

of Savoy, in 1280. It would remain a possession of the House of Savoy from that time onward.

We should be careful not to assume that the Savoyard takeover of Turin was the result of some long-meditated design that reached its inevitable dénouement in 1280. For two centuries before that date the counts of Savoy had tried to expand into the Piedmontese plains from their bridgehead at Susa, and had intermittently advanced their hereditary claims to Turin, but had never been able to seize the prize they coveted. Too many rivals stood in their way. Thomas III of Savoy finally attained this long-cherished objective by exploiting the chaotic political situation that developed in late thirteenth-century Piedmont after the death of the Emperor Frederick II in 1250. The resultant collapse of his political following, the Ghibellines, created a power-vacuum in which the bigger cities and feudatories competed for dominance within the region. In this vicious competition Thomas III outmaneuvered his rivals through a combination of guile and inspired opportunism, seized Turin from his most dangerous rival, and was proclaimed *signore* in 1280. But this coup did not lead to secure domination; the Savoyard dynasty's hold on Turin would remain precarious for a long time, and the city would not be fully integrated into the Savoyard domains for more than a century to come.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries we begin to have a fuller and more detailed picture of Turin and its people than we had for the earlier period, thanks to the more abundant documentation that has survived. A wider variety of source-materials – above all a growing number of private documents and official acts, in addition to the ecclesiastical documentation – is now available. These sources are still discontinuous and fragmentary, but they allow us to form an idea of how the city's political structure evolved, how its economy developed, and how its citizens lived in an era of rapid economic and demographic growth. We can begin to follow the fortunes of some of the city's leading families, and even in a few cases to reconstruct how particular individuals amassed and disposed of their wealth. In a more general way we can see how the city's economy functioned and how its urban fabric may have looked, as new churches and public buildings were constructed. In this way we can trace the history of Turin and its people in some detail between two critical moments: from the end of the Arduinid dynasty at the end of the eleventh century, through the ascendancy of the bishops and the emergence of the commune, to the seizure of power by Thomas III and the beginnings of Savoyard domination.