

century, when it was conquered by the Franks. Turin then became part of a Kingdom of Italy (*Regnum Italiae*) that embraced the northern and central regions of the peninsula. It formed part of the empire that the Frankish ruler Charlemagne had conquered, extending from northern Spain to the Low Countries and central Germany. Within this empire Turin and its Alpine passes formed the link between the heartland of the Frankish empire, its Italian territories, and its spiritual capital at Rome.

By the end of the ninth century, however, the Frankish empire had dissolved into a welter of warring kingdoms and dukedoms. In the Kingdom of Italy the great territorial magnates fought among themselves, while trying at the same time to repel the repeated invasions of Saracen and Magyar raiders. Turin formed both a bulwark against the Saracen incursions across the Alps, and a vital strongpoint for any ruler seeking to dominate the Italian kingdom. Finally, in the later tenth century the fragmented Italian kingdom was incorporated by the Emperor Otto I into the Holy Roman Empire. Turin fell under the sway of a local warlord, Arduin “the Smooth-Faced”, who ruled the city, its surrounding territory and the Alpine corridor as a frontier territory that came to be known as the March of Turin. His dynasty governed the city and the March for four generations as vassals of the emperor, with the title of counts and marquises of Turin, until the death of Arduin’s last descendant, Countess Adelaide, in 1091.

The Arduinids however did not rule Turin alone. Like the Ostrogoths, Lombards and Franks before them, they shared power with the bishops, who since the time of St Maximus had wielded both spiritual and temporal authority over the city and its diocese. Kings and dukes, counts and marquises might come and go, but the episcopal government remained, providing an administrative structure for the city – albeit rudimentary – and a thread of political continuity. Through these chaotic centuries the bishops’ authority waxed and waned; powerful rulers would encroach on it, but in the long intervals when Turin had no effective secular ruler the bishops resumed control over the city. Moreover the bishops and their clergy possessed an important advantage that enhanced their political strength: they were revered as spiritual leaders, and they constituted the only source of higher culture in the city. Along with the monastic institutions that began to spring up in the surrounding territory, at Novalesa and San Michele della Chiusa, the bishops and the clergy embodied an alternative to the warrior ethos that dominated this turbulent, brutal world. They were almost alone in being literate, and literacy conferred political power. The ability to draft documents and keep records was an indispensable skill, without which even bar-