The Indian Summer of Antiquity

Theodoric and the Ostrogothic Experiment



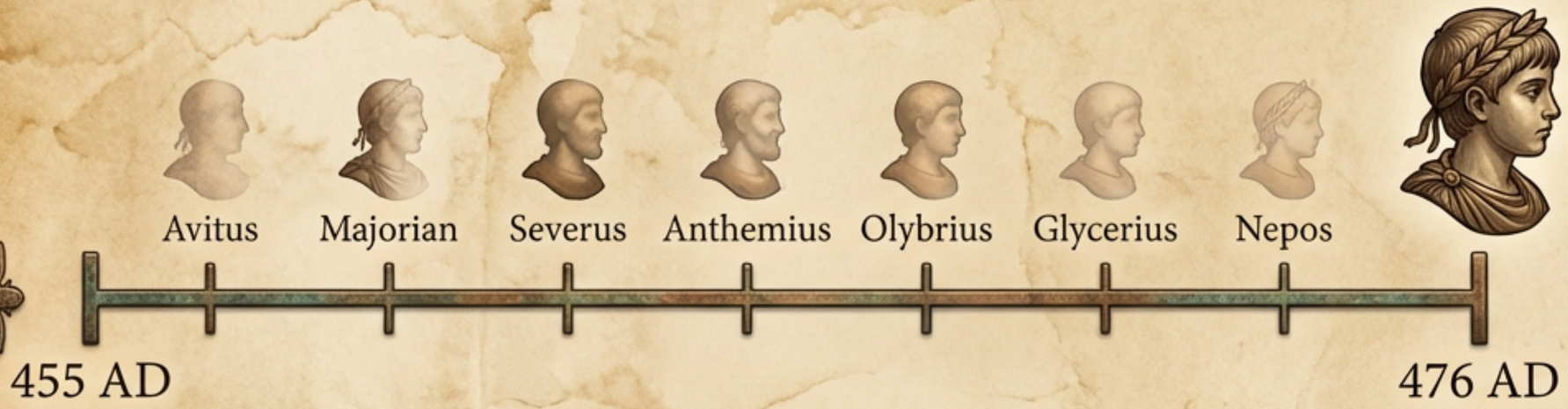
Rome did not fall in a day. It transformed. This presentation explores the reign of Theodoric the Great—a unique historical moment when a Gothic King attempted to preserve the light of civilization by being more Roman than the Emperors.

Synthesizing the *Getica* of Jordanes, the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, and the *Excerpta* Valesiana.

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THE WORLD DIDN'T END IN 476 AD.

It Just Changed Management.



In 476, the barbarian general Odoacer deposed the boy-emperor Romulus Augustulus.

He did not execute him. In pity for his youth and beauty, Odoacer granted him 6,000 gold pieces annually and exiled him to the Castle of Lucullus in Campania.

The Exile

"Odoacer... deposed Augustulus but in pity for his tender years, granted him his life."

— Excerpta Valesiana 8.38

Odoacer ruled not as a destroyer, but as a placeholder "King of Nations" for 13 years. The stage was set, but the lead actor was missing.

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FROM THE WOMB OF NATIONS



The migration path of the Goths as described in the Getica.

The Amali Lineage

Theodoric was not a mere soldier; he was royalty. He traced his bloodline back to the demigod heroes of the Amali clan.

- **Origin:** Scandza (Scandinavia).
- **Father:** Thiudimer, King of the Ostrogoths.
- **Upbringing:** Sent to Constantinople at age seven as a hostage. Educated in the Roman palace, yet retaining Gothic loyalty.

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THE INVASION & THE BANQUET OF BLOOD



Battle of Verona (489 AD)

"Where is God?" cried Odoacer. "This is what you did to my friends," answered Theodoric.

— Excerpta Valesiana 11.56



489 AD: Theodoric defeats Odoacer at the Isonzo and Verona.

490-493 AD: The three-year siege of Ravenna. Wheat prices soar to six gold pieces per modius.

493 AD: The Treaty. Odoacer opens the gates.

The conquest ended not on the battlefield, but in the Laurel Grove, where Theodoric slew Odoacer with his own hand.

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THE EXPERIMENT: *CIVILITAS*

Gothic Might
THE SWORD

- The Goths held the military power.
- Protected the borders.
- Lived by their own laws.



Roman Order
THE PEN

- The Romans held the administration.
- Managed the treasury and courts.
- Preserved the Senate and schools.

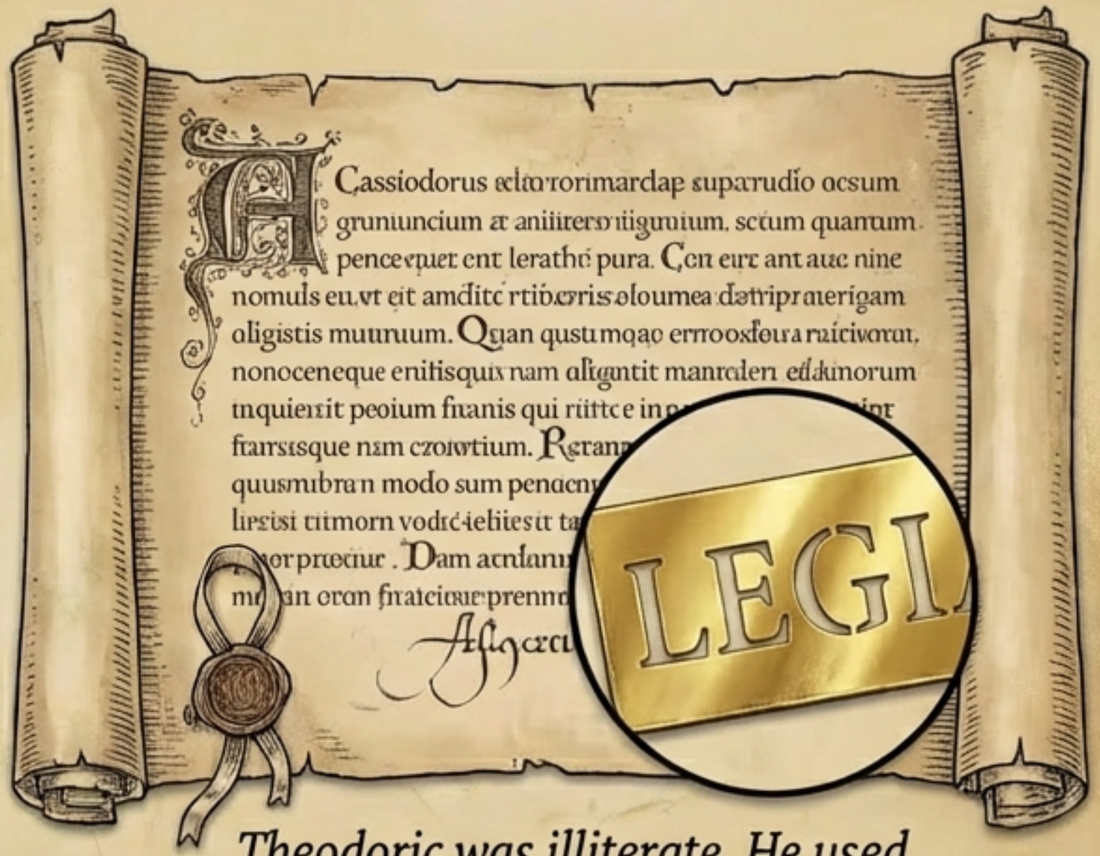
Theodoric established a functional segregation that brought 30 years of peace. He maintained the Circus and the Amphitheatre to keep the Romans content.

"A poor Roman plays the Goth, a rich Goth the Roman." — Excerpta Valesiana 12.61

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THE PEN BEHIND THE SWORD: CASSIODORUS

- **The Narrator:** Cassiodorus Senator, *Magister Officiorum*.
- **The Role:** To translate Gothic will into Roman eloquence. He drafted the *Variae Epistolae*, a collection of 12 books of administrative letters.
- **The Scope:** The letters cover everything from the appointment of Consuls and the repair of roads to the manufacturing of purple dye and the management of the postal service.

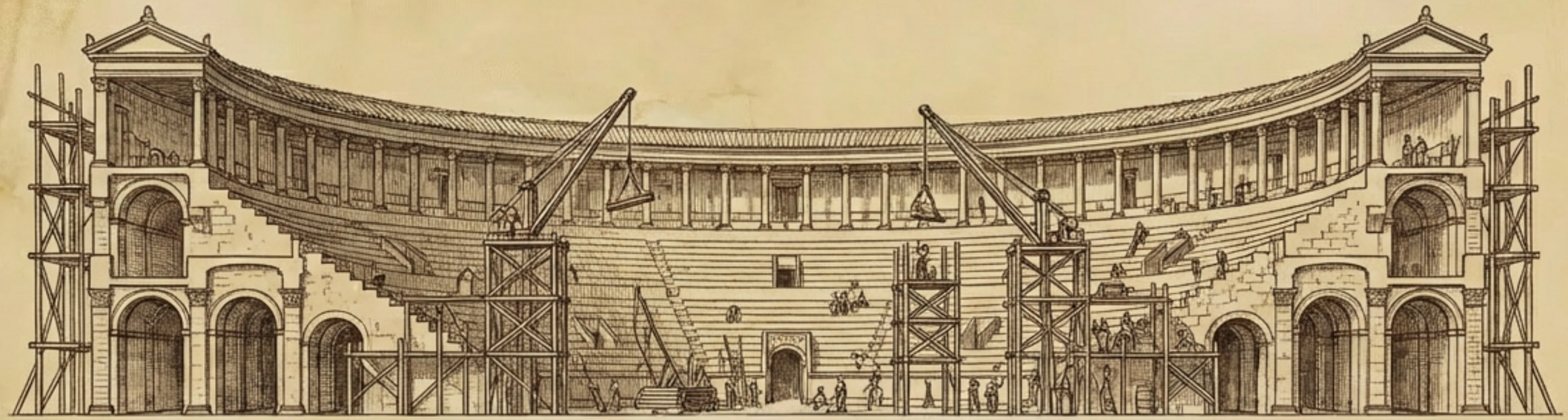


Theodoric was illiterate. He used a gold stencil to sign his edicts.

"He governed two races at the same time... judged to be in all respects their best king." — Valesiana

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BREAD, CIRCUSES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Theatre of Pompey

Restoration:	Economy:	Environment:
Repairing the aqueducts of Trajan in Ravenna and the walls of Verona.	The treasury was restored. A gold piece bought 60 measures of wheat.	Draining the marshes marshes of Decennonium (*Variae* II.32).

Theodoric's reign was a time of physical renewal. He found the treasury a "haystack" and made it rich, maintaining the public pleasures to ensure order.

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WE CANNOT COMMAND RELIGION

The Paradox of the Arian King



Theodoric was an Arian heretic ruling a Catholic majority. Yet, he enforced a strict policy of tolerance.

Case Study: When Christians burned a synagogue in Ravenna, Theodoric compelled the Roman population to pay for its rebuilding.

"We cannot command religion, for no one can be forced to believe against his will." — *Cassiodorus, Variae II.27*

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The Family of Kings



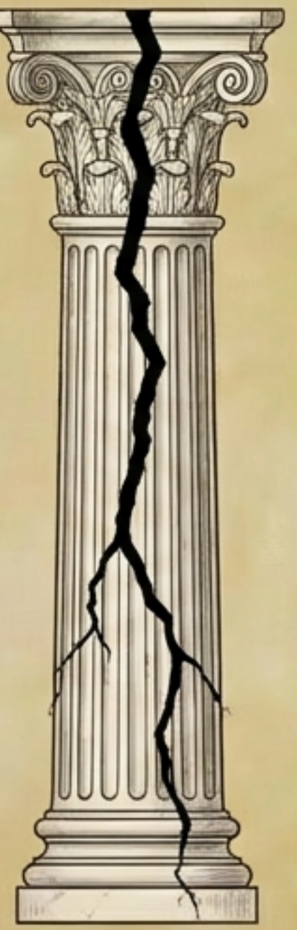
A United States of Gothia?

Theodoric attempted to bind the post-Roman West together through blood and marriage, creating a balance of power to hold off the resurgent Eastern Empire.

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THE CRACKS IN THE MARBLE (c. 523 AD)

- **The Succession:** No sons. Only a grandson, Athalaric, and a daughter, Amalasuentha.
- **The East:** Emperor Justin and his nephew Justinian heal the schism with the Pope, isolating the Arian Goths.
- **The Paranoia:** “The devil found an opportunity to steal a man who was ruling well.” (Valesiana)



After 30 years of stability, the atmosphere shifted. Theodoric, feeling the walls closing in, began to disarm the Roman population, forbidding them even a pen-knife.

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The Fall of the Intellectuals





- **The Accusation:**
  Senator Albinus accused of treasonous correspondence with the East.
- **The Defense:**
  Boethius, the Master of Offices, intervenes: “If Albinus did that, so also have I and the whole senate.”
- **The Verdict:**
  Theodoric, consumed by suspicion, imprisons Boethius.

Boethius was tortured—a cord twisted round his forehead until his eyes cracked—and beaten to death. With him died the dream of *Civilitas*.

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The Fish's Head

The Death of Theodoric (526 AD)



Haunted by the execution of Symmachus, Theodoric saw the senator's face in the head of a fish served at dinner. Chilled by fear and guilt, the King took to his bed.

He died three days later of dysentery, lamenting the wrong he had done to the Senate.



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The Unraveling



526 AD
Theodoric dies. Athalaric (grandson) takes the throne.

XII



534 AD Athalaric dies young.
Amalasuentha (daughter) becomes Queen.



535 AD Amalasuentha seeks support from her cousin Theodahad.

THE BETRAYAL
Theodahad imprisons Amalasuentha on an island in Lake Bolsena. She is strangled in her bath.

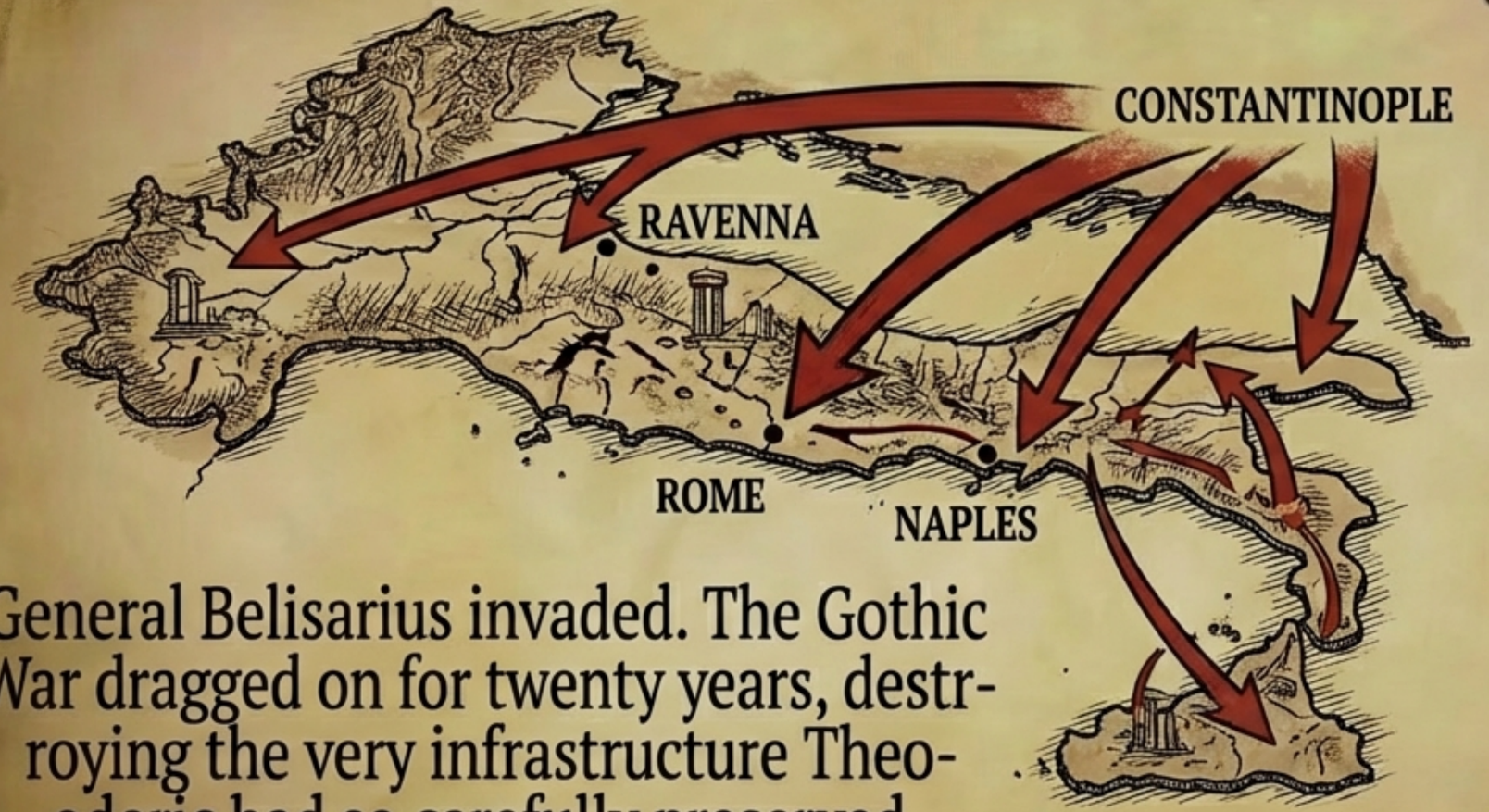




The murder of the Queen gave Emperor Justinian the "Just War" pretext he needed to invade Italy.

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Vandalicus, Africanus, Geticus



General Belisarius invaded. The Gothic War dragged on for twenty years, destroying the very infrastructure Theodoric had so carefully preserved.

- The aqueducts were cut.
- The Senate was decimated.
- The Goths were erased or taken captive to Constantinople.

Justinian “restored” Italy, but in the process, he destroyed it.

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The Bridge to the Middle Ages



The political experiment failed, but the cultural preservation succeeded.

Seeing the state collapse, Cassiodorus retired to the monastery of Vivarium. He instructed his monks to copy manuscripts, saving both pagan and Christian texts from the coming dark ages.

Theodoric's kingdom was the last flash of Antiquity;
Cassiodorus's library was the first light of the Medieval world.

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