

no guilds of craftsmen developed there, as they did in many towns in Lombardy and Tuscany, where they gradually carved out a place for themselves in the city governments. Turin's guilds would emerge onto the political stage much later and much less assertively. Nor did Turin evolve into a center of banking and finance with far-flung connections, as Asti did. Its modest prosperity depended on its position astride the main trade route between northern Italy and France, and on the revenues from the surrounding territory, where its leading citizens acquired farms, mills and vineyards, or leased them from the Church and the nobility. These urban landowners and leaseholders profited from the rising demand for foodstuffs as the city's population expanded. Agricultural contracts preserved from this period reveal that they closely supervised the peasants who worked the land for them, stipulating that their fields must be carefully plowed and manured, their vines properly staked. In a phrase that frequently recurs in these contracts, the peasants were enjoined to cultivate the soil "diligently" for their masters.

A typical member of Turin's urban elite, with interests in the city and in the countryside, was a certain Pietro Porcello. He first appears as an official in the bishop's administration, and as his vassal, commanding one of the bishop's castles in the countryside. He also had ties to the rural nobility. In 1193 and again in 1199 Porcello appears as one of the commune's major consuls, indicating that he figured among the upper reaches of the city's elite. The top level of urban society was composed of men like him, who styled themselves "nobiles", and in some cases were descended from the knights and judges who had constituted the urban elite under the Arduinids. Like the landed nobility, they seem increasingly to have conceived of their families as lineages, structured patrilineally. In the course of the twelfth century new men rose to join this original stratum of leaders, enriched by the transit trade, by administrative offices, by the income from their urban properties and agricultural lands, and by moneylending – or rather usury. By the beginning of the thirteenth century the top ranks of this elite consisted of about fifteen families. Some of them, like the Della Rovere, Borgese, Calcagno, Beccuti, and Zucca, would maintain their elevated position in Turinese society for centuries. Others would disappear; within the families that formed the urban elite there was always a certain turnover, although as a group it remained relatively stable in comparison to the elites of other cities in the region.

Part of the wealth these families enjoyed came from collecting tolls for the bishop and the nobility, but a greater part probably came from the land. They owned lands in their own right, or as vassals of the bish-