

dation. The archaeological evidence we possess, though scanty, reveals that the city's Roman ground-plan was losing some of its regularity, as houses were rebuilt with little regard for the boundaries of the streets. The Lombard buildings were no longer constructed of stone or brick, in the Roman manner, but were made of timber, or on a timber frame with rough stone filling. The fabric of the city was changing, unmistakably and irreversibly.

4. *The Frankish Conquest and the Carolingian Empire.*

From the first, the Lombards had lived in the shadow of their powerful neighbor to the west, the kingdom of the Franks, in what is today France. During the seventh century the threat of attack abated, because of the growing weakness of the Merovingian kings who ruled the Frankish state, but in the early eighth century Frankish power began to grow once more, as the family of a powerful nobleman, Pepin of Heristal, began to supplant the Merovingian dynasty: his family would later rule the Frankish state as the Carolingian dynasty. One indication of resurgent Frankish influence along the sensitive Alpine frontier was the foundation in 726 of the abbey of Novalesa, in the mountains west of Turin, by Abbo, the Frankish governor of Susa. The abbey would evolve into an important center of learning, and would attract the generous patronage of Turin's rulers.

In 751 Pepin III, the grandson of Pepin of Heristal, was proclaimed king of the Franks after he had deposed the last Merovingian ruler, and secured the approval of Pope Zacharias to legitimize his family's seizure of power. In return for this moral support the new Frankish dynasty deployed its formidable military power to defend the pope against the Lombards, who were threatening Rome. Pope Stephen II appealed for aid to Pepin, whom he anointed king of the Franks, confirming him as their legitimate ruler. Pepin then led an army into Italy, and defeated the Lombard king Aistulf. The Lombard kingdom was now clearly subject to Frankish military power, and given the aggressive territorial ambitions of the new Frankish rulers, its demise was only a matter of time. In 771 Pepin's son Charles – later to be known as Charlemagne, or Charles the Great – became sole ruler of the Frankish kingdom. Throughout his reign he would use his army of mounted knights to wage continual wars of conquest against his neighbors, creating a Frankish empire that ultimately stretched from the river Elbe to Catalonia. In 800 Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the Ro-