

settled. He then fortified the Alpine frontier, making Turin a strong-point in his line of defenses.

But the fleeting stability that Theoderic's rule conferred on northern Italy came to an abrupt end after his death in 526. The Ostrogothic kingdom was torn by a succession dispute, giving the Byzantine Emperor Justinian the opportunity to intervene in Italy. His intention was to destroy the Ostrogothic kingdom and restore Roman rule over Italy, thus reuniting the lost western provinces with the eastern empire he ruled from Constantinople, and winning undying glory for himself by reuniting the ancient Roman empire. In 535 a Byzantine army led by Justinian's brilliant general Belisarius landed in Italy and began the reconquest. A long, savage war resulted, which laid waste much of northern and central Italy. The Ostrogoths, though divided, fought back tenaciously. They could draw on wide popular support, for the Byzantine army reimposed the late-Roman fiscal system, with its punitive levels of taxation, which the Ostrogoths had done away with. But by about 553 the last Ostrogothic resistance had been crushed, and Theoderic's former kingdom had dissolved.

3. *The Lombard Kingdom.*

Justinian's victory soon proved hollow. By destroying the Ostrogothic kingdom the Byzantine reconquest merely cleared the way for another barbarian invasion. In 569 the Lombards, led by their king Alboin, swept across the Alps from central Europe and quickly overran northern and central Italy. The defeated Byzantine army and its attendant officials took refuge in Ravenna: Byzantine rule in most of Italy was now effectively at an end. Within a couple of years the Lombards had occupied Piedmont and established themselves at Turin; the city would become a vital stronghold in the kingdom they now established in northern Italy, with its capital at Pavia. They ruled Turin and northern Italy for the next two centuries, leaving a lasting mark on the land. The north Italian plain still bears their name: Lombardy.

Who were the Lombards? Legend has it that they were a Germanic people whose name, "long-beards", was bestowed on them by their supreme deity, Wotan. Recent research however has shown that the Lombards who invaded Italy were not a single people, but a confederation of several different peoples, not all of them Germanic, led by the Lombards. Like the Ostrogoths before them, the Lombards were not simply an invading army in search of plunder, but an entire people – or