

2. *The Consolidation of Savoyard Rule.*

In August 1280 Thomas III of Savoy entered Turin and accepted its citizens' submission, establishing himself as their *signore* or lord. This event spelled the end of the autonomy they had enjoyed for the past century: although the communal government continued to function as before, henceforth it was subject to the will of its new lord. Thomas moved quickly and decisively to assert his authority. He did not attempt to alter the commune's institutions, or to tamper with the oligarchy of elite families that monopolized municipal office, recognizing that their support (or at least acquiescence) was necessary for stable government. So the city council and its elected consuls remained in place, their membership unchanged, and Thomas swore that he and his successors would govern with their advice. But they no longer constituted the city's sole sovereign authority; they were now the junior partners in a diarchic form of government. Thomas immediately promulgated a set of Statutes that established him as the supreme legislative authority, and regulated administrative procedures. To make sure that the council did his bidding he created three new executive officials to head the communal administration. The office of Podestà disappeared and was replaced by the Vicario and the Judge, who dispensed justice and maintained public order. A third new official, the Clavarius, was charged with keeping an eye on the city's finances. All three were to be appointed by Thomas and his successors as lords of the city, and were chosen for their loyalty. They were often courtiers, officers of the lord's household, or even (in some cases) creditors of the prince, who could recoup what was owed to them from the perquisites of their office. These princely appointees were required to be present at every council meeting, and the councilors could not reach a decision without their approval. These changes were improvised in response to the sudden change in Turin's political situation, in order to cement Savoyard control over the commune, but they created a form of government that would prove unexpectedly long-lived. The combination of a council representing the urban elite with executive officials representing the ruler would last into the nineteenth century.

By taking these steps Thomas gathered the reins of power into his own hands, and in retrospect it is clear that he inaugurated a new era in the city's history. After 1280 Savoyard rule over Turin would continue virtually unbroken down to the mid-twentieth century, interrupted only by two intervals of French occupation, in the sixteenth century