



**Salvatore Ferdinando Antonio Caputo
&
Carmelo Currò Troiano**



PLATONI

**NOBLE ITALIAN FAMILY
OF LONGOBARD ORIGIN**

THE PLATONI

A NOBLE ITALIAN FAMILY

OF LONGOBARD ORIGIN

INTRODUCTION

After the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Italian peninsula and its surrounding islands became pawns for the European powers that emerged in the wake of Rome's demise. It was not until the late 19th century that the separate states of Italy finally brought an end to the long process of unification under Victor Emanuel II, the new king of Italy elected by the first Italian parliament in 1861. Even then, the nation of Italy as it is known today did not come into existence in its entirety until after World War I.

In the early Middle Ages Italy was divided and distributed by the transient dominance of medieval European conquerors like the Byzantine and Norman Empires. As different rulers vied for Italian preeminence, the Papal State began to develop a sphere of influence that rivaled the claims of the Holy Roman Emperor in Italy. At the same time, northern cities reluctant to cede to Imperial rule formed communes that eventually developed into independently governed city-states.

While southern Italy and the nearby islands of Sardinia and Sicily passed between the hands of Spanish, French, and Austrian rulers from the late Middle Ages into the 18th century, the autonomous regimes of northern and central Italy grew and flourished to become formidable powers in and of themselves. By the 1700s, Venice alone had extended its territorial tendrils well beyond the Italian peninsula to stake claims on Istria, Dalmatia and several other significant islands and ports of the Mediterranean.

The Napoleonic Era brought Italy almost entirely under French control until the Congress of Vienna in 1815 when the peninsula was returned to its prerevolutionary patchwork of independent governments. Despite Austrian and Habsburg attempts to subdue nationalistic fervor, the French had set an example that inspired the Italian states into revolutionary action and by the end of the century the Italian nation had been formed.

In this work we refer to The House of Platoni of Agilolfings Dynasty, legendary origins whose ancestors ruled over Bavaria since the 456 to 592 and the United Lombard of Italy between 653 and 774.

Salvatore Ferdinando Antonio Caputo

The Platoni descends from the Agilolfings and Lombardy Dynasties

It was not far wrong when the Count Girolamo Piatti dictated the stone inscription on the tomb of his illustrious uncle, Cardinal Flaminio Piatti, in the Church of Jesus in Rome; when in courtly Latin stated his surname as Plato: Hieronymus Platus comes Carpiniani. Flaminio (1552-1613), the true glory of the family, a lawyer of respect, art lover and philanthropist, was descended from a noble family from Milan, who in spite of the source away from the area of Ancient Greece or Byzantine Italy, did not hesitate remember mythical Greek and Roman origins, with easy leap name day that evoked the possibility of refurbish to noble ancestors like Plato and Plautus (Cf. P. BARTHOLOMEW *Milan Lustrì storiali de'Scalzi Augustinians of Italy and Germany, Milan 1700, p. 316*).

The count was not far from the truth, not so much because he believed in a different origin of his family; but because, quite unintentionally, it provided the correct etymology of the name: "Piatto" from Plato: phonetic corruption of the vernacular Italian a noun alien, and not by a name day as we thought or we tried to think. We are still very far, in fact, from the historical and social revaluation made since the time of Muratori¹; which he canceled the widespread view that, at the end of the Roman Empire, Italy was invaded by hordes of barbarians who had made a clean sweep of the previous institutions.

It is the same Byzantine`s assumption who wanted to explain the name chosen by the famous Platina, from the famous humanist Bartolomeo Sacchi (1421-1481), born in Piadena at Cremona, who adopted the pseudonym as the Latin name of its country of origin, upheld the exarch of Ravenna (of Byzantine origin) Giovanni Platina.

It is a bad habit, forcing outdated, unkempt and incredible, want bring our nouns in Latin and the Greek, forgetting *prelatini* (Origin & history From pre- + Latin) substrates, and then the Lombards, Franks, and even the Goths; those Arabs, French, Spanish and are widely entered the everyday language that formed the Italian language Piatti from Plato in fact. A noun that had to be very close to the current German *platt*, and that must mean "plan", "plain", in defining the orographic conformation of the territory, and that explains the language and ethnicity of those who bore that name.

A Germanic origin, then, for the name of Plato, and hence for Platone and Platoni, without being confused by Roman and Greek etymologies that are similar only in phonetics.

Platoni is the surname of one of the families that ruled the small sovereign states of the Italian peninsula forming part of the Holy Roman Empire. One of the families who managed to survive despite the conspiracies and the greed of the most important neighbors, until the turn

¹ Ludovico Antonio Muratori (21 October 1672 – 23 January 1750) was an Italian historian, notable as a leading scholar of his age, and for his discovery of the Muratorian fragment, the earliest known list of New Testament books.

of the eighteenth century, and were generally overwhelmed by the revolutionary storm that eliminated much of the state entities of which he was often saved until the full medieval period.

We are used to thinking of the pre-unification Italian States as to those few countries such as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany or the Lombard-Veneto who were conquered by the Kingdom of Sardinia during what is called the "resurgence". In fact, until a few years before, it had many other government entities, and ever more numerous if we go back in time.

Today, beyond a circle of experts, it would seem strange to hear talk of the county of Asti, the lordship of Bertinoro, the Marquis (later principality) of Torrighia, the Duchy of Guastalla. In fact, hundreds of state entities, employees from the Empire or the Church, were formed during the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, taking advantage of the temporary inability of the two great powers, to directly control their own territories. Feoffee² devoted to families, small or large areas of the Peninsula could form themselves into true autonomous entities will be phased out, to be absorbed or expand, depending on the general political situation and the capacity and power of their rulers. Think of a state only officially a vassal of the empire, such as the Savoy (Savoy brought and bear the title of vicars of the Holy Roman Empire) which in fact become fully sovereign thanks to the management of their strongholds, the carefree alliance policy, the possibility to incorporate less powerful states as the county Tent, at Asti, the Marquis of Saluzzo, the Monferrato, the Republic of Genoa. In this case, the entity actually became State; in others, it retained wide autonomy, calling typically half-sovereign State, of which the Pope or the Emperor, if possible, could try to cautiously resume control.

Think of all those entities that are within the Papal States and that were recovered piece by piece (even by force) from the beginning of the sixteenth century: Forli (already Ordelauffi and Riario), Faenza (Manfredi and then Borgia), Citta di Castello (Vitelli), Perugia (Baglioni), just to name a few. Think of the Duchy of Castro, granted to the Farnese Paul III in 1537, was recovered from the Papal States in 1649, when the Apostolic Chamber shouldered all the debts of the Princely House and retrieved his fief-State by the impossibility of the Dukes of Parma to balance after the deadlines.

We know what prudence has taken Charles V in managing its political relations with a State officially vassal as Florence; and how much skill he demonstrated Cosimo de Medici in free from the Spanish military garrison, acquire effective independence policy toughening administrative structures, expand their territories at the expense of less powerful neighbors such as the Republic of Lucca, Siena (which managed to incorporate) and the State of the Garrisons (cf. G. SPINI, *Cosimo I and the independence dl Principality Medici, Florence, 1980*).

² Feoffee a trustee invested with a freehold estate to hold in possession for a purpose. He became a legal advisor to Lord FitzWalter and later to his son, as well as a feoffee of the FitzWalter estates; he similarly served the Earl of Oxford, who had landed and commercial interests in Maldon.

In the list of small states imperial fiefs, one of the most long-lived was just what the Platoni, first consecrated in Val di Taro, later reduced to only Gravago Castle (today in the municipality of Bardi, in the province of Parma). The castle belonged to the lordship original long in Val di Taro, then became part of what was called the State Landi: large entities including the Bardi Castle, belonging to the family of the same name that it obtained from Charles V the title of marquis in 1551 long remained independent, despite continued attempts of annexation by the Farnese. Passed in 1682 to the latter house, for sale made by the Marquis of Bardi, the only castle Gravago that was not part of the Marquis, he returned directly to the House Platoni, heir of the State of Val di Taro, which descended from the coterie of medieval gentlemen original, feudal lords of the Holy Roman Empire, divided over the centuries in many families that had often taken different surnames. Count Carlo Troilo Platoni was the last count-king of the castle, which he forcibly sold in 1772 on the orders of the Duke of Parma that caused him to leave the castle and move to Borgo San Donnino.

Even today, therefore, we discuss whether or not the family Platoni is of Byzantine origin. It again philology can help us thanks to its support of preterintentional safe source. Far away from identifying Byzantine origin, are the names similar to many places in northern Italy: Plan (Bolzano and Aosta), Plata (Bolzano), Plataz (Udine). We will not speak of Platì (Reggio Calabria), since the country's name is a phonetic corruption of the noun "prati". It 'then the place names of the same "capital" of the Platoni, that is Borgo Val di Taro, to demonstrate a strong descent from the ancient Germanic languages, and thus the widespread presence and influence in the social life of the ancient inhabitants of Lombard.

The names of several villages are extremely clear, and speak orography of the territory or its use agricultural and pastoral. Banca (bank ancient Germanic and balk in Lombard, from which our balcony noun) wants to understand a mound, as indicated residents. Barca (from the Germanic bargke = bark), it has the later meaning of barn). Barzana (braz = fence) has wrecks language in Lombard dialect still in use. Bissaio, more than remembering a place where grew the boxwoods or Lombard baussa = cold place, I think it is due to the noun Lombard baissan = game (thus places where you went hunting). Boceto would be due in other region in the Latin noun bucetum (= pasture; A. CAMMARANO also proposed this etymology with uncertainty: *Toponomastica Agro picentino in Salerno Historical Review*, 18, 1992, p. 192); but here I would accept the noun biga=mucchio, sheaf. Houses Scodellino recalls the ancient word skulk = guardhouse. Ghiara from wara, or irrigation canal. Griffola by grif = socket (perhaps an old building). Magrano by Magrez = thin (later also nickname and surname). Meda pays dall'uguale noun meaning (cf. the many sites telematic wreck language Lombard where you can find many etymologies of great interest).

And then, also Platoni must be counted among those families whose family name is more clearly of Lombard origin, as the Aldobrandeschi, the Alfano, the Alibrandi, the Beccaria, the Landi, the Macchi, the Martinengo, the Odescalchi, the Sebregondi, the Strozzi, the Suardi.

Ludovico Antonio Muratori, the author of *Antiquities Este*, would smile on their pretensions of wanting to renew every word or every noble family with origins in Greek and Latin, making a clean sweep in his day about the origins of his own sovereign. From cultured explorer document which was, he wrote: "Instead of taking leave from ancient Rome or France the principles of the Serene house of Este, we have to bring in Germany (...)." Impossible to think that a kind prince lover of arts and poetry could be compared "to the ugly face of a Lombard (...), man horrid-looking, with a beard and mustache lying on the chest, on the satin backside head, armed with spikes it 'knees and sword two hands? ". Not so, he replied, because these people were very different, full of moral virtues and military, and all images entered the collective imagination, were considered for him "stories and imaginations air" (cf. B. ROSSI, *The Este*, Milan 1972, pp. 10-11). The story has often been invented. But at least for the Platoni and the House of Este ³ was intervened by philology ⁴ and Muratori. And justice is done.

Carmelo Currò Troiano

³ The House of Este is a European princely dynasty. It is split into two branches; the elder is known as the House of Welf-Este or House of Welf (Guelf or Guelph), and the younger is known as the House of Fulc-Este or later simply as the House of Este. The elder branch of the House of Este included the dukes of Brunswick and Lüneburg (1208–1918) and produced Britain's Hanoverian monarchs and one Emperor of Russia (Ivan VI). The younger branch of the House of Este included rulers of Ferrara (1240–1597), and Modena and Reggio (1288–1796).

⁴ Philology the study of literature and of disciplines relevant to literature or to language as used in literature

Italy in the early Middle Ages

The Roman Empire was an international political system in which Italy was only a part, though an important part. When the empire fell, a series of barbarian kingdoms initially ruled the peninsula, but, after the Lombard invasion of 568–569, a network of smaller political entities arose throughout Italy. How each of these developed—in parallel with the others, out of the ruins of the Roman world—is one principal theme of this section. The survival and development of the Roman city is another. The urban focus of politics and economic life inherited from the Romans continued and expanded in the early Middle Ages and was the unifying element in the development of Italy's regions.

On September 4, 476 the barbarian Flavius Odoacer deposed the Western Roman Emperor Romulus Augustus, a kid just thirteen years old, after having killed his father. Romulus Augustus was the son of Orestes who once had been an assistant to Attila the Hun, and who had at times been sent on diplomatic visits to Constantinople. After Attila's death, Orestes joined the service of the western empire and quickly achieved senior position. In AD 474 emperor Julius Nepos made him 'Master of Soldiers' and raised him to the rank of patrician. The young Romulus Augustus was imprisoned in a villa in Napoli. The crisis of the Roman state in the West, according to some even started in the I-II century, thus came to its dramatic conclusion. Odoacer, however, it was not without deference to the empire. He is considered a patrician who ruled in the name of the Eastern Zeno, which postponed the insignia Western; respected the Roman Senate much more than they had done many emperors legitimate. Beyond the historical dating it is possible to say that the Middle Ages, in Italy, began almost a century later, with the arrival of the Lombards.

What happened, in Italy, to the Romans during these years? What did the ruling class Latin faced with the inexorable rise of expanding populations? What was the identikit of the ruling class during the troubled V-IX centuries?

Of this we want to deal in this study. In this context, we do not care much debated the causes of the end of the Empire. Our question is whether the Germans who were, it should be remembered, few in number and fairly inexperienced in managing a complex state apparatus and sedentary, they replaced completely Latinos reducing them in a dark basement of the story or whether the Roman ruling class was able, once you understand that it was impossible to fight them, to come to terms with the newcomers, maintaining large slices of power from which drive a merger between the two elements.

If Theodosius had favored integration, his successors in the West were very uncertain about the policy to hold. In the East, he stepped forward with a policy decision more nationalistic, which was possible for most of the Eastern force, which did not appear too many scruples in addressing the migration to the West.

How interacted, in Italy, the Roman ruling class with the barbarian? As this interaction formed the new ruling class of the Middle Ages Italian?

FLAVIUS ODOVACER



This solidus was minted by Odoacer in the name of Zeno. Odoacer ruled Italy under the formal patronage of the Eastern Emperor.



Coin of Odoacer, Ravenna, 477, with Odoacer in profile, depicted with a "barbarian"

Flavius Odoacer was a soldier, who in 476 became the first King of Italy (476–493). His reign is commonly seen as marking the end of the Western Roman Empire. Though the real power in Italy was in his hands, he represented himself as the client of Julius Nepos and, after Nepos' death in 480, of the Emperor in Constantinople. Odoacer generally used the Roman honorific patrician, granted by the Emperor Zeno, but is referred to as a king (Latin *rex*) in many documents and he himself used it at least once and on another occasion it was used by the consul Basilius. Odoacer introduced few important changes into the administrative system of Italy. He had the support of the Roman Senate and was able to distribute land to his followers without much opposition. Unrest among his warriors led to violence in 477–478, but no such disturbances occurred during the later

period of his reign. Although Odoacer was an Arian Christian, he rarely intervened in the affairs of the orthodox and Trinitarian state church of the Roman Empire.

To what extent he was a military commander of a Roman army as opposed to being a German "tribal" leader was by now impossible to tell. Nonetheless, he, like Ricimer, was an effective defender of Italy against invaders for a long time.

Probably of Scirian descent, Odoacer was a military leader in Italy who led the revolt of Herulian, Rugian, and Scirian soldiers that deposed Romulus Augustulus on 4 September AD

476. Augustulus had been declared Western Roman Emperor by his father, the rebellious General of the Army in Italy, less than a year before, but had been unable to gain allegiance or recognition beyond central Italy. With the backing of the Roman Senate, Odoacer thenceforth ruled Italy autonomously, paying lip service to the authority of Julius Nepos, the last Western emperor and Zeno the emperor of the East. Upon Nepos' murder in 480 Odoacer invaded Dalmatia, to punish the murderers. He did so, executing the conspirators, but within two years also conquered the region and incorporated it into his domain. When Illus, master of soldiers of the Eastern Empire, asked for Odoacer's help in 484 in his struggle to depose Zeno, Odoacer invaded Zeno's westernmost provinces. The emperor responded first by inciting the Rugi of present day Austria to attack Italy. During the winter of 487–488 Odoacer crossed the Danube and defeated the Rugi in their own territory. Zeno also appointed the Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great who was menacing the borders of the Eastern Empire, to be king of Italy, turning one troublesome, nominal vassal against another. Theodoric invaded Italy in 489 and by August 490 had captured almost the entire peninsula, forcing Odoacer to take refuge in Ravenna. The city surrendered on March 5, 493; Theodoric invited Odoacer to a banquet of reconciliation and there killed him.

Odoacer is the earliest ruler of Italy for whom an autograph of any of his legal acts has survived to the current day. The larger portion of a record of Odoacer granting properties in Sicily and the island of Melita on the Adriatic coast to Pierius and issued in 488, was written in his reign.

THEODORIC THE GREAT



Theodoric, Late Latin Theodoricus, byname Theodoric The Great (born ad 454—died Aug. 30, 526, Ravenna), king of the Ostrogoth⁵ (from 471), who invaded Italy in 488 and completed the conquest of virtually the entire peninsula and Sicily by 493, making himself king of Italy (493–526) and establishing his capital at Ravenna. In German and Icelandic legend, he is the prototype of Dietrich von Bern.

Odoacer (433-493 CE) had been king of Italy, with Zeno's permission, since 476 CE but had increasingly been causing problems for Zeno. Odoacer had backed Illus' revolt, had annexed the region of Dalmatia with impunity, and was acting more like an independent monarch of a

⁵ The Ostrogoths (Latin: Ostrogothi or Austrogothi) were a branch of the later Goths (the other major branch being the Visigoths). The Ostrogoths, under Theodoric the Great, established a kingdom in Italy in the late 5th and 6th centuries. The Ostrogoths traced their origins to the Greutungi and a semi-legendary kingdom north of the Black Sea in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Migrating southward from the Baltic Sea, the Ostrogoths, at the time known as the Greuthungi, built up a huge empire stretching from the Dniester to the Volga River and from the Black Sea to the Baltic shores. The Ostrogoths were probably literate in the 3rd century, and their trade with the Romans was highly developed. Their Danubian kingdom reached its zenith under King Ermanaric, who is said to have committed suicide at an old age when the Huns attacked his people and subjugated them in about 370.

country than the ruler of a Roman province. Zeno needed to rid himself of Odoacer and Theodoric both, and it is thought that he considered this solution the best, as one of them was certain to kill the other and he would then have only a single problem to deal with.

Theodoric arrived in Italy in late August 489. In the following year he defeated Odoacer in three pitched battles and won control of nearly all Italy, but he could not take Ravenna, where Odoacer held out for more than three years. This war caused untold damage to city and countryside alike in northern Italy. The circumstances of Odoacer's death illustrate the crueller side of Theodoric's character, a side he normally concealed. When the Ostrogoth had failed to take Ravenna, the two leaders agreed to govern Italy jointly, and Odoacer admitted Theodoric into the impregnable city on March 5, 493. In the palace of Laurentum 10 days later, two Goths, pretending to be suppliants, suddenly seized Odoacer by the hands, and Theodoric cut him down with a sword. Theodoric went on to murder the dead man's wife and son and to massacre his followers remorselessly throughout northern Italy.

Whether Theodoric governed Italy as an independent king or as an official of the Roman emperor at Constantinople has been much debated. The truth appears to be that in theory he recognized the overlordship of the Eastern emperor; in practice, however, he was king both of the Romans and of the barbarians in Italy. In his official documents, he is simply "king" without qualification; he never defined of whom or of what he was the king. But there were some limits to his powers. He could not appoint legitimate consuls without confirmation by the emperor; he could issue edicts but not laws, though in practice there was little difference between the two; he could not confer Roman citizenship upon a Goth or appoint a Goth to a Roman civilian office or to the Senate; and his people could not legally intermarry with Romans. Early in his reign Theodoric put aside the skins or furs that Germanic rulers usually wore and surrounded his throne with something of Byzantine pomp. Unlike Odoacer, he dressed himself in the purple of the emperors.

Theodoric maintained peace in Italy throughout his 33-year reign. The Goths were settled in northern and central Italy, while Sicily and southern Italy as far north as Naples were free of them, but some of them lived in such overseas Ostrogoth dominions as Dalmatia and Pannonia. The Goths were divided from the Romans by language, for Gothic in the middle of the 6th century were both a spoken and a written language, used both for secular and for ecclesiastical matters. And they were further divided from the Romans by religion because they were Arian Christians, not Catholics, and they accepted the doctrines of the 4th-century heretical Gothic bishop Ulfilas⁶.

Theodoric's health began to fail and he died in 526 CE after 30 years as king. He was buried with full honors in his mausoleum at Ravenna and, although this was later desecrated

⁶ Ulfilas (c. 311–383), also known as Ulphilas and Orphila, all Latinized forms of Wulfila "Little Wolf"), was a Goth of Cappadocian Greek descent who served as a bishop and missionary, translated the Bible, and participated in the Arian controversy.

following Belisarius' victory over the Goths in 540 CE; it was repaired and still stands in the city in the present day. Theodoric is remembered as 'the Great' for his revitalization of Italy and his efforts in ruling over a diverse population without attempting to assimilate either culture into the other. His legacy continues into the present day as a great king who ruled his people wisely with the vision of a united kingdom of separate but equal populations. His later persecution of Trinitarian Christians is attributed to his emotional response to Justinian's anti-Arian policies in Constantinople rather than a clearly considered policy of discrimination and his memory continues to be honored for the vision he maintained and his efforts to make it a reality. He was succeeded by Athalaric.

Athalaric (516 – 2 October 534) was the King of the Ostrogoths in Italy. He was a son of [Eutharic](#) and [Amalasantha](#). His maternal grandfather was Theodoric the Great. He succeeded his grandfather as king in 526.

As Athalaric was only ten years old, the regency was assumed by his mother, Amalasantha. His mother attempted to provide for him an education in the Roman tradition, but the Gothic nobles pressured her to allow them to raise him as they saw fit. As a result, Athalaric drank heavily and indulged in vicious excesses, which ruined his constitution.

THE END OF THE ROMAN WORLD

The Eastern emperors in Constantinople regarded themselves as the legitimate rulers of the West, including Italy, after 476; both Odoacer and, for a time, Theodoric had recognized them, and they had strong links with the Roman Senate. In 533–534 Belisarius, general for the Eastern emperor Justinian I (527–565), conquered Vandal Africa; Amalasantha's death was the necessary excuse to invade Italy. Belisarius arrived in Sicily in 535, and by 540 he had fought his way north to Ravenna. The Ostrogoth king Witigis⁷ (536–540) surrendered to him. The Gothic armies of the north, however, elected new kings, and Totila (541–552), the most successful of them, kept the war going throughout the peninsula until his death in battle.

The Gothic wars were a disaster for Italy; almost no region was untouched by them. Together with the subsequent wars of the Lombard conquest (568–605), they mark the end of the Roman world there. In the 550s and the early 560s, however, the Eastern (thenceforth, Byzantine) Empire succeeded in reestablishing its political order in Italy, and in 554 Justinian issued the Pragmatic Sanction setting forth its terms: Italy was made a province of the Byzantine Empire, with its capital still at Ravenna (Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, however, were to remain administratively separate), and the Ostrogoth political system was to be dissolved. Indeed, the Ostrogoths virtually vanished as a people from then on; it is assumed they were absorbed into the Roman population or into that of the Lombards.

⁷ Witigis, (flourished 536), Ostrogoth soldier who became king of Italy and led his people in an unsuccessful last-ditch struggle against the Eastern Roman Empire.

Lombards and Byzantines

ALBOIN

King of the Germanic Lombards whose exceptional military and political skills enabled him to conquer northern Italy.



Alboin from the Nuremberg Chronicle, 1493 CE, Bavarian State Library

In 568–569 a different Germanic tribe, the Lombards, invaded Italy under their king, Alboin (c. 565–572). They came from Pannonia (modern western Hungary), which had itself been a Roman province. Exactly how Romanized they were is a matter of dispute, but they certainly did not have the political coherence of the Ostrogoths, and they never conquered the whole of Italy. Alboin took the north but was soon murdered, probably with Byzantine connivance. His successor, Cleph (572–574), was murdered as well, and for a decade (574–584) the Lombards broke up into local duchies with no king at all. The Byzantines seem to have been partially responsible for this too; at that time they did not have the military capacity to drive the invaders back, and it was easier for them to divide the Lombard leadership and buy some of them into the Byzantine camp. For the rest of the century, even after the reestablishment of Lombard kingship under Authari (584–590) and then Agilulf (590–616), nearly as many Lombard leaders seem to have been fighting with the Byzantines as

against them. In 584, in the face of Frankish⁸ invasions from beyond the Alps, the Lombard dukes met and elected Authari king, ceding him considerable lands; in the process, Agilulf managed to unify the duchies of the north into a single kingdom. But the confusion of the first decades of the Lombard kingdom did not favor the development of a coherent political system, and, when the wars stopped in 605, Italy was divided into several pieces with boundaries that were in some cases to survive for centuries.

The largest of these pieces was the Lombard kingdom of northern Italy and Tuscany. By the 620s its capital was at [Pavia](#), which remained the capital of the north until the 11th century; other major centers were Verona, [Milan](#), Turin (Torino), [Lucca](#), and Cividale, the capital of the duchy of [Friuli](#). Friuli played an important role as the Italian frontier against the [Avars](#), a powerful military confederation of Central Asian origin that had taken over Pannonia. The two

⁸ **Frank**, member of a Germanic-speaking people who invaded the western [Roman Empire](#) in the 5th century. Dominating present-day northern France, Belgium, and western Germany, the Franks established the most powerful Christian kingdom of early medieval western Europe. The name France (Francia) is derived from their name.

great southern duchies of the Lombards, [Spoleto](#) in the central Apennines and [Benevento](#) in the mountains and plains of the south, are best considered independent states; they were not connected to the Lombard kingdom geographically and seem to have developed separately, as territories conquered in the 6th century by Lombard detachments originally in some sense under Byzantine control. They were part of the same political structure as the north only for brief periods, most notably the 660s and the 730s–760s.

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire had expended enormous amounts of money to win back Italy from the Ostrogoths following the death of Theodoric the Great in 526 CE. Between 526-555 CE the eastern empire was almost constantly at war with the Ostrogoths of Italy, often employing the Lombards against them. It was a blow, therefore, to have their former allies now occupying the lands that the imperial forces had fought so hard to reclaim. In c. 582 the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, Maurice, established the Exarchate at Ravenna whose purpose was to reclaim Italy from the Lombards. The Exarchs were military commanders whose role would be to organize the populace and equip an army. The people of Italy, however, who still remembered the exorbitant taxes of the empire, were not interested in seeing a return of imperial rule and had even less interest in seeing their tax money go to finance more wars of the empire instead of going to improvements in their own land. The Exarchate, therefore, was ineffective and came to nothing.

Byzantine Italy was nominally a single unit, but it too in reality fell into several separate pieces. Its political center was [Ravenna](#), which was ruled by a military leader appointed from Constantinople and called exarch from about 590. Exarchs were changed quite frequently, probably because military figures far from the center of the empire that developed a local following might revolt (as happened in 619 and 651) or else turn themselves into autonomous rulers. But the impermanence of the exarchs made it easier for their local subordinates to gain some measure of autonomy. The duke of [Naples](#), the largest city of the south, was effectively independent by the 8th century, as was the duke of the newly formed lagoon city of Venice. The most important of these local rulers, however, was the pope, the bishop of Rome, for Rome

remained the largest city of Italy and its bishop, in theory the spiritual head of the whole of Latin Christendom, had considerable status. Rome had dukes too, but they did not have the local support the popes had, and they remain shadowy figures. The popes, on the other hand, had a political position that in practice equaled that of the exarchs and lasted a great deal longer. In the far south, Sicily remained administratively separate from Ravenna, as did Sardinia, which followed its own path under increasingly independent “judges” in almost total obscurity until the Pisan and Genoese invasions of the 11th and 12th centuries. The Lombards of Benevento took Apulia (now Puglia) from the Byzantines, except for [Otranto](#) at its southern tip, in the late 7th century; southern [Calabria](#) remained under Byzantine control and was Greek-speaking by the 10th century.

The Lombard kingdom, 584–774

King Authari ensured the survival of the Lombards, threatened as they were by both the Byzantines and the Franks. The last Frankish invasion, in 590, probably resulted in some sort of Frankish supremacy; the Lombards played tribute, at least for a time, and sent detachments to fight in the Frankish army as late as the 620s. King Agilulf reorganized the kingdom and suppressed several dukes with pretensions to autonomy. He also concluded a treaty with the Byzantines in 605 that established permanent borders with the exarchate, which scarcely changed over the next century (the only major exception being the Lombard conquest of the [Ligurian](#) coast in the early 640s). Agilulf also seems to have reorganized the central government with the help of Roman administrators, and indeed he imitated or reestablished some late Roman and Byzantine court rituals; he did not, however, exact the land tax and must have lived mostly off his substantial royal estates.

Agilulf seems to have been a pagan in his personal religion, though he may have been an Arian Christian; there were certainly many Arians among the Lombards, including most of the kings between 568 and 652. His wife and son were, however, Catholic, and Catholics were common among the Lombards as a whole from at least the 590s as well. Germanic peoples had often been Arians in the 5th and 6th centuries (the Ostrogoths were, for example), but the Lombards seem to have been less committed to Arianism than were the Goths or the Vandals, and they abandoned it without documented struggle in the mid-7th century. Although the Lombards do not in any case seem to have been religious fanatics, it may well have been Agilulf who laid the basis for a peaceful conversion of his people to Catholicism, owing to his careful cultivation of links to Catholic figures such as Pope Gregory I (despite his wars with Rome) or to the Irish missionary Columban, who founded the monastery of [Bobbio](#), near [Pavia](#), about 612.

THE AGILOFINGS

The Agilolfings were a noble family that ruled the Duchy of Bavaria on behalf of their Merovingian suzerains from about 550 until 788. A cadet branch of the Agilolfings also ruled the Kingdom of the Lombards intermittently from 616 to 712. They are mentioned as the leading dynasty in the *Lex Baiuvariorum*⁹ (c. 743). Their Bavarian residence was at Regensburg.

The dynasty's eponymous ancestor is Agilulf, a semi-legendary prince of the Suebi and descendant of Hermeric, the 5th-century Suevic king of Galicia, possibly identical with one Agilulf, a steward of the Visigothic king Theoderic II, who was executed in 457.

The first duke identified with the Agilolfings line in German historiography is Garibald I (Gariwald). However, doubt has been cast on Garibald's membership in the Agilolfings family in modern scholarship, which makes Tassilo I (r. 591–610) the first ascertained member of the dynasty.

The Agilolfings had close ties to the Merovingians. Garibald I himself married Waldrada, the widow of Merovingian king Theudebald, in 555, after her marriage to Lothair I was annulled on grounds of consanguinity. As they had their fate intertwined with the Merovingian dynasty, they opposed the rise of the Carolingian majordomos, who finally deprived the Agilolfings of their power.

Agilulf King of the Lombards

A relative of his predecessor Authari¹⁰, he was selected king on the advice of the Christian queen and widow of Authari, [Theodelinda](#), whom he then married. Although he assumed the royal dignity at the beginning of November 590, he was raised on the shield—the ceremonial investment of his title—by Lombard warriors in Milan in May 591.

He was baptized to appease his wife and his nation followed suit, though they adopted the Arian denomination, not the Roman faith. In 603, under the influence of his wife, he abandoned Arianism for



⁹ The *Lex Baiuvariorum* (also *Lex Baiuvariorum*, *Lex Bajuvariorum*, or *Lex Baivariorum*) was a [collection of the tribal laws](#) of the [Bavarii](#) of the sixth through eighth centuries. The first compilation was edited by [Eberswind](#), first [abbot](#) of [Niederaltaich](#), in 741 or 743. [Duke Odilo](#), founder supplemented the code around 748. It is one of the most well documented bodies of Germanic tribal law.

¹⁰ **Authari** (c. 540 – 5 September 590, Pavia) also known as **Agilolf**, was king of the Lombards from 584 to his death. After his father, [Cleph](#), died in 574, the Lombardic nobility refused to appoint a successor, resulting in ten years interregnum known as the *Rule of the Dukes*.

Catholicism, and had his son Adaloald baptized. He and his wife built and endowed the cathedral of Monza, where the [Iron Crown of Lombardy](#) is still preserved and where Agilulf crown, dedicated to St John, exists, bearing the inscription *rex totius Italiae*, meaning "king of all Italy", as Agilulf evidently saw himself.

His long reign was marked by the cessation of war with Francia (France), whose chief peacemaker [Guntram](#), king of Burgundy, had died in 592. Without him, the Franks descended into civil war which prevented a united assault on Lombardy throughout Agilulf rule. A truce with the Papacy negotiated in 598 temporarily ended thirty years of Lombard terror in the [Ducatus Romanus](#) and he spent most of his war making energies on the Byzantine threat. In that year, he consolidated Lombard power, extending the dominion of his kingdom by taking [Sutri](#) and [Perugia](#) among other [Umbrian](#) cities from the [exarchate of Ravenna](#), while maintaining good relations with the Bavarians. He fought the [Avars](#) and [Slavs](#), and entered a truce with the Byzantine emperor [Maurice](#) in 598 with the aid of Pope Gregory the Great. The following year, Exarch [Callinicus](#) broke the truce by kidnapping the travelling daughter of the Lombard king. War erupted and, in 602, the Byzantine emperor [Phocas](#) lost Padua, which Authari had cut off from Ravenna a decade prior. The loss of Padua in turn cut off [Mantua](#) and, before the year was out, that city too fell to Agilulf.

In 607, Witteric, king of the Visigoths, initiated a quadruple alliance against Theuderic II of Burgundy involving Theudebert II of Austrasia, [Clotaire II](#) of [Neustria](#), and Agilulf. Theuderic's grandmother and sister had murdered Theuderic's wife, the daughter of Witteric. The alliance does not seem to have had success. Nothing of any actual combat is known except that it took place, probably around [Narbonne](#).

In 605, he was recognized by the emperor Phocas, who paid a tribute and ceded [Orvieto](#) among other towns. The [Persian Wars](#) drew Byzantine attention to the Orient and gave respite to Agilulf final decade on the throne. He had to put down some insurrections and the Avars did not desist from invading [Friuli](#), where they slew its duke, Gisulf, in 610. Otherwise, his reign ended peacefully and he died in 616, after reigning for more than a quarter of a century. He was succeeded by Adaloald, his son by Theodelinda, who was still an adolescent, though he had been associated with the throne. He had a daughter [Gundeberga](#) who married [Arioald](#) who later became king.

DECLINE OF THE LOMBARDS & THE FRANKISH CONQUEST

After Agilulf's death, his wife Theodelinda reigned until 628 CE when her son, Adaloald, came of age and took the throne. He was deposed by Arioald, his brother-in-law and a staunch Arian, who objected to the king's Catholicism. Arioald was succeeded in 636 CE by Rothari who is considered the most effective Lombard king to rule between Alboin and the later Liutprand. Under Rothari, the Lombards expanded their holdings in Italy until the Byzantine Empire held only Rome and a few small provinces. The north of Italy was completely dominated by Lombard rule as was the majority of the south. He issued the first written law of the Lombards,

the Edictum Rothari, in 643 CE, which codified the laws in Latin. Rothari was succeeded by his son, Rodoald, who was quickly assassinated by political enemies.

Following his death, the Lombard Kingdom split between two rulers, one at Milan and the other at Pavia, and the Lombards battled each other as well as encroaching Slavic tribes on the borders. This situation was resolved when Liutprand came to the throne in 712 CE and reigned until 744 CE. Liutprand is generally regarded as the greatest Lombard king since Alboin. He increased the Lombard Kingdom beyond even what Rothari had accomplished and allied himself securely with the powerful Franks against all enemies. His reign was characterized by security and prosperity, but this good fortune would not last long beyond his death. His successors were generally weak and greedy men or simply ineffective rulers. The last king, Desiderius, succeeded in taking Rome and driving the Byzantines from Italy but, when he threatened Pope Hadrian I, Charlemagne of the Franks interceded, breaking the Frankish-Lombard alliance, and defeated Desiderius in battle in 774 CE. Charlemagne then seized the lands of the Lombards and so ended Lombard rule in Italy. Some territories under surviving Lombard dukes remained, but there was no longer a central Lombard government, and the people, with their culture, were absorbed into the kingdom of the Franks.

Desiderius, last King of the Lombards



(A 15th century miniature portraying Desiderius, the last king of Lombards)

In 756 BECAME KING DUKE OF TUSCANY, koning der Lombarden, Roi de Lombardie, the last king of the Lombard Kingdom of northern Italy, Rei da Lombardia, Longobardi (756-774), Duc, d'Istrie, Roi, des Lombards, Roy des Lombards, Duc de Toscane et d'Asti, Re.

Desiderius also known as Desiderio in Italian, died c. 786, was the last king of the Lombard Kingdom of northern Italy, ruling from 756 to 774. He is chiefly known for his connection to Charlemagne, who married his daughter and conquered his realm.



Pope Stephen III (c. 720 – 1 February 772, was the Pope from 7 August 768 to his death in 772) opposed Charlemagne's marriage to Desiderius' daughter, Desiderata, in 768, but by his death in 772, he had made peace with the Lombards. The new pope, Adrian I, however, implored the aid of Charlemagne against him, for the marriage of dynasties was dissolved by Charlemagne's repudiation of Desiderata in 771. Charles sent her back to her father. Moreover, Gerberga, the widow of Charlemagne's brother Carloman, sought the protection of the Lombard king after her husband's death in 771; and—probably in return for the insult Charlemagne had given to the Lombards by rejecting Desiderata—Desiderius recognized Gerberga's sons as lawful heirs, and attacked Pope Adrian for refusing to crown them kings and invaded the Pentapolis. The embassies of Adrian and Desiderius met at Thionville and Charlemagne favored the pope's case.

Such was the position when Charlemagne and his uncle Bernard led troops across the Alps in 773. The Lombards were severely defeated at Mortara (Ara Mortis) and soon besieged in their capital of Ticinum, the modern Pavia. Desiderius' son Adelchis was raising an army at Verona, but the young prince was chased to the Adriatic littoral and fled to Constantinople when Charlemagne approached.

The siege lasted until June 774, when, in return for the lives of his soldiers and subjects, Desiderius surrendered and opened the gates. Desiderius was exiled to Corbie Abbey, where he died, and his son Adelchis spent his entire life in futile attempts to recover his father's kingdom. Some sources state that the king and his family were banished to a monastery at Liège, Belgium. Desiderius died sometime around 786.

THE PLATONI FAMILY

Platoni family was a feudal house, it settled in the Borgo Val Taro. Borgo Val di Taro is a town and comune in Emilia, Italy, in the Province of Parma, 63 kilometers (39 miles) from the city of Parma. Borgo Val di Taro is an important center for cattle husbandry in Emilia and it's one of the zones where Parmigiano-Reggiano is produced. It is also commonly known as Borgotaro. The area is well known for its *Boletus edulis* or Porcini mushrooms, and the 'Fungo di Borgotaro' (Mushroom of Borgotaro) has IGP (English: PGI) Status.

The Val di Taro is traversed by the Via Francigena, the ancient road and pilgrim route from Canterbury to Rome, which follows the valley from Noceto to the Passo della Cisa. From mediaeval times most of the Val di Taro was held by the Landi family, princes of Val di Taro. Their castle stands at Compiano. In the late 16th century their lands passed into the hands of Ottavio Farnese following a failed conspiracy against the Farnese family in 1582, some thirty years before the more famous Sanvitale conspiracy. Claudio Landi, Prince of Val di Taro, plotted with Giambattista Anguissola and Giammaria and Cammillo Scotti to assassinate Farnese, but the plot was discovered; Landi lost the Val di Taro, and the other conspirators lost their heads.



According to a common tradition to many noble families it was often recovered, a kinship with illustrious ancestors, useful to celebrate the genealogical history of a family. In the case of family Platoni it would rise from the Italian branch of the dynasty Agilolfings, specifically when the eldest son Garibald I of Bavaria¹¹, called Gundoaldo, fled to Italy, acquiring the title of Duke of Asti. Gundoaldo in turn father of Aripert, first king of Italy and of the Lombards of Bavarian origin, and he had a lifelong genealogy of kings until Desire. Also according to tradition was the fourth son of King Ansprand that began to be designated with the surname Platoni. Recent historical research and philology still have sufficiently shown that claims origins family gifts are not reflected in reality.

Failed origin agilofingi appears more credible a source customs, a source that is tied to those barbaric warriors who had supervisory duties and government within the possessions of King and Lombard dukes. Given that the area of origin of Platoni corresponds to the current district of Borgo Val di Taro, we know that these territories had been donated by the barbarian kings Abbey of St. Columbanus . The Platoni, in particular, would be having been *livellari* (The word comes from the Latin *libellus* (namely book) of this land on behalf of the Abbey, concentrating

¹¹ **Garibald I** (also *Garivald*) (born 540) was [Duke \(or King\) of Bavaria](#) from 555 until 591. He stands at the head of the [Agilolfings](#) and the [Bavarian Dynasty](#) that ruled the [Kingdom of the Lombards](#).

more and more power into their own hands. The founder of the family was the historical Plato Platoni (Borgo Val di Taro, ca. 980 - Borgo Val di Taro, ca. 1022). He was the son of Facio, Count of oppression (current Angera), Count Palatine and Knight of the Golden Militia. He reached the high Val di Taro, to about the excellent military capabilities, and married Domitilla, eldest daughter of Livellario Curtis Turris, who was master of Bobbio. His son Plato, like his father, boasted the titles of Count Palatine and Knight of the Golden Militia, and Imperial Lord of Parma and Ceno.

Although the real founder of the dynasty was Facino, the question arises why the descendants have acquired the surname Platoni son from Plato, especially in view of the unusual choice of a name that seems to have Greek origins. The answer is to be found in the will of Plato Platoni, which bequeathed the castle Platono common to children, with the declared aim of preserving the name of the family. It would appear that the same Plato has acquired its name from the fortress received from his father and that this represented the symbol of the power of the family (this is probably of the same rock present in the coat of arms).

Following the death of Plato Platoni, which in the meantime had married with Metodia Lomello, daughter of Luciano, Counts of Lomello, the various properties were divided among the children. Still it remains evidence of this division in the will draw up by a notary Zirolo de Laude, in the State Archives of Parma. According to this deed was only undivided castle de Platono, while the older children and Allinerio Franzoto had the properties of Val Vona until Mozzola; Rolandino received the territories between Ena and Gotra, today in Albareto; Lusiardo went to the High Taro Valley, where today stands Borgo Val di Taro; Begarolo found himself the Castle Pietramogolana and territories close to Taro and the youngest son, Antonio, inherited the territories of Milan. Is not named in the will the last child, Lariato, as born out of wedlock. As you can see the territories under the control of Plato they reached considerable size, but just their division among the six children was the cause of the weakening of the powerful family, so much so that each branch stood out in a new family in preserving few cases the original surname Platoni (it was kept only by the two eldest children, and Allinerio Franzoto).

Between the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Platoni were at the head of a coterie (a group of people who associate closely) of noble families who ruled the mountainous territories of the Val Taro and Ceno Valley . In the third and fourteenth century the family was one of the major allies of the Landi of Bardi in clashes against the Guelph Piacenza. In the sixteenth century many family members took part in the city government of Borgo Val di Taro and surrounding villages, often holding positions such as the judiciary, captaincies, recommendations and consulates. Other Platoni, non-residents in the city, were part of the city council where representatives of Rural. Following several Platoni moved to Piacenza, also there with important positions in the city government.

From the crushing of the consortium they formed several feudal families, some of which, as we said before, did not keep the original surname but rather changed it. This is the case of granules, the Lusardi (Luxardo, Lusiardi, Lusuardi), the Costaerbosa, which saw numerous episodes of violence with the faction of Platoni of Borgo Val di Taro, or Rossi continued to appeal "seu de Platis" and who for years they dominated the territory Valtaro.

The last Platoni (at least the last descendant a keep the family name, although several branches of the family who modified over time) to rule on a feud was Troilus Platoni (Gravago - Fidenza, post 1772), last overlord of Gravago . Abolished the estate in 1772, he was ordered by the Duke of Parma to withdraw from the feud, together with the Municipality of Bardi. He settled and died in Borgo San Donnino, Fidenza today. Despite the spread of the surname also in subsequent years in the area Valtaro reason to believe that the descendants of the family, despite not always noble or belonging to the upper classes have survived to the present day.

Some source on the name:

*The **History of the Lombards** or the **History of the Langobards** (Latin: *Historia Langobardorum*) is the chief work by [Paul the Deacon](#), written in the late 8th century. This incomplete history in six books was written after 787 and at any rate no later than 796, maybe at [Montecassino](#). It covers the story of the Lombards from their mythical origins to the death of King Liutprand in 743, and contains much information about the Byzantine empire, the Franks, and others. The story is told from the point of view of a Lombard patriot and is especially valuable for its treatment of the relations between the Franks and the Lombards. As his primary sources, Paul used the document called the [Origo gentis Langobardorum](#), the [Liber pontificalis](#), the lost history of [Secundus of Trent](#), and the lost annals of [Benevento](#); he also made free use of works by [Bede](#), [Gregory of Tours](#), and [Isidore of Seville](#).*

[Of the Kingdom of Italy under the barbarians](#) epitome with annotationi Abbot Valeriano Castiglione. - Turin, Zavatta 1664.

Armorial Malvicini, Private Collection, Piacenza.

De 'Crescenzi Romani Gio Peter, "**Nobilita of the Crown of Italy of Families Overo Distinguished Compendium of Histories**", Part I, p.45. Tebaldini Nicolo Printing, 1639.

Noble families in Val di Taro: the mythical origins of Platoni, Archives in the provinces of Parma, vol. 57, Daniele Calcagno, 2005.

Testament of Plato Platoni, of 5 October 1022, deposited in the Archives of Notaries Borgotaro and the State Archive of Parma.

Feudal privileges granted by [Emperor Henry II](#), Holy Roman Emperor.

Biographical Dictionary of Parmigiani, Vol. IV, PPS, Lasagni Roberto.

Daniele Calcagno, "**Families stately in Val di Taro: the mythical origins of Platoni**", Archives in the provinces of Parma, vol. 57, 2005.

[Formentini family](#) history, descendants of Platoni.

Maurizio De Meo, "**The ruling class in Borgo Val di Taro**, description of the charges with civic description of the coat of arms and onomastics genesis of surnames that appear from the sec. XIII now extinct or extant", Association for Research Valtaresi "A. Emmanuelli" 1998.

Giovanni Tocci, "**The lands crossbars: powers and territories in the duchies of Parma and Piacenza seventeenth and eighteenth centuries**", Il Mulino, University of Michigan, 1985. (In his book mentions the families that are most in the councils of the State Landi "BORGO VAL TARO: Bocci, Boveri, Casali, Cassio, Fenaroli, Manara, Murena, Picenardi, and Platoni").