

households headed by single women decreased, presumably because widows were finding more opportunities to remarry. At the same time there was a dramatic rise in the number of extended households, in which several sons and their wives lived together under one paternal roof, indicating that families broken by the plague tried to regroup. These extended households became much more common than before, alongside the single-family households that had been the norm before the onset of the plague.

To offset the crippling loss of population, Turin's city council tried to facilitate immigration by offering inducements in the form of tax privileges and exemptions from service in the city militia. Some of the more distinguished immigrants – merchants, manufacturers and professionals – were given formal rights of citizenship as *habitatores*, as a reward for contributing their wealth and their skills to the city's economy. Most of the immigrants however were simple farmers and agricultural laborers who trickled in from the countryside. In the decades after 1348 the area around Turin became increasingly desolate and empty. Many people died of the plague; many of the survivors moved to the cities, drawn by the hope of better working conditions, and driven by fear of the marauding companies of mercenaries that scoured the countryside. From the mid-fourteenth century fighting intensified all over the region as the counts of Savoy and the great Piedmontese feudatories battled among themselves, and against the aggressive Visconti rulers of Milan, who were seeking to expand into Piedmont. These regional wars benefited Amadeus VI, the so-called "Green Count" of Savoy, who reigned from 1343 to 1383. He commanded regional leagues against the Visconti, and extended his Piedmontese territory at the expense of the marquises of Saluzzo and Monferrato. But the constant warfare had a devastating effect on the rural population. Peasants fled from unprotected villages and farms, and only remained in places that promised a measure of safety, for example around the castle built by the Beccuti family to guard their estates at Lucento, west of Turin.

Depopulation changed the way the land was farmed. The total cultivated area fell dramatically until the early fifteenth century; forest and scrub reclaimed much former arable land. Before the Black Death grain production had dominated; now the area devoted to cereals shrank, while the proportion devoted to pastureland, orchards and vineyards grew. The area of irrigated land increased, as owners strove to increase the productivity of their farms, often joining in partnerships to dig canals and ditches. A characteristically Piedmontese method of mixed cultivation, the *alteno*, in which grain and vines were grown in alternating rows, became far more common, perhaps because it offered the peas-