

prerogative of choosing who would hold the office. The rotating office of the Podestà soon became part of the commune's institutional framework alongside the consuls, and brought a new level of expertise to the business of governing Turin.

5. *The Urban Elite ca. 1200.*

By the end of the twelfth century the commune and its officials had come to dominate Turin's political life. The consuls and Podestàs followed one another in regular succession, the communal assembly met to deliberate, and its decisions were collected to form a corpus of statute law by which the city was governed. A small elite of wealthy families monopolized the offices of consul and the membership of the communal council. Now, as the bishop's power waned, this consular elite would assume undisputed control over the city. And thanks to the more abundant public and private documentation that we possess for this period, we can begin to identify the individuals and families who comprised this elite, and to form an idea of how they lived, how they made their money, and how they conducted their political affairs. Unfortunately, however, there is no corresponding body of evidence that would allow us to see how the mass of the citizens lived: our knowledge is restricted to the small circle of families that dominated the city's political and economic life.

By this time Turin had a total of perhaps 3,500 inhabitants, fewer than during the Roman period. Most lived within the circuit of the Roman walls, which still formed the city's defensive perimeter, but some were to be found in the suburbs that had sprung up outside the gates, where churches and monasteries formed nuclei around which clusters of houses coalesced. One suburb lay to the north, along the road to the bridge over the river Dora. Water was diverted from the river to irrigate fields and gardens, and to provide power for several mills. The Dora, like its sister the Po, was still an untamed river that frequently burst its banks and changed course, making it necessary periodically to relocate the bridge and the mills, and redirect the irrigation canals. The biggest suburb was located outside the western gate on the road to the Alps, clustering around the abbey of San Solutore and a handful of pilgrim hospices maintained by local monasteries, which offered free lodging to pilgrims traveling the "Frankish Road", or the "Roman Road" as it was now also known. In these hospices the wayfarers could find food and a bed for the night. In the course of the twelfth century this west-