

The growing prominence of the royal capital stimulated a demographic and territorial expansion that had begun in the mid-1820s, but accelerated in the 1840s. By the late 1840s, the population of Turin and its periphery was approaching 140,000, a 70% increase over levels at the end of the Napoleonic era. More than a third of the urban residents in 1848 had come from other areas of Piedmont, drawn by the expanded employment opportunities in the public sector and the rising demand for the services of merchants, shopkeepers, artisans, and domestic servants in the city. To accommodate this growing population, the urban expansion of Turin continued apace in the 1840s. By 1846, the city extended not only to the area south of the old walls, but also to the north and west, in the direction of Porta Susa, Borgo San Donato and Vanchiglia.

An expanding class of landowners, public officials, lawyers, merchants, bankers, and manufacturers were the chief beneficiaries of Turin's enhanced importance as an economic and administrative center. These groups, in particular, steadily increased in numbers, prestige, and influence during the reign of Charles Albert. The opulence and importance of the urban propertied classes found visible expression not only in their elegant homes, furniture, carriages, and clothing, but also in the changing rituals of Turin's high society. A small but talented segment of the old aristocracy began to abandon its caste prejudices in order to collaborate with these "new men". For his part, Charles Albert contributed to this process through his support of voluntary charitable and educational initiatives that encouraged, in turn, the growth of more diverse social groups.

Various developments testified to the gradual emergence of a new hybrid social elite in Turin, based less on inherited status than work and property. By the middle of the century, for instance, the city had 150 cafés, catering to an exclusive and affluent but socially mixed clientele. The same period also witnessed a softening of caste barriers in the Royal Theater (*Teatro Regio*). Much like the San Carlo Theater in Naples, the Royal Theater was built adjacent to the royal palace and was dominated by the presence of the king, whose central box was surrounded by those of the nobility. By the early 1840's, newly ennobled and bourgeois notables occupied a number of boxes, albeit the smallest, most crowded, and furthest removed from the royal box. A similar trend was evident in the new upper-class clubs that emerged in these years. In 1839, a *Società di ballo*, or dance club, was founded to encourage mixed socializing between nobles and wealthy non-nobles. Two years later, Cavour and his titled friends took an additional step in this direction