

in 590 Agilulf duke of Turin, “dux Taurini”, was chosen king by his fellow-dukes. He reigned until his death in 616. His election may well have been a response to the threat of invasion and demands for tribute from the powerful Frankish kingdom to the west: he stabilized relations with the Frankish kings and ended the payment of tribute to them. He became a champion of orthodox Catholicism against the Arians, because he had married Theodelinda, a Bavarian princess who subscribed to the orthodox or Roman form of Christianity. He became the protector of the Irish missionary-monk Columbanus, who arrived at his court in 610, and two years later founded the monastery of Bobbio, near Piacenza. King Agilulf supported this foundation, and over the years it would grow into a great center of learning, with an extensive library of rare manuscripts. Agilulf was succeeded by his son Adalualdus, who was in turn deposed by Agilulf’s son-in-law Arioldus: succession to the Lombard throne was a turbulent affair, decided by the military strength of the contenders. But gradually the political structure of the kingdom began to achieve greater stability and political maturity. And once settled on the land the Lombard warriors evolved into a landowning elite whose primary concern shifted from military service to the management of their estates. The ebbing of their earlier warrior spirit helps to explain why the Lombard kingdom would crumble with remarkable speed in the face of the Frankish invasions in the later eighth century.

The Lombard dukes of Turin transformed the Roman city, by then degraded by war and neglect, and added to its stock of Christian monuments. In all probability one of the city’s original three churches, dating from the time of St Maximus, was taken over and used for worship by the Arians, at least for a time. We know that the cathedral-baptistery of St John was the scene of a dramatic murder at Easter 662, when Duke Garipaldus was killed by a retainer of his brother (whom he had defeated and slain in a dispute over succession to the throne). The assassin lay in wait for him on top of the baptismal font, which must have been an imposing structure. We also know that the Lombards constructed a ducal palace in the northeast corner of the city; it was probably a fortified enclosure, built on the site of the former Roman Praetorium, more or less where the royal palace now stands. A new church was built close to this palace, probably by the Lombard dukes. It was dedicated to St Peter (a saint the Lombards particularly revered), and was distinguished by the appellation *de curte ducis* – “of the duke’s residence”. Several other churches in the city and its vicinity may also date from the Lombard era, and the convent of St Peter, which stood in the southwestern quarter of the city, was almost certainly a Lombard foun-