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I

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The 'Barbarian' Middle Ages: Invasions, Culture, Religion

CHRONOLOGY

- 410 The Visigoths sack Rome
- 455 The Vandals sack Rome
- 476 Formal end of the Roman Empire, with overthrowing of Romulus Augustus
- 476–93 Odoacer in Italy
- 493–553 The Goths in Italy (Theodoric)
- 535–53 Byzantine–Gothic wars in Italy
- 554–68 Justinian's attempt to re-establish imperial authority in Italy
- 569–774 The Lombards in Italy
- 590 Gregory I (the Great) is elected Pope
- 751–2 The Lombards capture Ravenna, the Exarchate and the Pentapolis from Byzantium
- 754 Pope Stephen II asks King Pippin of the Franks for assistance against the Lombards
- 754; 756 Pippin defeats Lombard King Aistulf, who promises to give territories back to the Pope
- 758 Lombard King Desiderius refuses to give territories to the Pope
- 773–4 King Charlemagne of the Franks conquers the kingdom of the Lombards
- 800 Charlemagne is crowned Emperor by Pope Leo III in Rome
- 814 Death of Charlemagne, succeeded by his son, Louis the Pious
- 824–30 Muslims seize strongholds in Sicily
- 841 Muslims occupy Bari
- 875–6 Byzantines reoccupy Bari and other strongholds in southern Italy

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When did the Middle Ages start? The German mathematician Johann Christoph Keller, who lived at the end of the seventeenth century, suggested that they began between 313 (when Constantine's Edict legalized Christianity) and 326 (when the capital of the Roman Empire moved to Constantinople), though he also considered 395, the date of the division of the Empire by Theodosius. Others proposed different dates, such as the capture of Rome by the Visigoths (410) or the death of Justinian, the emperor of the eastern Roman Empire (565). The Belgian historian Henri Pirenne (author, among many works, of the 1937 classic *Mohammed and Charlemagne*) argued that only with the Islamic invasions around 650 was it possible to really confirm the end of the Roman tradition, and so he dated the Middle Ages from that time.

By convention, we now regard the start of the Middle Ages as 476, the year when the King of the Eruli and a general of the Roman army, Odoacer, deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last western Roman emperor. That date had no significance for the population of the time, because throughout the fifth century, the western Roman Empire was invaded repeatedly while its organization crumbled. However, in recent decades a new concept of late antiquity has been used, which comprises the third to seventh centuries, therefore eliding a specific turning point or decisive break and emphasizing a slow and imperceptible transition between ancient times and the Middle Ages. The end of the Middle Ages is often considered to coincide with the discovery of America in 1492, a date that was also meaningless to contemporary populations. It is evident that all these dates function only to produce a superficial periodization and offer little help in understanding the slow dialectic of continuity and change provoked by repeated crises and contingencies.

Despite the impossibility of defining precise temporal shifts, some factors did determine the new age and the ways in which Italy took shape as a country from the end of the Roman Empire: the diffusion of Christianity and the organization of the Church; the migration of Germanic peoples with the consequent creation of an ethnically mixed society; the end of the imperial economic system; the beginning of processes which contributed to a separation between East and West, bringing religious unity to crisis point.

During the imperial age, populations external to Roman civilization were called barbarians. There was a distinction between those who were allowed to reside within the borders of the Empire and obtained the status of *federati* (allies of Rome), and those who remained outside. The latter included numerous Germanic tribes from the west (Angles,

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Saxons, Suevi, Burgundians, Alemanni, Franks, Lombards) and tribes from the east (Sciri, Goths, Turcilingi). Under King Alaric, the Visigoths attacked Italy directly and sacked Rome in 410. The Vandals (with the Anglo-Saxons the only sailors among the barbarians), founded a kingdom in 429 in Roman Africa. From there, they conquered the Balearic islands, Sardinia and Corsica, and in 455 sacked Rome for fourteen terrible days: this is the origin of the expression 'vandalism', still used today. In 443, the kingdom of the Burgundians was established in Gaul, the Franks occupied the lower Rhine, and the Suevi occupied western Iberia. In 449 the Angles and the Saxons penetrated Britain and integrated with the Celts, creating seven small kingdoms.

From the time of the barbarian invasions, Italy and the Mediterranean had been major attractions for northern peoples, as Pirenne and Braudel emphasized in their seminal works about the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages. One of their concerns was to integrate history and geography as closely as possible, and they regarded the nature of the land and the climate as fundamental reasons for the invasions. According to Pirenne, the invaders' dream was 'to settle down, themselves, in those happy regions where the mildness of the climate and the fertility of the land were matched by the charms and the wealth of civilization'. Most of the chosen countries for the fifth-century invasions were in the Mediterranean; the invaders' objective was the sea, 'that sea which for so long a time the Romans had called, with as much affection as pride, *mare nostrum*'. The invaders saw Italy as the garden of the Mediterranean, an area of abundance and wealth. The Mediterranean had also been the seat of Greco-Roman hegemony and the region of classical culture – an idea later emphasized during the Renaissance, and one that encouraged continual cultural migrations, culminating in the Romantic perception of the Mediterranean shared by Protestant reformers and other northerners in the age of the Grand Tour, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The wars that followed the 'barbarian invasions', or, as they are also called, the 'great migrations', provoked a terrible demographic crisis. As Chris Wickham has argued, Italy was ruined not by barbarian rule but by a succession of wars during the sixth and the seventh centuries. By then, Italy was no longer at the centre of the Western Empire as a whole, and consequently lost important tax revenue. Rome in particular suffered from the loss of African tax payments. The city, which had almost a million inhabitants at the end of the fourth century, was reduced to around 30,000 by the seventh century, even though it was still the

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second-largest European city after Constantinople. Indeed, the crisis was not specifically Italian: in the third century, Europe had an estimated 65 million inhabitants; but by the middle of the eighth century there were fewer than 30 million.

Populations were decimated by wars and massacres, but also by famine, terrible fires and catastrophic floods. As Bryan Ward-Perkins has recently argued, archaeological evidence shows a dramatic decline in Western standards of living between the fifth and the seventh centuries. The Lombard poet and historian, Paul the Deacon, born around 720 of a Lombard family in Friuli and educated at the grammarian Flavianus's school in Pavia, wrote: 'A deep silence reigned over villages and towns. Only dogs remained barking outside the houses, and cattle wandered in the moors without cowherds.' An Italian prayer known throughout the Middle Ages probably originated from this time: *A peste a fame et bello libera nos Domine* ('From plague and hunger and war free us, O Lord').

The contemporary building of churches demonstrates that, while the Roman heritage survived, new buildings were dramatically smaller. The materials of classical architecture were re-used; capitals, funerary epigraphs and columns were embedded in the structure of new buildings. Artisan workshops were established inside decaying ancient Roman villas and fires were lit on the mosaic floors. As a consequence of the Gothic War, cities were poorer than they had been in Roman times. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that cities experienced a serious crisis, and only slowly began to recover, from the eighth century onwards. Nevertheless, and unlike other parts of the Empire, Italian cities maintained their ancient structure, and that urban continuity is still visible today.

'MAY YOU LIVE IN HARMONY': LATIN AND GOTHIC POPULATIONS IN ITALY

When the invaders settled, Italy became characterized by Roman-Barbarian kingdoms, so-called for their dual aspect: Latin-speaking and Germanic populations did not integrate, but coexisted. The double legal system, which continued until the Ostrogothic period, allowed people to be judged respectively by either Roman or Germanic law; in the same way, two different religions were observed, Christian and Arian.

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Box 1.1 Arianism

Arianism is the doctrine claiming that Jesus Christ is inferior to the Father. The name came from Arius, a theologian who lived in the third/fourth centuries. He was condemned at the first Council of the Church at Nicea (325), summoned by Emperor Constantine, but, thanks to Bishop Ulfila, who translated the Bible into the Gothic language, Arianism established roots among many of the barbarian tribes.

In the state administration, Roman laws, institutions and organization persisted almost unchanged, but political power and the army were in the hands of the victors, who continued to follow their own traditions. The invaders were a small minority of the population, between 2 per cent and 20 per cent depending on the area. Government duties required a specific culture and training, and since many Germanic military chiefs were illiterate, they had to keep functionaries from the Roman administration. For this reason, many public institutions survived, particularly those related to the administration of justice and taxation.

The Germans imitated the symbols of Roman power, although no barbarian king proclaimed himself emperor until Charlemagne. The invading peoples underwent profound transformations, through a slow fusion between victors and vanquished, becoming the progenitors of the populations of modern Europe. The role that Germanic immigrants had on the creation of Italy has been a contested area for a long time. Recent historiography has moved to what Chris Wickham calls a 'Romanist direction', contesting an overemphasis on Germanic influence in the Roman provinces. The elites of the new populations, always small minorities, tended to 'make the best of what they found', even though the Roman state, its entire fiscal system and its economic networks had collapsed.

Odoacer was the first barbarian to govern Italy, from 476 to 493. He occupied Dalmatia, developed good relations with the Visigoths and the Vandals (who granted him Sicily as a tribute), and strengthened the northern borders of the empire at the eastern Alps. Although his religion was Arian he created no problems for the existing Church. However, Zeno, emperor of the Eastern Empire (which originated from the division of the Roman empire into a Western and an Eastern part after the death of Theodosius I in 395), who was either nervous of Odoacer's power or hoped to get rid of the Ostrogoths on his Balkan border, persuaded the

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Ostrogoths to fight Odoacer. The Ostrogoths were led by Theodoric, who had lived in Constantinople for ten years and had been educated in the values of Roman civilization. They defeated Odoacer, and Zeno granted Theodoric the title of king of the Goths in Italy.

The Ostrogoths were a tiny minority compared with the Roman populations in Italy, but as rulers they only had to live alongside and deal with the Roman elites, not with the majority of the population. Their settlement was not homogeneous, but was concentrated mainly in the centre-north. Under Theodoric, the Roman Church found itself inside a kingdom run by a barbarian of Arian belief, which it considered a heretical version of Christianity. The Arian Church had its own sacred sites and properties. In the urban centres where Goths and Romans cohabited there were Arian churches for the former and Roman churches (much more numerous) for the latter.

Differences between Romans and Goths were also evident in their ways of life. The Romans cut their hair and beards short and wore tunics and, among the upper classes, the toga. Goths had long hair and beards, and wore trousers. The transition from the ancient world to the Middle Ages can be interpreted as a vast process of cultural transformation that resulted from the encounter/clash between classical and barbaric civilizations. This is true also from a dietary point of view: the Greco-Roman civilization had taken shape in a Mediterranean environment, where cereal growing, and grapevine and olive tree propagation had a primary role, alongside some sheep farming, with limited use of uncultivated forests. The dietary culture was therefore based on wheat, oil and wine, supplemented with milk and cheese, though many animal bones have also been found on Roman sites. In mountainous areas, particularly from the ninth century onwards, cereals were replaced by chestnuts, which were also used to make flour. The food consumption of Celtic and Germanic populations north of the Alps was different, marked principally by the lack of olives: the economy was based mainly on forest and pasture, on the exploitation of uncultivated woods through hunting, fishing, the picking of wild fruit and pig breeding. However, cereal growing was central too, mainly used in the production of beer, which replaced wine. Once in Italy, however, Germanic peoples ate what the Italians ate.

The Roman influence became evident, particularly among Germanic elites. A famous treasure found by archaeologists in the Republic of San Marino in 1893, considered to be one of the most important finds from Italy under the Goths, includes the luxurious trousseau of an upper-class woman. The use of the bonnet and the veil, as well as the type of

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jewellery decoration, is typical of contemporary Mediterranean style, indicating a high degree of acculturation among Gothic communities. As an admirer of Latin civilization, Theodoric co-operated with the Romans, choosing for a number of years Senator Aurelius Cassiodorus, a prestigious intellectual from Calabria, as his adviser and secretary, and placing the philosopher Severinus Boethius, from a powerful Roman family, briefly at the head of his administration. Theodoric proclaimed the *Edict of Theodoric* which kept Romans and Ostrogoths apart, maintaining Roman law for the former and barbaric law for the latter. He restored fortifications, monuments and aqueducts that had been damaged by the invasions, and created new buildings in Verona, Pavia and Ravenna.

Theodoric regarded himself as the king of both Goths and Romans. To make clear his common kingship over the two peoples, he was buried at his request in a sarcophagus made of porphyry inside a funeral monument built for the occasion just outside Ravenna, near the lighthouse of the port. The tomb's cupola is 34 metres in circumference and made from a single block of Istrian stone. At the church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, a mosaic portrays Theodoric as a Byzantine emperor (though his name was later erased and replaced by that of Justinian, emperor of the Eastern Empire).

Theodoric's attempts to reconcile Latins and Goths failed, because of Justinian's intervention: the new Eastern emperor proclaimed an edict of persecution against the Arians in 524, which was extended to Italy, demonstrating that he still considered Italy to be his possession. The period of war between the Goths and the Eastern Empire from 535 to 553 was the worst time for the population of Italy since the first invasions in the fifth century. The Byzantine general, Belisarius, at the head of Justinian's army, attacked from the south, first conquering Sicily and proceeding without hindrance up to Naples. There, and later elsewhere, he finally faced stubborn resistance; the population endured a state of siege, in which they suffered violence from both sides.

Theodoric, already old and persuaded that there were conspiracies against him, condemned to death Pope John I, Symmachus, the head of the Senate, and the philosopher Severinus Boethius, who wrote from prison *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, a prose and poetry work protesting against barbarism in the name of spiritual values. Embittered by the failure of the policy of uniting Latins and Goths, Cassiodorus retreated to Vivarium, near Squillace, in Calabria, to a convent he had founded, and there wrote the *Institutions*, to promote the study and tran-

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Box 1.2 Statements by Theodoric*Theodoric to the Goths and Latins to live in harmony*

We love all of you equally, but those of you who are fond of the laws and demonstrate a wish for peace will be most dear in our heart. We do not like anything that is against civilisation and we loathe criminal arrogance and its perpetrators: our clemency is horrified by violence. In litigation, the law, and not strength, shall prevail . . . Both peoples, do listen to our wish. To you, Goths, may the Romans share their affection just as they share their land. And you, Romans, must love the Goths, who make the population more numerous in peacetime and who defend the whole state during wartime. (Cassiodorus, *Variae*)

Theodoric to Emperor Anastasius (Eastern Empire)

Our kingdom is an imitation of yours, it is the concrete realisation of a good system, a special example within the wider empire; therefore, the more we become similar to you, the easier it will be to overcome other peoples . . . We are certain that you do not want the persistence of discrepancies between the two states, which have always formed a single body under the emperors of the past. On the contrary, it is necessary that our states be united with peaceful love, and that they help each other. May the will of the Roman Empire always be unique, may its thought always be unique. (Cassiodorus, *Variae*)

scription of classical pagan and Christian masterpieces. He also inaugurated the differentiation between the arts of Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy).

At roughly the same time as Cassiodorus was writing the *Institutions*, the first Benedictine monastery was founded in 529 at Montecassino, near Frosinone. After three years of prayers and meditation in a cave on the river Aniene, Benedict of Nursia (480–547) spent time in a number of monasteries, an experience that persuaded him to forge his own path by founding a monastery on a site where – according to Pope Gregory I (called Gregory the Great) – there had once been a temple to Jupiter. The surrounding land was deforested and turned into vegetable gardens; fields and fruit trees were planted. The motto of the monastery, ‘Pray and Work’, prescribed that the hours of the day should be divided between work, study and prayer. As a result, work was revalued in a

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society in which it had been thus far reserved for the inferior classes and slaves. Immersed in the silence of the abbeys, anonymous scribes illuminated manuscripts of the masterpieces of ancient authors and Church founders.

At the same time, the Church began to reform the calendar, progressively replacing pagan feasts or adapting them to its own needs. In mid-December, for example, the Romans used to celebrate the *Saturnalia*, days of noisy partying; these were considered to be too close to Christmas, so the Church moved them to February–March, the time of Carnival. Around 525, Pope John I entrusted a monk, Dionysius Exiguus, with the duty of compiling a table for the calculation of Easter. Easter falls on different days depending on the lunar cycle. Not only did Dionysius establish the time of Easter for the coming 100 years, but he also proposed establishing a dating system from the birth of Jesus, calculating it as 25 December in the Roman year 753. Until then, years were counted from the foundation of Rome, which in today's chronology would be the equivalent of 753 BC. This innovation had huge symbolic value (although it was not used very often in Italy until the tenth century) as the birth of Christ became the turning point of history, the event that divided before and after. The date was probably wrong, as today it is thought that Christ was born around 7–6 BC, but Dionysius' calendar has been adopted in the Christian world.

A PROVINCE OF THE EMPIRE

As the Western Roman Empire ceased to exist, the Eastern Empire showed great vitality and lived on for another millennium, until the Turks seized Constantinople in 1453. Its longevity was a result of minimal pressure from the barbarians at its borders, the favourable geographic position of its major cities (which were generally located on the coast), and a well-organized bureaucracy. Emperors were absolute monarchs, with both political and military powers as well as being the religious leaders of the state, God's representatives on earth. The bishops of Constantinople were dependent on them, and they could appoint bishops, summon councils, and promulgate laws on religious matters. By contrast, the bishops of Rome, who were becoming the highest religious authorities in the Western world, increasingly acquiring more autonomy from the emperors, had never ceded these prerogatives.

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The difficult relationship between the Roman Church and Byzantium became particularly evident after the latter's victory over the Goths and the surrender of most of the peninsula to the Eastern Empire. The Gothic Wars, which lasted for almost twenty years (535–53), sacked and ruined the peninsula, causing the worst famine in its history. The contemporary Byzantine historian, Procopius of Caesarea, left testimony to the terrible results in his book *The Gothic Wars*:

In the Picene no fewer than 50,000 peasants starved, and many more did so on the other side of the Ionian gulf. I can describe what they looked like and in which way they died, because I have been a spectator of those facts. Their faces became emaciated and pale. Their dry skin looked like leather and seemed to adhere to the bones while their expression became horribly absent. If some of them, tortured by hunger, saw even a herb, they avidly leapt on it and, down on their knees, sought to extract it; but they did not succeed because all their strength was exhausted, and they fell dead on the herb they were clutching in their hands; nor was there anyone to bury them, because no one was thinking about providing burial. In the meantime, hunger grew also in Rome, where almost all the inhabitants looked emaciated and their colour had little by little turned livid, making them seem like ghosts. Many, while walking and chewing nettles between their teeth, suddenly fell dead on the ground. And they even ate each other's excrement. Many, tortured by hunger, committed suicide as they could no longer find dogs or rats, or the corpses of other animals to eat.

(Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars: The Gothic Wars*)

Italy was subsequently annexed to the Empire as a province, and subjected to heavy taxation. Among all Italian cities only Ravenna, the capital at the time, reaped some benefits from the Byzantine government: built by Theodoric and maintained by Justinian, it still boasts eight monuments that are considered to be world heritage sites by UNESCO because of their architectural importance and the extraordinary mosaics they contain.

The masterpiece that made Justinian famous is the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. He decided to re-confirm Roman law throughout the Empire so that its subjects were equally protected and the emperor's laws were clear to all. From 529 to 534 several committees of jurists published the *Corpus*, a collection of legal norms divided into three sections: the *Codex Iustinianeus*, which brought together laws promulgated from the time of Emperor Hadrian (117–38); the *Pandette* or *Digest*, which collected together the judgements of Roman jurists from the classical

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Box 1.3 Some of the great monuments of Ravenna

The Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (425–50), which portrays the Victory of Life over Death;

The *Neoniano* Baptistery (end of fourth–fifth century), octagonal with four niches, decorated with mosaics by bishop Neone;

Sant’Apollinare Nuovo (sixth century) was Theodoric’s church and has the largest piece of Roman mosaic work still remaining;

The Baptistery of the Arians, an octagonal building with four small apses;

The Chapel of Sant’Andrea (sixth century) has a cruciform layout; the mosaics on the superior part represent the glorification of Christ;

The Mausoleum of Theodoric (520), a great octagonal construction, is divided into two superimposed orders: in the upper space there is a porphyry tank where the king is supposed to have been buried;

The Basilica of San Vitale (consecrated in 548) is among the most important monuments of early Christian art: a central octagonal core is surmounted by a cupola and rests on eight pillars and arches;

The Basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Classe (first half of the sixth century) is famous for its mosaics and the marble sarcophaguses of the archbishops arranged along the side aisles.

age; and the *New Constitutions*, which also contained Justinian’s *Institutes*, a manual of law. Justinian’s *Corpus* remains the basis of modern law throughout continental Europe. The stratification of Roman law provided the instruments with which to govern, to safeguard people’s needs and to resolve conflicts.

After fifteen years of Byzantine dominion, the Lombards entered Italy, urged on by the Avars (a tribe probably of Turkic origin). The Lombards arrived from Pannonia (today’s Hungary) led by Alboin. They enforced confiscations across the entire territory they occupied, destroyed the administrative organization of the Romans and fragmented the territory by dividing it into thirty-six duchies governed by military leaders or dukes. They settled in the Po Valley, in Tuscany and the Apennine areas of central Italy down to Benevento in the south. The Byzantines were able to keep Ravenna for two more centuries, together

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with the exarchate (territory around Ravenna), the pentapolis (five cities along the Adriatic coast between present Romagna and Marche – Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Senigallia, Ancona), Venice, and much of the South.

A PROJECT FOR ITALIAN UNIFICATION? THE LOMBARDS IN THE PENINSULA

When they arrived in Italy in 568–9, the Lombard people numbered perhaps 100,000–150,000 men, women and children. They came to stay. They integrated with the Roman world, considered Italy their land and intended to occupy the whole peninsula. Most of the Po Valley was called Lombardy from the twelfth century until the early modern period. For example, in his *The Divine Comedy*, Dante called the early-fourteenth-century military leader, Cangrande della Scala from Verona, ‘the great Lombard’. The Lombards were very skilled in agriculture and divided the large Roman properties into many smaller possessions. They improved agricultural techniques and became attached to their new land. The Italian landscape, after centuries of disasters wrought by invasions, plague and wars between Byzantines and Goths, was being reborn.

The Lombard kingdom was composed of an immigrant, ethnically different population that dominated and politically subordinated a Roman majority; at the same time the papacy adopted a political role in defence of the values of Roman Christianity. Much of the historiography, particularly of the nineteenth century, underlined the negative aspects of this period, comparing it with contemporary domination by the Habsburgs: the Catholic–Liberal writer Alessandro Manzoni, for example, in his tragedy *Adelchi*, depicted a society in which Romans were enslaved by Lombard occupiers, symbolizing the Italians before the Risorgimento. That ‘slavery’ was in fact non-existent, and the relationship between the two populations evolved and took different forms throughout the long Lombard age. Contrasting judgements of that age were given by other authors who considered Italy’s history and identity in the centuries that followed. For example, in the sixteenth century, Niccolò Machiavelli saw the end of Lombard Italy as a missed opportunity for the political unification of the peninsula, as well as a typical example of the deplorable habit of inviting foreigners to settle Italy’s internal political issues (referring to the Papacy’s action in raising the Franks against the Lombards in the mid-eighth century). The enlightened

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philosophers of the eighteenth century admired the Lombard capacity to restrain the Church and its temporal interference. It remained important that 'barbarian Italy' was still an Italy inhabited mainly by Romans; the mixed character of Italian culture and institutions at that time meant that the different components did not remain separate and hostile, but influenced each other.

The Lombards chose Pavia as their capital. Regional officials employed by the duke resided in rural areas and controlled production. Once the first period of invasion and violence came to an end, daily life under the Lombards did not change very much, particularly for the peasants. New barbarian landowners replaced previous Roman landowners. Initially, Lombards and Romans remained separated socially, juridically and physically (for example, they may have lived in different areas within the same cities); however, prolonged coexistence and the Lombards' numerical inferiority favoured a slow but steady process of assimilation. In the cities, the Lombards were a small minority surrounded by a large Roman population that was organized by bishops and more used to a settled urban life. The Lombards were constantly coming into contact with Roman artisans and merchants. In these conditions, it was impossible for a militarized minority, despite its status as the ruling power, to remain separate indefinitely. Moreover, no rule forbade mixed marriages, and another determining force for unification was the Lombards' conversion to Christianity (initiated by King Agilulf, who had his son baptized, for political and diplomatic reasons), a process that was complete by the seventh century.

The Lombards at first imported an Arianism largely imbued with Germanic pagan elements, which clashed with local Christianity. This reignited religious conflict on the peninsula, a conflict that was linked directly with the political-military wars. Christians felt increasingly defenceless in the context of the declining power of the Byzantine Empire. The native Italian dominant class was destroyed in the decade 574-84, many Roman aristocrats were killed or had to serve the invaders, many cities were ruined, churches and monasteries were razed (including the community founded by Benedict at Montecassino). As recorded by Paul the Deacon, priests were massacred and bishops emigrated, leaving the churches empty. Rhetorically, he concluded that only a 'miracle' could have prevented Italic Christianity from disappearing. The new religion, on the other hand, had little chance of becoming rooted. Not only was it different from the previous religion, it was antithetical to it and had little precedent in Italy. It spread through the

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countryside but not in the cities, and was never adopted by cultured people. The Roman hierarchies began talking about an imminent end of the world; the future Pope Gregory the Great announced it many times, declaring that he saw signs in the Holy Scriptures. In a letter to the Milanese clergy in April 593, he wrote that sufficient evidence for such a demise could be seen by simply looking around: everything was in ruin, there were only few survivors and they lived under the shadow of the Lombard sword; the Day of Judgement was coming, and there was nothing to do but make ready for it: 'I do not know what is happening in other parts of the world, but here, in this land where we are living, the end is not only near: it has already occurred.'

The idea of the end was a powerful impulse in the discovery of a new religious path: if God's judgement was near, then all that was left was retreat, from society and from the Church, with the only objective being to please God. Many felt it was the right time to re-found the Christian experience. The common perception was that of a God who seemed to live in the cities and the villas of the powerful, taking the side of the Roman aristocrats and of emperors. While Gregory was no radical, he began describing a God who was not kind to the emperor, who condemned the rich and took the side of the poor. Moreover, this God had no interest in the origins of people, so even a barbarian could become a good Christian and be saved. Gregory's concerns were for Italy, for a southern Italy threatened by the extension of the Lombard invasion but still largely Roman, and for a northern Italy in the hands of the Lombards apart from a few Byzantine 'islands'. The south of Italy became centralized around the Roman Church; the Roman Christian religion became even more rooted in this period, to the extent that it was able to resist threats from Byzantium and Islam. In northern Italy, an explosion of monasteries replaced the traditional churches that had been destroyed by the invaders. Gregory relied largely on monasteries, as well as on the increasing belief in miracles: with the idea of the end of the world and of God's judgement, the irrational element in popular Christianity had greater appeal than anything said in priestly sermons.

Contemporary sources describe a multiplication of miracles. When floods threatened, the River Po near Piacenza obeyed the Pope and returned within its banks; in Verona, the oratory of St Zeno stopped the river Adige from flooding; at Genoa, the church of St Siro expelled from its walls the corpse of an unworthy clergyman who was to be buried there; in Brescia, the bones of the martyr St Faustinus were said to have

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rejected the burial of the corpse of a vicious aristocrat; at the court of Autari, a key of St Peter's killed an undignified Lombard and respected a pious one, demonstrating the power of the Roman God's justice. Gregory began to be regarded favourably even by the Lombards, though it was only about a century later that powerful Lombard kings began to support the monastic foundations, to such an extent that most of Lombard Italy, from Tuscia (an area north of Rome) to Friuli (north-east of Venice), became covered in a dense network of monasteries.

In 593, Agilulf arrived at Rome and laid siege to it, but after meeting Pope Gregory I he retreated. Such a swift change of heart generated a legendary account of the event among contemporary observers, modelled on the encounter between Pope Leo I and Attila the Hun in the previous century, which became a well-known symbol of the meeting between a Roman bishop and a barbarian, and of the beneficial effects of the Pope's protection for the Roman population. In the version made public by later sources, Gregory, unarmed, met the Lombard king on the steps of St Peter's and frightened him with the sheer strength of his faith and the power of his prayer. In fact, the Pope had probably agreed to give the king a substantial financial tribute, which the king considered more convenient than the prosecution of a military campaign that was likely to be both onerous and risky. However, in Rome the event reinforced the idea that, through the Pope, St Peter (protector of Rome, the cradle of world civilization) was the guarantor of the lives of the Romans and of the ethical and cultural values of the Roman-Christian civilization. The fusion of Lombards and Romans was also demonstrated by the presence of mixed names (traditional Roman names for the Lombards and traditional Germanic names for the Romans), and the elements of a mixed language; however, by the eighth century the Lombard language was no longer in use.

The years under King Rothari (636–52) were particularly important for territorial and political consolidation. Rothari took Liguria from the Byzantines, and his name remained famous for his codification of Lombard law, hitherto only transmitted orally. In order to avoid the proliferation of vendettas, he meticulously proscribed all types of offence. While the way in which cases were dealt with was naïve, the aim was noble: the end of personal vendetta, to be replaced by financial compensation. The Lombards' legislative initiatives demonstrate an interest in the judicial and civil culture that was at the heart of their civilization. Important additions to Rothari's edict were provided by Liutprand (king between 712 and 744), the most powerful and ambitious

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Lombard king, who also contributed to Pavia's architecture, emphasizing its role as a capital city. He presented himself as a Christian king and a defender of the Pope, and crossed the River Po to occupy the region south of Ravenna, though his attempts to occupy the city itself were unsuccessful. In 728 he occupied the town of Sutri near Viterbo and donated it to Pope Gregory II; this was the first core of the Roman Church's territorial power, known as the Donation of Sutri.

The Lombards in Italy were eventually defeated by another invasion, by the Franks, who came to Italy at the Pope's request. In 751, the Lombard King Aistulf seized Ravenna, leaving the Byzantines without their capital and best-defended city. Anxious about the Lombard threat, Pope Stephen II signed an alliance with the Franks and obtained the commitment that their king Pippin the Short would intervene against the Lombards. In two expeditions, the king of the Franks liberated Ravenna and the surrounding territory and gave them to the Pope, who continued to enlarge his possessions in central Italy. The Church by then controlled a strip of land that stretched from Lazio to the Romagna coast. This was the birth of the so-called Patrimony of St Peter, the core of the state of the Church, a political entity that divided Italy in two and survived until 1870; the present Vatican State is the last residue of this.

Charlemagne, son of Pippin, continued to provide assistance to the Popes, and in 773 broke the alliance with the Lombards that he had made when he married Ermengarda, daughter of the Lombard King Desiderius. When the other king of the Franks, Carloman, died, Charles occupied his part of the kingdom (from western France to the Pyrenees), abandoned his wife Ermengarda, and, at the request of Pope Hadrian I, waged war on Desiderius. He invaded Italy, defeating and capturing Desiderius at Pavia. He quickly occupied Milan and Brescia, where it is still possible to see the Lombard monastery of S. Salvatore, and seized Pavia, which he conquered in 774 after besieging it for a year. Desiderius was imprisoned in a monastery in France. Charlemagne then occupied all the Lombard territories apart from the southern Benevento, which survived as Lombard for three more centuries. The extreme south of the peninsula and the islands remained under Byzantine control; a fragile control that was subject to Arab incursions.

The defeat of the Lombards interrupted an experiment in coexistence between the barbarian and Roman populations that had lasted for two centuries. This had huge consequences. It meant that Italy could not experience, for example, what Visigoth Spain or Frankish Gaul had done: the consolidation of a kingdom capable of providing a united

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government – and identity. This fact, at the root of Italy's future complicated political situation, was caused by a number of contingent factors: the decision of the Roman Papacy to obstruct the Lombard experiment; the eventual retreat of Constantinople from the West; the failure of the Lombards to conquer more than a third of Italy at any given time; and the correspondence of Roman interests and those of the Franks.

THE MYTH OF ROME IN THE GERMANIC EMPIRE

Unlike the Goths and the Lombards, the Franks did not migrate to Italy, but sent there only the men who were to rule it. Aristocrats, warriors and administrators from north of the Alps slowly replaced the Lombard rulers. As Walter Pohl has underlined, Italians did not distinguish between their different ethnic backgrounds and called them, from the tenth century, *theotisci* (those who speak vernacular), which was the origin of the term used to define the Germans in Italy, *tedeschi*. The Lombards were excluded from this designation, most of them no longer spoke a Germanic language and they had by then mixed with the Italians and were perceived as such. One of the most important writers of the tenth century, Bishop Liutprand of Cremona, called the inhabitants of Italy interchangeably either 'Lombards' or 'Itali'; and soon after 1000 the term *teutonici* was also used as the collective name for all those coming from north of the Alps (used for the first time in the early eleventh century by John the Deacon in *Historia Veneticorum*). The *teutonici* continued to be regarded as outsiders, present in Italy only at a political level and only because of weakness and discord among Italians.

Italy's social body was not, therefore, significantly altered by the occupation by the Franks, and Italy continued to be inhabited by Roman and mixed Roman–Lombard populations. This was despite the fact that Italy's regions were controlled politically by different powers: the Carolingians in the north, and the Byzantines in the south. Between the two there existed a common thread, particularly at the level of cultural exchange, which makes it impossible to consider the period as the beginning of the divergence between the north and south of the peninsula. Moreover, the Lombard experience did not end in the south in 774, since their kingdom survived in the Benevento area. The development of Lombard rule in the south is exemplified by the monastery of Benevento, which was built on the model of S. Salvatore in Brescia. The Lombards also enlarged and strengthened the city, and began the

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urban redesign of Salerno. Southern Italy returned to unified rule only with the later Norman invasion: Salerno was the last Lombard city to fall into the hands of Robert Guiscard in 1076. Lombard influence in southern Italy did not end there, however. Its legacy continued under Norman rule, as well as in many areas (for example, in the law) in northern Italy.

The Pope granted Charlemagne the title of King of the Franks and the Lombards. Through successive wars, Charlemagne extended his power from the Atlantic to the Elbe, from the Ebro river in Spain to the Danube, from the North Sea to central Italy. He became the most valuable defender of Christianity for the Church, and provided the opportunity to replace the Eastern Roman Emperor and therefore occupy the centre of European politics. On the morning of the anniversary of Christ's birth, 25 December 800, Charlemagne entered St Peter's Basilica to hear the third Christmas mass celebrated by the Pope according to ritual. After the *oratio*, in which people prayed lying down on the floor, Charlemagne got up and Pope Leo III put a crown on his head. The Romans immediately understood the meaning of this gesture and acclaimed Charles as emperor, shouting the Pope's words three times: 'To Charles, pius Augustus, to the great emperor, bearer of peace, crowned by God, life and victory!' Until then, only the Eastern Roman Emperor in Constantinople had been recognized as the universal emperor, and no French, Goth or Lombard king had ever disputed the title.

In order to give a theoretical foundation to the Pope's temporal power and a judicial foundation to the coronation of kings, the Roman Church secretly produced a document according to which the Emperor Constantine had given the Western Roman Empire to Pope Sylvester as a gift in the same year as the Edict of Milan (313) in which he had granted Christians the freedom of religion, a gift known as the donation of Constantine. The history of what is perhaps the most famous literary forgery of the Western world, written anonymously in the eighth/ninth centuries, is rooted in the conversion of the Emperor Constantine. The legend holds that, after persecuting the Christians, Constantine was punished by God and hit by leprosy. During the night, he was visited by a vision of Saints Peter and Paul, sent by Christ to cure him of his illness on condition that he re-established churches throughout the Empire, abandoned idolatry and served God's will. As Constantine woke, Pope Sylvester – having thus far eluded persecution – explained to the emperor that his visions were of the apostles, the servants of God. Constantine converted, was baptized, and halted the persecution of the

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Christians in recognition of the superiority of the Roman Church. As a sign of gratitude, Constantine donated the symbols of imperial power and the material possession of the Lateran palace, the city of Rome, all the provinces and cities of Italy and the western regions to the apostles, through Sylvester and successive Popes, ‘who would sit on the throne of St Peter until the end of the world’. Thus a mythical origin was invented to explain the reasons for the growth of papal power in the West. The fake document also contained an ideological core, affirming the divine origin of papal superiority in an attempt to redefine the difficult relationship between Pope and Empire. The document was created at a time when the temporal power of the Popes was increasing, and when, under Pope Gregory III (731–41), the Roman Church was looking to the Franks for possible protection from the dual menace of Lombards and Byzantines (the Franks having converted to Christianity with King Clovis at the end of the fifth century).

The document was finally unmasked in 1440 by the Italian humanist, Lorenzo Valla (which did not prevent the Popes from continuing to proclaim the donation’s authority – as shown, for example, by the painting of it in the *Stanza di Costantino* in the Vatican palace under Leo X, or by its defence by Cardinal Caesar Baronius later in the sixteenth century). However, even in the Middle Ages, some intellectuals understood the harm the Constantine donation was doing the Church by prioritizing the pursuit of power over religion. In the XIX canto of his *Inferno*, Dante relegated some Popes to dwell among the simoniacs (those who bought religious titles) and lamented:

Ah, Constantine, of how much ill was mother,
not your conversion, but that dowry
which the first rich Father took from you!

For centuries the German emperors supported the myth of Rome because they needed to be crowned by the Pope as a sign of legitimacy. In May 996, for the first time since Charlemagne, a 15-year old German prince, the future Emperor Otto III, entered Rome to receive the crown from Pope Gregory V. The solemn occasion was greeted by Roman crowds and German imperial aristocrats. That scene was repeated many times until 1328: German kings descended on Italy with their armies, were crowned by the Popes in the ancient Church of St Peter, built by Constantine in the Vatican on the alleged site of the apostle’s martyrdom. The emperors generally remained in Rome for some time, which resulted

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in friction between the aristocracy and the population. Occasional revolts and urban guerrilla action took place, after which the – often defeated – emperor and his army would retreat back north of the Alps.

Despite repeatedly disappointing results, German emperors continued travelling to Rome for centuries to be awarded the prestigious title of Roman Emperor and Servant of the Roman Church – the highest political and religious consecration. Only Rome as the cornerstone of political universalism, and the Pope as the head of the Church in the West, could entitle the emperors to proclaim themselves successors to Constantine and Charlemagne – the two Christian emperors, treated by some as saints, and the memory of whom was diffused throughout the entire Christian world. Rome's prestige was felt universally; even though by around the year 1000 the city that had once had about a million inhabitants had shrunk to 30,000, it was still larger than any other city in Latin Europe of the period. However, Rome's fame was dwarfed by the splendour and power of Byzantium. By the end of the first millennium, Constantinople, first called the 'new Rome' by Constantine (who founded it on the site of the Greek town Byzantium), was one of the great metropolises of the Eastern world alongside Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad. Despite this, Rome, with its classic monuments, was able to synthesize an impressive number of memories and myths on which new ideological claims could be founded, as expressed by an anonymous seventh-century poet, quoted by the Venerable Bede:

So long as the Colosseum stands/Rome stands/When the Colosseum
falls/Rome falls/When Rome falls/The world falls.

From the end of the fourth century, the Roman Church had insisted that its possession of the relics of the Saints Peter and Paul, the founders of the Church and propagators of the Gospel, gave it the unique right to lead the Christian world. No doubts could remain that Rome was the mother and Constantinople the daughter – a daughter with a great political prestige, the capital of the Empire in the East, but inferior in rank to *Roma Christiana*. If pagan Rome had dominated the world physically, Christian Rome was going to dominate its souls; the city retained both temporal and spiritual powers.

One of Rome's main legacies was the idea of empire. While the kings of France and England were creating the bases for powerful national monarchic states and the Italian city-states were increasingly affirming their autonomy, during the Middle Ages – and not only in Germany – the

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concept of empire remained strongly rooted, as illustrated by Charlemagne's prestige in popular imagery. It was widely believed that God wanted the empire in order to favour the diffusion of the Christian faith and justice in the world. The medieval empire was to lead people to salvation through laws in the temporal sphere, while the Roman Church was responsible for their souls. The two powers, as underlined in a letter by Pope Gelasius to the Emperor Anastasius I as early as 494, were distinct and complementary.

A NEW LANGUAGE

Latin and Greek were the two principal languages in Europe until the barbarian invasions. In the second century, the cultural prestige of Greek was matched by the use of Latin in administration, in the military and in Roman colonies throughout the Empire. Many cities were bilingual. Thanks to literary rules, the spread of schools and Rome's prestige, Latin was the same language everywhere, expressed in different accents but not distinct dialects. Local ruling classes wanted to be recognized as Roman and took their example from Rome's senatorial class; the unification of law, commercial networks, and the presence of the administration and the army, avoided the fragmentation of the language.

The barbarian groups of Germanic speakers who were allowed to settle on the border along the Rhine–Danube axis in the second century had no significant influence on the language. The populations that invaded the Empire in the fourth century spoke heterogeneous languages and their influence on Latin was only superficial. After the fall of the Empire, rules remained in the written language at school level, but schools themselves generally only survived in convents. The language began to diverge into different local forms.

Between 600 and 1000, Europe underwent a great linguistic transformation. Latin began to be modified under pressure from diverse languages. For almost two centuries from 600, a period of transition brought about a substantial break between a literary and written Latin, practised by small groups of cultured people, and the spoken language called vernacular (language of the people), used by the majority of the inhabitants of the Roman–Germanic empire. Languages live and change with the people who speak them, and so it was for the Latin of the Romans, which slowly mixed with the various local languages.

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According to the Romance philologist and scholar of comparative literature, Erich Auerbach, the original language left for future generations was:

a residue of pronunciation habits, together with morphological and syntactical patterns that the newly Romanized people made a part of the Latin they spoke. They also kept a few words of their former language, either because they were deeply rooted or because there were no equivalents in Latin. This is especially true of the names of plants, agricultural implements, clothing, food, etc, in short, all those things which are closely tied to differences in climate, rural customs and regional traditions.

(Auerbach, 1961, p. 23)

Despite the collapse of the common language and local spoken languages becoming more widely used, Latin remained the language of the Church, schools, written law and administration, philosophy, theology and science throughout the early Middle Ages. During the age of Constantine, at the beginning of the fourth century, in the city of Rome alone there were twenty-eight libraries, numerous private collections, and schools with their own teachers and books. Following the sacking of Rome by Alaric in 410 and the Vandals' fourteen days of fire and pillage, the great majority of books fell into disuse, while circulation and copying stopped. Books rapidly deteriorated and were lost. Since these texts were all hand-copied, only those present in high numbers or those preferred by the Christians were rescued. The classics survived: Virgil and Cicero, for example, which – apart from their literary quality – constituted the model of Latin poetry and prose; great historical works, some technical manuals of agriculture, grammar and medicine were also saved. Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, parchment was difficult to obtain, so ancient parchment was re-used, the original scripts being washed out and written over. Manuscripts treated in this manner, known as palimpsests, can be read today, including their deleted sections, which can now be revealed by the use of X-ray equipment.

The enormous task of transcribing the texts of the classical era began in the religious houses. In order to write in good Latin, such as that of Caesar or Cicero, it was necessary to be able read their texts. In the service of God, clergymen made copies of an immense quantity of ancient literary production as well as the love poems of pagan poets, rescuing extraordinarily beautiful works in this way and transmitting

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past knowledge from ancient times to the present. Indeed, little has remained of the original Latin texts, and everything we read today (most of which had been copied in France) was transcribed in the Middle Ages. Monk scribes usually transcribed classic texts in the libraries of monasteries. A note in a codex from the seventh century bears witness to the terrible efforts that characterized such work:

Dearest reader, pick up the book only after having washed your hands with care, turn the pages with gentleness, keep your finger far away from the written text so that you do not spoil it. Those who do not know how to write believe that there is no effort involved. On the contrary, how excruciating the art of writing is: it strains one's eyes, bends one's back, and all the limbs are painful. Only three fingers write, but the whole body suffers.

The books that came out of the scribes' hands looked like a series of pamphlets made of folded sheets inserted one inside another (in Latin called *codex*). The sheets were made of parchment (which was made from goatskin and replaced Egyptian papyrus). The pamphlets were then sewn together and enclosed between wooden covers bound in leather. The scribes wrote with quill pens (generally of goose feather, which was thin and hard) and the calamus (which contained ink). The *miniatores* (painters) illustrated the manuscripts, the *antiquarii* (experts in calligraphy), the *scriptores* (helpers) and *rubricatores* (painters of the initial words of paragraphs and chapters) all contributed to the final result of the manuscript.

The transition that led to the spoken Romance languages took place over a long time: the new languages were formed over five centuries across a vast territory. An oral culture developed among the populations, often popular and folkloristic, diffused by actors who recited love poems and the first heroic poems in the Germanic language in the courts. The Romance languages, which did not come from literary Latin but from the changes to which spoken Latin had been subjected, were Italian, Dalmatian, Sardinian, Ladino (spoken in the Grigioni, Tirol and Friuli), Spanish or Castilian, Portuguese, Catalan, Provençal (occitanian or *langue d'oc*), French (or *langue d'oïl*) and Rumanian. Only in the late Middle Ages did spoken (vernacular) languages become written languages, giving birth to national literatures. The appearance of texts in these languages demonstrated that there was a new consciousness of the existence of two different (now written) languages. The transition to non-Latin texts derived from the emergence of new social needs, specifi-

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cally a new demand for knowledge and entertainment that could no longer be satisfied in traditional terms. This demand came from a new cultured public, defined by Auerbach as ‘a high level society that expressed itself in the popular language’: this was a milieu where both the producers and the consumers of literature written in the vernacular came together. The exchange between different milieux, the circulation of common values, the contact between popular themes, and the new official culture developed from the top down, through pilgrimages, feasts and mass movements promoted by the Crusades. As Mikhail Bakhtin has illustrated in his studies of the carnival-like origin of some literary genres, popular mentalities also penetrated dominant culture. The seigneurial culture was a secular culture in both its institution (the court) and its contents. From the eleventh century onwards, two cultures were established, one secular and the other religious, that at times would be in conflict and competition, at times influencing and penetrating each other. However, while in most of Europe the vernacular was the most suitable instrument to express this new culture, in Italy the common use of Latin survived until the late twelfth–early thirteenth centuries.

The following are the first documents written in Italian vernacular that have survived: the Veronese riddle; the *Placitum* of Capua; the *Postilla amiatina*; and the inscription of S. Clement. The Veronese riddle, later discovered in the chapter-house library of Verona, was written towards the end of the eighth/beginning of the ninth centuries, and is the most ancient example of Italian vernacular. It was probably produced by a copyist in the margin of a liturgical codex. It revived the genre of the enigma of the Latin early medieval tradition:

*Se pareva boves, alba pratalia araba,
albo versorio teneba, et negro semen seminaba.
Gratias tibi agimus omnipotens sempiterne deus.*
(He pushed oxen in front of him, ploughed white fields,
carried a white plough, and sowed a black seed.
We thank You, eternal almighty God.)

The first two lines are in vernacular, while the third is a Latin formula. The copyist must therefore have had some fun in mixing high and low styles. The solution to the riddle is the scribe, compared to a peasant who pushes the oxen (his fingers), ploughs white fields (paper), and sows a black seed (ink). The transformation of the Latin ‘i’ (*nigrum*) into ‘e’ and

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the disappearance of the endings are typically vernacular. From the lexical point of view, these are terms of Venetian vernacular.

The *Placitum capuano* of 960 is a sentence handed down by a judge who had to solve a border dispute between the monastery of Montecassino and a private individual. The judge reported the words of a witness in vernacular in order to be understood by all the participants in the case:

Sao ko kelle terre, per kelle fini que ki contene, trenta anni le possette parte Sancti Benedicti.

(I know that those lands, within the borders here indicated, were for thirty years the possession of the monastery of S. Benedict.)

The Latin endings of words and verbs were dropped, except for the Latin construction of *parte Sancti Benedicti*. The document is considered much more important than the one from Verona because it is an official document.

In the *Postilla amiatina* of 1087, the notary Rainerio, who had collected a donation for the St Salvatore abbey on Mount Amiata, added a personal comment: *ista cartula est de caput coctu ille adiuuet de ill(u) rebottu qui mal consiliu li mise in corpu* ('This paper is Capocotto's [a derogatory nickname of one of the two donors which means 'hot head', perhaps because he was drunk or in love] and may help him against the devil who put an evil suggestion into his body.'). The words have a clear Latin derivation, but are altered by the vernacular pronunciation, and the tone is playful and light-hearted. The inscription of S. Clement is from the years 1084–1100 and is situated in the underground chapel of the S. Clement Basilica in Rome. It was added to a fresco which portrays a miracle, and it is a mixture of vernacular and incorrect Latin. This inscription, a parody of paganism, was the first comic-strip of Western culture.

As the next chapter will describe, a period of high emigration during the eleventh and twelfth centuries from the centre-north to southern Italy and Sicily favoured the birth of an Italian poetic language, while the use of Greek and Arabic fell into irreversible decline. In the thirteenth century, in a period of extraordinary economic and cultural development, Tuscany became the new centre of written Italian, which then spread towards the other regions.

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SELECTED FURTHER READING

C. Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) combines history and archaeology, and is the most complete comparative history of the early medieval period. An excellent overview is M. C. La Rocca (ed.), *Italy in the Early Middle Ages, 476–1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) is a fascinating synthesis of pre-modern Mediterranean history. B. Kreutz, *Before the Normans: Southern Italy in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) provides a political and cultural history of pre-Norman southern Italy. H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988) is a thorough examination of the history of the Germanic invasions.

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