

The Day of the Barbarians: The Battle That Led to the Fall of the Roman Empire

Alessandro Barbero



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On August 9, 378 AD, at Adrianople in the Roman province of Thrace (now western Turkey), the Roman Empire began to fall. Two years earlier, an unforeseen flood of refugees from the East Germanic tribe known as the Goths had arrived at the Empire's eastern border, seeking admittance. Though usually successful in dealing with barbarian groups, in this instance the Roman authorities failed. Gradually coalesced into an army led by Fritigern, the barbarian horde inflicted on Emperor Valens the most disastrous defeat suffered by the Roman army since Hannibal's victory at Cannae almost 600 years earlier. The Empire did not actually fall for another century, but some believe this battle signaled nothing less than the end of the ancient world and the start of the Middle Ages.

With impeccable scholarship and narrative flair, renowned historian Alessandro Barbero places the battle in its historical context, chronicling the changes in the Roman Empire, west and east, the cultural dynamics at its borders, and the extraordinary administrative challenge in holding it together. Vividly recreating the events leading to the clash, he brings alive leaders and common soldiers alike, comparing the military tactics and weaponry of the barbarians with those of the disciplined Roman army as the battle unfolded on that epic afternoon. Narrating one of the turning points in world history, *The Day of the Barbarians* is military history at its very best.



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