

Sciences by a team of specialists in the city's history. We happily acknowledge our debt to their careful research, which has proven invaluable to us in writing this volume. At the same time however we found, contrary to our expectations, that there are very few general works that cover Turin's history from beginning to end. A few exist in Italian, from Luigi Cibrario's, published in 1846, to Francesco Cognasso's, published in 1964, but they have no counterpart in English. Our bibliography of titles in English therefore lists a variety of specialized studies on different aspects of Turin's history, but no general account of the city's development from its Roman origins to the present. So somewhat to our surprise, we came to realize that our book is a pioneering effort, both because of its general scope, and because it is the first history of the city designed for an English-speaking audience.

We have found it impossible to write the history of Turin in isolation. The city's development cannot be understood if it is divorced from its regional context. From the time of its foundation Turin was a crossroads and a gateway; geography has always played a decisive part in its development, and its history cannot be separated from the regional and national contexts in which it unfolded. Turin was founded by the Romans; became a strategic frontier outpost in the early middle ages; evolved into a small independent commune; and finally fell under the domination of the House of Savoy, which ruled it for almost seven centuries. In order to tell this complex story, the focus of our work moves beyond the confines of the city itself, to situate it within the broader historical development of Piedmont, its surrounding region; of the western Alps, where it gradually assumed the role of a regional capital; of the Italian peninsula; and of western Europe as a whole. Turin's history is also inseparable from that of its rulers, the House of Savoy, who seized control of the city in the thirteenth century, transformed it into the capital of their Alpine domains, and finally made it the springboard for the unification of Italy in the mid-nineteenth century. Turin's history is inextricably intertwined with that of the Savoyard dynasty, but the relationship between the city and its rulers was always complicated, and often contentious. Turin never gave its unqualified loyalty to the House of Savoy. Its role as the capital of the Savoyard state certainly brought important political, economic and cultural benefits, but Savoyard domination also provoked tension, for it ran counter to a deep-rooted tradition of municipal independence, dating from the city's medieval past.