At the beginning there was the land and the sea, and whatever Genoa was to become, it would owe to its position on the shore at a spot where systems of transport must change. With the northwestern stretch of the Apennines descending steeply to the sea, the most remarkable feature of the land is how little flat space exists (see Map 2). Stunning rugged cliffs and rocky beaches have entrances generations of travelers to the Rivieras — the Levante to the east and the Ponente to the west. It was never easy to live off poor mountain soils with the few flat areas revealingly named islands, places of refuge in a sea of stone. These mountains have a narrow watershed facing the sea; to the north, east, and west, what water there was tended to find its way into the great Po valley to the north. Torrents or creeks, the Biagno to the east of Genoa and to the west the Polcevera, were unnavigable and were not always reliable sources of fresh water. Genoa was at the mouth of nothing
on a sea where some of the great ports sat; there, significant rivers like the Po, Rhone, Arno, and Nile offered access to a hinterland. Beyond the Giov, the local pass at 472 meters (1,548 feet) through the mountains, the Genoese could reach the upper Po valley and Piedmont, but usually by mules on tough mountain trails or on the admirable Roman Via Postumia, which branched off from the coastal Via Aurelia at Genoa and found its way to Tortona, Piacenza, and beyond.¹

The environment

The natural world, with its opportunities for transport, shaped the ways in which the Genoese entered the rest of the Mediterranean world.² What did nature and the Romans leave them? Nature supplied a mountain city on the sea, a fair port on a harsh coast, probably the best port between Barcelona and La Spezia, though the Genoese were always improving the harbor, making it increasingly an artificial one requiring upkeep. Genoa's advantages as a harbor derive from its northern displacement. Although the way to the interior from Genoa through the Giov pass and the Scrivia valley is not easy, it is at least shorter and so Genoa is the natural port of the upper Po valley. Some flat land around Genoa provided food, at least as important as the shelter its harbor gave ships. The coast from Cap Ferrat to around Varazze is fairly dry, receiving today about 1,000 cubic centimeters of rain a year, whereas Genoa gets about 1,400 cubic centimeters (53 inches) and the eastern Riviera even more. The humid winds out of the southeast bump into the mountains of the Riviera Levante and cause this pattern of rainfall.³ Genoa had supplies of fresh water — needed by any ships and galleys putting into the harbor. The weak coastal current runs to the southwest while the prevailing winds in the sailing seasons come out of the northwest, providing clear sailing south and east, just the directions the Genoese wanted to take. The famous Mediterranean winds, the Saharan scirocco from the southeast and the bisecco from the southwest, sometimes helped the Genoese to get home.⁴ The Genoese thus had that other basic requirement of a good port — it was usually easy to get in and out of the harbor.

Liguria is today one of the smallest regions of Italy, 5,405 square kilometers or about 2,087 square miles, just a bit bigger than Delaware but in an even more elongated form. This modern region is not medieval Liguria; Genoa then controlled parts of the Lombard plain now in Lombardy or Piedmont. But the coast itself, the 331 kilometers from just west of Ventimiglia to La Spezia, represents more or less the medieval confines of the Genoese state, except for the loss of Monaco in the west. The highest mountain in Liguria, Monte Saccarello at 2,180 meters or 7,178 feet, stands out among a number of peaks that circumscribed Liguria in a narrow arc of coastline. Dramatic changes in altitude in this small region produce five zones of vegetation and climate within a small ecosystem.⁵ From the sea to 500 meters, the classic Mediterranean zone, characterized by scrub coastal pines and other trees, flowering bushes, and a rich variety of flowers, provides the most memorable impression of the region, though we must edit out some of the more modern additions like eucalyptus, cedar, and palm if we want to imagine medieval Liguria. The submontal zone, from 500 to 800 meters, in the Middle Ages contained vast tracts of chestnut forests and a range of plant life, particularly in the well-watered eastern foothills. As one ascends to the true mountainous zone, from 800 to 1,500 meters, the beech tree displaces the chestnut, but the terraced landscapes were still fertile ground for vineyards and olive groves. Above 1,500 meters the subalpine and alpine (over 2,000 meters) provided some vivid scenery but not much economic benefit to the Genoese. These heights, however, are so close to the coast that they determine several important geographic features. Liguria has no natural lakes except for a few glacial ones; the reasonably abundant water simply falls downhill too quickly.⁶ Hence malaria was not a local problem. The main rivers of the region, the Roia in the extreme west and the Entella, which enters the sea at Chiavari, are small because of the limited, vertical watershed. The most sizable river in the area, the Trebbia, heads northeast for the Po.

All of these natural advantages, however, existed alongside some real problems, mostly concerning the lack of natural resources in Liguria. After all, notable seafarers like the Greeks never settled any closer than Monaco and the Phoenicians gave Liguria a wide berth. Liguria had no mineral resources worth tapping, and its mountainous and coastal soils are generally poor and shallow. Some good marble was quarried at Cape Fari and up in the mountains at Carignano and Albare; Passano yielded particularly fine red and green marbles, and nearby Lavagna supplied useful slate for roofs.⁷ There was a fair amount and mix of timbers, but no real rivers existed to move the logs to the coast. Hence shipbuilding in Liguria would always be spread out in dozens of coves close to local supplies of good wood. When it was possible to bring wood by sea to Genoa, shipwrights worked there, but more typically the entrepreneurs in the business also constructed ships up and down the coast.

FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING
Local agriculture was never going to be very prosperous. For centuries the Genoese peasants in the valleys ate when necessary a bread made of chestnut flour, and they learned to like it. Their animals sometimes more cheerfully subsisted on an exotic fodder — chestnut leaves. Managing the chestnut forests required many traditional skills now being lost in modern Italy. Fruit trees, olive groves, and vineyards helped to vary the local diet, but cereal farming was difficult for the usual reasons — too little flat land and not enough water to irrigate thin soils. Even pastoralism did not thrive in this environment, and Liguria never became a noted center for producing wool, cheese, and leather. Liguria’s mountains provided a fragile ecological region, easily damaged by fire or imprudent agriculture and slow to recover from abuse, natural or man-made. Yet it would be wrong to portray Liguria as a desert or a hostile environment; the entire northern shore of the Mediterranean offered only a few places better than Liguria and some worse. But nothing less than how a great port developed in the middle of Liguria. Even the local fishing left a lot to be desired; as the seaborne dropped sharply off the coast, these deep waters were unfavorable to fishing. Obviously, the region produced a tough people, the Ligurians, with the Celts, Romans, and Lombards adding to the local heritage. Yet Liguria was an isolated place, a relatively poor and unpromising territory.

ANCIENT AND EARLY MEDIEVAL LEGACIES

To the Romans Liguria was on the way to provinces worth having, and thus they put good roads through the place, originally and primarily for military reasons. The great Via Aemelias, under the empire called the Via Julia Augusta, the coastal road to Provence and Spain, connected Rome to these important western possessions. But this road was on land, and few of Genoa’s modest natural advantages mattered. Genoa was nothing much under Rome, and towns like Vercelli, Albenga, and Vado were more important way stations. At least one major road in the region completely bypassed Genoa by cutting across country from Vado to Piacenza. The classical Genova left few traces in the Latin sources and hence ample opportunity in the centuries of the city’s greatness for local patriots to invent suitably Trojan origins and specious ancient significance. Archeology reveals the truth — a modest castrum overlooking the Roman road. The medieval neighborhood of Castello preserved the name and some street patterns of the old Roman city. To the north Turin, Milan, and Pavia could be proud of their classical past; Genoa had no place in that company.

No imposing Roman buildings of any kind survive in Genoa, so the city’s classical inheritance reveals itself in other ways. Roman Genoa was a small, bowl-shaped city, almost like a steep amphitheater, situated on a hill that sloped down to the crescent harbor. This ancient harbor and its hilly city remained Genoa’s core in all subsequent periods. Nearby Ticinum (Pavia) and Milan needed an outlet to the sea, and as these two cities grew in importance in the late empire, Genoa presumably thrived because of its geographic setting and was more vital than the available sources indicate. A maritime legacy from the ancient world to the early Middle Ages guaranteed that a knowledge of ships and how to build them survived in Genoa.

The late Roman Empire also saw a durable Christian community establish itself in Genoa. The fourth-century bishop and miracle worker San Siro gave his name to the original cathedral, located outside the earliest city walls. His relics at this site, as well as some from San Lorenzo at his church (the future cathedral), forged Genoa’s closest ties to late antiquity’s cult of the saints. As no spectacular martyrdoms occurred in Roman Genoa, its spiritual centers mainly depended on imported relics. The Genoese never forgot the Roman roots of their Christianity, but they were reluctant to embellish them. Only at the time of the First Crusade did new and powerful relics arrive in the city. So Genoa experienced no dramatic conversions, nor did it contribute much edifying material for pious future generations to contemplate. Instead, it was becoming what it would always be — a city of strong if conventional Christianity with no interest in heretical beliefs. The Genoese were remarkably impervious to all forms of heterodoxy; there are almost no signs in the ancient and medieval periods of any local religious dissent. This steadfastness to tradition may have owed something to classical values.

The fall of the Roman Empire in the west, a great historical drama in which Genoa played no part, had the dull but important consequence of eliminating the power that had maintained the roads and controlled the seas. But as land communications became more difficult, the sea counted for more. During a brief season of Ostrogothic rule, a Jewish community and synagogue existed in Genoa, probably a sign that it was still a trading center with ties to the east. Genoa was in Byzantine hands for a century, from 537 to about 642, when King Rothari of the Lombards conquered.
what was by then not much more than a sleepy fishing village on a crumbling road. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about this period of Greek rule, and the hard centuries that followed have effaced nearly all traces of it.\textsuperscript{12} Some curious local survivals of Latinized Greek words like \textit{sidus} for fleet and \textit{vinacea}, a city official from \textit{kentarchos}, attest to some linguistic heritage.\textsuperscript{13} Well into the twelfth century some Genoese still claimed to be living by Roman or Lombard law, and this hardy survival of old customs may point to important local differences between the indigenous population and the powerful newcomers.

Under the Lombards (642–774) and later the Carolingians, what little is known about Genoa concerns the church or the sea. Local churches, like San Ambrogio, San Vittore and Sabina, and San Nazario and Celso, reveal the importance of the church of Milan, whose archbishops spent about seventy years in Genoa as exiles whom the Byzantine protected during the early years of Lombard rule in Italy.\textsuperscript{14} The oldest churches and monasteries of Genoa, most notably San Giorgio and Santo Stefano, have their origins in this early period as well. Later, in 711, refugees from Spain brought the relics of San Fruttuoso to the Ligurian coast, where they built a new monastery at Capodimonte, east of the city, in an isolated area that eventually became a Doria family stronghold. Genoa was not much more than a big village at the time of the Carolingians, whose major naval base in the area was near Lucca, and the local count had responsibilities that stretched to Sardinia and Corsica.\textsuperscript{15}

Muslim raiders in nearby Fraxinetum (active ca. 889-ca. 973) mostly left Liguria alone, probably because they lacked sea power.\textsuperscript{16} But Muslims from North Africa thoroughly sacked Genoa in 934–35, and the site was probably abandoned for a few years.\textsuperscript{17} A recently uncovered Arabic source on this sack suggests that Genoa may have been a substantial town, with linen thread and cloth, as well as raw silk, worth looting. These trade goods, and the attack itself, may indicate a role for Genoa in the poorly documented trade of the early tenth century.\textsuperscript{18} Whatever Genoa’s actual significance in 934, this sack left it a shadow of its former self. No local records survived the destruction, so we will never be clear about early medieval Genoa’s history. By the late thirteenth century the Genoese historian and archbishop Jacopo da Varragine implausibly suggested that Genoa’s fleet was away when the Saracens attacked, sacked the city, and captured the women and children. When the fleet returned, it quickly pursued the Saracens and rescued the captives. The sack itself is one of the two or three secure facts Jacopo knew about Genoa before the First Crusade, so it must have been severe enough to rupture local memories as well as destroy the documents.\textsuperscript{19} In the disordered years of the mid-tenth century people reestablished themselves in Genoa; they emerge into the world of documents in a famous charter that the kings Berengario and Adalbert granted them in 938.

Before turning to the charter, the beginning of this history of Genoa, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider just what the city might have been like around the year 950. Whatever it was, Genoa was not necessarily the dominant place in Liguria; other survivors from Nice to Portovenere were still contenders for that distinction. Traffic by land and sea was probably as close to nonexistent as it had been since the republic of the Romans. It is hard to envision much trade except on the most local level and in staples like olive oil and chestnuts. Yet by 1016 the city recovered sufficiently to launch a naval offensive, along with Pisa, against Muslims in Sardinia. Land transport probably depended on mules and fishing boats of modest proportions. But to someone from up in the mountains, even a re-found small town would be impressive in local terms, and one important theme here is how Genoa absorbed the really small places in Liguria.

For Genoa in 950, little of “central place theory” would predict the city’s coming greatness.\textsuperscript{20} But the theory suggests that we keep a sharp eye on the systems of transport — here, most importantly, by sea. If the routes of the medieval galley stood out in the Mediterranean world in the same way that railroads did in the nineteenth century, then the traffic through Genoa, its place on those routes, and what these galleys carried all would have been fundamental to Genoa’s rise as a central place. The other key factor to note is the contemporary rise of competitors, both major and minor ones, and their fates. In the tenth century the wealth of the Mediterranean was south and east. When did the Genoese start going there, and, perhaps more significantly, how long did people west and north of Genoa not go east but depend instead on Genoese shipping? These points need to be raised now for several reasons. First, the century 910–1050 witnessed such rapid and profound change that we will run the risk of seeing Genoa’s history as the inevitable rise to greatness that it was not. Second, some will always argue in favor of a continuous if low-level historical development to 950, that is, some historians still see what Genoa subsequently accomplished as the fruit of what the Romans, Byzantines, Lombards, and Carolingians planted. Historians are more skeptical about a sudden takeoff around the year 1000 than they used to be, and the argument for gradual change and continuity is a good one for tenth- and eleventh-century Genoa.\textsuperscript{21} Certainly, the Muslim sack was a disaster for the town, but in the countryside a resilient aristocracy survived.

14 : FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING
pounds of silver threatened anyone who violated this charter, with half the proceeds to go to the kings and the other half to the men of Genoa.

Many questions surround this document. Ebone, without any sort of title, is a mysterious person, but he was probably something like the count or viscount of this refounded settlement, optimistically called a city in the charter. There is no sign of any corporate life in Genoa; it would be a mistake to read back the eleventh-century commune into this little place. All local economic activity seems to have involved farming and fishing, and the chief local concern was that in the twenty years or so since the Muslim sack, people had acquired lands in ways that rested on local custom rather than on strict legal form. Like all documents that survive, the charter struck the Genoese as important enough to keep, probably because it served as a collective title to what had been grabbed. Warriors only figure in the charter as people suspected of being potential disturbers of the peace. Perhaps powerful individuals in the countryside had exchanged oaths to protect and support one another and had accepted land in exchange for military service. Liguria was not well suited for agricultural estates and the traditional ways of living off the labor services and customary rents of a subject peasantry. Genoa’s most formidable competitors from the ranks of the warrior class would come from the other side of the mountains, where the nobles might more easily exploit the more productive lands of the upper Po valley. Other sources of local power, the bishop of Genoa and the abbots of the main local monasteries, are also absent from this charter. They too were going to find high demands for farming to be difficult in Liguria, and they would seek confirmation of their properties and liberties on their own. But in the eleventh century the bishop of Genoa would become one of the most important local powers in town, so his absence in 958 may be explained by the difficulties in reestablishing the institutions of the church in the neighborhood of Genoa.

The surviving records of the churches and monasteries after 958 partly illuminate a very obscure period of Genoese history. Most of the charters concern the great Benedictine abbey of Santo Stefano, in this period outside the city walls, described in almost wistful words as not far from the Porta Soprana and just east of the city — close enough to flee to safety in case of attack (see Map 3). In these early years of its existence Santo Stefano was a double monastery having male and female communities with an abbess and abbot. The extant charters reveal a series of abbots patiently consolidating the lands of the abbey by purchase or, more importantly, by pious donations in the valley of the Bisagno, at Prato San Martino, and in the little villages along the coast. As the abbots accumulated
properties they also leased them out, either for twenty-nine years or in perpetuity at low rents that usually required some payments in grains or animals. Abbeys occasionally sold property to acquire the cash in silver pennies of Pavia to buy lands closer to the center of their sphere of activity. These charters, some in a barely literate Latin, also reveal that professional scribes, the notaries, were active in Genoa. In a culture still overwhelmingly oral, the notaries, in the service of the church but not themselves priests, preserved in writing these acts of sale, rental, or pious donation. The relative precision of the written charters in the late tenth century reveals a people that was already thinking systematically about how to use land and records to support a community.28

These charters collectively portray complex local customs around Genoa and people claiming to live by Roman or Lombard or Salian law. For example, in 1019 Ingone, living by Roman law, and his wife Richelda, living by Lombard law, wanted to confirm a gift of land to Santo Stefano.29 Because Richelda was a Lombard she needed to have her mundadalba (male legal protector) notify her nearest relatives, in this case her two sons and another man, that she had given the land and that piety and not violence had prompted the gift.30 On three sides of this land Santo Stefano already owned property, so again the slow process of building a patrimony stands out. But in Lombard law a woman had to get the consent of her male relatives to alienate land, so a Roman husband had to keep all this in mind.

Most of the surviving charters from the period 950–1050 involve the church, but a few documents concern only the laity. In these cases if the land or other property eventually passed to the church, earlier charters had a chance to survive because they proved title. A curious early charter of 1005 notes that a certain Armano, living by Salian law, sold to a couple Benedetto and Benedetta for ten solidi a slave, a Burgundian woman named Erkentruda.31 In the long history of Genoese slavery she is the first slave with a name. The sellers promised that she was not a fugitive, or stolen property, or bad (sick?), but healthy in body and mind. Why this document survived is not apparent, but Erkentruda probably became church property at some time.

Another famous local monastery was the isolated San Fruttuoso di Capodimonte, a Cluniac house from 584 that attracted the notice and charity of the Empress Adelaide in the 990s.32 A charter from April 999 records a donation of the empress to the monastery land in Brugneto and elsewhere.33 A forged revision of the charter, probably from the twelfth century, has the empress giving San Fruttuoso all of Portofino as well as extensive fishing and hunting rights.34 The forger filled the charter with

anachronisms; Genoa has an archbishop and consuls in 399, more signs that even the medieval Genoese did not know much about this period of their city's history. But someone thought it would benefit the monastery to have a claim to Portofino.

Charters from the eleventh century also indicate how the local economy offered opportunities to improve the modest agrarian base of Liguria. In 1025 abbots Erberto of Santo Stefano rented out a piece of land to Gisulfo and his heirs for ten years.35 Gisulfo already had land on two sides of this new property. While paying the small rent of one penny a year, Gisulfo was supposed to plant a vineyard and build a house there. At the end of the term everything was to be divided and the abbot allowed Gisulfo to keep half. Other examples of this type of incentive to renters to improve the property of landlords suggest that labor was in short supply compared to land and hence was able to command a premium. Mountain agriculture, always labor-intensive, required a certain level of population to maintain the irrigation and contoured furrows necessary for Ligurian farming.36 Terracing, needing even more labor to build and repair the walls, does not seem to have been common in the medieval centuries, especially when the city attracted people to more profitable work.37

Another interesting collaboration occurred in 1012, when Amerata and Conrado, mother and son, a certain Giovanni, and the four sons of the late Venercio, each for one-third became partners for constructing a mill on the Bisagno at Amerata's land.38 The other two parties contributed the work of building the mill, aqueduct, and trough and presumably the materials as well. Amerata and Conrado were supposed to receive annually one-quarter of the income from the mill and two chickens and a side of meat. The other partners ran the mill and divided the rest of the income. Again, this sort of hard work to improve the lands leased from the church and others made it possible to produce some wealth out of the limited natural advantages of Liguria.39 Moreover, this form of contract by which partners contributed different amounts of capital and/or labor foreshadowed the commercial instruments that would determine the course of Genoese trade in the next century. The habit of pooling resources and reckoning profits was not formed first in distant markets or in long-distance trade but instead originated in the humble business of making agriculture pay.

By the early eleventh century the old noble family of the Obertenghi, who had held the march of Genoa in the tenth century when it had encompassed Genoa, the Lunigiana, Tortona, and a big part of the Lombard plain, had split into a dispersed local aristocracy with four main branches,
the Estensi, Pallavicini, Malaspina, and Adalbertini of Gavi. The viscounts of Genoa, no longer counting for much in the city, had moved into the countryside to build up power; some of these nobles would eventually move back into town and take up prominent positions in society. The Malaspina family was the most involved with Genoa, yet it never took up residence there. In 1056 Marchese Alberto confirmed the customs of the city, and this charter gives us the first real look at Genoa in nearly a century.

Let us analyze the provisions of this charter in the same rough order in which they appear in the document; this method gives a sense of what the parties thought was important. Marchese Alberto promised the Genoese the same rights their parents had and guaranteed them the ability to enforce charters drawn up by notaries and suitably witnessed. If the notary was alive, he was supposed to swear that the document in question contained nothing false. The oath presumably reassured all of the illiterates who depended on what they could not read. This early emphasis on the validity of documents reveals a community with an active land market and one struggling to adhere to public law. Lombard women had the right to sell or to give away their property according to their custom. Servs of the church, king, and count were permitted as well to sell or donate their property and rented land as they wished; these sales and gifts were valid according to custom. All of these provisions reveal an attempt to create a basis for trust by which people could rely on documents rather than force to transfer properties. The marchese assured the Genoese that they would not be compelled to prove their cases with foreigners by ordeal or combat, two methods already being supplanted by appeals to the written word.

The next set of provisions concerns the relations between the people living in the city and local powers—the nobles and the church. The Genoese did not owe suit at any court outside the city or to any marquis or viscount in the region. (Later the charter notes that the marquis still had the right to place people under ban, but it lasted only fifteen days—until he came to Genoa to hear the case.) In general, the Genoese had the right to exercise justice over themselves and were virtually immune from the nobility. The church figures in this charter as the principal landholder in the area. Marchese Alberto confirmed that people having church lands in lease who were unable to pay the rent annually because of “grave necessity” were allowed to pay within ten years without complaint. This stipulation applied only to lands rented from the church, not from the nobility or laity generally. The next provision, requiring people living in Genoa because they had fled the pagans to perform their guard duty, suggests that part of this “grave necessity” may have been the insecurity in the Genoese countryside caused by Muslim raiders. Another sign of the special status of the church appears in the ruling that everyone who had been invested with land for thirty years without any bishop, archbishop, abbot, advocate, rector, or count challenging it should continue to possess what he had, provided that five men were willing to swear, presumably to the length of the possession. But the parties to the charter also tried to defend the patrimony of the church. People having church goods should keep them only for the life of the cleric from whom they had rented them, according to custom. This rule prevented a local abbot from leasing out at perpetuity at low rent the lands of his monastery to his relatives. During his lifetime, little could be done about such nepotism. Contradicting an earlier provision, the marchese declared that no one having lands of the church in lease could rent them out to a third party, but those who had church land for more than ten years were allowed to keep it. In the same way, any cleric having land belonging to the church ought not alienate during his lifetime this property to any other cleric, but this rule seems to leave room for bequeathing it by testament. All these provisions secured local land tenure and prevented to some extent the breakup of the church lands.

Finally, the marchese guaranteed the farmers the right to hold land without any public service, an interesting relic of the Roman and Byzantine liturgies that still survived into the Lombard period and beyond. Three good men, people of sufficient local standing to serve as responsible earth takers, swore to uphold this charter and its record of local customs. The marchese promised to observe all these rules according to Genoese customs and precepts as judged by the Genoese themselves. In other words, he relinquished his own right to determine just what the privileges of the Genoese might be. In 1056 the Genoese were governing themselves, without the benefit of any discernible commune or system of government. They had successfully extracted themselves from both imperial power and the top ranks of the warrior aristocracy in northern Italy; they had yet to deal with their own bishop and local nobles, however.

The most important local nobles were the counts and viscounts of the various small towns along the Ligurian coast. Whatever their origins, these people by the eleventh century controlled the mountain passes and what food and trade goods came down them. The nobility of Liguria took readily to urban life and the sea and brought with them a frugal spirit and a taste for combat on land or sea. A late document of 1246 supplied the names of those Genoese families that traced their noble roots back to
the viscounts of the eleventh century. One problem with this evidence is that surnames are almost completely absent from the eleventh-century sources, so we must take on faith that families accurately preserved memories of their origins and would begrudge any upstarts wanting to include themselves in noble company. The noble families included Carmadino, de Insulis, Guercio, Spinola, Tabarcio, Pinello, de Murone, de Mari, de San Pietro de Porta, Scoto, Pevere, Avvocato, Gabenica, Cabo, de Campo, Busio, Carnevario, Picinataro, and many others. Some local families of undoubted noble origin, like the Doria, della Volta, and Embriaco, were not on this list, which might reflect the partisan strife of the 1250s.

The origins of the bishops of Genoa in this period are obscure, but it seems likely that they came from noble families or ones like them. Perhaps because the local nobility controlled the church lands, the bishop's political authority seems to have been waning as early as 1056, though the office continued to receive political respect for the way it represented Genoa to outsiders. The nobles faced the same problem as the church: how to live off the marginal agricultural lands of Liguria. Both the nobility and the church depended on the modest surpluses from farming in Liguria. Whatever real prosperity would come their way derived from the sea. All the land had to yield was enough resources to put some men and boats on the sea. The hard farming and pastoral life of Liguria was a powerful incentive, along with the rewards of piracy and trade, drawing men to the risks and benefits of the sea.

Because Genoa's own historians did not begin work until the time of the First Crusade, outsiders provide the first glimpses of the Genoese at sea, but as Pisans tell this story it is likely to be distorted by local pride and rancor. The first Genoese fleet known from the city's own records participated in the campaigns in the east from the time of the siege of Antioch in 1097. This famous fleet represents the culmination of a long Genoese effort to take to the sea and thrive there. Most of the earlier notices of naval activities come from later Pisan sources, notably the chronicle of Bernardo Maragone. In 1095 the Muslims sacked Luni, proving that their fleets were still capable of raiding the Italian coast, and Pisa itself was attacked in 1094 and 1011. In 1016 the Genoese and Pisans launched a joint attack on Muslims in Sardinia, an island that had not fallen to the Muslims but that was repeatedly raided by them. The Musulm, the ruler of Denia in eastern Spain, made a serious effort to conquer Sardinia, and the joint expedition in the next year was intended to repel him. The Pisan sources tell of a great victory over the Muslims in which the Genoese played a supporting but undeniable role. This triumph had significant consequences for Pisa, which began to take a closer look at Sardinia, a place that would also attract Genoese notice. But at the beginning of the long and usually contentious maritime history of Pisa and Genoa, the two communities collaborated. Muslim powers controlled Sicily and the Balearics; with Sardinia in hand, the western Mediterranean would have been a threatening place for small towns like Genoa and Pisa, which by 1067 were capable of launching a naval expedition a considerable distance from their home waters. The Pisans conducted a raid against Bone in North Africa in 1014, bringing the struggle for control of the western Mediterranean directly to the Muslims.

Later Genoese myth credited the city with gloriously capturing a Muslim king in Sardinia in 1095 and bringing him in triumph to Genoa. No evidence for this victory exists, but the story shows that Sardinia remained a focus of Genoese attention in the mid-eleventh century. The first of many wars between Pisa and Genoa occurred in the 1060s, and although its causes are obscure, they must relate to Sardinia. During the 1060s the Pisans provided important naval help to the Normans as they began the long process of taking Sicily from the Muslims. In 1067 Pisa and Genoa made a great naval attack on al-Mahdiya (Mahdia), the capital of a Muslim state centered in modern Tunisia. Once again the later Genoese sources are useless, but an interesting work, the "Victory Poem of the Pisans," preserves most of what is known about the episode. From the Pisan perspective the impetus for the attack came from Pisan and Genoese merchants, Countess Matilda of Tuscany, and Pope Victor III, once Desiderius abbot of Monte Casino, with Rome and Amalfi also participating. The role of the merchants is complex and suspicious. Tunis itself and other important Muslim cities along the African coast rivaled the Italians for control of the sea but were also among their best customers. An attack on al-Mahdiya looks like a natural continuation of ambitions hatched in Sardinia and Sicily. The Muslim half of the Mediterranean world depended on its coastal shipping from Morocco and Spain to Egypt, and Italian efforts to disrupt this trade and to pillage it, desires doubtless on the minds of the merchants who initiated the campaign, could only benefit Genoa and Pisa. The campaign itself is perhaps best known because the Italians wore pilgrim insignia. War on Muslims always had religious overtones, and the great armed pilgrimage of 1095, the First Crusade, would shortly open a new chapter in Christian-Muslim conflict in the Mediterranean. Pope Victor III's part in this campaign and
the religious fervor of the participants suggest that we might misjudge the attack on al-Mahdiyya by seeing it as a precocious trade war or as a rehearsal for the First Crusade.

What might have prompted Genoese and Pisan merchants to select al-Mahdiyya as a target? S. D. Goitein’s work on the Jewish records from Fustat (Old Cairo) convinced him that for most of the eleventh century the Jews of Egypt had contacts with merchants or ships sailing from Venice, Lucca, Salerno, and Amalfi, and not until the twelfth century did Jews use ships from Genoa, Pisa, and Gaeta. But a Jewish letter from the 1060s notes that ships had arrived in Alexandria from Rum (Byzantine lands?), Genoa, Spain, and elsewhere. Just after the First Crusade, around 1103, the sultan of Egypt had all the Genoese in Cairo arrested, presumably because other Genoese were helping the king of Jerusalem take Syrian ports belonging to the Fatimid state. Unfortunately, no continuous runs of commercial documents survive in Genoa from before the 1110s, when there was a sudden burst of detailed information on trade. Yet unimpeachable non-Genoese sources confirm that the Genoese visited Egypt long before the First Crusade, and around 1103 there were enough Genoese merchants in Cairo to make practicable their arrest as a category of persons. So the Genoese were active in North Africa as pirates and traders from sometime in the eleventh century, when intrepid merchants made their first trades and returned to Genoa hoping that they had turned a profit. Hence, for the moment al-Mahdiyya was a more plausible target than Alexandria.

The rise of eastern trade is a long story that will provide one of the constant themes of this book. For now, it is enough to observe that the Genoese had little to take to North Africa as trade wares except timber and salt. More likely, the earliest traders brought silver and were tolerated as cash customers. What the Genoese purchased with this silver can wait for a while; what is important now is, where did they acquire the silver, which was not a resource in Liguria? Silver had been extracted from Sardinia since Roman times, and the Genoese, Pisans, Muslims, and others were interested in the island as a source of silver, either to mine or to steal. This potential source of cash to begin a revolution in commerce seems at once too neat and farfetched. The Genoese struggled with the Muslims and Pisans for control over Sardinia. Success there would provide the Genoese with even more silver. Too little trade in the eleventh century was coming over the mountains from the north to account for a flow of silver into Genoa; in fact, “too little” may be an exaggeration. Even successful piracy seems to assume some resources. It is hard to imagine the prototypical heroic Genoese fishermen, poor in resources, acquiring silver on the high seas from the Muslims. Corsairs certainly played a part in the growing prosperity of Genoa, but being a pirate too had its start-up costs.

It is bad logic to believe with Sherlock Holmes that when all the possibilities have been eliminated, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the cause of the phenomenon or crime at issue. Yet only agriculture is left to explain the source of the modest surpluses that would enable some men to build ships capable of sailing across the sea. Having just poor-mouthed the agrarian base of Liguria, I must explain how agricultural surpluses could have yielded enough silver to start the takeoff of Genoese commerce. The charters of the bishops and monasticities of Genoa, even from the most dim years of the tenth and eleventh centuries, reveal that a money economy had never disappeared in Liguria. In nearby Pavia the mint turned out enough silver pennies to supply the undoubtedly modest needs of the Ligurian cash economy. Whatever taxes and booty ended up in Pavia were recycled through northern Italy, and silver was available. These same charters show a stream of rents paid in kind but also in cash to the church, and we may presume that the bulk of the land in Liguria, in the hands of lay lords and freeholders, brought them a similar if modest income. My argument here rests on social forms to explain the accumulation of a surplus; a very efficient squeezing of the rural population skimmed off a little from a broad if not wealthy base. Also, the fertility of mountain soils, although quickly exhausted, would give a burst of productivity as in some places farming tapped this resource for the first time.

No contemporary documents reveal anything specific about this process because the extant records concern only how the church profited from agriculture. No evidence suggests that the church put its silver into trade, but the local nobility certainly siphoned off some of the church’s wealth. Some later snippets of information reveal something about the mysterious early days of Genoese commerce. The nobility of Genoa and Liguria provided many (but not all) of the leading trading families of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. We do not need any successful buccaneers, as Henri Pirenne suggested for the north, to find a merchant class for Genoa. There the people who controlled most of the land were the same ones who took to the sea with whatever silver their tenants generated. One problem with this reasoning is the need to find plausible reasons for why a mainly rural nobility would do something as uncharacteristic as becoming merchant pirates — for that is what they did. They might as easily have turned on one another, something that nobles and warri...
were doing across Europe. Land scarcity helps to explain why the Genoese took to the sea to acquire food and wealth not available at home. The mountains circumscribed Genoese ambitions and caused a shortage of land that could be overcome only by crossing the seas to trade or fight. There is not much land or natural wealth to fight over in Liguria, as the Muslim raiders often learned, though later the mountain passes and their tolls would give the rural aristocracy good reason to struggle among themselves and with Genoa for control over them. But in these early days, there was little yet to tax. No power in the area except the Muslims gave the people of Liguria a common enemy or master. If the nobility had no


centralizing or external power in the neighborhood to fight, no great local wealth to promote envy and strife, and no easy way to expand the agrarian base because of the confines of the sea and mountains, then its task would be to fight its real enemy, the Muslims. The Genoese could not ride against these enemies, they had to sail against them. So the nobility marshaled the modest surpluses and labor at their disposal and put them to constructing ships, not for fishing, but for defending Liguria and warring against their most potent enemy.

To take stock of this complicated economic argument and to account for Genoa’s rise, let us look again at the city’s geographic position. To the extent that the upper Po valley benefited from an arduous shortcut to the sea, Genoa was the natural solution to the problem. But what Liguria had in common with the Venetian islands and the Low Countries, two of its parallel cases of early economic development, was land scarcity — in the Low Countries, powerful neighbors constituted the same barriers as the mountains or the sea. So although there was a potential market north of the Giuvi, it required the narrow options to the south to drive the Genoese toward the seas promise. Land scarcity by itself might foster migration or simply stagnation at low population levels, but in Genoa’s case geography provided a chance for it to play the role of intermediary and pirate.

A later bit of evidence on the early Genoese economy concerns the decima maris, a customary tith that the Genoese paid to their bishop (from 1133, their archbishop). A registry of the charters, customs, and rights of the archbishop, compiled around 1143, collected documents going back to the tenth century in order to defend the archbishop’s income. One of the first things the compilers noted was the title of ships; in the first category those returning from Oltremare (Latin Sarda), Alexandria, Romania (Byzantine lands), Barbary (the western Maghreb), Africa, Tunis, Bougie, and Almeria paid 22.1 solidi per ship, and if their ships were loaded with


grain, each man gave the archbishop one mina. After this clockwise tour of the most distant ports of call for Genoese ships, the compilers described how much ships from closer ports paid; from Sardinia 98, and Corsica 75. Any ships bringing grain from these islands to Genoa also owed the archbishop one mina per man, as did ships from Calabria and Provence. Pilots were exempt from this duty, a testimony to their importance. Ships carrying salt from Sardinia and Provence also made payments in kind to the archbishop. Because Genoa’s rugged coasts and sharply dropping seabeds left few opportunities for local production, importing salt was necessary. Such trade made the city a regional center for this vital substance.

These lucrative titles reveal the panorama of Genoese trade, but the questions remain. How far back into Genoa’s past were they collected, and what do they tell us about the earliest phase of Genoese maritime commerce? Around 1143 a certain Alessandro Avvocato denied that he owed the archbishop the tithe of a galley coming from Sicily because he said he was actually engaged in piracy in Romania, not trade. Consuls did not pay tithe, perhaps because their gains were considered ill-gotten. But at the beginning there must have been a fine line between trade and piracy. The archbishop’s records show the consuls of the commune enforcing the tithe of ships from Provence in 1117, and everything about this custom suggests that it was old, certainly dating back to the eleventh century. Hence the structure of the title discloses some of the features of early Genoese trade. The islands — Sicily, Corsica, and Sardinia — formed the core of Genoa’s interests at sea, and the key early commodities were grain and salt. Liguria was not rich in these resources. Even those goods produced locally, like wine and olive oil, were bulky and more easily moved by sea. The archbishop’s records are filled with concern about transporting agricultural products from his distant estates to Genoa. In Nervi the archbishop himself, along with the other local tenants, was responsible for making wine barrels to take the harvest to Genoa, and the architect kept four ships for this and similar purposes.

By the 1090s Genoese trade was already brisk, both locally in the Tyrrhenian and to the more exotic ports of North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. Trade closer to home consisted of staples like timber, salt, cheese, wine, olive oil, and grain, products enabling the Genoese to support a part of their population that was not directly employed in producing food. In the more distant ports the Genoese were mainly cash customers at first, but they were too smart and too comparatively poor to
remain so for long. The Genoese were for a while their own principal customers for food, but the luxury items of the east required a broader consumer market to be profitable. We shall look more closely at that aspect of Genoese trade after first examining how they secured and augmented their eastern trade as a consequence, intended or otherwise, of crusading.

THE FIRST CRUSADE AND ITS AFTERMATH

This is not the place to retell the history of the First Crusade or to miscast this fundamental event as merely an episode in Genoese history. Throughout this study we will run up against the problem of placing Genoese history in a proper perspective while not getting bogged down in narratives told better elsewhere. In this case, however, the first great chronicler of Genoese history, the nobleman, ambassador, and public official Caffaro, sailed with the great fleet of 1100 that arrived too late to participate in the siege of Jerusalem. But Caffaro was an eyewitness to the establishment of the Latin kingdom in this critical year, and he is neglected both as a historian of the Crusades and as one of the first urban historians in Europe. Caffaro, born about 1083, lived to the ripe age of eighty-six, only abandoning his greatest work, his chronicle of Genoa, in 1164, because he could no longer continue. Caffaro's own annals cover the period 1099–1163; he also wrote a separate work, "On the Liberation of the Cities of the East," that covers the First Crusade and its sequel. Moreover, he probably had a hand in the beginning of a "Brief History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem." As Richard Pevear notes, Caffaro stands at the beginning of a marvelous tradition of urban history in Genoa, primarily secular in tone and origin, that stretches into the fifteenth century. From now on we will nearly always have a contemporary or nearly so version of events. Caffaro tends to see the world through patriotic Genoese eyes, but our interest, again, is to see the Genoese through his eyes.

Caffaro's chronicle covers the period of the First Crusade in more detail than his description of the capture of the eastern cities, which may have been written as late as 1140, but in both works his memory was at times selective. Caffaro, for example, began his history with the edifying fairy tale that around 1083 Robert of Flanders and Duke Godfrey sailed to Alexandria on a Genoese ship named Ponente and then with some difficulties visited the church of the Holy Sepulchre, presumably forming the idea of returning to conquer the place later. Caffaro was only three years old when this alleged incident took place, so perhaps we should not fault him for believing it. The detail of the ship's name is just the sort of corroborative fact typical of a shaky story. On firmer ground, Caffaro noted that the bishops of Grenoble and Orange came to Genoa to seek help for the crusade in 1097; they preached in the church of San Siro, and many Genoese took the cross. Caffaro recorded the names of nine noble Genoese, some with names like de Insula and Avocato, who must have been the leaders of the first contingent of Genoese to leave for the east in July 1097. No doubt this fleet of twelve galleys and one small ship included about 1,200 men, as 100 constituted an average crew for a galley. This number of men, drawn from Genoa as well as the smaller ports and mountain villages, represented a considerable effort by a town that perhaps had a population of 10,000. The fleet arrived in Syria in time to provide valuable supplies and support to the main crusading force that was besieging Antioch. While the ships remained off Port Saint Simeon, presumably to enforce a blockade of Antioch, other Genoese marched inland to participate in the siege. From the earliest phase of this effort the Genoese aligned themselves with Bohemund, prince of Taranto and one of the leaders of the crusade.

After wintering in the east, part of the Genoese fleet, having spent nearly a year in hostile waters far from sources of supply, returned to Genoa on 6 May 1098. These ships brought with them the first tangible rewards for Genoese participation — the bones of Saint John the Baptist, which would become the most potent relics in the city. The Genoese remaining in the east were also in a position to claim rewards for their services, and after the fall of Antioch on 3 June 1098, they pressed their case. Bohemund, intending to establish himself as ruler of Antioch, gave to the men of Genoa the church of San Giovanni in Antioch, as well as a fonda, a well, and thirty houses on the church square. Bohemund also somewhat vaguely conceded to the Genoese the right to live by their own customs in Antioch. On the same day the good men of Genoa, Anselmo Rascherio and seven other important people, in exchange for what Bohemund gave them in Antioch, promised to help him defend the city and to be neutral in any quarrel he might have with Raymond Count of Provence, his main rival. These leading citizens claimed to be honest men, men with some standing in the law, but not in any sense were they official representatives of Genoa. Whether or not Genoa had a functioning commune in 1098 is a vexed question to which we will return. At this moment the Genoese in the east were parties to important decisions for which
there were few precedents, but the men on the spot were astute enough to acquire for their city and not for themselves a valuable concession in Antioch, privileged trade, something they did not yet have anywhere else in the world.

At this point there was a hiatus in the Genoese effort; perhaps the experience of the fleet wintering off Syria in 1097–98 did not tempt others into emulating the participants. In May or June 1099 Guglielmo Embrisco and his brother Primo arrived off Jaffa, just as the crusader army was making its way down the coast, intending to reach Jerusalem. After destroying some local Muslim shipping, the Embrisco brothers, in a famous and perhaps historically accurate gesture, took apart their own ships and marched to the siege of Jerusalem, bringing with them the wood needed to construct siege engines. Just how much wood two galleys contained and what sort of contribution the Embrisco brothers made to the conquest of Jerusalem in July 1099 remain unresolved questions that have always seemed more important to the Genoese than to anyone else. In 1099 the Pisans sent a fleet, whose size local pride inflated to 120 ships, to the east in time to assist Bohemund in expanding his principality and to bring Daimbert, archbishop of Pisa and papal legate, to the east in time to cause trouble in establishing the Latin state. But the Pisans were in a sense latecomers and the Venetians even later still, compared to the Genoese, whose interests in the east remained keen deep into the sixteenth century.

Caffaro's personal experience in the Crusades was as a participant in the great fleet that sailed on 1 August 1100. This time the Genoese sent twenty-six galleys and four ships, nearly 3,000 men, a substantial force drawn from Genoa, the rest of Liguria, and small towns like Savona, Noli, and Albenga. The Genoese arrived in the east after the death of the first Frankish ruler, Godfrey, and Bohemund's capture, so they found themselves at a loss to figure out what to attack. They were careful to ask Tancred, Bohemund's nephew and representative during his captivity, to confirm and augment the privileges they had received in 1098. In 1101 Tancred gave to the church of San Lorenzo, now the bishop's permanent seat, one-third of the income of the port of Solino and a church of San Giovanni (the same one Bohemund had already given), plus one-third of the port of Laodicea as well as a similar share of any other port conquered with their help. Tancred also exempted the Genoese from paying the commercium, a Byzantine-style customs tax.

In his chronicle of Genoese history Caffaro describes the fleet, which early in 1101 attacked itself to the service of Baldwin I, king of Jerusa-

lem. After wintering in northern Syria, the Genoese fleet around Lepanto sailed down the coast from Laodicea to the vicinity of Haifa. The crews, including Caffaro, visited Jerusalem for Easter. Under the leadership of the consul of the fleet, Guglielmo "Hammerhead" Embrisco, the Genoese helped Baldwin I take Acre on 9 May and then proceeded to attack Caesarea. Around 31 May 1101 Caesarea fell to the crusaders, who thoroughly pillaged it. Among the booty falling into Genoese hands was a green glass serving dish or bowl, slightly damaged but still a fine example of late Roman, Byzantine, or Islamic artistry. This dish is known in Genoa as the Holy Grail or, more usually, the Holy Basin. Although this object may have in fact come to Genoa in some other way in the twelfth century, it remains one of the oldest physical witnesses to Genoese history. For a long time the Genoese evidently believed that the dish was one of the three chalices that had cracked into several pieces, such was their gullibility and knowledge of glass. Caffaro, not mentioning the object, describes how the fleet then began its trip back home. At Port Saint Simeon the leaders decided for some reason, perhaps the rigors of the voyage or the quarrels of the crew, to divide the booty. After setting aside a tenth (the bishop's tithe?) and a fifth (the commune's share?), they parceled out the rest among the 8,000 men, giving the consuls, pilots, and "better men" a bigger share. Caffaro, who proudly states that each man got 4500 of Poitou and two pounds of pepper, must have been mistaken about the number of people in the fleet — 4,000 men would have been the upper limit here. But the booty was by all measures enormous, and the fleet returned home in triumph and glory in October 1101.

It is possible, however, that some Genoese ships remained in the east or perhaps quickly returned there, for Caffaro writes about eight galleys under Paganu della Volta and Mauro de Pizzazzalunga participating in the conquest of Tortosa in 1102, and some of these men remained in the service of Count Raymond of Provence and joined him in the siege of Tripoli. Sometimes between 1102 and 1104 the Genoese assisted in the capture of Gibellet and received a third of the city in recompense. The most plausible explanation for the tangled story of what the Genoese accomplished in the east in this decade is that every year some Genoese fought in the Latin states and that the chronicles noted only major fleets and their deeds.

In 1104 Baldwin I rewarded Genoese efforts in a charter with which the Genoese may have later tampered, but the basic content does reflect the political realities in the kingdom. Baldwin gave to the church of San Lo-
tenzo a piazza in Jerusalem and in Jaffa, one-third of Arsuf and its territory, one-third of Caesarea, and one-third of Acre as well as of the port's income. The commune was too new and incomprehensible to be the recipient of such largess; the bishop continued to represent Genoa to the outside world, particularly to the nobility. Baldwin also promised the Genoese 300 bezants a year and one-third of whatever he conquered when fifty or more Genoese aided him. The king and the Genoese shared some shady ambitions; Baldwin promised them one-third of Cairo if he took it with their help. Turning to legal and commercial rights, the king exempted the Genoese from the commercium and agreed not to execute, main, or imprison the Genoese, who were in turn careful to ensure that their clients from Savona, Noli, and Albenga were treated the same way. Finally, Baldwin guaranteed his warrior/merchant allies that if any of them died in the kingdom, he could dispose of his goods beforehand by testament, and if he died without a will, his associates, other Genoese, could safeguard the deceased's property and decide what to do with it. This provision certainly took some of the risk out of the dangerous life of the kingdom. Almost as an afterthought, the Genoese got to keep any booty that came their way.

Benjamin Z. Kedar has convincingly argued that this deal between Baldwin and the Genoese reflects how desperately the kingdom needed Italian naval support; in these early years the Genoese were first in line to provide it, followed closely by the Venetians and Pisans. Without naval power Baldwin could not effectively besiege ports, and one-third may have seemed to be a small price to pay. Later rulers renegotied the deal anyway. Acre was only taken in May 1194 with the help of the Genoese, at a time when Fatimid armies and ships seemed to threaten the kingdom's survival. Hence the promise of one-third of Cairo represented an early and astute view that Egyptian power remained a somber fact. Yet within just a few years, Genoese ambitions in the region had grown to encompass Cairo; no wonder the sultan arrested every one of them he could get his hands on. William of Tyre mentions the perpetual glory and rewards the Genoese got, along with one-third of Caesarea — thus the Muslims helped to make Genoa a power in the Mediterranean.

Genoa continued to play an important role in the history of the Latin kingdom for the rest of its existence. Antioch, Tripoli, the kingdom, as well as Armenia, Egypt, and the Byzantine Empire all provided venues for Genoese trade. Depending on the shifts of the caravan trade across Asia and the sea routes in the Indian Ocean, sometimes Egypt was the main entrepôt of the eastern trade, at other times Acre or the Black Sea ports. But Jerusalem remained a fixed point of spiritual focus, and it was the principal reason why the Genoese spent so many lives and so much treasure in the east.

THE COMMUNE

Caffaro states that a year and a half before the fleet that took Caesarea sailed, the Genoese established a compagna (commune or sworn association of citizens) to last for three years under the leadership of six consuls. As the fleet departed in August 1198, the Genoese must have set up their compagna early in 1199, perhaps on 2 February, the feast of the Purification of the Virgin, a date that became the traditional first day in office of the Genoese consuls. All earlier documents suggesting that a commune existed in Genoa before 1199 have been dismissed as forgeries, yet the city must have had some form of government in the late eleventh century. Caffaro is so matter-of-fact about this compagna that it is impossible to believe that it was the first one. It is also inconceivable that he would have failed to note that this was the first compagna. Yet the first fleet to the east, the one that benefited from Bohemund's generosity at Antioch, did not receive the concessions in the name of a compagna or commune. Marchese Alberto's deal with the Genoese in 1156 did not provide any evidence for a commune, and it did reveal that the bishop still wielded some real authority in the city. In 1887, at the time of the expedition to al-Mahdiyya, Bishop Conrad of Genoa favored the imperial cause, whereas the "people" leaned toward the reformed papacy of Gregory VII and Victor III.

In the aftermath of this discord, sometime between 1087 and 1099, the compagna first appeared in Genoa. Vito Vitale believed that the compagna was a voluntary association of neighborhoods, with the bishop and the nobility joining in the oath. The neighborhoods of Genoa, themselves called compagni, were originally seven: Borgo, Scoglia, Porta, San Lorenzo, Maccagnani, Piazzalonga, and Castello. The neighborhoods themselves had some economic and political organization — all but San Lorenzo had access to the port — and naval obligations to provide crews. Arranged much like slices of a cake, Genoa's neighborhoods descended from the hills down to the sea. Vitale suggested that the compagna was a precommunal stage of self-government because of its federal nature, but it is more accurate to consider it as the first stage in the long evolution of Genoa's commune. This period, down to 1191, witnessed periodic renew...
als and changes in the structure of the sworn association, but gradually its temporary nature disappeared and the number of consuls fluctuated between four and eight. Their means of selection is not clear, but some form of election is probable. Nobles frequently served as consuls and the bishop remained a force, especially in the first half of the century. Everywhere in central and northern Italy, city-states were emerging with a bewildering array of styles of government. The most important of these cities—Venice, Florence, Pisa, Milan, and Genoa—developed in distinctive ways. Giovanni Tabacco believed that the common themes in this struggle for control were how power became institutionalized and how “hegemonic social classes” emerged in Italian urban society. The sworn compagna compelled the Genoese to submit to a common power whose principal mission was to defend the people and to find the means to pay for it. Cross-dying required so much expense and effort that in Genoa’s case the problems of launching those expeditions probably contributed to the rise of institutions like the compagna. Hegemonic social classes are more difficult to identify, but we should keep an eye on the nobles and the families that dominated the consulates.

After the first known consuls, the compagna was reestablished in 1102 with four consuls chosen to serve for four years. This process was repeated in 1106 and then regularly in four- or two-year intervals until 1122, when the consuls began to serve one-year terms. Caiffaro himself served as consul in 1122 and five more times down to 1149. Because no autobiographical details survive about these early consuls except from Caiffaro, his age, about forty-two, may or may not have been typical of the men who served for the first time. Various documents from the early twelfth century reveal in a piecemeal manner the activities of these consuls. But from about 1143 a remarkable document survives, the brief of the consuls. In part this brief was a précis of the laws of Genoa, and in part it described the office of consul so that the men occupying it knew what to do in the unlikely event that they could all read the brief’s Latin. Earlier briefs probably existed and a later one survives, but this one illuminates the early commune in striking detail.

First and foremost, the consuls were not to diminish the honor of the city or the church’s income and honor. It was something new in medieval Europe that a city could have honor. The consuls were also supposed to dispense equal justice to the citizens, and in peacetime one of their most arduous tasks was to serve as a judge. By 1143, by means of a process to be described shortly, their writ ran from Monaco in the west to Portovenere in the east and in the interior on a line from Voltaggio to Montalto.

to Savignone—more or less modern Liguria, though plenty of people in the region still vigorously disputed the commune’s authority. In Genoa the consuls exercised their offices at three major churches: Santa Maria di Castello, in the heart of the old city; San Siro, the old cathedral; and San Lorenzo, the new seat of the archbishop. Intentional homicide was the first and the most serious crime, the brief explained to the consuls. If the guilty party was not a sworn member of the compagna, or if he was a cleric or a minor, the penalty for homicide was exile and seizure of all goods which went to the nearest surviving relatives of the victim or, if they refused it, to San Lorenzo. Sons and daughters of the killers could not inherit anything, except of course if the wife killed her husband or the husband murdered his wife. Then the children were, however, probably the nearest surviving kin of the victim, were allowed to inherit. In no case did the consuls have the burden of imposing capital punishment; this was a humane side to Genoese law. In murder cases for which the guilty party was not obvious or easily identified, an accused had the right to defend himself literally by combat against the deceased’s champion. If he refused to fight he was guilty, and if he died in the combat he was guilty; in both these instances he also forfeited all of his property. If the accused won the fight, then he merely suffered exile. In this system of law, to be accused was a taint that never completely washed clean.

Next the brief instructed the consuls on just what it meant to enter into the compagna and what the principal rights of members were. If any Genoese was called to enter the compagna, he had forty days to comply, and if he did not, he was refused admission for three years. If a person was not in the compagna he could not serve as a consul or treasurer, or be a legate or advocate or serve in any office. Perhaps most importantly, he and his money could not be carried by sea from Genoa, and anyone who transported such a person and his goods would be held accountable by the consuls. Anyone who did not enter the compagna and had a dispute with a person in it was not allowed to receive any counsel or help from a member. Clearly, those in the compagna were only a subset of the larger pool of adult Genoese men, and only those of a certain local importance found themselves invited to join. Membership probably conferred on people the right to vote for consuls and certainly the right to engage in maritime commerce, the backbone of Genoese prosperity and the source of the great fortunes in the city. Success in trade enabled powerful families to keep together their allies for political as well as economic purposes. By trading or employing those outside their circle, the members of the compagna created wider support for their policies. The poor lived without
these benefits, but even ordinary Genoese from time to time risked a few life in an overseas trading contract. This provision in the brief suggests that many adult men in the city were in the compagnia, which also helped members in their lawsuits and disputes. People outside the club were not going to fare well in court cases against members. The brief does not address the question of women and whether or not they entered the compagnia. Because no women served in any office, it is probable that they did not enter the compagnia, but as relatives of members they were permitted to engage in trade.

The brief then turned to the complex issues surrounding assault. In this matter the age of majority was twenty; below that age the law did not consider a fight to be an assault, and it instead imposed a fine on the father for damages. In this and all similar instances, the commune received a part of the fine. The consuls worked in pairs, and no consul alone could compel a man to take an oath. When the consuls disagreed with one another, the majority ruled. The consuls were not allowed to summon an army, or to begin a new war on land or sea, or to devise a new tax, without the consent of a majority of the council. It is unclear just what this council was—surely not the parlamento of all the members of the compagnia. More likely it was an advisory committee of some sort, the predecessor of the avvianti (elders). Besides directing whatever wars or diplomacy safety required, the consuls were also supposed to keep the peace. One problem was the towers, fortified family compounds sprouting up all over Genoa and other Italian cities—the Embriaco tower is the famous local example. Any tower built without the consent of the consuls was to be torn down or the owners would be fined. Carrying weapons in the city without license was prohibited and punished by a stiff fine; only those traveling out of the city were permitted to be armed. The consuls also promised to punish anyone who did anything against the interests of the church—a sign that the power of the archbishop had waned, as he himself could not defend it.

Judges called consuls of the pleas handled lesser justice, and the consuls of the commune supervised their activities. The brief contained an oath by which the consuls swore to uphold justice and defend the compagnia. If some other oath bound a consul and inhibited his ability to do justice or to conduct business, he could not serve in office. This part of the brief implies that any vassal of a lord against whom the commune might find itself at war should not be a consul. Consuls also swore never to be judges in cases concerning fellow consuls, even after their terms of office had expired. Consuls promised to make their wives swear that they would not accept anything that might pertain to the consulate worth more than three solidi—a nice sense of the conflict of interest here.

The consuls also had jurisdiction over trade, though commerce is not a major issue in the brief. No citizen, inhabitant, or foreigner was allowed to bring goods into Genoa that he or she had received from someone living between Piombino and Portovenere (Pisan territory) that were “contrary” (competing against) to Genoese goods. The Genoese wanted to prevent Pisan merchants from profiting by exporting goods to Genoa that would compete with items the Genoese themselves had imported into the city. The consuls were also in charge of proclaiming and enforcing embargoes against all enemies, and only a majority of the consuls in Genoa could grant exceptions. Certain taxes were set aside to pay the salaries of the consuls and other officials, but it is unclear how much they were in fact paid. The last part of the brief bound the consuls to high standards of integrity. Only by majority consent could they affix the commune’s seal to a document. The consuls swore to keep the treaties with the people of Lucca, Pisa, Tortona, and the Byzantine emperor. Above all, they promised to do the job in good faith and without fraud, and not to fall in their responsibilities because of love, fear, hatred, their own relatives, or any other reason. Only the just impediment of God or, in an odd human touch, forgetfulness (pro oblivione) could explain if not excuse a lapse in duty.

These details and mechanics of city government may appear tiresome, but it must be remembered that medieval Genoa was an independent state whose leaders were solving the problems of self-government largely through trial and error. Several important features of the early commune merit comment. Above all, the sworn association represented a local effort at self-help to establish a regime with moral as well as legal authority. The oath helped to accomplish this by giving the commune a quasi-religious sanction, but all the specific rules described here should be seen as attempts to empower the commune and not just by instilling fear in the people. Instead, the powerful Genoese, as well as some in the second rank, chose a system that allowed a number of residents to participate. Hence the commune’s moral authority derived from this free choice and the consent of at least some of the governed. Other rules reveal Genoese values. In criminal matters the penalty was the same whether the victim was in the compagnia or not. This sense of equal justice was significant because it would help to hold the loyalty of the Genoese who were too
poor to be members of the commune; it also guaranteed the safety of foreign merchants while they were in the city. At the bottom of the compagna were the shared commercial ties of the Genoese; in the twelfth century the old saw iannum ergo mercatur [a Genoese therefore a merchant] meant very specifically that the basic right of a member of the compagna was to trade freely on land or sea. The twin desires of administering justice and fostering trade and prosperity prompted the Genoese to join together in a compagna. Of course, they also wanted to defend themselves from rivals and enemies, and they also needed to pay for the limited but still costly activities of city government. Although the brief did not say much about finances, these matters determined Genoa's survival.

Money remained the sinew of war, and the ability to raise it—finance—decided Genoese power. Even as Genoa's wealth grew, if the city could not marshal some of it for defense, Genoa might have ended up as part of some other state's base of taxation. No fiscal brief for the consuls or treasurers survives, but if such a document existed in the early twelfth century it might have resembled the following summary of the commune's system of taxation. There was a head tax, probably going back to the eleventh century, on foreign merchants that varied according to the distance they traveled to get to Genoa. This tax was part of the income of the coast and port, which also included a customs tax on the weight of goods that varied according to the value of the merchandise. A tax on sales by foreigners in Genoa amounted to either 3 percent of the value or, in the case of slaves, 50 percent per head; for wool it was 2 pence a sack. These taxes comprised the tolls of the viscount of Genoa, and they fell on foreigners. In an undated list of customs duties (from about 1140), the consuls dedicated some taxes to pay for finishing the cathedral of San Lorenzo. These taxes were computed on the weight of items like pepper, brazil wood, indigo, senna, alun, tin, and other imported luxury commodities, or at so much per sack, as the 4d. duty on cotton from Sicily or Alexandria. Most items were taxed by weight, not volume, and presumably citizens as well as foreigners paid these duties on goods passing through the harbor. At 4d. a quantar of pepper, for example, which sold at £6 in 1186, the tax only amounted to one-third of a percent, not enough to distort the price of pepper or to complete the cathedral anytime soon.

In a document from 1149 the consuls listed all the taxes that foreigners paid in Genoa. Besides the taxes already mentioned, there were duties on many agricultural goods like wine, oil, flax, honey, oakum, almonds, and onions. These assessments must have encouraged rural Liguria to submit to Genoa in the same way that the taxes on trade helped to tie the small towns to the bigger ones. Foreigners comprised two sets of people—those in Liguria not yet benefiting from formal ties to Genoa and true foreigners who would never be anything else. One policy to both groups accomplished the dual goals of filling the commune's treasury and impressing people with the tangible value of being Genoese.

Not all of the income of the viscount in fact belonged to Genoa; some of it remained in the hands of the nobles. The commune had other important sources of revenue. Land tills through the mountain passes yielded considerable income, and in some cases the Genoese themselves paid the tills. There was an extraordinary tax (collected) levied on commerce and land in times of crisis. Gabelles (excise taxes) on salt and other commodities also existed. In difficult times the commune borrowed from its own citizens or bankers in Piacenza or Rome, or it sold the right to collect some taxes in exchange for immediate revenue. The right to coin money and to control lands and castles of the commune were also for lease, when necessary. The lack of a brief on finance, or a communal budget, makes finances more confusing than diplomacy or justice, but the general picture will become clearer as we move into the financial crises of the late 1140s and early 1150s.

This summary of Genoa's finances reveals these basic issues. Taxing foreign merchants was fine, especially when they competed with Genoese merchants, but those who came as customers were themselves a precious commodity—hence Genoa taxed their sales and not their purchases. For example, a brief on the customs taxes in 1128 reveals that men from Savona and Noli who came to Genoa to trade were charged only one cent rose, whereas merchants coming from Barcelona to sell Saracen slaves paid sixty pence. Over time the Genoese absolutely dominated trade going in and out of their town, so taxing foreigners would never solve the city's fiscal problems. Taxing land would also yield a modest return. Taxes on trade, either customs duties by volume or value of commodities, were potentially the most lucrative sources of revenue, but they added to the cost of doing business in a city with competitors as close as Pisa. So if the local level of taxes on trade reached a point at which Genoese transmigrants became more expensive relative to those of say Barcelona or Pisa, Genoese trade would begin to suffer a comparative disadvantage. The Genoese could use only so much pepper themselves; the whole point was to sell it to someone else. Taxes on items not exported out of Genoa but instead consumed locally—most importantly here, food—would not hurt trade and fell on the broad population. But if at some point they too
raised local prices by putting food beyond the reach of humble Genoese, the cost of doing business in Genoa would cause problems. As in so many other societies, the Genoese consuls might choose, and they often did, simply to postpone the inevitable by borrowing, in other words deferring taxation or mortgaging future tax receipts.

THE COMMUNE IN ACTION

For the first fifty years or so of the commune's history (1100–1150), the acts and charters, treaties, and legal decisions of the consuls and Caffaro's chronicle all reveal Genoa's increasing importance in the Mediterranean world. Caffaro is selective in his history and omits many important matters, especially financial ones, but he does provide important information, especially on Genoa's wars. Weaving the documentary and narrative sources together is a delicate but necessary task.115

All the sources suggest that the main job of the consuls leading the commune was to manage relations with other powers in the Mediterranean and on a lesser but still vital level to subdue the towns and nobles of Liguria. The consuls must have relied on a political consensus in Genoa to make policy, and their own fortunes depended on safe, prosperous trade.116 To consider the broader activities first, the consuls waged war against Pisa from 1119 to 1130 and in a sporadic way down to 1149, when circumstances surrounding the Second Crusade, as well as fiscal exhaustion, helped to bring about a treaty of peace between the two intractable rivals. Pisa, at the mouth of the Arno and the natural port of Tuscany, had other enemies, as did Genoa, but the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian seas were too small for two major sea powers in the business of overseas trade.

Besides economic rivalry, the two cities competed for supremacy over Sardinia and Corsica, though trade also played a role there too. One revealing episode in this struggle concerns how Genoa bribed the Roman curia in 1120, and for this interesting task Caffaro was a natural choice.117 Caffaro and Barisone traveled to Rome to handle "the business of Corsica"—narrowly defined here as which bishop got to consecrate the bishops of Corsica. On 16 June 1120 various clerics promised the Genoese that if they fulfilled their end of the bargain, Pope Calixtus II would take away from the archbishop of Pisa the right to consecrate the Corsican bishops. When Caffaro and Barisone returned to Genoa with this good news, they also brought the bill, 1,200 marks of silver for the works of the pope and 300 marks to the curia, in gold, silver, and money, at 13 solidi of Pavia to the mark. Fifty ounces of gold was also owed to the Roman clerics who actually decided the case. Caffaro and Barisone had paid out 500 marks of silver to some cardinals, bishops, and clerics. The legates had to borrow this money from Roman bankers at an interest rate of 25 percent. They also owed money for the galley that had taken them from Genoa.118 On 3 January 1121 in Rome Pope Calixtus II revoked the privilege that Urban II had granted to the archbishop of Pisa to consecrate the Corsican bishops.119 Presumably the Genoese had paid their bills.

Caffaro tactfully omitted the bribery of the curia from his chronicle, hence beginning the Genoese habit of secrecy. But he did note that a great fleet of eighty galleys, four ships, and other smaller vessels that the Genoese sent to Porto Pisano frightened the Pisans into settling the dispute over Corsica.120 In 1123 the Genoese and Pisans appeared before Calixtus II to argue all this out again. Caffaro recorded that the Genoese proved that the Pisans unjustly held the church of Corsica, and the pope and his council decided for Genoa.121 According to Caffaro, the archbishop of Pisa then threw or placed his miter and ring at the pope's feet and declared that he would not be the pope's bishop or archbishop any longer. Calixtus II kicked these items away and said that the Pisan archbishop was doing evil and would be punished. The Pisans withdrew without license and left the field to the Genoese, who received on 6 April 1123 a papal bull revoking the privileges the archbishop of Pisa had over the Corsican church.122 The bishop of Genoa did not get these rights back, but the Genoese must have been happy enough to see the Pisans confounded and their own position in Corsica improved.

This episode reveals some important features of the consuls' efforts to foster Genoese interests. Rome, if not Calixtus II personally, could be bribed, and was. Genoese evidence, in this case a virtual voucher for expenses, proves what in other instances might be viewed as slander against the twelfth-century Roman curia. The commune was prepared to spend money to accomplish its goals and trusted Caffaro to borrow in its name and to select the most prudent targets to bribe. The L1,000 or so at stake here represented a considerable fortune to win a seemingly trivial contest over the Corsican church. Corsica itself was open territory, and the power to consecrate bishops meant in practice the right to select them. Having bishops friendly to one city or the other was the first step to dominating the island. Such large expenditures must have been widely known among the wealthier Genoese and certainly would not have surprised the Roman bankers who lived off such transactions.

In order to frustrate Pisan ambitions in the Tyrrhenian, the Genoese
needed to establish a zone of domination for themselves in Liguria that would prevent other rivals from surfacing, as well as provide enough men to crew the fleets needed to back up Genoese pretensions. Often the local struggles resulting from such ambitions seemed petty to outsiders, but they really mattered to the Genoese. In 1131, for example, the commune purchased the castle of Voltaggio and its income from Marchese Alberto of Gavi for 1,400. This castle, near Savignone and the Giovi pass, would help Genoa to control the most direct northern route to the upper Po valley. The marchesi of Gavi, just beyond the limits of Genoese power and often enemies of the commune, were not going to be allowed to lord over this artery of Genoese trade; in the long run it was wise to sell. In 1130 the commune made a peace treaty with Marchese Alberto that reveals just what was happening to the nobility in the region. Marchese Alberto agreed to safeguard the Genoese and the men of Voltaggio, Piace, and Montalto — three vital castles around the Giovi — and to collect no tolls from them. If Genoa lost one of these castles, he would help them recover it. He promised to maintain the roads in Gavi and not bother anyone traveling by the northern road that went to Tortona in the Scrivia valley. Marchese Alberto was allowed to make a “special war” against anyone on these roads who offended him, provided that the Genoese consuls had not made amends within fifteen days, and he was allowed to collect a toll on the one main road out of Gavi but not beyond 18d. He also agreed to make no truces except by license of the consuls and to have his vassals swear to keep this agreement. In a treaty with Genoa’s usually reliable friend, Pavia, the consuls were confident enough of their sway over Gavi to promise the Pavesi to wage war against Marchese Alberto if he injured Pavia and did not fix the problem within forty days. Also in 1130 Caffaro wrote that the commune had extended its authority as far west as San Remo and that men of this region, including the count of Ventimiglia, having futilely resisted, were taken to Genoa and made to swear fidelity forever to San Siro and the people of Genoa. The commune succeeded against these nobles because it transformed its wealth into power, even on land.

By 1140 the marchesi of Malaspina, whose ancestors had confirmed the privileges of Genoa less than a century ago, found themselves receiving a guarantee of help from the Genoese. In exchange the Malaspina finally promised to reside in Genoa; at least one of them, or his wife, would live in Genoa for two months a year during war and for one month a year in peacetime. The Malaspina seem to have been on parole. Of course, this process of reducing Liguria and its nobility was not always successful or smooth. Caffaro tersely recorded that in 1132 the people of Lavagna, just about halfway along the coast eastward from Genoa to Portovenere, made war against Genoa at the same time the commune had a fleet of sixteen galleys fighting the Pisans off Corsica. In 1145 the consuls had to tell the counts of Lavagna, eleven named, to keep their oaths, honor their agreements, warn the commune about dangers, and help Genoa recover any castles it lost. This comital family, the ancestors of the famous Fieschi of Lavagna, the family of Pope Innocent IV, collaborated uneasily with Genoa and did not become its pawns. Genoa had some things to offer nobles and ordinary people in the small towns of Liguria, and its success cannot be understood solely in terms of force. The Genoese exempted some leading citizens of Lavagna from the collecta of the commune and offered to protect the local people as they participated in the trade and prosperity of Genoa, without yet swearing to be full members.

Still, these advantages did not always attract local loyalties to Genoa for long: in 1140 the Genoese had to conquer Ventimiglia with a great army. As part of that force, the sons of the marchese of Savona promised the Genoese that they would come with 100 knights and 1,000 foot soldiers to conquer Ventimiglia and its territory. In this way the commune used the land forces of the loyal nobles to crush the disloyal ones. In 1146 the consuls made peace once again with the count of Ventimiglia, but this time in terms that would become increasingly familiar to the Ligurian aristocracy. The count and his sons were forced to swear to the compagna and to live in Genoa according to the customs of the counts and marchesi — a sign that the Genoese were routinely building up a collection of Ligurian nobles in the city. The consuls expected his sons to marry Genoese women. More tactfully, the consuls hoped it would be convenient and suitable to the family’s reputation that the count find a husband in Genoa for his daughter. Finally, the count confirmed all that the commune possessed in Ventimiglia and in separate documents gave Genoa everything he had there, handed over the castle of Poggiopino, and made his son promise to keep the agreements.

In 1149 the people of Ventimiglia began to see the benefits of their count’s humiliation. In a brief the consuls gave them the right to buy and sell in Genoa with foreigners and private people in the same way the Genoese did, without paying the taxes foreigners paid. The consuls rewarded the people of Ventimiglia because they aided Genoa in its assault on Almeria and Tortosa in Spain, but it was really the culmination of a slow process by which the local people lost their lord and became, in
effect, Genoese. Up in Rivarolo, loyalty to the commune seems to have been for sale; there, twenty men swore to be loyal and not lose the castle in exchange for a flat L10 — a sum that Genoa was scattering in a poor mountain village to good effect. One final example of how the Genoese consuls extended the commune’s authority in a way that helped the local people occurred in Recco in January 1147. The consuls decided that Rollando Avvocato, a true noble of the family of the viscounts of Carmagnola, should return to the men of Recco four shoulders of meat that he had taken from them. One part of Recco still belonged to the diocese of Milan, and Rollando was the vassal of the archbishop; the other part of Recco belonged to the commune. In this year the consuls left Genoa to campaign in Spain in the commune’s most audacious effort to be a power in the western Mediterranean. But before fortune and glory came the peasants of Recco and their stolen meat. The Genoese consuls never missed the chance to put a thumb in the eye of any noble infringing on the rights of the Genoese, no matter how apparently minor the matter might seem.

Closer to home, the commune faced the mundane chores of running a city. The surviving records of what the consuls did are not comprehensive, but they do enable us to get a sense of the economic, political, and social policies in the town. One new source of income and prestige came Genoa’s way in December 1138, when Conrad II, king of the Germans, gave the city the right to coin its own money. Before this concession, commemorated for many centuries by putting Conrad’s name on the local coinage, the Genoese had used the money of Pavia or, ironically, Pisa when they needed cash. The earliest silver pennies, minted in the city in 1139, had the name of Genoa as well as King Conrad’s on them, even though the German monarch’s power in the city was pretty tenuous. By 1141 the consuls had already figured out how to lease the right to mint coins to a consortium for L1,700 for fourteen months. The consuls also ordered the leaders of the mint to keep the money stable and honest by maintaining the ratio of one-third best silver and two-thirds copper. Prominent local families like the Doria, Embricaco, and della Volta had taken up shares of the mint in pieces ranging from L50 to L150, and they would divide the profits on a proportional basis. If the profit exceeded 25 percent, the commune was to receive an extra L40. This habit of taking some of the risk out of big leases or purchases by breaking down the total sum into shares — whether for parts of a mint, ship, or the right to collect a certain tax — would become a hallmark of Genoese finance. The wealthy benefited the most from these arrangements, which secured in-

come at little risk to their fortunes. The only real problem was avoiding quarrels about how the shares should be distributed for sale among the powerful families.

Marriage was another matter in which the commune took an interest, not just as a means to tie the nobility of Liguria to Genoa’s best families, but as a way to alter the law to better fit the changing circumstances of an increasingly sophisticated society and economy. In 1130 the consuls decided that any woman marrying according to the custom of Genoa had the right to make any agreement she wished with her husband concerning the antefactus (counterdowry) and tercia (the right she had under Frankish law to one-third of her husband’s goods). All agreements between husband and wife on these issues were legally valid provided that the woman was at least eighteen years old and that force had not been applied. The antefactus, related to the Lombard marquiap, usually amounted to about half the dowry, but in practice it varied from very little to a sum almost equaling the dowry. This feature of the law represented a compromise between bridewealth and dowry systems of marriage, and it ensured that some portion, usually considerable, of the dowry ended up as property under the wife’s control. No external power enforced Lombard, Frankish, or Roman law in Genoa any longer; in this matter the consuls determined local custom. By introducing formal bargaining into these marriage pacts, the consuls may have intended to reduce the size of the marriage gift and allow husbands the chance to persuade their wives to settle for less than one-third of their estates.

If so, they failed, for on 3 February 1143, their first day in office, the consuls of the commune and of pleas together decided that no woman of the bishopric of Genoa was entitled to one-third of her late husband’s goods, and that the antefactus should not exceed L100. The consuls did not apply these new rules to widows or to women already possessing their marriage gifts. Caffaro recorded in his chronicle that “in this consulat the third was taken from the wives,” and in the margin there is the well-known sketch of two Genoese women mourning this loss. Diane Owen Hughes concluded that the policy behind these changes was to keep wealth in the lineage group, specifically the male line. What had happened to Genoese society that prompted the consuls to make these changes? As shown in the next chapter, property and wealth were increasing in medieval Genoa. The old system seemed better suited to an age when wealth was mainly in land and the lineage protected its rights by making sure that its women could hang on to family property, or at least
part of it; in the form of a marriage gift. Abolishing the tercia increased
the size of the inheritance the children would receive, if there were chil-
dren. If not, then the man's family did conserve its wealth, and the entire
dowry returned to the widow. Besides all these family issues, it is strik-
ing that in Genoa in the 1140s the consuls had sufficient autonomy to de-
decide this on the local level. Also, the consuls treated this aspect of marriage
as a secular issue that did not require the archbishop to be involved.

Other business of the consuls reflected the stresses of urban growth. In
1133 Genoa attained the dignity of an archbishopric, placing it on an equal
footing with Pisa and Milan. Pope Innocent II also gave the island of
Corsica in fief to the Genoese in exchange for one pound of gold a year to
Rome. Archbishop Siro had only two suffragan bishops on the main-
land — Bobbio and Brugneto; now he had three bishops on Corsica as
well. The papal claim to Corsica was not the only one, but from now on
Genoa solidified its control of the island and rivalry with Pisa shifted to
Sardinia. In 1134 a new neighborhood compagna, Porta Nova, joined
the other seven as an official unit of the city. This new compagna testi-
ified to urban growth westward, where there was decent anchorage beyond the
confinements of the old port. Also in 1134, the consuls began to estab-
lish a right of public domain in the city and its suburbs, in this instance by
claiming for the commune the land at the mouth of the Bisagno and land
from there to Genoa for a road. The survival of the idea of public space,
if first limited to the roads and shore, provided a reason for people to rec-
ognize and advance the public good. Inside Genoa, the commune wanted
the land between the palace of the archbishop and the sea for a public
market and wharves. In addition, the consuls established a new local tax
to pay for a harbor mole, showing that they were anticipating growth by
improving the harbor. In the midst of these provisions the consuls de-
cided that every Jew living in Genoa should pay annually 15. worth of oil
to the altar of San Lorenzo for light. By 1160, when the Spanish traveler
Benjamin of Tudela passed through Genoa on his way to the Holy Land,
he found in Genoa only two Moroccan Jews. Whether a larger commu-
nity had once existed in Genoa is doubtful, but the future was not; the city
was hostile to Jews and they never established a medieval community
there.

In 1139 the consuls returned to the issue of the public domain and
affirmed that all the coast of the episcopate of Genoa belonged to the
church of San Lorenzo. But the consuls were allowed to build the har-
bor and mole as necessary for the commune without contradiction, pre-
sumably from the archbishop. The church was invested with the owner-
ship of the coast, which meant that a little money would come to the
archbishop, but more importantly, the consuls could control access to the
sea and devise ways to tax it. Big ships, those carrying ballast, paid 20s.
if they carried goods from beyond Capo Farni and Calignano, close to
Genoa; little ships paid 10s. Although the consuls set policies, they needed
some official to implement their will. In 1142 they decided certain ques-
tions concerning the office of the cintrucus, whose job required him to be
in charge of the city guard, to call people to the parlamento, to pursue
thieves and evildoers, to summon people to court, to announce punish-
ments, and to warn people about fire during strong winds. The cin-
trucus was the sheriff of Genoa, and the consuls set the perquisites of his
office. Those Genoese who leased the butchery were supposed to provide
the cintrucus with his contovium (board). Moreover, every ship coming
from Sardinia with salt gave him three minas (1 mina = 120–150 kg —
a measure of volume); grain ships coming from Corsica gave him three
minas (1 mina = 82 kg). Other ships from different destinations also had
a schedule of payments. On principal feast days the cintrucus dined with
the archbishop, and he guarded the doors of San Giovanni on Sunday
when the archbishop and canons came to bless the fonts. People from vari-
sous neighborhoods were responsible for guard service for part of the year
in part of the city. Some people owed money instead, others torches, but
slaves were not liable for service. The cintrucus had no fixed term of office
or salary but instead a bundle of lucrative rights and serious obligations.

Because the consuls of the plebs and the cintrucus were supposed to
keep the peace in the city and the treasurers managed its income, the con-
suls were free to devote themselves to consolidating Genoa's control over
Liguria. Their other main task was to manage the commune's relations
with the other Mediterranean powers. Here, operating through repre-
sentatives dispatched in all directions, the commune assiduously applied itself
to a responsibility barely mentioned in the brief of 1143, the overseas
trade of Genoa. Rather than plodding through one long commercial
treaty after another, let us try to fathom the overall policies reflecting the
long-term interests of Genoa. Above all, hostility toward Pisa dominated
Genoese minds, and therefore Pisa's enemies were Genoa's natural alli-
ies — for example, Lucca. In the same way, Genoa was alert to obtaining
the friendship of its own near neighbors; here, a series of treaties with
Pavia demonstrates local concern.

Further afield, the commune wanted to secure privileges for its mer-
chants, and those devising taxes on foreigners knew exactly what kind of
privileges they wanted. A prototype for such deals, though it is mixed up
in the affairs of the crusading states, concerned Provence. In about 1188 Count Bertram of Saint Gilles gave to the Genoese freedom from all tolls in his domain; he also granted them land enough for thirty houses in Saint Gilles. Genoese representatives who made such deals, as the consul Ogerio did with Count Roger of Calabria and Sicily in 1116, wanted a place to call their own and some break on tariffs and tolls, ideally, a complete exemption. A merchant quarter of some kind, with a place to stay, a warehouse, some familiar faces, and a measure of security — this much the merchants expected the commune to obtain for them where it was possible, and of course many consuls were themselves merchants. Caffaro himself in 1127 represented the commune to Ramon Berenguer I, count of Barcelona and by marriage count of Provence. When dealing with powerful rulers, the Genoese compromised their desires, and sensible rulers protected their own merchants and shipping. In this case the Genoese legates agreed to pay ten marabouti (local currency) for each of their ships going to Barcelona; in exchange they received the right to trade there and the count guaranteed the safety of Genoese ships, people, and money. When it was necessary to pay for security, the Genoese wisely paid and taxed Catalan merchants in their own home port.

In 1138 the commune made a series of arrangements with the towns of the Provençal coast. The men of Fos swore to protect the Genoese and their goods, and to be friends to the friends of Genoa and enemies to its enemies. Fos agreed to pay a census (tribute) to the cathedral of San Lorenzo or to the commune of 20 minas of wheat a year for ten years, a token of respect and a sign that Fos was not being treated as an equal by Genoa. Hyères made the same pact as Fos. But Marseilles paid nothing to Genoa, instead promising to battle the enemies of the Genoese by contributing a hundred men to fight on ship. The men of Marseilles also promised to keep any peace the Genoese made with the Muslim king of Morocco and not to pillage his domain. The men of Fréjus made the same agreement, except that they charged the Genoese 50d each when they went to the fairs there. But the men of Fréjus paid a census of 50 sextarii of wheat. At Antibes Count Ramon Berenguer first appeared in one of these treaties as the protector of his people there; they paid nothing to the Genoese. So along the coast the Genoese secured safety, the lowest possible tariffs, some wheat, and the promise of support against Pisa.

In the eastern and western Mediterranean the commune secured privileged trade where possible. Genoese merchants in Egypt were, for the most part, on their own. Even though the brief of 1143 obligated the consuls by oath to honor agreements with the Byzantine emperor, this seems to reflect hope rather than fact as there is no sign of any formal treaty before 1153. The commune made advantageous deals for its merchants in Sicily and southern Italy, and along the coast from the end of its own domain in Monaco to Barcelona. The German emperor remained a minor player in the economy and politics of northern Italy, at least so far as Genoese interests were concerned.

ALMERÍA, TORTOSA, AND THE AFTERMATH

Outside of northern Italy, the western Mediterranean witnessed in the early twelfth century two powers consolidating their domains. In southern Italy the Normans created a durable state. In Spain a new state emerged, united by the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV of Catalonia and Petronilla of Aragon in 1150, but secured by their betrothal back in 1137. Genoa had interests in the Norman kingdom and was fighting Pisans in the streets of Messina in 1129. In 1136 the commune tested its own abilities by sending twelve galleys to attack Bougie in North Africa, and each ship returned with 1,700 in loot, a promising start. The next year saw an even larger fleet of twenty-two galleys active off Almería. Genoa’s major expedition between 1140 and 1150 was to assist Ramon Berenguer IV in capturing Almeria in 1147.

In 1146 Genoa prepared a fleet of twenty-two galleys and six smaller ships, under Oberto Torre and the consul Caffaro — by now in his mid-sixties and a person in whom the Genoese had placed the authority to make treaties on their behalf. This fleet sailed first to Minorca and then to Almería, a Muslim stronghold on the southern coast of Spain, at that time deep in Muslim territory. The Genoese defeated the Muslims, imposed a humiliating truce on them, and received 25,000 marabouti. While in the west the Genoese came to a series of agreements with Alfonso VII of Castile and Ramon Berenguer for a great assault on Almeria in the next year. The Genoese promised Alfonso that they would arrive next May and attack the city in exchange for one-third of it. Alfonso also freed the Genoese from paying tariffs in his domains, and he promised them 20,000 marabouti to construct siege engines. Probably in order to stay in the good graces of both Spanish rulers, the Genoese reached a similar deal with Ramon Berenguer for the conquest of Tortosa, an important city on the Catalanian frontier. After taking Almería, the Genoese would help conquer Tortosa, receiving in exchange one-third of the city; they were also to be freed from tariffs in his domains. When the Genoese fleet re-
turned in triumph with booty and these important treaties, the prospects for victory and riches must have seemed bright. If everything succeeded, Genoa would possess one-third of two important Spanish towns and be free of customs and tariffs throughout Castile, Catalonia, and Provence.

Caffaro himself wrote a short work on the capture of Almeria in 1147 and Tortosa in 1148, and he set out the reasons for the expedition.168 First, the Muslims of Almeria had for a long time seized Christians on land and sea, killing some and imprisoning others. Second, Pope Eugenius III had called upon the Genoese to send a force against the city.169 No actual letter to the Genoese from the pope survives, but the expedition did have the aura of a crusade. The Genoese elected four consuls in parliament to lead the force, Oberto Torre, Filippo de Piazzalunga, Baldino, and Ansaldo Doria, who together with two consuls of plebs commanded an enormous fleet of 61 galleys and 164 other ships. At Almeria, the Genoese had 12,000 men in the field, a sign of the city and region's rapid growth in population.170

Before following the fleet to the west, let us pause for a moment to examine why Genoa would commit so much of its resources to this campaign. There is no reason to doubt Caffaro's statement that the Muslims of Almeria remained a serious naval force; during the war they were able to put fifteen galleys out against the Genoese. In this century that was a large fleet for the Muslims anywhere in the Mediterranean. A fair amount of Genoese trade came from Morocco, and hostile naval forces in Almeria could disrupt it. Second, Pope Eugenius III had sanctified a crusade in Spain, and Genoese support for Alfonso and Ramon Berenguer was an integral part of the pope's general strategy for a broad assault on Muslim-controlled lands.171 Yet Caffaro does not mention any taking of the cross or vows, and he does not describe the participants as pilgrims, so some key elements of crusading are missing. But Caffaro's failings need not confuse the issue. The expedition to Almeria was part of the broader Second Crusade, though the Genoese still hoped to gain something, as Caffaro's treaties with Castile and Catalonia in 1146 reveal.

The Genoese, along with men from Castile, Catalonia, Provence, and Pisa, captured the city of Almeria on 17 October 1147. From the booty taken, the consuls set aside 117,000 to pay the debts of the commune and allowed the rest to be divided among the ships and their crews. Caffaro also claims that 10,000 women and children ended up being transported to Genoa, presumably as slaves.172 The number is too high, but there must have been plenty of slaves, enough to bolster local pride. On 1 November the consuls decided that Ottone Bonvillano should have Genoa's share of the city for thirty years, the first example of Genoa's largely privatized empire.173 In turn Ottone swore to be a good vassal of Genoa and to keep 500 men there, and to change no tolls to the people from Liguria. Back in 1109, when Count Bertram of Saint Giles gave all of the city of Gibellet to San Lorenzo, the commune had enfeoffed Guglielmo Embriaco and his heirs with the city.174 It was not practical for the Genoese to attempt to govern directly places as far from Genoa as Gibellet and Almeria—better to hand them over to loyal vassals in exchange for service and income to Genoa. Also, such an arrangement spared Genoa the expense of defending those places. Almeria fell to the Almohads in 1117 and remained in Muslim hands for more than three centuries. The Genoese would be reluctant for a long time to rule anything conquered or granted outside Liguria.

After settling matters in Almeria and leaving behind some forces to protect Genoa's third of the city, the consuls and the fleet sailed to Barcelona, intending to honor their promise to Ramon Berenguer to help him to take Tortosa.175 From Barcelona two of the consuls returned to Genoa in two galleys carrying the money to pay the commune's debts. For such a large force to winter away from Genoa must have stretched the resources of Barcelona, but it also cost the Genoese. More help arrived from Genoa, and the fleet moved from Barcelona to Tortosa, reaching the city on 1 July 1148. Here the forces consisted of Catalans, English, Templars, Provençals, and many others, but the Catalans and Genoese were by far the largest contingents. After a difficult siege Tortosa surrendered on 30 December, and this time Caffaro does not mention any booty or slaves—presumably Tortosa received terms. Genoa did get its one-third of the city, which by 1150 was in the hands of Baldusino di Castro, Guglielmo Tornello, and his associates.176 In 1153 the commune, perhaps not getting its share of the income from Tortosa or simply finding the deal too difficult to manage, sold its share of the city to the count of Barcelona for 16,000 marabotini.177

The fleet that returned in triumph to Genoa in 1149 found a city whose resources had been strained well beyond their limits. Genoa's ships and men had been away for about two years, and during that time normal trade must have drastically contracted. The booty from the first year's victory seems to have been only a minor part of Genoa's direct expenses and missed opportunities. Caffaro, so important in the diplomacy at the beginning of the campaign, recorded nothing in his chronicle for the years
1149-51 except the names of the consuls. The records of the commune tell a more interesting story. First, Pisa and Genoa, at the prompting of the pope, made peace and in April 1149 formed an alliance for twenty-nine years. In June Genoa concluded a ten-year truce with the Muslim king of Valencia. This treaty attempted to protect Tortosa; it also brought in a tribute of 5,000 manobotti and the same amount the next year, if it was paid. Also in 1149 the tariff on ships was increased to L3 for ships with two sails, L2 for other big ships, and L1 for galleys. In addition, the consuls established a new tax on grain. Signs of real trouble appeared in 1150, when the consuls began to sell various taxes and rights openly to pay debts associated with the campaign of Tortosa. One distinguished group of twenty-nine men bought the income of the shore and the tolls of Voltaggio for twenty-nine years for L1,200; another group leased the use of the exchange tables of the commune for L500. In the second agreement the consuls raised the possibility that the campagna might be dissolved, and January witnessed Marchese Alberto of Gavi swearing to a new campagna. Some upheaval in the city must have occurred, and Caffaro’s silence discredits the historian. Several times in 1150 the consuls tried to find a consortium to take over the commune’s share of Tortosa, and the city hoped for some income, perhaps L500 a year, from the takers. But Tortosa was a great distance away and Almeria far behind Muslim lines in Spain. All the activities of the consuls indicate a desperate search for money.

In 1154, after the sale of Tortosa and three years before the fall of Almeria, the consuls came to terms with their creditors in Piacenza and settled on a lump sum of L6,000. Caffaro, in an unusual metaphor, describes the city as being asleep; he notes that because of its debts — here pegged at more than L15,000 — the city was unable to accomplish anything. The commune eventually paid out L8,900, discharging its public debts as well as some private ones. The Genoese paid in money and goods like pepper, brazilwood, cotton, incense, indigo, and other merchandise perhaps paid in kind as customs duties in Genoa. All in all, it was a costly experience.

By the early 1150s Genoa had emerged as a power in the Mediterranean. Caffaro, proud enough to document triumphs over the Muslims in the Holy Land, was apparently too ashamed of what happened in the aftermath of the Spanish debacle to record it. Given his own role in the plans, this omission is not surprising. In the next chapter we will turn to one prominent man, Emperor Frederick I, and the increasing strength of