

DATA SHEET

Longobards, new european power

In the period when the Longobards infiltrated the Central European area - the *Lands of the Kings* - there remain several points that are not well defined (future scientific investigations will focus on them) concerning the exact routes taken and the timing of their “journey”. Unmistakable signs of their transit in various Germanic and European areas are provided by the distribution of archaeological finds attributed to the Longobards which, all together, trace a precise European corridor, the route of the migratory flow.

However, while it is certain that they travelled for a long distance up the Elbe, at least as far as its terrain allowed, it is equally plausible - as has been surmised - that some groups headed towards the course of the river Oder to reach the ancestral route of the “Amber Road”, which, via a pass through the Sudetes (*Mährische Pforte*), guaranteed easier access to the middle course of the Danube and present-day Moravia.

Not without further armed clashes and new victories - against the Huns (together with a federation led by the mythical Ardaric, king of the Gepids), then against the Herules and lastly against the same Gepids - the Longobards, led by kings who were real military commanders, finally reached the central area of Europe, settling first between Lower Austria and Southern Moravia, until they at last occupied the Roman regions of *Pannonia I* and *Valeria*, where they came into direct contact with the empire of Byzantium and with the Arian form of Christianity.

As a result of their maturity, shrewdness in exerting power was then added to their military ability. A striking example is offered by King Wacho, of the *Lething* dynasty, who also resorted to astute dynastic policies to strengthen the consideration of the role of the Longobards as a great and formidable power.

He himself had married, in sequence, a Thuringian princess, a Gepid and a Heruli, and he continued his strategy of alliances through matrimony by giving his daughter Wisigarda as wife to Theudebert I, king of the Merovingian Franks. Following her premature death, he repeated the alliance by granting his other daughter, Waldrada, to Theudebald, son of the Frankish king. Waldrada did not have any luck in France but later, on becoming wife of the first duke of the Bavarians, Garibald I, she gave birth to Theodelinda, the first great queen of the Longobard kingdom of Italy.



The Longobard system of government stabilised in a new form of territorial monarchy, and also the aristocratic classes were better defined, while more evolved directions were imposed on the whole social and cultural system.

An overall process of approach to the Roman-Byzantine institutions developed in Pannonia, with the acquisition of useful experience for arranging the conditions of future adaptations of the Roman administrative and economic institutes to their own tradition.

Funerary rituals changed, with the prevalence of burials, and there was also a change in artistic styles, just as the skill of the craftsmen increased, especially in the production of weapons and in goldsmithery.

In the final phase of their stay in Pannonia, there came an event that was decisive for all the future developments of the Italian phase.

On the death of Wacho, the throne passed to his young son Walthari, whose tutor was Audoin, of the Gausian dynasty. The young king died, but Audoin did not respect the dynastic rights of the *Lethings* and proclaimed himself king. His son would be Alboin, who in 568 entrusted the first Duchy - that of *Forum Iulii* (Cividale del Friuli) - to his nephew Gisulf I. This triggered the long, all-Italian contrast between the philo-Catholic dynasty of the *Lethings* (inaugurated by Theodelinda) and the traditionalist and Arian Friulan-Beneventan dynasty, related to the Gausi.