legend she was born in the castle 'of Matruc', of probable medieval origin (Roman 2011:10), in Piai di Fregona, from the Visigothic chief Matruk (according to Marson, [1903, in Roman 2011:10], or Alemannic according to Minuccio de Minucci). Her mother died in childbirth and the newborn was entrusted to the nurse Cita, who secretly made her baptize and educated her to the Christian faith, while Matruk was a fervent pagan. The Piai's castle is situated on the small Piai hill (here are the three springs from where

it originates a tributary of the Livenza, the Monticano river) at the foot of Mount Pizzoc, extreme western offshoot of the massif of Cansiglio-Cavallo. The castle had Roman origins as a control station, along the valleys of the rivers Carron and Friga, tributaries of the Meschio, connected with the road that climbed up toward the plateau of Cansiglio and Alpago, in connection, also visual, with the strongholds of Serravalle and Ceneda at west, and with the late-ancient fortified settlement of King Matruk in the locality of Nastego at the Fratte at south, and to east with the fortifications on the hills of San Daniele, above Osigo, and Montaner in the municipality of Sarmede. The castle of Piai was part of the Longobard Duchy of Cenedese, with its capital at Ceneda; with the arrival of the Franks the duchy was enlarged and called Marca of Friuli. Still in the Middle Ages the castle was a fundamental fortress for the road that joined Cadore and Friuli.

Matruk gave his daughter the name of Augusta as a sign of good luck. She grew up in the 'castle of King Matruk' on Mount Marcantone or St. Augusta's Mount, above Serravalle. She is attributed the miracle of the transformation of bread into wildflowers, near a stone halfway on the path that leads to the sanctuary. It is known that Mount Marcantone, the place of martyrdom, was called *Mons sancte Auguste* as early as 1234. The saint is also mentioned in the statutes of Serravalle in 1360 as the patron saint venerated since ancient times. The cult of Saint Augusta, however, was only formalized on May 22, 1754 thanks to a decree of Pope Benedict XIV issued on request of Bishop Lorenzo Da Ponte. Saint Augusta is mentioned twice in the calendar: March 27th recalls the discovery, during the restoration of the sanctuary in 1450, of her relics; the other name day is August 22nd, and for the occasion Vittorio Veneto organizes a fair (Fig. 3).

I believe that Matrucus was neither a Gothic or an Alemannic warrior, but a Celtic character possibly connected with the archaic cult of the bear and the feasts related to the spring equinox and the end of the harvest, in which the battle between spring and winter was celebrated. The daughter's 'torture' itself has the flavor of archaic sowing and harvesting rituals: torn teeth (seeds), burning (of stubble on swidden, or slash-and-burn agriculture), hooked wheel (the harrow to prepare the soil), all measures that do not move the girl to abjure, and above all do not kill her, and finally the sword that kills her (the scythe). It is the wheel (a solar and seasonal symbol) and not the sword that usually appears in Saint Augusta's iconography. The story of the torture is similar to that of St. Catherine of Alexandria, but it also reminds of the traditional votive bonfires (*Brandopferplätze*) of the Iron Age, a usage that has lasted, in a milder form, until the 20th century in the Triveneto area.

The first part of the name Matrucus or Matruk derives from Gaulish matus 'bear', euphemistic form from *matus* 'good, lucky, auspicious' (Welsh *math*, ancient Irish and Scottish *maith*, middle Welsh *mad*, middle Breton *mat*, related to the Latin *manus*, good and *maturus*, mature, said of fruit) not to irritate and to appease the dreaded plantigrade. So it means The Good One (i.e. the bear). Delamarre (2003:220) is skeptical about Vendryes' hypothesis that the Gaulish *matu-*, bear, and *matu-, mati-*, *matiacos*, good, favourable, complete, were the same word, an epithet of the bear (a taboo word), but I would not discard it.

The second part of the word may derive from **rokka*, a proto-Celtic term meaning 'to grunt' (Welsh *rhoch*, Breton *roc'ha*) for which we would have The Grunting Good One, or the Hoarse Goodwisher, a common periphrasis to define a bear (it is very probable that this sense got strength in the Middle Ages, with bears being brought around the houses during the holidays, cfr. Pastoureau 2007). Or the second part may derive from **trougo, *trukko-* (Gaulish *trogos* and *dru*, ancient Irish *trog*, Welsh and Breton *tru*, Cornish *troc*), which means 'bad, evil, miserly': in this case we would have The Evil / Avaricious Bear ', an excellent epithet to represent the harshness of winter and therefore for the evil

king of the hagiographic legend invented by Minucci, but who in the first part of the name, *Mat*, preserves the idea of goodness, abundance and crops that have reached maturity.

Augusta and Cita: a Dual Goddess?

It is no coincidence that Saint Augusta's two feasts are celebrated one, March 27th (according to the old calendar), around the spring equinox, and the other, August 22nd is the Feast of The Immaculate Heart of Mary, Traditional Catholic Calendar and the Queenship of Mary, the New Calendar. In the old Roman calendar (until perhaps as late as 153 BC), the *mensis Martius* (Mars' month) was the first month of the year; until renamed for Augustus Caesar, August was called Sextilis, originally the sixth month (*sext-*) when the year began in March. Hence Saint Augusta's day was also a New Year's Day.

In the second half of March there were a number of Roman festivals:in ancient Roman religion, the *Quinquatria* or *Quinquatrus* was a festival sacred to the goddess Minerva, celebrated from the 19th to the 23rd of March. The older festivals were of Etruscan origin and were to celebrate the Spring Equinox, the spring rebirth rites of women. The festival *Tubilustrium*, purification of the trumpets, was held on March 23, the last day of the *Quinquatria* festival held in tribute to the Roman God Mars and Nerine, a Sabine goddess.

The celebration on March 17th was meant to honor Liber Pater, an ancient god of fertility and wine. Liber Pater was also a vegetation god, responsible for protecting seed, and like Dionysus had female priests although Liber's priests were older women. Over time this feast evolved and included the goddess Libera, Liber Pater's consort. This ancient Italic ceremony was a country or rustic ceremony with a procession and a phallus, meant to protect people's fertility as well as the crops from evil. From March 16th through 28th the Romans also celebrated the feasts of the Magna Matris or Cybele: the Hilaria (from theGreek ἱλαρός cheerful, merry) were ancient Roman religious festivals celebrated on the March equinox to honor Cybele as well as Attis' and Adonis' death and resurrection.

On August 13th-15th there was the feast of Diana and Vertumno (god of the seasons and the ripening of crops). On August 19th-20th the Romans feasted with wine and ripe grapes in honor of Jupiter, on August 21st there were the very important *Consualia* feasts, in honor of Conso and Opis / Ope / Ops (the goddess of abundance, associated with Saturn and therefore often identified with Rhea, associated with Chronos / Saturn), archaic deities of the fields and fertility, and on August 23rd the *Vulcanalia* in honor of Vulcan, along with sacrifices to Maia, the Nymphs in campo ('in the field'), Ops Opifera, and a Hora. During this festival dedicated to the god Vulcan, an essentially atoning ritual was celebrated, consisting of throwing animals into the fire, in exchange for one's life. On August 24th sacrifices were made to Luna on the Graecostasis; it also was the first of three days when the mysterious ritual pit called the *mundus* was opened in Rome. It is possible that at least some of the most cosmopolitan Roman feasts were celebrated also in the '*Venetorum angulus*' and later in the *Regio X Venetia et Histria*.

The name Augusta derives from the Latin Augustus, from the Indo-European root *au̯eg-, u̯ōg-, aug- ug-*, 'I increase' and 'I make famous' in a figurative sense. Old Indian *ugrá-* 'immense' lat. *augeō, -ēre* 'to increase, augment, enlarge, spread, extend', *auctor* (= *umbr. uhtur*) 'a promoter, producer, father, progenitor, author etc', *auctiō* 'an increasing; hence, from the bidding, an auction', *augmen*(*tum*) 'an increase, growth, a kind of sacrificial cake', *augur 'a* seer, soothsayer, diviner'.

In Pokorny we find the Root / lemma: *au̯eg-, u̯ōg-, aug-, ug-*with s-forms *au̯ek-s-, auk-s-, u̯ek-s-, uk -s-* Page (s): 84-85 /(https://academiaprisca.org/indoeuropean.html). In general the sense of 'to grow, to increase', it exists in more or less all Indo-European languages.

The term is also connected with '*augur*', from Latin *augur*, a religious official in ancient Rome who foretold events by observing and interpreting signs and omens, perhaps originally meaning 'an increase in crops enacted in ritual,' in which case it probably is from Old Latin **augos* (genitive **augeris*) increase, and is related to *augere* increase, from PIE root **aug-* (1) to increase, Greek *ἀ(F)έξω* 'grow, increase', *ἀέξομαι* 'grows'; *αὔξω, αὐξάνω* 'grow, increase', Latin *auxilium* 'help, aid, assistance, support, succor' (originally Pl. *-ia* 'strengthening, reinforcements', N. Pl. *auxilis* 'auxiliary troops, or in gen., military power'); Old English *eacien* to increase, German *wachsen*, Gothic *wahsjan* to grow, increase.

Others believe August is related to the Greek *aughé*, light, splendor, ray, from which *augazo*, radiate, illuminate, shine. In the proper sense 'great' and therefore noble, majestic, venerable, sacred. Title given by Octavian onwards to the Roman emperors. (Bonomi 2004-2008).

In Pokorni (1959) we find the Root / lemma: *aug-* Page(s): 87 to glance, see, dawn, probably derived from Root / lemma: *au̯es-*: to shine; gold, dawn, aurora etc. Greek *αὐγή* 'shine, ray, daylight; eye', *αὐγάζω* 'shines, illuminates; sees', *ἐρι-αυγής* 'shining very much'; Albanian *agój* dawns, agume aurora, morning, dawn; Homeric Greek. *ἠώς* *(āusōs), Gen. *ἠοῦς* (*ἠόος*), Attic. (with accent innovation) *ἔως*, Dorian *ἀ¯ώς, ἀ F ώρ*, changing through ablaut *öol.* *αὔως* aurora (proto gr. *αυ [σ] ώς*).

The archaic connection between 'grow' and 'dawn' is also found in Beekes (2010): *αὐγή aughé* [f.] 'light, glow, ray of light', e.g. of the sun (ll.). *IE? *h2eug-* 'shine'. Denominative verbs: 1. *augazomai* 'to see clearly, lighten, shine upon' 2. *aughéo* [v.] 'To illuminate'. Probably an old verbal noun, cf. Alb. *ag* 'dawn' *<*h2eu*g. Perhaps further to OCS *jug'b* 'South, south wind'. A connection with the root **h2eug* 'to increase, grow strong' seems plausible, in view of the limited distribution of the words meaning 'light'.

Therefore we have a character that looks like the Christianized version of a pre-Latin, Venetic and / or Celtic deity who would be the local personification of the archaic goddess of dawn, in her luminous aspect and in that of the goddess of growth, whose epithet will be translated into the Latin adjective 'augusta'.

The legend also speaks of the nurse, Cita, a friend of Augusta's mother and the one who secretly had the baby girl baptized and raised her in the Christian faith: strangely she did not suffer any consequences for these actions, but she is sanctified together with Augusta. The name Cita may derive from the Celtic words *cet, cait* (wood, forest), *caito-, ceto- cetion*, wood, forest; *Caito-brix*, wooded hill in Lusitania, the term gives rise to numerous toponyms deriving from the Gaulish *-cetum* (Delamarre 2003: 97). In Matasovic (2009:174) we have the Protoceltic term *kwantyo-* flat hill, from the Indo-European root *kwem-t-*, hill, similar to the Latin *cumulus*, hill, middle Irish hill, eminence, open space, assembly. According to Matasovic, the original meaning could have been that of prominence. Cita seems to be a local hilly forest goddess.

Hence we have two divine figures: a young one, with the traits of a solar and crop goddess, and an older, nurturing one, with the traits of a forest / mountain goddess. There may be a third female figure, Augusta's mother, but she appears to be more of a duplicate of Cita, who looks Augusta's real

mother. Thus we have a dual goddess: young and old, which seems to agree with the many Venetic and Celtic dual goddesses. We have seen above that there were a cluster of festivities also in Roman times in the dates around March 17ᵗʰ and August 22ⁿᵈ and also a Catholic one: maybe in these dates a local dual goddess was celebrated, who had her sacred space on a number of hills, and that was related to a divine figure of Bear god/king.

It is reasonable to think that the Romanized Celts and the Venetic people who lived around Revine Lago, Tarzo, Ceneda, Serravalle and in general in the area of Mount Altare / Antare had rituals comprising the rolling of fire wheels down the slopes, and sacrifices to local Venetic and Celtic deities to which they added the Roman ones. Among the Celtic gods there was a cult to a very powerful bear-god that the Romans identified with *Mercurius Artaios*, called *Matunos* or *Matunnos* from the Celts of Gaul and Britannia, *Matutinos* in Switzerland and southern Germany; he is very similar to the Welsh *Math fab Mathonwy* (Bear son of Bear Cub), who could only sleep with his feet on the lap of a virgin, unless he was at war. *Math*, king of Gwynedd, is the greatest wizard in Wales in the *Mabinogion*, similar to the Irish magicians *Math mac Úmóir in drui*, the druid of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* and *Matgen*, the wizard of the *Tuatha Dé Danann* in the second battle of Moytura.

Nor does it escape the fact that the current festival of the saint begins on August 10th with a pilgrimage and that it is also the period of Saint Lawrence's Fires, with the appearance of the Perseid swarm. The Perseids are a meteor shower that the Earth crosses during the summer period as it travels its orbit around the Sun. This meteoric rain occurs from the end of July until beyond August 20 and the peak of visibility is concentrated around August 12th, with an average of about a hundred light-trails observable with the naked eye every hour. Given the shift of the calendar, our calendar and the Venetic and Celt calendars, which had lunar months, do not coincide perfectly. The Irish called the Perseids 'Lugh Games' because they appeared around August 1st, *Lughnasadh* or *Lughnasa*, when the *Tailteann Games* opened, in honor of the goddess Tailte, adoptive mother of the light god Lugh. The feast commemorates the sacrifice of the god (in the form of wheat), that is in its cycle of death to give nourishment and rebirth, wheat was identified as one of the aspects of the Sun/light god, Lugh. A priestly and military god, he protected merchants, travelers and thieves. His epithets were: *Esus* 'the best' (to be linked to the Latin *optimus*), *Teutates* 'man of the tribe', *Samildanach* 'with many craft skills'. Do not forget that *Esus, Tautates and Taranis* are named together by Lucanus. In Gaul he is *Lucus* in the Romanized forms of *Mercurius Artaios* Mercury-Bear and *Mercurius Moccus* Mercury-Boar; we should remember that the bear and the wild boar are animals that symbolize royalty.

Michel Pastoureau in his book *L'Ours. Histoire d'un roi déchu* (The bear, the story of a fallen king, 2007), shows not only that until the late Middle Ages the bear and not the lion was a symbol of the sovereign, but that 'ursine' saints existed and still exist, such as San Romedo, Sant'Orso (Saint Bear, including a Sant' Orso patron of Aosta venerated on both sides of the Alps), Sant'Orsola (she-bear), St. Martin, Sant' Ursicino (Saint Little Bear; there are several of them, one is the patron of cattle in Tyrol and one is the apostle of Friuli) etc., and that during the Middle Ages shrines and convents owned bears that went around the villages at certain times of the year when there were important holidays. These include Saint Lucia, Saint Nicholas, Saint Martin and Christmas. The heirs of these auspicious bears are, among others, the *krampuses* of Tyrol and Friuli, Switzerland, lower Germany, France and the straw bears of Piedmont, the British Isles, etc. Pastoureau (2007: 107, 101) notes that the name Martin contains the noun '*art*', bear in the Celtic languages.

On the other hand, Lugh lends its name to many toponyms. In Veneto we remember Lugo di Vicenza and Lugo di Campagna Lupia (near Venice). Rübekeil (2003) suggests that Lugus was a triple

god, including Esus, Toutatis and Taranis, the three main deities mentioned by Lucanus (who does not mention Lugus, but Caesar claims that Lugus / Mercury was the most important god of the Gauls).

The sanctuary on Mount Antare

As for the etymology of Mount Altare (Fig. 4), it seems established that in ancient times it was called Mount Antare and that the name Altare (altar) is to be considered a popular interpretation that recalls the presence of a sanctuary on the part of the mount called Collo Maledicto (Cursed Hill), when the name Antare or Antares did not have an intelligible meaning to the villagers any longer. In 1989 the Archaeological Group of the Cenedese, led by experts from the Archaeological Superintendence of Veneto, brought to light, from six trenches dug on the Collo Maledicto, finds of worship dated to the 6th century BC-4th AD, which are still preserved in Padua (one hundred votive coins, gold *laminas*, 'sortes' etc.). Giorgio Arnosti (1993) writes that the lower half of a bronze figurine was collected on Mt. Altare, produced with matrices, but worked in file and gouge to represent female characteristics, with the vulvar rhyme clearly evident. The ithyphallic figurines and other finds collected both on Mount Altare and in Tarzo and other nearby places show, according to Arnolfi, one of the aspects of the personality of the tutelary deity, as patron of femininity and health. On Mt. Altare there is a small cave called in the local dialect "*Buss dea Vècia*" (The Old Woman's Hole), which might be the deity the sanctuary was dedicated to and remembered in some way by the inhabitants of the area. Among the votive finds of the Venetic-Roman sanctuary there are some unusual bronze *laminas* with engravings that look like Latin numbers, provisionally identified as '*sortes*' (drawing of lots), which could also have an oracular meaning.

A Cenedese border document dated 1398 witnesses not only the demonization of the locality, Arnosti (1993), in the toponym 'Collo Maledicto' (Cursed Hill), but also the existence of the ancient name of Mount Altare (actually a hill, called mount from the use of the term by the Romans even for very modest heights):

> *... et a fontanella deorsum usque ad ruium de Merille et a ruio de Merille sursum per plaiterium usque ad sommitatem montis de Antares. Et a dicto Mount de Antares usque ad Colum maledictum, et a dicto Collo Maledicto usque ad sommitatem montis qui est inter Serravallum et Cenetam.*

The Colle Maledicto was so called by the Christians who after the edict of Theodosius in 380 had distanced themselves from pagan rites such as that of cleromancy. Arnosti (1993:23) writes:

> '*As for the sanctuary of Mount Altare we have an absolute lack of dedications or figures. However, we know some specializations of the tutelary deity. Mt. Altare has been known for centuries for the bromide-iodine and sulphurous springs that flow from the slopes of the hill. Perhaps the cult of the god is related to rituals at the springs, which are active even a short distance from the top, and few but significant fragments of drinking vessels have been collected among the finds recovered in the site. It would therefore be a divinity of health, but also a protector of warriors and human settlements, as suggested by the male bronze statues and the blades. In the negative, it is not a pastoral divinity, of breeders or farmers: in fact there are no [metal] laminas with figures of cattle or finds clearly connected with agriculture and pastoralism. The number of animal bones collected is very low. On some laminas with an irregular quadrangle and tapered downwards shape there is a strange punching with a more pronounced double decorative element, usually two cup marks, of unknown meaning, but which is assumed to be connected to a double personality of the tutelary deity, not extraneous to the Veneti, see also in Villa di Villa the double representation of the divinity on some laminas. He is also a patron of merchants*

> *for the large number of Norician coins (few republican Roman ones). The presence of an iron writing stylus and the so-called 'sortes' may also suggest an oracular divinity. In summary, the deity of Mt. Altare appears with a contradictory, but rather specialized personality, and the sanctuary seems to be mainly connected with the urbanization of Ceneda.*

Carlo Forin reports (see references) that a Superintendent refused to associate the name Antares with the finds as proposed by Carlo Forin, because of the 'oriental name', which would refer to the star Antares. Forin also reports: '

> *My mother remembers that my grandfather, Dal Mas Giuseppe, corrected it towards 1930: Don't say Mount Altare! It's called Antare! - In 1600 it was called 'Mount de Nantares' [according to Giovanni Tommasi, in The Diocese of Ceneda, Diocese of Vittorio Veneto, 1998, on p. 11].*

Now, given that Forin is a follower of Giovanni Semerano's theoretical rubbish, I don't feel like condemning the Superintendent. The point is that the name Antare (s) has nothing to do with the star Antares, whose name however is not oriental (Semerano had the fixation to derive every word from Akkadian or Sumerian through para-etymologies and so does Forin), but originates from the Greek Αντάρης (Antares) and means *rival of Ares* (*anti-Ares*) or *similar to Ares*, probably because of the reddish color similar to that of planet Mars. The mount was named Mount di Antares in 1398. Actually Antare has a Celtic flavor, which is reinforced by the fact that both Ceneda and Treviso (Latin *Tarvisium*, *Tarvisum*, possibly from the name of the Celtic Taurisci coming from Carinthia and Carniola; possibly from the Celtic *tarwo*, bull) are Celtic toponyms. Apparently there was a strong core of Celtic population in the area, which is reflected in the toponyms.

Therefore , we have two ' mounts' related to a dual goddess, and a third related to a masculine god, where we also have a cave named the Old Woman's Hole. It is a temptation to relate this cave with the older aspect of the dual goddess.

Ceneda, an ethnonym

Ceneda is remembered for the first time in the 6th century A.D. by Venantius Fortunatus in his *De vita S.cti Martini*, IV, vv. 657 and 668: '... *1 submontana quidem castella per ardua tendens; / ...' Per Cenetam gradiens et amicos Duplavenenses, I ...*' (in Arnosti 1993)

Ceneda is traced back to the Celtic term *kenet*, but the meaning is controversial. *Kenet* is a term from which the male name Kenneth also derives; as an adjective it is an appellative which means 'the beautiful' in various Celtic languages, such as Gaelic *Caioneach*; in Breton the adjective is the same, *kenet*. As a noun in Breton *kenet* means 'firewood' and it is tempting to see in the toponym Ceneda the meaning of 'place where you can get firewood'. However, there are other terms that can explain the meaning of *kenet* / Ceneda:

1. *cineal*: offspring, clan, nation, Irish *cineul*, Ancient Irish *cenél*, Welsh *cenedl*, Ancient Welsh *cenetl*, Cornish *kinethel*, from proto-Celtic **kenetlo-n*. Indo-European *qen*, to begin, to start; Greek *kainós*, new (*kanjós*); Latin: *re-cens*, English: recent; ecclesiastical Slavic *koni*, beginning; Sanskrito *kaná*, young man.

2. *cinneadh*, *cinne*: tribe, clan, Irish *cineadh*, *cine*, Ancient Irish *ciniud* (genitive *cineda*); from the root *qen* in *cineal*, q.v. Hence *cinnich*, pagans, Irish *cineadhach*, a pagan.

So Ceneda, from *kenet* can mean 'the beautiful', but it seems the least probable hypothesis from an anthropological point of view, given that it is an appellative aimed at a person (such as Philip the Beautiful, king of France), or it can mean '(place of the) firewood'. I prefer the meaning 'tribe, clan, nation' as the likeliest, given that many ancient peoples often used generic terms such as 'we people, people' to define themselves and 'the nation, the tribe' in the sense of the place where they dwelt to define the locality, in particular the 'heart of the nation'. In essence, in this sense it is a term of ethnic differentiation.

This is the same conclusion reached by Basset Trumper and Tomasi (2004:9-10) : Celtic base **ken*-take, originate, ancient/mid Irish *cenél*, ancient Corish *cenetl*, mid/modern Cornish *cenedl*, people, nation, family, etc., and also < **ken-i-*, airl. *cét-*, *cétne* first (> mod. *céod*), ancient/mid Cornish. *cynt* before/ previous; they suggest **ken-e-ta* or rather **ken-i-ta* 'original city', 'original settlement' or 'city of the firstborn, city of the natives', where the original name Kenita turned into Keneta around 500-700 AD.

Etymology of Antare

Going back to Antare (s), it seems composed of two parts: 'ant-are (s)' or 'an-tare (s)'.

The term *anto-* in the Gaulish language means 'limit, edge, frontier' (Delamarre 2003: 49); the meaning would derive from the proto-Indo-European **anti*, opposite, front, Sanskrit *antah*, border, border, end, from which the root **ant*, 'front'. *Ar* is a word found in many hydronyms, such as Aire, Ayr, Aar, Arro, Arrow, Arve, but with a dubious etymology, perhaps connected with Sanskrit *ara*, 'fast' 'flowing', and perhaps with the Celtic adjective *garw*, 'violent'. Basically it means 'fast flowing, violent', that is a river. In this sense '*ant-are*' could mean 'in front of, opposite the river' (the Meschio river?), or it may mean 'limit, border of the river', but it is not very probable, since we are talking of a hill, not a river.

Ant- may derive from the proto-Celtic adjective *ande*, 'large' or from the proto-Celtic terms *antor*, *antros*, which also mean 'large'. Delamarre (2003: 45), in discussing the Gaulish intensive particle *and-, ande-, ando-*, 'very', recalls how frequent it is in toponyms. It seems to correspond to the ancient Irish *an-*, *ind-*, Breton and Welsh *an-*, all particles that can derive from a proto-Celtic **nde <*ndi*, Sanskrit *àdhi*, 'above, in'. In the Scottish and Irish Gaelic languages an intensive particle assumes the idea of excess.

Delamarre (2003: 479) also reports an interesting term: *anderos*, the one found below, inferior, infernal, chthonic, written on the Chamalière curse lead tablet. The Gaulish inscription of Chamalières of the first century AD contains the expression *brixtìa anderon*, for which two possible interpretations have been given, as reported by Peter Schrijver (2002: 212-13). The meaning is 'for the magic of the underworld' (Lejeune and Marichal 1976-77, Lambert 1979, among others), where *anderon* would be a plural genitive of *anderos*, from the proto-Celtic **ndheros*, underground, lower. The other meaning would be 'for the magic of young girls', an expression that finds parallels in ancient Irish and in the Gaulish inscription of Lazarc. But as Schrijver points out that Jeroiter Anderon (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* II 2598) is more likely referred to Jupiter Chthonius, that is, of the Underworld, than Jupiter of Young Women.

Two Gaelic Scottish words are also worth mentioning:

1.   *àr*, plow, medieval Irish *ar*, Welsh *ar*, plowed land, Latin *aro*. Hence *aru*, collected.

2. àr, air (pl. *Ara*), battle, massacre, defeat, devastation, Irish and Ancient Irish *àr*, welsh *aer*, Ancient Breton *air*, from Proto-Celtic *agron* massacre, root *ag*, drive (war chariot?), chase, cf. Gaelic *agh*, doe, fawn, ancient Greek *agra*, hunting, Avestic *azra*, looting.

If we divide *Antare (s)* in *Ant + are (s)* we may assume the meaning of Great Battle, but there is the problem that if the name of the mountain has a final -s it may be a pural (the words with termination *-ar* make in the plural *-res* in the insular Celtic languages, or as in this case 'ara', but the Gaulish plural is *-os*). Is it possible that we have a similar Cisalpine Gaulish word? Delamarre refers the Gaulish term *agro- / agrios* battle, massacre, which is found in the name of the *Uer-agri*, an Alpine tribe named by Caesar and perhaps in the toponym *Su-agrius*, as well as in Latinized names such as *Agri-cu*, War Dog. Alternatively we may interpret '*ant-*' as a privative particle and '*-are (s)*' as deriving from a Gaulish Cisalpine term that would mean 'plowed land', or 'harvest', in this case indicating a place, Mount Antare (s), whose name would mean 'Without plowed land' or 'cropless', given the petrous nature of the soil. But this is guesswork.

According to Giovanni Tommasi (1998) the mountain in 1600 was called 'Mount de Nantares' but this poses big problems, since *nanto- nantu* (Delamarre 2003: 230-31) in Gaulish means 'valley, stream, river', very frequent in French toponyms. In Veneto we have Nanto (a town near Vicenza). It is an excellent meaning for a river valley, but as a hill name it does not seem likely, also because in general the second part '*-are*' would be superimposable to many hydronyms, such as the river Aar, the Ar, the Arc, the Herault , the Arre etc. from the pre-Indo-European root *ar*, stream. It is probable that in the seventeenth century, having lost the meaning of the name Antare, some locals tried to 'normalize' it by associating it with the toponym '*nanto*'. The name 'Mount de Nantares' in this case would mean 'mountain of the river valley,' which could be that of the Cervada torrent, an affluent of the Monticano river.

There is an interesting Gaulish term (Delamarre 2003: 289), *taranus*, the storm or the god of the storm, preserved in a Gascon dialect word *taram*, thunder, and perhaps in the Norman *tarane*, gnome, goblin. The same word in the insular Celtic: ancient Irish *torann*, storm, the noise of the battle, medieval Irish *torand*, noise, Welsh *tarann*, Cornish *taran*, thunder, from the Protoceltic *toranno-s*, ancient Breton *taran*, thunder, with a passage in Brithonic and in Gaulish from *oRa* to *àRa*. I also mention the Scottish Gaelic *taran*, the ghost of a dead child without baptism and *torrun*, a great noise. See ancient Greek *toros*, sound. Delamarre writes that this *taranus* and neo-Celtic derivatives have been approached to the Germanic name of the thunder and the god of war *Thunaraz* <ancient Norse *Thorr*, ancient High German *Donar*, from an Indo-European root *(s)tenonate*, for which the Celtic would show a metathesis *tonar> toran-* that would not yet have appeared in the Brithonic theonym Tanaro (Taranis, the variant reported by Lucan designating the storm, thundering Jupiter) and in the ancient name of the Po river, *Tanarus*, the Thunderer. According to Delamarre it is better, however, to explain the Celtic words with a root *tor-*, puncture, lacerating (noise), cracker, ancient Irish *toirn*, noise, noise and separate the two theonyms with identical functions, the Germanic Thunaraz and the Celtic Toranus <Tonarus.

It is worth adding that, according to MacBain's Gaelic Dictionary, the *root tar, tor* doubles to give the name Tartar, noise (which would also be the name of the Tartar river that bathes the Great Veronese Valleys, occupied by the Celtic Cenomanes), a root that gives the Irish *toirn* and *toirneanach*, thunder, and the Scottish *tàirnneanach*, thunder. From the root *tor*, perforate, which Delamarre considers the most economical explanation for the theonym Toranus < Tonarus, and from the words of the Celtic languages for 'thunder' also derive terms to designate the drill (Welsh *taradr*, cochlea,

Breton *tarar, tarazr* , cochlea, Latin *terebra*, drill, from the root **ter*, through, which also originates the Scottish word *thar*, Irish *tar*, across, Welsh between, over, and *trach*, beyond, from the Gaulish preposition *taro*, across).

From the same root **tor, *tar* derive two interesting Gaelic words, Scottish *tora* and *tarachair*, augur, *soothsayer*, seer, who interprets omens, Irish *tarachair*, whose first meaning is 'drill', 'gimlet'. We can therefore assume that a seer 'pierces' the veil of mystery to interpret omens. This also explains the relationship with the semantic group linked to the Gaulish preposition '*taro*' and the various neo-Celtic prepositions which indicate 'through'. In fact, the seer 'passes through' this reality and reaches the divine. Maceachen's Gaelic-English dictionary (1922) gives only one meaning for *Tarachair, -e, m.* an augur, a seer, a soothsayer. Macleod and Dewar's Gaelic dictionary (1831) reports the term *targain*, a verb which means to foretell, to prophesy, to predict the future, hence the masculine noun *targradh*, which means the action of divination. Both terms derive from the same root '*tar*'. In Welsh we have the verbs *darogan* and *daroganu* (where t- has become d-), which both mean to foretell, prophesy, foreshadowing the future.

Finally, I mention the northern British feminine noun '*torr*' which is derived from the Indo-European **(s) tr̥h1-* (zero degree of **(s) terh1-* 'rigid') –s- hence the proto-Celtic **to/arsā-** Brithonic *torrā->*? ancient Welsh *torr>* mid-modern Welsh *tor*, ancient and modern Cornish *tor*, ancient Breton *tar, tor>* medium-modern Breton *teur, tor*; ancient Irish *tarr->* middle-modern Irish *tarr*, Scottish Gaelic *tàrr, tòrr*, Isle of Man Galelic *tarr*. While the etymology is uncertain, the meaning of the root is 'something that sticks out,' especially a belly. In a topographical sense it is 'a pile of rocks', in the Welsh toponyms especially in the southwest, although it is rare in Cornish, and 'a protruding hill, a hill' in Scottish Gaelic, but not in Irish. These topographical meanings would be relatively late and it is not clear whether they are of Brithonic or Gaelic origin. From '*tor*' and '*tar*' derive two words that imply a 'protruding belly', *torrach*, pregnant, Irish *torrach*, pregnant, fruitful, medieval Irish *torrach*: it derives from **torth-aco-*, from **torato-, toradh*, fruit, the Welsh term '*torwy*,' with a big belly, has been compared with the previous terms, from '*tor*', belly, Gaelic *tàrr*. *Tàrr* in Gaelic means lower belly, tail, breast, Irish *tárr*, belly, lower belly, medieval Irish *tarr*, Welsh *tor*, Breton *tor*, ancient Breton *tar*: **tarsâ, tarmsâ*; Scottish *thairm*, belly, guts, English *tharm*, German *darm*, guts; ancient Greek *trámis*, tail, intestines, hip. The idea of a pile of stones is also present in the first three meanings of the Scottish Gaelic *tòrradh*, a masculine noun that indicates: 1. To form a heap or pile, 2. pile, 3. burial, burying a corpse, 4. solemn burial or procession, 5 watch over a dead, 6. dam embankment 7. payment to maintain a mill dam.

Recalling that *an-, ant-, and-* are particles that mean 'great', even in the sense of excessive, exaggerated, one could think that *An- tare (s)* means, based on the last meaning mentioned, *An-tar, Antarr*, that is 'big pile of stones', 'protruding (earth) belly', a name suitable for a hill of about 450 meters, even if prosaic.

However I must say that I prefer the other meaning that derives from '*tor / tar*' in the sense of 'through'. We have seen that from the same root **tor, *tar* derive the Gaelic terms, *tora* and *tarachair* (Irish *tarachair*), augur, soothsayer, seer, who interprets omens, which as the first meaning have 'drill', 'gimlet'. The metaphor of the piercing eye also exists in the Italian expression 'penetrating glance' and in the English expression 'gimlet eye', where gimlet actually indicates the gimlet, a small hand tool to make holes in a piece of wood. We may think, as I have already said, that the seer 'pierces' the veil of mystery to draw auspices and interpret omens: the seer, the augur, 'passes through' this reality and penetrates the divine one.

The tradition linked to Mount Antare is such that I prefer the latter meaning, although the former cannot be completely excluded, since the ancients had an unbridled passion for riddles and puns. Moreover, in the name Antare we do not know what is the length of the vowels, so important in ancient Celtic, as Delamarre (2003: 10) recalls, therefore recommending to look also at the context (e.g. it is probable that the name Sego-latis means Hero [*latis*, long vowel] of Victory [*sego*] and not Swamp [*latis*, short vowel] of Victory). So it is possible that 'antare' may mean both 'a large pile of stones' and Great Seer. In the latter case we would have *An-* (great) + *tare* (seer, augur). At the foot of Mount Altare in locality Salsa, there are also some thermal springs that have always had a religious importance, given their relationship both with health and with the nether regions (and here the term *anderos*, infero, chtonio, should be remembered). On the Collo Maledicto the presence of a Venetic sanctuary was dedicated to a divinity bearer of health, but also with warrior implications, judging by the figurines of the offerers.

Summing up, Arnosti (1993), as we have seen, writes that the lower half of a bronze figurine was collected on Mt. Altare, with the vulvar rhyme clearly evident. The ithyphallic figurines and other finds show one of the aspects of the personality of the tutelary deity, as patron of femininity and health. On Mount Altare there is a small cave called "Buss dela Vècia" (The Old Woman's Hole), which was probably a deity a sanctuary was dedicated to by the ancient inhabitants of the area. Among the votive finds of the Venetic-Roman sanctuary there are unusual bronze laminas temporarily identified as 'sortes' which could also have an oracular meaning. Moreover, we have seen that from the root **tor*, 'perforate', which Delamarre considers the most economical explanation for the theonym Toranus <Tonarus (Taranis) and the words of the Celtic languages for 'thunder', it derive the meaning of 'seer, augur'. Is it possible that the name Great Seer is an appellation of a thunder god similar to Toranus <Tonarus (Taranis), revered by warriors, who even came from Norico to honor him? Yet Arnosti says that divinity would be the patron of femininity and health. Is She/He the Great Seer? Arnosti himself writes that on some irregular quadrangle and tapered downwards laminas there is a strange punching with a more pronounced double decorative element, usually two cup marks of unknown meaning, but which is assumed to be connected to a double personality of the deity. The presence of an iron writing stylus and the so-called 'sortes' may also suggest an oracular divinity.

The Collo Maledicto, as the highest part of Mount Altare should be called, takes us to the dawn of the Cenedese civilization, with the very recent discovery, right on the top, of an extraordinary staircase, formed by 43 steps of rocky conglomerate, which between the sixth century BC and the 4th century AD led to the 'temple of cleromancers', a site (frequented for a millennium) where some popular oracles through the 'sortes', that is wooden/metal objects, gave responses to future events. The staircase, dating back to the sixth century BC, if it were contemporary with the archaeological finds found on site at the end of the 1980s, would confirm what local historians have been saying for some time, namely that on Mount Altare (or Antares) there is the oldest cleromancy site in Italy (Da Rold 2020:1).

In summary, the deity of Mt. Altare appears with a contradictory, but rather specialized personality, and the sanctuary seems mainly connected with the urbanization of Ceneda '. It is worth remembering, however, that if the deity of Mount Altare is connected with the urban settlement of Ceneda, as Arnosti believes, then it is also strongly connected with the population of Ceneda, which is a Celtic toponym.

If we accept Arnosti's hypothesis, that is, that we are faced with a dual deity, who appears in the relatively near Venetic sanctuary of Villa di Villa, then the contradictory personality of the god/dess of Mount Antare could be explained by the fact that in reality the deities are two. One could be a Venetic god of the storm and thunder that the Celts identified with Toranus / Tanarus / Taranis and the

other a goddess who might have the characteristics of an Irish Morrigan (the Holy Cow healing the wounded warriors and accompanying those who died in the Beyond, Mother of the Battlefield and Warrior goddess of prophecy), Bride or Brigit (the sacred White Sow, goddess of domesticated fertility, prophetic / poetic inspiration, health and metallurgy, who presides over the perpetual fire; coins were thrown to her in the sources of healing waters). Both Morrigan and Brigit are triple goddesses. The Indo-European solar goddess, the Goddess of Dawn (Ousa, Eos, Aurora, etc.), in Celtic environment evolves, among others, into Brigit / Bride / Brigantia, etc., born exactly at dawn, together with the sun, with sunrays coming out of her head; in Scotland and England she was associated with the cult of the swan until the 17th century in popular religiosity. She was a goddess of war and childbirth, a relation we can found in many cultures around the world. If the Veneti seemed to Polybius so similar to the Celts, apart from the language, it is perhaps possible to imagine that they had similar uses.

In Corbridge, Northumberland, the goddess called Brigantia is connected with Jupiter as his consort, therefore with a warrior god of the sky. In continental Europe the evidence is scarce: in France there are inscriptions to Brigindo and Brigindona, which are considered representations of the same insular goddess. In addition to the Brigands, tribes of Celtic Britain protected by Brigantia (who is also the goddess of the Brent River), we also have the Brigade tribe of Central Raetia, whose capital Brigantium Raetiae, located on the eastern bank of the Brigantinus Lacus is now known as Bregentz on Lake Constance in Austrian Tyrol (Roman Raetia). It is interesting that this is also the location where a *defixion* or curse tablet was found which invokes Ogmios (god with aspects of Hermes and Heracles) and also names Dis Pater, a fact that indicates that there is a strong relationship between the Gaulish Brigantia, Ogmios and Dis Pater, similar to that between the Irish Brigid, Dagda and Ogma. In northern Britain the goddess is depicted not with a wheel, but with a globe. However, Saint Brigid is also depicted with solar straw wheels similar to counterclockwise swastikas which are interpreted as solar wheels, the crosses of Saint Brigid. Brigid's feast is February 1st, Imbolc, while Saint Brigid's day is February 2nd, the Candlemas (candles are one of the symbols of the Celtic goddess).

It is quite possible that the female divinity who prophesized from the 'Buss dea Vecia' and healed through the thermal waters that reached up to 200 meters on Mount Antare was a Venetic version of Brigit / Morrigan, just as the god of the storm could be a local Venetic version of Taranis, god of the Heaven and the Storm / Thunder, whose symbol is the solar wheel, which appears in the iconography of Saint Augusta. We should not forget that Augusta - and Cita - are also connected with childbirth, and therefore with dawn: if we consider also Augusta's mother, we may consider the merging of two traditions: the Venetic dual goddess and the Celtic triple goddess, which were later Romanized and Christianized. One must not forget the meaning of Brigid, eminent, high, and that of Augusta, great, noble, or shining, are very similar. Delamarre (2003:87) writes that the name of the Irish saint Brigid derives from the Gaulish/ Goidelic adjective *brigenti*, the eminent, the noble, and is a late personification of the ancient goddess of Dawn. According to Matasović (2009: 78–79) and Mallory and Adams, (1997:269), the name is derived from the Proto-Celtic name *Brigantī* and means The High One, cognate with the Old Irish name Brigid, the Old High German personal name Burgunt, the Sanskrit word *Br̥hat* High, an epithet of the Hindu dawn goddess Ushas, and Avestan *bərəzaitī*. The ultimate source is the Proto-Indo-European *$bʰr̥ǵʰéntih_2$* (feminine form of *$bʰérǵʰonts$*, high), derived from the root *$bʰerǵʰ$-* to rise.

The nearby Rhaetian populations were also heavily influenced by Celtic penetration, such as the Swiss Raetians from Bregentz, where an eponymous goddess appears with characteristics similar to those of the Mount Antare' deity. On the other hand, we also have a similar situation in the Vicenza foothills: the Reti of Magrè had as their neighbors people living in a town with the clear Celtic name of Breganze.

The Celtic god of the stormy sky is sometimes identified with Jupiter (Jupiter Tanarus, Jupiter Taranis / Taranucus) and Dis pater / Pluto (both in the Scholia of Bern), a fact that would make the mysterious Jupiter Anderon / Jupiter Chthonius of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* even more transparent. Although the sanctuary on the Collo Maledicto of Mount Antares was dedicated to a deity or pair of deities belonging to the Venetic populations of the foothills around the current town of Vittorio Veneto, it was renowned enough to be visited by Celtic or Celticized populations who lived in the area and also by merchants and transalpine warriors from Norico (Austria). As Arnosti (1993) writes, there were two very important flow lines: the first in the south-north direction, a very direct route of penetration in the Alps up to the Norico valleys, on the Ceneda-Mel-Cavarzano (BL)-Cadore-Lothen (BZ) route, which was already indicated by the oldest Hallstattian-derived torques, with a hedgehog termination and herringbone decoration, present both in Ceneda and in Lothen, the other in the east-west direction, along the foothills north of the karst springs' line, on the Tagliamento-Vivaro-Polcenigo-Ceneda-Mountbelluna-Brenta route. These routes, to and from Norico, were confirmed by the diffusion of the silver oboli coins with the cross of the Tectosages tribe, living in the Drava and Gail valley, up to the sanctuary of Mount Altare above Ceneda. These so-called '*Volcae Tectosages*' are almost unknown in the Venetic area and documented in a consistent number in the extreme Venetic-Celtic station of Gurina in Austria; some specimens were collected in Lagole di Cadore, Moggio Udinese and Casteiraimondo near Forgaria in Friuli.

Conclusion

During the Iron Age the area around Vittorio Veneto was a frontier where Veneti, Celts and Raetians met and clashed. At the time of the Roman Empire the area was crossed by roads, among them the Via Augusta Altinate, connecting Norico with Altino on the Adriatic coast, and the local populations Romanized their cultures and became Roman citizens. In Late Antiquity the Romanized peoples of the Triveneto bore the brunt of the new peoples, most of them speaking Germanic languages, who crossed the Roman limes, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Alemanni, Lombards, Franks, etc., and in time became denizens of new political entities.

In the area a number of medieval ruins of castles or towers are named after a fictional character, Matruk/Matruc/Matrucco. We do not know exactly when the legend of St. Augusta was born, but there is evidence of her cult in the Middle Ages, and in full swing Counter-Reformation archbishop Minuccio de' Minucci wrote the hagiography of Saint Augusta. Minucci and later writers supported the opinion that Augusta and her father Matruk, the villain of the story, belonged to a Germanic-speaking people, either the Visigoths or the Alemanni, because in the Counter-Reformation period most Protestants spoke Germanic languages such as German, English and Dutch. Therefore, a nefarious heathen Germanic king martyrizing his Christian daughter was a good piece of propaganda.

An analysis of the legend of St. Augusta and King Matruk, however, convinced me that Augusta and Matruk belong to the much older Venetic and Celtic layers, which left us a number of toponyms as well as sanctuaries in the area. Augusta's Christian feasts, on March 27th and August 22nd, occur in a period when a number of both Venetic-Celtic and Roman festivals occurred, most of them related to the agricultural cycle. On the other hand, the 'torture' of the saint is also modeled on agricultural symbolism, and her prominent symbol of martyrdom, the wheel, is typically solar and seasonal. The wheel is also a symbol of an important Celtic goddess, Brigit/Brigantia; her name means the Eminent, the High One, and she is associated with spring, fertility and fire as well as healing, poetry/magic and birth. Augusta's name also means the Eminent, the Noble or the Great, and is related to growth, light and prophesy. She appears strictly connected with an older woman, her nurse Cita, whose name means

'wood, forest, forested hill'; hence we can identify a dual goddess, young virgin Augusta and older nurturing Cita, typical of the Venetic-Celtic cultures (a triple goddess if we count Augusta's mother, connected with birth), belonging to an older layer of tradition, still lurking under the Christian veneer.

Matruk's name, on the other hand, indicates a Celtic origin (the Celtic word *matus*) and a bear god; he seems the local version of one of the most important Celtic gods, the light/sun god Lugh, a priestly and military god (hence his relation with fortified towers), who was also related to the agricultural cycle in the form of wheat. In Gaul one of his Romanized forms was *Mercurius-Artaios* (Mercury-Bear). The bear is an animal that symbolizes royalty well before the lion, so it is obvious that Matruk actually is King Bear.

There are aspects of the landscape that are also connected with Matruk and Augusta, such as the 'mounts' Prai di Fregona, Mt. St. Augusta, and Mount Altare/Antare. The last one, in particular, was a Venetic sanctuary, which has evidence of ancient cults related to healing and prophesying and was visited by worshippers belonging to different peoples, Veneti, Celts, Romans. The name and the tradition of the so called Collo Maledicto (Cursed Hill) points out to a Venetic dual deity, as well as to the Celtic god of the stormy sky, Taranis, sometimes identified with Jupiter Anderon and Chthonius and Dis Pater by the Romans.

In sum, in the area of Ceneda and Serravalle, we have a multi-layered tradition of remarkable antiquity, which shows the merging of Venetic, Celtic and Roman traditions in a border territory, as well as their continuation in both the Christian hagiographic legend and Saint Augusta's cult.

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Pictures

Fig. 1 - The area of Vittorio Veneto (TV).

Fig 2 - The ancient roads to Norico, sanctuaries and offerings. From Arnosti G. 1993. Reperti votivi e santuari paleoveneti nell'Alto Cenedese, in Il Flaminio 6:55-82.

Fig. 3 - Saint Augusta, wooden sculpture.

Fig.4 - Mount Altare/Antare