

PEOPLE AND IDENTITY
IN OSTROGOTHIC ITALY,
489–554

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INTRODUCTION: STUDYING THE BARBARIANS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

We are the prisoners of preconception and periodization. We imbue preconception in images of the barbarians that surround us in school and in popular culture from our earliest childhood. Whether a *New Yorker* cartoon depicting barbarians in horned helmets and furs confusedly invading a modern office, or Marinetti's fantasies of mustachioed Ostrogoths eating pasta out of holes in the ground with their hands,¹ imagery of barbarian primitivism, violence and, above all, imagery of difference from equally stereotyped Roman behavior, is impossible to avoid.² The Nazis celebrated their version of the violent heroism of "Germanic" barbarians,³ and biker gangs today preserve vestiges of imagery associated with barbarians since the nineteenth century and before.

Despite decades of scholarship on the barbarians, we cannot easily escape these preconceptions, themselves inherited from the literary and artistic depictions of Graeco-Latin ethnography. Theoderic the Great was, alongside his classical education and the enormous subtlety and enlightenment of his propaganda and policy, an unpredictably violent man who murdered his predecessor and one of his courtiers with his own hands. Scholarly commentators have associated Theoderic's violence with his barbarianness,⁴ although the Roman Emperor Valentinian III had similarly murdered his general Aetius fifty years earlier.

While preconception determines certain images of barbarians and Romans, periodization locks in an even more insidious conceptual break at the time of the fall of the Western Roman Empire, around A.D. 500, a break created by Renaissance humanists, transmitted in the twentieth century through the enduring works of Spengler and Durant, and preserved in the curriculum of European history in every school

¹ Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, *The Futurist Cookbook* [1932], trans. Suzanne Brill (San Francisco, 1989), p. 51.

² See S. J. B. Barnish on the high-flown rhetoric of Theoderic's minister Cassiodorus: "Most barbarians, and even Romans of the day, would have found even the simpler letters hard to understand." (*Cassiodorus: Variae*, trans. with commentary [Liverpool, 1992], p. xxxii).

³ Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (2nd rev. edn, Berkeley, 1988), p. 3.

⁴ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West 400-1000* (3rd rev. edn, Oxford, 1967), p. 33.

and university in the world. The notion of a break, in culture, politics or institutions, prevents us from seeing late antiquity as an integrated culture or set of cultures in its own right, and encourages us mentally to assign fifth- and sixth-century groups either to the toga or to furs and pantaloons. The notion of a break imperceptibly urges us to continue the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dispute between Montesquieu and Le Nain de Tillemont, or the nineteenth-century dispute between Fustel and Dahn: were the Roman successor states “Roman” or “Germanic”? Were they more like the second century or more like the ninth century? Preconception encourages us to think of the sixth-century Romans as second-century men and women, and the sixth-century barbarians as ninth-century men and women.

This is the problem of artificially dividing world history into distinct “civilizations.” One philologist is still able to imagine the contrast in sixth-century Italy between “the vivacity and rigour of Ulfilan Gothic culture” and “the decline of Graeco-Roman tradition.”⁵ Contemporaries did not always imagine the world to be divided up in this way. From our standpoint, we can see the richness and coherence of late antique culture in itself, as something *sui generis*, containing both “Ulfilan Gothic culture” and “Graeco-Roman tradition.” They were cultural elements that influenced and determined each other, and each of which coexisted (in their late antique manifestations) with cultural traits not easily identifiable as either “Roman” or “Germanic.”

In other words, it is time to set the barbarians fully into late antiquity. Historians of the fifth and sixth centuries now have a field of their own, a way to avoid both the preconceptions of cultural dichotomy and the traditional periodization. An enormous number of works on late Roman history and on late antique culture have appeared over the last two or three decades. These studies examine the period between 300 and 700 as a historical epoch in its own right, not as a period of transition. Peter Brown’s vivid depiction of the fourth- and fifth-century penetration of spirituality into everyday life, and Dick Whittaker’s nuanced study of frontier cultures as coherent interactive cultural zones throwing up new leaders and identities, can join the vast collection of artistic objects and settlement excavations that show us a world that was neither like the second century nor like the ninth century, but one where people had inherited imagery, literature and institutions of the past and, without necessarily seeing any change, had imperceptibly made these things their own. It was a period of innovation and creativity, the world that threw up Western notions of individual guilt and

⁵ Piergiuseppe Scardigli, *Lingua e storia dei Goti* (Florence, 1964), p. 4.

conscience, the codex book, the lower-case alphabet that we still use today, the codification of law that determined subsequent legal science in Continental Europe, the triumph of monotheistic religion, and, not least, the ethnographic names that still mark and divide the political map of Europe.

How does the continuing late antique use of a dualistic classical ethnography, which distinguished between Romans and barbarians, fit into this world? The late Roman Empire was an antiquarianizing society at its wealthiest, most educated levels. But this antiquarianism re-used and recreated elements of past culture to fit new circumstances. It was a varied antiquarianism, itself in constant evolution. The use of classical ethnographic discourse in literature, law and ideology is one manifestation of this recycling of the past. Although some historians have argued that we must try to analyze the world in which late antique men and women lived as much as their ideas of “barbarian” and “Roman,”⁶ there has as yet been little attempt to set classical ethnography into its correct niche within the rest of Mediterranean culture. The common assumption that it continued to remain stable in its attitudes and vocabulary shows that ethnography in late antiquity has been insufficiently studied.

A discourse in anxious flux, classical ethnography could not operate in the same way in a non-classical world any more than classical literary genres could satisfactorily describe Justinian’s Constantinople without displaying strain.⁷ In the wake of recent re-evaluations of classicizing literature in late antiquity, we must place classical ethnographic texts among other, non-ethnographic sources that described ancient community, all of which influenced each other. Only then can we understand both the relative importance of ethnography and the composition and formation of groups ethnographically described in the sources.

Classical ethnography describes only a small part of the story. The late Roman Empire was composed of both a Mediterranean-centered political world with a cosmopolitan and well-traveled elite that shared certain cultural characteristics and behavior based on (but not preserving unchanged) ancient traditions, and a huge variety of cultures, languages and allegiances in the vast geography through which they moved. It was a world in which rigid hierarchy, ceremony and manners competed

⁶ e.g., James J. O’Donnell, “Liberius the patrician,” *Traditio* 37 (1981), 32. Rather than ask what Romans thought of barbarians and vice versa, we must ask “what did the average citizen of the western empire, by this time a Christian from a Christian family, think of the *world* in which he found himself – without necessarily using categories like barbarian, Roman, or pagan?” (Jean Durliat, “Qu’est-ce que le Bas-Empire? II,” *Francia* 18.1 [1991], 131).

⁷ Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 19–32.

with institutional structures that allowed startling social mobility and opportunity for the ambitious.

Part of what we call the fall of the Roman Empire was the collapse of these political structures and the geographical shrinking of the range of social institutions, with the consequent narrowing horizons for everyone in the West. With this diminution of opportunity, long-silent local cultures suddenly find a voice in our sources, alongside the protests of some of the privileged people who had lost access to a broader source of power and prestige.⁸ These cultures were not only “barbarian” or “Germanic.” They included the Thracians and the Isaurians, the Moors and the Basques, identities – geographical, linguistic or political – that, like the barbarian groups, attached to ancient names in new manifestations of a smaller independence from imperial power. These were not, of course, the same identities that had existed in the regions before the Roman Empire conquered them, but ones that developed beneath the small, if permeable, elite class of classically educated administrators and careerists. When access to that supraregional class vanished, people looked to local routes to power and local identities. These people could speak Greek or Latin without always considering themselves Romans.

One of the most pervasive historical myths is that the Romans “Romanized” the Roman Empire. The impact of the Roman armies, literate elites and bureaucratic government was enormous – and enormously varied. Roman administrative and learned culture was received differently according to the local culture, language, geography and economics of the regions conquered by the Empire. It is like the European and Mediterranean reception of Christianity. We need to imagine a sort of live, evolving “Romanization,” gradually laid down over a Mediterranean-sized field of different reactive cultures, and producing innumerable different reactions in different places over time.⁹

Did a single Roman people and culture confront diverse barbarian groups, as certain forms of classical ethnography – that elite viewpoint –

⁸ This interpretation was advanced by Herwig Wolfram as early as 1970, building on the ideas of Rostovtzeff but emphasizing regional particularity over Rostovtzeff’s class alienation. To my knowledge, no one has yet taken up Wolfram’s suggestion and developed it, despite the subsequent barrage of studies on political and cultural regionalism in the late Empire. At the time, of course, Wolfram also saw the barbarian settlements as invasions, and believed that the barbarians carried new culture into the Roman Empire, whereas I would see most of this culture as aspects of regional diversity newly brought to light – without downplaying the conflicts and massive social disruption that obviously occurred. (See Herwig Wolfram, “The shaping of the early medieval kingdom,” *Viator* 1 [1970], 16–18 with n. 80.)

⁹ The most powerful statement of this view remains that of Peter Brown in *The World of Late Antiquity A.D. 150–750* (London, 1971), pp. 11–21, though the study of interaction between center and periphery goes back to Theodor Mommsen on the Roman provinces (“Ostgothische Studien,” *NAI4*: 225–49, 453–544 [1889]; *NAI5*: 181–6 [1890]).

suggest? To accept the ethnographic viewpoint is to ignore not only the hundreds of regions, cities, cultures and languages within the vast Roman state, but also the overriding power of status and institutional affiliation among the salaried servants of that state.

What did the word “Roman” mean to the millions of inhabitants of the Mediterranean littoral and its hinterland? Many things: tax-exactions, law (not all of it) and overbearing ceremonial splendor; certainly the army. But when urban citizens were not in the law-courts or presenting a petition to a magistrate, such external concerns faded into the background. Among the civil servants and the military, fierce loyalties developed, not only to the emperors who changed so rapidly in the West, but also to the regiments and offices within which they and their fathers had served all their lives. At the same time, the rise of the Christian church introduced new and powerful institutional loyalties, in the West developing a cosmology in which the Roman Empire was no longer a providential manifestation of eternity.

Many of our preconceptions about barbarians must necessarily vanish when we set them into our newly focused, newly periodized picture of the late antique Mediterranean, a world in which a mosaic of different smaller identities resurfaces amidst the disruption of the deceptively smooth surface of Roman political culture. Appendix 4 shows how even the most sober scholars have succumbed to their prejudices – or to their wishful thinking – in examining reports and imagery of “barbarian dress.” How is it possible that serious historians can classify imagery of eagles on soldiers’ brooches as evidence of Germanic paganism, when the eagle was one of the oldest symbols of Roman imperial power, one associated with the military, and one in active revival in fifth- and sixth-century imperial art? The answer is, sadly, the mustachioed Ostrogoths devouring pasta.

I advocate this new approach. Let us set barbarian history into late antique culture and view an integrated world – one composed of many different and occasionally mutually opposed parts, but not one in the midst of a “break” or a “transition,” and emphatically *not* one sinking into barbarism, or at least not sinking into a new barbarism brought by the barbarians. It was a world that contained what we sometimes call “Germanic” cultural traits as constituent parts of its own wider culture, parts so constituent that neither “Germanic” nor “non-Germanic” cultural traits as they existed in the fifth century would be imaginable had the other not existed.

In turn, a re-examination of cultural diversity within the Empire calls into question the role of assumed ethnic or cultural community as a binding or divisive force among the barbarian groups and the Roman

provinces in which they lived. This book examines the meaning of community in the barbarian group most frequently used as a template for understanding all the barbarians: the Goths of Italy between 489 and 554.

OSTROGOTHIC ITALY: A NOTE ON THE POLITICAL HISTORY,
476–568

It is entirely characteristic of scholarship on the barbarians that there is still no single study of the political history of the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy. Despite the richness of the source material and the importance of its cultural production, the Ostrogothic kingdom is an anomaly in the traditional periodization and regional division of historical scholarship in Europe. With the exception of a few books and a large body of specialist journal articles, one must study it through works on the later Roman Empire, on sixth-century Byzantium (itself a neglected field, astonishingly), on the barbarian kingdoms, or on (all) the Goths as a “tribe.” These perspectives carry the obvious limitations of vantage-point and allotable space. Herewith an up-to-date summary.¹⁰

¹⁰ Herwig Wolfram’s *History of the Goths* studies the formation and composition of all the groups who laid claim to the name *Gothi* in late antiquity. Peter Heather’s *Goths and Romans 332–489* (Oxford, 1991) covers the vicissitudes of Theoderic and his followers in the Balkans between 450 and 489. The political history of fifth-century Italy must be approached through J. B. Bury (*History of the Later Roman Empire from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, 2nd edn, London, 1923), Ernst Stein (*Histoire du Bas-Empire de la disparition de l’Empire d’Occident – la mort de Justinien 476–565*, Paris, 1949–59), A. H. M. Jones (*The Later Roman Empire 284–602*, Oxford, 1973) and a number of scattered articles. John Moorhead’s *Theoderic in Italy* (Oxford, 1973) addresses in great detail and clarity the political history of Ostrogothic Italy under Theoderic, between 489 and 526, but stops at Theoderic’s death. The history of the senate under the Ostrogothic government through 554 receives a detailed but misconceived and misleading treatment in Sundwall’s *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des aufgehenden Römertums* (Helsinki, 1919). The period from 526 to 554, including the Gothic Wars, remains almost entirely neglected. Aside from Stein and Bury, one must use outdated works such as Hodgkin’s nineteenth-century *Italy and Her Invaders* (Oxford, 1892), and Hartmann’s *Geschichte Italiens im Mittelalter I* (Stuttgart, 1923). The Byzantine administration in Italy after the reconquest, from 554, on the other hand, is now well-covered by T. S. Brown’s *Gentlemen and Officers: Imperial Administration and Aristocratic Power in Byzantine Italy, A.D. 554–800* (Rome, 1984).

Outside the works of Stein, Moorhead and T. S. Brown, study of the church and papacy have been left to ecclesiastical historians such as Erich Caspar and Eduard Schwartz. But a major problem with both the political and ecclesiastical literature is that historians, influenced by the idea of the primacy of race or ethnicity, have tended to explain ecclesiastical divisions and factions by ethnic and political divisions. On the basis of church disputes, entire pro-Gothic, pro-Italian and pro-Byzantine parties have been created in sixth-century Italy, often without a scrap of evidence.

In particular, historians have used the following events to align participants for or against the Gothic monarchy: the Acacian schism (484–519), the Laurentian schism (499–505), the elections of Pope Felix IV and of Boniface II (526 and 530), the schism between Boniface II and Dioscorus (530), the condemnation of that schism by Agapetus (535), and the deposition of Pope

The Western Roman Empire (between 455 and 476 effectively reduced to Italy) was ruled by a series of puppet emperors under the military regency of the generals Ricimer, Gundobad and Orestes. In 476, the Western Roman barbarian general Odoacer deposed and pensioned off the child-emperor Romulus Augustulus, and sent the Western imperial regalia to the Eastern emperor Zeno at Constantinople. Odoacer suggested that he himself might rule Italy under the sovereignty of the emperor at Constantinople.

Zeno eventually, if reluctantly, accepted this arrangement. He faced a number of political and military difficulties at home, not least the management of a number of warlike bands in the Balkan provinces of Pannonia, Moesia and Thrace. Several of these groups are called "Goths" in the sources. They were the remnants of soldiers or people attached to the short-lived confederation of the Huns under Attila, which had disintegrated in the 450s. Zeno played diplomacy with these warbands, alternately hiring them as allies of the Roman army and setting them against one another. Constantinople was frequently under siege from them during the 470s and 480s.

The leader or "king" of one of these groups of Goths in the Balkans, Theoderic the son of Thiudimir, had grown up at the imperial court at Constantinople as a hostage from 461 to 471. He came from a royal family called the Amals, which may have laid claim to a prestigious history of rule over groups called Goths. The Amals, based in Pannonia, already led a group of soldiers and their families that later sources called "Ostrogoths" as a means of distinguishing them from the Visigoths of Toulouse and Spain. Theoderic returned to the Balkans in 471. He and his soldiers spent the next fourteen years in and out of alliance with Constantinople.

In 488, Zeno appears to have suggested to Theoderic – perhaps as a way of getting rid of him – that he invade Odoacer's Italy and restore it to the Roman Empire (more specifically, to Zeno's rule). In 489, Theoderic and his army crossed the Isonzo in Istria and defeated Odoacer at Verona. The peninsula was effectively his except for the impregnable fortress of Ravenna. Italy continued to suffer the ravages of war and famine for the next four years. The Ostrogothic army

Silverius by Pope Vigilius and Belisarius (537). But if anything, these disputes occasionally illuminate the evolution of ecclesiastical conceptions of the ideal Christian community in Italy. This evolution was gradual, and the ideas contained within it were often mutually contradictory. In particular, as I shall argue, the association of Arianism with the Goths, despite the Arian affiliation of all the Ostrogothic royal families, did not become a feature of papal policy until the period of the Gothic Wars. Arianism was an issue separate from Gothic rule for most people at most times, and ecclesiastical faction rarely followed political faction. I make the arguments supporting this interpretation in ch. 6; see also ch. 4, n. 152.

recruited soldiers from the Pannonian and Italian provinces, and absorbed the remnants of Odoacer's army. Theoderic besieged Odoacer in Ravenna until 493, when he gained the city by treachery, and, after agreeing to rule with Odoacer, murdered him at a dinner party.

Theoderic was now in control of Italy, but the emperor Zeno had died in 491, and his successor Anastasius was not immediately amenable to Theoderic's rule in the ancient home of the Roman Empire. It was not until 497 that Anastasius recognized Theoderic as king, apparently, like Odoacer, as a viceroy of the emperor in Italy. Anastasius sent the Western imperial regalia back to the new king at Ravenna.

The new government at Ravenna was not all new. It continued to use the same imperial administrative bureaucracy and many of the same people who had served under the last Western emperors and under Odoacer. Theoderic continued to honor the ceremonial prerogatives of the senate at Rome, as Odoacer had done, and gained from Anastasius the right to nominate one of its members as a Western consul each year. With the help of seasoned Italian politicians, such as the praetorian prefect Liberius and Cassiodorus *père*, Theoderic arranged for members of his army to be settled in Italy under some kind of reciprocal arrangement that may have involved the redistribution of tax revenues.

Theoderic's reign in Italy, from 493 to 526, is generally seen as a period of prosperity and peace until just before its end. Although Theoderic, members of his family and some of his followers subscribed to the heretical Arian sect of Christianity, Theoderic tolerated and honored the majority Catholic church and the papacy at Rome. In the year 500, he entered the city of Rome and celebrated his *tricennalia*, his thirty-year anniversary of rule. He worshipped the relics of St. Peter at the basilica on the Vatican Hill. He restored the walls and statues of many cities, and embarked on a major building program in Ravenna, including the Arian church now called Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. He fostered and probably actively encouraged an intellectual climate that led to the production and reproduction of major works on philosophy, theology and science. The king maintained steady neutrality in the (Catholic) Laurentian schism, which divided the pope Symmachus from the antipope Laurentius in 499 and 502, but finally intervened in Symmachus's favor in 507, after continuous riots and massacres in the city of Rome. In the same year, the pro-Symmachan deacon Ennodius, later bishop of Pavia, delivered a panegyric to the king suggesting that he had singlehandedly revived the glory of the Western Empire.

Theoderic conducted a number of military campaigns in the name of restoring lost territory to the Empire. He reconquered Sicily from the Vandals in the early 490s. In 504, he launched a campaign in his

old home, Pannonia, and took over the Balkan provinces of Dalmatia and Savia. In 507, after Clovis and the Franks invaded the Visigothic kingdom of Toulouse, Theoderic entered the war and conquered Provence, the Narbonnaise and most of Spain, where he allowed his young Visigothic grandson Amalaric to rule as nominal king, and installed a regent from Italy named Theudis.

During this time, Theoderic, although doctrinally estranged from both sides, helped negotiations between the papacy and the Eastern churches on healing the Acacian schism. This split between the Western and Eastern churches had begun in 484, over methods of compromise with the monophysite heresy then popular in Alexandria and Syria. After the death of the pro-monophysite emperor Anastasius in 518, the churches were reunited under the new emperor Justin I and his nephew Justinian in 519.

Shortly after the reconciliation of the churches, things began to go wrong for Theoderic. He turned against his *magister officiorum*, the philosopher Boethius, in 523, on suspicion of treason, and had him imprisoned and executed. Shortly thereafter he forced Boethius's friend, the new pope John I, to travel to Constantinople to stop Justin and Justinian from enforcing long dormant imperial laws against the Arians in the Eastern Empire. At this same time, the Vandal king Thrasamund of Africa died, and the new king, Hilderic, began to mistreat Thrasamund's widow, Theoderic's sister Amalafriada. Theoderic, enraged, threatened Africa with war. Amalafriada died under suspicious circumstances in 525. In 526, Theoderic assembled a fleet and made preparations to invade Africa. These were cut short by his death from dysentery in August of 526.

Theoderic was succeeded by his grandson Athalaric, who was only ten years old. He ruled under the regency of his mother Amalasuintha, Theoderic's daughter. Because the Gothic army would not accept the militarily incapable leadership of a woman or of a minor, Amalasuintha appointed generals as co-regents. Our sources for Athalaric's short reign are not good, but apparently various military officers objected to his upbringing. Amalasuintha, classically educated herself, was not "bringing him up as a Goth," which probably meant that the young king was not receiving a military education. Amalasuintha handed him over to soldiers, where Athalaric led a life of debauchery and dissipation. He died in 534. Amalasuintha was then forced to accept the co-rule of her cousin Theodahad, not a military man either, but at least a man. The queen feared for her rule and for her life, and made overtures to Justinian, who had succeeded his uncle Justin as emperor in 527.

During the late 520s and 530s, the Eastern emperor Justinian

embarked on a massive program of propaganda and repressive policy designed to create a single Catholic Mediterranean polity in the name of restoring the Roman Empire of the past. This program involved the first complete codification of Roman law, the building of new architectural projects such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and the repression of all the many religions and Christian heterodoxies that did not conform to the emperor's own formulation of correct Christian doctrine.

Justinian's new policy of renewal inevitably suggested, for the first time, that the barbarian kingdoms of the West were no longer, in fact, part of the Roman Empire. The reconciliation of the Eastern and Western churches in 519 suggested a more momentous reconciliation: the reunion of the Eastern and Western Empires, administratively split since 395.

In 533, Justinian's armies invaded the Vandal kingdom in northern Africa on the pretext of restoring it to the Empire. In 535, Theodahad suspected Amalasuintha of turning Italy over to Justinian and had her imprisoned on a small island, where she was apparently murdered. Justinian, using this as a pretext, instructed his armies in Africa, under the general Belisarius, to reconquer Italy – even though it was nominally under his sovereignty anyway.

With Belisarius's invasion of Italy in 535, the Gothic Wars began, dividing the loyalties of the civilian inhabitants of the peninsula. The Byzantine armies told the Italian citizens of Syracuse and Naples that they had come to restore them to the Roman Empire; the Gothic armies reminded them how much they had benefited under the rule of Theoderic, legally recognized as the servant of the Roman emperors. This pattern, resembling the predicament of modern civilian populations caught between native guerilla forces and the occupying army of a colonial power, was to continue throughout the Wars.

The first stage of the Gothic Wars, from 535 to 540, did not go well for the Gothic army. Theodahad, clearly incapable of leading an army in battle, was deposed and murdered by his general Witigis in early 536. Witigis, who married Amalasuintha's daughter for the purposes of Amal legitimacy, was then chosen as king by the Gothic army. Meanwhile, Belisarius had advanced toward Rome and taken it. Witigis unsuccessfully besieged Belisarius in Rome from 536 to 537, and Belisarius besieged Witigis in Ravenna from 539 to 540. After the capitulation of Ravenna in 540, Belisarius sent Witigis in chains to Constantinople, where the ex-king subsequently retired with honor.

In 540, the Gothic Wars might have ended, but some sections of the Gothic army held out in northern Italy, in Verona and Pavia. This army

was leaderless – its last three rulers had all tried to leave troubled Italy for a comfortable life in Constantinople; Witigis succeeded. But the Gothic army clearly wanted to retain its special corporate identity, necessarily in an Italy autonomous in some sense from the East. The army offered the kingship to Belisarius, who refused it. At the same time, a financial officer named Alexander arrived from the East as part of the new Byzantine administration in Ravenna. He enraged Italians of any sympathy with the typically outrageous Justinianic tax demands necessary for the maintenance of the emperor's constant wars and building projects.

No member of the Amal dynasty was left who had not defected to Byzantium.¹¹ After electing and deposing two ineffectual and unreliable kings, Hildebad and Eraric, the Gothic army offered its leadership to a young relative of the Spanish king Theudis, who was named Totila. His election probably owed something to the hope of bringing Theudis in on the Gothic side. But Spain stayed resolutely neutral in the conflict, successfully maintaining a renewed independence for the Visigothic kingdom. That kingdom would outlast Ostrogothic Italy by a century and a half.

In a series of swift and efficient campaigns, Totila reconquered almost all of Italy. Under Totila, the Gothic Wars continued from 541 to 552. Both the Gothic and Byzantine sides committed many atrocities, alienating large sections of the Italian civilian population, which could not afford to withhold its nominal support from whichever army happened to be occupying the region. Regions switched hands continually. Surrendered troops on either side joined the army against whom they had been fighting. There were frequent mass desertions in both directions. Totila besieged and occupied Rome twice, in 546–7 and in 550. In the winter of 550, the city of Rome was entirely depopulated for the first time in its history.

In 552, Totila was defeated and killed at the battle of Busta Gallorum by the Byzantine eunuch general Narses. Some Gothic troops, under the new king Teia in Cumae, continued resistance through the end of 552. Teia's younger brother Aligermus, continued to hold out until 554, when he joined the Byzantines against the Frankish troops of Theudebert I, who had occupied large sections of northern Italy in the last phases of the Gothic Wars.

Narses continued to pacify regions of Italy until the Franks were

¹¹ In the Prosopographical Appendix (PA), see Ebremud, Amalafidas, *Matasuentha (who married Justinian's cousin Germanus), possibly *Theudegisclus and *Theudenantha. Every Ostrogothic ruler from Amalasuinthia onward, except for Teia, defected or considered defecting to Byzantium.

completely driven out in 561. At this point, some parts of northern Italy were in schism with both the papacy and Constantinople over the Three Chapters Controversy, which may have led them to ally with new groups of ex-Byzantine soldiers and barbarian freebooters coming in from Pannonia, the Lombards. In 568, Lombard groups overran northern and central Italy, which had long been devastated from over two decades of warfare, and continued to raid and seize different cities in different areas. The foundations of these raids eventually led to the formation of a Lombard kingdom based on Milan in the north, and two Lombard duchies in the middle of Italy, based at Spoleto and Benevento.

The Byzantine government treated its sections of Italy no longer as the ancient home of the Roman Empire, but as a military frontier province governed by a military official at Ravenna called the exarch. The regions are thus usually called the Exarchate of Ravenna. They included Rome, Ravenna, and a narrow strip of land between the two, the Via Flaminia, as well as Genoa, the area that would become Venice, southern Italy and Sicily. Italy did not form a single state again until the year 1870.

After the 550s, no individual called a Goth ever appears again in Italy.¹²

¹² The only possible exceptions: PA **Widin** (dating uncertain, 552/561), **Wiliwiwa** (613/641, but uncertain label: the reading "Goth" in the papyrus is a hazardous emendation). On **Widin**, see ch. 5, below.