

the House of Savoy. The conflict between Charles of Anjou's Guelph partisans and the Ghibelline league headed by Asti rapidly widened. A powerful local magnate, Marquis William VII of Monferrato, joined the league, along with the commune of Chieri, and a variety of minor feudatories. In November 1275 the league's combined forces defeated Charles's army at Roccavione in southern Piedmont, and the loose-knit agglomeration of lordships and cities he had accumulated began to dissolve.

The victors now fell to fighting among themselves over the spoils. William of Monferrato formed a league of his own, ostensibly to further the Ghibelline cause and combat Charles of Anjou's remaining partisans, but in fact to extend his own domains. Turin was left unprotected by the collapse of Charles's forces, and early in 1276 William entered the city, proclaimed himself its lord, and compelled it to adhere to his league. Both the communal authorities and the bishop were powerless to resist him. Predictably however William's successes caused his rivals to unite against him. The city of Asti and Thomas III of Savoy, erstwhile enemies, were now drawn together by the danger he posed to them both. They soon overcame William and put an end to the lordship he had briefly enjoyed over Turin. In May 1280 he was waylaid and captured by agents in the pay of Thomas III. To regain his freedom he had to give up his rights over Turin, its bridge and some nearby communities to Thomas, who then quickly took possession of the city. This change of overlord was the seventh that Turin had experienced over the previous eight decades, but this time the new lord's dominion would prove lasting. Henceforth Turin would remain under the rule of the House of Savoy, two centuries after the marriage of Countess Adelaide and Oddo of Savoy that had given rise to the dynasty's claim to the city.

What sort of a prize did Turin represent for Thomas III? Its value was first and foremost strategic: the city and its territory constituted an advanced bridgehead into northwestern Italy. Up to this moment the counts of Savoy had managed to conquer or acquire a scattering of towns and castles in the Alpine valleys and foothills, from Susa and Pinerolo, to Rivoli and Avigliana. The acquisition of Turin consolidated their hold on these territories, while also placing them firmly astride the road from the Alps to the rich plains and cities of Lombardy. Turin gave the counts of Savoy a strategic center from which to govern and extend their domains in Piedmont. In the course of the next century the city, under a junior branch of the dynasty, would become the focal point for their territorial expansion. The seat of Savoyard power still remained on the western side of the Alps, but the opportunities for future expansion