

## Authors' preface

We have written this book on the occasion of the Winter Olympic Games of 2006, in order to provide English-speaking visitors with a history of Turin from its origins to the present. It is to the best of our knowledge the first history of the city to appear in English; this is not surprising, for Turin has never figured on the traditional itinerary for English-speaking tourists in Italy, despite its political importance, its rich cultural heritage, its architectural distinction, the beauty of its surrounding region, and its fine culinary tradition. Today it is perhaps best known as the home of the mysterious relic known as the “Shroud of Turin” – the subject of considerable scientific investigation and scholarly debate in recent years – or as the automotive capital of Italy – a distinction it seems however to be losing, as its principal carmaker, Fiat, experiences increasing difficulties. Turin’s reputation as an industrial powerhouse has tended to obscure its other claims to fame, which we personally have come to know and appreciate in the course of frequent sojourns in the city. Based on our long acquaintance with this elegant city and its many cultural resources, we believe that it deserves to be better known in the English-speaking world. So when the Turin Academy of Sciences approached us with a proposal to write a history of their city to coincide with the Winter Olympics, we gladly agreed.

Writing this book has turned out to be a demanding assignment. Turin’s history extends back for over two millennia, and is not at all easy to unravel and explain. As we approached the task of writing, we were struck by two apparently contradictory facts: first, the extraordinary wealth of detailed research by local scholars on every aspect of Turin’s history; and second, the lack of a comprehensive history of the city intended for the general reader. The abundant research by local scholars has proved invaluable to us in writing this book; we have leaned heavily on the recent nine-volume *Storia di Torino* (Giulio Einaudi Editore, Turin 1997-2002), written under the aegis of the Turin Academy of