

ern suburb expanded, and the monks of San Solutore divided part of the land they owned there to provide building plots. The suburbs to the south and east of the city did not develop to the same extent, for the city's main commercial axis was between the western and northern gates, the road between Lombardy and the Alps. As time passed, however, the route from the eastern and southern gates across the Po towards Asti and Genoa gained in importance, as trade with those cities increased. It seems likely that until the end of the twelfth century the crossing over the Po would have been by means of a ferry, or by the ford opposite the hamlet of San Vito. From there the road wound over the hills towards the town of Chieri and on to Monferrato, Asti and Genoa. Our first documentary reference to a bridge over the Po is in 1204, and it refers to what was evidently a recent structure, perhaps erected in response to the increase in traffic along the road to the east. This bridge would have been built of timber, and would have required constant repair; a stone bridge would not be built until much later. The river Po itself was not a commercial axis at this time. Fluvial traffic was slow to develop, and the river's value lay in its fisheries and a few mills along its banks, which were owned by a couple of nearby monasteries.

Judging from what we know of other cities at this time in northern and central Italy, many – or most – of Turin's inhabitants would have been recent immigrants from the countryside, drawn to the city by the hope of finding employment and a better life, and by a desire to escape the domination of their rural lords. They remained attached to the countryside, and lived by farming the land around the city. They kept animals and stored their produce in barns next to their dwellings, giving Turin a distinctly rustic character. Farming was probably the mainstay of the city's economy, followed by the traffic passing through its gates, where various tolls were charged. Turin did not function as a place where goods were exchanged and redistributed; it lived off the movement of goods and people in transit. Frederick Barbarossa's charter of 1159 had granted the proceeds from some of these tolls to the bishop; others were the property of various lords, or the emperor himself. But these tolls were actually collected by a small group of local families, who leased the right to levy them from their nominal owners and reaped handsome profits from them. Merchants and travelers who tried to evade the tolls faced stiff penalties in the form of fines or the confiscation of their goods. The passage of pilgrims and merchants along the "Frankish Road" also benefited the city's innkeepers, since the law required travelers to spend a night in the city.

Turin at this time was not a center of manufacturing; consequently