Münster, like most everything, started from a crude and small beginning, but gradually grew into a flourishing city and state. The story starts in the year A.D. 568, when Justin II, the nephew of Justinian by his sister, ruled the Roman Empire. The Winili, who later were called Langobards in a Latinized German name, either because of their jutting thick beards or rather because of their long axes, were neighbors of the Saxons, and grew to be so numerous within the confines of their own territory that there was not enough land to provide sustenance for such a large population. Accordingly, when necessity suggested the appropriateness of seeking a larger and more fertile land, they first prepared everything for an expedition and invited a large band of the ancient Saxons (that is, Westphalians) along to increase the strength of their army, and then under the leadership of Albwin they invaded that part of Italy which lies between the Alps and the Apennines. By their habit as barbarians hostile to the true faith, they profaned all shrines, plundered what they had profaned, and seized the profaned property as if they had acquired it by fully legal title, expelling some of the real owners and killing others. They abolished the worship of God, and in place of it substituted foul idolatry, ordering that divine honors be made to a goat’s head that they set up. Many Italians were moved by love of the present life to supplicate it with tilted heads facedown as they passed by, wishing to avoid being killed by the Langobards if they despised the newly established religion. About four hundred people, however, preferred death to tainting the purity of their faith by such foul idolatry, being fearfully tortured and then executed by the Langobards for this reason. The Langobards exercised their insufferable tyranny in Italy for some years. They seized Treviso, Vicenza and Verona by storm, and among other famous cities which they razed to the ground was Milan, where they killed about 30,000 inhabitants. Thus, the Langobards subdued virtually all of Transpadane Gaul, which is even now named Lombardy (from Langobardy) after them. They afflicted Italy with various misfortunes for a period of 204 years from the time of their first king, Albwin, until that of Desiderius, the last king, and his
unconditional surrender. But in A.D. 776 the renowned Charlemagne smashed and crushed their tyranny and violent savagery.

In the year 568, as I said, the Saxons followed the Langobards’ army, serving for fourteen years. After successfully performing such deeds during these years, they returned home from this war richer. Now they were no longer Saxons, but in order to distinguish themselves from the Langobards, they changed their name to that of the race living across the Weser, preferring to be called Westphalians, partly from the quarter of the land where the sun sets, and partly from their symbols. For as their symbol the whole race sports a young white horse, which in their ancestral tongue they call “ein fall” (“a foal”). We used to see an image of it wrought of white stone placed long ago for some special reason on a column supporting the choir vault from the outside (the Anabaptists knocked it down). Up to the present day, the archbishops of Cologne keep this foal among their insignia along with the title of “Duke of Westphalia” (if the fates should consent, I will follow up this matter more fully in a description of Westphalia). After that, the whole population between the Rhine and the Weser kept the designation “Westphalia,” being fond of the new name.

Two years after the return of the Saxons from Italy, the leaders and nobles of the race began in the year 584 to build a new town in the area between the Rhine and the Weser, calling it Mediolanum (Milan) after the name of the Italian city conquered by them so that they might thereby hand down to posterity the memory of their brave achievements in Italy. The nobler races of Westphalia inhabited the city, and they fortified it with a surrounding wall and ditch for protection against the assault of brigands and plunderers. For while other crimes had stiff penalties and were very severely punished among this race even before the adoption of Christianity, no one was faulted for plundering. It brought no disgrace so long as it was practiced outside of one’s own

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1 This explanation interprets “Westfalen” (The German form of “Westphalia”) as meaning “fall (of the sun) in the West.”
2 There is no indication that K. ever did write such a work.
3 The erroneous notion that Münster was named “Mediolanum” back in 584 can be attributed to the chronographer Valentine Müntzer, whom K. cites as his source about the foundation of the city in his later Catalogue of the Bishops of Münster (the story is also found in the cartographer Sebastian Münster).