

2. *Conflict over the Succession.*

The death of Countess Adelaide in December 1091 opened a new era in the history of the Turinese March that she had ruled so firmly for so long. The political climate was changing fast; the factors that had created the March had now given way to new forces that threatened its existence. The investiture conflict between the pope and the emperor continued unabated, eroding the latter's moral and political authority, spreading divisions among the ruling elites of the Kingdom of Italy, and undermining their allegiance to the emperor. The conflict also facilitated the north Italian cities' push for autonomy; the communal movement was gathering strength. Within the March of Turin itself the power of the Arduinid lineage was threatened by the rise of the communes and the growing independence of the lower nobility. Adelaide and her predecessors had made extensive grants of lands and privileges to their vassals in order to secure their loyalty. This policy worked in the short run, but over time it diminished the family's patrimony, undercut its authority, and strengthened the local lords. Furthermore, given the absence of a clearly defined successor to the March, conflict was bound to ensue when Adelaide died; several branches of her family put forward claims to it. Adelaide's death thus precipitated a crisis that would destroy the March of Turin.

First and foremost among the claimants was the Emperor Henry IV, the husband of Adelaide's daughter Bertha. Eager to ensure that the March remained under his control, he claimed it on behalf of his wife and their son, Duke Conrad of Franconia, whom he formally invested as its lord. But the investiture had no practical effect: Conrad never set foot in the March, and died within a few years. On the other hand, Adelaide's grand-daughter Agnes, the daughter of her eldest son Peter, had the advantage of actually residing in Turin. Her husband, who had ruled the March – in name at least – since 1080, had died recently, leaving their young son Peter as the titular heir. Agnes took over the government as regent for her son, but he too died young, leaving no heir. Meanwhile two other contenders moved to assert claims based on their dynastic ties to the Arduinid lineage, which they tried to make good by seizing parts of the March. Marquis Boniface del Vasto, of the powerful Aleramid clan entrenched in Liguria, occupied some of its southern territories, on the basis of his descent from Adelaide's sister. At the same time Count Humbert II of Savoy, Adelaide's grandson, occupied Susa and its valley, and then advanced on Turin. Although he failed in his