

# Roots of European Civilisation

## **Barbarians and the Dark Ages**

# Fall of the Roman Empire in the West



# Barbarian Kingdoms

- After the fall of the Roman Empire various Germanic tribes settled in its former territories:
  - Ostrogoths (Italy) (later they were replaced with Lombards)
  - Visigoths (Spain, Southern France)
  - Franks (North France,, Netherlands, part of Germany)
  - Burundians (region of Worms, later Burgundy, Switzerland)
  - Anglo-Saxons (England)



# Theodoric the Great King of Italy



- Ruler of Italy 493 – 526 A.D
- Regent (and *de facto* ruler) of Visigoths 511 – 526 (Spain and south of France)
- He practiced Arianism – after Catholic Justin I become Emperor in Constantinople it meant conflict with the Empire
- He was enlightened ruler, he tried to restore glory of Italy – activity of philosopher Boethius and historian Cassiodorus



# St. Appolinare in Ravenna



# Conflict between Catholicism and Arianism





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# Conflict between Catholicism and Arianism

- Both Gothic tribes (Visigoths and Ostrogoths) were practicing Arianism.
- Local „Roman” population was basically Catholic
- Gothic rule was not supported by local population despite its success (until Visigoths turned Catholic)
- Catholic faith helped Franks to seize power from Goths.

Baptism of Clovis c. 1500





# Karol Wielki i Karolingowie

- Merovingian Dynasty divided France into little kingdoms
- Very soon Merovingian Kings started to play only ceremonial role – country was ruled by Mayors
- Mayor Peppin the Middle made his position hereditary.
- His son Charles Martel become the most powerful ruler in Western Europe, though he was not a King. He also won the Battle of Tours saving Europe from Arabs
- From Charles Martel the dynasty is called Carolingian
- Son of Charles Martel proclaimed himself King of Franks

# Battle of Poitiers (Tours) – 732 r





# Charlemagne

- Ruled 768 – 814 A.D.
- Made great conquests
- **25 December 800 A.D crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III**
- He cared for art and science (Carolingian Renaissance)
- During his reign term Europe appears as a political unity



# Kingdom of Charlemagne





# Heritage of Dark Ages

- Dark Ages, though barbaric contributed to European culture mainly by providing mythology.
- Main Epics are (among others):
  - Nibelungslied
  - Song of Roland and other stories about Charlemagne
  - Stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table



# Nibelungslied

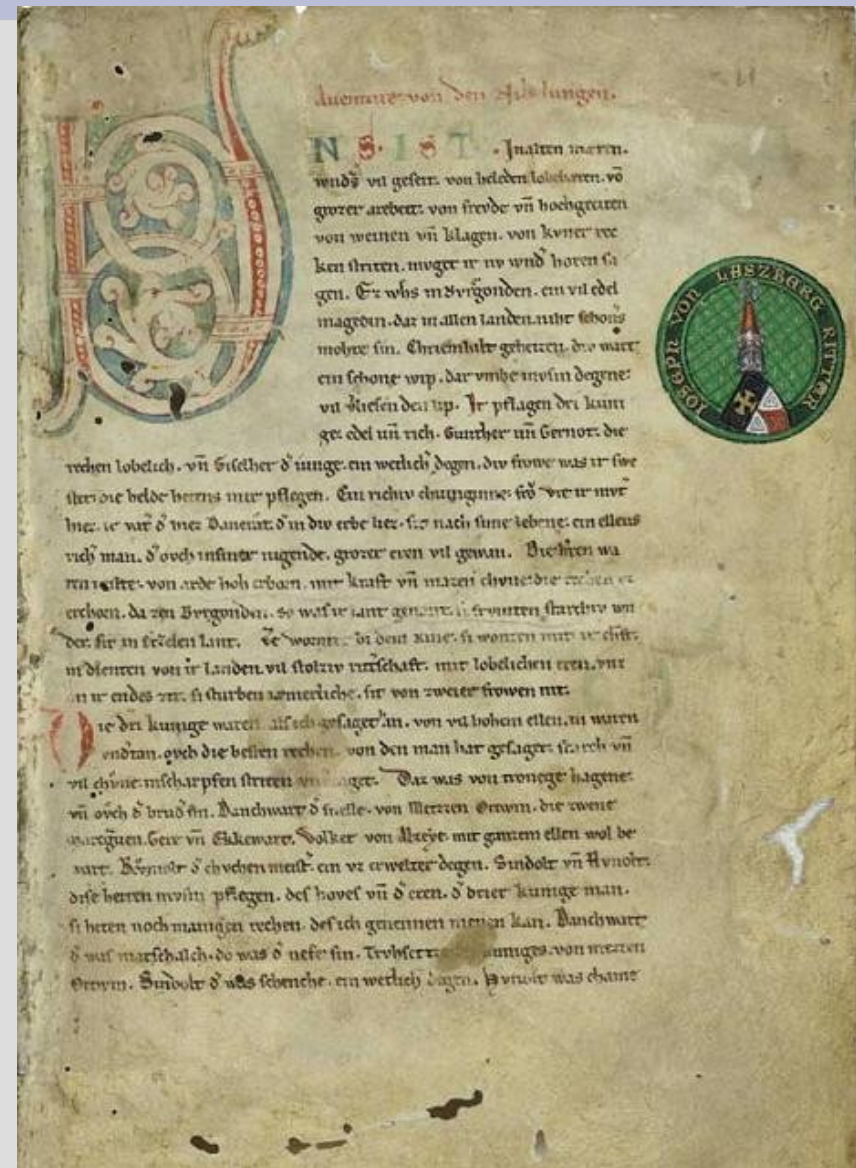
- Burgundian Epic known as Nibelungenlied and also as Norse Saga.
- It has two parts:
  - First covers adventures of Siegfrid, who defeated the dragon as he was wooing Kriemhild (Gudrun) daughter of king of Burgundians, and as he was killed by her brothers and Brunnhild
  - Second part covers the revenge of Kriemhild made with the help of her new husband Attila the Hun





# Pieśń o Nibelungach

- Nibelungenslied is a basis for Wagner's opera cycle „Ring of Nibelungs”
- Motives from Nibelungenslied were often used by German nationalists and Nazis



# Song of Roland

- Epic covers the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in Pyrenees of 15 August 778 A.D
- According to the legend Roland fought against Saracens whereas in reality he battled Basques.
- Roland (Hruodland, lord of Breton March), died in ambush refusing to call for help.





# Song of Roland

- Roland was one of the popular icons of medieval poetry.



# King Arthur

- King Arthur together with Charlemagne were considered ideal kings in medieval times.
- There is no „Story of King Arthur“, but rather set of different, often contradictory legends.
- It is disputable if a real King Arthur ever existed, and if so, who he was.





# King Arthur

- Arthurian legends can be divided into three types:
  - Celtic texts where Arthur is defender of Britons and conqueror of Saxons
  - English (Norman) texts, where Arthur is „Ideal King”
  - German and French texts focusing on adventures of the Knights of Round Table



# Decline of Ancient Culture

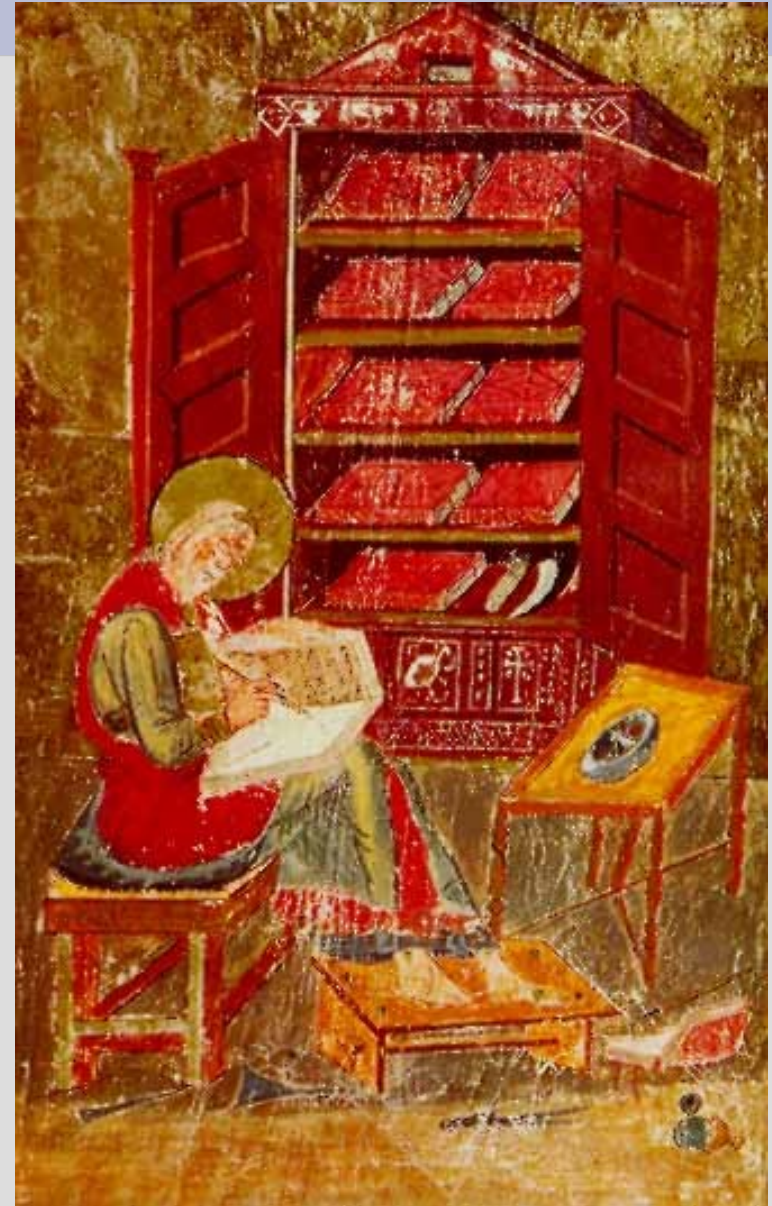
- Culture and science of Antiquity begin to decline much before the fall of political structures.
- The crisis was connected to the crisis of the state.
- Decline of cities in late Antiquity meant decline of schools which were located in these cities.
- In order to provide clergy capable of reading and writing the Church took over education.
- A characteristic feature of Late Antiquity and Early Medieval times is lack of new works, but rather compilation of previous achievements.



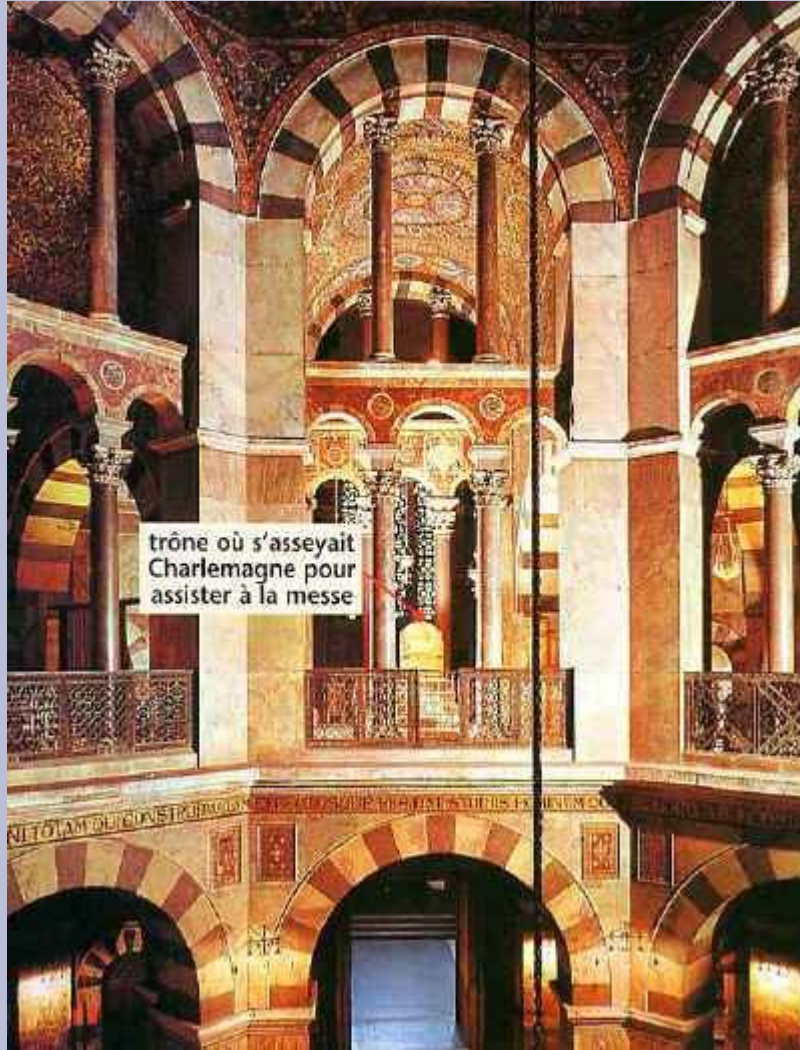


# Monasteries and Culture

- Late Antiquity monasteries were surviving thanks to money provided by land cultivated by peasants.
- St.. Benedict of Nursia (early VI c. A.D.) created new monastic order based on rule: „ora et labora” - „pray and work”, creating the basis for future power of monasteries
- Monasteries were centres of „science” - they hosted largest libraries of Medieval Europe”



# Carolingian Renaissance



- Late Merovingian times (especially after the fall of Spain) were marked by deepest crisis of culture.
- Latin was barely known in Europe.
- During Charlemagne times in continental Western Europe only Eriugena could understand Greek.
- Schools and books were extremely rare.



# Carolingian Renaissance

- Court of Charlemagne was a centre of Europe's culture rebirth.
- Charlemagne wanted the glory of Roman culture, science and art restored.
- Philosophers and scientists begin to educate Europe again.
- Charlemagne needed educated people to help him to rebuild culture – he found them in Ireland.

# „How the Irish Saved Civilisation”

- Ireland adopted Christianity in V c. A.D
- A unique merger of Christian religion and pagan intellectual tradition took place.
- Irish monasteries preserved Roman and Greek heritage for Western Europe









# Thank you for attention

