

council's protests that this was contrary to their privileges. The central issue thus became the city's privileges, which the council saw as its first line of defense against the duke's fiscal demands. For his part, the duke sought to undercut these privileges by challenging their legality, and also by granting exemptions from them to members of his court and to the tradespeople who supplied it, to his soldiers living in the city, and to the population that began to move into his New City after 1619. This attempt to make the New City a separate jurisdictional area ultimately failed, but it constituted a serious attack on municipal privilege, and further soured relations between the councilors and the duke.

Yet the relationship between the urban elite and the dukes was symbiotic as well as contentious. Many of Turin's families, both plebeian and elite, profited from their connections to the government, as suppliers to the army or purveyors to the court, or as bankers advancing loans – at substantial rates of interest – to pay for the duke's wars. Such for instance were the wealthy Baronis, Carello, Ferraris and Georgis families, who figured among the city's financial elite. Several of them were newcomers to Turin: the turnover in the civic elite was now proceeding at a faster pace. One of the most successful of these new men was Giampietro Cane, an immigrant from Monferrato, whose financial operations, centering on loans to the government, quickly propelled his family into the upper reaches of the civic elite. Other representatives of Turin's elite held positions in the ducal government. Such was the celebrated Gian Francesco Bellezia, also from a family only recently settled in Turin. Educated in the law, he was elected to the city council and became syndic in 1630, when the epidemic of plague was at its height. Unlike some of his colleagues, he did not desert his post, but directed the measures to contain the epidemic and maintain order. Subsequently he held many other municipal offices, and his portrait hangs in the great meeting-room of Turin's city hall as a tribute to his services. But Bellezia also held important offices in the ducal bureaucracy, serving as chief Savoyard envoy at the negotiations for the Peace of Westphalia in the 1640s, as a judge in the Chamber of Accounts, and finally as president of the Senate of Piedmont. His career highlights the constant osmosis between the municipal elite and the ducal government. Men like Bellezia offered the dukes the expertise their government needed; service in the ducal bureaucracy offered wealth and social advancement to rising families like Bellezia's.

The relationship between Turin and the state authorities was conditioned by two underlying factors: constant war, and a deepening economic malaise. From the early seventeenth century the city was hit by