

that the plague's effects could be at least mitigated by rigorous quarantine measures to exclude persons and goods that might carry the disease, and by isolating anyone in the city who became infected. In 1348 none of this was known, and the initial onset caught Europe's population and authorities by surprise, with terrifying effect.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century Turin's population had grown to about 1,100 families, or roughly 4,500 persons in all. After 1349 the city began periodically to compile registers of the population, or *estimi*, for fiscal purposes, and these enable us to track the catastrophic decline in the city's inhabitants as the plague struck again and again. The figures given in the *estimi* are somewhat lower than the real total, since they omit certain categories of people – the clergy, and the very poor who owned no property at all – but they provide a reliable indicator of the general trend of the city's population. The initial epidemic of 1348-49 may have carried off up to a third of the city's inhabitants, and the visitations that followed it, in 1361, 1381-84, 1398-1400, and 1420-21, caused a steep, cumulative decline. By the time of this latter epidemic the population was reaching its lowest level: the tax-register compiled in 1415 enumerated only 625 families, or less than 3,000 souls, a loss of roughly one-third compared to the pre-plague total, despite a big influx of immigrants that filled some of the gaps. Thereafter the intensity of the plague diminished, the epidemics became less frequent, and the *estimi* reveal that from this time a hesitant, painful demographic recovery began. Over the next century the city's population more than doubled, reaching 1,398 households or about 8,400 inhabitants by 1510.

The plague does not seem to have struck all classes of the population equally, although in the imagery of the time Death was depicted as sweeping away nobles, clerics and peasants with an indiscriminate hand. The analysis of the family names listed in the *estimi* suggests that the upper classes may have fared somewhat better than the rest of the population. Some noble lineages contracted, but none disappeared, while some even ramified and grew: the Borgeseio clan shrank from 21 branches before the plague to 13 by the early fifteenth century – still a substantial figure – but the Gorzano actually increased from seven branches to eight, and the Della Rovere from four to six. The losses among non-noble families seem to have been greater, judging by the many family names that vanished from the tax-registers between 1349 and the early fifteenth century, to be replaced by the names of new immigrants. The *estimi* also reveal that the structure of Turin's households changed in response to the massive losses caused by the plague. The number of