

bid to occupy Turin, he had staked out the Savoyard family's claim to the Arduinid lands east of the Alps, creating a precedent for the future. He and his successors consolidated their hold on Susa and the surrounding region, putting their own officials in charge of the localities, and setting up a mint to issue their own coinage. Humbert II was also careful to secure the support of the Church by endowing new monastic foundations and making generous gifts to those already in existence – the abbeys of Novalesa, San Giusto at Susa, Santa Maria at Pinerolo, and San Michele della Chiusa. The piety that motivated these gifts should not be underestimated, but neither should the political calculation behind them: the House of Savoy could not do without the support of these great monasteries as it worked to extend its influence. By securing their hold on Susa and its valley the counts of Savoy established a bridgehead east of the Alps, from which they gradually expanded their territories in Piedmont. For a long time their advance would be fitful, however. Humbert II died in 1103, leaving a young son, the future Amadeus III, who would not come of age for many years; his long minority interrupted the line of policy his father had laid down.

In the end, none of these rivals made good their claims to the Arduinid inheritance. Their struggles dismembered the March, but none of them was able to occupy Turin, which now became a separate territorial unit, split away from the rest of the former March. Authority reverted to the traditional head of civic life, the bishop, who emerged as the real winner in the succession struggle. While the Arduinids ruled the city, the bishops had been forced to defer to them, but in the power vacuum created by Countess Adelaide's demise the bishops regained their dominant place in city politics. With the support of the local lords, successive bishops fought to make good their rights over their diocese, which embraced the city and the lands around it. In course of time their efforts turned their diocese into a small ecclesiastical principality, in which the bishops ruled as princes over an agglomeration of villages and local lords.

By this time Turin and its surrounding district constituted a prize worth fighting for. The local economy was prospering, as traffic along the Frankish Road grew, and the tolls levied at the city gates increased. Since the early eleventh century a market had been held in the city – perhaps on the site of the old Roman forum – where local manufactured goods and foodstuffs were bought and sold. The bishops had every interest in keeping control over the growing economic and political asset that Turin represented. So when Humbert II advanced from Susa towards Turin in 1098 it was Bishop Vitelmo who blocked his way, by