

The presence of the ducal court and the university also enhanced Turin's cultural life. Already under the princes of Achaëa the court had been a center of artistic patronage, and it maintained this role under the dukes of Savoy after 1418. They commissioned artistic and decorative work for their various residences at Chambéry and Annecy, at Amadeus VIII's castle at Ripaille by Lake Geneva, and at the castle in Turin. From about 1411 the Turinese painter Giacomo Jacquerio worked as one of the team of artists employed by the ducal court. He came from a family of painters; his father Giovanni had contributed to the decoration of the "Codice della Catena", the manuscript of the city Statutes kept for public consultation in the communal archives. Giacomo was a versatile artist, producing easel paintings, frescoes, wooden sculptures, designs for stained glass, and decorative items for his ducal patrons. His position as court painter helped him secure other commissions; between 1426 and 1430 he executed what is perhaps his most important surviving work, a series of frescoes for the monastery of Sant'Antonio di Ranverso, just outside Turin. Besides the ducal court, the new university also provided some enrichment to the city's cultural life. From the middle of the fifteenth century a few humanist scholars taught there as professors of rhetoric or law. But they did not stay long and did not make a lasting impression, so that the university remained largely untouched by the new currents of Renaissance scholarship. The great Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, who received his doctorate in Theology from the University of Turin in 1506, has left us a somewhat disparaging account of what he considered its tradition-bound intellectual tone.

In the course of the fifteenth century the dukes of Savoy made some effort to beautify Turin, endeavoring to make it worthy of its new role as the capital of their Piedmontese domains. There was much work to be done, for the urban landscape was extremely unprepossessing. Fine architecture and monumental buildings, either public or private, were conspicuously lacking. Turin retained a strongly rustic character, with stables and barns attached to many of the houses, and farm-animals roaming the unpaved streets amid piles of refuse. The requirement in the Statutes that the citizens keep the streets clean was evidently not enforced. Housing was uniformly primitive. The urban nobles resided in large houses, fortified for defense, while the common people for the most part occupied little single-story dwellings of brick and timber, often with thatched roofs, which posed a constant danger of fire. Many property-owners had added balconies and porticoes to their houses which encroached on the streets, despite ordinances from the city coun-