

porarily thwarted by the conflict that soon broke out between the Emperor Frederick II and the same forces that had opposed his grandfather Frederick Barbarossa. Like him, Frederick II had ambitions to revive the power of the emperors in Italy, and predictably this grand design resurrected the same coalition that had defeated Barbarossa: the pope and many of the north Italian communes. In 1226 Milan reconstituted the Lombard League, and in the following year Frederick II was excommunicated by Pope Gregory IX. The centuries-long struggle between the emperors and the popes now entered its climactic phase, polarizing northern Italy into two warring camps: a pro-imperial, or Ghibelline party, and a pro-papal, or Guelph. In a reversal of alliances, Thomas I of Savoy now joined the Ghibelline camp, and was rewarded by being named imperial vicar of Lombardy, Frederick's chief military and political lieutenant in northern Italy. Faced by this threat from the House of Savoy and the Ghibellines, Turin reversed its long-standing pro-imperial stance. The commune of Asti, similarly threatened by the resurgence of imperial power and the expansionist designs of the House of Savoy, made common cause with Turin. Its merchants returned to their familiar route across the Po and through the city towards the Alps and France.

For a time, Frederick II prevailed. In 1237 he defeated the Lombard League at the battle of Cortenuova. He followed up his victory by appointing captains to govern many of the towns of northern Italy in his name, including Turin. Frederick's ascendancy also benefited the counts of Savoy. Thomas I had died in 1233, but his sons Amadeus IV and Thomas pursued the lines of policy he had laid down, maintaining good relations with the emperor, continuing the gradual encirclement of Turin by acquiring new territories in Piedmont, and extending the dynastic alliances of the House of Savoy. Amadeus's daughters married the two most powerful lords in northwestern Italy: one married the marquis of Monferrato, while the other married the marquis of Saluzzo, and then, after his death, married Frederick II's son, King Manfred of Sicily, as her second husband. In 1248 Frederick II rewarded the House of Savoy for its devotion to his cause. He granted the title of imperial vicar of Lombardy, which Thomas I had formerly held, to his younger son Thomas, the former count of Flanders. The latter had returned to Italy in 1244, after the death of his wife, and had been appointed ruler of the Savoyard domains in Piedmont by his brother Amadeus. The emperor also granted Thomas II a charter confirming his lordship over Turin and many lesser places in its territory, with the right to levy certain tolls. This charter greatly strengthened the House of Savoy's claims