

## Foreword

In the mid-1980s the Turin Academy of Sciences launched an ambitious project: a history of Turin from the Roman origins to the end of the twentieth century. The project immediately won the support of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, which made available the resources necessary for the enterprise. The result was nine large volumes, totalling about ten thousand pages, edited by a committee which included some eminent members of the Academy but also scholars extraneous to it. The work was published by Einaudi over a period of six years, from 1997 to 2002: the editors of the individual volumes were Giuseppe Sergi, Rinaldo Comba, Giuseppe Ricuperati, Umberto Levra and Nicola Tranfaglia.

The work differed from the traditional histories of Turin (such as the still valuable volumes of Luigi Cibrario, which date from 1846) not only in its size, but also in its approach. It was not just a politico-institutional history, nor just a politico-economic history; it devoted ample space to the development of society and to its division into classes, and to the development of culture in the Piedmontese area, in particular the history of the arts. And it was also, to a large extent, the fruit of original research, which produced new results and modified traditional interpretations. Certainly, as in all enterprises involving hundreds of collaborators, the quality of the individual contributions is uneven, and some aspects of the history of the city would perhaps have merited further study. But as a whole the *Storia di Torino* stands comparison with analogous studies of other cities in Italy and elsewhere in the world. Its attractive presentation and illustrations have made it a precious object for the libraries of many, both scholars and sophisticated general readers.

But anyone not motivated by specialist interests who wanted to get an idea of the development of the city and its various periods could hardly tackle such a large-scale work. The idea was thus born – at a conference whose aim was to assess the work and compare it with analogous projects, held in October 2003, on the two hundred and twentieth an-