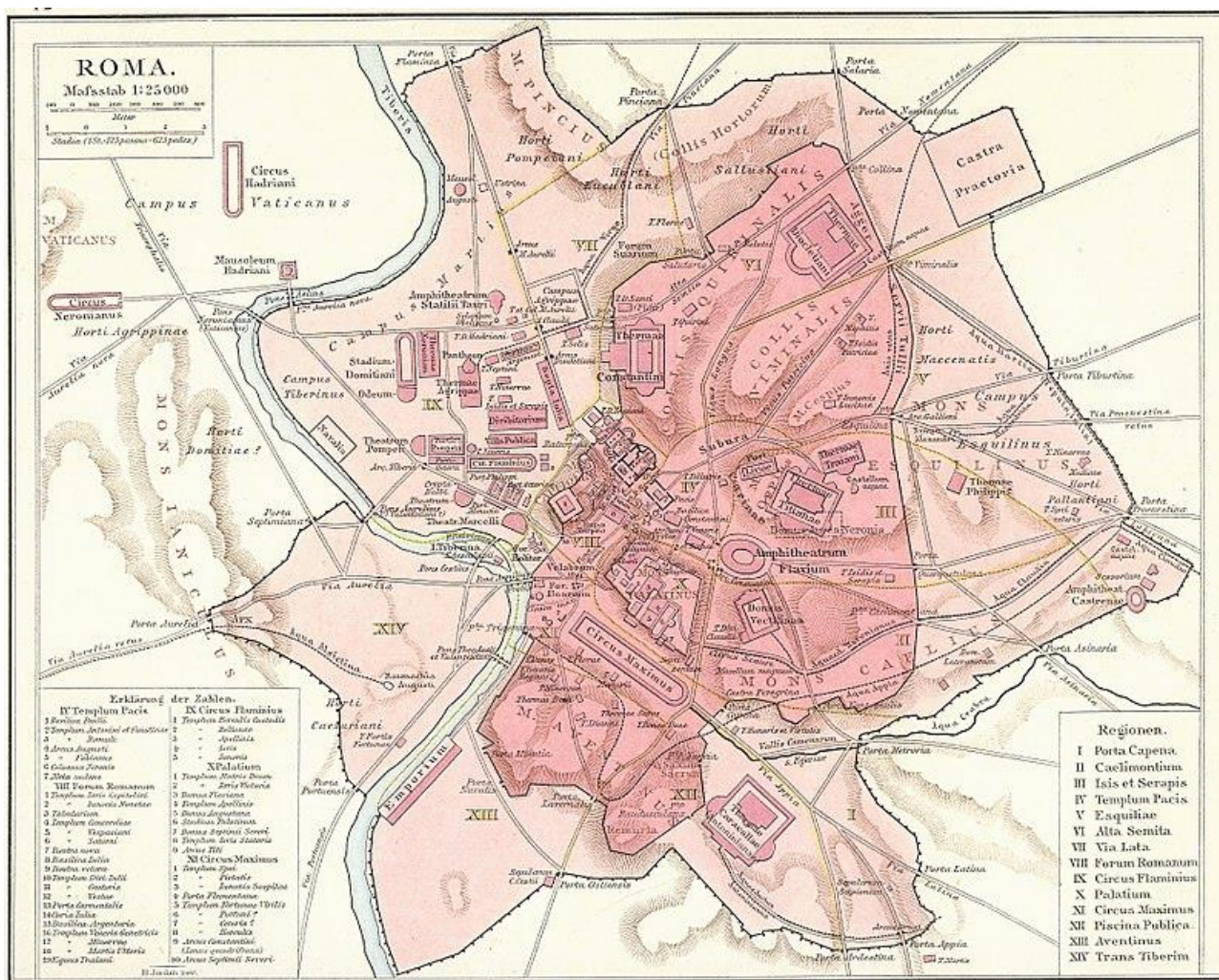


THE GOTHS AND THE BUILDINGS OF ROME

An answer to the question on Quora:

What measures were taken by the Gothic tribes to reconstruct Rome?



Map of imperial Rome, with the main buildings (public domain)

ROMA A GENTIBUS NON EXTERMINABITUR, SED TEMPESTATIBUS, CORUSCIS, TURBINIBUS AC TERRAE MOTU FATIGATA MARCESCIT IN SEMETIPSA.

Rome will not be destroyed by men, but, weakened by storms, lightning, whirlwinds and earthquakes, will rot in itself" (A prophecy by St Benedict, which Pope Gregory the Great in 594 CE quoted as having been fulfilled - Dialogs II, c.15)

I have the same problem as other respondents. Does the question refer to a political reconstruction, or rather to a material reconstruction of buildings and public works damaged by various causes? I believe that the first interpretation has already found at least one good and short answer by another respondent. I will now attempt to answer according to the second interpretation, that is, regarding the reconstruction of buildings and public works. My answer, inevitably, will be more detailed and, of course, it will have to include some echo of the attempts to bring about a political reconstruction, but I will try to avoid trespassing.

I. Destroying Roman Buildings.

Destroying Roman buildings and public works proved to be rather difficult, to the point that we could safely say that most ancient buildings would be still extant, had it not been for two adverse factors:

- The primary danger to buildings were the Romans themselves, who - however - did not succeed in the task of complete destruction in spite of centuries of poor maintenance, vandalism and, above all, their use of ancient buildings as quarries.
- Large fires. The City was reconstructed after the “Great Fire” of 64 CE, under Emperor Nero. The second largest fire appears to have taken place under Titus (80), two more fires happened under Commodus (189 and 191), one under Caro (283). Later records are uncertain, although I will report some (uncertain) memories of further fires. *However, unintentional, devastating fires must have been very few in the following centuries*, as the population quickly decreased from about 1 000 000 in imperial times to 30 000 during the Greek-Gothic war (535–553,) going to zero during 40 days, as we shall see. The population stayed between 20 000 and 30 000 for centuries, with a possible peak of almost 100 000 at the times of Gregory the Great (590 -604) and a low of 20 000 when the Papacy was removed to Avignon (1309–1377.) In the Baroque era, there were about 150 000 inhabitants. It was a sparse population, occupying only a minimal portion of the area of almost 30 square kilometers included in the Aurelian walls (which had a perimeter of about 19.5 km.)

The task of safeguarding buildings and public works undertaken in turn by Emperors, by Kings when the Empire fell, and, starting around 550, by the Popes. The role of the Church was ambivalent: while it used the materials taken from ancient buildings to build churches and Papal buildings, some of such churches and buildings are among the most ancient and majestic buildings in the world. Other private and public buildings and temples were converted directly into Catholic churches, which was a way of protecting them from vandalism. Also, the Popes, especially from the Renaissance onwards, undertook the task of protecting ancient buildings and archeological findings (although using materials from the old buildings occasionally proved to be an irresistible temptation).

II. Who were the Goths? The first two sacks of Rome.

The Goths were but a few of all German tribes. In fact, Rome saw two main branches, the Visigoths (Western Goths) and the Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths.) *Theoderic*, an Ostrogoth, was king of Italy from 493 to 526, but he put his capital in **Ravenna**. Still, as we shall see, he was the only Gothic ruler who had the power to preserve and reconstruct buildings in Rome, and he made a real effort in this direction. Thus, a hurried reader can skip most of my lengthy answer and go directly to the section in which I deal with him. For the rest, *rather than restoring buildings and reconstructing Rome, two Gothic tribes actually took measures to sack the City, although it is now recognized that the damage they could inflict was smaller than what has been traditionally reported.*

The **first sack** was the work of Alaric with his [Visigoths](#) in August 410 CE, and apparently it lasted three days, possibly not long enough to inflict substantial damage to a city from which perhaps two-third of the population had fled, but which still counted, in its fourteen “regions” (wards), 1747 palaces and 46,602 blocks (we have the data from the *Notitia Urbis Romae*.) Later authors indeed tell us that Rome recovered the previous splendor in just a few years.

At the time of the sack, Rome had not been the capital of the Roman empire for one century, since about 302, when the capital had been transferred to Milan. In the Fourth century, it became difficult to identify the capital of the Empire. There were a few “residences of the Emperor” (Augusta Treverorum = Trier, and Sirmium = Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia, just to mention the most important ones, besides Milan.) The empire itself was split into two (the Eastern and Western Empires) in 395. In 402 finally the Western capital moved sort of permanently to Ravenna, but the Emperors did not desert Rome: Valentinian III was killed in Rome in 455 and a few of the latter-day Emperors resided in Rome, where it was customary for an Emperor to receive the ratification of his election, at the hands of the Roman Senate. *Constantinople* (Istanbul,) was consecrated on 11 May 330, but it gained a full capital status, that of *second Rome*, only after the fall of the Western Roman Empire (476.)

In the meantime (summer **455**) king Genseric had led his Vandals, *who did not consider themselves Goths*, to **sack Rome for the second time**. He was supported by tribes from NorthAfrica, where he had arrived in 429. The sack lasted 14 days. It is uncertain, however, whether, in spite of their inevitable vandalism, the Vandals also made efforts to destroy buildings on a large scale. Greek historians claim that they devastated and **set fire** to the City: Genseric had explicitly promised to the Pope, Leo the Great, that he would not do it, and it is very likely that he kept his word. Apparently, during the sack the Goths pillaged almost exclusively the *Palatine and the Capitol*: in particular they seriously damaged the symbolic *Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol*. They took away all the statues, and one-half of the gilded bronze tiles of the roof (so says Procopius, who is fairly reliable when he does not prefer to gossip). Also *the spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem*, represented in the arch of Titus in the Roman Forum, seem to have left Rome around that time (it is not

really known where they were kept by then). Apparently, they were taken to Carthage, Genseric's capital, and eventually to Constantinople at the time of Justinian, after the defeat of the Vandals. Their fate is thenceforward unknown and could form an interesting subject for a novel.



Ruins of the Arch of Titus in the XVIII century
 With the spoils of the temple in Jerusalem
 By G.B. Piranesi
 (Please zoom on the bas-relief under the Arch)
 (public domain)

Furthermore, the poet, magistrate, bishop of Arvernus (=Clermont-Ferrand,) and Catholic saint, Sidonius Apollinaris, at that time a young man (he was born in 430), in his panegyric of Emperor Avitus (456) indicates that the *Ulpian Library* was left untouched by the Vandals. But at that point, Rome offered a sadly solemn sight. Many inhabitants were dead or had escaped. *“The solemn hush, which had already invaded the once animated streets and squares of the city of Trajan began to deepen into the awful silence of the grave.”* (Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*, I. 218.)



Majorian Emperor, golden "solidus"

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Attribution: I, Sailko

III. A noble Emperor (Majorianus) and other lesser rulers.

In the interval between 455 and 476, we have the "last noble emperor of Rome", Julius Valerius Majorianus (Majorian). Nowadays he is very praised, possibly rightly so, because he displayed an enormous activity on all fronts. Yet, he reigned only four years (457–461), achieving little or nothing in his fight to stop the collapse of the Empire, and against the corrupted bureaucracy. He had to be on guard against continuous betrayals. He was assassinated in Tortona by his mentor Ricimerus, who probably had expected to reign with him. What matters here is that Majorian promulgated a law, the "**Novella de aedificiis publicis**" (New law on public buildings, 11 July 459), for the protection of public buildings, which since the transfer of the capital from Rome were pillaged either for pure vandalism or to build (uglier) private houses, as he said. The penalties were heavy ones: a fine of 50 pounds of gold for the instigator, the cutting of both hands for the executor of the crime. He was not the first Roman emperor who tried to protect ancient buildings, as we have laws by *Constantius*, *Valentinianus*, *Honorius*. However, probably, his Novella VI,1, was the best-known edict on the subject to his time.

Sidonius Apollinaris, in his Panegyric of Anthemius, a fairly capable Emperor (467–471) appointed by the Eastern emperor Leo I, tells us that the *Baths of Nero*, *Agrippa*, and *Diocletianus* were still in function at the time of the visit of Anthemius, which means that either the aqueducts were never damaged during the two sacks, or were repaired. Gregorovius comments that under the papacy of Hilarius/Hilarus (461–468), the buildings belonging to the Church in Rome were enriched by private citizens, magistrates, Emperors, and the Pope took care of them, in particular of the great basilicas, *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, *St. Laurent*, *St. John in Lateran* and *annexed Palace*. The full list is given in the [Liber](#)

[Pontificalis](#), a summary of the history of the Popes compiled from the end of the 5th century onwards. Churches survived pillages, sacks and riots better than private buildings.

Eventually, Anthemius was killed by supporters of Ricimerus, who died of a hemorrhage in 472, after having allowed the **third sack of Rome, in the same year**. We do not know whether the 472 sack brought about any major devastation. A **fire** damaged a statue of Minerva, but we don't know what other damages were made. According to the *Historia Miscella*, the pillage involved the whole city excepting two (out of fourteen) "regions", the Vatican and the Janiculum, which Ricimerus held. Even Ricimerus, who was Arian, founded a church in Rome, *St Agatha of the Goths*. The church, initially Arian, became a Catholic Church in 592–593, under Pope Gregory the Great. There was an interesting mosaic, in which St Peter was represented with one single key. It was lost in 1589. Most probably, Ricimerus was buried there, together with his ambition, his arrogance and his barbaric ruthlessness (his mother was a Visigoth, while his father was a king in Swabia.)

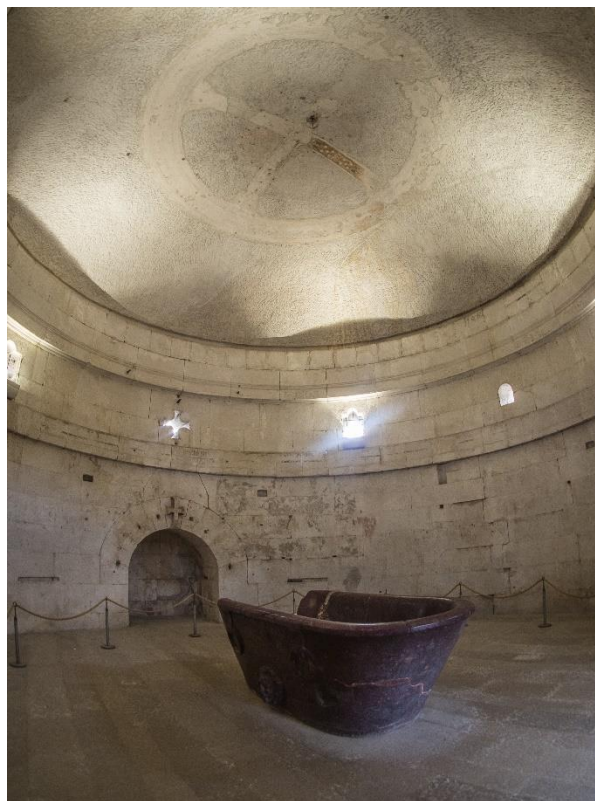
From 472 to 476, writing the names of all emperors who came to the throne of Rome takes almost longer than their reigns lasted. We have *Olybrius*, *Glycerius*, *Julius Nepos*, and finally **Romulus Augustulus**, the last western emperor, an inept youth who, as was immediately noted, had the ironic destiny of having being named after the founder of Rome and the founder of the empire.

The fall of the empire was brought about by Odoacer, king of the *Herules*, an *East Germanic tribe, associated but not identical to the Goths*. The empire ended and Odoacer took power on **23 August 476**, a date, which is reported by uncertain authors only. Still, I think that it is useless to invent another from scratch. He founded the first Kingdom in Italy, with capital in Ravenna. However, some historians maintain that he did not assume the title of King of Italy: he was, in a German way, just a "king to his soldiers". Although he was a German and Arian by faith, we know of no complaints against him either by the Romans or by the Catholics.

IV. After the fall of the Western Empire.

In the thirteen years of the quiet reign by Odoacer, an interesting evolution began to take place in the buildings. *A number of ancient private and public buildings (and later also pagan temples) began to be transformed into Catholic Churches, and the many images of pagan gods, demigods, heroes were replaced by the effigies of saints*. Iconoclasts and architectural purists may complain, but it is reasonable to conclude that such evolution helped to preserve the structure of the buildings and of the city. Had such buildings, especially the temples, remained pagan, they would be long gone, unprotected as they were, and open to lack of maintenance, theft, and vandalism. Four remarkable churches own their first foundation to the fifth century, precisely under Pope Simplicius. A large hall built in the form of a rotunda on the Caelian Hill was turned into a church and dedicated to St. Stephen; the main part of this building still exists as the church of *Saint Stefano Rotondo*. A fine hall near

the church of Santa Maria Maggiore was presented to the Roman Church. Simplicius turned it into a church dedicated to *St. Andrew* by the addition of an apse adorned with mosaics: he kept the pagan mosaics existing there. The church is no longer in existence. He built a third church dedicated to the first martyr, *St. Stephen*, behind the memorial church of San Lorenzo in Agro Verano; this church is no longer standing. He had a fourth church built in the city in honor of *Saint Bibiana*, "*juxta palatium Licinianum*", where her grave was; this church still remains. Gregorovius (I, from p. 267) gives an account, largely taken from the *Liber Pontificalis*, of the 28 most ancient "*titular churches*" (1) in Rome during the VI century, and frequently explains their origin, as adaptations of private or public Roman buildings, mostly homes of converted Christian (there is also a tavern, the Tavern Meritoria, on which the church of St Maria in Trastevere was built.) We learn that occasionally the churches were adorned taking columns and other material from temples. Although he will indicate later in his book "the first temple converted into a church", n.15 in the list of "*tituli*" (*Tigridae*) is said to occupy the site of the Temple of Mars.



Ravenna - Mausoleum of Theoderic - inside top level wideangle
(the ceiling is a single stone)

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Autor [Username.Ruge](#)

V. Theoderic the Great. His rise to power.

But now it was the turn of other Goths to come to Italy and to Rome. They were the Ostrogoths led by **king Theoderic**, who had been granted the titles of Magister Militum (generalissimo) and Consul by the Eastern Emperor, Zeno, who intended to keep him quiet. Furthermore, to get rid of him, he sent him to Italy, where Theoderic defeated Odoacer at the North-East border, on the Isonzo river, in 489. Odoacer escaped to Ravenna, where he resisted gallantly for three years. In 493 he surrendered, and few days after his surrender, violating the pacts, Theoderic (allegedly) killed him personally. It was not a promising start, but in fact Theoderic proved to be a great king, reigning until 526. I will just mention the fact that his reign had quite a remarkable political history. Besides, Theoderic made a grandiose attempt to fuse the Roman with the German element in his reign. The attempt was a major failure, but a noble failure. Such a fusion would happen three centuries later, with Charlemagne, the founder of the Holy Roman Empire (of the German Nation).

VI. Theoderic the Great. Buildings, public works, and monuments.

Here I will stick to answering the question: "*What measures were taken by the Gothic tribes to reconstruct Rome?*". Although Theoderic lived in Ravenna, where many monuments going back to his time are still extant (among others his remarkable *mausoleum*, with a monolithic roof, a 10 m diameter single stone), he also attempted to restore Rome, the only Gothic ruler who had the opportunity of doing it. Theoderic came to Rome for the first time in 500 CE and was received with the honors due to a Christian (he was Arian) Emperor. He made his dwelling in the *half ruined and deserted Imperial palace on the Palatine*. His Latin minister **Cassiodorus** reports in his letters a large number of rescripts issued by Theoderic, which he had helped to draw up.

He first mentions that Theoderic established the *Comitiva Romana*, a magistrate, who was supported by a *body of guards (Vigiles)* to protect buildings and statues, especially those in bronze. It appears that in spite of the robbery by Constantine, the three sacks of the city, and the demolitions of pagan statues by the Christians, in Rome there were still "*as many statues as inhabitants*" (!), possibly a rhetorical exaggeration. In a number of edicts, all reported by Cassiodorus, Theoderic came back to the matter of the preservation of the monuments, which shows that the plundering continued under his reign. The plunderers arrived at digging out the bronze clamps which held together the stone roofs of theaters and baths. It is ironic that centuries later, the Romans attributed to the barbaric Goths the deep holes they saw in building and arches, while in fact the Goths, by order of their king, were the only ones who fought to avoid them.

He appointed a City Architect (*Curator operum publicorum*) to take care of the preservation and reconstruction of the city, and reserved a portion of his revenues (notably those coming from the Lucrine bay (2)) to fund such tasks. He made provisions to produce bricks (he imposed a forced contribution of 25 000 bricks yearly,) and allowed to use

marble blocks from previous buildings to make lime, provided that they were lying on the ground and could be of no better use.

He repaired the sewers (Cloacae). Cassiodorus says that they were a marvel in themselves, and addressed Rome with the words: "*What city could ever attain thy height, when even the subterranean depths can find no equal?*" Sewers apparently were a rare sight at that time.

He appointed a *Comes formarum urbis* for the maintenance of the **Roman aqueducts**: there were 11 of them. The oldest, the Aqua Appia, was built in 312 BCE; the longest, the Aqua Marcia (144 BCE) was 91 km long and provided the best water. All together they provided the City with a daily total of 1,127,000 cubic meters of water (a figure which has been reduced by modern engineers, who say that the losses of water were not taken into account in that total).



A Roman aqueduct today
Roma, Lazio, Italia
30 ottobre 2006
Fonte [Flickr](#)
Autore [iessi](#)

Among the buildings, which Theoderic rebuilt or restored, we can mention:

- The **Theatre of Pompeius**, the "Theatre", or the ultimate "Roman Theatre", in the Campus Martius. It was a gigantic structure, very little of which is above the ground today. It was semicircular, with a diameter of 150 m, and it was said to hold 17500 spectators. The reconstruction (507–511 CE) was entrusted to the patrician Symmachus, who had also built some new buildings in the suburbs for the King. However, it was a short-lived revival, because after the Greek-Gothic war (about 550) the Roman population was so small (less than 30000 inhabitants) that it no

longer needed such a large theatre, and its stones were soon used for other buildings.

- The **Pincian Palace**. The **Imperial Palace** (“*Domus Aurea*”, mansion of gold), whose enormous structure occupying the top of the original Roman hill, the Palatine (whence the English word “*Palace*”), was abandoned. For the maintenance of the restored building, Theoderic allotted from the wine tax the yearly sum of 200 pounds of gold. He resided there during his stays in Rome.
- The **Amphitheatre of Titus**.

The various measures taken by Theoderic to make Rome safer, to ensure the food and wine provisions, to improve the decayed moral standards, especially in the shows and games, gave a last respite to the City. It was going to die, but it would die laughing. For the last time, it was “*Roma felix*” (“*happy and lucky Rome*”). Ennodius, bishop of Pavia until 521, adviser to Theoderic, wrote admiringly: “*Plus est occasum repellere quam dedisse principia*”. “It’s a greater glory to push back the decline than to provide the beginnings.”



“Campo Vaccino”, the Roman Forum in the XVIII century
(public domain)

VII. After Theoderic.

Theoderic died on 30 August 526, after a short illness. He had grown disenchanted about his plan to fuse the Latin and German elements of his Kingdom, and, inevitably, he had started to persecute and execute his worthiest Latin advisers, actions which cannot be condoned. He also went on a dangerous collision course against the Catholic Church, although he had been a tolerant Arian for thirty years (523). It was not his fault: the

Eastern Emperor Justinus had started a persecution against the Arians, which was correctly interpreted by Theoderic as a signal of future trouble.

But here political history is not my concern, and I prefer to leave out of this account the last years of Theoderic. The Latins circulated several dark legends about his death. The Germans extol "**Theoderich der Große**", which provides historical background to their legendary figure of *Theoderic von Bern* (where Bern is not the Swiss Bern, but the Italian city of Verona.)

Incidentally, Gregorovius tells us that in the years 526–539, under the reign of Pope Felix IV, there was possibly *the first conversion of a pagan temple in perfect conditions into a Catholic church*. Amalasantha, the daughter of Theoderic, donated to the Pope the Temple of the City of Rome (*Templum Urbis Romae*) with two other rooms, one of them being the round *temple of Romulus*, the son of Maxentius, with an entrance (now closed) on the Forum. It became the church of the *Saints Cosmas and Damian*.

The last years of the Gothic reigns in Italy were rather turbulent, and their internal strifes did not allow them to take care of the city of Rome, and/or reconstructing it. In fact, it was during the *Gothic war, waged by the Byzantines against the Goths from 535 to 553*, that Rome reached the lowest point in its history. The **aqueducts**, which Theoderic had repaired, were rendered useless by the Goths themselves during their siege of Rome in 537–538, under king Vitiges. The siege (Rome was kept at that time by Belisarius, at the head of a small (5000 men) but gallant Byzantine host) was raised after 21 months. *The aqueducts were never repaired, with the single exception of the Aqua Virgo, restored in 1453 by Pope Nicholas V, and still in function. The Fontana di Trevi takes its water from the Aqua Virgo. With the ruin of the aqueducts, all the huge Baths became useless. Thus, perhaps the most important reconstruction work achieved by Theoderic was made useless by the Goths themselves.*

The Goths came again to Rome under the new king Totila in **546. They took the City on 17 December, fourth sack**. But the City was now empty of both inhabitants and wealth. Procopius says that when the Goths entered, besides the Greek garrison there were perhaps 500 Romans in the City, everybody else had fled. The Churches were respected. *However, Totila had said that he would throw down the Aurelian walls. He partly did it: the Goths destroyed one-third of the walls.* Totila also declared that he would destroy all buildings and make Rome "*a pasture for cattle*", but apparently was dissuaded by his very enemy, Belisarius, who lay sick in the Port of Rome. It is not clear whether Totila set **fire** to the City. Possibly only the suburb on the left bank of the Tiber (the "*Trastevere*") was damaged, but not many important buildings were there. Still, the legend that Totila destroyed Rome was increasingly popular during the Middle Ages, and was recorded by Renaissance historians. Whether he destroyed it or not, he abandoned the City and ordered what remained of the population to follow him. During forty days Rome was inhabited only by animals.

Belisarius re-entered the City with his Byzantine soldiers, and, having neither workmen nor appropriate material, repaired the walls as well as he could. *Today, two thirds, 12.5 km of the Aurelian walls are still standing.* Some of the inhabitants dispersed in the countryside (the “*Campagna*”) came back. Belisarius also (temporarily) refitted the *Baths of Trajan*, and turned them into mills, alimented by the *Aqua Trajana*, built in 109 CE and long 40 km. It was restored by the Popes at least two times. Finally, it was rebuilt entirely, on the ancient structures, in the XVII century and became the *Aqua Paola*, taking the name of Pope Paul V Borghese. It is in function today.

Totila came back for the third time in the fall of 549 and took the City by treason of the Isaurians, a body of soldiers serving under the Greeks. He realized that destroying Rome and especially its walls had been a major mistake after the first siege and ordered that all the damage done be restored. When he left, he offered to the Romans the **last chariot race** in the *Circus Maximus*. Gregorovius comments that the Romans who attended, very reduced in number, with a few Senators, must have looked like an assembly of ghosts.

The same Gregorovius, after relating the pillages the City had to suffer, and telling us that nothing was left to be taken away, still makes a digression, following Procopius, to describe the many bronze statues of animals, which still were left in Rome in 549. He concludes describing the wooden “*Ship of Aeneas*”, which was preserved in the Arsenal on the shores of the Tiber. It is clear that Rome always contained more than the pillagers could take away. Possibly, the most ancient mementos inspired such a reverence that even barbarians would not dare to destroy them.

In 552 Rome was taken for the fifth time by the Byzantines. While escaping, the Goths massacred the senators who were in Rome. Also, all Senators and hostages of noble families who were in the hands of the Goths elsewhere in Italy were put to death. Very few members of the Roman aristocracy survived. Totila died as a hero at *Taginae* (*Gualdo Tadino, July 552*) and the last king, Tejas, also died as a hero at the beginning of the battle of *Mount Vesuvius* (553). His warriors continued the fight, and the major part perished in the battle. A truce was negotiated in the evening of the second day of battle, but one thousand Goths managed to escape and went to *Ticinum* (see below). That was the end of the Ostrogoths, except for (i) a band of 5000 of them, which was eventually exterminated by the Byzantine Narses in 555 at the fortress of Campsa (Conza della Campania), and (ii) one rebellion in Northern Italy led by chief Widin in 561–562, which ended with the capture of Widin and the destruction of the last Ostrogoths, who disappeared from history. It was also the end of the Gothic domination in Italy. The Italians remembered the Goths as utterly barbaric rulers and cause of all disasters which befell on Italy. More than one legend reported that Goths occasionally came back from nowhere to retrieve treasures they had buried in Rome when they abandoned the City. Silly legends and unjust memories-

As it was said above, the population of Rome, which in imperial times was around 1000000 inhabitants, dwindled to 30 000. They were a bunch of poor and famished people,

living within a huge circle of walls, with majestic ruins, prairies for the sheep and cows to graze (a condition to which the Roman Forum itself was reduced), orchards, vegetable gardens, and plenty of rubble. During fifteen years Rome and Italy were under the rapacious Greek rule.

Then, **in 568 the Lombards/Longobards led by king Alboin** invaded Italy. *As far as I know, they never were associated with the Goths.* Besides, it was recognized by most authors that the Longobards were far more barbaric than the Goths, although they (slowly) improved their customs. In any case, although there is a memory of a Longobard Duchy of Rome, it does not appear that the Longobards (whose capital was **Ticinum, modern Pavia**) ever had any real power on the city of Rome, in spite of their numerous attempts to take it. By the time of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604), the Popes had taken over the task of ruling Rome, and, with it, that of preserving ancient Rome, recovering from the worse damages, and constructing new churches and palaces.

The fusion of ancient buildings with more modern ones, in different styles, ancient, medieval, renaissance, baroque and even more recent, all preserved side by side, all loaded with history, makes of Rome a most unforgettable city to the eyes, to the brain and to the heart of the tourist... if he has eyes, brain and heart.

VIII. Conclusions.

My answer to the question is clear: the Goths at first sacked Rome (410) but did not do any serious damages. Then the Ostrogoths reigned in Italy for sixty years (493–553). Their first king, Theoderic (493–526), took good care of Rome and restored damages *not caused* by the Goths. The following Gothic Kings, especially during the Greek-Gothic war (535–553), *caused major damages, re-destroying what Theoderic had rebuilt*, and in a sense collaborating with the Greeks in the destruction work. The net result was that when the Ostrogothic kingdom disappeared, Rome was at the lowest point of its “urban” history. *Thus, the effect of the Goths on Rome, reconstruction plus re-destruction, was zero at best.*

Which is what happens of most human undertakings.

NOTES:

(1) A *titular church* in early times was a church built on a private house. Later on, it became a church assigned to a Cardinal Priest.

(2) The Luchrine or Lucrine lake/bay was a salt-water lake or lagoon, adjoining the Gulf of Baiae on the coast of Campania. It was famed for its oysters. These oyster-beds were so valuable as to be farmed out at a high price.