

THE MOTIF OF WARNING BIRDS IN ATTLA'S SIEGE OF AQUILEIA  
AND ITS SURVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION IN THE *ORIGO  
CIVITATUM ITALIAE SEU VENETIARUM (CHRONICON ALTINATE ET  
CHRONICON GRADENSE)*, *LA CRONACA DI MARCO* AND *CHRONICA  
EXTENSA* BY ANDREA DANDOLO

*Alenka DIVJAK*

Institute of Nova revija for Humanities, Cankarjeva 10 b, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia  
e-mail: alenka.divjak@guest.arnes.si

**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to examine the motif of warning birds, associated with Attila's siege of Aquileia in 452, in its late antiquity context, and second, to trace the transformation of this motif in three medieval Venetian chronicles: Origo civitatum Italiae seu Venetiarum (Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense), La Cronaca di Marco and Dandolo's Chronica Extensa. The motif of warning birds in the three Venetian chronicles can be viewed from two perspectives. First, on a larger scale, the discussed motif can be seen as a part of a broader historiographical vision underlining the importance of the earliest settlements in the lagoons for the growth of the Republic of Venice. Second, from a narrower perspective, the warning birds provide a fine opportunity to glorify two prominent mainland cities, Altinum and Aquileia, associated with the warning birds in the three Venetian chronicles, as the selected motif offers an opportunity to emphasise an elevated position of the daughter-settlement of Aquileia, Grado, and the daughter settlement of Altinum, Torcello, two earliest lagoon communities.*

*Key words: the siege of Aquileia, Attila, the Age of Migrations, medieval Venetian historiography, Venetian lagoon communities*

IL MOTIVO DEGLI UCCELLI PREMONITORI NELL'ASSEDIO DI AQUILEA  
DA PARTE DI ATTLA E LA SOPRAVVIVENZA E TRASFORMAZIONE  
DI QUESTO MOTIVO IN TRE TESTI: *ORIGO CIVITATUM ITALIAE SEU  
VENETIARUM (CHRONICON ALTINATE ET CHRONICON GRADENSE)*,  
*LA CRONACA DI MARCO* E *CHRONICA PER EXTENSUM DESCRIPTA*  
DE ANDREA DANDOLO

**SINTESI**

*Il presente articolo ha due scopi: in primo luogo, intende discutere del motivo degli uccelli premonitori o di malaugurio che appare in collegamento con Attila e il suo asse-*

*dio di Aquilea nel 452, e in secondo luogo, cerca di individuare le eventuali modifiche che questo motivo tardoantico possa aver subito nelle seguenti due cronache veneziane medievali: Origo civitatum Italiae seu Venetiarum (Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense) e La cronaca di Marco, nonché nel testo magistrale di Dandolo, intitolato Chronica per extensum descripta. Il motivo degli uccelli premonitori nelle tre cronache veneziane medievali dovrebbe essere considerato da due punti di vista. Da un punto di vista più ampio lo si può trattare come parte di una visione storiografica a più generale che sottolinea l'importanza del primo insediamento nelle lagune per l'ascesa della Repubblica di Venezia. In una prospettiva più ristretta, invece, gli uccelli premonitori offrono una bella opportunità per esaltare due città nobili della terraferma, Aquilea e Altino, e le rispettive comunitàfiliali nelle lagune: Grado e Torcello.*

*Parole chiave: l'assedio di Aquilea, Attila, invasioni barbariche o l'era delle migrazioni di popoli, storiografia veneziana medievale, comunità nelle lagune veneziane*

## INTRODUCTION: THE STORKS OF AQUILEIA

Animals play a significant role in myths and legends, being often depicted as guides leading exceptional individuals to discover treasures, healing waters, gold and silver mines, salt deposits and hot spas,<sup>1</sup> the most favoured protagonists being even allowed to find the way to the Other World (Haiding, 225-226). Furthermore, animals figure in numerous foundation stories, where temples, churches, monasteries, even towns and cities owe their foundation to the appearance of an animal, for example a bird, a stag, a rabbit etc. at a particular site. These animals, either functioning as guides to the places notable for their miraculous and healing properties or playing a vital role in foundation stories, were highly valued in both antiquity and the Middle Ages, being referred to as the 'weisende Tiere', guiding animals. However, apart from these 'weisende Tiere', endowed with highly developed geomantic abilities, chronicles and other written sources from antiquity and the Middle Ages often refer to another type of marvellous animals, the so-called 'warning animals', which were believed to be able to foretell disasters, such as floods, earthquakes and the fall of cities (Krappe, 8-12; Altheim, 224).

The most famous warning animals in western tradition are undoubtedly the storks of Aquilea associated with Attila's siege and destruction of the city in 452, the event which is to be viewed within a broader context of his invasion on Italy in the same year. Roman Aquilea was a magnificent city, in the late fourth century enjoying the reputation of being the ninth among the most prominent cities in the Roman empire: Rome, Carthage, Alexan-

1 Aachen, for example, owes its foundation and fame to Charlemagne's discovery of hot springs during the hunt, being lead to the site by a chased stag (Haiding, 219-220).

dria, Constantinople, Antioch, Treves, Milan and Capua.<sup>2</sup> Even though the city was past its prime in the early fifth century, it was before its fall into Attila's hands still a wealthy metropolis excelling in architectural beauties, set into the environment pregnant with legend (Šašel Kos, 11-12), the site of notable historical events, an influential as well as controversial religious centre (Bratož, 1981; Cuscito, 1994), the place associated with numerous early saints and an ecclesiastical see supposedly established by St Mark the Evangelist (De Biasi, 91-97). Late antiquity historiography, understandably, took notice of this event, especially as it was the notorious Attila, *flagellum Dei* (Bertini, 237-238), the most intimidating, the most complex and the most mysterious historical figure in the Age of Migrations, who had engineered the city's downfall. His invasion on Italy in 452 still presents a puzzle to the historians as to his motives for this large-scale military operation undertaken only one year after his disastrous defeat at the battle of Catalaunian Plains in Gaul. The explanations provided by the scholarship are numerous but inconclusive: Attila's thirst for revenge, the need to restore the morale of his army (Wolfram, 20), the wish to annihilate the Roman chief commander Aetius, responsible for Attila's defeat at the Catalaunian Plains, the need to obtain new sources of booty with which to keep Attila's greedy Huns and Germanic allies contented, and finally, Attila's desire to marry Honoria, the sister of the western emperor Valentinian III, the argument which has been for a long time dismissed as fiction but which is slowly gaining grounds among scholars (Zecchini, 104-105).

According to the late antiquity sources referring to the fall of Aquileia in 452, the strongly garrisoned city turned out to be a hard nut to crack, its stubborn defence driving Attila's military forces to the verge of rebellion. The frustrated Attila, on his march around the city walls, hoping to discover a weak spot in the city defences, suddenly noticed that the storks nesting on the roofs of the city buildings were carrying their offspring away from Aquileia and he immediately interpreted this 'aviary' evacuation as an omen of the city's eventual fall. After launching another attack, Aquileia was taken and its destruction so complete that the city never regained its previous influential position,<sup>3</sup> being soon eclipsed as an ecclesiastical see by the neighbouring sea town of Grado and in the centuries to come being also replaced as a commercial centre by the newly founded communities in the nearby lagoons, the ancestors of the future Republic of Venice. The account of warning storks is believed to have been recorded for the first time by the Byzantine ambassador Priscus, Attila's contemporary, being sent on a diplomatic mission to the king of Huns in 449.<sup>4</sup> His original record is lost, but his story of the warning storks is preserved

2 Ausonius, *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*. This text is derived from an unknown edition: [http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/ordo\\_urbium.html](http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/ordo_urbium.html).

3 Scholarly views on this point differ materially, from Jordanes's statement that the city was so completely destroyed that it was difficult to recognise its original site to the references to the city's recovery soon after the siege and its continuing building activity (Marano, 573, 574, 579-580; Cuscito, 219-220; Wessel, 135-135; Maenchen-Helfen, 136-137).

4 If Priscus's account of the storks evacuating the city contains a kernel of truth, it allows us to speculate on the date of the Aquileia's fall, which could be at the end of August or at the beginning of September, as, according to Pliny the Elder, storks leave Italy after Vulcanalia, 23 August (Maenchen-Helfen, 133). Chronicles, however, mention another date for the city's fall, 18 July, based on the *Ravenna Annals*: *His consulibus Aquileia fracta est XV kal. Aug.* (Duval, 192; Cuscito, 218).

and related by numerous other writers: the Gothic historian Jordanes one century after the event,<sup>5</sup> the Byzantine historian Procopius in the same century,<sup>6</sup> Paulus Diaconus in the late eighth century,<sup>7</sup> his contemporary Paulinus II, Patriarch of Aquileia, in his poem *De destructione Aquilegiae numquam restituendae*,<sup>8</sup> Landolphus Sagax in the eleventh century,<sup>9</sup> Gotfriedus Viterbiensis in the twelfth century,<sup>10</sup> Sicard of Cremona one century

- 5 Jordanes, *De origine actibusque Getarum*, Ch. 42, 220-221; <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/jordanes1.htm#XLII>: Attila deambulans circa muros, dum, utrum solveret castra an adhuc remoraretur, deliberat, animadvertit candidas aves, id est ciconias, qui in fastigia domorum nidificant, de civitate foetos suos trahere atque contra morem per rura forinsecus conportare. Et ut erat sagacissimus inquisitor, presensit et ad suos: «Respicite», inquit, «aves futurarum rerum providas perituram relinquere civitatem casurasque arces periculo imminente deserere. Non hoc vacuum, non hoc credatur incertum; rebus presciis consuetudinem mutat ventura formido». Quid plura? Animos suorum rursus ad oppugnandum Aquileam inflammat. Qui machinis constructis omniaque genera tormentorum adhibita, nec mora et invadunt civitatem, spoliant, dividunt, vastantque crudeliter, ita ut vix eius vestigia ut appareat relinquunt.
- 6 Procopius, *History of the Wars, the Vandalic War*, Book 4, 33-38, tr. H. B. Dewing; <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16765/16765-h/16765-h.htm>.
- 7 *Pauli Historia Romana, in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae historicis recusa*, XIV, 9, pp. 113-114, ed. H. Droysen (Berolini: apud Weidmannos), 1879: .... Cum die quadam civitatem circuit, ut ex qua parte eam facilis posset expugnare, inquireret, cernit repente aves in aedificiorum fastigiis nidificare solitas, quae ciconiae vocantur, uno impetus ex urbe migrare fetusque suos sublato rostris per rura forinsecus depotare. «Aspicite» inquit ad suos «aves futurorum praescias perituram relinquere civitatem». Statimque adhibitis machinis tormentisque hortatur suos, acriter expugnat urbem ac sine mora capit. Diripiuntur opes, captivantur uel trucidantur ciues, residuum direptioni igni soppoito flamma consumit. Fuerat si quidem in ea ciuitate feminarum nobilissima, Digna nomine, forma quidem eximia sed candore pudicitiae amplius decorata. Haec dum habitaculum super ipsa urbis moenia haberet turremque excelsam suae domui imminentem, subtern quam Natissa fluuius uitreis labebatur fluentis, ne sordissimis hostibus ludibrium fieret animaeque pulchritudinem uel ui inlata libidine uitaret, mox ingressum hostium captamque urbem praesensit, e summa se eadem turre obuoluto capite in gurgitem praecipitem dedit metumque amittende pudicitiae memorabili exitu terminauit.
- 8 Gestare vidit aves fetus proprios / turribus altis per rura forinsecus, / prescivit sagax hinc tuum interitum / mox adfuturum.
- 9 Landolphus sagax. *Historia miscella*, ed. Franz Eyssenhardt, Libri XV, Berlin, 1869, p. 335: Ac primum Aquileam ciuitatem in ipso Italiae sitam principio expugnare adgressus est, quam continuo triennio obsidens cum aduersus eam, strenue ciuibus repugnantibus, nihil praeualerta quam murmur sui exercitus non ualentis famis tolerare penuriam audiret, cum die quadam inquireret, cernit repente aues in aedificiorum fastigiis nidificare solitas, quae ciconiae uocantur, uno impetu ex urbe migrare fetusque solos sublato rostris per rura forinsecus deportare. 'aspicite', inquit ad suos 'aues futurorum praescias perituram relinquere civitatem.' Statimque adhibitis machinis tormentisque hortatur suos, acriter expugnat urbem ac sine mora capit. Diripiuntur opes, captivantur uel trucidantur ciues, residuum direptioni igni soppoito flamma consumit. Fuerat si quidem in ea ciuitate feminarum nobilissima, Digna nomine, forma quidem eximia sed candore pudicitiae amplius decorata. Haec dum habitaculum super ipsa urbis moenia haberet turremque excelsam suae domui imminentem, subtern quam Natissa fluuius uitreis labebatur fluentis, ne sordissimis hostibus ludibrium fieret animaeque pulchritudinem uel ui inlata libidine uitaret, mox ingressum hostium captamque urbem praesensit, e summa se eadem turre obuoluto capite in gurgitem praecipitem dedit metumque amittende pudicitiae memorabili exitu terminauit.
- 10 *Pantheon sive Memoria Saeculorum, Patrologia Latina*, 198, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1855), vols. 899-990: Attila, recedentibus Wisigothis, securus iam factus, versus Romam iter convertit, et in via obsidione cingit urbem Aquilegiam, metropolim Venetiarum. Quam longo tempore obsessam, cum vincere eam se posse non crederet atque de recessione iam cogitaret, quadam die circa muros urbis deambulans, videt ciconias pullos suos parvulos ex nidis extra civitatem portantes. Ubi advocans milites ait: «Iste aves futuram civitatis cladem perpendunt, propter quod etiam filiolos exportaverunt». Hec aiens, milites ad eversionem loci fortius

later<sup>11</sup> and many other historians, medieval and modern.

As mentioned above, the presence of prophetic birds foretelling the fall of Aquileia and Attila's insightful interpretation of animal behaviour further sharpened the late antiquity perception of Attila as a demon creature, being greatly encouraged to adopt this line of thinking by his physical appearance revealing the Mongolian ethnicity. In fact, the inhabitants of both the Eastern and Western empire were equally horrified by the diet, nomadic life, religion and Mongolian facial features of the Huns, something the majority of the citizens of both empires witnessed for the first time and disliked immediately and intensely. In the light of pillage, atrocities and devastations wreaked by this mysterious and, by Greco-Roman standards, physically repulsive race (Sinor, 3-4), it is easy to understand why the prophetic birds and Attila's ingenious interpretation of their behaviour were taken at face value by late antiquity and medieval writers.<sup>12</sup> The second reason why the image of storks evacuating their young on the eve of the tragedy of Aquileia in 452 was not questioned later by medieval scholarship may have been the storks' position in medieval bestiaries depicting them as exemplary parents.<sup>13</sup> The image of conscientious storks of Aquileia carrying their offspring to safety away from the doomed city therefore enjoyed wide credibility and have remained closely associated with Aquileia ever since.

---

animavit. Unde instructis machinis variisque tormentis, urbem repente devicit, et usque adeo desolavit, ut prioris formae aedificii vestigia non valent inveniri. Asserunt multi quod urbem vacuam invenerit, quia cives perm are, quod est eis contiguum, reliquias sanctorum in Venetias, cum omni supellectile, navigio detulerunt. Ibiq; deinceps perpetuo habitantes, Veneti quasi advenae sunt nominati.

- 11 Sicardus Cremonensis: *Chronica universalis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, SS, 31, Hannover, 1903, p. 134: Quo reverso, Attila redintegratis viribus et maiori collecto exercitu Ytaliam furibundus per Panonias introivit, Aquilegiam agressus est, quam obsedit triennio; demum, cum cyconie uno impetu ex urbe volarent et pullos suos rostris forinsecus exportarent, hoc augurio fultus Attila urbem expugnavit et cepit. Quaedam femina Digna nomine forma, timens ab hostibus opprimi, metu amittende pudicitiae se in fluvium precipitavit. Concordiam, Putavium solo equavit; per Venetiarum urbes, scilicet Vincentiam, Veronam, Brixiam, Pergamum et reliquas, Hunni bachantur, Mediolanum, Ticiniumque arripiunt, Emilię civitates expoliant, et ubi Mincius in Padum influit castramentati sunt.
- 12 Some modern historians, however, tend to regard the storks of Aquileia as an element of fiction, arguing that the motif of warning birds derives from Central Asia, being common property of numerous Mongolian and other central Asian tribes (Maenchen-Helfen, 134). According to some other modern historians, Attila was supposed to be skilled in shamanistic lore, being a highly superstitious individual, regularly consulting augurs and living in the world of magic and shamanism, which deeply puzzled the Romans and Greeks. As a result, the Roman and Greek ambassadors found his behaviour, heavily influenced by these native religious practices, so difficult to understand that the imperial negotiations with Attila were seriously impeded as a result (Merkelbach, 239).
- 13 Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Animal Symbolism in Art*, p. 393, New York, 2006; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XII.VIII, 16-17; *The medieval book of birds: Hugh of Fouilloys' De avibus*, Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, vol. 80, ed. and tr. with commentaries by Willene B. Clark, New York, Binghamton, 1992, p. 213; [http://www.archive.org/stream/medievalbookofbi00hugh\\_uoft\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/medievalbookofbi00hugh_uoft_djvu.txt).

THE MOTIF OF WARNING BIRDS IN MEDIEVAL VENETIAN  
 HISTORIOGRAPHY: *ORIGO CIVITATUM ITALIAE SEU VENETIARUM*  
 (*CHRONICON ALTINATE ET CHRONICON GRADENSE*), *LA CRONACA DI MARCO*  
 AND DANDOLO'S *CHRONICA EXTENSA*.

This paper focuses on the motif of warning birds, its transformation and function in three medieval Venetian texts: *Origo civitatum Italiae seu Venetiarum* (*Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense*), *La Cronaca di Marco* and Dandolo's *Chronica Extensa*. All of them set the motif of warning birds into a broader context of barbarian invasions on Italy in the Age of Migrations, which induced a considerable portion of the indigenous population to permanently settle in the Venetian lagoons. Their departure from the mainland and their habitation in the marine area were recorded with a varying degree of attention by the earliest Venetian historiography whose first surviving records date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even though their beginnings might go back to the tenth century (Manitius, 246, Saint Guilan, 266), being produced in episcopal or monastic centres. John the Deacon (†1009) is believed to have laid the foundations of medieval Venetian historiography in his *Chronicon Venetum*, beginning with the settlement of the Langobards in Italy in the late sixth century and ending with the year 1008. The *Chronica de singulis patriarchis Nove Aquileie* (ed. Waitz, MGH SS 8, 45-47) from the tenth century blames Attila the Hun for the destruction of Aquileia, but it is the Langobard occupation of Aquileia which, according to the *Chronica*, eventually leads to the city's loss of ecclesiastical control over the Venetian lagoons, its ecclesiastical leadership being lost to Grado (Manitius, 251), while the *Chronicon Gradense* (MGH SS 7, 39-45) is preoccupied with the rise of two early Venetian lagoon communities, Torcello and Grado.

The *Chronicon Altinate*, from the twelfth century, severely criticised by the scholars because of its ungrammatical Latin (Manitius, 249; Simonsfeld, 80) and described as 'amphigoric or maybe farcial' (Saint Guilan, 266), was later heavily exploited by the thirteenth-century writers Martino da Canal and Marco as well as the best medieval Venetian historian Andrea Dandolo (1306-1354). The chronicle is one of the earliest Venetian historiographical records trying to provide the Venetian lagoon communities with an ancient, mythic origin and venerable primeval past, which in reality they did not possess.<sup>14</sup> In order to mend the situation, the chronicle claims that the mother cities of the lagoon communities, such as Aquileia, Altinum, Padua, owe their foundation to the Trojan hero Antenor, Aeneas's friend (Fortini Brown, 4), thus boldly implying that the rise of mainland Venetian cities precedes the foundation of Rome, erected only several generations after Aeneas's death, which, in turn, endows the mainland Venetian cities and their daughter settlements in the lagoons with an aura of exceptional prestige.

This survey of the earliest medieval Venetian historiography also reveals that the *Chronicon Altinate* no longer satisfies itself with John the Deacon's rather dry 'model of lagoon immigration as a consequence of the Langobard invasions' (Fortini Brown, 3;

14 For further information on the foundation legends and myths of those medieval European towns and cities without prestigious Roman or other ancient roots, see Rosser, pp. 6-7.

Simonsfeld, 77-78)<sup>15</sup>, attributing instead the exodus of the indigenous population to the attacks of some unspecified pagans from the east. In other words, apart from its intention to invest the mainland Venetian cities with the Trojan origins, considered as being highly prestigious in the whole of Western Europe (Ripping, Flemming, 54), placing thus the Venetian mainland cities on the same footing with Rome in terms of prestige, the *Chronicon Altinate* is equally preoccupied with underlining their religious devotion by presenting the mainland fugitives as religious refugees, this being noticeable also in the chronicle's account of the warning birds foretelling the fall of the coastal city of Altinum.

*ORIGO CIVITATUM ITALIAE SEU VENETIARUM*  
(*Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense*)

It is, as mentioned before, the city of Altinum which witnesses the exodus of birds removing their young from the city on the eve of the pagan invasion. In the earliest series of hystoriorographical accounts, referred to above, the motif of warning birds occurs only in this chronicle, its substantially modified account – in relation to the traditional late antiquity story – being as follows:

*Post istius episcopi expletum tempus venit ab australi plaga sevissimi paganorum, qui destruxerunt cunctas civitates, que supra nominate sunt, istam autem Altinensem civitatem. gens multitudo diversorum, que intus erant habitantes, quod per illius significationem Deus enim demonstratus est, cuncte aves et volucres, que per muros et turris civitatum totis per circuitum habitantium erant, longe a civitate expernebantur, in becis ipsis deportentur parvis illorum filliis. Tam iste civitatis quam Aquilegie civitas tota hominum gens videntes erant. Toti autem populi civitatum, cum hoc videretur signum, foris erant exituri; per partes illas egerunt captivos. de eadem Altinensium civitate duas partes populi exierunt: peregerunt ex captivitate, alii Ravenna, alii Ystria, alii Romania Pentapolim: alii ergo triduanum fecerunt ieiunium, quod Deus illis aut per navigium aut in locis habitantium ostenderet eis, qualiter vivere possit. iuxta promissum Dei, quod eis indignis factum erat, vocem audivit quasi tonitruum eis dicentem: 'in turrem ascendite, ab astra autem videte'. Ascendit et in astra vidit proximus vicinis insulis habitationum loca, ut figuris illius et omnibus, quid esset, demonstrati sunt. alii quod eiecerat, similiter viderunt, quasi corporaliter figurabant, quod per navibus et in lignis caveis; itemque loca, cunctis videntibus illis, vicina habitatio Deus eorum demonstratus est. (Origo (Chronicon Altinate), ed. Cessi, 52-53).*

In the chronicle, the inhabitants of Altinum are warned in advance of the city's impending doom by the unspecified birds. Unlike the late antiquity writers who consistently mention the storks as ominous birds in the siege of Aquileia, in this account it is any birds as well as vultures who warn the Altinese, thus intensifying the feeling of urgency. The

15 For a view that it was the Langobards and not the Huns who made numerous mainland inhabitants settle in the lagoons, see also De Biasi, pp. 89-90.

birds in this misty, almost pseudo-historical *milieu* retain and even upgrade their warning function by being seen as divine messengers, and their behaviour is, as a result, much more benign than that of the warning storks of Aquileia. The birds warn the Altinese of the impending danger so far in advance that the citizens together with their bishop are able to take counsel and evacuate the city. In other words, the birds, the messengers of God, confer on the inhabitants of Altinum a special status, marking them as a community particularly favoured by God, which, in turn, endows their new foundation Torcello with an aura of exceptional spiritual prestige.

The invasion which induced the Altinese to migrate is in the chronicle attributed to some unidentified pagans from the East, which makes the account rather vague from a historical perspective. It is the additional extratextual historical evidence, however, which helps to clarify the identity of the historical conquerors of Altinum who induced numerous Altinese to abandon their city for good: the Langobards, who during the reign of their King Rothari (636–652) occupied Altinum in 639.<sup>16</sup> An active role of the city's bishop in deciphering a divine message, singling out the lagoons as the Altinese's sanctuary, alludes to another significant historical fact that it was the bishops and other religious leaders who had a hand in persuading the indigenous population to abandon their ancient cities (Hodgson, 24; Kehr, 1927) in order to avoid the co-existence with the Arian Christians Langobards. The chronicle's refusal to recognise the share the Langobards had in fostering the exodus of the indigenous population from the mainland marks, as mentioned before, a considerable deviation from the earliest Venetian historiography which, with John the Deacon at its head, identified Langobards as the main cause of migrations.

The chronicle - in line with its idealising tendencies - also refuses to reveal more mundane reasons which, apart from the barbarian invasions and religious tensions, also fostered permanent habitations in the lagoons. The Venetian mainland was in the sixth and early seventh centuries badly affected by the cold and rainy weather, floods and inundations which made numerous cities and surrounding areas unfit for habitation. The economic decline, the roads and infrastructure falling into disrepair also contributed to the determination of many to sever their ties with the mainland and move to the lagoons controlled by the Byzantines and regarded as a part of Byzantine Exharhate of Ravenna (Heher, 66–67; Reynolds, 4–5, De Biasi, 81).

In the light of this extratextual information, it is easier to understand the historical reasons inducing the Altinese to abandon Altinum *en masse* in favour of the new marine settlement at Torcello. Like many other mainland urban communities, the city experienced deteriorating climate conditions, floods, economic decline and the decay of the infrastructure (Heher, 71). Torcello, in common with other early communities, also sought connections with Constantinople whose military presence in the lagoons coincided with

---

16 The process of intensive and permanent settling of the lagoons during the Langobard invasion: from Aquileia (568/69) to Grado, from Concordia (616) to Caorle, from Oderzo (639 and 667/69) to Herakleia, from Altinum (639) to Torcello, from Treviso to Rialto and Malamocco, from Padua (603) to Chioggia and also Malamocco (Heher, 63–64). Dandolo in his *Chronica extensa* also refers to Rothari as the king during whose reign Altinum had been taken by the Langobards, p. 95.

the flight of the Altinese in 639 to Torcello. This community soon rose to such prominence that in 639 Torcello may have served as a temporary residence of a Byzantine high official in charge of Venetia before the permanent removal of his residence from the mainland city of Oderzo, which fell to the Langobards in 639/640, to the lagoon community of Herakleia (Heher, 93-95).

In the *Chronicon Altinate*, however, Torcello's dependence on the Byzantines is passed over in silence, due to the chronicle's preference for a more fictitious account of the native leadership exercised at Torcello from its earliest beginnings. According to the chronicle, the leaders of the fugitives were Arrius and his son Arator, also designated by the chronicle as *tribuni* and *duces*, who encouraged the settlement of the island of Torcello as well as the following lagoon islands: Burano, Mazzorolo, Murano, Ammiana and Constatiaca, all the islands being named after the six gates of Altinum. The permanent inhabitation of the islands was further encouraged by the hermit priest Germanus who advised the exiles initially living in boats or wooden huts to build houses and churches on the islands, his advice being repeated later by the priest Maurus and future bishop of Torcello who saw the visions of all the saints wanting their churches to be erected on the islands (Hodgson, 27-8, Crouzet-Pavan, 421-422).<sup>17</sup> The legendary character of Altinese's habitation in the lagoons is further underlined by the chronicle's claim that the fugitives find uninhabited lagoons, a kind of desert, which they convert into a magnificent urban community reminiscent of their old mother city of Altinum,<sup>18</sup> this version of events being in line with a broader perspective of medieval Venetian historiography depicting the fugitives as pioneers in their new uninhabited land (Horodowich, 4-5), founding new magnificent communities from the scratches. In reality, as confirmed by modern archeology, Torcello was, like many other island communities, settled as early as the first centuries AD (Housley, Ammerman, McClennen, 148; Crouzet-Pavan, 417), even though the population in the lagoons remained sparse until the mass migrations from the mainland in the Age of Migrations.

The warning birds in the *Chronicon Altinate* are therefore the first narrative element in the legend clustering around the abandonment of Altinum and the birth of Torcello. They save the inhabitants of Altinum, enabling them to evacuate the city together with

17 The *Chronicon Altinate* is rather vague as to the identity of the bishop who is more likely to be Paul rather than Maurus who is referred to as a priest. Dandolo in his *Chronica extensa* also claims it was the bishop Paul who abandoned Altinum but died one month after his arrival at Torcello, being succeeded by Maurus (Dandolo, 95-96). John the Deacon, by contrast, attributes the evacuation of Altinum and removal of the bishop's see from Altinum to Torcello to Bishop Maurus, *Chronicon Venetum*, I, 38. Maurus is also referred to as a bishop on a stone inscription excavated at Torcello, claiming that the basilica of S. Maria Assunta was consecrated in 639, in the era of the bishop Maurus.

18 See Reynolds, pp. 3-4: 'The focus on urban development is evident in the erection of buildings throughout its history. Despite continued destructions at the hands of invading forces, the destructions are also seen as an opportunity for renewal, which does not call for new styles but emphasises *recreatio* or the reproduction of great antique models that have been annihilated by invading forces. When building Grado, the first capital of the Venetian lagoons, planners looked to emulate the plans of Aquileia which had recently been destroyed. Aquileia was the acknowledged mother of Venice, signifying its status as the oldest model city within the province. Ultimately, the urban nature of Venice is intrinsically related to a reverence for antiquity as demonstrated in their desire to emulate the buildings and city plans of the oldest cities nearest to them.'

their material possessions and Christian relics,<sup>19</sup> serving at the same time as a divine sign which activates a chain of other miraculous events leading to the foundation of Torcello, all the details being incorporated into the chronicle with the purpose of emphasising Torcello's divinely sanctioned status.

*LA CRONACA DI MARCO (the Chronicle of Marco)*

The Latin written *Cronaca di Marco*, started to be written in 1292, one of three preserved Venetian historical records from the thirteenth century, reflects - together with the anonymous *Historia ducum Venetorum* and the French written *Estoires de Venise* by Martino da Canal, written between 1267 and 1275 - the growing power of Venice after the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204, providing a rich source of historical data on Venice's successful expansion in the Mediterranean and a lot of information on non-Venetians, Greeks and Latins alike (Saint Guilan, 272).<sup>20</sup> Within this group of chronicles, only Marco's account refers to the warning birds, *Historia Ducum Venetorum* completely ignoring Venice's early mythical past and Martino da Canal not referring to the warning birds in any way, not even in their traditional context of Attila's siege of Aquileia which he duly records. Marco's account of the warning birds is as follows:

*De eodem.*

*Post hec Attilus destrui fecit Altiliam, cuius cives, perfecti in fidem XPI, antequam persecutor accederet, Dominum oraverunt ut ostenderet illis locum quo possent manus evadere persequentis. Quorum precibus exauditis, in modum tonitruum audita est vox de celo que orantibus dixit ita: «Ascendite in cachumina turrium et inspicite defferentes volucres pullos in rostris suis et quo pergunt illuc eciam vos eatis». Et fecerunt ita.*

*De eodem*

*Tandem vero construxerunt ligna concava se cum thesauris suis versus marina litora dirigentes.*

*De eodem*

*Cum illi de Altilia ad quasdam tumbas aquis circumdatas maritimis pervenissent, hospitati sunt in maiori [tunba], Torcullum hedificantes ibi, in quo construxerunt pulcras ecclesias atque domos (La Chronaca, ed. Carile, 124-125).*

In this account Attila is identified as the invader, conventionally designated as *flagellum Dei*, this designation corresponding with late antiquity traditions, regarding Attila as a kind of Antichrist, destroyer of towns and cities, the killer of saints (Bertini, 234), the image which continued to prevail in medieval chronicles as well. It is worth noticing that in Marco's chronicle, unlike in the late antiquity records, but along the same lines as in

19 For example, the relics of St Heliodorus, the first bishop of Altinum (Osborne, 374).

20 For his views on the Fourth Crusade, see Fortini Brown, pp. 15-16.

the *Chronicon Altinate*, it is Altinum which witnesses the birds carrying away their young in their beaks and abandoning the city, not Aquileia. Unlike the *Chronicon Altinate* where the truth is revealed to the city's bishop, in Marco's chronicle it is the Altinese themselves who correctly interpret a divine message and act accordingly.<sup>21</sup>

The birds' divine mission in the passage is further underlined by the fact that their role is no longer restricted to heralding an impending danger, this traditional warning role being upgraded by their function of 'weisende Tiere', guiding animals which single out the site of future Torcello as the place suitable for the Altinese's new habitation.

Marco's attribution of the foundation of Torcello to Attila's ravages rather than to the Langobard invasions is in line with the tendencies noticeable in medieval Venetian historiography which from the twelfth century onwards increasingly depicted Attila as a driving force behind the mass departures from the mainland, the *terra ferma*, the historiographical records achieving two objectives in this way. First, the beginnings of the new lagoon communities were pushed one century further into the past, and second, the Christian devotion of the indigenous population refusing to live under the pagans (Das, 105), was thus duly emphasised, the hatred felt for the pagans being a much more laudable reason for migrations than the hostilities existing between the Arian Christians such as Langobards and the Catholics (Fortini Brown, 4).

In short, Marco further emphasises the point already made in the *Chronicon Altinate* and later medieval Venetian historiography that it was not the Langobards who caused mass migrations to the lagoons. But unlike the *Chronicon Altinate* which attributes the fall of Altinum and other mainland cities to some unidentified pagans from the East, Marco identifies the Huns and Attila as the invaders responsible for the mass evacuation of the mainland cities. In this way Marco provides the evacuation of Altinum with a historical background which is, although not accepted by modern history,<sup>22</sup> still more credible than a vague time frame provided by the *Chronicon Altinate*. Furthermore, with the exception of the warning birds, Marco's account is entirely devoid of miracles and visions of the saints eager to have their churches erected on the islands, satisfying himself with a brief reference to the Altinese's building activity in their new homeland. And finally, in Marco the emphasis is on the citizens of Altinum who find their way to the lagoons without the guidance of any ecclesiastical authority and who later organise their new life in the lagoons without singling out any exceptional individuals to preside over their new community, thus demonstrating their preference for communal action.

21 They themselves organise the evacuation, this absence of a strong secular leader being in line with the Venetian ideal of republicanism which did not tolerate the superiority of an individual over his community (Fortini, 5). Marco praises their Trojan ancestors' communal spirit quite determinedly and their dislike of individual authority (Das, 103). For a different view that medieval Venetian historiography in fact abounds in exceptional individuals, see Saint Guilan, p. 272. (prevod avtorice)

22 According to modern historians, no matter how devastating Attila's invasion was, his ravages did not cause an exodus on a large scale, the majority of the indigenous population using the lagoons only as a temporary refuge, being encouraged to act so by Attila's brief and abortive Italian campaign. It was the Langobardian invasion, Aquileia being affected by its first wave under King Alboin and Altinum by its second wave under King Rothari, which eventually persuaded many inhabitants of the mainland cities of Venetia to try their luck in the lagoons rather than staying under the Langobard authority (Reynolds, 4, Osborne, 374).

DANDOLO'S *CHRONICA EXTENSA*

The third medieval Venetian chronicle exploiting the motif of warning birds is the *Chronica Extensa* by the doge Andrea Dandolo (1306-1354). During his reign he witnessed the Black Death, fought wars with Venice's archrival Genoa, faced the Hungarian appetites for Dalmatia and the growing Turkish threat in the Aegean (Simonsfeld, 6-10). His historiographical activity has to be viewed within a broader context of his ideological project to raise the morale of the Venetians (Saint Guilan, 282) by drawing their attention to Venice's unique history. His first work, *Chronica brevis*, relating the history of Venice from its origins to 1342, can be regarded as a preparation for his major text, a masterpiece of medieval Venetian historiography, written during his term as doge, *Chronica extensa*, centering on the history of Venice as well as recording the most notable events in universal history. In the chapters relating to Venice's earliest beginnings Dandolo relies heavily on the inherited Venetian historical records, organising the traditional material in such a way as to revive and further expand the themes associated with Venice's primeval past: her Troyan origin (Pincus, 105), her Christian roots going back to Saint Mark the Evangelist (Das, 103-104), and the portrayal of the pagan Attila as the initiator of permanent settlements in the lagoons (Simonsfeld, 78-79). Like Marco, Dandolo also considers Attila rather than the Arian Langobards as the main reason for the exodus of the mainland fugitives to the lagoons (Collodo, 540-541). However, unlike Marco who links the warning birds with Altinum, Dandolo retains a traditional connection between the warning birds and Attila's siege of Aquileia:

*Nicetha episcopus Aquileie electus est anno Domini nostri Jusus Christi IIII LIII. Hic, origine grecus, uir catholicus, hoc tempore factus episcopus, multas tribulationes passus est. Nam Athila rex Hunorum, reassumptis viribus, circa mare pertransiit, cepitque Tragurium (Trir), Sibinicum (Sebenico), Belgradum (Beograd namoro), Iadram (Zara), Nonam (Aenona = Nona), Signiam (Senia = Senj), Polam (Pola), Parenium (Parenzo), Emonam (Aemonia = Cittanova), Tergestum (Trieste). Et cum ueniret Aquileiam, illi, reliquias sanctorum cum paruulis ac mulieribus et thesauris in castro Gradensi tutauerunt. Athila autem, longa obsidione fatigatus, cum cichoniae uno impeto ex urbe uolarent et pulos rostris forinsecus exportarent, hoc augurio fultus, urbem acrius impugnavit. Mortuisque ex parte Athile VIIIIm, Aquilensium uero IIIm, eidem non valentes resistere multitudini, Aquileienses muros ciuitatis statuis munierunt et sic, non aduertende Athila, Gradum quasi omnes fugierunt. Interim ille, falcone dimisso, cum super unam ex statuis resedisset, aduertens Athila dolum, indignans sic eos manus suas efugisse, ciuitatem destruxit. Sed uirgo quedam nobilis, que remanserat, nomine Digna, nimis timens ab hostibus opprimi, in laudem castitatis in fluvio Nathis se iactauit. (Chronica extensa, ed. Pastorello, 58-59).*

This traditional record, however, is by Dandolo supplemented with three new details which materially alter the traditional course of events and invest the defeated Aquileians with a kind of prestige unknown in late antiquity accounts. First, the Aquileians place

wooden soldiers on the city walls thus tricking Attila into overestimating the city's military strength. In other words, the well known literary motif: images set up to resemble watchmen (K. 1883.8 in Arnes Thompson index) is used to link the besieged Aquileians with all those clever communities threatened but not crushed by an overwhelming force, thus emphasizing their ingenuity. Second, it is Attila's hawk which discovers the trick with the fake soldiers, and third, during the siege the inhabitants are evacuated secretly and discreetly, with such success, that by the time Attila eventually sees the fleeing storks and renews his attack, the majority of Aquileians has already made an escape to the nearby island town of Grado together with the city's most precious treasures and Christian relics.

How is the role of storks to be interpreted in Dandolo's version of events? Aquileia's fall and Attila's victory remain an unaltered fact, nevertheless, the siege is presented in such a way that Attila's correct interpretation of the fleeing storks' behaviour is nullified in the battle of wits initiated and eventually won by the clever Aquileians, which leads to a considerable erosion of Attila's reputation in the passage. The intimidating war leader endowed with supernatural powers, as depicted in late antiquity, is still able to correctly interpret the flight of storks, but it is his hawk which discovers the trick of the fake sentinels, which reduces Attila to the status of a duped individual. Dandolo's version of Attila's siege remains traditional in its basic outlines: the storks warn him rather than the Aquileians and the city eventually falls, nevertheless the loss of human life is reduced to the minimum by the timely evacuation, enabling the citizens to transfer to Grado their treasures and Christian relics. In this respect Dandolo's account is far less apocalyptic than the late antiquity records depicting Aquileia's fall within the literary conventions of the motif "urbs capta", the captured city, focusing on the suffering, pillage, destruction and carnage associated with the conquest of cities (Paul, 154-155).

Dandolo's account of the siege of Aquileia also provides a good opportunity to draw the readers' attention to Grado whose growing importance was noticeable already in the fourth and fifth centuries when it served as a seaport through which commercial goods were transported by the Natissa River to the riverport of Aquileia located ca. six kilometres from Grado. Archaeological excavations reveal Grado's varied commercial links with Palestine, the Aegean region, Asia Minor and the Near East in the fifth and sixth centuries as well as the import of African and Oriental products. In addition, in the late sixth century, Grado turned out to be an ideal retreat for the administrative structures under the protection of Constantinople and it can therefore be regarded as the first example of the transfer of political power to the lagoons, thus setting an example to other mainland cities which preferred the Byzantine authority to that of the Langobards. Its position as a political centre, however, must have been rather short-termed, being in the seventh century replaced in this capacity by another lagoon community of Herakleia, this shift of political power from Grado to Herakleia coinciding with the reduction of the Mediterranean trade in the 7th century and the consequent erosion of Grado's status as a commercial centre (Heher, 78-80).

It is necessary to point out, however, that Grado's main reputation is based on its position as an initially alternative residence of the patriarchs of Aquileia after its fall in 452 and after 568 as their permanent home and the new ecclesiastical see for the new lagoon

communities. The erosion of Aquileia's status as an ecclesiastical see began soon after its fall to Attila, with Grado serving as a more reliable and safer substitution for dilapidated and diminished Aquileia which could never again recover its former wealth and authority. In the sixth century, Aquileia's position as an ecclesiastical see further deteriorated as a result of the Langobard permanent occupation of northern Italy under their king Alboin (†572/573), which induced a considerable part of the indigenous Catholic population to break their ties with the mainland not only physically but also spiritually by recognising Grado as their new ecclesiastical centre, the act strongly supported by the Byzantine ecclesiastical and political structures as well. It was therefore the Langobardian invasions which led to a political split between Aquileia, retaining its leading position on the mainland under the Langobards, and the newly founded Patriarchate of Grado, addressing the spiritual needs of lagoon communities under the Byzantine authority.

The prestige of Grado as a new ecclesiastical centre was further enhanced by a collection of valuable relics, such as those of St Hermagoras, Aquileia's first bishop, transferred to Grado by the patriarch Paulinus of Aquileia in 568 (Osborne, 374). The relics of St Hermagoras had a vital role in strengthening the ecclesiastical credibility of Grado, as St Hermagoras was, according to tradition, appointed to his episcopal position by St Mark the Evangelist who was believed to have brought Christianity to northern Italy, singling out Aquileia as the ecclesiastical see of Venetia. In fact, in spite of continual political tensions between Aquileia and Grado and their rivalry for the ecclesiastical supremacy over both mainland and lagoon Venetias, neither Grado nor other Venetian communities in the lagoons had ever denied their spiritual debt to Aquileia, correctly evaluating the city's exceptional spiritual prestige derived from its associations with St Mark the Evangelist, St Peter's friend and equal. St Mark's associations with Aquileia were artfully exploited by medieval Venetians emphasising their spiritual independence from Rome on the grounds of St Mark's associations with Aquileia whose elevated position as a leading ancestral city was fully recognised by medieval Venetian historiography.

In conclusion, the three medieval accounts encompassing the motif of warning birds reveal considerable modifications in relation to the traditional story of the storks of Aquileia. Traditionally, the warning birds serve as an evil omen foretelling the fall of Aquileia and its consequent degradation in terms of prestige and influence, underlining at the same time the devilish character of the man who correctly interpreted the birds' flight from the doomed city, the notorious Attila, *flagellum Dei*. The three medieval Venetian chronicles exploiting this motif, by contrast, reuse it in a substantially modified form. In *La Cronaca di Marco* and in the anonymous *Chronicon Altinate* the inhabitants of Altinum are warned by the fleeing birds, divine messengers, so far in advance that they can evacuate the city to such an extent they leave behind only city walls, choosing for their new habitation the lagoon island of Torcello which they settle together with the neighbouring lagoon islands. In Dandolo's *Chronica extensa* the account is on the surface a rather faithful rendering of the traditional story but the additional details help to create a far less apocalyptic version of events: during the siege the Aquileians cunningly evacuate the city, finding shelter in the nearby seaport of Grado. The motif of warning birds has therefore to be viewed within a wider perspective of the Age of Migrations which caused a mass exodus of the

indigenous Roman population from the mainland, *terra ferma*, to the lagoons. From the perspective of medieval Venetian historiography, the inhabitants of the mainland cities are destined to found new lagoon communities which will far outgrow in wealth and prestige the mainland cities which they had to abandon, and the warning birds figuring in the three medieval Venetian chronicles are to be regarded as a meaningful part of this hopeful historiographical vision.

MOTIV SVAREČIH PTIC V ATILOVEM OBLEGANJU OGLEJA IN PREŽIVETJE  
IN TRANSFORMACIJA MOTIVA V TREH BESEDILIH: *ORIGO CIVITATUM  
ITALIAE SEU VENETIARUM (CHRONICON ALTINATE ET CHRONICON  
GRADENSE)*, *LA CRONACA DI MARCO* IN *CHRONICA EXTENSA*  
ANDREA DANDOLA

*Alenka DIVJAK*

Inštitut Nove revije – Zavod za humanistiko, Cankarjeva 10 b, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija  
e-mail: alenka.divjak@guest.arnes.si

*Leta 452 je Atila oblegal Oglej, eno najiminentnejših mest v rimskem cesarstvu. Obleganje ni prinašalo Hunom nikakršnih uspehov in Atila je že razmišljal o umiku, ko je nenadoma zagledal štoklje, ki so v kljunih odnašale svoje mladiče iz mesta. Atila je njihov odhod razložil svoji vojski kot znak, da bo mesto padlo, zato je okreplil napad, ki je tokrat uspel. Padec Ogleja je pretresel sodobnike, svareče ptice, ki so njegov padec napovedale, pa so pomagale ustvariti prav posebno apokaliptično vzdušje, ki daje Ogleju izjemen položaj med severno italijanskimi mesti, ki so padla v hunske roke. Namen tega članka je raziskati preživetje in preobrazbo motiva svarečih ptic v naslednjih treh srednjeveških beneških besedilih: Chronicon Altinate (12. stol.), La Cronaca di Marco (13. stol.) in Chronica extensa Andree Dandola (14. stol.). Prvi del članka, ki se ukvarja s poznoantičnim ozadjem motiva, se osredotoča na pregled pozno antičnih in srednjeveških piscev, čigar pripravljenost vključiti motiv svarečih ptic v svoje zapise o Atilovem obleganju Ogleja dokazuje trdoživost motiva in neskončno prevzetost kronistov nad motivom svarečih ptic. Atilov bister vpogled v vedenje ptic nekateri moderni zgodovinarji pojasnjujejo s šamanizmom, medtem ko so pozno antični pisci v Atilovi sposobnosti razumevanja vedenja živali videli še eden dokaz njegove demonske narave. V beneških kronikah, ki jih obravnava ta članek, je motiv svarečih ptic podvržen različnim stopnjam modifikacije, pri čemer je Dandolova kronika doživela v tem pogledu najmanj radikalne spremembe, medtem ko sta bili La Cronaca di Marco in Chronicon Altinate deležni veliko drznejšega posega v samo jedro motiva.*

*Kot je bilo prej omenjeno, se Dandolova različica Atilovega obleganja Ogleja dokaj zvesto naslanja na podedovane poznoantične tradicije, s štokljami, ki odnašajo*

svoje mlade, in z Atilo, ki v skladu s tradicijo pravilno razloži njihov beg. Toda istočasno Atila spregleda evakuacijo meščanov, izvedeno na skrivaj med obleganjem, prav tako kot tudi lažne lesene vojščake na mestnem obzidju, kar ga zapelje v precenjevanje oglejske vojaške sile in izgubo dragocenega časa. Z drugimi besedami, kljub Atilove-mu bistremu vpogledu v vedenje ptic in končnemu padcu mesta so vendarle Oglejčani zmagovalci na dolgi rok. Rešijo namreč večino prebivalstva in svoje najdragocenejše zaklade ter se naselijo skupaj z relikvijami svetnikov na bližnjem otočku Gradežu, ki kasneje postane novo versko središče, ki zasenči stari in porušeni Oglej. Dandolo torej uporabi tradicionalni motiv tako, da obleganje Ogleja predstavi kot veliko moralno in umsko zmago obleganih meščanov, kar posledično vodi do erozije Atilovega statusa kot izredne osebnosti, obdarjene z nadnaravnimi sposobnostmi, ki ga v kroniki, v nasprotju s poznoantičnim prepričanjem v njegovo umsko premoč, spretno prevara staroselsko prebivalstvo Ogleja.

V *Chronicon Altinate* se motiv pojavi v veliko bolj izvorni obliki in v tesni povezavi z vizijami in čudeži, katerih naloga je poudariti božjo milost, ki so je deležni prebivalci mesta Altina, ustanovitelji Torcella, ene najpremožnejših in najbolj cvetočih zgodnjih skupnosti v beneških lagunah. Ptice posvarijo prebivalce pred pogani z vzhoda toliko časa vnaprej, da so se le-ti sposobni prepustiti božjemu vodstvu – njihov škof se povzpne na stolp in zagleda otoke, čolne in ladje na nebu, vizija, ki jo on in njegova verska skupnost pravilno razumejo kot namig, da jim je namenjena naselitev v lagunah. Do takrat, ko zavojevalci dejansko dosežejo mesto, je le-to že izpraznjeno, njegovi nekdanji prebivalci pa varno naseljeni na otočku, kjer ustanovijo Torcello.

Najbolj izdelan zapis o svarečih pticah se pojavi v La Cronaca di Marco, kjer ptice, njihova vrsta, tako kot v *Chronicon Altinate*, ni več podrobno določena, delujejo istočasno kot svareče in vodeče živali. Vidi se, da odnašajo iz Altina svoje mladiče, znamenje, da bo mesto zasedel Atila, ki je že opustošil mnoga mesta na celini. Meščani – enako kot v *Chronicon Altinate* – se povzpnejo na visoke stolpe in tam dobijo božansko sporočilo, naj se naselijo v smeri, v kateri letijo ptice, to je v bližnjih lagunah, kjer ustanovijo Torcello.

Za zaključek, srednjeveški beneški zapisi uporabijo motiv svarečih ptic, ki so ga v Evropo prinesli Huni v dobi preseljevanja narodov, v skladu s svojo historiografsko vizijo. Mestom na celini je usojeno pasti, kot to nakažejo bežeče ptice, toda prebivalci pogubi zapisanih mest ustanovijo nove, imenitnejše otoške skupnosti, ki bistveno presežejo slavo svojih matičnih mest na celini. Vse tri kronike pripisujejo eksodus celinskega prebivalstva bodisi neidentificiranim poganom bodisi poganskemu Atili, s čimer postavijo začetke nastankov naselbin v lagunah vsaj eno stoletje prej kot Diakon Janez (†1008), oče srednjeveškega beneškega zgodovinarja, ki je pripisal migracije celinskega prebivalstva njihovemu odporu do arianskih kristjanov Langobardov, ki so vdrli v Italijo l. 568. S tem, ko določeni beneški zapisi pripisujejo Atili odgovornost za poselitev lagun, še dodatno povečajo ugled staroselskih prebivalcev, ker njihovemu eksodusu dodajo verski vidik, odpor kristjanov do sobivanja s pogani. Svareče ptice v treh beneških srednjeveških besedilih torej pomagajo povečevati ugled zgodnjih otoških skupnosti v lagunah, skupaj z njihovim bistrim in vernim staroselskim prebivalstvom, ki mu uspe evakuirati svoja pogubi zapi-

*sana mesta na celini z minimalno izgubo človeških življenj in z maksimalno ohranitvijo materialnih dobrin in krščanskih relikvij, kar jim omogoči ustanovitev novih skupnosti, ki po dosežkih in ugledu presežejo svoja matična mesta.*

*Ključne besede: obleganje Ogleja, Atila, doba preseljevanj narodov, srednjeveško beneško zgodovinopisje, skupnosti v beneških lagunah*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

- Pastorello E. (ed.) (1939):** *Chronica extensa*. Bologna.
- Carile A. (1970):** *Aspetti della cronachistica veneziana nei secoli XIII e XIV*. In: Olschki, L. (ed.): *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*. A cura di Agostino Pertusi. Firenze, 75-120. Marco, cod. Marc. it. XI, 124 (6802), ff. 4v-7r. Appendix (121-126).
- Cessi, R. (ed.) (1933):** *Origo civitatum Italie seu Venetiarum (Chronicon Altinate et Chronicon Gradense)*, Rome.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

- Altheim, F. (1969):** *Geschichte der Hunnen. Von den Anfängen bis zum Einbruch in Europa*. Berlin, De Gruyter.
- Arnaldi, G. (1970):** *Andrea Dandolo doge-cronista*. In: Olschki L. (ed.): *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi*. A cura di Agostino Pertusi. Firenze, 127-268.
- Battaglia, M. (1995):** *Sulla figura di Attila nel mondo Germanico*. In: Blason S. (ed.): *Attila e gli Unni. Mostra itinerante. Gruppo archeologico aquileiese*. Roma, «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 99-194.
- Bertini, F. (1994):** *Attila nei cronisti e negli storici del medioevo latino*. In: Blason S. (ed.): *Attila. Flagellum dei? Convegno internazionale di studi storici sulla figura di Attila e sulla discesa degli Unni in Italia nel 452 d.C/ Gruppo archeologico aquileiese*. Roma, «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 229-241.
- Bertini, F. (1988):** *Attila nella storiografia tardo antica e altomedievale*. In: Fasoli G. (ed.): *Popoli delle steppe: Unni, Avari, Ungari*. 23-29 aprile, tomo secondo. Spoleto, Presso la sede del centro, 539-557.
- De Biasi 1985:** *Legenda e storia nelle origini di Venezia*. Ateneo Veneto, 23, 77-101.
- Bratož, R. (1981):** *Kratek oris zgodovine krščanstva na Slovenskem v pozni antiki*, *Zgodovinski časopis*, 35, 205-221.

- Carile, A. (1970):** Aspetti della cronachistica veneziana nei secoli XIII e XIV. In: Olschki L. (ed.): *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi.* A cura di Agostino Pertusi. Firenze, 75-120.
- Cracco, G. (1970):** Il pensiero storico di fronte al problemi del comune veneziano, In: Olschki L. (ed.): *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi.* A cura di Agostino Pertusi. Firenze, 45-74.
- Crouzet-Pavan, E. (1949):** Venice and Torcello: history and oblivion. *Renaissance Studies*, 8 No.4, 416-427.
- Cuscito, G. (1994):** La lettera di S. Leone magno a Niceta di Aquilea contributo alla comprensione storica del mito di Attila. In: Blason S. (ed.): *Attila. Flagellum dei? Convegno internazionale di studi storici sulla figura di Attila e sulla discesa degli Unni in Italia nel 452 d.C/ Gruppo archeologico aquileiese.* Roma, «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 216-228.
- Dale, T. (1977):** *Relics, Prayer and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquilea Cathedral.* Princeton N. J., Princeton University Press.
- DAS, S. (2004):** The Disappearance of the Troyan Legend in the Historiography of Venice. In: Shepards A., Powell S. D (eds.): *Fantasies of Troy: classical tales and the social imagery in medieval and early modern Europe.* Toronto, 81-114.
- Dopsch, H. (2004):** Steppenvölker im mittelalterlichen Osteuropa – Hunnen, Awaren, Ungarn und Mongolen. [Http://www.sbg.ac.at/samson/rvws2003\\_04/dopsch2003.doc](http://www.sbg.ac.at/samson/rvws2003_04/dopsch2003.doc), entnommen 27.06.2004.
- Fasoli, G. (1970):** I fondamenti della storiografia veneziana. In: Olschki L. (ed.): *La storiografia veneziana fino al secolo XVI. Aspetti e problemi.* A cura di Agostino Pertusi. Firenze, 11-44.
- Ferril, A. (1986):** *The Fall of the Roman Empire: The Military Explanation.* London, New York.
- Grubb, J. S. (1986):** When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography. *The Journal of Modern History*, 58, 43-94.
- Haiding, K. (1970):** Das „weisende Tier“ in steirischen Volkssagen. *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereins für Steiermark*, 61, 209-227.
- Hardt, M. (2009):** Attila-Atli-Etzel. Über den Wandel der Erinnerung an einem Hunnenkönig im europäischen Mittelalter. *Journal on Civilisation*, 2/2, 19-28.
- Heher, D. (2009):** *Das frühe Venedig und Byzanz (ca. 560-850).* Wien, Universität Wien.
- Hodgkin, T. (1880):** *Italy and her Invaders.* Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Hodgson, F. C. (1902):** *The early history of Venice, from the foundation to the conquest of Constantinople, A. D. 1204.* New York. [Http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/f-c-francis-cotterell-hodgson](http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/f-c-francis-cotterell-hodgson).
- Horodowich, E. (2009):** *A Brief History of Venice. A New History of the City and Its People.* RUNNING PressBOOK PUBL.
- Housley, R. A., A. J. Ammerman and C. E. McClennen (2004):** That Sinking Feeling: Wetland Investigations of the Origins of Venice. *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*, 4, 139-153.

- Iacumin, R. (1995):** Note sulla chiesa aquileiese nel IV-V secolo. In: Blasan S. (ed.): *Attila e gli Unni. Mostra itinerante. Gruppo archeologico aquileiese*. Roma: «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 1995, 39-46.
- Kehr, P. (1927):** Rom und Venedig bis ins XII Jahrhundert. Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken, 19, 1-181.
- Kos Šašel, M. (2008):** The story of the grateful wolf and Venetic horses in Strabo's Geography. *Studia Mythologica Slavica*, 11, 9-24.
- Krappe, H. (1948):** Warning Animals. Folklore, 59, 8-15.
- Manitius M. (1923):** Geschichte der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters. Von der Mitte des 10. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ausbruch des Kampfes zwischen Kirche und Staat. Zweiter Band. 28. Venetianische Geschichtsquellen des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts, München, Verlag C. H. Beck, repr. 1975.
- Marano, Y. A (2011):** Urbanesimo e storia ad Aquilea tra V e VI secolo D. C. In: Bonetto J., Salvadori M. (eds.): *L'architettura privata ad Aquilea in età romana. Atti del Convegno di Studio (Padova, 21-22 febbraio 2011. Padova, 571-590.*
- Merkelbach, R. (1996):** Hestia und Erigone: Vorträge und Aufsätze. Stuttgart, Leipzig, B. G. Teubner.
- Maenchen-Helfen, O. J. (1973):** The world of the Huns, studies in their history and culture. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.
- Mor, C. G. (1969):** Pohod kralja Alboina (568-570). Kronika, 17, 9-14, tr. M. V.
- Nicol, D. M. (1989):** Byzantium and Venice. A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations. Cambridge.
- Osborne, J. (1999):** Politics, diplomacy and the cult of relics in Venice and the northern Adriatic in the first half of the ninth century. *Early Medieval Europe*, 8, 369-386.
- Paul, G. M. (1982):** "Urbs Capta": Sketch of an Ancient Literary Motif. *Phoenix*, 36, No2, 144-155.
- Perry, M. (1977):** St Mark's Trophies: Legend, Superstition, and Archaeology in Renaissance Venice. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 40, 27-49.
- Pincus, D. (1992):** Venice and the Two Romes: Byzantium and Rome as a Double Heritage in Venetian Cultural Politics. *Artibus et Historiae*, 13, 101-114.
- Reynolds, M. (2011):** Myth Materialized: Thirteenth Century Addition to the West Façade of San Marco and their Value in Venetian History Making. University of Puget Student Summer Research, 18 September 2011, 1-34.
- Rippin, A., Flemming P. (2006):** Brute force: Medieval foundation myths and three modern organizations' quests for hegemony. *Management & Organizational History*, 1, 51-70.
- Rosser, G. (1996):** Myth, image and social process in the English medieval town. *Urban History*, 23, 5-25.
- Saint-Guillan, G. (2011):** Tales of San Marco: Venetian Historiography and Thirteenth-Century Byzantine Prosopography. In: Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint Guillan (eds.): *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*. Aldershot, GB, Ashgate publishing, 265-280.

- Simonsfeld H. (1879):** Andreas Dandolo und seine Geschichtswerke. München.
- Sinor, D. (1993):** The Historical Attila. In: Bäuml F. H. and Birnbaum M. D. (eds.): Attila. The Man and his Image. Los Angeles, 3-15.
- Tavano, S. (1995):** Aquileia. Documenti archeologi del V secolo. In: Blason S. (ed.): Attila e gli Unni. Mostra itinerante. Gruppo archeologico aquileiese; a cura di Roma: «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 34-38.
- Thompson, E. A. (1984):** A History of Attila and the Huns. Oxford.
- Wessel, S. (2008):** Leo the Great and the spiritual rebuilding of a universal Rome. Leiden, Brill.
- Zecchini, G. (1994):** Attila in Italia: Ragioni politiche e sfondo «ideologico» di un'invasione. In: Blason S. (ed.): Attila. Flagellum dei? Convegno internazionale di studi storici sulla figura di Attila e sulla discesa degli Unni in Italia nel 452 d.C/ Gruppo archeologico aquileiese. Roma, «l'Erma» di Bretschneider, 92-107.
- Wolfram, H. (1993):** The Huns and the Germanic Peoples. In: Bäuml F. H. and Birnbaum M. D. (eds.): Attila. The Man and his Image. Los Angeles, 16-25.