

A LAND

WITH

A

DRAGON HEART

MIRELLA GIULIANI

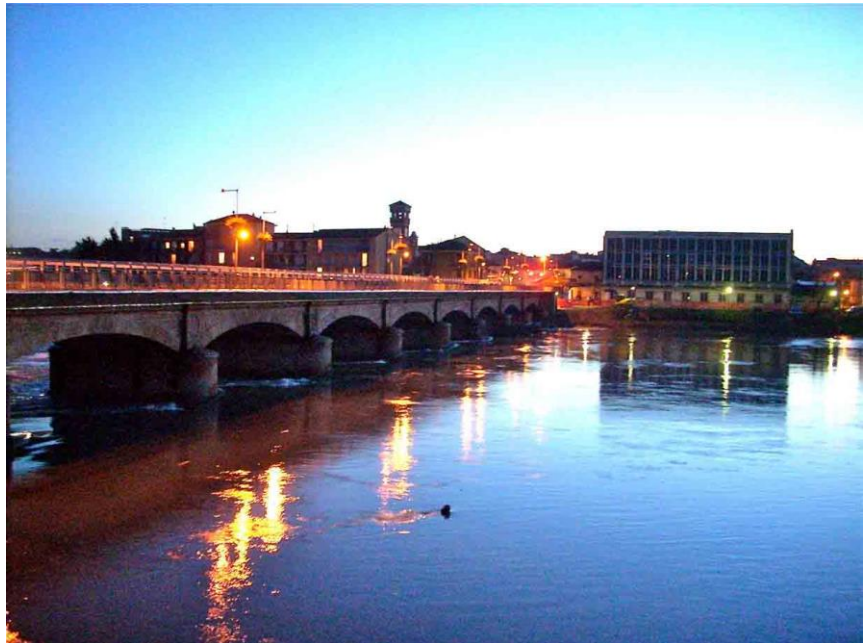
*Dedicated to my parents Graziella and Michele
and to my brother Giorgio, the three Awen rays
that have inspired all my life*

A Land with a Dragon heart

In Italy , in the Po Valley , a land rich in verdant fields , soft hills and waters that irrigate it , is situated the city of Lodi , which is crossed by an imposing river , the Adda . The stream divides it like a big silvery ribbon and , in a delicate way traces a line in the citizens ' disposition : people born in the area near the river feel proud of their belonging and this makes them feel different from those who live in the centre , situated on the top of the Eghezzone hill .

It is impossible not to stop and watch it from the bridge that crosses it in all its stateliness, thinking that in the Rhaetian Alps a tiny gush of water makes its way through debris flows and later down grassy slopes to become at first a spring and then, nourished by pools , change into a torrent and turn , at last , into our river .

And we , citizens of Lodi , also discuss on its sex , whether it is a male or a female river ; but this diatribe was made also by great poets such as Alessandro Manzoni and Giosuè Carducci ; the first believed it to be a wonderful woman while the second referred to it as a bold young man .



And it was really the water to guide the Gauls , coming from the banks of the Loire , to a territory not too distant from today's city of Lodi , where they built an "oppidum " , a fortified village that Giovanni Agnelli , a local historian , assumes to have been called Alauda (Lark) .

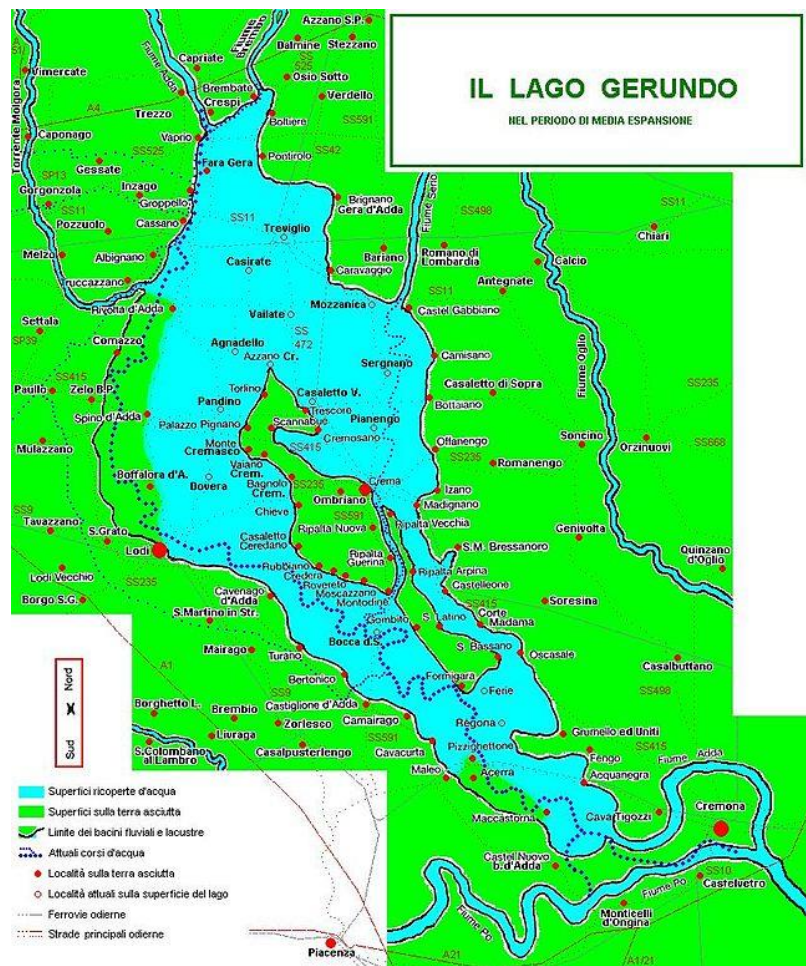
What had been the cause for them to stop at that point ? A quadrilateral made of four streams : the Padus (Po) in the south , the Abdua (Adda) in the east , the Lambrus (Lambro) in the west and the Addetta in the north .

Certainly strategy and military technique had their weight in the choice , but we know very well that the river has always been considered the sacred limit with the Otherworld , and , therefore , with the Gods . I believe that the Druids of the time recognized this land as a place marked by strong energies still well perceptible today, which I intend to let you know with this work .

From the archaeological finds recovered in the place (handworks dated back to the so called Golasecca culture , which reached its maximum development around the Vth Century a.C.) we can go back to three gallic deities honoured in the ancient Lodi : Teutate , Rosmerta and Ogmios , that following the Roman domination were substituted by Mercury , Maia and Hercules (honoured in a little temple on the banks of the Adda where today stands the Church of Saint Magdalene).

But a fourth Goddess , not gallic , but italic, was honoured in this place – Mefite , Goddess of the fumes coming from the marshes . And her worship is related to another important reality, physical and energetic , of the territory : the Gerundo Lake Or Sea . It was a large swamp created by the stagnation of the Adda that extended in a very large territory among the cities of Milan , Lodi and Cremona . Inside it there was even an island called Fulcheria , on which rose the present day city of Crema .

The Gerundo shouldn't have been very deep because it was anyway a lake situated in a plain and the origin of its name is given by the word " gera " or " ghera " which means gravel , to indicate its gravelly bottom . Anyway it was navigable , travelled by fishermen's boats and small merchant ships , as you can guess from the big mooring rings of which has been found evidence , one of them was fixed in the ancient Pocalodi Tower that became later on a chapel of Saint Francis' Church , situated on



top of the Eghezzone Hill , where the port of Lodi was located .

Now the time has come to know the Lord of the Gerundo Lake , the Dragon Tarantasio .



The Dragon Tarantasio - table of the naturalist U. Androvandi 1522-1605

In the ancient chronicles of about 1200 is mentioned a monstrous creature " a dragon , an enormous snake ... that gave off an unbearable and pestilential stink , which was enough to deprive of life the unhappy citizens ... " .

It seems , indeed , that Tarantasio had the body of a snake , the enormous head of a saurian , very long horns ,an infinite tail and webbed paws . The name , that is declined also in Tarando or Taranto , makes us think of its belonging to the ancestry of the Tarasca , a celtic origin monster that the ecclesiastical historian Opicino de Canistris made known as a myth in our area by the time of 1300 , and that joins us to other european cities which derive their name really from the Dragon : two ' Tarascona ' in France , and a ' Tarasca ' in Ukraine .

But earlier on , the greek historian Polybius told that where today is situated the Cathedral of Milan rose the sanctuary of the Goddess Belisama , in which there were stones high up to 4 meters and awesome statues such as the " Noves Monster "(kept today in the Avignon museum) whom the Celts called Ingcèl , the embodiment of the

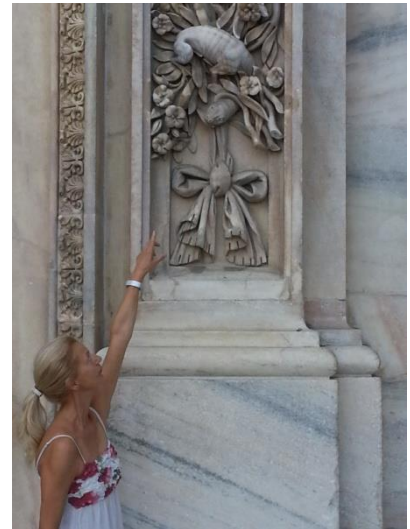


destructive force , one of the celtic divinities of death.

The head , indeed the sacred skull that is kept in the paws , opposes to this deity as donor of eternal life and , at the same time , of a cyclic force .

In the night of New Year's Eve of 1299 Tarantasio appeared for the last time , disappearing then finally the day after due to the intercession of St. Christopher .

Afterwards an array of enormous bones was recovered and in the church dedicated to the Saint was kept for a long time a " rib " of the Snake or Dragon .



Still at the present time we can admire at the base of the pilaster on the right side of the main entrance of the Duomo (Cathedral) in Milan a small statue which represents a Dragon cub , ascribed by the tradition really to Tarantasio , the most " famous " dragon of the area .



It is curious that the animal is depicted while eating a leaf of the plant on which he lies down .The shape of the leaves and of the flowers would suggest their membership to a family of the Daphne ,word that in greek means "Laurel " , maybe a Daphne Odorosa or Daphne Cneorum, a very beautiful plant although poisonous.

It seems that the sculptor Giovan Battista Crespi said " the Cerano " (1573 – 1632) wishes to combine the innocence of the image of the Dragon cub with the dangerousness of the leaf it is eating.



Indeed at the top of the pilaster we can admire the Dragon , by now fully grown , in all its might .

But all this happened in medieval centuries , when it was better to accuse a Dragon of poorness , war and pestilence.

Conversely in ancient times , in the same area , the Goddess Mefite was worshipped , and her name had various interpretations – medhio dhmitis ' she who smokes in the middle ' ; methno mefio ' she who goes into raptures ' ; mesitis ' mediator ' ; mefiiai ' she who stays in the middle ' . Her worship is always situated in an environment distinguished by the presence of waters, from rivers but also stagnant . She was considered a peaceful divinity and she was ascribed the power to act as an intermediary , to embody " the one who attends to dualisms " such as life and death , day and night , hot and cold , the kingdom of the living and the afterlife .

She was also the Goddess of the herds , of the fields and of fertility, and only in a later time her cult tied itself to the benefits resulting from the use of thermal waters , present as well in our territory in the small town of Miradolo .

During this long period there is no mention of episodes of terrifying monsters and people anguished by their presence , and this has led me to unite inevitably the two characters , the Goddess and the Dragon , in an alliance where the beneficial energies of the deity could be perceived through the manifestation of an imposing entity , that for sure caused awe in its role of keeper of the misteries .

Franco Cardini , professor of medieval history at the University of Florence , in his studies gave me new hints to validate much more my intuitions . The dragon polymorphism has always been reflected in the four empedoclean elements ,



either for its own structure (earth – the paws ; water – the long tail or rudder ; fire – the flames coming out of the jaws ; air – the wings), and for the specific membership to the element itself . It has been since Aristotle onwards that animals are traditionally distinguished in aerial , earthly and marine , also admitting some hybrid species such as amphibia or flying fishes . Dragons take part to the elemental division as well , and in each element they induce peculiar characteristics which differentiate them one from the other .

The deep caves , the subterranean caves in which to enshrine hidden treasures reveal the dragon as a chthonic being , and its flexible and sinuous body seems to hint to the mazy proceeding of the path towards Power , Knowledge or Liberation .

In the Germanic poem " Ornit " of about the half of the XIIIth century , Wolfdietrich,

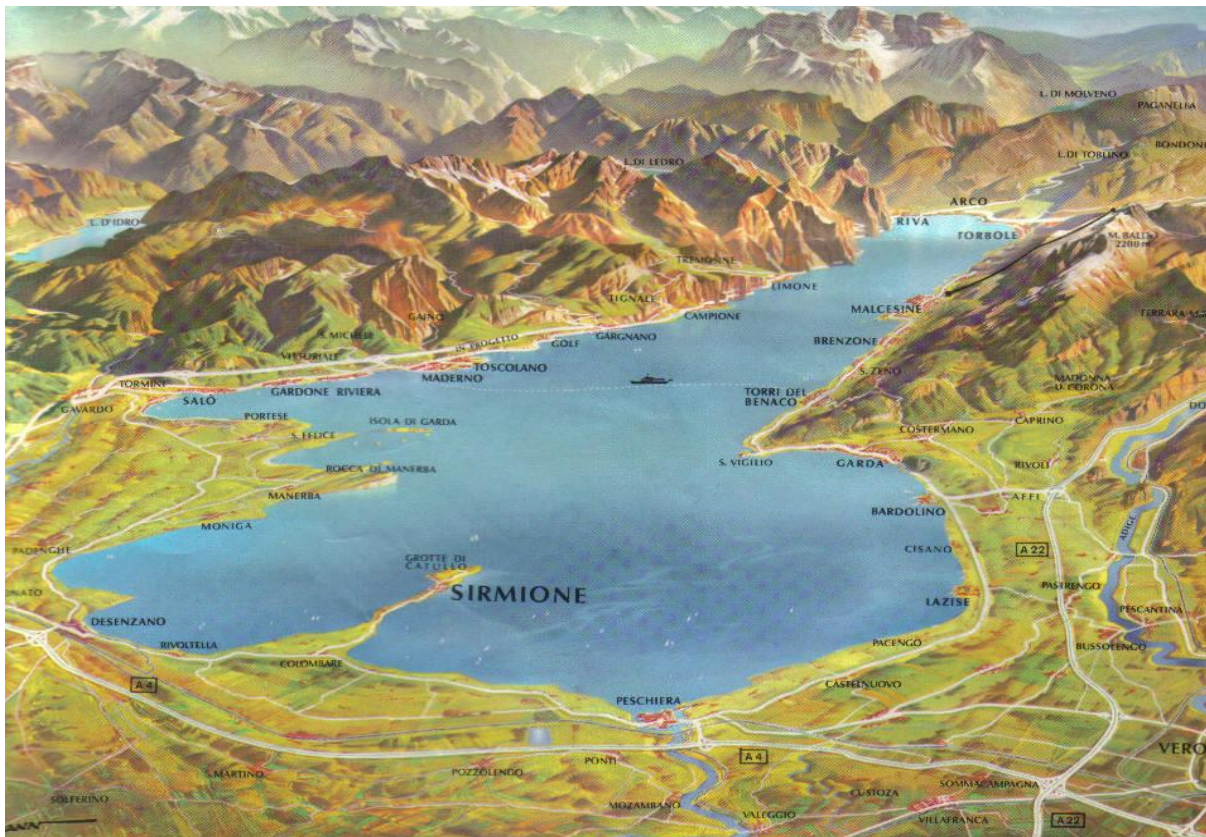


Manuscript from Heidelberg University Library

the most valiant hero of the Amelungo cycle , brought up by wolves after having been abandoned by his brothers , arrives after many adventures in Lombardy and here he is challenged by the Dwarf Alberich in a strenght competition . Coming out of it as the winner , he receives a magical ring as a gift and the task to find the two Lombardy dragons who guarded the magical sword Rosen , still in Ornit's hands after his death in a battle with them .

And it is actually by recovering the Rosen sword , the hero pierces the dragons , becomes King of Lombardy, forms an army and marches towards Costantinople and is at first crowned Emperor of the Oriental Empire and , afterwards , of the Occidental one .

And thus combining dragons, mysterious caves and magic , a young man that nothing could expect , rises to all honours after having accomplished his path of initiation reaching the Keepers of the secret and of internal knowledge , to come out of it enriched by the contact with the divine . The marvellous scenery where all of this develops is the Lake of Garda , in an area near the town of Lazize , where rises the " Mondragon " hill , the Mount of the Dragon . And the lake itself becomes , in its shape , A Water Dragon , that travels all through the bottom and then goes to lay its head in the plain that is located between Riva and Arco.



But the Dragon of my land is a swamp Dragon , if possible positioned in an intermediate position between earth and water . The swamp is the place in which water and earth join themselves in a disordered and chaotic way , the place of chaos really , of matter waiting to be ordered. This chthonic-watery Dragon is sinuous and humid as a maternal womb , nourished by the waters that are astrologically connected to the sign of Scorpio , when the transformation is reached through the dissolution of the previous state , with an energy represented in its disruptive force that will be necessary to be able to enact a new creation . In this " underworld " water you feel the impulse to descend in depth, to transcend into the darkness of everything that you can find beyond the threshold of consciousness , to re-emerge purified by transformation , often under the thrust of suffering, that is after having fought the Dragon . To conquer the treasures guarded by the dragon , man must necessarily be complete , in other words he has to rediscover the feminine element in his being ; and this is the

*reason why it is always a maiden to be kept prisoner .
Fighting the dragon the hero achieves a triple result : he purifies with his courage
the forces that prevented him to fight his own interior dragon , regains the
complementary feminine element and opens up his way to the treasure .*

*Also in Alice A. Bailey's initiation journey , Hercules in his eighth Labour finds
himself actually in the swamp to face the Hydra of Lerna , that the authoress links to
the eighth zodiacal sign , Scorpio . The hero , making his own the archetype
teaching , takes on a different strategy from the one of all other warriors , he stops
fighting the invincible monster with nine heads , he kneels in the mud (humbleness)*



Statue of Hercules-Musei Capitolini-Roma

*and lifts up the monster in the air (recognition
of the mistakes and failures of the
past) . At this point the Dragon dies in its eight
mortal heads and Hercules can tear
out the ninth , the immortal one , and bury it
under the rock , where it becomes a
source of power.*

*Hercules demonstrates in this way that the form
is simply a channel of expression
through which you come into contact with the
divine manifestation , proving that
personality must not be killed or crushed , but
rather recognized .*

*It is in this way that I have always lived this
reality and I underline on purpose the
word " reality " , because in my opinion the
Goddess and the Dragon are present to
whoever is willing to transcend the form and
enter in connection with the Divine .*

*Of course today the swamp does not exist
anymore , it had been reclaimed many
centuries ago leaving fertile and cultivable
lands, but the appearance does not remove the
energetic existence palpable when you don't
desire to dominate , but to know .*

*Mefitis is for me " she who helps to cross the threshold " ,she is the maximum
expression of the feminine power necessary in every quest, necessary to every knight
willing to reach the Head of the Dragon , to the comprehension of the ley lines that
cross my land , making it unique and manifold at the same time . Because each line
forms a wonderful web with all the ley lines in the world , and each line resounds
with the others forming a perfect harmony that reunites each part of the Creation .*



Bibliography

Lodi, profilo di storia comunale - A. Caretta, L. Samarati

Storia di un mare perduto - G. Pederiali

Mefitis: la deità della transizione (consultato in rete)

Milano esoterica di A.E.Piedimonte ed. IntraMoenia

Il tesoro dei Templari - F. Terhart ed. Arkeios

Il Drago di F. Cardini – in www.mondimedioevali.net

L'Anello di Tolkien - D. Day ed PIEMME

Le fatiche di Ercole - Alice A. Bayley ed. Adeo

Il libro del Drago: l'architettura del Cosmo - A. Veggi ed Venexia

Adda: immagini dalle sorgenti al Lario - Cattaneo Editore Oggiono

Adda: immagini dal Lario alla foce - Cattaneo Editore Oggiono