

that have come down to us from the eleventh century give us glimpses of the episcopal chancery and its *scriptorium* at work. Its scribes, some of whom we know by name, like a certain Adam Presbiter, were trained professionals capable of drafting a range of edicts, title-deeds and contracts, in competent Latin and a well-formed script. In the twelfth century these scribes were joined by a number of notaries, whose skills further augmented the administrative efficiency of the bishops' chancery.

The professional skills of the notary were an essential element in the revival of urban culture in this period, vital for the development of civic administration, law and commerce in the emerging communes. The "art of the notary", as it was called, was a complex and demanding discipline, so important that in theory the emperor alone could award diplomas granting entry to the profession; in practice, however, the emperors delegated this authority to local lords and bishops, and to the cities. Men entering the notarial profession were required to study under a master, who initiated them into the complexities and responsibilities of their craft. Somewhat later, a system of examinations was developed in order to regulate entry to the profession. The art of the notary required a knowledge of Latin, of the technical terminology used in official documents, and of Roman and customary law. The notary's function was to draft both official acts, and private documents like contracts, land sales and wills, giving each of the parties involved a true copy, and retaining one in his own hands as a permanent record. The notary thus functioned as the keeper of the public trust, and his profession demanded not only technical competence, but impartiality, accuracy and integrity. In the course of the twelfth century we see notaries beginning to figure in the administration of the emerging Turinese commune, as well as those in the episcopal chancery, and others who handled private transactions. By the middle of the twelfth century Turin's notaries had formally constituted themselves into a guild. Their skills had become indispensable in the increasingly complex political and commercial life of the city, and these skills were well rewarded. We can identify several notaries who grew rich through the exercise of their profession and whose families rose into the ranks of the urban elite.

The notarial profession thus formed a vital thread in the fabric of Turin's urban life and the political culture of the incipient commune. So too did the legal profession. Together, notaries and lawyers formed the vanguard of a new secular culture that was emerging in the cities of northern and central Italy, distinct from the hitherto-dominant culture of the clergy. Judges and men learned in the law had always figured among the urban elites of northern Italy, even in the depths of urban