

to prosecute them successfully. In part this was because they had been primarily concerned with extending their hold on their domains west of the Alps, but it was also because each count of Savoy in the twelfth century had succeeded at a very young age. The resultant lengthy minorities and unsettled regencies had interrupted the continuity of policy and limited the Savoyard rulers' ability to pursue their aims consistently. In the early thirteenth century however this situation changed. Count Thomas I succeeded as a boy in 1189, but after him no more minorities interrupted the continuity of Savoyard policy for a century. Thomas I and his successors established firm control over their transalpine lands, built up a network of alliances with the royal families of western Europe that immeasurably strengthened their diplomatic and military position, and worked to expand the patchwork of lands and seigneurial rights they were accumulating on the Italian side of the Alps. By the end of the twelfth century the counts of Savoy possessed the Susa valley, together with footholds around Pinerolo and Avigliana, where the road from Susa debouches into the Piedmontese plain. The bounty they granted to the major monastic institutions in their zone of influence assured them valuable support; Amadeus III had been particularly generous in his pious benefactions. In the course of his reign Thomas I added to this bridgehead by acquiring other lordships beyond the Alpine foothills, over a number of minor local feudatories, and over the little towns of Vigone and Cavour, Rivalta and Collegno, the last two perilously close to Turin itself. Savoyard expansion was by no means unopposed, however. The commune of Turin and the bishop strove to check it, for they were both directly threatened, but it also alarmed Turin's powerful neighbors: the communes of Asti and Vercelli, and their rival feudatories, the marquises of Monferrato and Saluzzo, who were eager to capture Turin for themselves.

The commune's chief antagonist in the years after Barbarossa's death, however, was not the young count of Savoy but the nearby commune of Chieri, which refused to acknowledge the bishop (and thus also the commune of Turin) as its overlord. Since Chieri sought protection in an alliance with Asti, the Turinese commune allied with Vercelli. Several local feudatories also refused to acknowledge the authority of the bishop and the commune; some were adherents of the count of Savoy. Several years of inconclusive skirmishing ensued, interspersed with short-lived truces. The citizen militias of Turin and Chieri clashed, a few castles changed hands, and at one point Turin's bishop was captured by a local lord; the commune ransomed him. These little wars however were soon overshadowed by the renewal of conflict between the