DYNASTY AND DIPLOMACY IN THE COURT OF SAVOY

POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

TOBY OSBORNE

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1

DYNASTIC POWER: SAVOY AND EUROPE

After the treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis in 1559 and the conclusion of the Habsburg–Valois rivalries in the Italian peninsula, north Italy supposedly enjoyed some fifty years of relative peace. But by the early decades of the seventeenth century, north Italy was again one of the most unstable regions in Europe. Not only was it the scene of a renewed and intense rivalry between the ruling dynasties of France and Spain, but the independent states of the peninsula themselves engaged in frequent struggles for territorial, political and cultural superiority against each other, often in alliance with the two Catholic 'super powers'. Some states were perhaps more culpable than others in generating instability. Of the major conflicts that shook the region in the first decades of the seventeenth century, the wars in Mantua and Monferrato (1613–17 and 1628–31) and the wars in the Valtelline and Genoa (1625–6) were all instigated, at least in part, by the duchy of Savoy. Accounts of the Thirty Years' War indeed have rarely been kind to the duchy, and not only because of its frequent interventions in regional conflicts. From the seventeenth century through to the *Risorgimento* of the mid-nineteenth century and beyond, Savoy has been subjected to numerous, if typically misleading, historiographical traditions, its role in the international arena of diplomacy and power politics in turn raising fundamental questions about how the duchy and the entire Italian peninsula have been integrated into accounts of early modern Europe.

The most important historiographical traditions have followed the political unification of the Italian peninsula into a single nation-state during the nineteenth century. In the wake of national unification, Savoy was portrayed by some patriotic post-*Risorgimento* historians as a haven of political independence in a peninsula riven by conflicts and cowering under the long shadow of Habsburg military power. The duchy, so it was argued, enjoyed both political and cultural superiority over its lesser Italian neighbours because of the unflinching desire of the dukes of Savoy to

assert themselves against foreign domination, even to the point of war.[1] Following the treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy (1528–80) was restored to his patrimonial land that had experienced occupation from the 1530s by French, Bernese and Imperial troops, prefiguring the national unification of the nineteenth century. Emanuele Filiberto's sole son and heir, Carlo Emanuele I, was in turn elevated to an exalted position as the lone defender of native Italian liberties against the interventions of outside powers. Accordingly, through the actions of these Savoyard dukes, the House of Savoy itself was viewed as the nationalistic prototype of the dynasty that eventually unified Italy.[2]

This traditional view of valiant Savoyard independence was inextricably coupled with the notion of liberty and had at least part of its origins well before the nineteenth century. Liberty, a multi-faceted concept, was hardly new in the Italian peninsula. As Quentin Skinner has elaborated, one conceptual tradition of political liberty enjoyed a history in the republican civic-states of the Italian peninsula that dated back to the middle ages, while the Italian historian Lino Marini has directed attention to the struggles in the later middle ages between the constituent territories of the duchy of Savoy over constitutional and economic rights or liberties.[3] The specific notion of liberty employed by dukes of Savoy, not least by Carlo Emanuele I, differed from those traditions of civic or economic rights. It was more concerned on a state level with addressing the extent of Spanish power that claimed control over the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily and the duchy of Milan, as well as an effective protectorate over the republic of Genoa. In essence this meant political freedom from Spanish dominion even if the Spanish Habsburgs were not in fact concerned with imposing their supposedly tyrannical will over all the states of Italy, let

[1] Giuseppe Olmi, 'La corte nella storiografia Italiana dell'Ottocento', in Cesare Mozarelli and Giuseppe Olmi (eds.), *La corte nella cultura e nella storiografia: immagini tra Otto e Novecento* (Rome, 1983), p. 81. For some classic statements of this view see Luigi Cibrario, *Origine e progressi delle istituzioni della monarchia di Savoia sino alla costituzione del regno d'Italia* (second edition, Florence, 1869), pp. 148–9; Domenico Carutti, *Storia della diplomazia della corte di Savoia (dal 1494 al 1773)*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1875–80), II, book VI, p. 310. A more moderate expression of this sentiment can be found in R. Quazza, 'La politica di Carlo Emanuele I durante la guerra dei trent'anni', *Carlo Emanuele I Miscellanea*, 1 (1930), 4–5.

[2] Olmi, 'La corte nella storiografia', in Mozarelli and Olmi (eds.), *La corte*, pp. 72–6, 84; Ruth Kleinman, 'Carlo Emanuele I and the Bohemian election of 1619', *European Studies Review*, 5 (1975); Daniela Frigo, 'L'affermazione della Sovranità', in Cesare Mozarelli (ed.), *'Familia' del principe e famiglia aristocratica*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1988), p. 295. Even the foundation of a national collection of the arts was affected by *Risorgimento* views of Italian history. Jaynie Anderson, 'National museums, the art market and Old Master paintings', *Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Kunst und Kunsttheorie 1400–1900*, 48 (1991).

[3] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1978); Marini, *Libertà e privilegio*.

alone with creating a feared 'universal monarchy' across the entirety of Christian Europe.[4]

Certainly, the violent confrontations between Savoy and Spain in north Italy during the early seventeenth century provided ample opportunities for the Savoyard duke to tap into this version of political liberty, as he himself became 'the symbol and point of reference to all those who aspired to a return of the peninsula to Italians', according to Franco Barcia.[5] In December 1614 Duke Carlo Emanuele I commissioned the Modenese poet Alessandro Tassoni, who was then resident in Rome, to write a defence of Savoy's military incursion into the duchy of Monferrato following the death in 1612 of Carlo Emanuele I's son-in-law, Duke Francesco IV of Mantua and Monferrato.[6] The conflict began with Savoy's invasion of Monferrato in the spring of 1613 and had little to do with notions of liberty as such, and more to do with the duke's own territorial claims to that separable duchy. But the extreme sensitivity of north Italy to Madrid's own strategic considerations, added to the fact that Carlo Emanuele also attacked Genoa, dragged the Spanish Habsburgs into confrontation with Savoy. The conflict lasted beyond the two efforts to conclude the war at the treaties of Asti in 1615, until 1617, by which time Savoy, facing direct attack from Spanish forces, no longer had the support of France or Venice that had been offered earlier.[7] Inevitably the war activated the familiar anti-Habsburg rhetoric of the defence of Italian freedom against foreign, primarily Spanish, interference.[8] Divided into two sections, the *Filippiche* were initially circulated in manuscript because of their more than controversial message in criticising other Italian states; they were eventually published in four different editions in May 1615.[9] Tassoni's aim was straightforwardly to eulogise the role of the Savoyard

[4] See also the rather dated account of liberty defined against Spanish dominance in Vittorio di Tocco, *Ideali d'indipendenza in Italia durante la preponderanza spagnuola* (Messina, 1926).

[5] Franco Barcia, 'La Spagna negli scrittori politici italiani del XVI e XVII secolo', in Chiara Continsio and Cesare Mozzarelli (eds.), *Repubblica e virtù: pensiero politico e Monarchia Cattolica fra XVI e XVII secolo* (Rome, 1995), p. 191. Even though the war was not ultimately successful, Carlo Emanuele seemed to be a valient loser, for, as Romolo Quazza has written, 'when the war of Monferrato was finished [Carlo Emanuele I] was materially vanquished, morally victorious'. *Storia politica d'Italia: preponderenza spagnuola, 1559–1700* (Milan, 1950), p. 432.

[6] *Storia politica d'Italia*, book III, part II, chapter 2.

[7] For the treaties of Asti to terminate Savoy's incursions into Monferrato see Jean Dumont (ed.), *Corps universel diplomatique du droit des gens, contenant un receuil des traitez d'alliance, de paix, etc. faits en Europe depuis le régne de Charlemagne jusques à présent*, 8 vols. (Amsterdam, 1726–31), V, part II, pp. 263, 271–2.

[8] Di Tocco, *Ideali d'indipendenza*, p. 89; Pietro Pulliati, *Bibliografia di Alessandro Tassoni*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1969-70), I, p. 94.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Fig. 1 North Italy in the early seventeenth century.

Fig. 2 The duchy of Savoy *c.* 1627.

duke as the tireless and typically lone defender of Italian liberties in opposition to the Spanish Habsburgs, his work evoking the orations of Demosthenes against Philip of Macedon, oppressor of the Greeks. Accordingly, in the first half of the *Filippiche* Tassoni praised Carlo Emanuele I for 'fighting for the reputation of the princes of Italy and for our common liberty', repeating stock anti-Habsburg phrases.[10] He did not end there. Tassoni concluded the second part of the tract by castigating other Italian sovereign states not under Spanish control – principally the republic of

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 345.

Venice, the grand-duchy of Tuscany and even the Papal state – for their reluctance to support the duke of Savoy in his, and possibly by implication their, time of acute political need.[11]

While this positive interpretation of Savoy's role as the defender of the Italian peninsula has had a persistent influence on numerous Italian writers, it was not the only account of early modern Savoy's role in international relations. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, the historian Luigi Randi for one mixed the view of Savoy as the lone voice against Spanish power with a second powerful tradition that has been equally influential in shaping conceptions of Savoyard and Italian political and cultural history. In his biography of Cardinal Maurizio (1593–1657), Duke Carlo Emanuele I's fourth son Randi wrote that 'only the House of Savoy stood out as a contrast to the domination of foreigners', especially Spain, 'the natural enemy of every independent Italian prince'. Savoy's struggle to maintain independence, according to Randi, came in a period not only when the domination of Spain had effectively undermined political liberty but also when the Italian peninsula was itself languishing in the trough of decline.[12]

The crucial theme of decline, a fundamental opposite to the dynamic force of political liberty, has been equally resonant in histories of the Italian peninsula. Like the theme of liberty, it nevertheless derived in part from the early modern period, with the perpetual rivalries between the Habsburgs and French ruling dynasties over north Italy. While this rivalry had initially focused on gaining control of the duchy of Milan, culminating in the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's campaigns of the 1530s, the entire peninsula remained one of the key strategic theatres of the leading powers, certainly until the War for the Spanish Succession at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the Spanish composite monarchy was effectively partitioned. The fortunes of the Burgundian inheritance of the Spanish Netherlands and the Franche-Comté in northern Europe were linked with those of the Italian and Iberian peninsulas, creating a complex political relationship between the Spanish and Austrian

[11] Alessandro Tassoni, *Filippiche contra gli spagnuoli*, in *Prose politiche e morali*, 2 vols. (Rome and Bari, 1978), II, p. 361. The tract seems to have been enlarged to seven parts, though not by Tassoni, and was reprinted with an anonymous response, *Risposta alle scritture intitolate Filippiche*, which inverted his argument by blaming Carlo Emanuele I for bringing war to the Italian peninsula. Pulliati, *Bibliografia*, p. 97 for bibliographical information.

[12] Luigi Randi, *Il Principe Cardinale Maurizio* (Florence, 1901), pp. 8, 10, 12. The idea of decline was perhaps most importantly expressed by Benedetto Croce, who was preoccupied in the first place with the seemingly woeful state of Italian literature in the first half of the seventeenth century, a trough from which he argued Italian writers only emerged towards the end of the century. Benedetto Croce, *Storia dell'età barocca in Italia* (Milan, 1993), especially chapter 1.

branches of the Habsburgs. With the revolt in the Netherlands from 1566 and continuing rivalries between Spain and France over the Italian peninsula, which were only temporarily halted by the French Wars of Religion, the Spanish monarchy was set the monumental task of defending its territorial possessions and prestige across continental Europe.

Neither of the two Catholic 'super powers' was willing, or indeed able, to exclude Italy from its strategic calculations, not least because the logistics of the Spanish composite monarchy depended to a large degree on open lines of communication between the peninsula and the Low Countries in northern Europe. One of the routes of the Spanish Road passed directly through Savoyard territory and the key Alpine pass through the Val di Susa to the west of the ducal capital and its fortress, giving the duchy a crucial role in regional geo-politics, especially when the other major Alpine route, through the Valtelline, was itself frequently insecure.[13] Although this meant that the leading powers were in fact highly sensitive to preserving good relations with states such as Savoy, some more nationalistic Italian historians like Randi were nevertheless confronted with the problem of how to discuss the open involvement of these leading powers in a peninsula that from the mid-nineteenth century had effectively rejected foreign intervention. The seventeenth century, coming after the apparent glories of the Renaissance but before the satisfaction of territorial unification and full political independence, was nothing less than embarrassing.

In this light the Italian states of the seventeenth century were stereotypically listless, with little energy or capability for affecting their individual and collective political destinies.[14] Indeed, while Randi argued that Savoy was effectively alone in rising above this political turpitude, to other historians the duchy was as much, if not more, a victim of decline than the other states of the peninsula. The evidence for political decline, like that of liberty, again seemed to exist in abundance, not least during the first half of the seventeenth century when Carlo Emanuele I was on the ducal throne. As Emanuele Filiberto had in 1553 inherited a duchy suffering from war and foreign interventions so his son Carlo Emanuele I bequeathed Savoy in a piteous state to his successor. At the time of Carlo Emanuele I's death in July 1630 north Italy was being ravaged by virulent plague (to which he himself succumbed) and the patrimonial Savoyard lands were once more occupied by French, Spanish and Imperial troops following the seemingly disastrous involvement in the war for the

[13] Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 71, for an indication of the logistical route.

[14] See Giuseppe Olmi's comments, 'La corte nella storiografia dell'Ottocento', in Mozarelli and Olmi (eds.), *La corte*, pp. 65–75. See also Pierpaolo Merlin *et al.* (eds.), *Il Piemonte sabaudo: stato e territori in età moderna* (Turin, 1994), p. 174, and Guido Quazza, *La decadenza italiana nella storia europea* (Turin, 1971), part I.

succession of Mantua and Monferrato. Even by early modern standards such a direct contravention of territorial integrity seemed to break what were arguably the golden rules of good government. When in 1580 Carlo Emanuele I assumed the ducal throne from his dying father, Emanuele Filiberto reportedly advised his son that 'your age had already made you capable of governing the states that I leave you; take care to conserve them for your heirs'.[15] The Piedmontese Jesuit Giovanni Botero (1544–1617), employed by Carlo Emanuele I as a tutor to the ducal sons at the beginning of the seventeenth century, also had a relatively clear conception of the duties of the prince which he elaborated in his highly influential treatise on political statecraft, *Della ragion di Stato* (1589). The good prince acting according to the precepts of 'reason of state' was expected to defend both his subjects and his territorial state; 'the state', according to Botero in the opening sentence of the treatise, was 'firm rule over people, and reason of state the means of creating, protecting and increasing such a territory'.[16] This high moral and political responsibility effectively entrusted to the sovereign as a guardian of his dynasty, subjects and patrimonial lands was something that Carlo Emanuele I had arguably failed to fulfil on his death.

Given these factors, Carlo Emanuele I's dubious legacy to his successor Vittorio Amedeo I seemingly implied that he was not in control of his own political destiny, and by extension the destiny of the duchy of Savoy. Political impotence has indeed been a crucial component of the historiography of Italian decadence. Yet according to a third tradition of historical interpretation this view of decline has itself been turned on its head to suggest that Carlo Emanuele I was in fact fundamentally reckless and overambitious, hot-headedly pursuing policies that cost the duchy heavily in the early seventeenth century and moreover destabilised the entire region of north Italy.[17] His siege of the city of Geneva in December 1602 which culminated in the infamous *Escalade*, the botched attempt to take the Reformed city by force of arms when Savoyard troops were thwarted in scaling the city's defensive walls, has been taken as but one spectacular example of ill-considered Savoyard territorial ambitions. The duke's still more ambitious plan to obtain both the vacant Bohemian and Imperial crowns at the head of a makeshift anti-Habsburg coalition following the death of Emperor Matthias in 1619, on the other hand, has

[15] Samuel Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique de la Royale Maison de Savoie*, 2 vols. (Lyons, 1660), I, p. 697.

[16] Botero, *Della ragion di stato*, p. 55.

[17] For instance, see Quazza, 'La politica di Carlo Emanuele I', 3; Quazza *Preponderanza spagnuola*, p. 431; Litta, *Celebri famiglie Italiane*, 'Duchi di Savoia', table XV (Milan, 1844).

been viewed as fanciful, if not faintly ridiculous.[18] It seems hardly surprising that a recent study of early modern Italy has characterised Carlo Emanuele I as 'one of the most incautious rulers of the age'.[19] Even Samuel Guichenon, a Savoyard subject whose monumental genealogical history of the House of Savoy written in the 1650s heaped praise on the exploits of successive dukes to rank the dynasty with the royal families of Europe, addressed Carlo Emanuele I's apparently insatiable appetite for war with the awkward gloss that

> his enormous courage evident in so many episodes gave him such great aspirations that he could not contain his ambitions within the borders set for his lands, and he let loose his designs of which only the Caesars and Alexanders had been capable, having such a high opinion of his conduct, his spirit and his bearing that he believed nothing could block them.[20]

Looking over Carlo Emanuele I's fifty-year reign from 1580 until 1630 it would be hard to deny that he was a political opportunist. By nature the 'chameleon', as he has been described, was willingly involved in territorial and international disputes at virtually any opportunity, and when circumstances demanded he tapped into an established stock of political and cultural images about liberty and foreign tyranny (principally Spanish tyranny) to rationalise his ambitions.[21] Yet taking the three broad historiographical strands together, Carlo Emanuele I was not the selfless defender of Italian liberties, nor was he languishing in a decline, and finally he was neither reckless nor entirely cynical. The Savoyard duke had no evident conception of a single Italian nation-state, even of a unitary territorial state under the direction of the Savoyard dynasty as eventually emerged during the *Risorgimento*. Moreover, while the language of 'liberty' implied that his international aspirations were in line with those

[18] Much of the historiography on the siege of Geneva has been written by Genevans, which has obviously led to some bias. See the comments in Kleinman's article, 'Carlo Emanuele I and the Bohemian election of 1619'. For Carlo Emanuele I's attempts on Geneva, Saluzzo and Provence in the sixteenth century see Merlin *et al.* (eds.), *Il Piemonte*, pp. 182–7.

[19] Hanlon, *Twilight of a military tradition*, p. 278.

[20] Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 866. See also *ibid.*, I, p. 708. For a similarly ambivalent judgement of Carlo Emanuele I see Vittorio Siri, *Memorie recondite dall'anno 1601 sino al 1640*, 8 vols. (Lyons, 1677–9), VII, pp. 197–8, and Quazza, 'La politica di Carlo Emanuele', 4. The nineteenth-century historian Domenico Carutti, author of one of the classic histories of Savoy, was himself candid about the ambitions of Carlo Emanuele I and the problems facing Savoy at the point of his death, but gave him the benefit of the doubt by arguing that if the French had not entered Casale in 1630 the duke's reputation would have been 'raised to the stars'. Carutti blamed the invasion of French troops into north Italy on an inept local commander. Carutti, *Storia della diplomazia*, II, p. 310.

[21] Domenico Sella, *Seventeenth Century Italy* (London, 1997), p. 5.

of other Italian states in a common cause they in fact placed the duke in direct competition with them for territory and prestige. The picture that emerges from Carlo Emanuele I's foreign policies suggests an underlying consistency towards foreign polcies where he, like other dukes of Savoy, viewed his state as a potential leader of a group of different and independent sovereign territories within the peninsula, each one vying for power and prestige, often in alliance with either France or Spain. That these independent states remained rivals was evident in certain key flashpoints during the early seventeenth century, most strikingly over the contentious issue of the succession to Mantua and Monferrato, where Savoy's unresolved territorial claims brought the duchy into diplomatic and military confrontation with rival Italian sovereign powers.

Far from operating without regard to wider principles, Duke Carlo Emanuele I was invariably motivated and guided by his dynastic priorities, and it is on them that the rest of the chapter will focus. While not the only factor in the formulation of foreign policies, dynasticism was arguably of greater importance than 'material' considerations such as his military resources, or the duchy's pivotal geographical position, as outlined in the Introduction. It was certainly the case that so long as Savoy maintained its position as the 'gatekeeper of the Alps', with independent control of the west Alpine passes, the duchy enjoyed some tangible leverage over France and Spain. Savoy's importance to France and Spain was, at least on a basic level, governed by the duchy's geographical position. But the power afforded to Savoy by its control of passes through the Alps, and its capacity as a regional military force, were primarily used by Carlo Emanuele I as tools in his foreign policies, the means to dynastic ends. If during the early seventeenth century Carlo Emanuele I had calculated in terms of his material power alone, he would perhaps have been less willing to push his state (and north Italy by extension) repeatedly to war and crisis. Dynasticism established, energised and justified the territorial ambitions of Savoyard dukes within the Italian peninsula and further afield in Europe, in a context where many disputed territories were not subject to codified laws of succession and were thus open to negotiation. Indeed, even if unresolved dynastic interests remained dormant for years or even generations, they could be activated at any appropriate time with a strong semblance of legitimacy, although it was rarely in the interests of sovereigns to let any of them lapse for too long.[22]

If the duke's dynastic and territorial strategies are taken into account, the assumptions and aspirations of Savoy's foreign policies certainly become more comprehensible. Duke Carlo Emanuele I was not a political

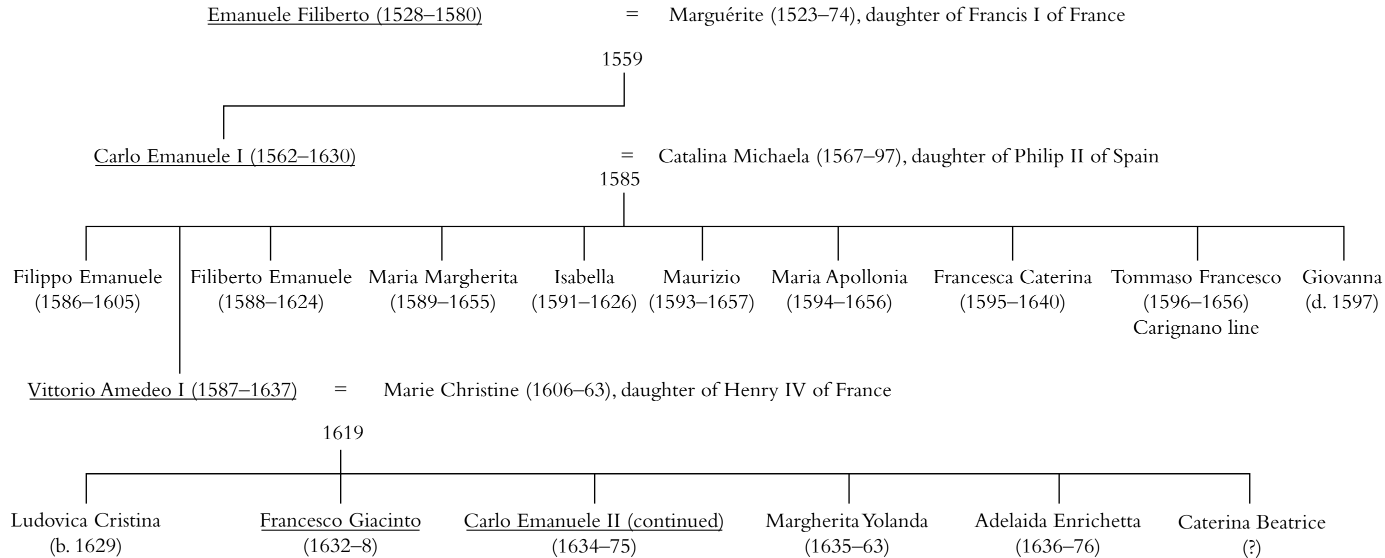
[22] For a near-contemporary assessment of Savoy's various territorial claims consult Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, pp. 96–111.

chancer but a sovereign who was always alert to his unfulfilled dynastic rights, and who was willing, and perhaps even compelled, to fight for them as his particular responsibility to his House. Within the Italian peninsula the duke of Savoy's most important and politically sensitive territorial claim was to the duchy of Monferrato, one part of the Gonzagan collection of territories that also included Mantua. The issue of the Gonzaga succession flared up twice in the early seventeenth century with massive international consequences, first in 1613, following Duke Francesco IV's death, and then after the death of Duke Vincenzo II in December 1627. As will be seen in chapter 5, Mantua and Monferrato were essentially two separate states that had been linked following the dynastic union in 1531 between Federico II Gonzaga, duke of Mantua, and Margherita, daughter of Guglielmo IX Paleologo of Monferrato. Though linked (not formally unified) under a single ruler, each sovereignty had different customs of succession, of partible inheritance in Mantua and of inheritance through both the male and female lines in Monferrato.[23] The particular status of Monferrato as a *feudo feminino* provided the basis for the claim of the House of Savoy to that duchy alone. Duke Carlo Emanuele I repeatedly argued that female succession was permissible in Monferrato and that consequently he had a claim through a Savoyard connection that predated the marriage in 1531 of Federico and Margherita. The origins of Savoy's claims to Monferrato dated back to the marriage between Aimone, count of Savoy, and Iolanda, daughter of Teodoro Paleologo, marquis of Monferrato, in 1330. According to their marriage contract, all of the Paleologo inheritance would pass to Savoy in the event of the male line of Teodoro becoming extinct. The claim to portions of Monferrato was revived following the marriage in 1485 of Carlo I of Savoy (died 1490) to Bianca, daughter of Guglielmo VI Paleologo, and again in 1533 following the death of Giovanni Giorgio Paleologo, and lastly by the marriage in 1608 of Margherita, a legitimate daughter of Carlo Emanuele I, to Francesco IV, who ruled as duke of Mantua and Monferrato for an unexpectedly brief period in 1612.[24]

[23] The issue of Mantua and Monferrato has recently been examined by David Parrott, 'The Mantuan Succession'.

[24] Litta, *Celebri famiglie Italiane*, 'Duchi di Savoia', table VII (Milan, 1841), and 'Paleologo, Marchesi di Monferrato', table I (Milan, 1847). Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 645; Pietro Giovanni Capriata, *The history of the wars of Italy from the year MDCXIII to MDCLIV in XVIII books, rend'red into English by Henry, earl of Monmouth* (London. 1663), pp. 7–9. See also Parrott, 'The Mantuan Succession', 32–3, and footnote 14 in David Parrott and Robert Oresko, 'The sovereignty of Monferrato and the citadel of Casale as European problems in the early modern period', in D. Ferari and A. Quondam (eds.), *Stefano Guazzo e Casale tra Cinque e Seicento* (Mantua, 1997), which strongly reinforces the closeness of dynastic ties between the House of Savoy and the Paleologo family, before even those of the Gonzaga House.

THE SAVOYARD SUCCESSION DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



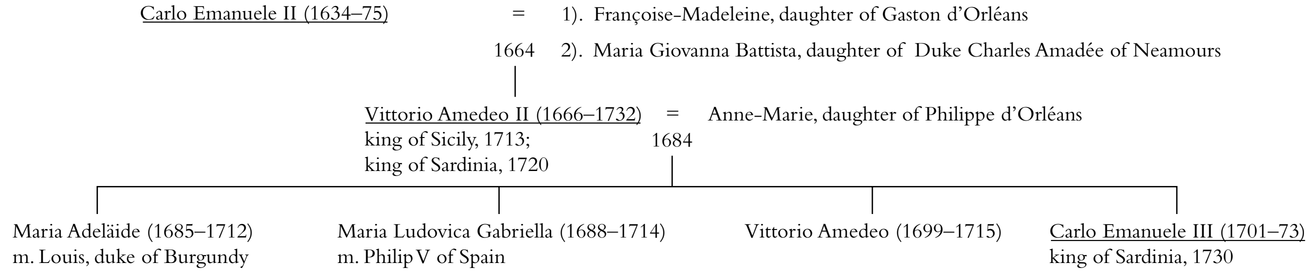


Fig. 3 The House of Savoy during the seventeenth century.

Fig. 4 Anthony van Dyck, *Prince Filiberto Emanuele of Savoy* (1624). This portrait was completed following Van Dyck's invitation in 1624 to travel to Palermo by Filiberto Emanuele, who had recently been appointed as viceroy of Sicily. The portrait served several purposes. Most obviously, it recorded Filiberto Emanuele's elevation as viceroy by Philip III, important to both Savoy and Spain for improving dynastic and political relations between the Savoyards and Habsburgs. The timing of the portrait may also have been linked to the project for a marriage between the prince and his niece, Maria Gonzaga, whose marital status potentially governed the fate of Mantua and Monferrato, where Savoy had a dynastic claim. Filiberto Emanuele died in August 1624, within months of the completion of the portrait.

The complexity of relations between the duchies of Savoy and Monferrato was increased by their ill-defined borders. As Peter Sahlins' suggestive study of the seemingly 'fossilised' Pyrenean boundary between France and Spain has indeed argued, borders were more complex in early modern Europe than their modern counterparts too often suggest. They could signify more than simply territorial delimitations, but also different borders of jurisdiction, where loyalties were defined primarily by the relationships between rulers and subjects above and beyond territorial divisions.[25] Some ecclesiastical benefices under Savoyard jurisdiction, for instance, enjoyed rights outside the territorial limits of the duchy, while dioceses in Monferrato held property in the Savoyard state, a problem that remained unresolved until the reforms conducted by Pope Benedict XIII Orsini (1649–1730) in 1727 following pressure by Vittorio Amedeo II.[26] Similarly, in the realm of secular territorial interest some leading noble families who were subjects of the duke of Savoy also held land in Monferrato, which had the potential of raising searching questions about their political loyalties. The Valperga di Rivara were one of the most distinguished family clans from Piemonte and enjoyed considerable favour at the Savoyard court, particularly after the restoration of Duke Emanuele Filiberto. The marriage of one member into a family from Monferrato nevertheless had serious consequences for the Valperga during the Gonzaga succession disputes of 1612 and 1627, since as part of the marriage dowry he acquired land outside Savoy's jurisdiction. With properties in both Savoy and Monferrato the family divided, though as Alessandro Scaglia's exile will suggest, families faced with political crisis could place their members in different political camps to safeguard their collective interests.[27]

Savoy's second major disputed territorial interest in north Italy was the region of Zuccarello, which was at least formally in the possession of the Spanish-protected republic of Genoa. Carlo Emanuele I had bought Zuccarello from its previous owner, Scipione del Carretto, in 1588. However, the sale of Zuccarello, which stood within the *Reichsitalien*, that part of the Italian peninsula under the feudal guidance of the Holy Roman Emperor, had not been recognised formally by the Emperor.

[25] Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1989), especially the introduction.

[26] Achille Erba, *La Chiesa sabauda tra Cinque e Seicento: ortodossia tridentina, gallicanesimo savoiardo e assolutismo ducale (1580–1630)* (Rome, 1979), pp. 28–9. Though see Carlo Marco Belfadi and Marzio Achille Romani, 'Il Monferrato: una frontiera scomoda fra Mantova e Torino (1536–1707)', in Carlo Ossola, Claude Raffestein and Mario Ricciardi (eds.), *La frontiera da stato a nazione: il caso Piemonte* (Rome, 1987), which argues that the period in fact saw a rationalisation of Savoy's territorial borders.

[27] Woolf, *Studi sulla nobiltà Piemontese*, pp. 83–93.

This allowed Scipione's brother Ottavio to contest the sale with the support of the republic of Genoa, while arguing that since Scipione had been accused of a murder he had consequently forfeited any legal rights over the property.[28] Subsequent attempts by Carlo Emanuele I to obtain an unequivocal Imperial decision over the matter of the sale came to nothing. Like the issue of Monferrato, control of Zuccarello remained unresolved into the seventeenth century, the source of potentially serious military conflict in north Italy and a sticking point in relations between Turin and Madrid.[29]

The zeal with which Carlo Emanuele I pursued the claims to Monferrato and Zuccarello during the early seventeenth century has led some historians to conclude that in the first decades of the century Savoy's borders on the French side of the Alps were consolidated once and for all, with the possibilities of territorial expansion thereafter limited solely to the Italian peninsula. Stuart Woolf for one concluded that Emanuele Filiberto and Carlo Emanuele I were in fact concerned with rationalising their states by effectively dropping the claims to Geneva, which Emanuele Filiberto had lost as a result of the 1536 invasion of his duchy by French and Bernese troops, and diverting their attention solely to interests on the Italian side of the Alps.[30] This view of territorial, and by extension political, rationalisation indeed seems to be supported by the example of Carlo Emanuele I's agreement with Henry IV (1553–1610) of France through their treaty signed at Lyons in 1601. The treaty saw the exchange of Savoy's properties of Bugey, Bresse, Valromey and Gex, which were west of the river Rhône, for the French enclave of Saluzzo in the Piedmontese Alps, a territory which had dominated Savoyard ambitions at the close of the sixteenth century when France was riven by civil conflict. The treaty also marked a phase of Savoyard diplomacy that raised the possibility of aligning with France against Spain and Spanish-controlled territory in the Italian peninsula, a project that was only temporarily put

[28] Carutti, *Storia della diplomazia*, II, book V, p. 4; Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, pp. 715, 833. Vittorio Siri also recorded that Savoy claimed rights to Zuccarello because the territory had paid homage to Luigi of Savoy until 1448. Siri, *Memorie recondite*, V, p. 797.

[29] Pietro Rivoire, 'Un diplomatico Piemontese del secolo XVII', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 2 (1897), 318–19.

[30] Stuart Woolf, 'Sviluppo economico e struttura sociale in Piemonte da Emanuele Filiberto a Carlo Emanuele III', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 46 (1962), 2–3; Belfadi and Romani, 'Il Monferrato', in Ossola, Raffestein and Ricciardi (eds.), *La frontiera*. For the enormous complexities of Savoyard-Genevan relations during the reign of Emanuele Filiberto see Robert Oresko, 'The question of the sovereignty of Geneva after the Treaty of Câteau – Cambrésis', in Helmut G. Koenigsberger (ed.), *Republiken und Republikanismus im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit*. Schriften der Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien 2 (Berlin, 1988).

on hold by the assassination of Henry IV in 1610.[31] Such a view might however fall into a trap of historical inevitability, for contrary to the assumption that early modern Europe saw the final consolidation of territorial borders into a recognisably rational shape, borders in north Italy remained far from stable, let alone formalised, during the seventeenth century.[32] The sheer variety of Savoy's unresolved dynastic claims meant that the duchy could potentially expand in any geographical direction. To the south lay the republic of Genoa and Zuccarello, while Monferrato was to the east; Languedoc lay west and had been the target of Carlo Emanuele during the 1590s, before Henry IV had been able to reassert control over France, while the city of Geneva, lost in 1536, was to the north.

The House of Savoy's potential rights to lands beyond the Italian peninsula were equally wide-ranging and they too were retained by successive dukes in the hope that they might be realised. The Portuguese succession crisis of 1578–80 brought to the fore the House of Savoy's right to the royal throne through Duke Carlo II's (1504–53) marriage in 1521 to Maria Beatriz (1504–38), daughter of King Manuel I (1469–1521) of Portugal, a claim that was as strong if not stronger than that of Philip II of Spain, who of course obtained the crown in 1580 through force of arms as much as by dynastic argument.[33] Carlo Emanuele I's marriage in 1585 to Catalina Michaela (1567–97), the younger of Philip II's two daughters, opened other avenues for dynastic advancement into the Spanish composite monarchy, and the Spanish king himself suggested that the first male child of the union might inherit the Milanese territories under his rule, with the title of king of Lombardy.[34] The marriage in 1598 of Philip II's elder daughter, Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566–1633), to her cousin Archduke Albert VI (1559–1621) of Austria and the recognition that the Spanish Netherlands as a distinct territorial unit was potentially alienable from the Spanish composite monarchy, on the other hand, left open the possibility that Carlo Emanuele I, as the widowed husband of

[31] Dumont (ed.), *Corps universel diplomatique*, V, part II, pp. 10–13. On the issue of Saluzzo see G. Vita, 'Carlo Emanuele I e la questione del marchesato di Saluzzo (1598–1601)', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 24 (1922) and 25 (1923). On Franco-Savoyard relations after the treaty of Lyons see Romolo Quazza, *Preponderanza spagnuola*, book III, part II, chapter 1.

[32] On the borders of Savoy see Claude Raffestein, 'L'evoluzione del sistema delle frontiere del Piemonte dal XVI secolo al XIX secolo', in Ossola, Raffestein and Ricciardi (eds.), *La frontiera*.

[33] Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, pp. 102–6.

[34] Though this was seemingly restricted to the first male child only and was not extended to any following sons. Litta, *Celebri famiglie Italiane*, 'Duchi di Savoia', table XV (Milan, 1844).

Isabella's younger sister, might in turn inherit the Spanish Netherlands in the event of Albert and Isabella dying without legitimate male issue.[35]

The potential claims to the Portuguese throne and to Spanish territories, formed one element of Savoy's burning ambition to obtain royal status, a tantalising prize for the ducal House throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was not formally achieved until 1713 with the treaty of Utrecht, when Savoy was accorded the royal crown of Sicily, followed more permanently in 1720 by the less significant kingdom of Sardinia.[36] Prior to this, most attention of the dukes of Savoy focused on obtaining the right to the so-called kingdom of Cyprus with the associated royal territories of Jerusalem and Armenia, a claim that was based on its donation to Savoy by the last legitimate member of the Lusignan dynasty, Carlotta (d. 1487), who in 1458 had married Luigi of Savoy (1431–82). However, international recognition of Savoy's ambition proved to be an insurmountable problem. The kingdom of Cyprus was also claimed by the republic of Venice and the issue almost continuously divided the duchy and the republic throughout the early modern period, raising difficult and immensely controversial questions of their relative precedence among the states of the Italian peninsula, and not just those two powers.[37] Savoy's claims to pre-eminence seemed strong. As Robert Oresko has suggested, reiterating a point made as early as 1633 by the Piedmontese polemicist Pietro Monod when justifying the *trattamento reale* of the previous year, it had already become customary for the head of the ducal House to marry daughters of kings, implying closeness between the Savoyard dynasty and the royal dynasties of Europe; Vittorio Amedeo I wedded a daughter of Henry IV, Carlo Emanuele I's father had of course married a daughter of Francis I, while his grandfather Duke Carlo II had taken the daughter of the king of Portugal as a bride.[38] In addition, successive rulers of Savoy from Amedeo VIII (1383–1451), the first duke, secured the privilege of the Imperial vicariate in those parts

[35] On Savoy's potential claim to the Spanish Netherlands consult Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 106; V. Ansaldi, 'Giovanni Botero coi principi sabaudi in Ispagna (da lettere inedite)', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 35 (1935), 322, 328.

[36] For further information on Savoy's royal ambitions see Robert Oresko, 'The House of Savoy in search for a royal crown in the seventeenth century', in Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton* (Cambridge, 1997), and Luigi La Rocca, 'L'aspirazione del duca Carlo Emanuele I al titolo di re di Piemonte', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series 5, 46 (1910).

[37] On Venice's claim see, for instance, Siri, *Memorie recondite*, VI, p. 193.

[38] Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', in Oresko, Gibbs and Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty*, p. 285; Pietro Monod, *Trattato del titolo regio dovuto alla serenissima Casa di Savoia. Insieme con un ristretto delle rivolutioni del Reame di Cipro appartenente alla corona dell'Altezza Reale di Vittorio Amedeo, Duca di Savoia* (Turin, 1633), p. 26.

of the Italian peninsula that were within the Empire following his abdication in 1449 as antipope Felix V (he had abdicated his ducal throne in 1440), while the court of Turin was the only one in the peninsula to have a regular nuncio from Rome. However, on the other side of the balance, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II (1527–76) had in 1569 elevated Tuscany to a grand-duchy, despite the relative newness of the Medici family among the princely houses in Italy.[39] Even earlier than this, in 1560, Pope Paul IV Carafa (1476–1559) had granted the *sala regia* to Venice, primarily a ceremonial gesture though a bitter pill for Emanuele Filiberto and his son Carlo Emanuele I to swallow given the high importance they ascribed to issues of precedence.[40] Even though the Savoyard dynasty, at least, always saw itself above other sovereign powers in the Italian peninsula and as an equal to the royalty of Europe, few European sovereigns were willing to choose definitively between Savoy, Venice and Tuscany. The rivalries and disputes over prestige and status among these independent states could threaten the stability of north Italy.[41]

While Carlo Emanuele I bore the responsibility of promoting existing Savoyard claims across Europe, he was equally alert to the enormous dynastic possibilities afforded by his own children. He himself was the only legitimate son of Duke Emanuele Filiberto through his marriage to Marguérite de Valois.[42] In 1585, nearly five years after succeeding his father to the Savoyard throne, Carlo Emanuele I married Catalina Michaela, travelling to the Iberian peninsula to complete the dynastic transaction.[43] By his marriage Carlo Emanuele I was fortunate, and almost unique in early modern Savoyard history, in having a large number of legitimate

[39] For a discussion of the role of the Empire in the peninsula, in particular over issues of ceremonial and political precedence, consult Giovanni Tabacco, *Lo stato sabaudo nel sacro romano impero* (Turin, 1939). For the elevation of Tuscany see Alessandra Contini, 'Aspects of Medicean diplomacy in the sixteenth century', in Frigo (ed.), *Politics and Diplomacy*, pp. 78–9.

[40] Oresko, 'The House of Savoy', in Oresko, Gibbs and Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty*, pp. 290-1. On the issue of the *sala regia* see for example AST, Cerimoniale, Roma, m. 1, fasc. 9.

[41] Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 537; Litta, *Celebri famiglie Italiane*, 'Duchi di Savoia', table X (Milan, 1842). On the difficulties faced by Vittorio Amedeo I for obtaining recognition of his declaration of royalty see for instance A. Zanelli, 'Le relazioni fra il Ducato Sabaudo e la Santa Sede dal 1631 al 1637 nel carteggio della Nunziatura Pontificia', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, 41 (1939) and 42 (1940); CSPV 1632–6, pp. 116, 126.

[42] Emanuele Filiberto also had three illegitimate sons, Don Amedeo (d. 1610), Don Filippo (d. 1599) and Othone (d. 1580), and three illegitimate daughters, Maria (1556–80), Matilda (d. 1639) and Beatrice (d. 1580). Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, pp. 703–6; Litta, *Celebri famiglie Italiane*, 'Duchi di Savoia', table XV (Milan, 1844).

[43] Dumont (ed.), *Corps universel diplomatique*, V, part I, pp. 437–41 for a text of the marriage contract.

sons and daughters who survived into adulthood. These legitimate offspring were critically important political resources to the duke as the head of the main branch of the family, responsible as he was for planning domestic and foreign strategies; they were probably the most powerful tools available to the duke for maximising existing dynastic claims and creating new territorial and international interests, though given the number of legitimate children Carlo Emanuele I also had to take care in offsetting the considerable financial costs involved in providing for them with any wider benefits.[44]

The eldest of the five sons was Filippo Emanuele who was born in 1586. While the Infanta Catalina Michaela had formally renounced her own claim to the Spanish throne in her marriage contract to Carlo Emanuele I, the Savoyard duke nevertheless viewed his first-born legitimate son as a potential heir to parts of the Habsburg patrimony, or indeed to its entirety.[45] Filippo Emanuele's first name appropriately evoked that of the king of Spain, and his godparents included his cousin, the future Philip III, and maternal aunt, Isabella Clara Eugenia, underlining still further the dynastic connections between the Savoyard and Habsburg Houses.[46] In 1603 the young Filippo Emanuele travelled with his younger brothers, Vittorio Amedeo and Filiberto Emanuele, to Madrid under the charge of Filiberto Gherardo Scaglia and the didactic supervision of the Jesuit Giovanni Botero. The ostensible purpose of the trip was one of goodwill, though the Savoyard duke clearly had his eyes fixed on greater things. At the time of the mission Philip III was, as his father had been, subject to considerable dynastic insecurity, lacking a male heir. Although the Spanish were extremely reluctant formally to recognise Filippo Emanuele as a claimant to the Habsburg territorial inheritance because of the obvious implication that the composite monarchy might pass out of the direct control of the Habsburg dynasty, the House of Savoy nevertheless saw itself as a fall-back option for Spain in the event of a break in the direct line of succession. Filippo Emanuele's journey to Madrid thus reminded the Habsburgs of his potential significance as a dynastic safeguard. Unfortunately for Carlo Emanuele I, however, his young son caught the plague and died on the mission at the same time that Philip III succeeded in fathering a legitimate son and heir, the future Philip IV.

[44] Enrico Stumpo, *Finanza e stato moderno nel Piemonte del Seicento* (Rome, 1979), p. 133.

[45] Dumont (ed.), *Corps universel diplomatique*, V, part I, pp. 438–9. See also Carutti, *Storia della diplomazia*, I, pp. 413–14.

[46] Guichenon, *Histoire généalogique*, I, p. 870. As Guichenon recorded here, Filippo Emanuele also had two other godparents, Pope Gregory XIII Boncompagni (1502–85) and the French dowager consort Catherine de' Medici (1519–89).