

op and local nobles. Possession of these lands often gave them seigneurial jurisdiction over the peasants who tilled the soil, an attribute of noble status that set them apart from the common run of citizens and bolstered their aspiration to be considered noble. These leading families formed a close-knit bloc, united by intermarriage, and monopolizing access to the consulate and the communal councils. Situated just below them was another group of perhaps fifteen or so well-to-do families, who did not enjoy such exalted status, but who also had access to positions of power, and whose wealth would have been accumulated in the same way. Together these two groups of families constituted Turin's small urban elite. They alone could claim the privilege of full citizenship, which distinguished them from the rest of the population and gave them alone the right to hold office in the communal administration.

The will of Enrico Maltraverso, drafted in 1214, provides a good example of the kinds of fortunes these elite families were amassing. He stipulated that his considerable wealth was to be shared between his four daughters and several ecclesiastical institutions. He had no male heirs and only one of his daughters was married, so that he had not been able to found a lineage that would bear his name in future generations. In consequence he bequeathed the bulk of his wealth to the Church. Part of this fortune came from his lands. His will lists a number of properties in the city and the surrounding countryside: houses and gardens, a butcher's shop, a vineyard, parcels of farmland. Like other members of Turin's elite, he had spread his holdings between the city and the countryside. He also owned the rights to a toll levied at Rivoli, which had once belonged to the bishop, but which had apparently been ceded to Maltraverso as repayment for a loan. One part of his estate went to a daughter, who was the abbess of the convent of San Pietro, which thus became the effective legatee. The bulk of the legacy however went to the monastery of San Solutore, where Maltraverso endowed a chapel served by two priests. His motive for this bequest becomes clear when we remember that he had accumulated much of his wealth by lending money at high rates of interest. By making a generous bequest to his favorite ecclesiastical institution he was evidently hoping to avert the punishment that awaited him in the next world as a usurer. But even though he made this gesture to appease divine wrath, he still did not forgive his debtors: instead he charged a fellow-usurer, Giovanni Cane, to collect the credits due to him for the benefit of his legatees. Cane would go on in his turn to become one of the city's wealthiest men. In his will, drawn up in 1244, he bequeathed lands and money to endow a hospice for the