

and under Napoleon. This outward appearance of the continuity and stability of Savoyard rule is however somewhat deceptive. We must be careful not to assume that Thomas III's seizure of power marked an irreversible turning point in Turin's history. Savoyard rule would remain precarious for decades to come. The political situation was still fluid; the citizens' loyalty to the House of Savoy was by no means assured, and external foes were constantly scheming to seize the city, with the aid of dissident factions within the walls. Another *signore* could easily have ousted Thomas and his heirs and taken their place at the head of the city. Nor did the Savoyard takeover render the civic elite and the city council powerless. They retained a great deal of freedom of administrative action, and clung with pride to their tradition of communal independence. Far from being docile instruments of their lord, they retained both the will and the capacity to resist his dictates. Relations between the councilors and their princely rulers were often contentious, and would remain so for centuries.

The first hint of political instability appeared quickly, not however as the result of external attack or internal dissension, but of a dynastic crisis within the House of Savoy that threatened its hold over its newly-won possession. Only two years after he seized Turin Thomas III died, leaving a four-year-old son as his heir, in the care of his widowed mother. Three years later the reigning count of Savoy, Thomas's uncle Count Philip I, died without heirs. The succession to the multifarious Savoyard possessions was now contested by Thomas III's two brothers, Amadeus and Ludovico, in a conflict that jeopardized his son's rights to Turin and the Piedmontese lands. In 1286 a settlement was worked out between the contenders through the mediation of King Edward I of England. He awarded the title of count of Savoy to the elder brother, who became Amadeus V, compensated Ludovico with an estate and a lesser title, and upheld the rights of their nephew, Thomas III's young son Philip, to the House of Savoy's Piedmontese possessions. In this way Piedmont was made into a separate principality, ruled by a junior branch of the dynasty as vassals of the senior branch, which ruled the county of Savoy itself and the other lands west of the Alps. This arrangement would last until the junior line died out in 1418. Philip came of age in 1294, and was invested with the lordship over Turin and what was now the Principality of Piedmont by Amadeus V in the following year. In 1301 he married Isabella of Villehardouin, heiress to the crusader principality of Achaia in southern Greece. Even though this resounding title remained devoid of any practical meaning – Philip journeyed to Greece in 1301 in a fruitless effort to take possession of his