

gathering his vassals and their men at his castle at Rivoli. By repelling Humbert's bid to capture Turin Vitelmo assured the bishops' ascendancy over the city for the future. The only potential alternative to their authority was the citizen body, but unlike the citizens of Asti or Vercelli or Milan, who were organizing themselves into communes, the citizens of Turin were still only an embryonic political force. Turin lagged behind these more assertive neighbors in developing the institutional framework of urban autonomy. Its citizens would not appear as a formally constituted commune for half a century to come, and would not finally supplant their bishop as the dominant force in city politics until the beginning of the next century.

3. *The Bishop and the Emerging Commune.*

The power of Turin's bishops derived primarily from their authority as spiritual leaders of the urban community and as heads of the diocesan clergy, and from their long history as the city's leaders and protectors since the time of St Maximus. They were also the city's cultural leaders, in an age when the only culture was that of the Church. The bishop's court, or curia, and the great monasteries in the area offered the sole exemplars of the life of the spirit and the intellect in a rough-hewn world of illiterate rustics and soldiers. But the bishops' power also rested on more mundane foundations. By this time they disposed of considerable landed wealth, which allowed them to maintain their own military forces, and to found castles and villages in the countryside. They were in fact prince-bishops, ruling a small principality centered on the city of Turin. Their patchwork of lands – the fruit of purchases and pious bequests over many centuries – yielded increasing revenues, as the rural population expanded and agricultural production rose. So too did the proceeds from their judicial and fiscal prerogatives: the fines assessed by their courts, and the tolls on traffic moving along the roads through their domains. Personal prestige strengthened their ascendancy too, for the bishops usually came from important local lineages: Bishop Vitelmo, who repelled Humbert II of Savoy in 1098, hailed from a clan of viscounts who had risen to prominence through their service to Countess Adelaide.

Finally the bishops enjoyed another important advantage: they had at their disposal what was by the standards of the time a sophisticated administrative apparatus, staffed by literate officials who kept their records and handled their judicial and fiscal business. The documents