

SYSTEMS OF CHARITY IN TURIN  
(1541-1789)

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis represents the first thorough study of forms of charity and medical and poor relief in an Italian city in the post-Renaissance period. It complements the studies of other Italian cities carried out for an earlier period and contributes to comparison between European patterns of charity. The study reverses the usual demand-centred approach, which sees transformations in charitable provision mainly as a response to changing demographic and economic conditions, by focusing instead on the role played by changes in the nature of "supply", i.e. in the social composition of governors and benefactors and in the indirect and symbolic meanings which charity embodied for its dispensers. The main argument of this study is that the nature of control over charity had a significant impact on the form initiatives towards the poor took: dynamics of conflict, prestige and patronage among the elites contributed to forge charitable attitudes and definitions of poverty to a much larger extent than it has been recognised. Wills and other biographical material, figurative representations of charity and analysis of the architectural form of institutions have been used, besides the more obvious sources, to trace shifts in the symbolic implications of charity.

This study also contributes to a reassessment of the periodisation and the features usually regarded as typical of the 'Italian model' of charity and poor relief. It argues, in particular, that the importance of institutional forms of care and assistance has been exaggerated and the role played by outdoor relief for the poor and sick underestimated. Moreover, it emphasises the crucial function of the municipal government as agency of relief well into the early modern period.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Archives

AAT	Archivio Arcivescovile, Turin
ACT	Archivio Comunale, Turin
AOC	Archivio Ospedale di Carità, Turin
AOSG	Archivio Ospedale S.Giovanni
AOSML	Archivio Ordine di S.Maurizio e Lazzaro
ASSP	Archivio Storico S.Paolo
AST, p.s.	Archivio di Stato di Torino, prima sezione
AST, s.r.	Archivio di Stato di Torino, sezioni riunite
BR	Biblioteca Reale

### Archival Funds

<u>Ins.</u>	Insinuazione di Torino (in AST, s.r.)
LPqM	Luoghi Pii di qua dai Monti (in AST, p.s.)
OPCB	Opere Pie Comuni e Borgate (in AST, p.s.)
<u>Ord.</u>	Ordinati del Comune di Torino (in ACT)
PCF	Patenti Controllo Finanza (in AST, s.r.)
T.P.	Testamenti Pubblicati dal Senato (in AST, s.r.)

### Printed Primary Sources

Borelli	G.B.Borelli, <u>Editti antichi e nuovi dei sovrani Principi della Real Casa di Savoia</u> , Turin 1681.
D.	F.A.Duboin, <u>Raccolta per ordine di materia delle leggi, editti, manifesti.. emanate dai sovrani della real Casa di Savoia sino all'8-12-1798</u> , 23 Toms, Turin 1818-69.

### Periodicals

AHN	Acta Historica Neerlandicae
AHR	American Historical Review
AIIGT	Archivio dell'Istituto Italo-Germanico di Trento
Ann.Osp.M.Vitt.	Annali dell'Ospedale M.Vittoria di Torino

Ann.Osp.M.Vitt.	Annali dell'Ospedale M.Vittoria di Torino
ARH	Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte Archive for Reformation History
ASI	Archivio Storico Italiano
ASL	Archivio Storico Lombardo
BSSS	Biblioteca della Società Storica Subalpina
BISSSV della	Bollettino dell'Istituto di Storia Società e dello Stato Veneziano
BSBS	Bollettino Storico Bibliografico Subalpino
BHM	Bulletin of the History of Medicine
EHR	Economic History Review
ESR	European Studies Review
Giorn.Acc.Med.	Giornale dell'Accademia di Medicina, Torino
JIH	Journal of Interdisciplinary History
Loc.Pop.St.	Local Population Studies
Mem.Acc.Sc.Tor. di	Memorie dell'Accademia delle Scienze Torino
NRS	Nuova Rivista Storica
RSLR	Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa
SHM	Social History of Medicine
SMRH	Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
Univ.Birm.Hist.Jl	University of Birmingham History Journal

## INTRODUCTION

Measures for the poor in Italy have been studied primarily in cities in the small states of the North and the Centre which in the Renaissance developed a sophisticated system of government based on the city-state and the principality<sup>1</sup>. It is these studies which have provided the basis for a picture of the principal characteristics of the Italian system of poor relief: the importance of the charitable activities of the confraternities; the existence as early as the fifteenth century of large hospitals with hundreds of medical patients; and the early appearance of a policy of renferment in the form of legislation which confined beggars and other categories of outcasts in institutions. It is usually assumed that these elements combined to make the charitable system existing in certain parts of Italy exceptional in the more general European context. The towns

<sup>1</sup> Surveys of the numerous works on poor relief published in the last two decades (most of them on single institutions or single aspects of relief) are in: M.Rosa, 'Chiesa, idee sui poveri e assistenza in Italia dal Cinque al Settecento', Società e Storia, 10 (1980); G.Assereto, 'Pauperismo e assistenza. Messa a punto di studi recenti', ASI, 141 (1983); A.Pastore, 'Strutture assistenziali fra Chiesa e Stati nell'Italia della Controriforma', Storia d'Italia, Annali IX, La Chiesa e il Potere Politico, (edited by G.Chittolini and G.Miccoli), Turin 1986; S.J.Woolf, The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, London and New York 1986 (Introduction); B.Pullan, 'Support and redeem: charity and poor relief in Italian cities from the fourteenth to the seventeenth', Continuity and Change, 2 (1988). Among the most significant studies to be published after these surveys, P.Gavitt, The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536, Ann Arbor 1990, and S.Cohen, The Evolution of Women's Asylums since 1500, Oxford 1992. On medical charity in particular see also J.Henderson, 'The hospitals of late medieval and Renaissance Florence: a preliminary survey', in L.Granshaw and R.Porter (eds.), The Hospital in History, London 1989; K.Park, 'Healing the poor: hospitals and medicine in Renaissance Florence', in J.Barry and C.Jones (eds.), Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State, London 1991.

of the Veneto, of Tuscany and Lombardy - which had already led the way in adopting public health measures against the plague after the Black Death - continued in the early modern period to be admired by foreign observers and governments of the time and the measures adopted with regard to the poor and the sick to be taken as examples to emulate<sup>2</sup>.

But what was the situation in those numerous areas of Italy (covering most of the South, but also many parts of the North and Centre), where the medieval tradition of commune development was not strong, and where towns were essentially creations of the early modern period<sup>3</sup>? Turin is an ideal place to examine this question because it is not generally held to have been part of the Italian tradition of *comuni* and Renaissance city-states. The political system in Piedmont has usually been considered closer to the feudal system prevailing in the countries to the North of the Alps, rather than to the model of the self-governing city more typical of North and Central Italy - where the systems of relief regarded as pioneering developed<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> E.Chaney, '"Philanthropy in Italy": English observations on Italian hospitals, 1545-1789', in T.Riis (ed.), Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe, Stuttgart 1981; K.Park and J.Henderson, '"The first hospital among Christians": the Ospedale di Santa Maria Nuova in early sixteenth century Florence', Medical History, 35 (1991).

<sup>3</sup> On these different chronologies of urban development, see E.Fasano Guarini, 'La politica demografica delle città Italiane nell'età moderna', in Società Italiana di Demografia Storica, La Demografia Storica delle città Italiane, Bologna 1982.

<sup>4</sup> This traditional "feudal" view on Piedmont has been dominant for a long time. See F.Gabotto, 'Le origini "signorili" del "comune"', BSBS, VIII, 1903; and recently G.Chittolini 'Cities, "city-states", and regional states in north-central Italy', Theory and Society, 18, 1989. Some recent studies however, argue against this view: G.Sergi, Potere e Territorio lungo la Strada di Francia, Naples 1981; id. 'Le città come luoghi di continuità di nozioni pubbliche del potere. Le aree delle marche d'Ivrea e di Torino' and R.Bordone, '"Civitas nobilis et antiqua". Per una storia delle origini del movimento comunale in

Figure 1. POPULATION OF TURIN 1571-1782

1571	14,244
1614	24,410
1631	36,649
1702	43,866
1712	56,336
1722	59,233
1732	66,851
1742	71,096
1752	69,517
1762	76,559
1772	81,791
1782	88,082

Source: G.Levi Centro, p.13; P.Castiglioni, Censimenti degli antichi stati sardi, Turin 1860.

Turin might be described as a city which never experienced the Renaissance. From the thirteenth century on, it was part of the county (later dukedom) of Savoy, and it remained smaller and less important than other towns in either Piedmont or the Savoyard lands until 1560, when the state capital was moved to Turin from Chambery. So it was only in the later sixteenth century (and more especially from 1640 on) that it gained a major role, not only as a court city, but also as an important manufacturing centre (especially for silk fabrics)<sup>5</sup>. Its growing importance can be judged from the rise in population, mainly due to immigration. Thus in the space of forty years between 1571 and 1614, the population grew from around 14,000 to over 24,000 - a rise of 70%; then in the following hundred years, it increased by 130%, to 56,000 in 1714, and

Piemonte', both published in Piemonte medievale. Forme del potere e della società, Turin 1985.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of Turin G.Levi 'Come Torino soffocò il Piemonte', in his Centro e Periferia di uno Stato Assoluto, Turin 1985.

continued to grow in the eighteenth century, albeit at a more moderate rate, reaching over 90,000 in the 1790s (see Fig.1). Turin is therefore essentially a city of the early modern era, and one which seems at first sight to be closely linked to the rise of the Savoy house and the consolidation of the Savoyard state. Like Naples and numerous other Italian cities, Turin became important at precisely the time when the towns with a strong medieval tradition of independence saw their role decline and had difficulty in maintaining their populations<sup>6</sup>.

The study of Turin allows us, therefore, to glimpse what things were like in that other half of Italy, and to examine the form measures for the poor took in a context where - it is maintained - the medieval and Renaissance background of experience, organisation and institutions was lacking.

My study begins in 1541, the year in which the first comprehensive plan for relief of the poor was issued, and then traces the history of the bodies involved in the administration of charity for a little more than two centuries, up until the eve of the French invasion of Piedmont<sup>7</sup>. It tries to give as comprehensive a picture as possible of initiatives taken towards the poor, including also the policy towards the sick, a subject which is usually ignored by the now numerous monographs on relief in various European cities and seen as belonging to the

<sup>6</sup> Fasano Guarini, 'La politica'.

<sup>7</sup> The only aspects of relief and social policy I do not touch on are policy towards lunatics (the main initiative in the period seems to have been the mad-house called the Pazzarelli, which had an elite clientele) and measures dealing with the converted heretics (Jews and Waldensians). Both areas have features which distinguish them significantly from other measures of social policy. On converted heretics in Turin L.Allegra 'Modelli di conversione', Quaderni Storici, 3 (1991).

separate domain of the historian of medicine<sup>8</sup>. The tendency to see poverty and disease as separate areas of investigation reflects a modern distinction which certainly does not hold for the early modern period (and even today is often inappropriate): as other research has emphasized and as my study confirms, illness, along with marriage status, gender and age, was at this time one of the components of contemporary definitions of poverty<sup>9</sup>.

This study pays particular attention to a period which has been under-investigated by studies in the field in Italy, the period between the Renaissance and the initiatives of enlightened despotism in the later eighteenth century. Research on medical facilities has especially neglected this period<sup>10</sup>. This lack of interest is probably due primarily to the view, long dominant, that the history of Italy in the early modern era was a history of decline. But the classic threefold periodization into Renaissance, Counter-Reformation and Enlightened Absolutism which is usually applied to the description of the development of measures for the poor in Italy also tends to encourage the tendency to leave long periods in the shade. Thus little is known about what became of those arrangements for relief of the needy and sick which were created in the late Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, and equally little is known about the long interval which elapsed between the burst of charitable initiatives under the Counter-Reformation and

<sup>8</sup> For an exception to this tendency see C.Jones, The Charitable Imperative: Hospitals and Nursing in Ancien Régime and Revolutionary France, London 1989.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, M.Pelling, 'Illness among the poor in an early modern English town: the Norwich census of 1570', Continuity and Change, 2 (1988); M.Fissell, 'The "sick and drooping poor" in Eighteenth century Bristol and its region', SHM, 1 (1989).

<sup>10</sup> A somewhat whiggish emphasis on the eighteenth century "reforms", seen as the precursor of "modern" medical treatment has prevailed among most Italian medical historians. See, for example, Storia d'Italia, Annali 7 Malattia e Medicina (edited by F.Della Peruta), Turin 1984.



the taking over of responsibility for the poor by enlightened governments in the later eighteenth century.

In my research on Turin I tried to avoid forcing events into preconceived periods and sought instead to adopt a periodization which was more intrinsically linked to my material, one which was based on the question: who controls charity? This approach also explains the way I have organised the narrative: different chapters chart the shift in the focus of control from the municipality to corporate bodies to the state, and from women to men, and bring out the different definitions of poverty and forms of assistance that these various configurations of control generated. Behind this approach lies the idea that the nature of control over charity has a significant impact on the form initiatives towards the poor take, since it contributes to shaping perceptions of poverty and thus to defining the categories worthy of assistance. My study tries, in other words, to relate two objects of investigation which are usually kept apart: the identity of the dispensers and the identity of the recipients of charity. How did changes in the social composition of donors and administrators affect policy towards the poor? In what ways did shifts in the social motivations for becoming involved in charity alter the identity of those group for which the relief was intended?

The social history of poor relief has generally assumed that the recipients changed with changes in the characteristics of poverty - so that new policies reflected shifts in the numbers, age and sex of the poor, in the extent of crime and vagrancy, etc. Thus within this approach, a crucial role has been given to the nature of demand in shaping social policy. But is it realistic to see measures for the poor as a simple reflection of a lucid and rational analysis of the situation of the poor?

Those historians who have been more interested in charity in respect to the actions of individuals and groups rather than of governments and institutions, on the other

hand, have focused more on what we might call the supply side. They have examined the factors (partially independent of the actual conditions of the poor) which motivated benefactors to give - and to give more in some periods than in others - and which defined the object of their munificence. Thus there has been discussion of the ideals of moral reform which are said to have brought about a wave of charity, chiefly religiously inspired, between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries; and discussion of the decrease in voluntary charity caused by a decline in religious enthusiasm in the Enlightenment<sup>11</sup>. In addition there has been debate over specific forms of welfare provision inspired by theories of political economy which set out ways to enforce social discipline, policies of population and control of the labour-force<sup>12</sup>.

The "supply" approach has shown that policy towards the poor was not determined solely by the statistical extent of poverty, but rather by the way the poor were perceived; but it has also often given very generic explanations which are not capable of accounting for concrete individual actions. Reference to religious or ideological movements which were in vogue at the time certainly illuminates the context in which philanthropy took place, but historical analysis of the motivations behind measures for the poor should

<sup>11</sup> B.Pullan, Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice. The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620, Oxford 1971; M.Vovelle, Piété Baroque et Déchristianisation en Provence au XVIII siècle, Paris 1973; C.Fairchilds, Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence 1640-1789, Baltimore 1976; J.Chiffolleau, La Comptabilité de l'Au-Delà: les Hommes, la Mort et la Religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Age, Rome 1980; C.Jones, Charity and Bienfaisance. The Treatment of the Poor in the Montpellier Region 1740-1815, Cambridge 1982; K.Norberg, Rich and Poor in Grenoble 1600-1814, Berkeley 1985; S.K.Cohn Jr., Death and Property in Siena 1205-1800: Strategies for the Afterlife, Baltimore London 1988.

<sup>12</sup> D.Andrew, Philanthropy and Police. London Charity in the Eighteenth Century, Princeton 1989; G.Himmelfarb, The Idea of Poverty. England in the Early Industrial Age, London 1984.

certainly not stop there. It is always the case that certain social groups take up these ideas more enthusiastically than others, perhaps women rather than men, young people more than the old, etc. The variety of possible responses to the same ideological stimulus becomes particularly evident when one shifts from generalizations about the influence of, say, the Counter-Reformation, the process of de-Christianization, etc., to the analysis of specific situations. It becomes plain that the preaching of a given religious order in a particular local context might have stimulated some to charitable activity but also aroused the hostility of others. The spread of the Counter-Reformation was often supported by specific groups and circles who were pursuing wider aims in local politics (as will be apparent also in cases discussed in this study). We need, therefore, to find less obvious motivating factors which allow us to order the apparent randomness of individual charitable activity, and to find explanations for the involvement of individuals and groups which are less remote from the concerns of their everyday experience. This work gives special attention therefore to the social context in which charity took shape, first by establishing who exactly were the individuals and groups who introduced, controlled and founded welfare provisions in various periods; and secondly by examining those conflicts and social dynamics within the actors' social and political milieux, as well as in their private lives, which may have affected their attitudes to charity.

Social motivations for charity, ranging from conflict over family wealth to search for prestige, have occasionally been mentioned by historians (especially in descriptions of individual benefactors), but have never been analysed systematically; above all, no attempt has been made to construct a periodization of charity based on changes in these kinds of social motivations. This is the aim of the present study. I describe the various configurations of power and of conflict between elites in

which differing patterns of charity took shape - i.e. the clash between local and central government in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century (Chapter II), the tension between new economically successful elites and the older court elite which held the monopoly of prestige in the mid seventeenth century (Chapter III), and the attack of the rising bureaucratic class on traditional administrations of hospital (expression of a corporate structure of power) in the eighteenth century (Chapter V). Finally, Chapter IV describes the conflict between men and women over women's exclusion from control over property. These various patterns of elite conflict largely explain the predominance of particular groups in charitable initiatives at particular times, and also the particular forms that charity took. For example, the shift from outdoor relief to institutions - something which is often explained by reference to an emerging ideology of renferment - seems to have been more closely linked to a shift away from a conception of charity as a civic duty (and thus tending to care for the poor within the community), which was dominant until the City Council retained monopoly of welfare matters. In a period characterised by fierce rivalry between elites, this broad and impersonal conception of charity gave way to a more personal and voluntary pattern which assigned new importance to hospitals as stages for public display of the prestige of the benefactor.

Even shifts in the definition of the deserving poor - the categories of the needy seen as especially worthy of aid - also seem to have been related to changes in the social identity of benefactors or administrators - or rather, to the discourse and sets of values which those controlling charity endorsed. For example, the introduction of discrimination against outsiders to the town in the second half of the sixteenth century was an aspect of the political rise of the Town Council and the related rise of a rhetoric in which citizens came to be given special

prestige. Similarly, state employees became the object of special charitable concern precisely during the period when the special dignity of state service was being emphasized by state functionaries who were appropriating various areas of power. In the late seventeenth century, concern for women with unhappy marriages and for widows and young women unable to marry, came above all from women benefactors - a pattern which can be linked to the acute awareness of female vulnerability, and to the anti-matrimonial rhetoric, which were widespread among aristocratic women in a period in which gender conflict was rife within families of rank.

The main aim of this work is therefore to focus attention not solely on the explicit aims which administrators and donors declared, but on the indirect and symbolic meanings which charity embodied for its dispensers. In other words, on the role that charity played for the elites themselves in their strategies for achieving public consensus at the expense of rival political bodies, or in the competition for prestige between social groups, and even in gender conflicts within the family. The hierarchies of merit of the deserving poor, and the priorities given to one group rather than another in access to relief seem in many cases to have been only vaguely linked to the real need of the poor; rather, the definition of who was and was not worthy of assistance can be seen as a metaphorical transposition of discourses which reflected tensions within the world of the elites. This approach, which sees the emergence of new attitudes towards the poor as a process rooted in patterns of social conflict, may, perhaps, contribute to bring back the subject of motivations for charity - a topic which has so far remained in the rather elusive area of the history of ideas and mentalités - into the domain of social relations.

## CHAPTER I. SIXTEENTH CENTURY PLANS FOR POOR RELIEF

### 1. The 1541 Plan in Turin

At the beginning of May 1541, an announcement was trumpeted through the streets of Turin. It invited all the poor, be they 'men or women, young or old, healthy or infirm', to congregate a few days later at the cathedral, where they were to see a committee of the 'reverend suffragan [the archbishop's delegate], the reverend canons and several gentlemen and merchants of the city'. When the poor had assembled at the cathedral on the appointed day, they were asked to file past the committee one by one. The committee had brought two white books and a bag of money and, while one of them handed out a coin (un quarto di re) to each pauper, another recorded in the first book the names of 'the orphans, the infirm and the disabled who had no dwelling in Turin' and in the second book the names of 'those who have rooms'. Those entered in the first book were taken to the hospital of S.Giovanni, where they were given 'sufficient food, drink, clothing and a place to sleep'. As for the others, 'careful investigations were made by religious and secular persons delegated by the above mentioned gentlemen in order to ascertain their requirements'. A dole varying 'according to their state of need' was established on the basis of these inquiries. It consisted partly of bread and partly of money and every Sunday the poor were to collect it from the hospital; 'some were given 12 good sizeable loaves and one Piedmontese grosso [a coin of small value], others were given four loaves and two grossi, others thirty-six loaves and three grossi and still others sixty loaves and five grossi'. On Sunday, hospital officials would also deliver the agreed amount of alms to the homes of the poveri vergognosi (those ashamed to go in person).

This account is just the first part of a long document

which describes in detail the charitable system active in Turin in 1541<sup>1</sup>. Lack of documentation on the previous period prevents us from ascertaining to what extent the document marked the introduction of a new plan of relief that year, or merely gave a written and statutory form to a set of measures already enforced in the capital, maybe re-enacting provisions fallen into neglect. Despite this uncertainty, the document represents an important source providing a thorough picture of the methods and conceptions of poor relief employed at this early date. It certainly testifies to the desire for a permanent and well-ordered organization of welfare, capable of meeting the different needs of the various categories of the poor in the city.

The system laid down in 1541 attempted to provide for all those who were really in need by identifying them through a thorough and regular examination of the poor in the town. The hospital's governors had the duty of visiting the city, house by house, every six months, in order to update the records of those qualifying for assistance and to adjust the amount of relief to the present circumstances of the recipients, 'providing everyone according to his needs'. But the system also aimed at 'uprooting the true cause of trickery'. Begging was therefore unnecessary and was in fact outlawed; the regulations considered anyone caught begging an imposter and instructed that they should be punished accordingly. The document concluded with the order - which was to be trumpeted around the city - that no pauper, whether from the city or outside, 'should dare ask for alms, under pain of being irremissibly whipped'.

The statutes also provided for the hospital's internal life and defined the roles and duties of staff, and the procedure for day-to-day management. As far as medical treatment was concerned, it was stated that a doctor and a surgeon should attend the hospital regularly, visiting the

<sup>1</sup> ACT, C.S.657. All quotations in the following pages will refer to this document, unless otherwise specified.

sick twice a day, and that a male nurse should constantly watch over the sick and provide them with 'medicines, ointments and whatever may be necessary'. The chaplain had a crucial role in assisting the sick and supervising the running of the hospital, as well as conducting Sunday mass and administering the sacraments to the patients. He had to visit the sick four times a day and twice at night, to give them food and medicines, and to provide 'generally for all their needs'. He was responsible for furniture and equipment, kept the accounts of charitable gifts received, purchased the necessary food and provisions, 'corn, wine, firewood, meat, fish and other things', and submitted the accounts to the treasurer. The chaplain was assisted in these activities by an 'agent', 'a diligent and trustworthy man who receives an honest salary'.

Provision of poor relief thus appears to have been the main responsibility of the hospital of S.Giovanni which, following the union in 1440 of twelve small medieval hospitals, constituted by then the only hospital in the city. Not only did this hospital receive the sick and disabled, and provide outdoor relief to the needy through the weekly distributions of bread and money, but it also had the duty to receive foundlings. In the first years of the latter's lives, they were sent to the country for wet-nursing at the expense of the City Council, then they returned to the hospital. The 1541 document also laid down regulations for the education of the foundlings, by stating that a teacher had to be hired 'to teach the alphabet to the boys' and 'an honest woman' to teach the girls to spin, sew 'and other womanly activities'. As soon as possible, the hospital had to send the boys to an artisan for apprenticeships and to place the girls in service or arrange a marriage in which case it had also to supply the dowry.

We do not have much information on the hospital building previous to 1545, when the move took place to a larger establishment, after receipt of a legacy. The new house,



which was in the very centre of the city and close to the cathedral, consisted of two floors: the ground floor contained a chapel and an apothecary (this was already mentioned in the 1541 document), as well as the service rooms (kitchen and refectory, bakery and stable); the first floor was divided into seven large rooms which separated the patients according to sex. The patients were also housed separately from the foundlings<sup>2</sup>. The overall capacity of the hospital was probably quite limited, but we have to consider that much of its relief activity consisted of outdoor provisions. These measures issued in Turin in 1541 have many points in common with the municipal plans for poor relief which emerged in the first half of the sixteenth century all over Europe. They share the same naive idea that it was possible to eradicate begging by setting up a permanent and all-embracing system which would provide aid to the deserving poor and punishment to able-bodied imposters and idlers. One of the best known sets of provisions of this kind had been drawn up in nearby Lyon a few years previously<sup>3</sup>, and published in a 1539 pamphlet which could easily have been known in Turin<sup>4</sup>. However regulations of this type were much more widespread. From the information currently available, it would appear that similar measures were adopted in German cities such as Nuremberg, Habsburg, Strasbourg, Wittemberg, Leipzig in the early 1520s, and in many towns of the Low Countries, such as Lille (1506), Bruges (1512), Mons, Anvers (1521), Ypres

<sup>2</sup> T.M.Caffaratto, L'Ospedale Maggiore di San Giovanni Battista e della Città di Torino. Sette Secoli di Assistenza Socio-Sanitaria, Turin 1984, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> J.P.Gutton, La Société et les Pauvres: l'Exemple de la Généralité de Lyon, Paris 1971; N.Zemon Davis, 'Poor relief, humanism, and heresy: the case of Lyon', SMRH, V (1968).

<sup>4</sup> La Police de l'Aulmosne de Lyon, Lyon Sébastien Gryphius, 1539.

(1525) and Valenciennes (1531)<sup>5</sup>. For the 1530s and '40s there are documented examples in Spain: in the Basque Country (1535), and in Zamora, Salamanca, Valladolid, Madrid and Toledo<sup>6</sup>. In this period there were also countless French cities where municipal initiatives reorganised and centralised poor relief under bureaux des pauvres or aumônes générales<sup>7</sup>. In Italy, Venice remains the best known example, thanks to Brian Pullan's detailed investigation: here comprehensive poor relief schemes made an early appearance in 1527 and 1529 and were further strengthened in 1545<sup>8</sup>. But there is some evidence that municipal systems of poor relief existed elsewhere in Italy, and particularly in the Po Valley. Apart from the cases of Verona, Brescia and Salò (which are mentioned by Pullan), Modena had its charitable provisions centralised

<sup>5</sup> H.J.Grimm, 'Luther's contributions to sixteenth century organization of poor relief', in ARH, 2 (1970); R.Jutte, 'Poor relief and social discipline in sixteenth century Europe', ESR, 11 (1981). On the Low Countries, H.Pirenne, Histoire du Belgique, Bruxelles 1923 (first edition 1907), vol.III, p.273-80; J.Nolf, La Réforme de la Bienfaisance Publique à Ypres au XVIe Siècle, Gand 1915; P.Bonenfant, 'Les origines et le caractère de la bienfaisance publique aux pays Bas sous le règne de Charles Quint', Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire, V (1926) and VI (1927).

<sup>6</sup> L.Martz, Poverty and Welfare in Habsburg Spain. The Example of Toledo, Cambridge 1983, pp.14-15, 21-22; M.Flynn, Sacred Charity. Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400-1700, London 1989, pp.91-4.

<sup>7</sup> M.C.Paultre, De la Repression de la Mendicité et du Vagabondage en France sous l'Ancien Régime, Paris 1906, vol.I, pp.55-115; C.Bloch, L'Assistance et l'Etat en France à la Veille de la Revolution, Paris 1908, p.44; M.Fosseyeux, 'La taxe des pauvres au XVIe siècle', Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France, 1934. The system operating in Paris is described in the pamphlet La Police des Paouvres de Paris, about 1555, published by E.Coyecque in Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile de France Bulletin, 15 (1888).

<sup>8</sup> B.Pullan, Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice. The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620, Oxford 1971.

under civic control during the 1530s and 1540s<sup>9</sup>. In Genoa, in 1540, an Office for the poor was responsible for keeping a list of all those requiring relief who had been resident in the city for at least six months, and handed out bread and money<sup>10</sup>. In Lucca, two bodies were created in the 1540s by the Municipal Council to deal with the different categories of the poor, the *Offizio dei poveri foretani e forestieri* (for the non-resident poor) and the *Offizio dei poveri vergognosi* (for the local and shamefaced poor)<sup>11</sup>. In England too, the early decades of the sixteenth century seem to have been a crucial experimental period in the local administration of poor relief and the suppression of begging. At the beginning of the century, a number of towns initiated campaigns to expel vagrants and the poor originating from other areas, and this wave of activity was particularly intense between 1517 and 1521. At the same time there were attempts to regulate begging by granting the deserving local poor licenses to beg. In many parishes individual charity was discouraged and donors were enjoined to make use of communal collection boxes for the poor in the churches - the alms from which were redistributed by specially nominated officials. In the following decades, it increasingly became the practice to keep an up-to-date record of all the poor in a given town, and to establish the obligation for parishioners to contribute regularly to their support through the payment of voluntary or

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.pp.270-8; S.Peyronel Rambaldi, Speranze e Sogni nel Cinquecento Modenese. Tensioni Religiose e Vita Cittadina ai Tempi di Giovanni Morone, Milan 1979, pp.153-161.

<sup>10</sup> E.Grendi, 'Ideologia della carità e società indisciplinata. La costruzione del sistema assistenziale genovese (1470-1670)', in G.Politi, M.Rosa, F.Della Peruta (eds.), Timore e Carità. I Poveri nell'Italia Moderna, Cremona 1982, p.68.

<sup>11</sup> S.Russo, 'Potere pubblico e carità privata. L'assistenza ai poveri a Lucca tra XVI e XVII secolo', Società e Storia, 23 (1984).

compulsory poor rates<sup>12</sup>. These measures seem to have become even more common in the 1550s and 1560s along with the issue of the first provisions from central government to encourage their adoption<sup>13</sup>.

Many scholars have seen these civic plans for relief as a radical shift in attitudes and in the policy towards the poor<sup>14</sup>. The measures adopted were largely repressive in nature and implied the abandonment of traditional unselective charity and the last vestiges of the sacredness which had been attributed to poverty in medieval society. Other features are also seen to have marked a new departure. For the first time, poor relief provision was made more efficient by centralizing its administration and its financing: existing charity funds were put at the disposal of the new scheme, attempts were made at channelling voluntary donations into a common box and, in a few cases, at imposing poor rates on various corporations and the tax-paying population. Finally, the new provisions were usually secular in origin. City Councils, in particular, were often the prime movers (although the launching of the initiative was often backed by the religious sermons given by professional preachers). This last aspect has led historians to see the sixteenth century urban schemes of relief not only as a "rationalisation" of the action towards begging, but as a move towards a "secularisation" of charitable activity, which supposedly, up to that time, had been primarily in the hands of the

<sup>12</sup> P.Slack, Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England, New York 1988, pp.115-9, 123; M.McIntosh, 'Local responses to the poor in late medieval and Tudor England', Continuity and Change, 2 (1988).

<sup>13</sup> For examples in Suffolk, McIntosh, *ibid.* p.229 and note 81; for Essex, F.G.Emmison, 'The care of the poor in Elizabethan Essex', Essex Review, LXII (1953).

<sup>14</sup> This view has prevailed since the very first works on the history of poor relief, e.g. Bloch L'Assistance p.39. More recently R.M.Kingdon, 'Social welfare in Calvin's Geneva', AHR, 1 (1971); Zemon Davis, 'Poor relief'.

church.

All these features which are normally seen as having revolutionised sixteenth century policy towards the poor can be found in the Turin case. Not only did the plan adopt the measures seen as characteristic of the new, more discriminating attitude (the prohibition of begging, the expulsion and punishment of transgressors, the investigation and census of the poor, etc.), but it shows the same attempt at centralizing the management and financing of charity under secular control. Formally speaking, the overall organisation of relief was in the hands of the hospital's governors, but in reality the City Council was the major force in its administration. More generally, the City Council had been responsible for the formulation of the scheme and for imposing the financial arrangements which funded it.

1541 did in fact mark the secularisation of the hospital of S.Giovanni. According to the version repeated by various of Turin's chroniclers, the hospital fell into decline in the 1530s, when Piedmont was hit by the plague and then became the battleground for French and Spanish armies. In 1536, the Duke of Savoy finally abandoned his territories and the Duchy was divided between the two contenders. A long period of foreign occupation then commenced. Turin remained subject to the French for nearly 30 years (1536-1563) and, like the rest of Piedmont, it suffered, especially in the early years, from the disastrous consequences of the military taxation imposed by the occupiers which caused considerable impoverishment, the abandonment of properties and vast areas of cultivated land and the flight of much of the population. According to the prevalent version, these dramatic circumstances also took their toll on the capital's hospital and eventually induced the City Council to come to its aid by donating the income of twelve lay confraternities which it administered in the city. The hospital was then able to re-establish itself following this considerable improvement in its financial

situation. In return for bailing the hospital out, the City Council obtained a majority control in its administration: four of the six governors were to be City councillors, while the other two were to be canons of the cathedral chapter, the body which had originally founded the hospital and which had administered it up until that time<sup>15</sup>.

The chronicles of Turin present this change in the hospital's administration as an erosion of the power held by the Church over charitable institutions and attribute it mainly to the late medieval Church's financial difficulties and the faltering of its authority. This interpretation, which is the one commonly given for the secularisation of charity also in other parts of Europe, is questionable for many reasons and will be discussed further on. For the moment, I wish to focus on one of the elements that this view downplays, the strength of local governments that, independently of any supposed weakness of the Church, the 1541 plan in Turin - and similar plans in other European towns - indicate.

## 2. Civic Ideology and Provision for the Poor

The city's early historians discussed the 1541 document only for the administrative shift it introduced, but it

<sup>15</sup> Ferrero di Lavriano, Istoria di Torino, Turin 1679, pp. 533, 696-7; G.B.Semeria, Storia della Chiesa Metropolitana di Torino, Turin 1840, p.415; L.Cibrario, Storia di Torino, Turin 1846, vol.I, p. ; S.Solero, Storia dell'Ospedale Maggiore di S.Giovanni Battista e della Città di Torino, Turin 1859; and more recently M.Grosso and M.F.Mellano, La Controriforma nella Diocesi di Torino, Vatican City 1957, vol.II, p.100. A few decades later, the hospital government came to be shared by 4 canons and 4 councillors. This probably occurred in the 1570s after a conflict between the board of governors and the archbishop (who was in those years a man of the Duke) over the management of the institution. This dispute has to be seen in the context of the clash between Municipality and Ducal power which was rife at the time, as we will see further on.

should be also noted that such an extensive system of relief implied major organisational and financial effort. The first step had been to centralise the funds to be used for charitable purposes, by transferring all the income that had originally been managed by the confraternities to the hospital. But the City Council also managed to persuade the other authorities present in the town, both secular and religious, to pay regular poor rates. The French administration agreed to pay a fixed levy, which supposedly, and not without symbolic meanings, had to be a deduction from the pay of the occupying troops, at the rate of one soldo per soldier. In addition the excise officer responsible for the salt duty, which was the direct tax that hit the poor hardest, had to supply the hospital every year with one measure of salt. On 1 September 1541, some four months after the start of these financial agreements, it was decided to add further taxes on the religious authorities possessing the richest benefices<sup>16</sup>. The archbishop undertook to pay two scudi del sole every week, plus two sacks of corn, two cartloads of firewood and twelve cartloads of wine every year. The Abbot of S.Solutore also committed himself to two cartloads of corn, two of wine and ten of firewood every year. The parish priest of S.Andrea and prior of the Consolata was to supply the same amount, while the parish priest of S.Dalmazzo was to give eight sacks of corn, a cartload of wine and five of firewood every year<sup>17</sup>.

It is clear that the City Council enjoyed considerable prestige if it was able to bind both ecclesiastical and secular authorities to such an agreement<sup>18</sup>. It is

<sup>16</sup> ACT, C.S.658.

<sup>17</sup> 1 sack = 138.33 litres; 1 cartload (liquids) = 493.07 litres; 1 cartload (solids) = 4 cubic metres.

<sup>18</sup> Significant of the leading role plaid by the City Council in setting these agreements is also the fact that this was the only urban authority which was not bound to give a fixed contribution to the hospital but send alms as

particularly striking that it managed to exact recognition of its own authority even from the occupying forces and obtain the latter's support for a civic enterprise. An episode that occurred a few years later reinforces this impression: in 1556 the hospital governors won the judicial support of the French government in a dispute with the new arch/bishop, who had refused to honour his predecessor's undertakings concerning the annual payment of the poor rates. The Conseil du Roi sitting in Turin immediately accepted the governors' complaints and instructed the archibishop to fulfil the agreement. As the latter continued to refuse to pay, six months later the king himself issued an order which authorised his Conseil in Turin to proceed against the arch/bishop's property and income<sup>19</sup>. Besides confirming the strength of the City Council, this incident also points to the lack of concern for welfare matters in the upper ranks of the Church. This was a period in which the Turin diocesan seat was in the hands of absentee arch/bishops interested only in cashing their revenues, and not at all inclined to expend energies and resources on behalf of the poor. In 1515 the local Cathedral Chapter lost the right to nominate the arch/bishop, who was now appointed by the pope: this meant that, until 1563, when the duke gained this right for himself, Turin archbishops were foreigners and totally uninvolved with local power and its social policy. In this kind of context, it is very plausible that the ecclesiastical authority was alien to the reshaping of poor relief organisation which culminated in the 1541 plan and that the scheme should be seen as the sole expression of the City Council and of the local elites represented in it.

However the project did not rely only on the regular fixed payments which had been agreed with the religious

it wished.

<sup>19</sup> Sentence carried on 17.1.1556 and Henry II's letter of 27.6.1556. Semeria, Storia, p.283.



authorities and the occupying forces. The entire citizenry was involved in making the plan work. Collection-boxes were supposed to be handed out to merchants and inn-keepers with instructions to request alms from the clients visiting their shops and inns. Larger collection-boxes were to be used in each of the four districts into which the city was divided. A citizen was to be entrusted with the collection-box and required 'to go every Saturday from house to house and from shop to shop, asking for alms for the poor. After a month he is to give the collection-box to his neighbour, and so on until everybody has done his turn'. A few days before the Christmas festivities, the governors were to make a further collection for the poor by going to the houses and shops, and at Easter with the help of some of the more affluent citizens, they were supposed to go to various churches around the city, set up a table and request alms from passers-by. The poor themselves were employed in the process of raising funds for the scheme. A new kind of beggar was created who was authorised to beg on behalf of the hospital: an iron box was to be placed at the entrance to the more important churches, with the inscription "Donations for the poor"; there was always supposed to be a certified pauper present, who would ask all the passers-by to contribute. Two other paupers from the hospital were authorised to beg once a week throughout the city. At harvest time, groups of poor people assisted by the hospital were to visit repeatedly the farms within the city's territory in order to collect donations of corn, wine and vegetables.

The plan to assist the poor and eliminate begging was therefore a community-wide initiative, and an expression of municipal self-government. The involvement of all the citizens, and not just the governors or the city Councillors, turned it into a civic enterprise. This aspect was ritually highlighted by the annual procession, which displayed to the citizens the results of all their efforts: on the eighth Sunday after Whitsun all the poor receiving

relief, 'whether resident at the hospital or dependant on its charity', paraded through the streets of the city, two abreast, and divided into groups according to age and sex, 'the girls first and then the boys and men'.

In Turin the prohibition on begging was not accompanied by a ban on alms giving, as occurred in some other cities. This was a matter on which there was a great deal of caution since such a ban could be resented by the Church: the argument that any restriction of voluntary charity was contrary to Christian doctrine as it limited the freedom to carry out acts of mercy had been flourished several times by various churchmen. In reality these reservations mainly reflected worries about harming the mendicant orders and those religious institutions which derived part of their income from the collection of alms. Otherwise the Church was not at all against the policy of limiting charity to the deserving poor. The Sorbonne theologians, for example, when requested to give their opinion on the new schemes for poor relief, concluded that they were perfectly acceptable, but exempted the mendicant orders from the prohibition against begging<sup>20</sup>.

The compromise adopted in Turin was probably that which was most widespread: although provisions for relief did not outlaw almsgiving, they attempted indirectly to discourage face-to-face charity by arranging regular opportunities for giving to the deserving poor (i.e. those accepted by the centralised organisation of welfare), and thus directed the citizens' charitable impulses towards the municipal system of poor relief.

Radical solutions were also avoided with regard to taxation. Strictly speaking, no taxes for the support of the poor were levied on the citizens of Turin, as they were in a number of other towns. However, a sort of obligation

<sup>20</sup> B.Geremek, 'La réforme de l'assistance publique au XVIème siècle et ses controverses ideologiques' in Domanda e Consumi Livelli e Strutture (nei secoli XIII-XVIII), Florence 1978.

to contribute to the city's scheme was established, due to the continuous pressure exerted on citizens. Again, this was the most common strategy adopted at the time, since there was strong resistance to any attempt to impose compulsory poor-rates<sup>21</sup>. Where there was compulsion, it was usually limited to crisis years. In some localities a compromise was reached, by which the citizens were required to register the amount of money they were willing to give<sup>22</sup>. Failure to pay the rate they had committed themselves to could result in prosecution. It is possible that such a system was at work in Turin too at this early date, although no documentation of this practice survives for the mid 16th century. Certainly this kind of voluntary self-taxation for the poor was endorsed by the City Council at the end of the century, as we will see further on, and was still in force a hundred years later.

The thorough project for poor relief drawn up in 1541 thus relied not only on a well consolidated civic authority but also on a widely accepted civic ideology which stressed citizens' obligations towards their own poor and urged them to involve themselves practically and financially in the implementation of the scheme. The combination of these two factors made the project work: for it did not remain simply on paper but was put into practice up until the late 1560s, when action towards the poor took on new characteristics, as we will see in the next chapter. For about three decades, therefore, the hospital of S.Giovanni

<sup>21</sup> There was similar resistance to early attempts to introduce poor rates in England, which in some cases continued after the Elizabethan Poor Law came into force. P.Slack, Poverty and Policy, pp.125-8.

<sup>22</sup> For example, a tax was imposed in Venice from March to August of 1528, in order to deal with the emergency caused by famine and plague. Pullan, Rich and Poor, p.247 and 251. Examples of temporary taxation have also been noted in France, in Abbeville, Poitiers, Dole, and Nantes; while more regular impositions of poor-rates (although the exact amount to be payed normally remained voluntary) were found in Limoges, Angers, Nîmes, Orleans, Avignon, Lectoure, and in Paris from 1525. Fosseyeux, 'La taxe'.

continued to care for the poor along the guidelines established in 1541. In the absence of direct sources on the hospital's activity, figures for the consumption of victuals give some idea of the scale and nature of the relief provided. The complete series of accounts in the period 1541 to 1549, and the fragmentary information available for the following two decades, shows high expenditure on bread: it appears that the institution consumed between 325 and 429 sacks of wheat every year, which enabled the governors to distribute as charity up to 84,000 pounds of bread (an average of 230 pounds per day) 'both inside and outside the hospital',<sup>23</sup>. This represented a substantial quantity of food for a city which at that time had not reached a population of fifteen thousand ( Figure 1). Although we do not know how much of this food was consumed in the hospital and how much was given to the poor outside in the weekly distributions of bread, there can be no doubt that outdoor relief figured very prominently in the charitable activity of the hospital, given the modest size of the institution. Again we do not possess definite information about the number of those assisted within the hospital but some indications can be obtained from the consumption of wine: this stayed at a very stable 32-34 cartloads per year, which is equivalent to about 45 litres a day. Given that the staff numbered about ten, and that there was always a significant number of foundlings living in the hospital, following their return from wet-nurses, we can reasonably assume that there were no more than a couple of dozen patients<sup>24</sup>. A

<sup>23</sup> AOSG, Cat.11, Protocolum aliquot instrumentum 1541-1589. After 1549, the accounts only record receipts on a daily and no longer on an annual basis. However, the partial information available after this date suggests that there were no drastic changes in consumption.

<sup>24</sup> In wine-producing regions such as Piedmont wine was one of the main constituent of the diet amongst the lower classes. Consumption of a litre a day was common also for those assisted in charitable institutions, as later regulations reveal.

substantial amount of the bread consumed by the hospital thus went to relieve the poor outside.

The financial arrangements contained in the 1541 plan also continued to be honoured in the years that followed: the lists of receipts record the arrival of wheat, wine and firewood from the various institutions and authorities committed to maintaining the hospital. Even the Savoy family had to accept the existing system after it regained its territories in 1563. Shortly after his return in Turin, the Duke was asked to specify what his contribution to poor relief would be, and in 1566 an agreement was reached which committed him to making a yearly payment of 30 scudi to the hospital. Six years later, following complaints by the governors about the continuing failure of the Duke to meet the undertaking, this was guaranteed by linking it to the excise on meat, and by having it paid directly by the tax collectors involved<sup>25</sup>.

The fact that the Council was the force pressing for the financing of poor relief even after the return of the House of Savoy is particularly interesting because it throws in doubt the long prevailing view which has seen the central government, if not the Duke in person, as the main agent of social policy, and largely ignores the contribution made by other political forces<sup>26</sup>. The local nature of initiatives over poor relief does not, incidentally, seem to be a peculiarity of Turin, but seems to mark the entire wave of action and concern over the poor that spread across European cities in the early sixteenth century. Even the body of provisions that eventually constituted the Elizabethan Poor Law issued in 1598-1601, was not the outcome of a reorganization of poor relief emanating from central authority, but rather the product of a long interaction between experimentation at the local level and

<sup>25</sup> Caffaratto, L'Ospedale, pp.18-19.

<sup>26</sup> See for instance A.Erba, La Chiesa Sabauda tra Cinque e Seicento. Ortodossia Tridentina, Gallicanesimo Savoiano e Assolutismo Ducale (1580-1630), Rome 1979.

legislation<sup>27</sup>. This close connection of sixteenth-century plans for poor relief and town governments and their civic ideology has not received sufficient attention in the various debates which have sought to explain the origins of these initiatives.

### 3. New Methods and Conceptions of Poor Relief?

The idea that a profound reorganisation of the welfare system was brought about by sixteenth century town schemes of relief has represented a leitmotiv in the historiography of poor relief. As I have already mentioned, these plans are seen to have introduced a twofold reform, consisting of the removal of poor relief from the control of the church and of a break with the traditional Christian view of the poor. Various lines of argument have been employed to back the idea of the novelty of the sixteenth-century urban measures of relief. One of the most widespread arguments has linked their appearance to the Protestant ethic and therefore to the teaching of the Reformation<sup>28</sup>. This connection between religious doctrine and poor relief policy was first put forward in Germany towards the end of the last century, and was then re-proposed in the interpretations of the history of welfare developed within the English and German Christian-socialist circles in the second and third decades of this century<sup>29</sup>. Already in

<sup>27</sup> For stress on the local precedents of legislation on poor relief see McIntosh, 'Local responses'. For the classic view from above, G.R.Elton, 'An early Tudor poor law', *EHR*, 2 (1953).

<sup>28</sup> On this debate Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp.11-13, 197-200; B.Geremek, *La Pietà e la Forza: Storia della Miseria e della Carità in Europa*, Bari 1986, pp.XIV-XVII; Grimm, 'Luther's contributions'.

<sup>29</sup> E.Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, London and New York, 1931 (German edition 1911); R.H.Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, London 1926. See also B.and S.Webb, *English Poor Law History*, Part

this period however, Belgian historians adopting a more pragmatic approach, were able to undermine the idea that different models of charity operated in Catholic and Protestant countries<sup>30</sup>. They showed that municipal plans of relief similar to those introduced in reformed German towns in the 1520s had been formulated in the same period in the Low Countries, quite independently of the German experience. Though accepting the idea of a sixteenth-century reorganisation of poor relief, Belgian historians argued that this was caused by developments in economic relations, and in particular by the capitalist ethos and humanist culture that inspired the new urban mercantile bourgeoisie<sup>31</sup>. The thesis that Christian humanism inspired by Erasmian ideas was the moving force behind the sixteenth century reform of poor relief was re-proposed with renewed vigour in more recent studies, in a context in which the purely "heretical" view of the Reformation was losing ground and increasing emphasis was put on these calls for a renewal of moral and religious attitudes which had developed within the Catholic world before and alongside Luther's ideas<sup>32</sup>. However, the idea of a decisive influence of humanist teaching should not be overemphasised. For instance, the leading role played by Juan Luis Vives' pamphlet De Subventionem Pauperum in inspiring the European movement of welfare reform needs to be put into proportion: this was published only after the city of Ypres' famous provisions, which have long been seen

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I, The Old Poor Law, London 1929.

<sup>30</sup> More recently, this view has been fully discredited by B.Pullan, 'Catholics and the poor in early modern Europe', in TRHS, XXVI (1976). A recent study on Geneva provides new evidence for comparison. J.E.Olson, Calvin and Social Welfare. Deacons and the Bourse française, London 1989.

<sup>31</sup> Nolf, La Réforme; Bonenfant 'Les origines'; Pirenne, Histoire, vol.III, pp.273-80.

<sup>32</sup> In particular Davis 'Poor relief; M.Todd, Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order, Cambridge 1987.

as pioneering city plans for relief<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, important precedents to this plan can be found in the Low Countries and elsewhere in the previous two centuries<sup>34</sup>. Humanist doctrine certainly created an ideological context favourable to the formulation of a more sophisticated policy but to say that it revolutionised attitudes to the poor is an exaggeration. A similar criticism can be made of the approach that has become dominant in the last few years and which sees economic and demographic circumstances and their social consequences as the factors really responsible for the sixteenth-century turn-around in ideas and in strategies for dealing with the poor<sup>35</sup>. Certainly population growth and pressure on resources in the sixteenth century, together with the devastation caused by war, famines and epidemics - and the consequent explosion of begging, vagrancy and crime - encouraged a harshening of attitudes to the poor. But these elements fail to provide a precise chronology for the emergence of specific provisions: it has been noted, for instance, that in Venice the adoption of measures against famine preceded demographic growth and immigration<sup>36</sup>.

The very idea that there was in fact such a radical reform in welfare fades if the measures adopted in the

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<sup>33</sup> M.Bataillon, 'Juan Luis Vives, réformateur de la bienfaisance', Bibliothèque d'Humanisme and Renaissance, XIV (1952). The De Subventionem Pauperum originally appeared in Latin, published in Bruges in 1526, it was subsequently translated into German (Strasbourg 1533), Dutch (1533) and Italian (Venice 1545). C.G.Norena, Juan Luis Vives, The Hague 1970, p.302.

<sup>34</sup> Nolf, La Réforme; Bonenfant, 'Les origines'; W.P.Blockmans and W.Prevenier, 'Poverty in Flanders and Brabant from the Fourteenth to the mid-sixteenth century: sources and problems', AHN, X (1978); Fosseyeux, 'La taxe'.

<sup>35</sup> For an example of this approach Geremek, La Pietà; this line of interpretation is particularly well developed in English studies on which see Slack, Poverty and Policy, in particular pp.46-49, 54-55.

<sup>36</sup> B.Pullan, 'The famine in Venice and the new Poor Law 1527-1529', BISSSV, vol.V-VI (1963-64).



sixteenth century are compared with those enforced in the previous period. This comparison however has generally been avoided, despite the fact that a substantial literature on late medieval welfare highlighting significant elements of continuity has existed for a long time. With regard to the French situation for example, nineteenth-century historians had already shed light on the efforts made between the thirteenth and the fourteenth century by local authorities (échevins and canons of the cathedral chapters) to create permanent and organized welfare systems. In many French as well as Dutch towns, *tables des pauvres* or *tables du Saint Esprit* were set up to centralise alms and charitable revenues, and to provide shelter, pensions and medical treatment for the various categories of worthy poor living in the parish or neighbourhood<sup>37</sup>. More recently Belgian historians have been able to document extensive municipal and parish welfare systems operating in the main centres of Flanders and Brabant since 1300. These structures of relief, which operated via regular distributions of food, clothing, footwear and firewood, and provided home medical assistance, represented a not inconsiderable resource for the local poor<sup>38</sup>.

It emerges from these and other studies that many of the features that were supposedly introduced in the sixteenth century, were already part of the charitable practices of late medieval society. In the first place, it appears that also medieval charity was selective. Since the fourteenth century in particular, provisions for controlling begging, the inspection of the poor, and the issuing of badges or tokens to licensed beggars had become

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<sup>37</sup> See the studies referred to in Foyssieux, 'La taxe'. These structures often evolved into the sixteenth century bureaux des pauvres or aumônes Générales. See also A.Vauchez, 'Assistance et charité en Occident XIII-XV siècles' in Domanda e Consumi.

<sup>38</sup> Bockmans and Prevenier, 'Poverty'.

common practice in most of Europe<sup>39</sup>. It also emerges that the involvement of secular authorities in charitable initiative was already widespread. They were responsible for setting up the medieval network of hospitals and almshouses that sprung up all over Europe, albeit at different times in different places, between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries<sup>40</sup>. Equally the volume of poor relief provided by lay confraternities should not be underestimated. In Italy and France the growth of these organisations reached its peak in the fourteenth century, while in England this probably occurred a century later<sup>41</sup>. Often, their charitable activities were restricted to providing relief to their own members and their families, and to ritual distributions of food (particularly in association with religious events, or during famines). But

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<sup>39</sup> Vauchez, 'Assistance'; B.Tierney, Medieval Poor Law: a Sketch of Canonical Theory and its Application in England, Berkeley 1959. In particular for the situation in England Slack, Poverty and Policy p.22; for France and Belgium Bonenfant, 'Les origines'; for German towns Grimm 'Luther's contributions'; for Spain Martz, Poverty and Welfare p.12. On tokens issued by Italian Confraternities W.J.Courtenay, 'Token coinage and the administration of poor relief during the late middle ages', JIH, 3 (1972-73).

<sup>40</sup> J.Imbert, Les Hôpitaux en Droit Canonique, Paris 1947, pp.58-66; E.Nasalli Rocca, Il Diritto Ospedaliero nei suoi Lineamenti Storici, Milano 1956; P.Bonenfant, Hôpitaux and Bienfaisance dans les Anciens Pays-Bas des Origines à la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle, Bruxelles 1965, pp.13-32; M.Rubin, 'Development and change in English hospitals, 1100-1500', in L.Granshaw and R.Porter (eds.), The Hospital in History, London 1989, pp.46-7, 54-6. For a comparative overview P.Horden, 'A discipline of relevance: the historiography of the later medieval hospital', SHM, 1 (1988).

<sup>41</sup> The literature on confraternities is now very vast. For an overall view see A.Vauchez, 'Les confréries au moyen age: esquisse d'un bilan historiographique', in Id. Les Laïcs au Moyen Age. Pratiques et Experiences Religieuses, Paris 1987. On Italy R.Rusconi 'Confraternite compagnie e devozioni', in Storia d'Italia, Annali 9, La Chiesa e il Potere Politico, ed. by G.Chittolini and G.Miccoli, Turin 1986. On England C.M.Baron, 'The parish fraternities of medieval London', in C.M.Baron and C.Harper-Bill (eds.), The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F.R.H.Du Boulay, Suffolk 1985.

there are important examples of some of the larger confraternities being in charge of civic welfare, and giving assistance on a regular basis to those considered to be deserving cases<sup>42</sup>. Finally, the desire to rationalise and centralise the management and financing of poor relief cannot be seen as a sixteenth-century innovation. Examples of centralisation of charitable funds in the hands of bodies comparable to the French or Belgian tables des pauvres, can be found already in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries in Northern Italy, and somewhat later in England. These bodies administered stocks of land and animals which had been gradually built up by bringing together legacies and donations. The purpose was to create a regular income to distribute to the poor belonging to the community<sup>43</sup>. An important example of centralisation (to which we will return later) was brought about by the unification of the small medieval hospitals, thus creating larger and more functional institutions to deal with the sick. This phenomenon, which is particularly well documented for the cities of Northern Italy, predates by nearly a hundred years the sixteenth-century practices of reorganisation of charity<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> To date, the Florentine case is the best known example in this regard. See C.M.De la Roncière, 'Pauvres et pauvreté à Florence au XIVE siècle', in M.Mollat (ed.), Etudes sur l'Histoire de la Pauvreté, Paris 1974, vol.II, pp.691-5, 714-22; J.Henderson, Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence: Religious Confraternities from the Middle of the Thirteenth Century to the Late Fifteenth Century (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Westfield College, University of London 1983). J.R.Banker, Death in the Community: Memorialization and Confraternities in an Italian Commune in the Late Middle Ages, Athens London 1988.

<sup>43</sup> In Italy these properties were known as "beni di Santo Spirito". P.Duparc, 'Confréries du Saint Esprit et communautés d'habitants au moyen-âge', Revue d'Histoire du Droit Français et Etranger, s.IV, XXXV, 1958; A.Erba, La Chiesa Sabauda, p.237. For the English case McIntosh, 'Local responses'.

<sup>44</sup> Nasalli Rocca, Il Diritto pp.81-89.

Even though there is now a considerable background of research into medieval poor relief, there is still a great deal of reluctance to carry through the implications of such findings and modify our understanding of early modern systems of poor relief. In the periodisation of welfare history the theory of a radical shift from medieval charity to the forms of relief adopted in the early modern period persists. Why has this thesis been so resistant?

It is possible that the idea of a profound sixteenth century reform of poor relief had been somehow created by contemporary arguments over the sixteenth century proposals dealing with the poor. Historians may have accepted those controversies at face value, believing the clamour that accompanied the anti-begging policies to be proof of their innovative nature. It is well known that during the 1520s and 1530s, towns' plans for poor relief became the object of wide debate and theological disputes. In 1531, theologians at the Sorbonne scrutinised the scheme for poor relief enacted by the city of Ypres, to check that it conformed to Christian doctrine. Vives' De Subventionem Pauperum, which was to be seen as the ideological manifesto of poor relief "reform", also attracted criticism and misgivings. It was discussed by Cellarius and Jacques De Paepe at Louvain University and elsewhere; but, on the whole, the comments were favourable and the threat to declare it heretical never materialised<sup>45</sup>. Vives had intentionally made his pamphlet doctrinally water-tight, taking "every possible precaution" (as he confided in a letter to his friend Cranevelt) to avoid linking the problem of begging in general to that of monastic begging - aware as he was of how explosive that issue could be in

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<sup>45</sup> C.Cellario, Oratio Contra Mendicitatem Pro Nova Pauperum Subventionem, Louvain 1531. On the dispute over Vives' work and other fifteenth century welfare plans see Geremek, La Pietà, pp.196-210; Martz, Poverty and Welfare, pp.22-30; Flynn, Sacred Charity, pp.94-102.

that particular period<sup>46</sup>. The polemic over measures towards begging broke out with more violence in Spain, in the dispute between the Dominican friar De Soto and the Benedictine Juan De Robles (or De Medina), in Lyon in the hostility of the Dominican inquisitor, Nicolas Morin, towards the priest Jean de Vauzelles who supported the civic plan of poor relief, and in Bruges where, as late as 1560, the Augustinian Lorenzo de Villavincencio attacked Wits' pamphlet on welfare<sup>47</sup>. However, it has to be asked what these polemics were really about, whether the violent reactions to the civic plans of relief really reflected a clash between traditional views of charity and innovative proposals, or rather had a metaphorical significance. In the turbulent climate of the early sixteenth century - created not only by Luther's attacks on religious conventionality, but also by evangelical and reformist tendencies within Catholicism itself- attitudes to begging took on the value of symbolic stands on the burning issues of the day (the patrimony and authority of the Church and the autonomy of the mendicant orders)<sup>48</sup>. Dispute over these issues was dividing the Catholic world

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<sup>46</sup> Vives was afraid he might be reported by the Franciscan Nicolas De Bureau, vicar to the Bishop of Tournai who had accused him of Lutheranism. The quotation from the letter to Cranevelt is taken from Bataillon's 'Jean Luis Vives' p.143.

<sup>47</sup> Juan de Medina, De la Orden Ou En Algunos Pueblos de Espana Se Ha Puesto En la Limosina: Para Rimedio de los Verdadores Pobres, Salamanca 1545; Domingo de Soto, Deliberacion en la Causa de los Pobres, Salamanca 1545; Lorenzo de Villavincencio, De Oeconomia Sacra Circa Pauperum Curam, Anvers 1564; G.Wits, De Continendis et Alendis Domi Pauperibus et in Ordinem Redigendis Validis Mendicantibus, Anvers 1562.

<sup>48</sup> In sixteenth century religious history the emphasis has increasingly shifted from the influence of Luther's teachings to the recognition of the role of reformist currents within Catholicism. For a survey see A.Jacobson-Schutte, 'Periodization of sixteenth century Italian religious history: the post-Cantimori paradigm shift', JMH, 61 (1989).

itself at this time. The emergence of ambivalent feeling to the mendicant orders in fact predates Luther's attack on them, and affected both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. The renewed growth of monastic radicalism, asceticism and itinerant preaching was the cause of the growing hostility. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the governments of Venice and other Italian cities were already manifesting their impatience with the number of religious orders that were springing up, and complaining about the conflicts between the various orders and about their increasing influence on local politics. They were already trying to contain the expansion of this ungovernable force. Not by chance the policy enforced later in the century by the Council of Trent aimed at confining the orders within the monasteries, and actually succeeded in imposing strict seclusion on tertiary orders and nuns, and made missions and sojourns in the outside world subject to the issuing of special permits ("licentia extra standi"). In spite of the declared intention of encouraging the monastic vocation, the Tridentine directives introduced restrictions on recruitment, aimed at containing the expansion of the orders and cooling the fervour for the evangelical ideology and absolute poverty<sup>49</sup>.

The clear formulation of secular control over poor relief implied by the civic plans in the sixteenth century, although not in itself new, also assumed alarming implications in the particular situation of the day. This was the period in which the Roman church was attempting to establish its authority over local ecclesiastical authorities and to regain control of its usurped estate. As a consequence, the conflicts between central and local Church figures, and between city or state governments and

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<sup>49</sup> G.Zarri, 'Aspetti dello sviluppo degli ordini religiosi in Italia tra '400 e '500. Studi e problemi', in P.Prodi e P.Johanek (eds.), Strutture Ecclesiastiche in Italia e Germania prima della Riforma, Bologna 1984.

the papacy became particularly acute<sup>50</sup>. In this framework, provisions taken by the cities to deal with the poor, which in the Middle Ages had been regarded simply as measures of public order and hygiene, or as famine prevention, now appeared to be questioning the extent of Church authority and jurisdiction.

There is no doubt that the innovative character brought about by the measures taken in this period to deal with the poor was notably amplified by the peculiar circumstances of the early decades of the century. The disputes that developed around provisions against begging should not be taken literally, as the result of a merely doctrinal controversy, but as an expression of the conflicts which at the time saw secular powers and the papacy, local churches and the Church of Rome, religious orders and ecclesiastical and secular authorities in conflict with each other.

#### **4. A Secularisation of Charity?**

The idea that a radical reform of welfare took place in the sixteenth century was originally formulated in the context of the belief that church institutions declined and degenerated in the late Middle Ages<sup>51</sup>. This decadence is also supposed to have affected the institutions of poor relief which were presumed to be under the control of the church. According to the established view, it was inefficiency and corruption in the administration of charity that forced the secular authorities to take action.

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<sup>50</sup> G.Chittolini, 'Stati regionali e istituzioni ecclesiastiche nell'Italia centro-settentrionale del Quattrocento', Storia d'Italia, Annali 9.

<sup>51</sup> As an example of this widespread view, see the influential work of G.Le Bras, Histoire du Droit et des Institutions de l'Eglise en Occident, vol.I, Prolégomenes, Paris 1955, pp.162-64; also J.Imbert, 'L'Eglise et l'Etat face au problème de l'assistance', in Etudes d'Histoire du Droit Canonique dédiées à G.Le Bras, T.I, Paris 1965.

Indeed, it is usually maintained that, because of a general break-down in the organisational structure of the church and moral decadence of the clergy, hospitals and other charitable institutions almost ceased to carry out the welfare tasks they had originally been set. Charities are thought to have fallen victims of voracious administrators, often belonging to the clergy, who diverted their revenues to their own orders or even for personal or family gain. Under increasing pressure from the growth of poverty, the secular forces (civic authorities or groups of leading citizens) are then said to have taken on responsibility for poor relief, removing the existing hospitals from church control and founding new institutions. This is thought to have heralded a brief period of secular control over welfare organisation, before the Council of Trent reasserted the church's charitable mission in Catholic countries, and prompted a revival of Catholic initiative in this domain and the proliferation of provisions for the poor in the Counter-Reformation age.

The image of a crisis-ridden church at the end of the medieval period was long dominant among historians<sup>52</sup>. The predominance of this view helps to explain why both Catholic and secular historians have vigorously supported the thesis of a reorganisation and secularisation of poor relief in the sixteenth century<sup>53</sup>. Only in the last twenty years has the stereotype of a crisis of religious life in the late Middle Ages been questioned. Renewed interest has also undermined the simplistic image of widespread stagnation and corruption and ended the lack of interest in poor relief activity in this period. Indeed, this very period from the late fourteenth to the beginning

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<sup>52</sup> The theme can still be found in recent literature, for instance M.Carlin, 'Medieval English Hospitals', in Granshaw and Porter (eds.), The Hospital.

<sup>53</sup> Compare, for example, the works of the secular historian Bloch and the Catholic Lallemand: Bloch, L'Assistance, pp.39-46; L.Lallemand, Histoire de la Charité, Paris 1906, vol.IV, pp.1-29.



of the sixteenth century is now seen as an age of considerable religious vitality. While it is true that ecclesiastical authorities were troubled by serious economic and organisational problems, and that the authority of the papacy, undermined by the Great Schism, lacked direction, this was also a period in which religious initiative found new expressions. The laity took on a more active role in religious life, and there was an extraordinary expansion of pious organisations (in the form of companies of penitents, confraternities and prayer groups)<sup>54</sup>. It has been said that this was the golden era for lay piety and religious activity<sup>55</sup>. But much was also happening inside the Church; at the same time as ancient orders were falling into decay, new orders were being founded in the fifteenth century, especially mendicant orders coming out of the observant movement<sup>56</sup>. So while it is important to emphasise the contribution made by the laity in the spread of religious awareness in the late Middle Ages, one should not exaggerate the gap between lay religious experience and the activity of ecclesiastical institutions. At the local level religious initiatives were often the product of an intermingling between laity and clergy, between political and religious power, which makes it difficult to distinguish clearly the sphere of the church from that of temporal authorities. One of the most useful contributions that recent developments in religious history have offered to historians of poor relief is the removal of an over-sharp distinction between secular and ecclesiastical domains.

Recent studies have been particularly concerned with demonstrating the crucial role played in this period by the

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<sup>54</sup> For an overview Prodi and Johanek (eds.), Strutture. On the confraternities G.G.Meersseman, Ordo Fraternitatis: Confraternite e Pietà dei Laici nel Medioevo, Rome 1977.

<sup>55</sup> Vauchez, Les Laics, 'Avant-propos'.

<sup>56</sup> Zarri, 'Aspetti'.

laity in leading religious life at the local level. Groups of layfolk and secular institutions encouraged and financed the establishment of new orders and the building of churches and monasteries. They controlled nominations to ecclesiastical positions and associated benefices in the locality, often right up to the level of bishop or archbishop. The links between political and ecclesiastical power were often made even closer by family ties, for the majority of the city's ecclesiastical authorities came from the local patriciate - particularly the canons who made up the influential metropolitan chapters. This allowed the most prominent families not only to consolidate their power but also to control much of the Church's property. Up until the Council of Trent (whose directives were aimed at changing the bishops into real representatives of papal policy), a bishop was often a distant figure who did not set foot in his diocese. Bishops who were active and well-versed in local politics were mainly to be found in the cities where canons still maintained their ancient rights to nominate the bishop<sup>57</sup>.

Initially, it was thought that this situation where local power was unchallenged in its leadership of a city's religious life was mainly a characteristic of those cities of Northern and Central Italy where the independent tradition of medieval communes and city-states was strongest. Recent studies however, show that symbiosis between political power and religious initiative - or the "civic religion", as it has come to be known - was not only a vestige of the period of the comuni; it received a further impulse between the late fourteenth and the early sixteenth centuries due to the weakness of the Church's

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<sup>57</sup> G.Miccoli, 'La storia religiosa', in Storia d'Italia, Part II, vol.I, Turin 1974; S.Bertelli, Il Potere Politico nello Stato-Città Medievale, Florence 1978; G.Chittolini, 'Stati'.

central authority<sup>58</sup>. In the late medieval period, religion increasingly became an aspect of local politics. Princes, powerful clans and factions, and most especially municipal governments instigated campaigns to defend Christian morals or to attack heretics and they set themselves up as the upholders of the faith and religious precepts. They guided the reform of the church through their support for observant movements, the reform of life within the religious communities, the encouragement of confraternities and the establishment of new devotional cults. The ideological purpose of these initiatives was to reassert the autonomy and unity of the "civitas", and therefore the legitimacy of the municipal authorities. But religious initiatives were also used in the struggle for influence and prestige. In the fifteenth century in particular, private interests expanded their control over rights of patronage and over appointment to the main ecclesiastical positions in parishes, abbeys and monasteries. Private religious foundations multiplied to such an extent that large religious buildings like cathedrals and convents were to be divided by the most powerful families into their personal chapels and cells<sup>59</sup>.

The increased religious awareness was also accompanied by greater interest in charitable activities. In particular there was a wave of reform of existing institutions; the composition of their administrative bodies was altered,

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<sup>58</sup> L. Donvito, 'La "religione cittadina" e le nuove prospettive sul Cinquecento religioso italiano', in RSLR, 1 (1983). On civic religion at the communal period see M. Orselli, 'Vita religiosa nella città medievale italiana tra dimensione ecclesiastica e "cristianesimo civico". Una esemplificazione', in AIIGT, VII (1981); M. Ronzani, 'La "chiesa del comune" a Pisa nel '200-300'', in G. Rossetti (ed.), Spazio, Società, Potere nell'Italia dei Comuni, Naples 1989.

<sup>59</sup> Donvito 'La religione cittadina'; Chittolini, 'Stati regionali'; G. Zarri, 'Monasteri femminili e città (sec. XV-XVIII)', in Chittolini and Miccoli (eds.), La Chiesa.

management regulations were reorganized, and funds which had originally been intended for assisting the poor, but which had fallen into private hands were recovered. One of the better known results of this religious and charitable activity was the unification of several smaller hospitals founded in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, into one larger and richer hospital (often called Ospedale Maggiore). However, this was not the only form of welfare reorganisation taking place in this period. In fifteenth-century Italy there are various examples of ancient confraternities and other sorts of charitable funds brought together in order to finance systems of outdoor relief. In Mantova, for example, revenues for the poor had already been centralised by the beginning of the century, and entrusted to a Consorzio di cittadini (whose members were appointed by the town council) which examined and assisted the poor district by district<sup>60</sup>. Scholarly attention however, has so far concentrated on the fifteenth-century hospital unification. Between the 1430s and the beginning of the following century, this phenomenon affected most of the cities of Northern Italy. The amalgamation of medieval hospitals took place in Cuneo (1437), Casale, Turin (1440), Brescia (1447), Mantova (1450), Cremona (1451), Reggio Emilia (1453), Milano, Bergamo and Lodi (all in 1459), Como and Crema (both in 1468), Piacenza, Genova (1471), Parma (1472), Ferrara (1478), Modena, Imola (1488), Novara (1482), Ravenna (1513)<sup>61</sup>. In the majority of cases it was

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<sup>60</sup> R.Navarrini and C.M.Belfanti, 'Il problema della povertà nel ducato di Mantova: aspetti istituzionali e problemi sociali (secoli XIV-XVI)', in Politi, Rosa, Della Peruta (eds.), Timore, in particular pp.125, 130-131.

<sup>61</sup> Nasalli Rocca, Il diritto Ospedaliero; A.Pastore, 'Strutture assistenziali tra chiesa e stati nell'Italia della Controriforma', in Storia d'Italia, Annali 9. On the Milan case see Leverotti's fine analysis of the struggle between various temporal and religious authorities that lead to the establishment of the Ospedale Maggiore. F.Leverotti, 'Ricerche sulle origini dell'Ospedale Maggiore di Milano', ASL, CVII (1984).

the municipal government that initiated the changes and took control of the new institution created through incorporation. The local ecclesiastical authorities often gave their full support, although on occasion the bishop could be extremely hostile. In any case, the bishop's attitude reflected his personal views, and his relationship with the local church and power groups, rather than any policy about charitable action emanating from the papacy<sup>62</sup>.

Recent research into urban religious life in the late Middle Ages thus confirms the impression that provision for the poor adopted in the sixteenth century drew on a wealth of experiences in poor relief administration accumulated over the previous two centuries. These studies also fail to support the thesis of a sixteenth century secularisation of the management of charity. Far from being the monopoly of the church, responsibility for poor relief was shared to a very considerable extent by layfolk and by secular authorities already in the late medieval period.

#### **4. Turin's "Civic Religion" in the Late Middle Ages**

The picture of civic initiative in the field of religion and charity which has been observed in some of the late medieval Italian cities in general applies also to fourteenth and fifteenth century Turin. Unfortunately, there are only very dated accounts of the city's social policy in this period: tied to the traditional "feudal" interpretation - according to which municipal power in Piedmontese towns was simply an appendage of a feudal lord or an episcopal authority - these studies show a purely anecdotal interest in the activities of civic authorities and therefore provide very incomplete, and often indirect, information. Even from these sketchy accounts however, a

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<sup>62</sup> Leverotti, 'Ricerche'.

picture of "civic religion" emerges which is very similar to that found in Italian cities which had stronger traditions of independence as medieval comuni<sup>63</sup>.

In Turin as elsewhere, therefore, there appear to be some important precedents to the 1541 municipal plan for poor relief. Certainly, this was not the first time that the city authorities had become involved in welfare matters. More than a century earlier, they had played a key role in carrying out the hospital reform, which after repeated attempts finally reached completion in 1440. This led to the incorporation of the ten hospitals situated on the city's perimeter into the hospital of Santa Maria del Duomo (later named hospital of S.Giovanni after the city's patron saint), sited in the very heart of the city, next to the cathedral. It is interesting to note, in passing, that the hospitals which were merged on this occasion originated from lay initiative: they had been founded in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by single families or groups of affluent citizens and entrusted to religious orders or, less often, to keepers appointed by the benefactors<sup>64</sup>. In

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<sup>63</sup> Unless it is stated otherwise the following pages are based on the information found in Lavriano Istoria, Semeria Storia; T.Rossi and F.Gabotto, Storia di Torino, BSSS, LXXXII (1914); Grosso and Mellano, La Controriforma.

<sup>64</sup> The hospitals involved were as follows: S.Dalmazzo run by the friars of S.Antonio; S.Biagio which was founded by four citizens in 1208 and which benefited from further private donations in 1226 and 1228 -this was run by the order of the Crociferi; S.Cristoforo founded in 1244 by the citizen Giovanni Cane and run by the Umiliati; the Maddalena founded by the Arpini family in 1196 and run by the canons of Rivalta; S.Giacomo di Stura founded in 1146 by two citizens and later enriched by new donations by Ardizzone BORGESIO and Uberto CACCIA (1214 and 1244), run by the Vallombrosani; S.Severo e S.Brigida run by the Templars and later by the knights of Jerusalem; S.Andrea run by the Benedictines; Santa Maria del Duomo reputed to have been founded by a canon of the cathedral; Santa Maria di Pozzo Strada; S.Lazzaro founded to assist lepers; S.Benedetto; S.Bernardo. See Semeria, 'Storia'; G.BORGESIO and C.FASOLA 'Le carte dell'Archivio del Duomo di Torino (904-1300) con appendice 1301-1433', BSSS, vol.CVI, 1931, pp.50-2, 65-80, 107-8, 190-1; A.Cognasso, 'Cartario

the second half of the fourteenth century, when the city council started to campaign for hospital reform, most of the religious orders had fallen into decay, the families of the original benefactors had died out and - so the municipal officials complained - the hospitals had fallen into the hands of corrupt administrators. A further strain was put on the system by a population increase which was quickly making up for the losses of the previous century and by the migration which occurred during this phase of revival<sup>65</sup>. The hospitals, which were generally very small and in a state of disrepair, had become totally ineffective. These were the arguments (very similar to those generally employed in these incorporations) that the City authorities put to the bishop, who held formal jurisdiction over the hospitals. It is not possible to reconstruct the events in detail, but it would appear that the first move was the petition from the city authorities presented to Bishop Giovanni di Rivalta in 1378, in which they offered the co-operation of their own officials in a plan to reform the hospital administration. We do not know the outcome of this initiative, but in 1385 we find another appeal to the bishop by the City Council, which again refers to the bad management of the town's hospitals. Four years later the municipality proposed that the administration of the hospital of Santa Maria del Duomo be turned over to the lay confraternity of the Battuti and its accounts be regularly checked by a committee of canons and councillors. After considerable pressure from the City, the hospital reform was finally carried out in 1440 with the

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dell'abazia di San Solutore di Torino. Appendice di carte varie relative a chiese e monasteri di Torino', Ibid. vol. XLIV, 1908, pp.299-308.

<sup>65</sup> In the plains of Piedmont there had been an 80% increase in the number of hearths between 1420 and 1450 and this trend continued in the second half of the century. The growth of Piedmontese population between 1415 and 1571 has been estimated at around 240%. R.Comba, La Popolazione del Piemonte sul Finire del Medio Evo. Ricerche di Demografia Storica, Turin 1977, pp.76-92.

suppression of ten of the twelve existing hospitals. Their incomes were used to increase the funding of the hospital of Santa Maria (soon renamed hospital of S.Giovanni), which became the only institution for the sick continuing to operate within the city walls (outside the walls the hospital of S.Lazzaro continued shortly to be run for skin diseases).

Lay involvement in welfare administration thus occurred well before the sixteenth century. It was not the 1541 agreement between the canons and the councillors on the administration of the hospital of S.Giovanni that led to the introduction of the laity into an area previously dominated by the clergy. The municipal authorities had had a role in the reorganisation of the city's welfare system in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and it well may be that they already played an active part in the administration of the two hospitals which remained after the amalgamation reform. It is significant for instance that in the message sent to the bishop thanking him for his cooperation in the reorganisation of the hospitals, the City defined itself as the 'patron' of the two resulting hospitals. In any case, the Council certainly controlled the management of charity on other occasions. In periods of famine, for example, it was the municipality which took emergency measures, approving and administering special provisions for the poor. Thus in 1375 the Council allocated 200 florins to finance a daily distribution of bread and wine to the poor. It also decreed that the confraternities should be obliged by the City officials to contribute to the scheme, as did the bishop who supplied money and grain.

It appears in any case difficult to make a clear distinction between the lay and the ecclesiastical administration of poor relief, given the markedly civic nature of the local church. The canons who administered the city hospital were mainly members of the leading patrician families, as in many cases was the bishop who formally held jurisdiction over the hospitals. Throughout the fifteenth



century and for part of the sixteenth, the city Chapter conserved the right to nominate the bishop. We therefore find in Turin the classic situation of a shared identity between the local church and the patriciate, which seems to have been a typical feature of the late medieval city. This becomes particularly clear in the period between 1483 and 1515, in which for three generations the diocesan seat was held by the Della Rovere family, one of the four most prominent families in the city<sup>66</sup>. This symbiosis between secular and ecclesiastical power was partly upset in the years 1515-1563 when the archbishops were nominated by the pope. And in fact conflicts arose in this period between the absentee archbishops, who were principally interested in protecting and increasing their own revenues, and a City Council deeply involved in religious and welfare matters. The diocesan authority however made itself heard only when money was involved: in 1550 for example, archbishop Cesare Cibo refused to contribute towards the expenses incurred when the City Council invited preachers to give sermons against heresy in the city's churches. This conflict, like the refusal to finance the charitable activity of the hospital a few years later, ended in a judgement that obliged Cibo to pay<sup>67</sup>. Obviously the pope's appointees were not in the least interested in influencing religious life at the local level - a task which in any case was virtually impossible due to the number of benefices and dioceses that they had to govern - and control remained firmly in the hands of the municipality. In some cases, they would happily delegate the running of the diocese to a suffragan fully conversant with the city's politics, reproducing in this way the traditional pattern of civic

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<sup>66</sup> The outstanding position of the four families, which included the Della Rovere, found symbolic recognition in the privilege to carry the four poles that supported the canopy under which the consecrated host was kept during processions and major public ceremonies.

<sup>67</sup> Semeria, Storia, p.283.

religion<sup>68</sup>.

The sermons against heresy mentioned above, suggest that, in a number of domains, secular responsibility over religious matters extended further than that of the ecclesiastical authority. First of all, it appears that the confraternities were under the control of the City Council: this supervised the employment of their revenues and could force them to make special payments to the poor in times of food shortage. It was the municipal authority and not the archbishop that had taken control of the incomes of those extinct confraternities, which in 1541 the councillors were to incorporate in the hospital of S.Giovanni. More generally, the Council carried out the role of guardian of the faith and of religious orthodoxy much more vigorously than the church authorities. It was the City Council that passed laws in 1421 to ensure that Sundays and religious holidays were respected, banning markets, the opening of shops, the baking of bread and grinding of corn on those days. The Council encouraged the introduction into the city of new religious orders, by providing them with a church and monastery or mediating with the bishop in order to obtain his protection<sup>69</sup>; and it repeatedly took up the struggle against heresy, not just by paying for preachers to campaign against heretics but also, as in 1561, by expelling priests who showed sympathy for heretical positions. In the fifteenth century, the influence of the municipal authorities on the religious life of the city can

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<sup>68</sup> For example, another Della Rovere was appointed by archbishop Innocenzo Cibo (uncle of Cesare) as his suffragan in the administration of the diocese. Cibo (who was the pope's nephew) was invested with various bishoprics and archbishoprics at the same time. In the 30 years that he was archbishop of Turin (1520-49) he never resided in the diocese.

<sup>69</sup> As in the case of the Capuchin friars for whom the city built the monastery of S.Maria del Monte in 1538, or that of the Minori Osservanti who were given the parish of S.Tommaso following the intercession of the council in 1542.

also be seen in the successful introduction of the cult of Corpus Domini which in a very short time was transformed into a civic cult and the religious symbol of the city's unity and of municipal power<sup>70</sup>. From 1451, following the miracle of the host that had occurred on the field of battle between the French and the Piedmontese, the cult of the Holy Sacrament became the principal object of the citizen's worship, and the annual procession of Corpus Domini the most important public event in the city's calendar. The councillors erected a chapel in the cathedral which they looked after very carefully, and turned into the most frequently used place of worship and the only one where the host was always present. In 1521 the council built a separate church dedicated to the Corpus Domini: this also functioned as the meeting place of the fraternity of the same name which became the religious association of the elites involved in urban government.

The information we have on this period, although patchy, clearly demonstrates the strength of Turin's municipal institutions in the late Middle Ages and the significant role that the Council played in directing and governing religious and charitable activities in the city. The welfare plan that was supported by the Council in 1541 - and which was the starting point for this chapter - did not represent a turning point in the management of poor relief, but just one more expression of the municipal tradition of setting the tone for the city's social policies. When the House of Savoy regained its sovereignty over the territory in the mid-sixteenth century, it found a capital with a long tradition of self-government - a tradition which, far from having been subdued by French rule, may even have been

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<sup>70</sup> On the growth of the cult of the Corpus Domini in fifteenth century Italy and its characteristics of civic devotion see Rusconi, 'Confraternite', p.479 on.

reinforced during the thirty years of foreign occupation<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> This is the thesis put forward by H.J.Koenigsberger, 'The Parliament of Piedmont during the Renaissance, 1450-1560', in his Essays in Early Modern European History, Ithaca New York 1971, pp.70-71.

## CHAPTER II. CIVIC CHARITY IN THE AGE OF STATE FORMATION

### 1. The Growth of Municipal Poor Relief

Even those who have recognised the vitality of the local charity systems which developed in late medieval towns hold that municipal control over poor relief ended with the sixteenth century. It is generally assumed that the formation of nation states had dire consequences for municipal autonomy. Allegedly, civic power (of which the organization of local welfare was a manifestation) went into decline, as did the social and communal dimension which found expression in the intense devotional and charitable activities typical of Italian cities in the fifteenth century. The cities then lost control of poor relief which increasingly became the responsibility of central government<sup>1</sup>. In reality, very little is known of what became of municipal systems of relief in the early modern period. Despite the existence of scattered evidence suggesting that municipal leadership over poor relief often lasted well beyond the sixteenth century, and even expanded in the following periods<sup>2</sup>, the fate of civic welfare systems has not been a focus of interest.

The study of sixteenth century town schemes for poor relief has largely been motivated by a desire to test the influence of the Reformation on attitudes to the poor; hence investigation has been circumscribed to the decades most affected by the spread of Protestantism, and has shown less concern for the subsequent evolution of local systems

<sup>1</sup> Donvito, 'La "religione cittadina"'.

<sup>2</sup> Fosseyeux, 'La taxe', p. 411-2, 424; J. Imbert, 'La bourse des pauvres d'Aire-sur-la Lys à la fin de l'Ancien Regime', Revue du Nord, XXXIV, 1952.

of charity<sup>3</sup>. On the other hand, studies of poor relief in a later period had a completely different focus, for they have concentrated heavily on the emergence of government schemes for the internment of the poor (of the type that has received the clearest formulation in the project for the French hospitaux généraux), i.e. on the development of forms of intervention which centred on institutions. As it clearly appears in the case of studies on Italy, interest has focused on only one aspect of the policy towards the poor of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - on the hospitals for beggars which began to be established across the country<sup>4</sup>. Locally managed forms of poor and medical relief, often provided outside the hospital, have been largely neglected. This approach reflects the prevailing view of the state as an agency that suffocated previous power centres. As a consequence of this view, attention has concentrated on the policies of central government while overlooking the activities of civic administrations in the early modern period.

In this chapter I shall examine the changing patterns of the Turin system of assistance to the poor in the period between the restoration of the House of Savoy (in 1563 in the wake of the French occupation) and the emergence, in the mid-seventeenth century, of a welfare policy more heavily centred on institutions. I wish to focus, in other words, on the decades usually neglected by studies of poor relief. Analysis of this period produces several surprises in relation to the established view. First of all, it suggests that the consolidation of central power did not

<sup>3</sup> Kingdon, 'Social welfare'; Pullan, 'Catholics'; Davis, 'Poor relief'; Jutte, 'Poor relief'; Martz Poverty and Welfare.

<sup>4</sup> B. Geremek, 'Renfermement des pauvres en Italie (XIV-XVIIe siècle). Remarques préliminaires', in Mélanges en l'Honneur de Fernand Braudel. Histoire Economique et Sociale du Monde Méditerranéen 1450-1650, vol. I, Toulouse 1973 and the studies surveyed in Rosa, 'Chiesa e assistenza', and Pullan, 'Support and redeem'.

bring a decline, but rather an expansion, of the welfare system administered by the municipality. Secondly, it shows that this policy of expansion and improvement aimed almost entirely at the growth of outdoor provision for the poor and sick, whereas municipal investment in institutionally-based care and aid was very limited. For nearly a century into the first phase of state-formation, the welfare system operating in the town would remain municipally-run, sustained by a strong civic ideology and characterised by non-institutional provision.

For decades after its reinstatement, the ducal government did not interfere in local social policy. Indeed, the City Council even strengthened its direct control over the organization of poor relief and medical care in this period. Up to the late 1560s, poor relief was still centred on the hospital of S.Giovanni, and managed by the governors along the guidelines established during the French occupation, and laid down in 1541. However, over the following couple of decades, responsibility for the welfare of the poor was gradually removed from the (already largely municipally controlled) hospital to become more directly one of the tasks of the local authorities. As the City Council took over full control, resources for poor relief and the care of the sick, expanded considerably. New services were created - such as a system of outdoor medical relief, which provided treatment at home and free medicines for those who lacked the means to obtain them. This system was built up between 1569 and 1587 and included a doctor, a surgeon and an apothecary 'for the poor'. At the same time, the health and welfare system underwent a major administrative reorganisation and was divided into a large number of specially created departments subject to the management of specific officials. Many new positions were created for this purpose, and entrusted either to salaried officials or to City councillors. From 1568 a Cavaliere di virtù was hired, with the task of expelling from the city all beggars who did not qualify for assistance; for this

purpose he was aided by a number of constables<sup>5</sup>. The position was not permanent, but was frequently renewed in conjunction with orders issued to keep beggars away. A few years later, the census and classification of the poor - which up till then had always been carried out by the governors of the S. Giovanni hospital - also passed into the hands of City officials. Initially this task was entrusted to the Conservatori di sanità, Council officials created in 1577 with the principal aim of preventing and fighting epidemics, particularly the plague. Later (in 1586) the task of keeping records on all the poor living within a particular cantone (block) shifted to the City councillors appointed to the new office of Cantoniere, each Cantoniere carrying out the census for the cantone assigned to him<sup>6</sup>. The municipal authority also extended its control over the management of foundlings who, after being brought to the hospital, were sent to wet nurses outside the city. The Council imposed stricter organisation in this field, and arranged for supervision by the Conservatori degli esposti. This office, created in 1585, was also taken on by city councillors, who kept the accounts for wet-nursing, and visited the villages and towns where the wet-nurses lived to check for any abuses that might occur<sup>7</sup>.

At the same time, the Council reorganized administration of those measures that dealt more directly with public health. This activity was undoubtedly spurred on by the return of the plague to almost the entire Italian peninsula after fifty years of partial respite in which it had been restricted to a few localities (Turin's last serious outbreak had been in 1523). In 1577, when the news arrived that the plague had spread to neighbouring regions, it was

<sup>5</sup> D., T. XIII, p. 248, Lettere di Sua Altezza colle quali nomina un cavaliere di virtù e polizia con autorità di scacciarne gli oziosi mendicanti, 5.4.1568.

<sup>6</sup> Ord., 21.8.1577, 10.9.1586. In 1592, there were 52 Cantonieri, ibid. 7.6.1592.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 14.11.1585.



decided - as was usually done in these circumstances - to appoint a Visitatore dei cadaveri (a corpse inspector) who looked into any suspicious deaths. But on this occasion the threat of the plague also led to the creation of a health board - made up of Conservatori di sanità - which was to become a permanent body dealing with routine provisions for sanitation even in normal times. The number of Conservatori (who were once again City councillors) sitting on this board varied from five in normal times to twenty-five during epidemics. Although their duties in normal times are poorly documented, it seems that a series of public health measures concerning slaughter-houses, street-cleaning, rubbish removal, drains, the control of those who might carry infectious disease, etc. were adopted in this period and that they remained in force after the plague had passed. For example, a system of rubbish collection was organised between 1584 and 1588, and a new official paid by the City, the Soprastante alle strade (a streets' supervisor), was placed in charge of workmen who removed the rubbish on large carts. This official also had the duty of enforcing the municipal regulation requiring each household to keep its own stretch of street clean. Households were required to pay a tax to maintain the service, based on the amount of rubbish they produced, and set by the City authorities<sup>8</sup>.

While it has been mainly anti-plague legislation which has interested, and fascinated, historians, it should be realized that these years were also marked by a growing concern for wider questions of public health. Another of the tasks of the Conservatori was to combat the spread of syphilis. On various occasions in the sixteenth century the City engaged a Visitatore delle meretrici, a surgeon who was supposed to identify those prostitutes who had been infected with the "French" disease, and report them to the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 8.3.1584, 22.2.1588, 21.9.1588, 29.1.1589.

Cavaliere di virtù who would then see to their expulsion<sup>9</sup>. The inspections and expulsions of prostitutes were applied with increased vigour whenever it was felt there was any danger of plague, but they were also enforced in other times, reflecting the concern over the harm thought to be caused by these women who 'infected the youth and wrought their perdition', leaving many 'crippled' and forcing the City to pay for their treatment in the hospital<sup>10</sup>. The scale of this problem is also attested by other sources: from a petition presented to the Council by the hospital governors in 1598, in which permission was requested to sell property in order to construct a larger building, we learn that most of the patients in the institution were suffering from "French" disease<sup>11</sup>.

The period from 1568 to 1588 were thus crucial years in Turin for the emergence of a body of civic legislation concerning public health, welfare and public order. This set of provisions was formally set down in the Ordini politici which were first published in 1573, and republished on several successive occasions with minor amendments<sup>12</sup>. Even though we cannot rule out the idea that similar measures had to some extent been experimented by the local government in the preceding period, there can be little doubt that they were considerably expanded and rationalised in the second half of the sixteenth century. The particular form this expansion took also deserves attention since it was not primarily a matter of institutionalization or internment of the sick and poor. The city's hospital did undergo some expansion in these

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 21.8.1577, 29.9.1591, 1.3.1602; ACT, C.S. 4834, 16.8.1588.

<sup>10</sup> D., T. XII, p. 248, 5.4.1568.

<sup>11</sup> Ord. 20.4.1598.

<sup>12</sup> D., T.XI, pp.1173-75 and 1104. In 1569 and 1571 there is already mention of a set of Ordini Politici but they have not been preserved. Ibid.p.1099.

decades, and in fact moved twice to larger premises between the 1560s and the 1590s; but its size remained modest throughout the period (it was able to house some twenty patients by 1601) and its services were largely directed to a rather elite clientele, as we will see<sup>13</sup>. Its impact on the needs of the poor was completely marginal if compared with the amount of medical service provided by the municipal system of outdoor medical relief, which constantly expanded from the 1580s on. Similarly, policy towards beggars and the indigent - which underwent a good deal of experimentation in these decades in response to outbreaks of dearth - did not involve any plan for confinement, but was based on distribution of bread and money and on the monitoring of the poor in their houses or in the streets.

The case of Turin thus suggests that the classic image of continental systems of charity providing a highly institutional type of relief, in contrast with the community-based care provided by the English Poor Laws requires qualification, at least with regard to the early phase of the early modern period. The importance of forms of outdoor relief has probably been largely underestimated as a result of the scant attention paid to the activities of local agencies of charity. The existence of municipal doctors for the poor, for instance, has been documented also in other Italian and European cities in the late Middle Ages. Historians, however, insist on the temporary and marginal nature of this service, which supposedly died out with the growth of the centralised state and the weakening of local governments at the turn of the sixteenth century<sup>14</sup>. In the next three sections, I will discuss the characteristics of this non-institutional system of

<sup>13</sup> In 1601 there were twelve male patients (Ord., 19.12.1601); in 1609, 10 beds for female patients (AOSG, Cat.2, Cl.5, Inventari 1609-1797).

<sup>14</sup> A.W.Russell (ed.), The Town and State Physician from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, Wolfenbuttel 1981.

charity, focusing on three areas of activity: the management of the emergency situations created by the plague; the provision taken to deal with dearth; and the organization of poor relief and sick care in 'normal times'. In the remaining two sections (5 and 6) I will discuss the dynamics behind the growth of the municipal welfare system. Traditional explanations which see intervention as a response to conjunctural factors (growth of population, dearth, epidemics) are largely unsatisfactory. For instance, the chronology and geography with which anti-plague measures were adopted are largely inconsistent with the chronology and geography of the spread of the disease itself. Clearly many communities were not able to enforce anti-plague legislation, despite the fact that the main principles of protection had been well known since the late fourteenth century. As we shall see later, the enforcement of emergency provisions to cope with the event of plague or dearth, and more generally the establishment of regular welfare schemes, required access to large-scale financial resources and the development of a complex bureaucratic apparatus that not many communities could boast. Moreover the influence of the ideological climate should not be underrated. This kind of municipal project relied mainly on the generous support of the citizenry which had to be mobilised to provide the necessary financial contributions; charity thus benefited substantially from the growth of a rhetoric which celebrated the values of self-government and civic obligation contained in the idea of a commonwealth. So the growth of civic measures in the field of welfare and public health cannot be considered in isolation from the political and ideological context in which this took place. In my analysis of the Turin case, I will stress the importance of this relationship, and show that the second half of the sixteenth century was also marked by the expansion of the municipal authorities' fiscal powers and administrative autonomy, and by the development of a civic identity which

was fostered by the Council as a means of counteracting the rival power of the Duke.

## 2. Responses to the Plague

The emergence of regulations designed to limit the spread of the plague and minimise the damage where it had already occurred is generally attributed to central government initiative. Italy is considered to have been at the forefront of this development, and the measures taken by the Visconti in Milan, by the Venetian state and by the Grand Duke of Tuscany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are considered prime examples<sup>15</sup>. In the northern Italian states a centrally co-ordinated organisation of local boards concerned with public health under the direction of a Magistrato di Sanità situated in the capital is usually given the credit for the early emergence of anti-plague measures. This corpus of regulations is therefore perceived as an administrative victory and a demonstration of the efficiency and advanced centralism of the small Italian states<sup>16</sup>. In this framework of interpretation, the Italian case thus appears similar to that of England, as in both cases provisions against the plague are supposed to have spread "from centre to periphery", rather than originating from local experiments - although this process occurred much later in England. In France and Spain in contrast, policy towards the plague is thought to have emerged from initiatives taken by

<sup>15</sup> On the chronology of these measures and the events leading up to them, see: R. Palmer, The Control of the Plague in Venice and Italy 1348-1600, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Kent University, 1978; A.Carmichael, 'Plague legislation in the Italian Renaissance', BHM, 57 (1983), and 'Contagion therapy and contagion practice in 15th century Milan', Renaissance Quarterly, 2 (1991).

<sup>16</sup> Cipolla, Public Health and the Medical Profession in the Renaissance, Cambridge 1976.

individual cities, and central government health boards only appeared in the seventeenth century<sup>17</sup>.

Piedmont does not conform to this characterisation of the Italian model since in Turin and other Piedmontese cities and towns measures against the plague were developed and put into practice by local authorities<sup>18</sup>. By the fifteenth century, some communities had already adopted provisions which were similar to (albeit less sophisticated than) those enforced in the second half of the sixteenth century<sup>19</sup>. Local experimentation in anti-plague policy thus existed more than a century before central government took any interest in public health questions; for, the central office of the Magistrato di Sanità was not created until 1576. In any case, even the constitution of this body did not bring about a great deal of change. The activities of this office (whose duties, significantly enough, were not formally defined until 1723) appear to have been restricted to the issuing of orders confirming and systemizing local authority decisions and the penalties for offenders; the Magistrato did not enact any legislation on its own or take independent initiatives. Its role seems to have been that of giving greater legitimacy to the

<sup>17</sup> On the English case, see: P. Slack, The Impact of the Plague in Tudor and Stuart England, Oxford 1985, in particular p. 200; on France and the rest of Europe, see: J.-N. Biraben, Les Hommes et la Peste, Paris 1975, Vol. II, p. 106, 138-43.

<sup>18</sup> For examples of communities only a few miles from Turin, see: M. Abrate, Popolazione e Peste del 1630 a Carmagnola, Turin 1972, and T.M.Caffaratto, Il flagello Nero, Saluzzo 1967 (which deals with the situation in Moncalieri).

<sup>19</sup> The practice of checking where travellers have come from, and which territories they had come through already existed in the fifteenth century, but the system was based purely on the sworn statements of those being questioned. Moreover, checks were restricted to the movement of people, and still did not cover the movement of property and goods. Cf. I. Naso, Medici e Strutture Sanitarie nella Società Tardo-Medievale. Il Piemonte dei Secoli XIV-XV, Milan 1982, pp. 59-72.

regulations adopted locally to deal with the plague, by putting the Duke's authority and his more extensive legal powers at the disposal of the City's public health administration.

Probably the most important contribution that the Magistrato di Sanità made was its monitoring of the areas afflicted by the plague. It was naturally much better placed than the City to carry out this activity because of the information it received through the state diplomatic network. The fact that in the 1570s and 1580s the region avoided the plague that broke out with such virulence in other parts of Italy and in neighbouring Savoy, must also have been due to the activities of the newly created Magistrato di Sanità -which on several occasions banned all movement between Piedmont and infected territories<sup>20</sup>. However, all other aspects of the struggle against disease were in the hands of the City authorities.

As I have already mentioned, the office of Conservatore di sanità was created in 1577, when the plague was raging in Savoy. In reality, on that particular occasion, Piedmont avoided the plague, and the Conservatori only had to take preventive measures, although the region remained in a state of alert for two years. They had a much more active role between 1596 and 1598, and again in 1629 and 1631, years in which there were particularly severe outbreaks in the capital. Under their direction, all the measures were adopted which were by then typical of the methods used by Italian cities to fight the plague. The complexity the Conservatori's tasks assumed is reflected in

<sup>20</sup> Sicily, Calabria, Venice and its mainland territories, Milan and many other cities in the Po Valley, Trento and the Tyrol were banned on 26.8.1576; the ban was extended to various regions in Italy and the Near East, to Asti and surrounding area, Savoy, Lyon and surrounding area, Auvergne, Languedoc, Provence, Cévennes and Alès on 11.8.1579. Lièges, Namur and other Flemish cities were also included on 19.8.1579. The Dominion of Genoa was banned in 1580, Savoy in 1585, and Ivrea and all the towns on the other side of the River Orco in 1589. D., T. X, pp. 254-273.

the amount of administrative documentation they produced. For the two-year period 1598-99, in particular, this documentation is so rich that it allows us to follow step by step the measures adopted by both the municipal and ducal authorities<sup>21</sup>. Obviously there was a wide gap between the ideal situation envisaged by these provisions and what really went on, between the regulations on paper and their implementation. If one wants a description of the reality of city life in time of plague one should go to a different type of source<sup>22</sup>. In this section however my concern is not with lay attitudes to the plague but precisely with those administrative responses which, in the last few years, have provided the focus for debate about the disappearance of the plague. The measures adopted by the authorities to fight the disease have been seen as evidence for the thesis that it was human intervention rather than biological transformations which played the central role in the defeat of the plague. Historians have stressed the rational, functional aspect of public health provisions which centred around the principle of isolation and quarantine. Usually, however, reference to these measures has remained very vague. Historians' accounts do not describe what these consisted of, in practice, nor do they explain the administrative and financial burden they implied, or the repercussions they had on citizens' lives. There is no mention, for instance, of the long disinfection phase envisaged by anti-plague regulations, which endlessly protracted the state of emergency well after the infection had disappeared. It may be useful therefore to provide a detailed chronicle of the measures adopted day by day by the authorities in a plague situation. This account might allow a more balanced picture to be drawn in which the

<sup>21</sup> Caffaratto, Il Flagello. Unless otherwise stated, I refer to this work for archival references for the documents used in the following pages.

<sup>22</sup> Of the kind, for instance, employed by G. Calvi in her Histories of a Plague Year, Chicago 1989.



costs as well as the benefits of anti-plague legislation are assessed. For it may be that the purely positive evaluation of public health measures is based on an incomplete picture. Besides the obvious beneficial impact of measures aimed at isolating the infection, the classic anti-plague regulations included a number of provisions which may have created more problems than they solved.

The action taken in Turin can be clearly divided into three phases, in each of which different types of provisions were implemented: a prevention period, one of direct confrontation with the epidemic, and finally one of disinfection.

In Turin, as elsewhere, preventive measures were introduced very early on. In May of 1596, after being informed of an outbreak of plague in Savoy, the City appointed an official to check that those coming to the town had certificates of health, and that they did not come from a banned area. The state of alert lasted all through 1597<sup>23</sup>. In April 1598, a decree issued by the Magistrato tightened up the regulations concerning contacts with Savoy, by ordering surveillance of the Alpine passes and prohibiting the use of minor or roundabout routes to evade these road-blocks. There was considerable concern that the infection would be brought back by soldiers returning from Savoy, after the Treaty of Vervins (2 May 1598) had brought about a temporary pause in the hostilities with France. A further order of the Magistrato therefore requested all communities to put soldiers returning home in quarantine for twenty days<sup>24</sup>.

On 26 May, even though the danger of the plague was still distant, the City proceeded to nominate ten special deputies to deal with the risk of epidemic; these were supposed to co-ordinate the activities of the Conservatori di sanità and the Cantonieri if outbreaks should take

<sup>23</sup> Ord., 5.8.1596, 19.7.1597 and 10.9.1597.

<sup>24</sup> D., T. X, p. 285, 16.5.1598.

place. It was not until July that deaths possibly due to the plague occurred in towns close to Turin. At this point the City immediately sent two doctors from the College of Physicians to ascertain whether the plague really was the cause of death, and two days later, following confirmation, the Magistrato banned all contact with those towns<sup>25</sup>.

The City authorities immediately took precautions to fight the plague when it made its appearance. Even though the first cases did not appear in the city until the middle of September, the two intervening months saw the introduction of a whole series of measures to set up and equip the organisation which was to defend the city from the disease<sup>26</sup>. Surveillance at the city gates was tightened up: one Conservatore di sanità took responsibility for each gate, with the assistance of two subordinates and two gatekeepers. All except a few roads leading to the town were blocked with tree trunks and other barricades. To further ensure that nobody attempted to enter the city by any unauthorised route, citizens were organised into foot patrols while horsemen scoured the boundary roads.

A series of repressive measures were taken against those groups and activities that were considered to spread the plague, and these measures were later confirmed by decrees from the Magistrato. Begging was prohibited and some of the beggars were sent back to their home towns, while others were confined to places outside the city where they were maintained at the expense of the Council. A Chirurgo delle meretrici (a 'prostitutes' surgeon') was appointed to keep

<sup>25</sup> Ord., 26.7.1598.

<sup>26</sup> The sense of urgency was maintained by the appearance of further cases in the neighbouring towns and indeed one case on the city boundaries. The authorities reacted with drastic measures to this last case: the furniture was burnt, the cats and dogs killed and the eight people living in the house were put in quarantine. Ord., 26.8.98.

a register in alphabetical order of all prostitutes, to visit them every eight or fifteen days, and to report the development of any suspicious symptoms. All public gatherings were cancelled, including those for religious purposes. All activities involving contact with livestock, meat or skins (dyeing, tanning, slaughtering and the sale of meat) were either banned or moved outside the city, as they were considered responsible for infecting the air with 'putrid fumes'. An official was appointed to remove from the city all dead cats and dogs found in the street<sup>27</sup>.

Lastly, a complex system of controls was set in motion to monitor any changes in the health of the population, and prevent the hiding of anybody suspected of plague. On 15 August, the Council took on a doctor and a surgeon to visit any of the poor suspected of having contracted the disease<sup>28</sup>. Controls were also imposed on public and private medical practitioners in the attempt to impede collusion between doctors and patients. All doctors practising within the city, even if private, were obliged to send a written report to the City authorities on the state of health of all their patients. Ten doctors appointed by the City, working in pairs, were required to see the patients of these private doctors, every two weeks, 'in order that no cases of plague be incorrectly diagnosed or kept secret'. At the same time the Cantonieri were instructed to visit the entire population of their block (cantone) every Monday and Thursday, and to hand over all those found to be ill. Failure to do so would incur a fine of twenty-five scudi. Even civic officials were not immune from suspicion and were subjected to the same control. In September, the Magistrato di Sanità extended to the entire

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 28.7.1598, 29.7.1598, 3.8.1598 and 4.8.1598.

<sup>28</sup> Ord., 15.8.1598, Contratto con Pasquasio Dobbessio e Nicola Auxilio. Those men also undertook to continue their duties even if the city became infected with the plague; in these circumstances their salaries were to be increased by a factor of five (from ten to fifty scudi).

citizenry the obligation to notify any cases of illness, under the threat of various punishments - which could include the death penalty in cases where the sufferer had clear physical signs of the plague<sup>29</sup>.

At the same time, the Council was stockpiling corn, wine and medicines, in case the gates had to be shut and the city sealed off from the outside world. It recruited monatti - the people responsible for transporting the dead and those suffering from plague, and for dealing with infected houses and property. Carts were provided for this work. The hospital of San Lazzaro (originally for lepers) was made ready to receive patients infected with the disease.

Even before the plague actually reached Turin, therefore, the local government put considerable financial and organizational resources into the lengthy preventive measures that they considered necessary to protect the city. Once the disease had actually broken out, the councillors' workload and local expenditure increased dramatically.

The plague started in Turin in mid September, with the death of two Franciscan friars. This was the first occasion in which quarantine was required: the remaining friars were isolated in their monastery for twenty-two days. As no more cases were reported during this period, the city was declared free from the plague on 5 October. But after another case had been discovered on 2 November, the Magistrato wrote to the other communities in Piedmont informing them that Turin was still in danger. At this point, the City started to prepare special quarantine facilities. Temporary shelters ('huts') were constructed outside the town walls for those who were to be placed in quarantine, and the generous diet that the council was to supply daily was agreed upon. This consisted of 'two and a half pounds of bread, one jug of wine, three ounces of

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 9.9.1598, 12.9.1598 and 20.9.1598.

cheese, and eight ounces of meat on days that meat is allowed'. In November, the plague broke out with full force. 'For the general good', all government activity was transferred to other Piedmontese towns not affected by the plague. All state officials left by the same road that had been taken by the Duke and his court some time before<sup>30</sup>. All those citizens who had relations and economic means, lost no time in leaving the city. The City authorities then became completely absorbed by the management of anti-plague operations.

At this stage, most of the measures aimed at separating the sick from those who had been in contact with them, and segregating these two latter categories from the completely healthy. Any contact between these three groups was prohibited. The sick were sent to pest-houses outside the city walls. The "suspect cases" (those who had been in contact with the sick or had uncertain symptoms) were sent to the quarantine camps, if poor; while the better off were allowed to stay at home for the period required to prove their state of health, as long as they could undertake to pay for their own maintenance, medical treatment and the guard that was placed on their house. These operations imposed a massive extra burden of administration on the Council. The special records which had to be kept were, by themselves, a considerable burden for the City officials. They were expected to keep a register of all the sick and suspect cases, and keep track of the latter group's health, releasing them on termination of the quarantine or transferring them to the pest-houses. They were supposed to register the dead and arrange for their burial, and required to seal infected houses and draw up an inventory of their contents. They had to find notaries for those wishing to leave a will, and to retain a copy in order to deal with any future claims of inheritance. They also had to keep records of citizens able to pay for their

<sup>30</sup> D., T. X, p. 287, 8.11.1599.

quarantine, and to collect the payments from them<sup>31</sup>.

These provisions were not only complex, but also extremely expensive. The City was obliged to take on a vast number of extra employees: doctors, monatti, gravediggers, guards and staff for the pest-houses. Their wages were a notable drain on the council budget. Thirty-seven people, for example, were employed in the two quarantine camps outside the city, including workmen, butchers, bakers, water-carriers, wine-carriers, horse-drivers, porters, attendants and clerks. The monatti and their families numbered about three hundred people<sup>32</sup>. In addition, the Council was obliged to feed thousands of people - not only the sick and those in quarantine, but also the increasing numbers of destitute. For the isolation of the city, which prohibited all movement of people and goods, had also brought all commercial and manufacturing activity to a standstill. The misery of the plague was compounded by the poverty resulting from unemployment, which drastically undermined living conditions and considerably reduced the City's financial resources. The municipal authority in fact had to maintain nearly all those who had stayed in the town (presumably the poorer citizens). We can get some idea of the vast numbers involved from the fact that on 4 January, after only two months of widespread plague, the City was complaining of quarantine costs in excess of 26,000 ducatonì (nearly twice the City's entire annual income)<sup>33</sup>. It was then decided to reduce the quantity and quality of the food distributed. Wine was restricted to three days a week. By February, it was no longer possible to keep to the

<sup>31</sup> See Istruzione da osservarsi dal controllor deputato per tutti quelli che saranno in quarantena published in Caffaratto, Il Flagello, pp. 53-57.

<sup>32</sup> See Ord., 19.7.1599; D., T. X, p. 325, 23.11.1599.

<sup>33</sup> Information concerning the city budget has been taken from Chiaudano, 'La finanza del comune di Torino ai tempi di Carlo Emanuele I', Torino Rassegna Mensile, 1930, p. 915.

rules that stipulated white bread for the sick and 'pane secondo' (bread of lower quality) for those in quarantine, since there were already complaints about unfair distribution. It was therefore decided to distribute only one kind of bread, made of a mixture of white and brown flour. The central government also intervened in this emergency, and the Magistrato was authorized to call upon other parts of the territory to supply food and other provisions, which were to be left at the gates of the capital. However the order, in spite of being repeated twice, was widely ignored.

For a few months, the epidemic retreated and, with perhaps excessive haste the emergency regulations were relaxed. But as the weather became hotter, the plague returned with even greater severity. The city authorities were not caught completely unawares, however. By the late spring, they had recalled all the special deputies and these had set up the whole organizational structure again. The Magistrato once again gave the City his full support, and re-published the regulations in force a few months before<sup>34</sup>. However, by July when the plague reached its apex, all this complex organisation for combatting the plague was falling apart. Only one doctor continued to practice, in spite of the severe penalties which had been threatened against those who ignored instructions not to leave the city<sup>35</sup>. By this time, in any case, nearly all the councillors had either fled or died, and not enough remained to make up a quorum<sup>36</sup>. The Duke had to authorise the mayors to carry motions with only two councillors present, but on 21 July the mayors themselves also

<sup>34</sup> D., T. X, p. 292-94. The order of 12.5.1599 brought back into force those of 12.9.1598 and 20.9.1598.

<sup>35</sup> Apart from the punishment, the order of the Magistrato threatened that doctors suspected of being infected with the plague would not be segregated or put in quarantine. Ibid., p. 305, 16.6.1599.

<sup>36</sup> Ord., 1.7.1599.

abandoned the city. Due to deaths and defections, Turin was left for forty days without a proper government, and in a state of chaos. This pattern was fairly typical, and is to be found again in the 1630 plague. In that year, according to the memoirs of one of the few officials who did stay in the city, any kind of control over the epidemic ceased. The rule of law lapsed in the absence of the Magistrato di Sanità, and criminals, extortionate doctors and other unscrupulous elements took over the city. The citizens were at the mercy of the greed of the monatti, even for such essential services as the removal of bodies from the street. The few doctors that stayed in the city, abandoned the pest-houses in order 'to vend their services to the highest bidder'. Even the pest-houses were only accessible to those who could bribe the keeper 'with money, jewellery, house-keys, legacies, donations or trusts'<sup>37</sup>.

The city government only managed to reassert its control after the plague had begun to wane, and it was then able to introduce the third phase of its plague policy - the operations of disinfection. This procedure was as arduous and costly as the preceding provisions for isolation and quarantine. Teams of City officials and doctors were set up in each district, to direct the job which was actually carried out by monatti. They unsealed, cleaned and perfumed houses that had been infected or suspected of infection, room by room. An inventory was made of the furniture and utensils in each house; these were then boiled in cauldrons, washed by laundresses, and left in the sun. They even ordered the money to be boiled, as it was considered particularly responsible for the spread of the disease. The only concession was that they did allow this part of the operation to be carried out in private, in the presence of two witnesses. The zones that had been cleansed - what were called the 'clear' areas (nette) - were cordoned off, and guards placed to prevent any contact with the contaminated

<sup>37</sup> G.F.Fiocchetto, Trattato della Peste et Pestifero Contagio di Torino dell'Anno 1630, Turin 1631, p. 51-55.



zones -what were called 'bad areas' (brutte). Fires were lit at every crossroads and outside the pest-houses, in order 'to purge the air that had conceived the infection'<sup>38</sup>.

Thus the disappearance of disease did not bring back normality, nor did it end the financial and administrative burden on the City. Once again, City officials devoted all their time to the onerous record-keeping that arose with such large-scale operations. The expenses incurred by twenty-four teams of monatti, laundresses, perfume-spreaders, doctors and surgeons, must have been very high. In 1630, the City employed two hundred people in similar cleansing operations, plus twenty-five cart horses and six oxen for transporting personal effects to the cauldrons<sup>39</sup>. Worse of all from the point of view of the city's economy, isolation continued. The process of disinfecting the city lasted for a month and a half. This was followed by a period of 'post-plague' quarantine (quarantena compita), a trial period in which the city was still cut off from the outside world, but worked quite normally within its walls in order that 'all things be handled and all houses lived in, so that the disease would show itself, if it was still hidden (may God prevent it!)'<sup>40</sup>. Before the city could be 'released'(liberata), it had to prove its return to good health by reopening all the houses and having them lived in for a period of twenty-two days. If the owners did not wish to reoccupy their house, they had to send guinea-pig proxies called 'prove'<sup>41</sup>. However, those who had fled the plague were frightened to return, and even though the Magistrato repeatedly ordered all citizens to come back under threat of severe punishment, the City had great

<sup>38</sup> D., T. X, p. 308, 317 and 321 (19.9.1599, 19.10.1599 and 29.10.1599).

<sup>39</sup> Fiocchetto, Trattato, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> D., T. X, p. 321 and 329, 29.10.1599 and 11.11.1599.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.308, 14.8.1599.

difficulty in persuading inhabitants to return<sup>42</sup>. The moment of 'release' was thus continually postponed, as one post-plague quarantine followed another, protracting the hardship of those who had not been able to leave the town. It was not until February of 1600 that the City authorities finally freed Turin from all restrictions<sup>43</sup>.

For a full five months after the last cases had been reported within the walls, the city therefore continued to be isolated. The economic ruin inflicted by a year's interruption to normal trade was compounded by every passing day. Increasingly, during the disinfection phase, the civic authorities became more concerned with poverty and the number of mouths to feed, than with the plague and the number of dead. They were aware that the city's hardship and financial difficulties were far from over; disease was to give way to destitution. This cruel legacy was discussed in a letter the Council send to the Duke, dated 4 October. "In matters of health" things were said to be "improving day by day", so that in the city itself there were "no more sick of any kind" and very few in the pest-houses outside the walls; of the latter six were dying, while four to five hundred people were in "clear" quarantine of twelve days, without showing signs of disease. However, a month and half after the disappearance of the epidemic, the City Council still had to distribute three thousand rations of food every day - not to the sick but to the destitute, since "the end of the disease does not entail the end of the poverty"<sup>44</sup>. Three thousand mouths to be fed from the public purse - in a city which had no more than fifteen thousand inhabitants even before the advent of the plague and which had been decimated by

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 325-327, 23.11.1599 and 14.12.1599.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 330, 12.2.1600.

<sup>44</sup> AST, Corte Paesi per A e per B, no.7, Fasc. 9, Rappresentanza dei Sindaci della città di Torino, 4.10.1599.

deaths from the disease and the exodus of many of its unhabitants - plainly constituted a major crisis.

It has to be asked, at this stage, whether the measures taken by the City to fight the epidemic did not contribute to this state of affairs. Historians have usually been interested in these measures only for what they tell us about the medical rationale behind them. They have therefore looked favourably on the emergence, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of regulations based on the isolation of the disease, perceiving it as a step towards the understanding of the plague as a contagious disease and away from the traditional miasmatic theory<sup>45</sup>. It is difficult to share this enthusiasm, however, if we consider the overall consequences of anti-plague legislation - the havoc it reeked on the economy and on trade. I do not wish to enter into the question of whether or not the isolation procedures were effective in confining the spread of the disease, but only to point out that in any case they had other effects which, over time, could be devastating. Apart from reducing many citizens to indigence, and producing soaring prices, they led to an enormous increase in public expenditure, which continued to have negative repercussions on the poor long after the epidemic had passed. It should not be forgotten that the municipal government was the principal source of poor relief; the drain on financial resources brought about by the plague left the competent authorities indebted, and limited their ability to assist the poor, provide medical care and carry out normal public health measures. On 4 October, the City, in its struggle against the plague, had already contracted debts in excess of 125,000 scudi, an enormous figure if one considers that less than 20,000

<sup>45</sup> For a review of the various positions concerning the interpretation of the disease in medical literature, see Palmer, The Control; V. Nutton, "The seeds that fell among thorns? The reception of Fracastoro's theory of contagion", Osiris, 1990.

scudi entered their coffers every year<sup>46</sup>.

City officials were well aware of this link between traditional anti-plague policy and increasing poverty. Not surprisingly, isolation procedures were a recurring source of dispute between civic and central government. On the surface, there was general agreement over what kind of policy to adopt. As we have seen, the Magistrato backed up the tenor of the City's anti-plague action. However, the general principles of this policy were mere abstractions. For instance, the term quarantine applied to an undefined period of isolation, whose length had to be specified each time, probably as a result of negotiation between the interests and requests of different parties. As has been seen in the course of this account, quarantine rarely lasted for forty days; more usually it was twenty-two, twelve or even just eight days long. When the disease appeared to be dying out, the conflict over the exact length of time the city was to remain cut off, brought the two authorities more directly into conflict. Once disinfection operations had been completed, the civic government immediately wished to reopen the city to the outside world, whereas the Magistrato adopted a stricter and more literal interpretation of the regulations. In November 1598, the City authorities were vehemently opposed to 'his majesty's desire and that of his excellency the Magistrato sopra la Sanità' that the city remain shut for the period of 'post-plague' quarantine, 'in order that it could more speedily free itself of the contagion'. They protested that:

the city has no wine, salt, wheat or firewood for the maintenance of the poor and the needy, beggars and poveri vergognosi (shamefaced poor), who, at present, number five thousand, and are still increasing, owing to the state of beggary to which poor artisans have been brought. After

<sup>46</sup> Rappresentanza dei Sindaci (see note 44).

fourteen days of quarantine, the City has used up all the victuals that it had put in store, and his Excellency the magistrato di Sanità has made no provision to send the supplies necessary for its maintenance, in spite of our repeated requests.<sup>47</sup>

The City was at pains to point out the side-effects of the public health measures. These arguments should not be mistaken for irresponsibility or lack of concern for the public good, in contrast to central government's supposed greater awareness of the health risks. Rather, it was that local government knew, through its own experience, that the sequence famine-epidemic, that recent scholars have emphasized<sup>48</sup>, could as easily be switched around. Poverty was not only one of the causes of the plague; it also increased during an epidemic and the operations carried out against it, and would continue long afterwards. The City government was also the main agency which had to bear the expenses incurred by the isolation of the city. While it had run up debts of 125,000 scudi, the duke had made only a limited contribution to the cost of the epidemic. He had donated three thousand scudi, and promised two thousand sacks of corn, to cover the costs of billeting the soldiers in the fortress within the city walls. However, by 4 October 1599, only 1,406 scudi had been paid. Central government also empowered the City to impose a death duty on its citizens, but a few months after the end of the plague, the Camera dei Conti (Chamber of Accounts) reduced the total the City could exact to the sum of ten thousand scudi<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Ord., 25.11.1598.

<sup>48</sup> This sequence is widely discussed in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds.), Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society, Cambridge 1989 and in A. De Waal, Famine that Kills: Darfur, Sudan, 1984-85, Oxford 1989.

<sup>49</sup> This limitation was stipulated on 31.1.1600. D., T. VII, p.267, 19.10.98.

### 3. Anti-Famine Policy

Turning our attention to poor relief, we will now examine the system that emerged from the expansion and bureaucratisation of the 1570s and 1580s. What resources did these developments make available to the poor? What effect did they have on definitions of poverty and on attitudes to begging?

The treatment of the destitute and beggars seems to have been based on the same principles drawn up in 1541. The duties of the new officials responsible for poor relief were not dissimilar to those that had been previously carried out by the governors of the hospital of S.Giovanni, when this had been the principal relief agency. The Ordini politici published by the city in 1587 specified that the Cantonieri had to pay visits twice a week to all the inhabitants of the part of the city they were responsible for, and take down the Christian names, surnames, places of origin, ages and addresses of all 'the beggars, the needy and the shamefaced poor (vergognosi)', and the reason for each one's destitution - whether due to 'youth, old age, or other factor making it impossible for him to earn a living'. The lists were then handed in to the mayors who could order the hospitalisation of the sick and the disabled, and the issue of permits to beg for those who 'have no means by which to help themselves, other than that which is necessary for sleeping and to clothe themselves'. By contrast those recognised not worthy of any assistance were to be expelled from the city and severe penalties were fixed for those caught begging without permits (a lashing, the rack or banishment according to the persistence with which the offence was committed). The Ordini politici also provided for the dismissal of gatekeepers who did not stop vagabonds and destitute "foreigners" (from outside the city) from entering, and a twenty-five scudi fine for those

householders who took in such people<sup>50</sup>.

On paper, the regulations set down in the second half of the sixteenth century thus show notable intransigence towards beggars and poor outsiders. They drew a clear-cut distinction between the really needy who qualified for assistance and the undeserving who were made liable to severe punishment; and they established a permanent and minute control of the poor and their needs, aimed at stamping out all begging. However, if the implementation of these measures is taken into account, attitudes towards beggars and outsiders appear highly ambivalent. The census of the poor and the expulsion of beggars who did not qualify for assistance were only enforced when the Council recognised that there was a threat of dearth, and that the city had to defend itself against an influx of poor. In normal times, these measures were dropped and beggars were not only tolerated but even protected; even in times of emergency, attitudes were much more complex than legislation would lead us to think.

From 1586 on, a state of alert for dearth recurred with extreme frequency, at times even on a two-yearly basis: crises are recorded in the City's minute books in 1592, 1596, 1598, 1601, 1603, 1611, 1620, 1623, 1629<sup>51</sup>. We do not know whether this pattern reflects a recrudescence of dearth or rather a more interventionist attitude of the City. The list of dates of crisis years is based on years in which anti-dearth measures were taken by the Council. Obviously, action of this type does not simply reflect a situation of need but could be the result of various considerations. These might range from the pressing need to

<sup>50</sup> ACT, C.S.4701, Ordini politici formati dal Consiglio della Città, 1.8.1587 and Ordini politici da osservarsi dalli Signori Capi de' Cantoni e dal Cavaliere di Virtù.. per ordinare li poveri mendici.., 29.5.1592, in Borelli, p. 228-9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 27.9.1594, 8.12.1596, 11.2.1598, 20.4.1598, 30.11.1601, 14.12.1603, 27.12.1611, 19.7.1620, 9.8.1623, 16.5.1629.

respond to the threat of disorders from below or to pressure from above; to more ideological and strategic aims such as that of gaining consensus in a situation of competition with other agents of power; or to a desire to divide the population and isolate certain sections of it, through selective distribution of aid<sup>52</sup>. All we can do is to note that recorded crises intensified in the years which - as we will see in section 5 - marked the reinforcement of the authority of the City. Whereas in the new century dearth emergencies became rarer alongside the rise of conflict between the municipal and the ducal power.

If we take the extension of the anti-famine measures as evidence of the severity of the crisis, the most serious outbreak of dearth affecting Turin seems to have been that of 1586-7. In reality, this was also the first time in which the City experimented with its anti-famine provisions. It is possible that the high costs implied by the adoption of this plan persuaded the City to limit itself to a more prudent policy on subsequent occasions.

From September 1586, when the first signs of dearth were noted, the Cantonieri carried out their duties on a regular basis. Their twice-weekly visits resulted in the banishment of 'idle outsiders' and the realization of a massive operation to assist the poor who qualified for aid. The first expulsion took place in September, that is to say after the harvest had been gathered in and it was evident that there were likely to be problems of shortage the following year. A second expulsion was enforced in April 1597, and a third in August, after the new harvest, in order to clear the city of the poor 'who had been tolerated

<sup>52</sup> P.Slack, 'Dearth and policy in early modern England', SHM 1 (1992); for examples from the modern period see A.De Waal, Famine that Kills; M. Buttino, 'Politics and social conflict during a famine: Turkestan immediately after the Revolution' in Id.(ed.), Underdevelopment, Ethnic Conflicts and Nationalisms in Soviet Union, Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, Milan 1993.



during the period of greatest need<sup>53</sup>. This pattern of expulsions therefore shows the prevalence of relatively compassionate attitudes towards beggars and outsiders even during the emergency of famine. The authorities tried to deal with the shortage several months in advance, using early expulsions to discourage the poor from the countryside from flocking to the city; but they were then reluctant to send the poor back to the countryside when this was pinched hardest<sup>54</sup>. Expulsions were suspended during the most acute shortage and were resumed only well after the new harvest. Meanwhile, considerable assistance was given to the needy who had been allowed to remain in town. Unfortunately, gaps in the records only allow us to have precise figures for emergency expenditure on the indigent for a limited period. But in just forty days, from 19 May to 30 June, the City distributed 28,000 pounds of bread made from 145 sacks of wheat: 382 pounds a day in the first week and 573 pounds on each of the following ten days and 764 on each of the last twenty-five<sup>55</sup>. It is clear that these amounts would keep several hundred people from starving. To this expenditure we must add a further four scudi per day allocated for medicines for the poor who were sick, and the cost of the bread given to the poor who were expelled, to eat on their journey back<sup>56</sup>.

On this occasion, the City engaged in a tremendous effort which left it with a debt of 30,000 scudi (more than

<sup>53</sup> Ord., 10.9.1586, 8.4.1587, 1.8.1587.

<sup>54</sup> The countryside did not have, to the same extent as the city, the benefit of controlled retail prices (another task carried out by civic authorities) nor of stocks imported from outside. In 1586 for instance, Turin was supplied with grain from Sicily. M.Chiaudano, 'La finanza del comune di Torino ai tempi di Emanuele Filiberto', Torino Rivista Mensile, 7-8 (1928).

<sup>55</sup> Ord., 19.5.1587, 27.5.1587, 7.6.1587.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 22.4.1587, 11.8.1587.

double its overall budget) once the emergency had passed<sup>57</sup>. More limited operations took place in the shortages that recurred in the years at the turn of the century. Generally these consisted of the distribution of relief in money (sometimes allocated for periods as long as a year), on the basis of the Cantonieri's visits; the usual expulsions of undesirable beggars; and the issuing of permits to beg<sup>58</sup>. The large-scale distribution of bread was repeated only during the terrible dearth of the late 1620s, which preceded the serious plague outbreak of 1630. Even though the City became more cautious in its policy after the experience of the 1580s, there is no doubt that it was eager to show the paternalistic and caring side of its power in these years, and willing to engage in major financial outlay to protect its poor citizens (and occasionally outsiders) from starvation. This attitude appears to be one aspect of a wider sense of civic obligation that the City actively tried to inculcate; in effect the City was expecting all members of the community who had some means to take part in its policy towards the poor, through regular financial support or even through more direct involvement in their relief. The high costs of special expenditure were partly covered by voluntary levies of the kind we have already encountered in the previous chapter. A great deal of pressure was brought to bear on the citizenry to make them contribute regularly to these levies for poor relief. In times of emergency, the Cantonieri were required to visit all house-owners and

<sup>57</sup> Chiaudano, 'La finanza...ai tempi di Emanuele Filiberto', pp. 922-23. According to Chiaudano, the price of a sack of wheat increased from 30 florins in May to 48 in September of 1586, and then to 58 in February and 60 in June of 1587. If this information is correct, then just in the forty days we have been discussing here, the City spent more than 1,500 scudi in exceptional expenses to provide bread to the poor, on an overall budget of nearly 16,000 scudi(1603 figure).

<sup>58</sup> For example in 1591-2, Ord., 12.1.1592, 26.1.1592, 29.5.1592, 7.6.1592, 12.7.1592, 1.11.1592.

better-off members of their block, and to register the contribution they were willing to make during the period of hardship<sup>59</sup>. The donator was subsequently repeatedly reminded of his undertaking. Another form the extraction of semi-voluntary charity took was to send groups of the poor assisted by the municipality every day to the houses of those 'who had said they were willing to donate the left-overs from their lunch and dinner'<sup>60</sup>. These systems, although not compulsory, were probably reasonably efficient, given that they called into question the reputation of the richer citizenry. Who had paid and who had not clearly appeared in Cantonieri's registers and became part of public knowledge. Refusal to donate was cause for scandal, and could lead to a reprimand from higher authorities. In 1602, following a period of famine, the Duke, perhaps at the instigation of the Council, publicly rebuked his courtiers and officials 'who had refused to pay the levy requested for the poor', and asked the City for a list of their names<sup>61</sup>.

It is commonly believed that a more selective attitude towards beggars emerged in the sixteenth century in response to the public order problems created by demographic growth, famine and war. Begging was increasingly identified with culpable idleness, and the idle were more vigorously sought out, distinguished from the genuine cases of disability, and then punished. Citizens became particularly intolerant towards outsiders who arrived with stories of unproven misfortunes<sup>62</sup>. However, the idea of increasing harshness towards begging does not appear very convincing in the case of Turin, where

<sup>59</sup> For example, *ibid.*, 8.4.1587.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.12.1601.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.3.1602.

<sup>62</sup> See for instance N.S.Davidson, 'Northern Italy in the 1590s' in P.Clark (ed.) The European Crisis of the 1590s, London 1985, pp. 168-69.

attitudes were extremely ambivalent even during the emergency of dearth, and easily switched from repression to leniency and more positive aid. Once a crisis was over, the prohibition on begging would fall into abeyance, and expulsions would cease. Paradoxically, those categories of the poor who (at least on paper) had been hardest hit by the repressive measures might become the recipient of special welfare provisions. In September 1588 for example, just a year after the previous expulsion, an order was issued instructing that 'accommodation should be given to destitute foreigners and vagabonds'<sup>63</sup>. Again, in September 1591, measures were taken to protect 'the many poor who go wandering and have no place to rest themselves at night', and two councillors were appointed 'to find rooms whose rent they will agree with the owners for one year, engage a suitable person for the protection and care of said poor persons and have twelve straw mattresses made at the City's expense'<sup>64</sup>. Measures of this kind that provided shelter and warmth for 'destitute beggars' were very common, especially in wintertime when it was feared that those who 'naked and barefoot sleep at night on the bare earth' would freeze to death<sup>65</sup>. It is a curious fact that the homeless and the incomers, the primary target of the expulsion orders, were now the major beneficiaries of this compassion. The terms 'foreigner and vagabond', which usually had such negative connotations, were considered here as states of acute vulnerability and provoked widespread compassion. This reversal of views cannot merely be explained in terms of a survival of very different attitudes towards begging. Rather, it has to asked whether orders against begging have not been interpreted in too simplistic a fashion. There has been perhaps a tendency to take things at the letter, and not perceive the rhetoric in

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 21.9.1588.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 29.9.1591.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 3.1.1623.

the harsh invectives against idlers and vagabonds from outside the city. In reality, interest in sixteenth century legislation against begging has centred on the ideology it expressed, but little is known of the way in which it operated in practice<sup>66</sup>.

The existence of two lists of destitute persons to be expelled in 1601 allows us to compare the policy actually put into practice towards beggars with the picture that emerges from the anti-begging decrees. On 30 November 1601, with dearth threatening the city, the Cantonieri were instructed by the Council to carry out a census of 'the destitute persons who go begging around the city streets', listing all those who turned out to be 'foreigners from outside the city or from other states'<sup>67</sup>. Here a definition of the undeserving poor seems to be given, which corresponds to non-citizens and those from other countries. Further examination of the implementation of this order, however, shows that the interpretation of the term 'foreigner' is not as obvious and straightforward as one might assume.

Two separate lists were drawn up by Cantonieri, one consisting of 226 poor people who were either oltremontani ('those who came from the town of Susa and beyond') or from 'foreign states'<sup>68</sup>; and the other consisting of 123 poor people originating from various Piedmontese localities

<sup>66</sup> There are only a few studies on the English situation which have analyzed who precisely the poor really affected by the legislation against vagabonds were. J. Pound, "An Elizabethan census of the poor: the treatment of vagrancy in Norwich, 1570-80", Univ. of Birm.Hist.Jl, VIII (1962), A.L.Beier, "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England", Past and Present, 64 (1974), P.A.Slack, 'Vagrants and vagrancy in England, 1598-1664', EHR; J.R.Kent, "Population Mobility and Alms: Poor Migrants in the Midlands during the Early Seventeenth Century", Loc.Pop.St., 27 (1981).

<sup>67</sup> Ord., 30.11.1601.

<sup>68</sup> The Susa valley leads to the Mont Cenis pass, which at that time was the principal Alpine crossing point between Piedmont and Savoy, and Italy and France.

(including five from Turin itself). On 18 December, those on the first list were all expelled from the city, each having been given six pounds of bread and an amount of money which varied from 1 to 3 ducatonì according to the size of their family<sup>69</sup>. The treatment meted out to the second group was very different. In most cases the expulsion order was not enforced. For 84 of the 123 Piedmontese poor (68.3%), the sentence was commuted to an undertaking not to beg. This undertaking was made by the individuals themselves or - in nearly half of the cases - by other people resident in the city, on their behalf. If the undertaking was breached, the beggar would be flogged and the guarantor fined. In this case, then, the expulsion order was not rigidly applied, but used to force relatives, neighbours, fellow townspeople and house-owners to take on responsibility for those reduced by the shortage to destitution and begging. As in the case of the voluntary levies squeezed out of the citizens to tackle the emergency, the Council policy was to prompt a sense of obligation towards the less fortunate, by using indirect methods of compulsion. In other cases, the duty of assistance was simply made obligatory. Those who sheltered much younger siblings (probably on the basis of some agreement with their family), were quite simply ordered to restrain their charges from begging, under threat of punishment. The councillors themselves set an example of charity and solidarity with the poor, by taking into their houses some of the worst cases of destitution and those without relations, undertaking to keep them for eight or fifteen days, or until they regained their health<sup>70</sup>.

It would appear, then, that the primary function of expulsion orders was often to deter, and to set an example. They had the effect of containing the problem of begging by increasing public awareness and responsibility towards the

<sup>69</sup> Ord., 18.12.1601.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 26.12.1601.

Figure 2. FAMILY COMPOSITION OF OLTREMONTANI BEGGARS EXPELLED IN 1601.

Singles F	M	Mothers and children	Fathers and children	Parents and children	Siblings	Comrades	Relatives	Total of Family groups
13	19	26	6	6	20	2	2	95

Figure 3. FAMILY COMPOSITION OF 'PIEDMONTESE' CAUGHT BEGGING IN 1601 (in brackets those expelled)

Singles F	M	Mothers and children	Fathers and children	Parents and children	Siblings	Comrades	Relatives	Total of Family groups
11 (4)	32 (24)	3 (2)	3 (1)	10 -	3 -	-	-	62

poor, but only in a few cases did they lead to physical expulsion from the city. Yet only a few days before, 226 oltremontani had been expelled without remission. How do we explain this discrimination between the two groups of poor? According to the language in which the legislation was expressed, the repression of begging was directed against people who refused to work, and the foreign vagabonds who used up the charity intended for the city's own poor. The oltremontani however, did not generally resemble the stereotype of those voluntarily idle or dangerous vagabonds who were the target of the expulsion orders (Fig.2). In the first place, families were more common than single people. Of the ninety-five units expelled, fifty-eight (60%) were families. Of these, as many as twenty-six (nearly half) had a woman as head of family, twenty were made up of siblings, six were fathers with their sons, and a further six were complete nuclear family units consisting of both parents and their children. Unfortunately, the ages of the poor are not stated, only the sex and the relationship to the head of family. However the fact that nearly a quarter of the children (24%) are defined as creature (infants) and forty per cent are registered as figliolo (child) or figlio

piccolo (small child) implies that in many cases they were young families, with small children. Even amongst the high number of family units made up of siblings, the most common pattern seems to be of an elder teenager (generally a girl) who would go begging, taking along younger brothers and sisters. The beggars who were expelled therefore seem to be principally the most vulnerable categories: widows (or widowers) with children, orphaned adolescents and children. Given that age was not recorded, the identity of the thirty-two single people (nineteen men and thirteen women) is more obscure. It cannot be excluded that they too may have belonged to vulnerable categories like the old or the disabled. Finally, there were the five remaining family units, three of which consisted of couples with the same surname and unspecified relationship, and two of which consisted of couples of the same sex (two women and two men) defined as 'comrades'.

Most of all these people would appear to have been reduced to penury by family disasters (the loss of their spouse or parents) or by other adversities. This impression is further confirmed by their places of origin. The majority of them (66%) came from the impoverished region of Maurienne just on the other side of the Mont Cenis pass, which up until a few months previously had been the theatre of war against the French. The other family units (12%) came from Alpine villages just on the Italian side of the pass, in the Susa and Lanzo valleys. The origin of the oltremontani was therefore from the same kind of ecological area. The economy of these mountainous regions was essentially based on the income earned by mule-drivers from the transit of goods and people across the Mont Cenis, and from sheep-farming and the use of common land. However, the protracted conflict with France (which had stricken this area intermittently for 50 years) had had disastrous effects. The interruption of normal commercial traffic, together with the burden of war taxation, not infrequently



produced cases of depopulation<sup>71</sup>. Given the beggars' extremely localized area of origin, it is reasonable to speculate that in some cases they were part of a mass exodus. And in fact we find that seventy-three of the ninety-five family units came from neighbouring hamlets in a very limited area spanning the Mont Cenis pass<sup>72</sup>. Of these, as many as thirty-six (twenty-two family groups and fourteen single persons) came from the same village, Bessans. The departure of several score people from villages and hamlets that usually counted only a few hundred inhabitants gives an idea of the dramatic situations that these migrants left behind. In this context, the Council's decision to return them to their lands would appear particularly lacking in compassion. Their rejection was total and a priori, no exceptions were entertained.

The treatment of the second group (the Piedmontese), in contrast, was much more circumspect. In this case, harsher treatment was reserved mainly for single people, who were expelled in much greater numbers than the families (Fig.3). Twenty-eight of the forty-three single people (65%) were expelled, against only three of the nineteen family units (16%). Gender also seems to have been taken into account in the case of the single persons: twenty-four of the thirty-two men were expelled as against only four of the eleven women. This does not seem to have been the case for the families, however, two of which had a woman as head.

It is interesting to observe that the discrimination

<sup>71</sup> Savoy was subject to 50 years of war from 1580 and 1630, and two total occupations in 1600 and 1630. Cf. J.P. Leguay (ed.), Histoire de la Savoie, Vol. III, La Savoie de la Réforme à la Revolution Française, Rennes 1983-86. On the economic situation: P. Guichonnet (ed.), Histoire de la Savoie, Toulouse, 1984, pp. 135-47.

<sup>72</sup> For twenty of the ninety-five family units the place of origin was not specified, but it is probable that they came from the same area; in ten cases they had the same surnames as other families for whom the place of origin was registered.

against the oltremontani was explicitly justified on the basis of their foreignness. Significantly, the census distinguished them from other beggars, registering them on a separate list. This attribution would seem completely unjustified however. The oltremontani were simply inhabitants of certain Alpine regions of the Savoy state. Only one of the expelled beggars came from a 'foreign state' (Casale). From a political point of view, they were all the Duke's subjects, just as much as the Piedmontese beggars who were to be allowed to stay only a few days later. Nonetheless, the use of the term forestiero (foreigner, outsider) evidently did capture a genuine foreignness in social terms. As far as the movement of goods and men was concerned, these territories had traditionally been more linked to the French than to the Italian side of the Dukedom. In the sixteenth century, migrants from Savoy went to various parts of France, Switzerland and Germany, but not yet to Piedmont and its capital<sup>73</sup>. The oltremontani therefore were considered foreigners by the city authorities, because they did not belong to the city's social space, to that territory which was defined not by political borders, but by links of commerce and migration. The social foreignness of the oltremontani is further confirmed by the fact that they were not able to produce relatives willing to give guarantees on their behalf and protect them from expulsion. Their flight to the capital had evidently been motivated by desperation; it was a disorganized form of immigration, not one in which immigrants arrived via sponsors in the town of destination. It was these factors that worried the City - which did not want to take on people with whom it had a purely relief relationship. It totally rejected this new influx, which risked becoming an uncontrollable wave of people who, in addition, could not count on friends and

<sup>73</sup> J.P. Leguay, Histoire, Vol. III. Later on, in the eighteenth century, the Maurienne region contributed to the seasonal migration to Turin. Levi, Centro, p. 41, 53.

relations who could ease their integration into the capital. The situation of the 123 destitute Piedmontese was very different: half of them could count on uncles, brothers, or fellow-townspeople who were working in Turin as, for example, servants to the aristocracy, tailors and butter-sellers. In some cases, they themselves were able to declare an occupation that they had previously carried out in the capital (wine-carrier, fruit-seller, worker at the powder-magazine), thus proving their roots in the city.

The analysis of the treatment received by the poor in the two lists thus demonstrates that those definitions of the worthy poor which appear in the orders against begging, and which have often been the main focus of historians' interest, were really just convenient compartments into which the groups that at that moment appeared most unwelcome would could be slotted. In the case examined, a strict definition of idler might in part explain the distinctions made within the Piedmontese group, but it in no way corresponded to the treatment of the oltremontani, where a population of women and children was expelled. Yet a simple identification of the unworthy poor with the foreigner would also be misleading: as we have seen, there were times when their condition as vagabonds without possessions and without a place to sleep provoked greater compassion. The demarcation between the worthy and unworthy poor was unquestionably influenced by conjunctural factors, such as food shortage, but more important still was the way in which the groups to which the poor belonged were perceived by the citizenry. Their degree of familiarity or extraneousness in relation to the city seems to have played an important role in defining attitudes towards beggars. In addition, attitudes were also influenced by indirect factors, such as the pattern of social or political conflict - which might have the effect of boosting a given ideological discourse. In section 5, I will examine just such a case, and show how the condemnation of foreigners grew with the rhetoric that exalted the status of citizen.

#### 4. Charitable Resources for the Worthy Poor and Sick in "Normal Times".

Further indications on the mechanisms used for selecting the poor can be inferred from an examination of ways of access to other forms of assistance offered by the local system of welfare. We have already seen that mass assistance in periods of shortage gave way, when the emergency was over, to ad hoc provisions to assist the city's beggars, and to a general tolerance of the practice of begging. In addition, the City handed out assistance ad personam, in the form of money in response to petitions presented by the poor, often via the mediation of a decurione (a City councillor). In 1581 the responsibility for the decisions over petitions was delegated to the mayors, who were given discretion to distribute alms as they wished from a budget, which generally amounted to eight scudi a month. If the mayors kept to this sum, no report was required by the Council<sup>74</sup>. Only if alms payments exceeded the budget, were extra grants discussed in the Council. We can obtain some idea of who the beneficiaries were by examining some of these cases. The recipients appear to belong to two categories. First of all, there were the poveri vergognosi who consisted of those who had enjoyed a certain status or affluence, but had fallen on hard times. In February 1598, for example, ten poor in this category received a special payment on top of the sum already allocated; they included a notary, a doctor in law, a soldier and a French gentlewoman<sup>75</sup>. In April, it was the turn of messer Perrachia, 'once a wealthy merchant and now without the means to feed or clothe himself' who, on the recommendation of decurione Magnano, obtained twenty-three florins<sup>76</sup>. The other group of

<sup>74</sup> Ord., 17.12.1581.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 11.2.1598.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 20.4.1598.

recipients seems to have consisted of destitute people somehow connected to the Council - having been either directly employed by the municipality (as bailiffs, janitors, etc.) or holding some other kind of contract. Thus in 1584 Margarita Grosso, who rented a stall from the Council in the market square, obtained thirty florins in alms and the suspension of rent payments for the stall for a year, on becoming a widow responsible for four small children. Access to this kind of assistance was therefore restricted to selected categories, who could boast past social distinction or the existence of patrons and intermediaries. Social contacts, which we have seen to play an important role in deciding who the deserving poor were, even in times of shortages, were still more crucial in normal times.

The same kind of "selective" access to charity, channelled through personal contacts and patronage, also seems to have operated at the hospital of S.Giovanni. Unfortunately we have only very limited records for the hospital in the second half of the sixteenth century. However administrative records do exist for the three-year period from 1585 to 1588, and they give some hints as to the nature of the assistance given<sup>77</sup>. It appears that the decision to accept the sick into the hospital was taken by the governors, quite often on the basis of a petition presented by an intermediary known to the hospital. So on 14 September 1586, it was agreed that Giò Nigra, the hospital agent, could bring in his brother-in-law for treatment for three days; on 4 January 1587, the governors accepted the proposal made by Giò Marco Invinceraio, an apothecary from Turin, to bring in Alessandro Cisari of Turin who was sick. However the most common route of entry to the hospital was through a bargain made directly between the governors and the patient. The latter would promise to leave the hospital a legacy in property or money, and would

<sup>77</sup> ACT, C.S.662, Volume Congreghe tenute dalla direzione dello Spedale dal 26.3.1585 al 18.12.1588.

receive in return the right to be cared for as long as he or she lived. Often the undertaking to make the hospital a donation occurred after an initial period in hospital, once it became clear that this period would have to be extended. On 12 May 1585, Gioannino Perreto of Ceres and resident on the outskirts of Turin, being cared for in the hospital of S.Giovanni and 'not wishing to be ungrateful for the assistance given', donated to the hospital 'were he to die while in its walls' the sum of ten scudi. On 29 September, Antonio Martina of Dronero, a mule-driver in Turin, donated a white mare to the hospital, once again on the condition that he should die while in its care<sup>78</sup>. It was normal practice for the hospital to expect some kind of recompense from patients whose treatment was liable to be lengthy, either because of the nature of the illness, or because they were old or had no relations to assist them. Even when no agreement had been made, the patient and his family were considered to have incurred a debt to the hospital which they had to pay before they could benefit from any further assistance. On 23 June 1585, Claudio Madis of Borgaro repaid a debt of this kind by donating a piece of land of about half a hectare, owed by his brother Giovanni, who had died in the hospital some three years before, 'as the said Claudio was himself in need of the hospital'.

This kind of contract was very common, and very similar to the caring arrangements which were stipulated between private citizens, even amongst the poor, whereby old people, children and young women were entrusted to a keeper who was paid an allowance<sup>79</sup>. On 15 September 1585, the

<sup>78</sup> Martina was to die three months later and the mare, when sold, brought in fourteen scudi. Ord., 5.1.1586.

<sup>79</sup> Agreements of this kind were common in England in the same period, and were even provided for in the Poor Law. See M. Pelling, 'Healing the sick poor: social policy and disability in Norwich, 1550-1640', Medical History, 29 (1985); A. Wear, 'Caring for the sick poor in St. Bartholomew Exchange: 1580-1676', in W.F. Bynum and R.Porter (eds.), Living and Dying in London, Medical History Supplement n.11, London 1991.

governors took in Angela, the ten-year-old daughter of the late messer Hercole, son of Signor Michele Begiamo of Savigliano, accepting the petition presented by Caterina Genta, who had looked after the girl up to that time, on the basis of just such an agreement with her father. The father was now dead, and Caterina, 'poor, old and sick' was unable to collect the agreed 'expenses and food', and thus could no longer afford to look after the girl. In a certain sense, therefore, the governors recognised, and took over responsibility for, the contract made between Caterina and messer Begiamo. They seem to have been convinced of the need to help by the girl's good looks (deemed to represent a particular danger) and by the fact that she was of good family. However the agreement also guaranteed that the hospital would receive the income of fifty scudi that the father had left to Angela.

These agreements could therefore also concern persons - usually women - who had urgent need of shelter rather than medical care. One of the categories that the hospital concerned itself with was that of women suffering from marital violence or desertion (the so called malmaritate). On 2 March 1587, the last wishes of Mattia were recorded. She had been in the hospital for ten months and during this period, she had been 'fed, treated, and given all necessary things, having been gravely ill and continuing to be so'. The principal reason for being accepted into the hospital seems, however, to have been the tempestuous relationship with her husband, who not only ignored her medical needs, but had taken a mistress and had severely beaten his wife 'so that she would have died had she not been admitted to the hospital'. The grateful Mattia therefore bequeathed the hospital her dowry which amounted to the tidy sum of one hundred scudi. Maddalena Barbero was a similar case, having been forced on three occasions to take refuge in the hospital following mistreatment by her husband. The governors had received her 'with love and charity', and had twice arranged reconciliation with the husband who had

promised to mend his ways. On the third occasion, Maddalena stayed in the hospital, and in December 1590 she revoked the deed of gift made over to her husband at the time of her wedding and transferred all her wealth to the hospital poor<sup>80</sup>.

The frequency of these agreements in a hospital that had barely two dozen patients suggests that the institution functioned mainly as a permanent refuge, or at least that its inmates stayed for considerable periods of time. The lengthy stays of these residents - who suffered from social isolation rather than illness - clearly restricted the space available for those requiring short-term treatment. Until the second half of the seventeenth century, when the hospital of S.Giovanni began to expand significantly, access to the institution was extremely restricted, indeed restricted to those who were able to offer the hospital some attractive recompense. Some of the patients were far from indigent, and other could boast a fairly respectable background. For many years hospital treatment was to remain an extremely remote possibility for the poor.

The only forms of assistance which did reach the great mass of the needy were distribution of bread and alms in times of shortage, and outdoor medical relief. It would seem from the considerable investment that the City made in the expansion and improvement of this latter kind of assistance, that, in the view of contemporaries, a close link existed between poverty and disease. In normal periods disease was considered to be the greatest threat to the poor. The system was initially set up with the agreements drawn up with the hospital physician (1569) and blood-letter (1581), by which these received supplementary salaries from the City for assisting those without means. In 1587 a third agreement was concluded with the apothecary to supply the medicines prescribed by the doctor free of

<sup>80</sup> AOSG, Cat.4, cl.2, vol.2, fasc.2, 14.10.1590.



charge<sup>81</sup>. The Council then attempted to improve access to the system by advertising on every street corner the name of the doctor and the barber engaged by the City 'in order that the poor should know to whom they should turn in times of need'. In 1612 the surgeon for the poor was offered the shop next to the town hall tower in Piazza del Municipio, so that his activity could be seen by all, and would be in a place which was easy to reach<sup>82</sup>.

The municipal medical service was substantially enhanced during the seventeenth century, mainly in response to the increased demand. At the beginning of the century complaints had been recorded about the high number of prescriptions, but numbers continued to rise, reaching startling levels by mid-century. The annual expenditure on medicines rose 'to several hundred lire' by 1653, but already by 1662 we find a proposal to fix a annual ceiling of a thousand lire. In 1679, there were complaints that expenditure, which, until a few years previously, had been around the one thousand five hundred or two thousand lire mark, had now exceeded the enormous figure of seven thousand lire<sup>83</sup>. In 1675, a second doctor was engaged, as a result of protests made by the one already employed by the City that he had an excessive number of patients<sup>84</sup>. In 1678 the number of doctors was increased to four, and three young surgeons were also appointed to back up the surgeon for the poor by carrying out minor duties, such as 'visiting the sick, blood-letting, and putting on poultices and bandages', thus freeing the senior surgeon for more serious operations. Up to that time, the surgeon had used

<sup>81</sup> Ord., 11.3.1569, 12.2.1581, 8.4.1587.

<sup>82</sup> Ord., 5.8.1586, 9.3.1612.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 13.9.1602, 20.4.1653. 29.5.1662, 30.9.1679.

<sup>84</sup> Armano left the post of city doctor in 1675 for this very reason. But even the two doctors together found the workload too heavy, and complained that they had twice fallen ill through overwork and requested to be replaced. Ibid., 31.12.1675, 6.8.1678.

three apprentices who, however, had not been sufficient to allow him to carry out all his duties<sup>85</sup>. This sharp rise in the expenditure on medicine and health care at the end of the 1670s coincided with an enlargement of the city boundaries, but demographic pressure is not the only reason for the expansion of the system. This can be seen by the fact that the consumption of medicines very quickly levelled off, and that during the following century expenditure mostly stayed within the six to seven thousand lire range, in spite of a steady increase in the city population (Fig.4). It may be that this relative decline was in part due to the expansion of the hospital, which commenced in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. But above all, the medical service was affected by the City Council's loss of independence in the management of the local government. Already in the first half of the eighteenth century there were protests that the post of doctor for the poor had become little more than a sinecure. The doctors collected their salaries without having their activities checked up on, and they put most of their energies into private practice<sup>86</sup>. Particularly after the 1740s, the municipal health system had in fact gradually changed its functions, and adjusted its services to meet the demands of the state institutions (prisons and reformatories), neglecting the treatment of the poor in their homes.

For at least the century and a half before this, however, municipal medical outdoor relief played a dominant role among the city's charitable resources. It is not possible to have a precise idea of how the numbers of

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 29.9.1678.

<sup>86</sup> In May 1748, following these considerations, the numbers of doctors and surgeons were increased to four and nine respectively. This was not an attempt to expand the service, merely to save it. The doctors were allocated smaller areas of the city in the hope that they would find it easier to reconcile their duties for the City with their private practices. ACT, C.S.4793.

Figure 4. CIVIC MEDICAL OUTDOOR RELIEF

	Annual expenditure (lire)	Number of patients
1662	1000	about
1679	7000	and over
1687	7778	
1705	7318	
1710	6556	
1711	6956	
1718	8581	
1719	7464	
1729	6574	
1730	6512	
1735	8675	5792
1740	5336	
1749	6287	from 1743 expenditure also
1750	5785	includes medicines to prisoners
1759	6597	4454
1760	6520	4310
1761	6281	3889
1762	6178	4539
1769	6596	
1770	6618	
1779	9737	from 1776 expenditure also
1780	10100	includes medicines given to the
1783	10387	inmates of the Opera Martinetto
1789	12485	(or prostitutes).
1790	13245	

Note. The Table shows the expenditure on medicines at the turn of every decade as well as all the available information about the number of recipients. For the eighteenth century the information is drawn mainly from the annual Conti del Tesoriere (in ACT). Scattered data derive from the Ordinati of the City Council. On the extension of the service to the prisoners and to the women in the Martinetto, ACT, C.S.4796 and Ibid. Collez.1v, fasc.6.

recipients changed over the period, given that the earliest figures date from the eighteenth century. In 1735, free medicine was distributed to 5,792 patients (in a city of about 70,000 inhabitants). Between 1759 and 1763, the number of recipients averaged 4,200 a year (Fig.4). It seems reasonable to argue that, given that the level of

expenditure on medicine remained steady from the late 1670s on, the figures available for the eighteenth century could also be extrapolated back to the preceding period<sup>87</sup>. If this is a reasonable assumption, the recipients of municipal medical assistance would be several thousand already in the late seventeenth century. Obviously backdating these figures cannot take account of fluctuations in the cost of medicines or of changes in medicines prescribed. However we can find further evidence that the volume of medical assistance supplied by the Council must have been high if we compare it with the hospital's expenditure on medicines. In 1693, a year in which war and famine must have crowded the hospital with patients, expenditure amounted to 3,329 lira, about half the average figure that the Council paid for the poor treated at home<sup>88</sup>. We do not know the overall number of patients yearly treated in the hospital of S.Giovanni. By this time however the latter had some ninety beds and so no longer constituted a small refuge for extreme cases, but was an important centre for medical care<sup>89</sup>.

The extraordinary expansion of the municipal medical service was certainly not planned nor welcomed by the City Council. The reasons for its growth probably lay in the fact that, unlike other forms of assistance we have examined, the selection of recipients was not centralized but very much at the discretion of the doctors. The doctors probably found it hard to send away the poor who came to their shop without a prescription. It is also very likely that the apothecaries themselves prescribed medicines to the poor, since it seems impossible that the few practitioners paid by the City could be responsible for the

<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately we do not know how these figures were calculated - whether the poor who received assistance several times in a year were counted only once, or every time they resorted to the service.

<sup>88</sup> Caffaratto L'Ospedale p.179.

<sup>89</sup> AOSG, Ord.13.7.1692.

thousands of prescriptions yearly figuring in the bills of the apothecaries of the poor (even if we assume that their duties were largely carried out by their apprentices and pupils). The salary received by the doctors was not affected by the number of patients but we certainly cannot exclude the possibility of some kind of agreement between doctors and apothecaries, aimed at sharing the profit deriving from the high number of prescriptions (given the frequency of this type of practice at the time). The service therefore may have grown under the pressure of demand and the tolerance (and avidity) of doctors and apothecaries. The City made repeated attempts to establish its control over access to this form of assistance. In 1653 a committee of six councillors was set up to ascertain whether those who benefited from free medicines were 'truly poor and destitute'. In 1672 it was stipulated that the poor had to obtain a fede di povertà ('certificate of poverty') from the parish priest (Ill.1), and this remained an obligatory requirement throughout the period. However, the length of validity of these documents is not stated and it is likely that, once the poor person had obtained the certificate, he could refer directly to the doctor any time he was in need of medical treatment. On several occasions, the doctors were exhorted to make out prescriptions 'only in the most serious cases and where there was urgent need', to avoid expensive medicines, and only to treat those who were really poor, and in particular to avoid treating servants of any kind, as they were the responsibility of their employers<sup>90</sup>. Detailed guidelines about how to keep the expenditure low can be found in the Istruzione per i dottori dei poveri ('Instructions to Doctors for the Poor') which the City commissioned the Protomedico to write in

<sup>90</sup> Ord., 29.9.1653, 10.9.1672. See also *ibid.* 1.6.1648, 29.5.1662, 30.9.1679 and 21.12.1679.

Francis S. Jones

III.2. 'Instruction for the doctors  
for the poor', front cover,  
1680 (ACT).

**Appretto BARTOLOMEO ZAPPALÀ**  
Stampatore dell' *Illustrissima Città*  
Con Licenza de' Superiori.

1679 (Ill.2)<sup>91</sup>. However the doctors retained their control over this form of assistance, largely because the scale of the operations meant that any supervision could be only very cursory. Unfortunately, we have no information as to the identity of the poor who benefited from the medical treatment at home. It may well be that, as the City complained on several occasions, the consumption of medicines was increased by corrupt practices, and that some of the recipients did not really qualify on the grounds of destitution, but these protests seem to have been mainly an expression of alarm over increasing costs.

Partly against the Council's wishes, medical assistance had grown considerably from the end of the sixteenth century and had become the core of the municipal welfare system. Of the various forms of aid offered by the City, it was certainly the one which affected the greatest number of poor, partly because it was a permanent service, not just one which appeared in times of crisis, and partly because it operated relatively independently from the channels of patronage and privilege that dominated other forms of aid. Medical relief also proved extremely durable, and continued to operate after the hospital expanded and the City had lost its control over other aspects of the urban charity system.

## **5. Poor Relief and City Politics.**

By the end of the sixteenth century, civic government had consolidated its control over Turin's charitable system, and this had expanded its scope considerably in the space of a few decades. The system was able both to deal with emergencies caused by famine and epidemic, and to give extensive aid to the poor in normal times. In the following

<sup>91</sup> ACT, SI/CN 10838, Avvertimenti per la cura de' poverelli infermi, nella città di Torino, Bartolomeo Zappata Stampatore, Turin, 1680.

pages I will argue that this expansion of welfare was closely linked to the pattern of city politics which characterised the first decades after the return of the Duke. The extension of the relief system controlled by the City was not an isolated tendency but an aspect of a wide-ranging consolidation of civic powers and privileges which occurred in this period. This statement would appear to clash with the long-prevailing view, according to which, after repossessing his territories, Duke Emanuele Filiberto immediately engaged in a policy of centralisation in all areas of government, including welfare<sup>92</sup>, stamping out all local obduracy and rival power structures, and earning his reputation as one of the first examples of an absolute monarch<sup>93</sup>. Yet there is substantial evidence of a very different story. It is well known that the Duke had difficulty asserting his authority, and encountered constant hostility from the myriad of local autonomies that had become consolidated during the period of French domination (which had lasted more than twenty years)<sup>94</sup>. As far as the capital is concerned, some well-documented (although largely ignored) studies show that, for several decades, the city authorities were far from submissive towards the Duke<sup>95</sup>. In reality, indeed, the key to

<sup>92</sup> Erba comments on the implications for welfare in La Chiesa.

<sup>93</sup> P.Anderson, Lineages of the Absolute State, London 1974, p.170-71; E.Stumpo, 'I ceti dirigenti in Italia nell'età moderna. Due modelli diversi: nobiltà piemontese e patriziato toscano', in A.Tagliaferri (ed.), I Ceti Dirigenti in Italia in Età Moderna e Contemporanea, Istituto di Storia dell'Università di Udine, Udine 1984. Even Koenigsberger accepts this interpretation, although he adopts a more negative attitude to the Duke, who he describes as despotic, cf. 'The Parliament'.

<sup>94</sup> Numerous examples are referred to in W. Barberis, Le Armi del Principe. La Tradizione Militare Sabauda, Turin 1988.

<sup>95</sup> D. Bizzari, 'Vita amministrativa torinese ai tempi di Emanuele Filiberto', Torino Rassegna Mensile, 7-8, 1928, and 'Vita amministrativa torinese ai tempi di Carlo



understanding the relationship between central and local powers in this period seems to be the Duke's isolation and lack of authority, rather than his strength and determination. This perspective helps to explain the desperate attempts - which strongly characterise the rule of the first Dukes - to shore up their image, creating new areas of patronage. The bestowal on a grand scale of gifts, titles, enfeoffments (mainly taken out of state property) and fiscal incomes all show, in my opinion, that the sovereign was trying to build up consensus and support and not, as has usually been suggested, that he was lucidly carrying out the design of replacing the established, unreliable nobility with a group of loyal new men.

The Duke was particularly unpopular in Turin where, as we have seen, local autonomy had not only been recognized but strengthened by the French occupation. As the new capital of the Duchy of Savoy, Turin often found itself in disagreement with the sovereign's requests; indeed the very presence of his entourage was cause for continuous clashes. The disputes began as soon as Emanuele Filiberto entered the city, and were to last for several decades. The citizens were reluctant to accept the authority of his officials, and hostile to his requests for accommodation for his family, soldiers and courtiers. Nor did they take kindly to the imposition of new taxes or to the request that they provide men for the formation of a militia. The City contended that these demands were incompatible with its traditional immunity and administrative independence. Continual remonstrances on the part of the Council led to drawn-out negotiations on various issues, which ended with concessions being made by both sides. The City donated large sums to central government, which was in major financial difficulties, in exchange for exemption from the

Emanuele I', *ibid.*, 9, 1930. For the successive period, see G. Claretta, Storia della Reggenza di Cristina di Francia, Duchessa di Savoia, Turin 1868 and Id., Il Municipio Torinese ai Tempi della Pestilenza del 1630 e della Duchessa Cristina di Francia, Turin 1869.

taxation and other obligations that the Duke wished to impose. In this way, the City increased its fiscal and administrative privileges, while the Duke obtained recognition of the legitimacy of his requests. For a few decades, Ducal and municipal power, therefore, grew together, the one reinforcing the other. Contrary to the traditional view of state-building process, the affirmation of central government did not imply the weakening of local power, but to certain extent its enhancement.

In its attempts to reinforce its powers and status the City leant heavily on reassertions of its claims to ancient privileges. However, this was a classic case of the "invention of tradition", for the extension of municipal prerogatives in this period went well beyond the powers which had been enjoyed in the Middle Ages. Nonetheless, on the basis of supposed ancient rights, the citizens of Turin obtained exemption from all direct and extraordinary taxation imposed by central government<sup>96</sup>, exemption from the land registry of all land and property within the commune, and critical rights of jurisdiction. The Duke conceded, in fact, that all civil and criminal cases involving Turin citizens should be tried before one of two municipal officials, the Giudice and the Vicario. From 1575, the right to nominate these judges passed from the Duke to the City itself<sup>97</sup>; and from 1577 onwards the City was allowed to keep the whole of its income from fines, whereas previously central government had had the right to a quarter<sup>98</sup>. But the municipal authority not only

<sup>96</sup> D., T. XX, Atto pubblico di convenzione, 30.4.1567, p. 1071, and pp. 1076 ff. provide a summary of successive acts confirming the tax exemption obtained in exchange for City donations to state coffers.

<sup>97</sup> The local authorities had, however, to present the Duke with a choice of three candidates. Bizzarri 'Vita.. ai tempi di Emanuele Filiberto', p.442.

<sup>98</sup> ACT, C.S. 94; C.S. 103, 1580; C.S. 114, 1582. A case would first be heard by the Giudice, then in appeal by the Vicario. Final appeal was to the Senate. Ibid., p. 441.

reinforced its administrative independence, it also extended the scope of its activity: for example, it obtained recognition of its role in the management of urban police<sup>99</sup> - that is the system of public order and law enforcement that was expanding in this period and was codified in the Ordini politici to which I have already referred<sup>100</sup>. These orders aimed at regulating a wide range of aspects of city life: from commercial activities (controlling weights and measures, prices, the baking of bread, in order to prevent speculation, fraud and hoarding), to working conditions, building, sanitation and public health, from education, moral standards and public order to public holidays and festivities.

The city administration also obtained recognition of its rights to the income raised from customs and excise within its territory. Some of these rights had indeed existed since time immemorial, but they were confirmed by the Duke. They included the tax on wine sold in the city, and duty on the wine that was imported, the tax on meat butchered in the city and (most profitable of all), the duty on milling (that is on all flour used to produce bread consumed in the town). The Duke also confirmed the City's rights to the rents from the stalls in the market square and the tax on the goods sold there<sup>101</sup>. New rights were also obtained in this period of rivalry with central authority, such as the right to introduce new taxation. New taxes included charges on the river-crossings and on the use of water from the Po (1570), two new taxes on meat sold in the city (1564 and 1566), and the salt duty previously

<sup>99</sup> ACT, C.S. 94, 1569; C.S. 103, 1575.

<sup>100</sup> See footnote 12.

<sup>101</sup> ACT, C.S. 86, 1564-66; C.S. 91, 1567; C.S. 101, 1575; C.S. 106, 1578.

held by the Duke (1587)<sup>102</sup>. Other concessions obtained during negotiations included the right to increase the duty on milling (1564), the doubling of wine duty (1578), and the right to income from the taxes payed by the commune of Grugliasco (1567)<sup>103</sup>. The City also obtained permanent exemption from the most unpopular of all its obligations to the sovereign, namely the cost of billeting the Duke's entourage and of providing men for the town garrison<sup>104</sup>. It is clear that the City's budget was considerably enhanced by these concessions. The growth in fiscal powers and the income from increased police and judicial activities, in particular, brought the City's finances to an unprecedented state of prosperity.

In spite of opposition from the College of Jurists (which was still making itself felt in the Senate as late as in 1607), the municipality also obtained symbolic recognition of its enhanced status as a political institution. From 1574, the City Council was represented in public ceremonies in a position immediately behind the Camera dei Conti (Chamber of Accounts). From the 1570s, City officials could use the emblem of civic identity and power (a bull) as a symbol of the dignity of their office. The symbol of the bull was displayed on councillors' coats of arms and on their doors, and carried by the municipal usher, who walked in front of the mayors on the city streets<sup>105</sup>. In 1597 the councillors were given all the rights associated with vassalage, including the carrying of

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., C.S.86; C.S.95, 1570; on the transfer of the salt duty, see Chiaudano 'La finanza ... ai tempi di Carlo Emanuele I', p. 913.

<sup>103</sup> Chiaudano, 'La finanza del comune di Torino ai tempi di Emanuele Filiberto', Torino Rivista Mensile, 7-8 (1928), e 'La finanza ... ai tempi di Carlo Emanuele I'.

<sup>104</sup> ACT, C.S.106, 1578.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., C.S. 100, 1574; C.S. 106, 1578. Bizzarri, 'Vita ... tempi di Carlo Emanuele I', p. 881.

weapons<sup>106</sup>.

There can be little doubt, then, that the privileges and status of civic authority increased enormously in these three decades at the end of the sixteenth century. As I have mentioned, this was a result of an intense play-off between the interests of the City and those of central authority. Like the spectacular cases of social mobility which became frequent in this period, permitting individuals of modest backgrounds to attain large fortunes and high office, the growth of the City's powers originated in the fragility of the Duke's authority, and in his willingness to concede privileges. In both cases, the Duke's quest for consensus interacted with the strategies of groups and individuals who aimed to exploit his weakness.

The developments which affected poor relief in the second half of the sixteenth century were inextricably linked to this increase in the influence of the municipal government. Investment in welfare was not only a consequence of the enhanced political identity of the City, but also an instrument for its formation; for the expansion of the civic welfare system boosted the authority of the municipal government, and support for it. The definitions of deserving poor that were formulated in this period were themselves partly an outcome of the ongoing political conflict. In its negotiations with the Duke, the City strongly emphasized the privileged status of its citizens; policy towards the poor became a vehicle for reinforcing this civic identity and awareness of the rights associated with the condition of citizen. At least in terms of the rhetoric employed in the legislation, it was in precisely this period that access to welfare was restricted to Turin citizens. We should recall that, previously, no distinction had been made between citizens and non-citizens in the distribution of poor relief. Indeed, in 1541 the poor who

<sup>106</sup> ACT, C.S. 145, 1597.

'had no rooms' in the city were entitled to favourable treatment - a place in the hospital of S.Giovanni - whereas residents could receive assistance only at home<sup>107</sup>. Or again, in 1568 and 1571, the distinction between beggars to be expelled and to be assisted depended on their ability to work, and not on their citizenship<sup>108</sup>. Foreignness appeared as a negative attribute only in 1586. For the first time, the City Council ordered 'the expulsion of the indolent foreign vagabonds who steal bread from the mouths of the city's poor'<sup>109</sup>. However, the uncertainty surrounding the criteria used to distinguish who was and who was not a citizen demonstrates that the concept was still alien and ill-defined. In July of 1587 the new edition of the Ordini politici stated that all the poor who arrived in the city after Christmas were to be considered non-citizens, and those who arrived before Christmas, citizens. The same Ordini in autumn of 1592 changed the cut-off date from Christmas to Michaelmas (i.e. to autumn and the beginning of the cold season)<sup>110</sup>. In the years that follow, orders for the expulsion of beggars usually mention the distinction between citizen and non-citizen as one of the principal criteria for their selection, but without further clarification.

The reasons for the emergence of a discourse which discriminated against non-citizens are to be found in that political clash which prompted the City to define its own borders and to play heavily on the rhetoric concerning the privileges and status of citizenship. As I have already suggested, this does not mean that rules concerning

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., C.S. 657, 1541.

<sup>108</sup> D., T. XIII, p. 248, Lettere di Sua Altezza con le quali nomina un Cavaliere di virtù, 5.4.1568, and ACT, C.S. 3234, 1571.

<sup>109</sup> Ord., 10.9.1586.

<sup>110</sup> ACT, C.S. 4701, 1587, and Borelli, p. 228 ff., Ordini politici, 29.5.1592.

citizenship were applied to the letter. They were, in fact, widely inconsistent with the dynamics of immigration which sustained the expansion of the city in those years and its transformation into a capital. In practice, the rules concerning citizenship were applied in a fashion which reinforced social rather than geographical discrimination. However, the distinction between citizen and non-citizen did contain an important ideological message. During the struggle against the Duke's authority, the inclusion of this distinction in legislation must have reinforced the City's identity and the image of a body with its own rights and privileges.

#### **6. The Rise of Ducal Charity.**

Initiatives taken in the field of poor relief thus have to be understood in the framework of local politics. This becomes even clearer if we examine the changes in the Duke's initiatives in welfare, since these appear to be closely related to shifts in the local balance of power. Three phases can be detected. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, the Duke set up his own welfare institutions, but was careful to keep them from encroaching on municipal charitable activity. His policy was extremely cautious and mainly orientated towards the creation of separate areas of ducal influence. At the turn of the century, there were the first attempts at more direct interference, but these were easily resisted by the City. It was not until ducal power had consolidated its authority and formed a following, that a more determined attack was made on the City's monopoly over welfare. In order to carry out this challenge, the Duke relied on the services of the knights of the Ordine di San Maurizio e Lazzaro, who were made up of his closest courtiers.

The first signs of a ducal involvement in charity go back to the 1570s and 1580s, when two new charitable

institutions were created under the Duke's protection, and generously funded from central government. Officially, the hospital of San Maurizio e Lazzaro was founded in 1575, in a house donated by the Duke together with other property<sup>111</sup>. However this did not actively involve itself with welfare until the following century<sup>112</sup>. The establishment of the hospital was in fact an essential part of a purely political project for the creation of an order of knighthood under the control of the House of Savoy. In 1572, after complex diplomatic manoeuvres, Emanuele Filiberto did in fact obtain a papal bull which united the existing order of San Maurizio with the order of San Lazzaro of Jerusalem which possessed substantial benefices in commendam<sup>113</sup>. The foundation of the hospital was thus initially merely a consequence of the fact that the ancient order of San Lazzaro had originally been dedicated to the care of the sick (in particular lepers). The hospital only started to carry out its duties once the status of the order had been firmly established. In the mid-sixteenth century it underwent its first major reorganization and expansion; then, in the 1670s, a newly constructed building of 'greater dignity' replaced the original group of medieval buildings. The later decades of the century saw the fastest expansion of the institution - which grew from fourteen to fifty beds between 1656 and the end of the

<sup>111</sup> The donation (effected in 27.4.1575) included, along with the house, an income of 600 scudi per year and the property belonging to the community of Poirino. See T.M. Caffaratto, 'Storia dell'Ospedale Maggiore di Torino della religione e ordine dei SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro', Ann.Osp.M.Vitt., Vol. XXII (1979), p. 366.

<sup>112</sup> In the early decades of the seventeenth century the building was used as a convent for the friars of Santa Teresa. Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>113</sup> Breve di papa Clemente VIII quale restituisce in pristino la milizia e ospedale di S. Lazzaro, 9.9.1603, in D., T. I, p. 275.



century<sup>114</sup>. After this period, however, the hospital seems to have undergone a kind of paralysis, and there was no significant expansion in the eighteenth century. The growth of the hospital therefore reflected the rise and fall of the prestige of the new order much more closely than the changing requirements of the city's population. The hospital of San Maurizio e Lazzaro never lost its character as a fief of the House of Savoy. Isolated from city life, it appears to have been the sovereign's private institution, at the service of his court and other ducal institutions. This helps to explain why, unlike the other hospitals and institutions, it was unable to attract the attention of private benefactors: in the hundred and forty years between 1650 and 1780 there were only about forty donations that exceeded a hundred lire, and in the most cases they were extremely small<sup>115</sup>.

Let us take a closer look at the order, for it had a key role in the Duke's attempts to develop his own welfare system with which he could challenge the municipal monopoly. Originally, the creation of the order of knighthood was aimed at establishing the dynasty's status over other ruling families - as the high number of foreign knights testifies<sup>116</sup>. So in the first few decades,

<sup>114</sup> Caffaratto, 'Storia dell'ospedale', p. 371.

<sup>115</sup> The legacies and donations to the hospital are preserved in AOSML, m.2 and m.3 da ordinare.

<sup>116</sup> The order of San Maurizio was established by Pope Gregorio XIII in a papal letter of 16.9.1572, and Papal Bull of 13.11.1572 brought about the union with the order of San Lazzaro (D., T. I, p. 271 ff. and 275 ff.); with the Letters Patent, 22.1.1573 Emanuele Filiberto founded the Sacra Religione (ibid., p. 399). Histories of the order include: G. Baldesano, La Sacra Historia di S. Mauritio Arciduca della Legione Thebea..., Turin 1604 (2nd edition); G.B. Ricci, Istoria dell'Ordine Equestre de' SS. Maurizio e Lazzaro col Rolo delle Comende, Turin 1714; L. Cibrario, Breve Storia degli Ordini di S. Maurizio e di S. Lazzaro Avanti e Dopo l'Unione Loro, Turin 1844; G. Claretta, Dell'Ordine Mauriziano nel Primo Secolo della Sua Costituzione, Turin 1890.

knighthoods were conferred in order to encourage relationships with other courts. But after the turn of the century, the order was used increasingly for internal political purposes as a means of bolstering the pro-Savoy camp. The knights now came mainly from within the state<sup>117</sup>. At the same time, members of the order received an impressive list of privileges - such as tax exemptions, special jurisdictions, rights of precedence, and the right to carry arms - which placed them at the highest level of the social hierarchy<sup>118</sup>. The status of the order was further enhanced by the decision, taken in 1603, to declare St. Maurice's Day a public holiday. The prosperity gained in the same year from its union with the order of San Lazaro allowed it to grant its knights wealthy benefices in commendam<sup>119</sup>.

The boosting of the order's prestige constitutes a typical example of the way the Duke sought to enlarge his following and influence by introducing new forms of social advancement under his direct control. The opposition that this policy encountered on the other hand from other political bodies points to the weakness of the Duke's

<sup>117</sup> See the list of the investitures which, although incomplete, does make it possible to observe how the trend was inverted, in Ricci, Istoria.

<sup>118</sup> On 8.1.1608 the knights were exempted from the payment of duty, tolls, personal taxation (except the registration of property) and payments for the upkeep of the garrison, and from service in the guard; they were given precedence over doctors, lawyers and craftsmen in public ceremonies, and, with their servants, were granted the right to carry all types of arms. On 12.4.1608 the order was extended to include the legal privileges which had been formulated in 1572. These privileges regarding the jurisdiction they subject to were no longer restricted to religious affairs, but also included all criminal and civil cases (including debt), all of which were to be heard by the Auditor of the Order. In 1609 the knights and the hospital were given the right to keep their own slaughterhouse, where the meat was to be free of duty. Borelli, p. 245 ff. and D., T. I, p. 428 and 454.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

position and the climate of political barter that still characterized the period at the turn of the century. On three occasions, the Senate refused to pass the edict granting privileges to the order of S. Maurizio e Lazzaro, in spite of the fact that they had already forced the Duke to accept a whole series of amendments to the previous draft. Notwithstanding these concessions, the Senate continued to obstruct ratification of several clauses, especially one that granted the knights precedence in public meetings over doctors, lawyers and trade guilds. In the end, the Duke was obliged to justify this precedence in terms of the religious status of the knights, and to assure his opponents this did not imply any slight to the professions or trades. On 8 February 1608, the Senate finally had to capitulate, but it insisted on putting its continued opposition on record and stating that ratification was the result of pressure from their sovereign<sup>120</sup>.

One of the Duke's aims in building up the order was to create a nucleus of officials invested with his direct authority. This picture of loyalty was the dominant image in the propaganda; the knights' devotion to the Duke even appeared to have the seal of religious vows. Before very long, a clear distinction was to emerge between court offices and governmental duties, and this confined the order within the boundaries of the court so that it came to have a merely ceremonial role<sup>121</sup>. For a brief period before these developments took place, however, the knights were given positions of considerable responsibility as the Duke's representatives. It was in this context that, at the

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p 245.

<sup>121</sup> In the following decades, the order was increasingly identified with court circles, and court protocol attributed particular importance to its role in public gatherings. See T. De Gaudenzi, 'Torino e la corte sabauda al tempo di Maria Cristina di Francia', BSBS, Part I, Vol. XVIII (1913), p. 41 and 43, and *ibid.*, Part II, Vol. XIX, (1913), p. 53.

end of the sixteenth century and in the early decades of the seventeenth, 'the knights of our order' took on the administration of the charitable institutions established by the Duke. In the 1620s, the Duke unsuccessfully attempted a more ambitious plan which would have given the order control over a charitable organization covering the entire state. He asked the Pope to transfer the property belonging to the practically defunct Confraternities of the Holy Spirit (administered by the laity) to the knights of his order; this property was to constitute the basis for the establishment of a network of hospitals stretching right across the country<sup>122</sup>. The knights of San Maurizio were also involved in the administration of another ducal institution, the Albergo di Virtù. This had been founded in 1580 by a number of members of the Compagnia di S. Paolo (Turin's most important lay congregation)<sup>123</sup>, but it existed only on paper until Duke Carlo Emanuele I took it over in 1587, and entrusted it to the order, which, together with the members of the Council of State and the Auditor of the Camera dei Conti, was to manage it<sup>124</sup>. The Albergo di Virtù was also the beneficiary of a considerable transfer of financial resources. It received an income linked to public finance, an annual cheque for six hundred lira and a large building outside the city walls called the Palazzo delle Poste, which for many decades was to be the centre of the Duke's activities in the field of welfare. Here, under the auspices of the Duke, the brothers of San Giovanni di Dio later established their hospital and this was also where

<sup>122</sup> Erba, La Chiesa, p. 242 ff.

<sup>123</sup> D., T. XIII, p. 198 ff., Letters Patent, 18.12.1580.

<sup>124</sup> AST s.r., Albergo di Virtù, box 3, Atto di remissione dalli direttori della casa dell'Albergo al Duca Carlo Emanuele I ..., 29.6.1587; Borelli, p. 205, Eretione e autorità del consiglio dell'Albergo, 8.7.1587.

the first hospital for beggars was to be set up<sup>125</sup>. Right from the beginning the institution thus bore the marks of ducal patronage. It is no surprise, therefore, to learn that the inauguration was a stately occasion with a full procession, arranged to coincide with the Duke's birthday in January 1588.

The Albergo has generally been seen as an attempt to favour the formation of a class of artisans, and encourage the spread of manufacturing activities at a time when Piedmontese industry was extremely limited<sup>126</sup>. The Albergo took in a few dozen children aged between twelve and fifteen (mostly boys) and trained them under master craftsmen who lived in<sup>127</sup>. In the early period at least, most of these craftsmen were recruited from outside the state, in order to introduce new skills. Yet the institution was also an important vehicle for the Duke's policy of influence. Given the privileges that it entailed, admission to the Albergo was desirable both for the apprentices and for the craftsmen who opened shops there. The institution paid for the maintenance of the boys and girls and all the costs of their six-year apprenticeship. At the end of this period they were supposed to be experienced enough in their craft to be able to enter the labour market, and spread the new skills they had

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., Fondazione dell'Albergo, 24.7.1587. By way of comparison, it should be remembered that the Duke's contribution to the maintenance of the hospital of San Giovanni was 30 scudi a year.

<sup>126</sup> D., T. XIII, p. 198; G. Ponzio, Stato e Pauperismo in Italia: l'Albergo di Virtù di Torino (1580-1836), Rome 1974.

<sup>127</sup> AST. s. r., Albergo di Virtù, Scat. 47, Ordinati del Consiglio di amministrazione, 1, 1587-1598, 26.12.1587 and 15.12.1587. Sixty children (40 boys and 20 girls) were accepted at the inauguration. The total number of inmates remained at about a hundred.

acquired<sup>128</sup>. The Albergo also committed itself to the maintenance of the artisan, his family and any workers he might take on, and to supplying the workshop (and in some cases even the equipment) free of charge - as well as the apprentices who had to be properly instructed in their craft<sup>129</sup>. The institution also shared the risk of the enterprise in that it advanced the capital for the raw materials (this capital was then reimbursed from sales). Finally, the covenant often provided for the concession of monopolies in the production of specific articles; these might last a number of years, and sometimes covered the whole of the state's territory<sup>130</sup>. Membership of the Albergo therefore not only created favourable working conditions, but also guaranteed access to a number of privileges and rights not enjoyed by the other artisans in the city. In 1587, the Albergo and all those who worked in it came under the Duke's direct protection, which meant that all civil and criminal cases concerning the governors, the master craftsmen, their servants and workers were removed from ordinary jurisdiction and put under that of the institution's own governing council<sup>131</sup>. This policy of granting special privileges continued in the following century. In the mid-seventeenth century, the governor and

<sup>128</sup> Some children were admitted for no charge, but in many cases the family paid a modest fee. Especially in the early period, there were limited openings on the labour market outside the institution, and the ex-apprentices stayed on as employees in the workshops run in the Albergo, where they received free board and a small salary.

<sup>129</sup> Some examples are to be found in *ibid.*, minutes of 25.6.1589, 16.12.1589 and 23.12.1590. On 21.6.1594, following consultations with the Duke and Duchess, it was agreed that, in order to avoid excessive spending, the master craftsmen would take on responsibility for the maintenance of the apprentices, and would be paid an annual lump sum for each one.

<sup>130</sup> For example, *ibid.*, the minutes of 24.1.1593 and 7.8.1594, and the covenant with Pattino, in D., T. XIII, p. 203, 15.9.1587.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, clause 9.

craftsmen were granted exemption from personal and military taxes, and further concessions were obtained in the eighteenth century<sup>132</sup>. The Albergo was therefore a kind of free port zone. It enjoyed immunity from the duties imposed by the Duke on 'all goods, livestock, fruit, and any other items in transit across the state' for use by the institution, and in 1636 it was exempted from the tax on the silk bought in Racconigi<sup>133</sup>.

The establishment of the Albergo constituted an important political act in a period of conflict like the late-sixteenth century. The Duke's initiative did not interfere directly with the charitable institutions managed by the City, nor did it create a system of patronage in competition with that of the municipality. By and large the Duke's strategy for creating consensus did not even, at this stage, involve the capital, as can be shown by the fact that most of the apprentices came from the provinces. Admission was nearly always arranged through the intercession of the provincial nobility or members of the court, and only very rarely did the governing body admit candidates whose families petitioned directly. Very often the Dukes themselves were the mediators. They would receive the petitions, check them through and pass them onto the governing council of the Albergo for acceptance<sup>134</sup>. It would thus appear from the minute books that in the first few decades the Duke and his wife, the Infanta, managed the Albergo almost directly, and continually concerned

<sup>132</sup> Ponzo, Stato e Pauperismo, p. 99. With the development of craft guilds, the apprentices were assured of the title of master craftsman free from the charges and conditions usually imposed by guilds. The master craftsmen were granted the right to sit with the leaders of their guild once a year. AST, p.s., LPqM, m.16, Albergo di Virtù, fasc.3.

<sup>133</sup> See the Letters Patent referred to above, 15.9.1587, and Ponzo, Stato e Pauperismo, p. 120.

<sup>134</sup> See the minutes of 22.4.1593 and 19.2.1594 in AST, s.r., Albergo di Virtù.

themselves with questions of internal organization, and the governing council seems to have consulted them before taking even the smallest decisions. The main impact of the institution upon the balance of power in the city was the influence that the Duke was able gradually to extend over a class of artisans who had been trained in the Albergo or who had gained a privilege. In other words, the Albergo encouraged the creation of a network of entrepreneurs and artisans tied to the Duke by links of dependence, and therefore an area of support that he could count on.

It was only at the end of the century that the Duke openly attempted to subvert the autonomy and prestige of the charitable institutions run by the municipality. In 1597 he attempted to set up a new hospital in competition with the City's hospital of S.Giovanni. Originally the Duke supported a proposal put forward by the brothers of the order of San Gioanni di Dio (the Fatebenefratelli) that they should establish themselves in Turin, and take over the management of the hospital of S.Giovanni. This project would have involved the exclusion of the City Council from the running of the hospital, given that the members of this order were obliged by their statute to submit the accounts of their management only to the Archbishop<sup>135</sup>. The City had a similar proposal by the same brothers some four years earlier, and they did the same with this second proposal, in spite of the fact that this time it was openly supported by the Duke and the Archbishop. Faced with a blank refusal by the City Council, the Duke backed away from the plan, and gave the friars a wing of the building used by the Albergo di Virtù, until they were able to establish their own hospital under the name of Santissimo Sudario. The inauguration ceremony held in May was attended by the Duke and the Infanta, together with their officials and

<sup>135</sup> For the sources on this episode, see G. Radice and C. Marpelli, I Fatebenefratelli, Vol. V, I Conventi. L'Ospedale del S. Sudario di Torino e di S. Michele di Asti, Milan 1977 (pp. 13-48), which contains a good part of the documentation.



courtiers, in order to emphasize the importance attached to the event. Even the City councillors could not refuse the Duke's request that they send two delegates to the ceremony. However the municipality was able to impose rigid conditions on the order, which were stipulated in a notarial act on the very day of the inauguration. These conditions effectively subjected the new hospital to the City's supervision. A particularly significant clause was the one which limited the maximum number of friars to six, thus blocking any plans the order and the new hospital might have for expansion. Moreover, the friars could be sacked in cases of malpractice, and any items thus acquired would remain the property of the hospital<sup>136</sup>. By December the City was already exercising its rights and ordering two councillors to carry out an inquiry, into the allegations that the friars were not using all the alms collected to help the sick, but were sending them out of the country. Further investigations of this kind were carried out in the decades that followed, constantly to remind the brothers of their unstable position in town and their dependence on the local authority.

In 1598 the Duke was still using the hospital of Santissimo Sudario in his attempt to limit the expansion of the hospital of S.Giovanni, and to move it outside the city walls. The governors of the latter had just purchased a building in order to enlarge the hospital further, when the Duke asked them to exchange their new building with that occupied by the brothers of San Gioanni di Dio. This request was rejected out of hand, and sparked off a lengthy polemic between the ducal authorities and the municipality. This was essentially a political dispute, centred on the decrease in prestige that would have resulted from the transfer outside the city walls of the hospital of S.Giovanni, which had been at the very heart of the city since the fifteenth century. The Duke argued that outside

<sup>136</sup> The covenant is published in D., T. II, pp. 1-3.

the city walls the air was healthier and the hospital would be better placed in time of epidemics; the governors replied that a central position was more essential if they and the doctors were to carry out their duties properly, and argued that the hospital's existing position offered gentlemen and gentlewomen the opportunity to exercise their piety by visiting the sick, and that the presence of the sick within the town itself encouraged charity amongst the citizenry<sup>137</sup>.

This attempt to shift the City's hospital to a less central place on Turin's social map was successfully resisted, and when he was forced to concede defeat the Duke seems to have abandoned the plan to create an alternative centre for the care of the sick. The hospital of Santissimo Sudario never had anything more than a marginal role in the city's welfare system. Until the 1620s it was housed in a building which was totally unsuitable for the care of the sick, due to its state of disrepair and the fact that the hospital was not sealed off from the manufacturing activities in the adjacent institution; as a consequence of this, its patients and staff were disturbed by the noise of the spinners and 'the clamour and terrible smell' produced by the silk worms<sup>138</sup>. In 1628, after the hospital had been transferred to a new building built by the friars, there were still only five patients. At the end of the century, in the final building, completed in the 1680s after further enlargement, the infirmary consisted of only ten beds.

In the first decades after the restoration of the House of Savoy, the development of Turin's welfare system therefore reflected the continuing weakness of the Duke's authority, in contrast with increasing prestige of the municipality. As we have seen, the institutions protected

<sup>137</sup> AOSG, Cat. 1, cl. 1, cart. 5, 69, Ragioni d'addursi acciò che l'Hospitale no' si muti fuori della città, 1598.

<sup>138</sup> Radice e Marpelli, I Fatebenefratelli, p. 48.

by the Duke remained largely ineffective, and unable to constitute a significant reference point for the city's poor or to attract private charity.

The municipality's dominance of the welfare scene was not seriously challenged until the 1620s. After that date however, the conflict became more acute. The Duke started to meddle more often in the treatment of beggars. His delegates would frequently present the City Council with censures which bitterly attacked its policies. He denounced the municipality's inefficiency and its inability to free respectable citizens from the nuisance of begging. He sought the adoption of measures that 'imposed order and stopped destitute beggars from wandering the streets',<sup>139</sup>. The civic government was accused of being too lax towards beggars, and even of exposing the city to the risk of contagious diseases:

His Majesty protests at the terrible state of affairs and the way the poor in the city live, their scandalous lifestyle, atrocious sins, licentiousness, the constant contact between men and women day and night, with the ensuing danger of some infection.<sup>140</sup>

But at the same time, the councillors were denounced for their lack of compassion for the poor:

who at night suffer the cold, which has caused three deaths, and the City has demonstrated little charity in assisting them, and must quickly provide somewhere for them to shelter at night to avoid death from cold [...] and if they do not do this, his Majesty will take on the City's responsibilities and provide for the poor in disgust.<sup>141</sup>

The accusations of lack of proper Christian charity to the

<sup>139</sup> Ord., 17.8.1623 and 19.7.1620.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 30.8.1624.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 7.2.1622.

poor who were left to die of cold, or driven from the city's territory without any assistance, were supposed to acclaim the sovereign's piety and solicitude, and his willingness to protect all his subjects and his ability to interpret their needs:

and a great number of exhausted and destitute people come to the city, and many die in the city and just outside, and the doctors say that these deaths are caused by the terrible sufferings they undergo, which has caused His Highness great affliction upon hearing of it<sup>142</sup>.

The attack on the municipal management of welfare was in fact based on arguments implying a universal and indiscriminate perspective on charity, in opposition to the corporative nature of the measures taken by the City Council. The Duke argued strongly against any distinction between citizen and non-citizen - the element which by then constituted the basis of the municipality's rhetoric. He opposed expulsions of beggars, and put forward plans to assist all the needy in the city without distinction. In 1627 this policy of extending welfare to all subjects in need was acted upon with the establishment of the hospital for beggars which the Duke entrusted to the knights of San Maurizio e Lazzaro. The new hospital invited 'all the poor of whatever situation who come from our territories and happen to be in the city' to seek shelter within its walls<sup>143</sup>. However the establishment of this hospital did not mark a turning point in the overall policy towards begging. The hospital had a short and difficult existence. This was in part caused by the serious outbreak of plague soon after its foundation, and then by the dynastic civil

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 5.6.1629.

<sup>143</sup> Borelli, p. 232, Eretione di un hospitale per i mendicanti, 10.3.1627. The hospital of the Annunziata as it was called was initially housed in the disused building belonging to the ancient hospital of S. Lazzaro outside the city, and later in the Albergo di Virtù, after the brothers of San Giovanni di Dio had moved.

war (1637-42). It finally ceased to function at the end of the 1630s<sup>144</sup>.

The City continued to oppose plans for universal charity, but its power had at last been eroded. Welfare initiatives increasingly resulted from difficult negotiations between the Duke and the municipality. When the City councillors carried out the traditional collections from the wealthier citizens, or distributed daily hand-outs to the poor, they were often flanked by the knights of the order of San Maurizio e Lazzaro in their capacity as representatives of the Duke<sup>145</sup>. The controversy over the 1629 anti-famine measures (in a period of dearth that was the prelude to a dramatic outbreak of plague), clearly demonstrates the nature of the conflict. The anti-famine policy was administered jointly, instead of being organized by the City autonomously as had been the case previously, but this situation had to be forced on the municipality and was a source of serious conflict. The City allocated ten scudi a day to finance relief, but the Duke demanded that it should commit itself to pay half the bill, whatever this should come to. The City replied that the policy of indiscriminate aid the Duke wished to enforce was too extravagant, and would have involved 'undertaking the impossible'. It therefore requested the adoption of selective measures. The two authorities eventually reached a compromise by which the City committed itself to pay a thousand scudi for another three months, but the Duke had to concede that no non-citizens would be assisted. On 26 May, hundreds of poor were expelled from the city, although the municipality was obliged to pay a further one hundred

<sup>144</sup> No documents have survived recording the activities of this first hospital for beggars. However the dates of the Duke's provisions in its favour (payment of the donations and incomes allocated to it) cease in 1638, suggesting that the hospital was closed around this time. D., T. XII, pp. 254 ff.

<sup>145</sup> Ord., 4.6.1628, 5.6.1629.

and twenty-five scudi to supply them for their journey<sup>146</sup>.

In spite of the arbitrary nature of the distinction between citizen and non-citizen, in these years of sharp conflict the municipality attempted to impose it with the greatest rigour. This was clearly a symbolic dispute. The attack on the principle of citizenship, which the City had employed to justify its hegemony, was an attack on the ideological basis of municipal power. It challenged the privileges enjoyed by citizens, and opposed it with an alternative perspective based on the equality of all subjects' rights and the sovereignty of central government.

It is notable that the Duke was able to take on a more active role in welfare policy at a time when the court was expanding and gaining a privileged position in the urban social hierarchy. In other words, at a time when the sovereign's power was consolidating itself. Again, the attack on municipal hegemony over charitable provision was very much an outcome of this new political context and of the changing balance of power. Nor was the offensive restricted to the field of welfare, for in this period the City's immunities and privileges generally were attacked with renewed vigour. In the 1620s for the first time war taxation did not respect the capital's privileged status. Turin was requested to make large contributions to the special levy for military expenses, and was obliged to borrow heavily and incur unprecedented levels of indebtedness. In addition, Turin's citizens were now faced with ordinary taxes - such as the tax on wheat - from which they were supposed to be exempt. The Duke simply ignored the agreements drawn up in previous decades, which authorized exemption, not to mention the once-and-for-all payments the City had made to acquire immunity. The Duke's edicts now quite explicitly and blatantly disregarded the myth of Turin's special status, and continually equated the

<sup>146</sup> Ord., 21-22.6.1629 and 26.5.1630.

capital with his other territories. Many other privileges were lost at this time; in 1616 the citizens of Turin were called to arms for the first time (once again this was a measure which put them on a par with other subjects). The City resisted this violation of its privileges for a long time, but in the end it had to capitulate. It soon became clear that this was no isolated incident; in 1620, even though the state was at peace, the citizens again had to 'bow their heads' before the order to provide a permanent militia for the city, and accept 'something that had never occurred in centuries gone by, even in time of war'. Compulsory military service was extended to the entire territory of Turin. In the following decade, even the ancient rights over milling were questioned (1629). On numerous occasions, the City's dignity as an institution was slighted, and its position in public ceremonies often usurped<sup>147</sup>.

As we will see in the next chapter, profound changes were taking place in the relative status position of the various elite groups, and these were leading to a redefinition of the pattern of power. The confrontation between the Duke and the municipality which had dominated the picture for many decades, causing even charitable institutions to be split into two well-defined parties, now gave way to a more complex distribution of power and pattern of political initiative in the capital.

<sup>147</sup> Bizzarri, 'Vita.. ai tempi di Carlo Emanuele I'; Chiaudano, 'La finanza.. ai tempi di Carlo Emanuele I'.

### CHAPTER III. THE MOTIVATIONS FOR CHARITY

#### 1. From Civic to Voluntary Charity

1649 saw the founding of an institution which eventually took over a considerable part of the charitable functions of the Town Council. This was the Ospedale di Carità, which, after a shaky beginning, went on to become a large poorhouse which housed 2000 inmates and gave bread to hundreds of families outside. This new hospital marked a significant watershed, for some of the poor who until that time had been assisted principally via out-relief provided by the City Council now came to be segregated in an institution set up specifically for the purpose. Unlike the hospital for beggars that had been started in 1627, but had never taken off, and soon closed, the Ospedale di Carità, was to become the main focus for Turin's charitable activity.

How can we explain this transformation? The appearance of forms of confinement of the poor has normally been seen as a result of new attitudes towards poverty which meant that this was increasingly perceived as blameworthy and synonymous with crime and sin. According to this view, beggars were no longer regarded with compassion but aroused fear, annoyance and revulsion among the respectable ranks of society. The poor were therefore cast into secluded institutions where they were supposed to receive the moral and religious education they lacked and forced to do what they would not have done spontaneously - that is, work<sup>1</sup>. In this chapter, I would like to draw attention to a different order of phenomena which appeared at the same time and which may have played a considerable role in prompting the

<sup>1</sup> M.Foucault, Folie et Dérailson. Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, Paris 1961, Première Partie; Gutton, La Société et les Pauvres; Fairchilds, Poverty and Charity; Norberg, Rich and Poor; R.M.Schwarz, Policing the Poor in Eighteenth Century France, Chapel Hill London 1988.



emergence of the institutionalisation of the poor.

Apart from anything else, the advent of institutions for beggars should also be seen in the context of the rapid expansion of prestigious charitable building which is noticeable in many parts of Europe especially from the mid seventeenth century on<sup>2</sup>. This period saw a wave of new construction and of rebuilding of existing institutions not only for the indigent, but also for the sick and other categories of needy. Newly-founded institutions were established in grandiose edifices and existing foundations left their old, modest buildings (which had often originally been designed for some other purpose) and moved into new purpose-built premises. Hospitals and other institutions came to be modelled on the splendid lines of noble house architecture<sup>3</sup>. In Italy, the baroque style in architecture provided them with an imposing and ornate appearance. Turin was no exception to this trend; in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, all its main charitable institutions moved to new premises: the Ospedale di Carità in 1683, the hospital of S.Giovanni in 1680, the Albergo di Virtù in 1682, the hospital of San Maurizio e Lazzaro in the late 1670s, and that of San Giovanni di Dio in the early 1680s. The first two, in particular, were built as real civic monuments; even at the time, they were recorded in guides to noteworthy buildings in the town (see Ill.3-4)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> D.Leistikow, Ten Centuries of European Hospital Architecture, Ingolheim 1967; J.D.Thompson and G.Goldin, The Hospital: a Social and Architectural History, New Haven Conn. 1975; A.Scotti, 'Malati e strutture ospedaliere dall'età dei Lumi all'Unità', in Storia d'Italia, Annali 7.

<sup>3</sup> S.Coppo, 'L'edilizia assistenziale ospedaliera nell'urbanistica torinese del Sei e Settecento', in A.Cavallari Murat (ed.), Forma Urbana e Architettura nella Torino Barocca, Turin 1968, vol.I, part II, p.854.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. passim. The dates cited are those when works began; in some cases, several years elapsed before completion. The new wave of building was made possible by the eastward extension of the city limits in the 1670s.

The fact that the 'houses of the poor were coming to resemble palaces' (to use the expression adopted by one contemporary critic)<sup>5</sup> is an important phenomenon, which deserves more attention than it has received. In Turin, this architectural change combined with the development of a series of rituals and celebratory practices centred around charitable institutions which turned the latter into something much more complex than simple places of shelter or confinement of the poor. Hospitals became a grandiose stage on which new forms of celebration of the prestige of governors and benefactors were enacted, a theatre where hundreds of poor inmates could be employed to praise the virtues of the wealthy. Moreover, they provided new opportunities for the acquisition of power and influence. The multiplication in this period of hospitals for beggars - and of charitable institutions more in general - not only reflects a change in policies towards the poor and sick, but shows that charity was now actively employed as an instrument in the strategies of the rich.

The appearance of large institutions for the poor was also accompanied by an ever-increasing growth in charitable donations. Evidently, the institutionalization of the poor - by creating an arena in which city elites could put their prestige on display via their charitable acts - stimulated their generosity considerably. In fact, the end of the century is marked by a large increase both in the number of legacies (see Fig.6) and in their average size. There is no comparison between the few scudi which for decades was all the hospital of S.Giovanni could hope for in the way of charity (Fig.5) and the generous donations and legacies which started to rain down at the turn of the century<sup>6</sup>. Where in the earlier period, bequests and donations were often given by long-term inmates in return for services

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Jones, The Charitable Imperative, p.37.

<sup>6</sup> Some idea of the value of the legacies in Fig.6 can be gained if one considers that the annual salary of a doctor for the poor in 1624 was 60 scudi.

Figure 5. SIZE OF MONETARY LEGACIES LEFT TO THE HOSPITAL OF SAN GIOVANNI 1541-1631 (in scudi)

<10 %	<30 %	<50 %	<100 %	<500 %	<1000 %	over 1000 %	Total
7 (16.7)	12 (28.6)	7 (16.7)	9 (21.4)	4 (9.4)	1 (2.4)	2 (4.8)	42 100

they received, in the later period charitable giving became the common practice of Turin's elites.

This generalized voluntary giving was also very different from the contribution to municipal special levies for the poor which had sustained the City Council's upkeep of the poor. A related change which emerges in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, is in fact the shift in the bulk of financing the support of the poor away from the City government to private charity. From this time on, the financial needs of the institutions - including the enormous costs of constructing the new buildings - were covered almost entirely by private donations. A revolution in the meaning of charity and in forms of giving had taken place. Charity had been transformed from a civic duty - administered by the City Council - into a voluntary and personal act conveying prestige on the giver. This change and its chronology is illustrated by the comparison between two lists of contributors to the relief of the poor which exist for 1683 and 1739<sup>7</sup>. In both cases, the Ospedale di Carità tried to overcome its financial difficulties via a voluntary tax on citizens - a practice which is reminiscent of the City's sixteenth-century imposition of taxes to which I have just referred. However, whereas the 1683 charge still managed to obtain contributions from a

<sup>7</sup> AOC, Cat.V, Parte I, Busta 1, fasc.1, Libro delli concorsi dei benefattori alla tassa fattasi da ciascuno per il sostentamento dell'Hospedale della Carità, 1683; fasc.2, Libro delli particolari tassatisi, 1739.

substantial number of citizens who had resources of some kind, the 1739 list is a much shorter one including only a couple of dozen contributors. In 1683, in the ten parishes for which the tax register survives, 508 citizens committed themselves to giving money or goods to the hospital. If we assume that another hundred contributors may have been obtained in the two parishes for which we have no register<sup>8</sup>, we can calculate that around 15% of heads of households contributed<sup>9</sup>. Even though this is not an extraordinarily high percentage, nor is it an insignificant one. Worth noting is also the wide-ranging status of contributors. These included innkeepers, shopkeepers and artisans, as well as officers and prominent aristocrats. Likewise, the contributions varied from a few soldi to hundreds of lire, from a few pairs of shoes or a piece of cloth to large quantities of corn or wine. On paper (for we do not know if all the contributors maintained their commitments), our 10 parishes gave a total of 4165 lire, plus 720 emine of cereals (mostly wheat), 257 brente of wine, and various quantities of bread, shoes, cloth, oil, etc.<sup>10</sup>.

The response to the charge levied in 1739 was very different. Despite the notable growth of the town's

<sup>8</sup> One of the parishes for which the register is missing (San Pietro del Gallo) contained the Duke's palace and thus was the main area of residence for members of the court; in theory, at least, it should have provided a high number of wealthy contributors.

<sup>9</sup> I obtain this figure by multiplying the 600 contributors listed by 4 (estimated average size of household) and dividing it by the total city population, which at the time was around 40,000. *h*

<sup>10</sup> Some donors committed themselves for just one year, others for three years; it seems probable, therefore, that the charge was imposed for three years. This supposition seems reinforced by the fact that in 1685 the governors noted that 'payment must be solicited of alms which citizens have committed themselves to making and bills sent out', AOC, Ordinati, 30.12.1685. I have found no reference to any other charge between that made in 1683 and that of 1739.

population since 1683, the register lists only 32 subscribers, all of whom belonged to the most exclusive ranks of the city's aristocracy. This restriction to a much more elite group was not the sign of a decrease in levels of Turinese generosity, but rather a sign that this form of charity had become unpopular. The majority of affluent citizens refused to contribute to what was in effect a semi-imposed form of charity, and one which by this time did not seem sufficiently personalized. Only the thirty odd names at the top of the social hierarchy - those, in other words, who took part in every public initiative - were in the list<sup>11</sup>. Whereas the 1683 levy was still in the tradition of the municipal poor rates discussed in the previous chapters, the contribution called for four decades later was just an unsuccessful attempt to revive a custom by now totally anachronistic.

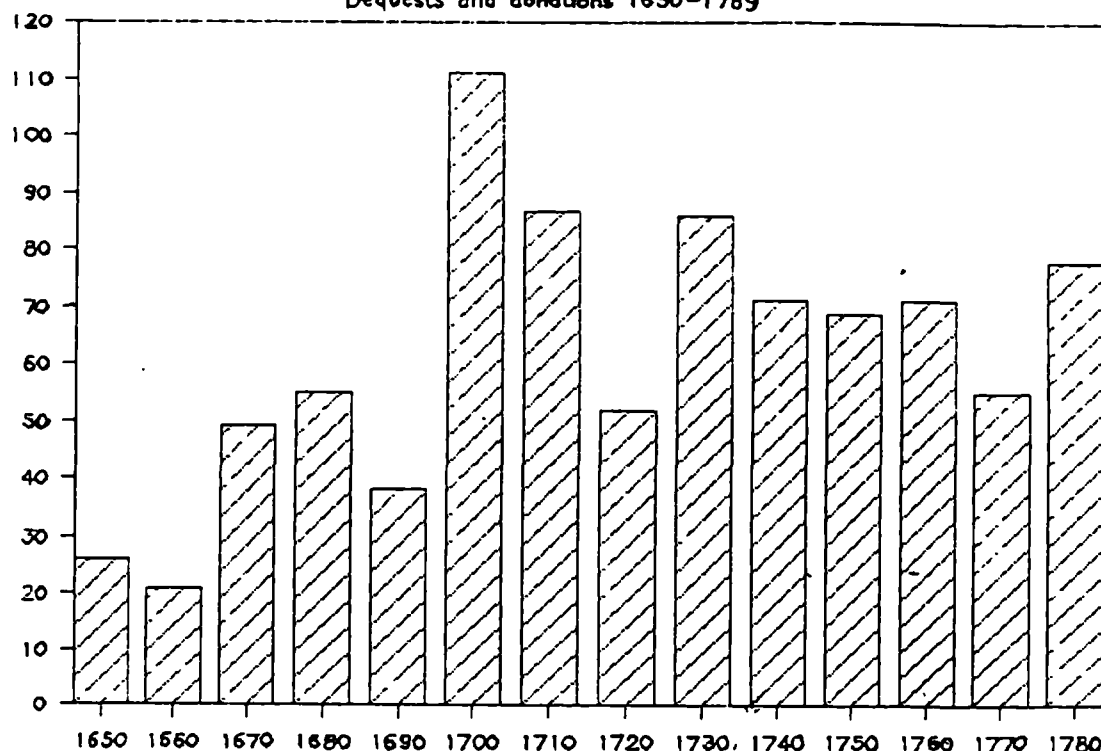
Private charity in Catholic countries has usually been seen as an expression of religious sentiment and linked in particular to the Counter-Reformation Church's encouragement of charitable action. In Turin, however, private charity became important only at the turn of the seventeenth century - too late, in other words, to be ascribed in any direct way to the influence of the Counter-Reformation. Moreover, the charitable trend continued to rise (Figure 6) in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, which are usually seen as years in which the grip of religion - and hence also charity inspired by concern for the afterlife - declined<sup>12</sup>. The chronology of charitable growth becomes meaningful, on the other hand, if we relate it to changes in social stratification and to changes in the structure of local power. On the one hand,

<sup>11</sup>Contributions to the 1739 charge were standardized as contributors were asked how many poor they were prepared to support (the annual cost of maintaining one poor person having been calculated at 90 lire). Contributions thus went from 90 lire 'for one poor person' to the Marquess Tana's 600 lire 'for 6 and 2/3 poor persons'.

<sup>12</sup> Vovelle, Piété Baroque

# Fig.6 Charitable Institutions

Bequests and donations 1650-1789



NOTE ON THE CRITERIA USED TO CALCULATE BEQUESTS AND DONATIONS (in Figures 6, 7, 9 and 13)

I have included in my calculations only substantial donations and legacies, i.e. those of 500 lire and above. Repeated donations by the same individual have been considered separately, even if made to the same institution. I have excluded donations and bequests which did not come into effect, because subject to conditions which did not materialize (such as the absence of heirs, or the amount of the estate).

The date is that of the donation or will, not that of the payment. When there was more than one testament, I have considered only the last one (if this amended wishes laid down in previous ones).

the expansion of private charity seems linked to the changed political context in which the City Council lost many of its prerogatives, and the so far dominant bipolar pattern of power gave way to the emergence of a corporate pattern which entailed a widespread involvement of elites in the boards of the charitable institutions. On the other hand, the growth in charity seems to be related to the emerging, more elitist configuration of social prestige - which made it essential for large parts of society to seek alternative ways of gaining recognition of their status. In the middle of the seventeenth century a widening gap emerged within the Turin elite. The top of the social scale came to be occupied by an aristocracy which consolidated its position in the space of a few decades thanks to the Dukes' spoils system and to financial speculation. This aristocracy soon came to close in on itself around a court life which by this time had come to be formalized in exclusive rituals, and more generally, around a life centred on the Duke. The court milieu cut itself off from the rest of the elite via heavy inter-marriage and by abandoning most of its involvement in the administration of the state in favour of specialisation in diplomatic and military office as well as in the function of the Duke's immediate counsellors. In this way the court became a clearly separate entity, whereas earlier it had been common to find the combination of court functions and various bureaucratic offices in the same individuals and the same families.

Historians of Piedmont have traditionally seen the seventeenth-century court as an ancient hereditary nobility<sup>13</sup>. In reality this aristocracy was not so much

<sup>13</sup>The idea that the distinction between ancient nobility and new nobility, and between nobility and bourgeoisie, was the basis of the system of social stratification is to be found in G.Quazza, Le Riforme in Piemonte nella Prima Metà del Settecento, 2 voll., Modena 1957, and in more contradictory form, in L.Bulferetti, 'L'elemento mercantilistico nella formazione dell'assolutismo sabaudo', in BSBS, LIV, 1956; *ibid.*, 'Sogni

the heir of an uninterrupted tradition as the beneficiary of rapid upward mobility. The families which made up the exclusive court aristocracy in the later seventeenth century in fact came from very varied backgrounds. Some could boast noble origins, but even these families were often modest or obscure vassals who in any case owed their current privileged position to processes of social mobility set in motion by the restoration of the Savoy family's rule. A few came from the legal profession, and many from the ranks of financiers. The often cited case of the Turinettis - bankers and jewellers who became wealthy through dealing in foreign currency exchanges and loans to the Duke, and prominent in the court aristocracy - was not an isolated case. A similar trajectory characterised the rise of financiers, like the Coardis (who became Counts of Carpenetto), the Biancos (Counts of San Secondo) and others.

Entry into the uppermost ranks of society was relatively easy in the early and middle decades of the seventeenth century and made possible first of all by the prodigality of the Duke, eager to conquer supporters and continually in need of bestowing favours in exchange for the loans he depended on. Wide opportunities for enrichment and promotion were also created by the difficulties of the public treasury, which, between the late sixteenth century and the mid seventeenth, had to maintain the direct and indirect costs of almost permanent war, and it did this by constant borrowing from private financiers. The combination of the obligation to reward favours rendered, and of the attempt to obtain support in the future, led to the widespread creation of new noble titles, to the concession of feudal land (converted from the royal demesne), and to

e realta' del mercantilismo di Carlo Emanuele II', NRS, XXXVII, 1953; E.Stumpo, Finanza e Stato Moderno nel Piemonte del Seicento, Rome 1979, pp. 228-229, 277, 293. Although Bulferetti and Stumpo refer to processes of social mobility, they do not develop any alternative criterion of stratification.



the selling of fiscal rights<sup>14</sup>.

In the earlier period, the opportunity to plunge into court life seems to have been just one of the possible options open to the families who had been involved in this widespread experience of social mobility. Other families chose instead to focus their investment in state offices, or in a career in the City Council. After the mid seventeenth century, however, the court succeeded in cutting itself off from the rest of social elites, and in establishing itself as an altogether superior level in the Turin status hierarchy. This change was no doubt made possible by that more restrictive recruitment and increased tendency towards in-marrying to which I have referred. But the creation of symbolic boundaries was also an important factor.

The court built up its image and its self-identity as a separate body also via a series of exclusive rituals and practices which dug a deep divide between this and other elite groups. As we have seen, the ruling family had long been trying to build up a circle of loyal servants, pressed as it was by the difficulties in asserting royal authority in the capital city. But it was not until the regency of Cristina (1637-61) that a distinctive court culture really consolidated itself, crowning the efforts already made along these lines by the two previous Dukes. Under Cristina, a precise court ceremonial emerged, with its rituals and mechanisms for emphasizing internal hierarchies and distinctions<sup>15</sup>. Grandiose new ducal residences were

<sup>14</sup>In 1625 there were 106 "new" fiefs - a third of the total. W.Barberis, Le Armi del Principe. La Tradizione Militare Sabauda, Turin 1988, p.116. By 1688 rights to over half of the tasso - Piedmont's main source of fiscal income - had been ceded to private individuals; see L.Bulferetti, 'Assolutismo e mercantilismo nel Piemonte di Carlo Emanuele II', Mem.Acc.Sc.Tor., series 3, T.II (1953), pp.21-22.

<sup>15</sup> De Gaudenzi, 'Torino e la corte'; I.Massabò Ricci and C.Rosso, 'La corte quale rappresentazione del potere sovrano', in G.Romano (ed.), Figure del Barocco in Piemonte. La Corte, la Città, i Cantieri, le Provincie,

built in these years outside the town, which, along with the rebuilding of the ducal palace in the centre of Turin, provided new opportunities for the development of a court life<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, there was a sharp increase in the number of occasions in which the ducal family appeared in public against a highly emotive baroque backdrop. Ceremonies of religious piety had a central place here. Already in the first decades of the century the dukes had asserted a leadership in the taking of religious initiatives, and it was they who were mainly responsible for the importation of Counter-Reformation practices into the city. Thus the new religious orders started up in Turin under the direct patronage of the ducal family, and under their direction the orders already in the town were reformed. Turin's architecture was transformed in this period by an explosion of church-building: thanks to aid from the ducal coffers, just in the thirty-year period 1620-50, some eleven convents with their accompanying churches were built or re-built<sup>17</sup>. These buildings provided the infrastructure around which the rituals characteristic of the Counter-Reformation - the flagellations, public confessions, processions of the Way of the Cross, and other forms of mortification and penitence - developed. The ducal family, and especially its

Turin 1988.

<sup>16</sup> In the 1650s the Vigna di Madama Reale was built on the hill outside Turin, and the Valentino palace (christened Little Versailles), on the banks of the Po, was finished. In 1660 work was started on the hunting palace of Venaria. See A.Pedrini, Ville dei Secoli XVII e XVIII in Piemonte, Turin 1965; also M.Viale Ferrero, Feste delle Madame Reali di Savoia, Turin 1965.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. L.Tamburini, Le Chiese di Torino dal Rinascimento al Barocco, Torino 1968, which also gives extensive details of the contributions made by the ruling family to building costs. On the contributions Cristina in particular made to costs of construction and decoration, see Claretta, Storia della Reggenza, vol. II, p.547-70, and P.Codreto, Memorie di Alcune Opere Pie Fatte da Madama Reale Christina di Francia, Duchessa di Savoia, Regina di Cipro, no date.

female members - the Infanti Maria and Caterina, and subsequently the regent Cristina - were, with the ladies of their court, the principal promoters of these expressions of religious fervour<sup>18</sup>.

I will discuss the particular role women had in this flowering of religious enthusiasm in the following chapter. For the moment I only wish to point out that these ceremonies played a crucial part in creating a distinctive shared language and an exclusive set of rituals that helped to make the court a more homogeneous entity, with a culture of its own.

The court also separated itself spatially from the rest of the population. In the 1650s and '60s the most prominent families at Cristina's court nearly all moved to the noble houses which sprung up in or around the new Royal square and along the road (Contrada Nuova) which connected the square to the ducal palace<sup>19</sup>. The new mansions gave the

<sup>18</sup> See the numerous references to these religious activities of court ladies in De Gaudenzi, 'Torino e la corte' and Claretta, Storia della Reggenza. See also La Virtù Educata in Corte, Perfettionata nel Chiostro, Descritta dal Padre Fr. Alessio di Santa Maria, Carmelitano Scalzo, nel Doppio Stato Secolare e Religioso della Venerabile Serva di Dio Suor Anna Maria di S.Gioachino, nel Secolo Donna Caterina Forni, Turin, 1692. On the Infanti Maria and Caterina, cf. P.Codreto, Spreggio del Mondo. Vita e Morte della Serenissima Infanta D.Francesca Caterina Figlia del Gran Carlo Emanuele, Mondovì, 1654; A.A.Codreto, La Fragranza dell'Amaranto. Istoria Panegirica della Serenissima Infanta S.Maria Figlia del Gran Carlo Emanuele, Torino 1657; B.Alessio, Vita della Serenissima Infanta Maria di Savoia, Torino, 1663; M.Arpaud, Vita dell'Infanta Caterina di Savoia Religiosa del Terz'Ordine di S.Francesco, Annecy 1670. On Cristina, cf. also Harangue funèbre de Madame Chrestienne de France, Duchesse de Savoie et Reyne de Cypre Prononcée par le R.P.De Barenne de la Compagnie de Jesus, Paris 1664, 'Il Conte Fulvio Testi alla corte di Torino negli anni 1628e 1635', in D.Perrero, Documenti Inediti, 78, Turin 1865.

<sup>19</sup>The Royal square and the Contrada Nuova were built on the southward expansion of the city. It is interesting to note that the repeated invitations to build on this land, which had been issued since the end of the sixteenth century, fell on deaf ears for decades. Cf. V. Comoli Mandracchi, Torino, Bari, 1983, pp. 26-28, 34-39. On the

appearance of forming one entity together with the royal palace, which was itself rebuilt, during these years, along much more grandiose lines, to replace the modest and relatively small structure of 1584<sup>20</sup>. In this way, the architecture, and the plan of this new part of the city, visually symbolized the unity of sovereign and court and, at the same time, the new gulf existing between the court and other social strata.

This process of formation of a court, its turning in on itself, and its elevation in Turin's hierarchy of prestige must have encouraged the emergence of a corporate configuration of power which came to be the prevailing pattern, at least in the management of charity. As we will see, the court was henceforth represented in charitable institutions and initiatives as a separate body in its own right, with its own delegates, and other groups had an equally corporate form of representation.

The growth of importance of the court also had the effect of encouraging the search for, and creation of, new ritual forums in which the prestige of members of other sections of the elite could be asserted. This phenomenon seems particularly important when we wish to explain the rapid expansion of private charity. It is important to bear in mind at this juncture that the consolidation of a court aristocracy by no means implied that other forms of social mobility were blocked off. Up until the early eighteenth century in fact it continued to be possible to make a fortune and to experience rapid advancement through the exploitation of the state's financial needs. Merchants and financiers continued to rise socially via tax-farming,

explosion of prestige building at Turin in the mid seventeenth century, cf. M.Abrate, 'Elementi per la storia della finanza dello stato sabaudo nella seconda metà del XVII secolo', BSBS, LXVIII (1969).

<sup>20</sup>For descriptions of the original ducal palace, see N.Carboneri, Ascanio Vitozzi. Un Architetto tra Manierismo e Barocco, Roma, 1966, pp.117-25; A.Scotti, Ascanio Vitozzi, Ingegnere Ducale a Torino, Firenze 1969, pp.26-9.

loans to finance wars, or the working of state monopolies. Titles of nobility and feudal properties were also still being dispensed<sup>21</sup>. However, even though these routes of upward mobility - by means of commerce, finance, offices (especially financial offices) within the state bureaucracy, the acquisition of noble titles and feudal land - were the same paths which in the first half of the seventeenth century had led to spectacular cases of rise in status, it had by now become more difficult to obtain assimilation to the very top levels of the social hierarchy, where the court elite sat in splendid isolation, divided from the rest of society by rigid barriers. It was this exclusion which had such a stimulating effect on private charity; for it was precisely these strata, very mobile but who found their social aspirations frustrated, that plunged into charitable works in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was they who cast the institutions in a new mould and introduced new forms of encouraging private giving which led to such a sharp upturn in the volume of charitable donations and legacies.

In the remainder of this chapter, I shall explore the forces which help to explain the great expansion of charity to institutions which took off in the late seventeenth century. Although charitable giving is usually described in terms of spontaneous reactions of brotherly feeling, or in terms of obedience to religious preaching, I will try to link it to more secular concerns and to social processes. In section 2, I will examine the various attempts to defend status which make up a constant leit-motiv in private charity. In section 3, I will look at the new pattern of control over the administration of charity which emerged in the mid seventeenth century. In section 4 I will discuss

<sup>21</sup>After a brief gap, new fiefdoms began to be created again from the 1670s on to pay for war, and continued to be during the wars of the 1690s and 1703-13. Bulferetti, 'Assolutismo', p.18; S.J.Woolf, 'Sviluppo economico e struttura sociale in Piemonte da Emanuele Filiberto a Carlo Emanuele III', NRS, XLVI,1, 1962.

the relationship between the new patterns of charitable behaviour and the move towards confinement of the poor which found expression in the creation of the Ospedale di Carità. In sections 5, 6 and 7, I will look at transfer of prestige, patronage and influence entailed by the charitable act and the participation in the running of an institution.

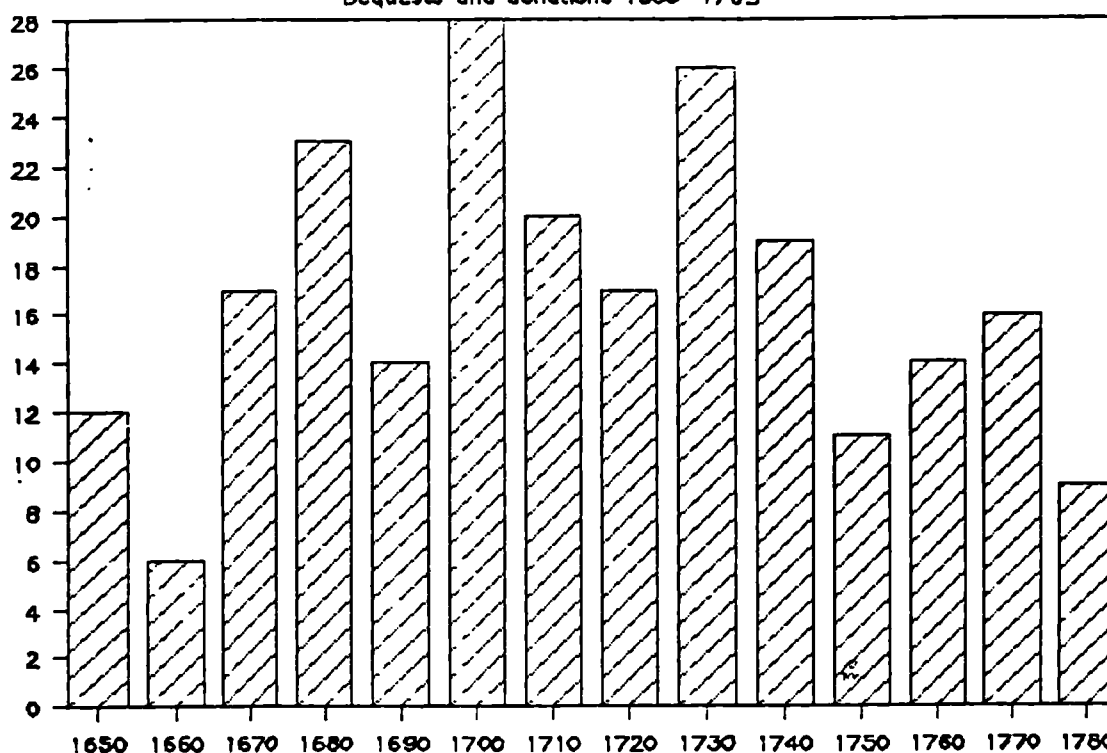
## **2. Charity and the Defence of Status**

The flow of charitable funds was directed overwhelmingly towards certain institutions and ignored others. Above all, those institutions which were well funded by ducal finances (described in the previous chapter) received a negligible quantity of private funds. Donations to the hospital of San Gioanni di Dio<sup>22</sup> were virtually non-existent, and the Albergo di Virtù seems to have been completely ignored by benefactors. By contrast the hospital of San Maurizio and Lazzaro was characterised by numerous legacies but extremely small in size. This can be explained with reference to the special privilege this institution had obtained from the Duke, which obliged notaries to ask all those drawing up a will whether they wished to leave something to the hospital. A fair number of testees - in a situation in which they were face to face with the thought of their death - did leave a few lire. We may therefore think of the hospital of San Maurizio e Lazzaro as the recipient of acts of charity genuinely linked to concerns about one's fate in the afterlife. The hospital was much less successful, on the other hand, in attracting donations which sprang from more secular impulses, and generally

<sup>22</sup> The hospital's historians give only one from Antonio Vagnone in 1602 and one from Abbot San Martino d'Aglié in 1678. Radice and Mapelli, I Fatebenefratelli, p. 68ff.

Fig.7 Compagnia di S.Paolo

Bequests and donations 1650-1789



amounted to much larger sums of money<sup>23</sup>. The increase in the overall number of legacies (Figure 5) thus mainly reflects the charity received by the hospital of San Giovanni, the Ospedale di Carità, and the Compagnia di San Paolo (Figure 7)<sup>24</sup>.

The Compagnia di San Paolo, which has already been mentioned as the body which made the original proposal to found the Ospedale di Carità, was established in 1563 as a congregation of laymen for the defence of the Catholic faith. After a period of decline, the Company grew

<sup>23</sup> Between 1600 and 1770, the hospital of San Maurizio e Lazzaro received only about forty legacies over 100 lire, and most of these were quite modest (see Ch.II, note 115).

<sup>24</sup> For data for the Ospedale di Carità and the hospital of S.Giovanni, see below Figure 9 and 13. In the overall figure I have also included institutions founded in the eighteenth century (such as the House of the Provvidenza) which I will discuss in chapter V. I have excluded, however, the small female institutions of Santa Maria Maddalena and Santa Pelagia, since these had an ambiguous status - half way between nunneries and shelters for women. I will deal with their case in chapter IV and look at what kind of donations they attracted.

increasingly important in the seventeenth century, partly thanks to vigorous preaching of the Jesuits who became the Company's spiritual counsellors in 1605<sup>25</sup>. It quickly developed into one of the main centres of Turin's charitable activity; not only did it administer a series of charitable works and institutions which attracted considerable funds, but it became the favourite body which testators designated as executors of their wills, when these included charitable or pious legacies not made out to institutions.

One reason that so many testees entrusted their affairs to the Company may have been that it counted among its members a large number of jurists (lawyers, senators and other magistrates). In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, it seemed in fact to be teeming with that bureaucracy de robe which was to gain increasing prestige (especially from the 1720s on) in the city's social structure. However, the Company also boasted numerous representatives of the mercantile and financial elite, prominent state officials, and a few members of the court<sup>26</sup>. To a considerable extent, therefore, it was characterised by a social mix similar to that found in the administration of the Ospedale di Carità, which I describe below. This merging of groups of differing status who usually had few contacts with each other in public life was especially noticeable in one of the works the Company managed, that concerned with promoting spiritual exercises. These retreats for meditation under the spiritual guidance of the Jesuits became a crucial focus for the city's elites. They grew so popular that from 1683 onwards, a

<sup>25</sup> Two very valuable works exist on the Company - the contemporary Istoria della Venerabile Compagnia della Fede Cattolica Sotto l'Invocazione di S.Paolo, by E.Tesauro, published in Turin in 1654 and in an enlarged edition in 1701; and the more recent work of M.Abrate, L'Istituto Bancario S.Paolo di Torino, Turin 1963.

<sup>26</sup> ASSP, 5, Elenchi degli ufficiali e dei confratelli, 1, 1668-1783.



series of benefactors began to leave legacies which would constitute funds enabling also those who were not brothers of the Company to take part<sup>27</sup>.

At first glance, the Company may appear to be a typical Counter-Reformation organization (similar in its purposes to the French Company of the Holy Sacrament), given its constant concern with the conversion of heretics, with morality and the preservation of female honour, and its initiatives to encourage religious piety. In fact, the charitable works it administered included funds to provide poor girls with dowries and clothes, two women's institutions - the House of the Soccorso and the Deposito - , and funds to pay for missions in valleys where heresy had a hold<sup>28</sup>. To a closer examination, however, the most distinctive characteristic marking the Company's activities seems to have been the tendency to favour the poor decayed from a position of wealth and social distinction. The Company's work in fact was directed at a clientele which was quite different from that assisted by the Ospedale di Carità: its recipients were those for whom poverty was a disgraceful condition and who could not, for reasons of

<sup>27</sup> These retreats usually consisted of a stay of eight days in a house outside the town which the Company had equipped especially for the purpose. Every day four different themes were proposed for participants to meditate on, from 5a.m to 9p.m. Turin city archives contains the guide to the spiritual exercises held in 1732 (ACT, Coll. SI/n.8991).

<sup>28</sup> Besides the works I have listed, the Company also managed a pawnshop (Monte di Pietà), set up in 1579, which gave loans in exchange for pawned goods at a low rate of interest (2%). A large number of Monti di Pietà were founded in Italy in this period (adding to those which had been set up in the first wave, in the fifteenth century) with the stated aim of giving aid to tide the poor over a difficult time. Historians, however, have usually been sceptical about the truly charitable nature of their activities. In those towns where the records have survived, the diversion of capital to a favoured few, or at any rate to social strata which were far from poor, seems to have been the rule. Pullan Rich and Poor; Pastore, 'Strutture', pp.451-456.

status, either resort to humble occupations such as domestic service or beg, even if in serious need.

The Company organization which was specifically aimed at dealing with the 'shamefaced poor' (poveri vergognosi) was the Ufficio Pio, which was set up in 1589. This distributed money and goods regularly through members elected to the office of 'almsgivers' (elemosinieri): each of them was responsible for a particular quarter of Turin - in the same way as the cantonieri of the City Council's -, made frequent visits and kept up the Company's records of the needy. The other function of the Ufficio Pio was to distribute dowries and clothes to poor girls; and here too, it was the respectable poor who were the target. Thus one of the prerequisites for being included in the draw from which winners were selected at random on the feast-day of St. Paul and the Assumption was that they should never have been employed as servants<sup>29</sup>.

A similar preoccupation for the defence of status can be found in the working of institutions administered by the Company. The Casa del Soccorso, founded by the Company in 1589, was an asylum for girls 'in danger' - who, that is, were thought to be running a risk of becoming corrupted or falling into bad ways. According to the chroniclers of the institution, the first girls admitted were naive and physically attractive, with no fathers, and neglected by their mothers, and whose virtue was besieged by fraudulent protectors and unworthy knights<sup>30</sup>. These hagiographic accounts seem to indicate that originally the Company planned a form of charity which would intervene in emergencies; once it heard of critical cases, it would step in to prevent the girls in question from falling. At first in fact, the regulations of the Casa del Soccorso specified

<sup>29</sup> In addition, they had to be of legitimate birth, Turinese (this condition was waived in the case of heretics or converted Jews), of good morals, and had not to have any other dowry. See D., T.XIII, p.42-44.

<sup>30</sup> Tesauero, Istoria, pp.76-87.

a stay of a few months, up to a maximum of one year<sup>31</sup>. However, it was not long before the aims of the institution altered. The girls 'in danger' became a minority, and most of the girls (who were allowed to enter from the age of fourteen) left only when they were eighteen and when the House had found them some sort of social position to go to<sup>32</sup>. Of the various requirements for eligibility laid down in the regulations, only that of fatherlessness was normally adhered to; conditions of being 'in danger' and being physically attractive were conditions which remained at the level of rhetoric. Entry was via direct application of the family or friends, and many of the girls paid fees<sup>33</sup>. The inmates were mainly girls without close relatives able to look after them, who were relatively poor but still had some property or a small income - which was not, however, sufficient to keep up the standard of living necessary to preserve their social status. The circumstance of belonging to some branch of a once distinguished family come upon hard times was invariably one which those who decided on applications took into very serious consideration<sup>34</sup>.

In the institution the girls were taught to 'manage a house' and to 'starch, cut and sew shirts, collars and similar things'. In fact they worked almost all day for outside merchants, and the assessment the institution made of their behaviour gave a central place to the girls' skill

<sup>31</sup> ASSP, 249, Casa del Soccorso, fasc.9, Regola Antica, 1589.

<sup>32</sup> If they had a marriage match fixed up, they had the right to a dowry provided by the Ufficio Pio, without having to go through the draw. D., T.XIII, p.58.

<sup>33</sup> They paid a sum which fluctuated over time between 13 and 18 lire a month. The House then paid the 'mother' (the housekeeper) 80 lire per year for the maintenance of every inmate (1683 figure). In addition, the mother was entitled to the proceeds of the girls' work. ASSP, Rep.Lasc. 161, Soccorso.

<sup>34</sup> ASSP, 251, Casa del Soccorso, Ordinati 1665-1699.

in their work<sup>35</sup>. A system of commendations, rewards and small percentages on the profits on their work encouraged them to become more skilled and productive. High 'profit' in work was also an essential requisite in order to obtain a dowry<sup>36</sup>.

At the Casa del Soccorso, therefore, the Counter-Reformation aim of preventing or redeeming from sin was soon abandoned, and the girls admitted were soon all respectable - both morally and, above all, in terms of their social status. The other institution for women administered by the Compagnia di San Paolo - the Deposito - followed a similar pattern of development. The original intention was that this institution, founded in 1684, should devote itself to three categories of women:- 'those who live through the public prostitution of their modesty'; 'those who have fallen but are not exposed to public shame'; and 'those in danger of falling or suspected of having already fallen'. In other words, the apparent aim seems to have been to take up the type of cases which the Casa del Soccorso had come to neglect. In reality, however, the Deposito also restricted its attentions to the last two categories. In addition, it seems that many women abandoned by their husbands or with unfortunate marriages - the malmaritate - were also admitted to the Deposito as paying inmates<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> According to the 1679 regulations book, the girls rose at 7a.m. in winter, and at 5 in summer; after mass they worked up until lunch, and after a break they worked again until 8p.m. in winter, and until 7 in summer. See Regole 1679 in *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> On the medals and rewards given out by the Ladies of the Company of Humility, see *ibid.* Regole 1679. In the early years, the girls worked for the institution all week but for themselves on Saturday. But from 1682, thanks to the legacy of a brother of the Company (Marquis Pallavicini), which supplied the mother with the money lost, the custom was introduced to give the girls a fixed proportion of the return from their work. *Ibid.* Busta 120, n.190.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 252, Opera del Deposito, Ordinati 1742-1800.

In this case, too, therefore, there was a notable divergence from the original aims. This seems in fact to have been the fate of all similar projects. Despite the preoccupation with female sexual behaviour that contemporaries seem to show, provisions for the protection and rehabilitation of women's honour were inextricably entangled with concern for social honour. In other words, such provisions were restricted to women of a certain social status. Once again in the 1740s, a plan to provide for women of low origin encountered strong opposition. In 1741 a benefactor promised to leave the Company a large legacy if it agreed to finally set up 'a refuge for poor fallen women, of any social condition'. The proposal, which was backed by the government, forced the Company to examine the possibility of opening up the Deposito to 'women, whether repentant or not, even public prostitutes'. But in spite of the favourable terms of the deal - which would have saved the Deposito from the grave financial difficulties into which it had fallen - the Company rejected the plan, arguing that the brothers were more inclined to 'rid themselves for ever of the taint of said sinners, which various brothers found tiresome and unpleasant'<sup>38</sup>. It was decided instead to set up a separate institution, which was called the Forzate. However, even this institution encountered the same difficulties in putting its original aims into practice and in the end restricted its entry to 'sinners of respectable birth'<sup>39</sup>.

It was thus not until the later eighteenth century - a period when state action in the field of public order had become well established - that an institution aimed at ordinary prostitutes appeared, in the form of a house of correction set up and administered by state delegates. —

———— So long as social policy was dominated by private

<sup>38</sup> OPCB, m.221, fasc.3, Atto presentato dalla Compagnia di S.Paolo, 7.5.1741; D., T.XIII, pp.5-6.

<sup>39</sup> ASSP, Casa del Deposito, 250, Memoria sul ritiro delle Forzate, 1777.

charity, although Counter-Reformation rhetoric was trumpeted in official statements of aims, the redeeming of sinners took effect only when their belonging to a family of distinguished status made their behaviour particularly embarrassing, or when, although the women themselves were of low origin, their sin embroiled men of higher rank.

Aid motivated by the desire to defend status was a fundamental aspect of Turin's system of relief and took up a significant part of total charitable resources. The work directly dealing with provisions to the shamefaced poor has so far predominantly concentrated on the late medieval period, henceforth giving the misleading impression that these provisions did not extend beyond then<sup>40</sup>. In Turin this kind of group protection underwent particular expansion during the eighteenth century. In the middle of the century, the budget of the Compagnia di San Paolo was roughly equal to that of the two main hospitals (the Ospedale di Carità and the hospital of S.Giovanni). At this time, it had an annual income of over 10,000 lire only to distribute in alms to the shamefaced poor (to get an idea of what this meant, we may recall that the annual cost of maintaining one poor person in the Ospedale di Carità was estimated at 90 lire); in addition, it had 7800 lire per year to spend on dowries<sup>41</sup>. This expansion of resources was accompanied by an increasing specialisation in the destination of provisions. Whereas at the time of the Company's foundation, the concept of povero vergognoso had been understood as meaning 'those who, by reason of their standing, do not beg', the interpretation became more and

<sup>40</sup> R.C.Trexler, 'Charity and the defense of urban elites in the Italian communes', in F.C.Jaher, The Rich, the Well-Born and the Powerful, Urbana 1973; G.Ricci, 'Povertà, vergogna e povertà vergognosa' Società e Storia, II, 1979; A.Spicciani, 'The 'poveri vergognosi' in 15th century Florence', in T.Riis (ed.), Aspects of Poverty in Early Modern Europe, Stuttgart 1981.

<sup>41</sup>AST, LPqM, m.18 d'add., fasc.2, Bilancio dell'opera dei vergognosi, 1747; ibid, fasc.1, Ristretto dei redditi, 1745.

more restrictive in the following two centuries, eventually coming to include solely members of specific social strata. Just as occurred with the distribution of alms, dowry funds gradually came to impose ever more stringent restrictions, limiting applicability to either the daughters of the old nobility, or the daughters of state officials, or those of impoverished merchants, etc. As we will see further on, a series of changes in the pattern of social stratification in the early decades of the eighteenth century led both elites in decline and, at the same time, new elites looking for a firmer group identity and social recognition, to establish charitable funds reserved to specific social categories - thus symbolically asserting the prestige of their particular group.

### **3. The Corporate Control over Charity**

In 1649 the Compagnia di San Paolo put forward the proposal to establish a refuge for beggars 'based on the example of Lyon', which would provide not only for 'the upkeep of poor mendicants, men women and children, ill as well as healthy, but also for the collection of information and support of the needy persons of the city'. The healthy were to be employed in 'worthy works' and the sick to be 'aided with charity'. The new hospital - the Ospedale di Carità - planned to institutionalize the poor, but this does not seem to have been the crucial point under discussion. The proposal mentioned only briefly and in very general terms the activities the new institution was meant to carry out; in contrast, it dwells at length on the structure that the governing body had to assume. The plan reiterates a number of times that 'all orders in the city' should be involved in the new project, and that 'all the parts of which this city is composed' should be represented

in the administration<sup>42</sup>. The document thus makes explicit reference to the overcoming of the opposition between the Duke and the City Council which had dominated the Turin scene for around a century, and which was even reflected in the organization of charitable institutions, rigidly divided in areas of ducal and areas of municipal influence.

The Patents for foundation contain the same message. Here again, the space dedicated to the actual functions the hospital was supposed to perform is negligible, whereas great care is lavished on the form that the administration should take, on how various responsibilities should be shared out and rotated, and on the political equilibria thus expressed<sup>43</sup>. In both documents, therefore, the project is presented as a political event of some importance rather than a reform in the treatment of the poor.

The power balance contained in the regulations for administration did indeed contain novel elements. For the first time, a mixed administration was set up in a charitable institution. The governing body was composed of 17 persons, all of whom, with the exception of the Archbishop, were to remain in office for one year only. The direction of the Hospital was headed by 5 Chairmen: in addition to the Archbishop, there were to be 2 members of the court, nominated by the Duke (one to be an ecclesiastic, the other a layman), one representative elected by the Senate or by the Camera dei Conti (in alternate years), and the first mayor of the city. Then there were 12 rectors: 4 to be nominated by the Town Council, 2 by the Compagnia di San Paolo, and 6 by the guilds of merchants and trades. Of the latter, 2 had to be bankers, cloth or silk merchants or wholesalers, the other 4 had to be members of other trades. It is clear enough

<sup>42</sup> D., T.XII, p.257, Supplica della Compagnia di S.Paolo, 30.8.1649.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.260, Patenti d'erezione dell'Ospedale della Carità, 30.8.1649.



that this broad representation broke with the rigid bipolar pattern that had dominated the organization of charity up until that time and for the first time presented an image of the town as articulated in a series of bodies - the Town Council and the court, certainly, but also the clergy, the magistrates, and a range of trade organizations. Ducal power and municipal power were no longer antagonists, but were seated side-by-side in the governance of the new institution. An image of concord and of cooperation in the running of a common enterprise replaced the conflictual image of the preceding period. And above all, the power of the two older blocs seems reduced - the Council and the Duke were not the only forces in play.

The period of open competition for control over charity did not end, therefore, with the victory of one of the two parties, and certainly not with the establishing of a centralized, absolutist direction, but rather with the emergence of a broad configuration of power. A period started in which a corporate pattern of control of charity prevailed - a pattern which lasted up until the earlier decades of the eighteenth century. During this time, there were shifts in the internal balance of power, which reflected changes outside the institution. For example, in 1685, following a request made by the hospital's governing body, a royal decree increased the number of governors elected by the Senate and by the Camera dei Conti to four - thus quadrupling their representation<sup>44</sup>. However, while this provision reflected the increased prestige of the magistracy, it did not affect the corporate logic of the hospital's administrative arrangements.

We find further evidence of this pattern of control over charity if we examine the emergency provisions which supplemented the hospital's normal activities in times of crisis. Although from 1650 on the Ospedale di Carità was officially the body responsible for dealing with the

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.271.

problem of the poor, its opening did not involve the winding down of "outdoor" forms of aid, of the type which had traditionally been provided by the Town Council. Periods of deprivation and dearth were still dealt with by large-scale distributions of bread, expulsions of unwanted outsiders and by aid to the homeless in the street. These provisions are interesting because they reveal the shifts which were occurring in the balance of power between the various groups which had a part in the administration of charity. Over the second half of the seventeenth century emergency measures of this kind were taken by committees chaired by the Archbishop and formed by representatives of the hospitals and the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Town Council and the other most prominent corporate bodies of the town. In other words, a corporate pattern similar to that found in the administration of the Ospedale di Carità emerges. A committee of this kind in 1670, for example, faced with the enormous number of poor in the city, decided on special distributions of bread. This was to be entrusted to the Ospedale di Carità, but paid for by the various bodies represented on the committee. During the shortage, deserving poor persons were in addition to receive an eight-day licence from their parish priest allowing them to beg<sup>45</sup>. In 1676, 'the survey of the poor, their name, surname and their place of origin' carried out with the aim of 'sending them to their own places if foreigners and to the hospitals if citizens' was entrusted to a mixed delegation, made up, for each parish, of a governor of the Ospedale di Carità, a brother of the Compagnia di San Paolo, the parish priest and a cantoniere of the city<sup>46</sup>. Similar action, managed by similar committees, was taken again during the crisis of the 1690s, and sporadically in

<sup>45</sup>Ord. 2.1.1670.

<sup>46</sup>AOC, Ordinati, 9.2.1676. Other expulsions of outsiders were carried out in 1678 and 1679. Ord. 26.5.1678 c.248 and 29.9.1679.

the first years of the new century<sup>47</sup>.

The first thing which is striking here is the drastically reduced role of the Town Council. By this time, even in forms of aid which had been those most typical of its own system, the Council was evidently taking part as just one of several bodies responsible for welfare measures. It is true that the Council still kept control of large islands of responsibility - for example, the outdoor medical relief (which expanded to its greatest size precisely in these years) - but it had undoubtedly lost its dominant hold over the system as a whole.

The influence of representatives of the court and the sovereign also seems reduced. There is no longer trace of any direct role exercised by the knights of San Maurizio and San Lazzaro who, in the early seventeenth century, had been the body which led the Duke's attack on the Council's charity system. In fact, it was not until the middle decades of the eighteenth century that the central power took over a central part in the determining of policies towards the poor. At first glance, the role of the sovereign may seem greater than before due to the fact that orders prohibiting begging now took the form of ducal edicts. But this should not be interpreted as a sign of real independent authority. The minute books of the ~~O~~pedale di Carità in 1683 provide us with an example of what was probably the normal sequence of events leading up to an edict on begging. In March, the board of governors of the hospital decided that it was necessary 'to obtain an edict ensuring that all the beggars of the town are forced to come to the Vigna [the hospital's building]'. In a meeting held a few days later 'the minute of the edict which has to be presented to His Royal Highness in order that he may be pleased to sign it, for the consignment of all the beggars

<sup>47</sup> See for example AOC, Ordinati, 7.11.1691 and AST, s.r., Confraternite e Congregazioni, m.1, fasc.2, Congregazioni per provvedere all'emergenza dello Spedale di Carità, 23.12.1709.

that are in this town' was read and approved<sup>48</sup>.

Among the powers on the rise, on the other hand, the ecclesiastical authorities stand out. The Archbishop was not only the head of the governing body of the Ospedale di Carità but a key figure organizing and mediating between the various groups involved in the administration of charity. It was he who was the coordinator of the emergency measures for the poor, it was to him that complaints about the malfunctioning of the system of charity were presented, and pleas for new forms of intervention<sup>49</sup>. He was also consulted when there was discussion over criteria determining which categories of the poor should be given aid and which turned away<sup>50</sup>. Important decisions like that setting up a hospital for incurables (in reality a ward within the existing hospital of San Giovanni) were taken in his presence (after long discussions between the usual range of delegates of various corporate groups)<sup>51</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the ecclesiastical authority became involved in the managing of the charity system in Turin only in the mid seventeenth century. This is much later than what one would expect if we accept the usual idea that the Church regained a central role in the field of charity as an effect of the new orientations decided on at the Council of Trent. At Turin the Church had very slight prominence during the long period in which the Town Council dominated the charity system, and only emerged when this latter control broke up and responsibility for charity began to be divided between various groups.

In addition, the nature of ecclesiastical power and influence over charity needs reconsidering. At least in

<sup>48</sup> AOC, Ordinati 14 and 21.3.1683. The edict in question is published in D., T.XII, p.268, and bears the date 13.4.1683.

<sup>49</sup> AOC, Ordinati 11.5.1664; Ord. 26.11.1663.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 21.5.1673.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 15.7.1665; AOSG, Ordinati 26.6.1667, 9.3.1668.

Turin, the Archbishop's role was essentially that of an arbitrator and intermediary between the various groups involved in the administration of charity; there is no evidence of an attempt to expand the Church's direct control over the running of institutions, nor of any marked desire to promote independent policies or projects of its own. On the very few occasions when the Church acted independently, it aroused opposition. One of these rare instances occurred in the 1660s, when the Archbishop's office issued permits to beg which it evidently had not previously agreed with the other authorities. The Ospedale di Carità immediately condemned the measure as illegitimate, and it was not repeated<sup>52</sup>. It does not seem appropriate, therefore, to talk of a desecularisation of charity as a result of the more aggressive Church policy coming out of the Council of Trent. The Church failed to gain that direct supervisory role over charitable institutions, advocated by the Council<sup>53</sup>; but in the long run it extended anyway its control over the distribution of charity, thanks to the gradual rise of the parish. The Church was much more successful, in fact, in achieving <sup>15</sup> another goal of the Tridentine policy, that of turning the parish into the focus of local devotion. As a consequence, the authority of the local clergy - that of Bishops but above all, at the lower levels of the hierarchy, that of parish priests - grew considerably. In Turin, it was in fact the lower clergy's control over access to the sources of charity that was extended. Parish priests took over that responsibility for inspecting the poor and assessing their state of neediness which had previously been in the hands of Town Councillors - in other words, they were entrusted with the crucial responsibility for deciding who was poor and who was not. This process however, occurred only in the

<sup>52</sup> AOC, Ordinati 9.7.1664.

<sup>53</sup> This seems to be true of Italy in general. See Pastore, 'Strutture assistenziali', p.439.

second half of the seventeenth century. Probably, the 1670 emergency measures to deal with dearth I referred to earlier, established for the first time that the issuing of temporary licences to beg were no longer to be given out by Councillors, but by parish priests. Two years later, even the municipal medical service, although still firmly in the hands of the Town Council, transferred responsibility for assessing the financial condition of applicants to priests (this task, too, had previously been carried out by delegates of the Council)<sup>54</sup>. The image of the parish priest who knew the poor of his territory, and who had a crucial pastoral role over them, steadily gained general recognition. In 1700, the rules of the Ospedale di Carità also assigned the parish priest the part of reliable informant capable of making a first assessment of need for those who applied for admission or for bread<sup>55</sup>. By late seventeenth century, therefore, the parish priest had conquered a new role as welfare broker or intermediary for obtaining charity; but he did not (yet) manage or dispense aid directly. That step came only in the eighteenth century (as we shall see), with the influx of donations to the parish churches which provided them with their own funds to use for charity. But the territorial importance of the parish was already well advanced by the end of the previous century - as is confirmed by the fact that when a census of the poor was carried out in 1676 (managed by the usual collection of representatives of the various corporate bodies), the parish took the place of the cantone as the territorial unit adopted.

<sup>54</sup> Ord. 10.9.1672.

<sup>55</sup> D., T.XII, p.274, 1.6.1700.

#### 4. The Internment of the Poor

From 1650 the Ospedale was officially the body which was responsible for the repression of begging. From this date on, the orders which prohibited begging in the town instructed mendicants to go to the hospital where they would be interviewed by the governors, then kept in the hospital if truly needy, otherwise dismissed, after having sworn not to beg any more. In the meantime, 'collectors of the poor' paid by the hospital combed the city and arrested those breaking the prohibition on begging. When they were brought to the hospital, these were then supposed to be punished at the discretion of the governors - with a period of incarceration on bread and water, with cropping of the hair, or with whipping in the case of persistent offenders<sup>56</sup>. It is clear, however, that the Ospedale di Carità had difficulty in asserting full control over begging. Especially in periods of deprivation and famine the town continued to be overrun by beggars and the indigent.

The governors of the hospital put down their failure to control the problem to an unwillingness on the part of the citizens to give them adequate financing. In the early decades of its existence, this complaint had some substance, for the hospital was beset by continual financial problems. It obtained few benefactors and was supported almost exclusively by donations from a few of the governors themselves, who obstinately persisted in shoring up their own institution. Often there was no money for the most basic necessities and on several occasions the governors themselves had to fill this gap by making loans without interest to the hospital, or simply by donating the money. In the calamitous year 1677, for example, there was not even wood to cook the soup for the poor, and ten or so governors were obliged to give either bundles of wood or

<sup>56</sup> The 1650 orders prohibiting begging are given in Borelli, p.236 ff.

money to get over the emergency<sup>57</sup>. The governors' disappointment over the cool reception the town gave the hospital is occasionally evident even in the routine language of the anti-begging orders. The citizens - so the governors complained - refused to give 'on the mere pretext that the hospital did not abolish the unbearable nuisance of vagabonds and beggars, and saying that they cannot give alms to everyone'<sup>58</sup>. The controversy was taken up vehemently by the Town Council, which - having been itself the object of continual requests to support the hospital and contribute to the special measures against beggars - bitterly criticised the Archbishop and His Highness over the problem of beggars and the deficiencies and inadequacy of the hospital<sup>59</sup>. In 1679, after it had been invited to impose a small tax for the support of the poor, the Town Council indignantly replied that the citizens would give voluntarily 'when they were sure that the town would be purged of the poor, and they [the citizens] free from the continual nuisance and infestation they create in the churches, in the streets, and at their own homes'<sup>60</sup>. The dispute was obviously a vicious circle, with the hospital maintaining that it was insufficiently funded and that it 'could not aid such a large number of people without the help hoped for, and in part promised, by the citizens', and the latter justifying themselves by replying that the hospital had failed in its function of eliminating beggars.

To what degree were these accusations justified? It is certainly true that the Ospedale di Carità only functioned very partially as a place for interning and punishing

<sup>57</sup> AOC, Ordinati 7.11.1677; for cases of loans made at zero interest, see *ibid.* 27.8.1679, 21.1.1685, 1.4.1685; for wine for the poor, see 30.11.1683.

<sup>58</sup> Borelli, p.241, 1.4.1664. See also *ibid.*, p.240-5, 30.3.1661, 8.1.1670, 4.12.1676.

<sup>59</sup> Ord, 26.11.1663, 13.8.1679.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 25.8.1679.



beggars. It was however far from being inactive. In the 1660s (which is the earliest date from which the minute books have been kept) it contained several hundred poor persons<sup>61</sup>. This made it by far the largest charitable institution in the town, for the hospital of S.Giovanni contained no more than fifty or so patients at this time. In addition, the Ospedale di Carità seemed to take seriously the plan of finding the poor places in the world of work, an idea which had been mentioned very briefly at the time of the institution's foundation. Thus many boys and girls were placed as apprentices with outside masters<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, contracts were made with a series of outside masters who transferred their workshops inside the institution and were supposed to teach their trade to young inmates entrusted to them. At least in the 1660s, there were several silk spinning machines working in the hospital, together with a silk winder at which more than 40 boys and girls were employed<sup>63</sup>, plus a ribbon manufacture, which had thirty or so apprentices<sup>64</sup>. In the 1680s, a shoemaker's workshop was set up, and this taught 12 young people, and also a shop for the working of hats<sup>65</sup>. Later on, various types of productive activity were tried out - among which figured the manufacture of woollen hosiery, and

<sup>61</sup> In 1665, the figure of 400 inmates is mentioned. AOC, Ordinati 15.7.1665. The minutes books have survived only for 1664-65; there is then a gap until 1674, when a complete series starts.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 26.9.1683.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 11.5.1664 and 20.8.1664; 17.5.1665; 7.8.1675.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 31.7.1664, 30.6.1666. In this case, the apprenticeship was supposed to last three years, after which the sons or daughters could be dismissed from the hospital. The master paid the hospital a fixed amount a day in return for their work.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 6.7. , 3.7. and 24.8.1687. The agreement with the cobbler ceased after just two years 'due to its scarce usefulness'. Ibid. 26.6.89.

that of silk and gold cloth<sup>66</sup>. From 1689, however, the cloth manufactory became the main activity which absorbed the work of the poor in the hospital. This was originally set up as a government manufactory, but after a few years (in 1704) it was ceded to the hospital which ran it in partnership with a company of merchants<sup>67</sup>. Assured of a steady demand for its output in the shape of clothing for the ducal troops, the wool manufactory in the Ospedale di Carità grew to become one of the largest in the state. In 1713, 170 poor persons were employed there - see Fig.8 - and this grew to a peak of 500 in the decades which followed. The hospital obtained almost a fifth of its annual income from this enterprise<sup>68</sup>.

The Ospedale di Carità did, then, fulfill its aim of giving a trade to the young people it interned, but it only tackled the problem of begging partially. Only some of the poor were brought in by the 'collectors of beggars' - the majority were admitted on their own application<sup>69</sup>. Indeed, at certain times, the hospital complained that the number of applications was too high, and admission was restricted to cases 'which cannot be postponed'<sup>70</sup>. In practice, the hospital was used for many purposes other than forcible confinement. First of all, there seem to have been a continual influx of children and adolescents left 'in trust' at the institution. This practice is first described

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 20.6.1701, 29.12.1702.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 24.6 and 23.11.1698; 21.9.1704. See, for example, the partnership agreements drawn up in 1707 between the hospital and Signori Giò Clemente and Co. and Giuseppe Fogliano for ten years. Ibid. 6.3.1707.

<sup>68</sup> In 1715 the hospital earned 8714 lire income from the work of inmates (who at the time numbered 837). Of this total, 7235 lire came from the wool manufactory. The hospital's total income amounted to 42,456 lire. See Ibid. Cat.VI, Parte I, 1, Ricoverati e poveri 1715-1864.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Cat.VIII, Opera Bogetti, busta 1, 22.5.1657.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. Ordinati 26.12.1678, 9.9.1685.

Figure 8. INMATES OF THE OSPEDALE DI CARITA', BY AGE, SEX, AND OCCUPATION (1713)

	M A L E												
	0-7	7-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-50	50-60	60..	TOT.
Staff(1)				35	16	19		2	1	6	1	1	81
Male nurses						2				3			5
Apothecary boys				2			2						4
<u>Infirmary:</u>													
Sick			8							2	10	2	22
Disabled			1				3	5			4		13
Helpless	27												27
Fallen sick								3				11	14
Tailors				13				2				1	16
Shoemakers					29				1		2		32
Cabinet-makers						1							1
Hosiery				1									1
Silk spinners									2				2
Cloth weavers						3						3	
At the farms						2					3		5
Royal silk mill				11									11
Woollen mill			50	43	1	6					2		112
TOTAL	27		59	105	46	30	8	12	4	11	22	15	349

(follows)

in the first rules of the hospital which have survived - dating from 1700<sup>71</sup>; but it seems probable that it had existed since the hospital was set up, given the high number of girls and boys who appear among the inmates, and for whom various forms of manufacture and apprenticeship were organized. These young people usually remained in the hospital until they had acquired a trade and could find a place in work outside. In 1713 (the earliest year for which we have details by age, sex and occupation of the inmates) there were as many as 461 young people under the age of 20,

<sup>71</sup> D., T.XII, p.272, 1.6.1700.

# FEMALE

	0-7	7-10	10-15	15-20	20-25	25-30	30-35	35-40	40-45	45-50	50-60	60+ . TOT.
Staff(1)					3	5	10	15	13		3	49
Nurses					5				1		6	12
Infirmaries:												
Sick	2			10				9				29
Incurables								10				10
Contagious								7				7
Disabled											41	41
Almost always ill								12				12
Blind					2						3	5
Fallen sick				7	6			6	7			27
												53
Helpless	72											72
'Piazzate' (2)											5	5
Wool spinners						23		2			10	35
Cotton workers									2			2
Cloth workers								4				4
Seamstresses					9							9
Glovers				6								6
Hosiery				10				12				22
At the farms					1						1	2
Silk workers			45	26	8	2		3				84
Woollen mill			28	21	6	1		2				58
TOTAL	74		73	86	40	31	10	82	23		27	71
TOTAL M/F	101		142	191	86	61	18	94	27	11	49	86

(1) Includes door-keepers, bakers, cleaners, those assigned to the refectory, herdsman, porters, cooks, etc. (often ex-inmates).

(2) They have the benefit of one 'piazza', that is a fund sufficient for the maintenance of one inmate, which had been donated by a benefactor. The latter usually kept the right to nominate the beneficiaries. Source: LPQM, n.18, fasc.5, Tabella de' poveri esistenti all'Hospedale della Carità, luoro età, professione e impiego, 2.4.1713. N.B. In the document age groups overlap.

or over half the total (see Fig.8)<sup>72</sup>.

The 'incurables' also accounted for a substantial

<sup>72</sup> Note the absence of any children between the age of 7 and 10; this is due to the fact that children were sent out to nurses until the age of 10. The high numbers of inmates under 7 are probably children who have not yet been sent to wet nurses.

proportion of the total in the Ospedale di Carità. This was a general term which was usually applied to all those who, due to age or disability were incapable of working or looking after themselves. The numbers of incurables - unproductive, and by definition long-stay inmates - worried the hospital governors particularly. In theory, access to the Ospedale di Carità was forbidden to inmates of this kind; but the frequency with which the minutes complain about their numbers and the expense they cause shows that the regulations on this point were far from successful<sup>73</sup>. The report of 1713 shows 206 persons (the great majority women) who were categorized as infirm, incurable or invalid; this amounted to nearly a quarter of the total inmate population. To a lesser extent, other categories of poor took up hospital resources and left even less for beggars - poor people who succeeded in getting admitted for an agreed, short period, a few of the insane<sup>74</sup>. A large number of people ill with syphilis - especially women - also sought to be cured of their illness in the hospital. They were probably attracted by the fact that the hospital had always, since its foundation, had a permanent doctor and surgeon (who, at least since 1679 were resident in the institution)<sup>75</sup>. We have already noted that the demand for treatment for syphilis was very high, and that there existed no specific facilities for dealing with it. Thus the Ospedale di Carità, like the two other main hospitals, ended up taking on cases of syphilis, even though this was

<sup>73</sup> AOC, Ordinati 9.7.1664, 15.7.1665, 24.5.1682, 20.2.1684.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 9.7.1691; 2.7.1665, 2.3.1687.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. Cat.VIII, Opera Bogetti, busta 1, 22.5.1657. The doctor's and surgeon's apartments in the hospital are mentioned in the minutes of 3.12.1679. There was also an apothecary, which was open to the public as well.

against the rules<sup>76</sup>.

Right from the time of its foundation, therefore, it is clear that the Ospedale di Carità had an eminently charitable function rather than a punitive one. All this does not mean that the hospital had no effect on the problem of begging - it did alleviate it; but at the same time, it was a long way from eliminating it. On at least one occasion, it was even necessary for the Duke to send an order to the hospital, to get rid of the 25 or 30 most notorious beggars who pestered Turin's good citizens in the churches<sup>77</sup>. A considerable gap between the original intentions of the hospital and the actual results was somehow inevitable (and seems to have been the normal fate of similar plans for internment elsewhere). As soon as the hospital existed, it was besieged by the needy, overcome by the pressure of demand from the poor who saw in it a place where their old, their children, or their difficult cases, might be placed. Nor were benefactors immune from this logic. There is no lack of agreements made with well-off individuals, who, in exchange for payment, sought admission for impecunious members of their families, or for poor people under their protection. In 1692, for example, signor Griotero committed himself to donating a farm on condition that the hospital took in several female relatives ("alcune sue nipoti") and, when the moment came, arranged for their marriages and provided them with dowries. In 1695 another man offered to pay the hospital if six infirm poor persons he knew were received by the hospital and kept until their death or their recovery<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> It seems that, at least in the early years, the Ospedale di Carità was not equipped to give those with syphilis the specific treatment they needed; but they kept them until - on intercession from the Ospedale di Carità - they were admitted for treatment at the San Giovanni or the San Maurizio and San Lazzaro hospitals. Ibid.17.5.1665.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 14.1.1698.

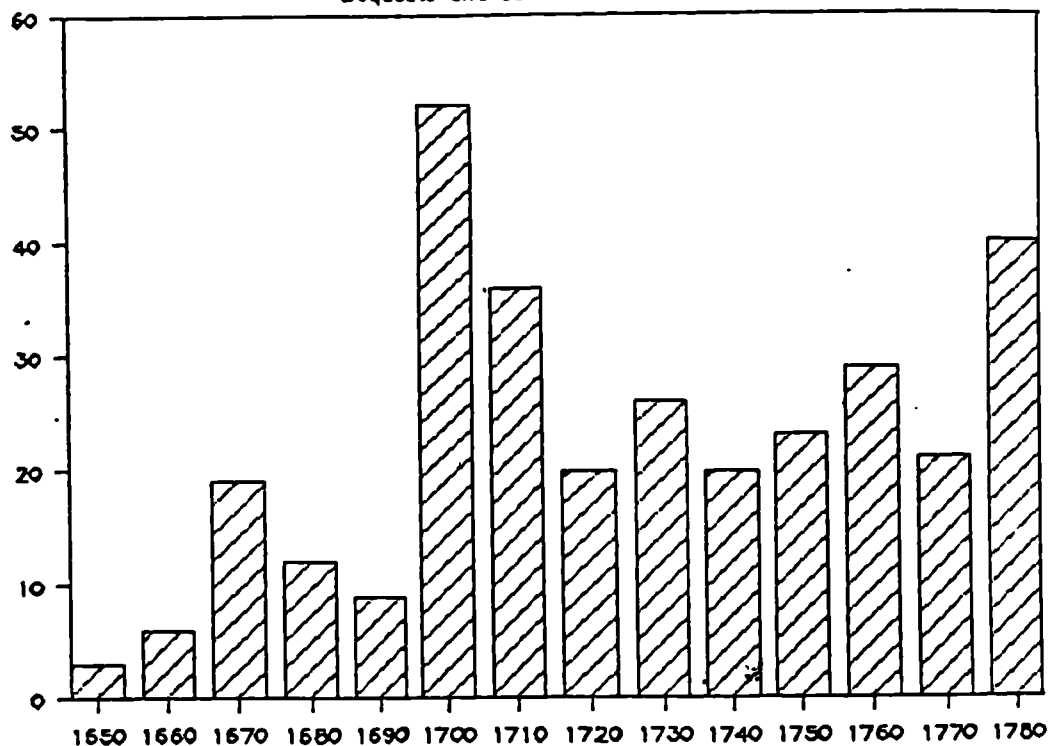
<sup>78</sup> Ibid.20.4.1692, 5.9.1695.

So, those who complained about the ineffectiveness of the hospital in repressing begging and made it an excuse for evading the insistent demands of the governors for donations, actually shared with the poor the perception of the hospital as a charitable place and one which could take over the obligations they had towards the poor in their sphere of influence. Moreover, attitudes toward confinement seem to have been highly ambivalent. Forcible arrest of beggars was by no means a policy which commanded universal consensus - indeed, it tended to evoke widespread opposition. A ducal order issued one year after the founding of the Ospedale di Carità made it illegal to obstruct the Collectors of beggars in their duty by 'taking the poor from their hands, insulting them, and throwing water and other dirt at them'<sup>79</sup>. Episodes of this kind, and complaints about them, continued for a long time. In the two decades after the hospital's foundation, 'continual incidents and obstruction' which prevented the arrest of the poor were referred to, and the governors asked the Duke to provide the collectors with an escort of 25 guards. In spite of repeated petitions for an escort, this request, evidently considered too dangerous politically, was never granted. However, penalties were established for anyone who prevented beggars from being captured, and the collectors were supplied with 'pointed truncheons'. In addition, His Highness gave them the right to carry his insignia, so that they would command more respect<sup>80</sup>. We do not know who it was who was involved in resisting the collectors, but it is difficult to believe that a society so criss-crossed by links of vertical solidarity (based on bonds of kinship, community of origin, trade, neighbourhood, etc.) could be so sharply divided in its attitude to forcible internment, with the poor defending beggars and the rich trying to

<sup>79</sup> Borelli p.237, 11.1.1651.

<sup>80</sup> AOC, Ordinati 11.5.1664; also 15.7.1665, 24.9.1666, 8.1.1668; Borelli, p.224, 4.12.1676.

Fig.9 Ospedale di Carità  
Bequests and donations 1650-1789



incarcerate them. It seems more probable that internment was seen by many as right in theory, but unjust every time it affected someone whom one knew.

It is not likely, therefore, that the failure to apply strictly the policy for incarcerating beggars was the reason which put benefactors off. The financial difficulties of the Ospedale di Carità in its first decades of life are only partly attributable to its lack of rigour over internment. The main argument in favour of being sceptical about the justifications given by the citizens lies in the fact that donations did eventually start to arrive in spite of the fact that neither policy over incarceration nor the balance of different types of inmates in the hospital had changed. From the 1670s onwards, and then, more strongly from the 1700s, donations started to flow in (see Fig.9). The small-scale gifts from governors desperately trying to shore up the institution's finances, gave way to numerous substantial legacies from outside. Yet the precise records we have for the eighteenth century make it clear that the hospital's inmate population continued to



be made up in large part of voluntary admissions, and in particular, of children placed 'in trust' by their families, of old people living on their own, of disabled<sup>81</sup>.

In explaining the difficulties of the hospital's early decades, we should not underestimate the importance of the fact that at that time the total amount of private donations given to charitable institutions of all kinds was still very limited. Institutions which aimed to house hundreds of inmates (and thus needed large and regular flows of funds) were at that time a novelty for Turin. Not only the Ospedale di Carità but also older institutions (like the hospital of S.Giovanni), if they wanted to expand, were faced with a need to find new means of financing themselves. For them to be able to extend the scale of their activity, they stood in need of a new pattern of charity. And this is exactly what developed. Charitable giving to institutions took off with the emergence of forms of social reward which indissolubly joined the charitable act with the acquisition of prestige, and of resources for the bestowing of patronage and influence.

## **5. Charity and Prestige**

One of the ways in which the Ospedale di Carità eventually succeeded in attracting the benevolent interest of the local citizenry was to set itself up as a financial institution. One of the means of attracting money thought up by the governors was in fact to seek out individuals who had unused capital and convince them to invest with the hospital, at a reasonable rate of interest (usually 5%).

<sup>81</sup> On the composition of inmates in the eighteenth century, see my article, 'Conceptions of Poverty and Poor Relief in Turin in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', in S.J. Woolf (ed.), Domestic Strategies: Work and Family in France and Italy, 1600-1800, Cambridge 1991.

Since disinterested aid was not forthcoming, the governors decided to offer something in exchange; and from the 1670s on, the number of loans to the hospital grew steadily. The attraction of this arrangement to lenders can be partly explained by the fact that there was a chronic lack of places where savings could be invested due to the absence of a banking system in Piedmont<sup>82</sup>. Opportunities for investment were therefore very scarce. Nonetheless, especially in the first decades, loans to the Ospedale di Carità may also be seen as a form of charity, for at that time the hospital was hardly a safe investment. The offer of a loan to the hospital at a time when it was in financial difficulties is often presented in the minutes as an act of charity: 'he benevolently offered a loan of 3,000 lire at 5%', 'he is prepared to help the hospital with a loan'. Obviously, the character of the transaction was inherently ambiguous. Apart from anything else, it might be that what started out by being a form of earning money from the institution's difficulties turned out in the end to be a charitable act; for especially in the early years, the hospital was often unable to return the money when the loan expired, and on a few occasions the lenders had to negotiate a return of part of the sum and leave the rest as a donation. In most cases, however, these difficulties were resolved by the governors managing to cobble together another loan which made it possible to repay the earlier one. There are even cases of the governors themselves lending the sum necessary to return a loan at the expiry date. It seems probable that the governors were, in some sense, considered responsible for the hospital's solvency, especially in those cases where particular governors had

<sup>82</sup> The private banks were only involved in loans to merchants to finance trade, and did not deal with private individuals. In 1711 John Law approached the government with various banking projects, but by the time the Duke and his ministers got round to becoming interested in the idea, Law had moved on to Paris and to more ambitious projects. G.Prato, Problemi Monetari e Bancari nei Secoli XVII e XVIII, Turin 1916.

acted as intermediaries between the lender and the institution; indeed, it is likely that it was precisely their personal mediation which made the loan appear relatively safe.

The ambiguity in the real nature of monetary transactions with the hospital was even greater in the case of the annuity contracts (vitalizi) which also became numerous from the 1670s on. The balance of advantage to the hospital of these contracts is much more obvious: elderly people entrusted a sum of money to the hospital in return for a rate of interest higher than that normally paid (perhaps as high as eight or ten per cent, whereas the legally permitted rate was three or four per cent), on the condition, however, that on their death the capital sum was kept by the hospital. The arrangement contained an element of risk for the Ospedale since a lender who lived longer than expected could use up most of the capital; but in most cases, it came out clearly the gainer. We may note that this type of arrangement too is often presented as a charitable act 'Donates a capital sum of ... at his death, in the meantime to be paid the annuity of ...'. And indeed it was a kind of charity. It seems quite plausible that it may not have been difficult to find private individuals willing to accept a contract of this kind; the decision to let the Ospedale di Carità have this opportunity may thus be considered a deliberate choice to benefit it.

The financial activities of the charitable institutions made up a large source of income which however does not appear in my reckonings. Contracts to provide annuities, for instance, were very common, but it is difficult to arrive at an exact estimate of their value. The minutes record the date when a contract was made, but only rarely do we know when the hospital inherited the capital, and thus we cannot know how much the hospital had to pay out and how much - if anything - the effective "donation" amounted to. The data discussed in the pages which follow thus substantially underestimate the sums the institutions

/s

really received.

Later on, when it was in a healthier financial state, the Ospedale di Carità was also able itself to make loans. The prevalence of usurious lending at exorbitant rates of interest made a loan from the hospital at the legal rate of interest, or just slightly above it, very attractive to borrowers. However, it was mainly the prosperous S.Giovanni which became heavily involved in lending. Its financial activity became so successful that in a few decades the hospital was able to compete with Turin's largest lending fund. So in 1729, when the interest rate paid to holders of Luoghi dei Monti - bonds of public debt - was sharply reduced, the S.Giovanni hospital was able to declare its willingness to offer a higher rate, and thus obtain a large influx of capital<sup>83</sup>.

The charitable institutions need, therefore, to be taken into consideration also for the crucial role they played in the city financial scene. The change of fortunes that they underwent in the late seventeenth century was certainly linked to some extent to the growth of these financial activities, which allowed them to attract citizens' interest. But the main reason was that they managed to transform themselves into a forum for the exhibiting of prestige in the city. In the closing decades of the century, to be one of the benefactors of Turin's charitable institutions became one of the main forms of social recognition sought after by the rising number of families who were entering into the local elite. Involvement in charities became a way of symbolically translating the social success and mobility which one had achieved - a vehicle for the social competition between families and between individuals.

In the case of the Ospedale di Carità, this development was greatly aided by the conquest of a more dignified building and a move to the centre of the city. The attempt

<sup>83</sup> AOSG, Ordinati, 11 and 28.1.1729.

to move to a better location was a constant feature in the strategies adopted by the governors. When it was founded in 1650 the Ospedale was set up in modest rented premises a long way outside the city boundaries. Then in 1661 it moved to an ex-Capucin monastery just outside the city walls. Since the area was part of the land where it was planned that the city should expand into, this was an important first step towards full integration into the fabric of the town<sup>84</sup>. The edict which announced the opening of the new premises explicitly stated that the purpose of the move was to encourage citizens to donate more liberally by shifting the hospital nearer the town<sup>85</sup>. This first move does seem to have had some effect in the desired direction, for it is in the 1660s that the first substantial legacies began to arrive from "outside" (i.e. not from members of the governing board). In the first ten years after the move (1661-70), the total of legacies and donations to the institution rose to around 58,000 lire (see Fig.10). This was a marked improvement, but still not sufficient for the hospital's needs, for the annual cost simply of maintaining the inmates amounted to around 40,000 lire<sup>86</sup>, not to mention the cost of refurbishing the building, which was also planned. Moreover the great bulk (55,000 lire) of the total of legacies and donations was contributed by just two benefactors - Giò Antonio Arnulfo and Giorgio Turinetti<sup>87</sup>. In the ten years which followed there was a sharp increase in donations, to over 162,000 lire. But once again, although the total number of legacies was considerably

<sup>84</sup> This move was made possible by the gift of a member of the ruling house of Savoy, Prince Maurizio, who donated almost two-thirds of the sum needed. AOC, Cat.I, Documenti di fondazione, vol.1, 1649-1700, fasc.1, Origine del Regio Spedale generale della Carità.

<sup>85</sup> Borelli, p.240, 30.3.1661.

<sup>86</sup> AOC, Ordinati, 15.7.1665.

<sup>87</sup> AOC, Cat.XV, Donazioni, parte I, Eredità, vol.1; and Ibid, Cat.IX, Chiesa.

Figure 10. KNOWN AMOUNTS OF CHARITY TO THE OSPEDALE DI CARITA' BY DECADE 1650-1789

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	amount	n. of legacies and donations	known	unknown	partly known	subject to condition
1650s	1,680	3	2	1	-	-
1660s	57,880	6	5	1	-	1
1670s	161,945	19	12	3	4	2
1680s	52,814	11	7	3	1	-
1690s	30,212	9	6	2	1	1
1700s	105,457	52	33	16	5	-
1710s	113,800	36	27	8	1	-
1720s	154,217	20	17	2	1	-
1730s	445,000	26	24	2	-	-
1740s	141,093	19	17	2	-	-
1750s	342,365	23	21	1	2	-
1760s	343,466	26	20	5	1	-
1770s	280,490	21	16	3	2	1
1780s	181,353	40	38	2	-	1

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Amounts considered in Figures 10 and 11 are those which were actually paid to the hospital after various deductions. The discrepancy between amounts figuring in wills and those eventually paid can be substantial in particular in the case when the hospital was made 'universal heir' and in the case of funds for masses for the dead. In both cases, I have included only what was the clear profit for the hospital (if any), once the payment of debts and bequests to legatees, and expenses for the chaplain saying masses, for candles, etc. had been subtracted.

higher than before, this figure was reached mainly due to just four large donations, which accounted for 140,000 of the total<sup>88</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> The donations in question came from a merchant, Marchisio (approx. 28,000 lire), the abbot S.Martino d'Aglié (65,500 lire), the merchant Rochati (16,500 lire), and one of the ladies of Regent Cristina's chamber, the heirless widow of Baron Servan (over 25,000 lire). AOC, Cat.XV, Donazioni Parte I, Eredità, vol.2. For Marchisio's

Figure 11. OSPEDALE DI CARITA'. DISTRIBUTION OF REQUESTS AND DONATIONS BY AMOUNT 1660-1789 (%)

LIRE	500 to 1,000	< 3,000	< 5,000	< 10,000	< 20,000	< 50,000	< 100,000	100,000 and over
1660-1699	24,3	32,5	5,4	2,7	21,6	10,8	2,7	-
1700-1749	34,4	34,4	11,5	10,7	6,7	4,9	-	2,5
1750-1789	27,3	23,2	8,1	15,2	13,1	8,1	3,0	2,0

See Footnote to Figure 10 for the criteria used to calculate amounts of charitable giving

It is not particularly surprising, therefore, that this increase was not maintained. In the 1680s and 1690s there was a fall both in the number of legacies and in the total sum given. It was only from 1700, after the hospital had finally achieved its long-standing ambition to move into the centre of the town, and had begun to construct the monumental premises in which it was to remain for two centuries, that there was a real change in the pattern. Not only did the number of legacies increase by a factor of five in the first ten years of the new century, but donations - which previously had been divided between a few very large gifts and very small ones - now tended to be in the middle range (see Fig.11). A third of the donations now fell into the five to ten thousand lire bracket, and 60% were between a thousand and ten thousand lire. In contrast, there were fewer really large donations - just one over 10,000 lire in this decade.

The hospital thus became more reliant on a flow of "normal" funds, rather than on exceptional gifts; giving to the Ospedale di Carità had become a generalized practice for a broad section of the Turin elite. By this time, in

will, see *Ins*, 1685, l.3, vol I, 22.6.1673; for S.Martino's legacy, AOSML, m.3, fasc.8; for Rochati's, AOC, *Ordinati* 23.5.1683; for Baron Servan's widow, *ibid.* 27.11.1677.

other words, the hospital had succeeded in involving the middling sort of society, and no longer had to rely on enormously rich individuals at the top of the social scale, such as banker Turinetti and Abbot D'Aglié, on those who had no heirs, as the widow Baron Servan, or on those who wished to spite their relatives<sup>89</sup>. The 52 donors of the decade 1700-10 include people from a wide variety of social ambiances - the baker Collino, who left the hospital all his property, and instructed that a plaque be put up in his honour, the doctor Capellis, who donated 5,000 lire, the master of the royal stables, Dumaré, who left 1500 lire on condition that the poor prayed for him every evening<sup>90</sup>.

The type of pattern which emerged in these first years of the eighteenth century persisted up until the middle of the century, when the average value of a legacy to the Ospedale di Carità began to shift upwards. This was not because the social composition of the benefactors changed; indeed, we might say that the "middle classes", in particular the mercantile groups, were even more thoroughly involved. But the same groups which had previously given a couple of thousand lire now gave ten or fifteen thousand. This might partly be the result of inflation in the second half of the century, but it might also suggest that a widespread increase in available wealth had taken place<sup>91</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> The legacy left by Arnulfo seems a case of this kind. Arnulfo's will provides evidence of his bad relationship with his son-in-law, Count Pietro Bartolomeo Dalmazzone, husband of Arnulfo's only daughter and father of the only heir. Ins., 1690, 1.9, 10.10.1661. It is not surprising that, after Arnulfo's death, Count Dalmazzone contested the donation to the hospital.

<sup>90</sup> For Collino, Ibid., 1752, 1.5, 30.4.1752; for Cappellis, AOC, Cat.IX, Chiesa, 30.9.1704; for Dumaré, Ibid., Ordinati, 24.2.1703.

<sup>91</sup> There are no comprehensive studies either on spending power in this period or on the distribution of wealth. The only indication in support of my argument is found in Prato's claim (based on very partial data) that there was an increase in wealth in the first three decades of the eighteenth century, and then a larger increase after



The tenacity with which the governors fought to bring about a move of the hospital's premises into the centre of the town demonstrates the influence which locality and physical appearance were considered to have on the way an institution was looked upon, and on charitable attitudes. The hospital eventually entered the town in 1685, after a brief period of confinement on the hill outside Turin. This hillside location had been the result of financial difficulties which had obliged the governors to put themselves in the hands of the ducal authorities. For the hospital had found itself in trouble at a time when the Regent, Giovanna Battista, was trying to sell the land to the east of the city and to encourage building on it. The presence of the hospital in that area clashed with these plans, which aimed at making this an imposing official entrance to the city, and to the ducal palace. It was therefore thought that removal of the hospital would significantly increase the value of the area. Recourse was made to arguments concerning the danger of infection; the hospital was accused of putting public health at risk, causing 'most serious damage to nearby buildings by its unbearable fetid smells, and the citizens fear infection from the excrements of such a multitude of poor and sick'<sup>92</sup>. If the hospital was prepared to move out of the way of the new development, the Regent was prepared to donate it the spacious building of the Vigna on the hill outside Turin. This offer was too financially attractive to be turned down, for not only did the arrangement provide the hospital with premises large enough for its needs (after twenty years in the ex-monastery, which it had never

1750. G.Prato, 'Risparmio e credito in Piemonte all'avvento dell'economia moderna', in La Cassa di Risparmio di Torino nel suo Primo Centenario, Turin 1927, p.36ff.

<sup>92</sup> LPqM, m.18, fasc.1, Donazione fatta da Madama Reale..., 30.1.1679.

had the money to finish refurbishing)<sup>93</sup>; but it also provided it with a significant income from the rent to be derived from the old building<sup>94</sup>. The other side of the coin, however, was that the agreement relegated the hospital to a location outside and distant from the town, and this went against the strategy of trying to integrate the hospital into the urban fabric, which had long been pursued by the governors.

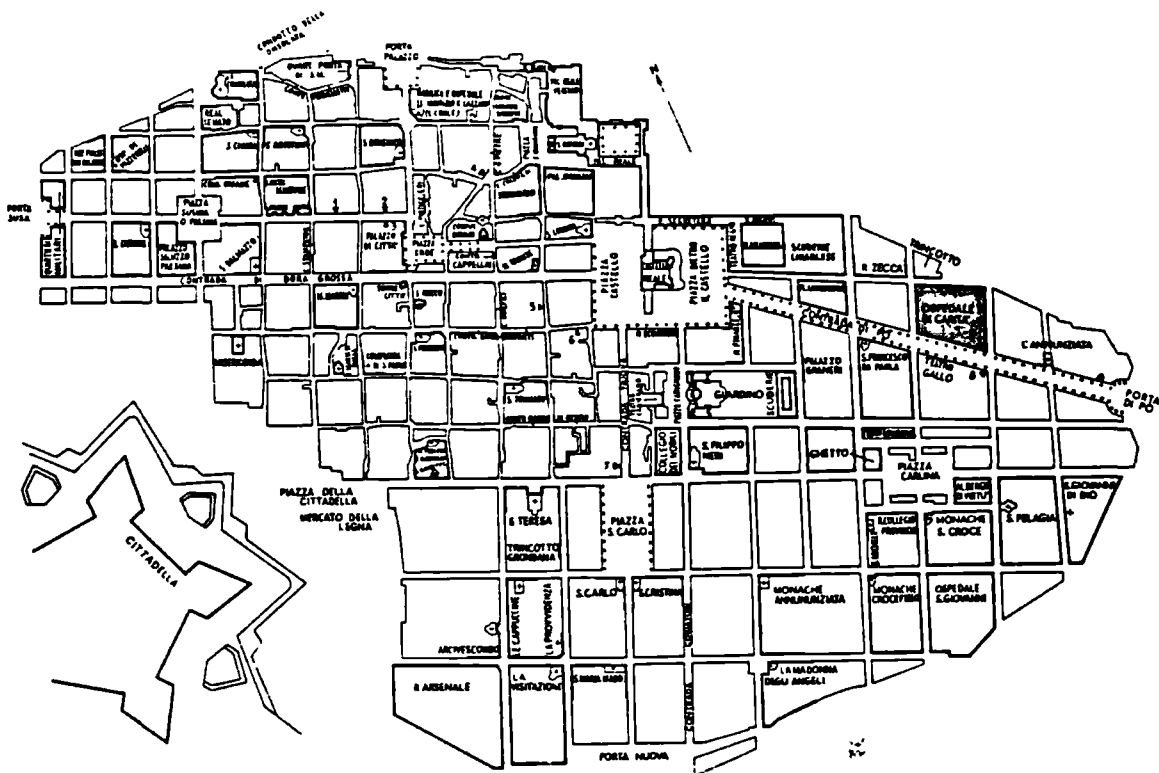
However the exile (which took place in 1679) did not last long. At once, a campaign was launched against the move, a campaign which did not scruple to use even underhand methods such as the anonymous publication of a pamphlet which accused the transfer of being of serious 'prejudice to the poor' - and hence, indirectly, the Regent to be responsible for the damage. After a protest by the Regent, the governors were forced to deny publicly the veracity of this pamphlet and dissociate themselves from it<sup>95</sup>. However, their manoeuvre proved effective. After hard bargaining, an agreement was reached which seemed to contain substantial risks for the hospital, but which eventually turned out well: it was arranged that the governors should build, at their own expense, new premises for the Albergo di Virtù (for which the Regent wanted a more dignified building), but then the Ospedale would become the owner of the Albergo's old premises<sup>96</sup>. As a

<sup>93</sup> Rebuilding had gone ahead in dribs and drabs throughout the almost twenty years the hospital was in the old priory. Work could only proceed when there were funds available or promised.

<sup>94</sup> This old building became a ghetto for Jews. In 1739 the rents for this ghetto totalled about 30,000 lire, thus making up over half what the hospital made from its property (58,745 lire). AST, sez.I, OPCB, m.237, fasc.16, Stato dimostrativo de' redditi e delle spese dl Regio spedale di carità di Torino, 9.3.1739.

<sup>95</sup> AOC, Ordinati 18.4.1679.

<sup>96</sup> This agreement was made in August 1682. So officially, the stay in the Vigna, on the hill outside Turin, only lasted three and a half years; but it was only



Ill.5. Plan of Turin (1786).

consequence of the expansion of the city into that area, these now faced onto the road leading down to the river Po, the smart new street which connected the Doranea gate to the ducal palace. In this way, the Ospedale di Carità thus conquered a prestige location and established itself a few hundred metres from the nerve centres of the court and the state administration (Ill.5).

Already in March 1683, even before the inmates were transferred from the Vigna, the governors had approved the plan to rebuild the new premises in a way which would give them an appearance fitting to the status of the new site<sup>97</sup>. The works were started at once, but they subsequently stopped, due to the serious economic difficulties the whole state suffered from, in the late 80s and in the 90s, as a consequence of the war with France

in June 1685 that the Ospedale di Carità was actually able to transfer the inmates to the new building, after some building work had been done. Ibid. 20.5.1685, 24.6.1685.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. 28.2.1683, 14.3.1683, 21.3.1683.

(which was fought in various parts of the duchy's territory). Building got properly under way again only at the end of the century, and it was only in 1700, when the front of the building, with its arcades, and its church facing on to the fashionable Contrada di Po (Po's Street), were completed, that the Ospedale began to assume its finished appearance<sup>98</sup>. It is at this point that, as we have seen, donations began to pour in. In the early years, many of these were given specifically to finance building work, and seem to show the citizens' approval of the new premises<sup>99</sup>. In addition, in June 1700 the aid of 9000 lire per year and 200 sacks of corn - which was granted by the Duke when the hospital had been founded, but had been suspended for ten years due to the war - started up again<sup>100</sup>. From this time on, the financial state of the institution improved notably; it left behind it the instability which had characterised it in the early decades and it proved capable of supporting the very heavy expenses which its ambitious building plans involved<sup>101</sup>. It was able to rely on a relatively regular inflow of donations, and on the substantial property it had accumulated through its acquisition of buildings and, above all, via its financial activity.

Apart from achieving an important place on the Turin map, the Ospedale di Carità also took on new functions at

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 28.5.1697, 2.6.1697, 13.6.1700, 28.12.1700, 16.1.1701. It seems that the cross-like plan of the building was finished only around 1715.

<sup>99</sup> As examples of donations for building, see, for the church Ibid. 12.9.1700 (Spada's donation), 11.7.1700 (Grondana and Miglyna); for the women's section, see T.P. vol.XXI, c.90-98, 20.4.1704 (Quaglia).

<sup>100</sup> D., T.XII, p.268, 13.6.1700.

<sup>101</sup> Apart from the cost of its own building, and that for the Albergo di Virtù, the Ospedale also had to pay for the refurbishing of the ex-monastery it had formerly inhabited, and which was now its own property, to turn it into a ghetto for the Jews.

the turn of the century. These began to emerge already with the first move towards the town. The first sizeable legacies, which date from the 1660s and '70s, merit mention in this context, because they were the first examples of the custom of linking the donation to a series of conditions which had the evident aim of celebrating the donator and his or her charitable act. In the course of these years, a number of practices and rituals were established which later became habitual. There appeared the first examples of instructions to have statues or busts of the benefactor made, bearing the family arms; and the first memorial tablets, to be placed at strategic points in the hospital, giving details of the donation. In 1661, the year of the hospital's first move closer to the city, Giò Antonio Arnulfo left instructions for what seems to have been the first bust. Arnulfo gave the hospital a series of donations to the hospital, in the form of income rights over land or capital (censi) and houses, for a total value of 37,000 lire; he belonged to a family of wholesalers which repeatedly appears, from the 1620s on, in government registers of contracts for supplying corn, for farming of the salt tax, and other enterprises, and for loans to the Duke<sup>102</sup>.

Busts and statues soon became a usual means of celebrating the most prominent benefactors. The Ospedale di Carità (as also the hospital of S.Giovanni) transformed themselves into galleries of urban prestige. Busts and memorial tablets continued to accumulate until well into the nineteenth century, gradually invading the corridors, refectories, dormitories and even courtyards of the two hospitals (see Ill. 6-7). In the end, this form of homage became a kind of cliché, and so was devalued. But there is little doubt that for many decades after the introduction

<sup>102</sup> On Arnulfo's donation to the hospital, see note 85 above. The instructions to set up a bust are in AOC, Ordinati, 25.6.1665. On the Arnulfo family, PCF, reg. 1623 f.15, 1627 f.63, 1643-44 f.300, 1649 f.249, 1653 f.79 and 89.

of the practice, it made a strong impression - which encouraged others to compete to ensure a place in this gallery of faces and family coats of arms.

Among the other conditions which Arnulfo specified, apart from the bust, was that 100 of the hospital's inmates - 50 men and 50 women - should attend his funeral wearing 'as a veil or hood 4 lengths of silver coloured woollen cloth each', to be provided at the testator's expense, and each bearing a two ounce candle<sup>103</sup>. The use of inmates in this way in funeral choreography was another fashion subsequently imitated by others; in 1688, Arnulfo's funeral was taken as a model for that of another prominent benefactor, Cavalier Michel Angelo Golzio, secretary of state for finance, who also ordered a marble bust<sup>104</sup>.

Apart from instructions specifying the attendance of the poor at the funeral, another clause which started to become common in this period was that which required inmates to say prayers in memory of the donor and his generosity to the institution at fixed times of day. In 1671, for example, Michele Rochati, a furrier who had been a governor of the hospital for many years, left a house worth 16,500 lire on the condition that the inmates said a Salve Regina for his soul, before lunch and dinner, in perpetuum. In addition, the governors were required to put up two stone tablets (one in each refectory) stating this duty, in Italian (see Ill.8)<sup>105</sup>.

Alongside the introduction of a genre of sculpture, then, the closing decades of the seventeenth century saw the development of a repertoire of imposing baroque rituals. The use of the poor to add to the scenography had precedents in many of the rituals of penitence and piety which had become common, in court circles, in the first

<sup>103</sup> AOC, Ordinati, 25.6.1665. Arnulfo also specified that he should be buried in the hospital's church.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 8.1.1668.

<sup>105</sup> T.P., vol.XII, 8.7.1671.

Ill.8. Ospedale di Carità. Memorial tablet of Michele Rochati, a furrier. 1677. (Reg.Piemonte, Assess. all'Istruzione e Cultura).

half of the century. During the Easter week, for example, 13 poor men and 13 poor women had their feet washed by the Dukes, and were then served a meal by courtiers of the royal mouth<sup>106</sup>. Similar rituals took place on St.Joseph's day, or on the anniversary of the death of the Blessed Amedeo di Savoia<sup>107</sup>. With the growth of rituals in the hospitals, however, this symbolic use of the poor was extended to wider social circles. The same sort of ceremony of serving the poor at table was now introduced at the Ospedale di Carità, thus making it a pious ritual in which all the urban elites could take part<sup>108</sup>. The celebratory

<sup>106</sup> An example of this ceremony is mentioned by De Gaudenzi, 'Torino e la corte', for 1644.

<sup>107</sup> Alessio, Vita della Serenissima.

<sup>108</sup> AST, sez.I, OPCB, m.237, fasc.16, Avvertimento per le Signore invitate a servire a tavola Gesù Cristo riconosciuto ne' poveri dell'Ospedale di Carità, late 17th

practices which grew up at this time around charity and charitable institutions formed a way in which wider social circles could reappropriate rituals after decades in which they had been used mainly by the court. It is true that the requirement for small numbers of poor people to attend funerals had a long tradition; a few wills leaving property to the hospital of S.Giovanni even in the second half of the sixteenth century specified that four or six (at the most, twelve) poor, dressed in white or black cloth should be present<sup>109</sup>. But these were certainly modest rituals compared with the grandiose choreography centred around the poor which emerged in the later seventeenth century. The spread of statues and busts also constituted a democratization of a previously more exclusive form. In the first half of the century, busts and statues were used mainly (in combination with painted portraits) in the celebration of the ruling dynasty or of the families of the high court aristocracy - and, in any case, only in ducal residences<sup>110</sup>. This genre of portraiture received a crucial boost from the customs which were becoming widespread in the charitable institutions, where it fulfilled the desire for symbolic tribute of members of much more modest elites - like the merchant Arnulfo or the secretary of state Golzio.

century.

<sup>109</sup> For example AOSG, Cat.4, Cl.1, vol.2, fasc.1; vol.24, fasc.2; vol.63, fasc.2; vol.2, fasc. 4 and 6.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. L.Mallé, 'Appunti e revisioni per la scultura del '600 e '700 in Piemonte', in Arte in Europa. Scritti di Storia dell'Arte in Onore di Edoardo Arslan, vol.I, Milano 1966. On genealogical portraiture, see A.Griseri, 'Il cantiere per una capitale', in I Rami Incisi dell'Archivio di Corte: Sovrani, Battaglie, Architetture, Topografia, Torino 1981.



## 6. Charity and Patronage

The hospital of S.Giovanni also experienced a marked upsurge of donations in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, and here too, this seems to have been inextricably entwined with the celebration of the prestige of benefactors and of their lineages. The pattern was very similar to that which I have described for the Ospedale di Carità, and the chronology was also almost identical. As with the Ospedale, rebuilding along grandiose lines (agreed in 1676 and commenced in 1680) gave great new impetus to the influx of funds<sup>111</sup>. Here too, it became increasingly common for benefactors to ask for busts (or, in this case, also statues, to be set up to commemorate their donation. Some of these were fine works sculpted by well-known artists (see Ill.9). The first in the series seems to have been the statue of Abbot Amoretti, in 1682. The Abbot had made his 24,000 lire gift conditional on the construction of this statue, which he specified should be placed above the entrance, no less. In addition, he required that the poor should recite prayers in his honour, three times a day<sup>112</sup>.

The upsurge in the flow of funds to the hospital of S.Giovanni was also linked to the opening (in 1668) of a section for incurables<sup>113</sup>. The decision to open this new ward was partly the consequence of a desire to separate the hospital's functions as a refuge from its functions as a centre of medical treatment. For in the course of the

<sup>111</sup> Like the Ospedale di Carità, the new hospital of S.Giovanni was built in the new extension of the town. The regent donated half of the land (10.8.1678). The other half was bought by the Hospital in February 1680, and in March the plans of the architect Castellamonte were approved. Regione Piemonte, Assessorato all'Istruzione e Cultura, L'Ospedale Maggiore di San Giovanni Battista e della Città di Torino, Turin 1980, pp.15-19.

<sup>112</sup> AOSG, Ordinati, 31.1.1680.

<sup>113</sup> AOSG, Ordinati, 9.3.1668.

Ill.9. Hospital of S.Giovanni. Statue of Abbot  
Amoretti. 1682 (Arch.Museo Civico, Turin).

century, the hospital moved significantly away from the form I described in the last chapter, and medical treatment acquired much greater importance. This change had been made possible partly by a first enlargement of the premises in 1598, and then by a more extensive one in 1651<sup>114</sup>, and also by the extension of the hospital's role as a place where young surgeons could practice (see chapter V).

However, the decision to open a ward for incurables was not only the result of internal administrative

<sup>114</sup> Caffaratto, L'Ospedale, p.23, p.30.

reorganization, but also a response to strong pressure from below. For years representatives of the various corporate bodies in the town had been talking about the urgent need to set up an institution specifically for the elderly, crippled or otherwise non-able-bodied who were continually being sent to existing institutions because there was nowhere else for them to go<sup>115</sup>.

The opening of the new section also brought with it a new form of charitable giving; on payment of a given sum (fixed at 5200 lire), the benefactor secured the acquisition of a bed and of the right in perpetuum to nominate who was to occupy it. During the donor's lifetime, the right was of course his personally, after his death it passed to whoever he had named in the agreement (usually firstborn descendants in the male line). Inmates nominated by these benefactors had the right to remain in the hospital until their death. This new procedure linked the gift indissolubly to the name of the family which directly controlled who could use it. Possession of rights over a bed thus was a sort of status symbol, and many benefactors set up more than one (the highest number recorded is nine). For the number of beds which the family disposed of was a measure of its power and its ability to exercise patronage on behalf of its clients.

It was probably the ability of this new form of charity to provide tangible proof of a family's prestige and influence which accounted for the very marked increase in legacies and donations which occurred after the opening of the section for incurables. Between 1660 and 1667 the hospital received only six smallish legacies (total value a few thousand lire); whereas between 1668 and 1677 it had over 40,000 lire left to it. And in the following decade there were over 23 beds founded (see Fig.12).

Much of the hospital of S.Giovanni's growth was due to this device of founding beds; it went from 36 beds in the

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.26.6.1667. See also the Ospedale di Carità repeated petitions to the Archbishop (note 51).

Figure 12. Hospital of S.Giovanni. Endowments of beds for incurables and curables, 1668-1790.

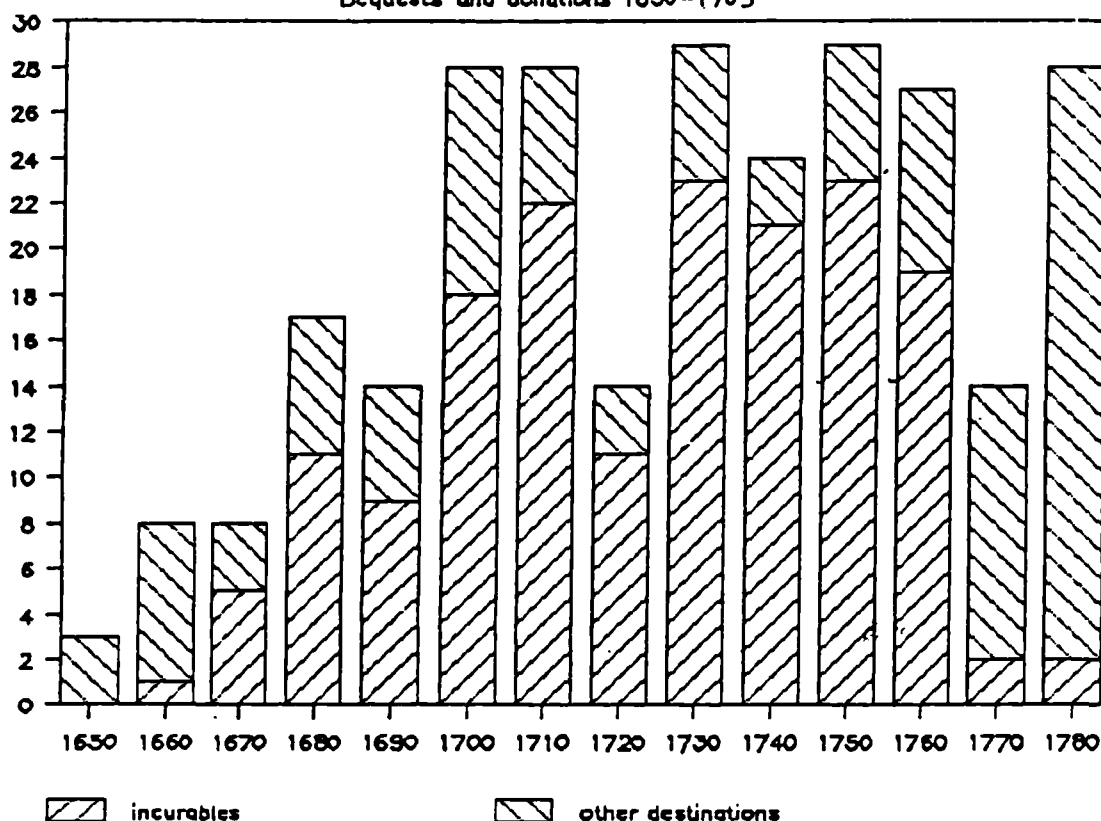
Year	Inc.	Cur.	Year	Inc.	Cur.	Year	Inc.	Cur.	Year	Inc.	Cur.
1668	2	-	1700	2	-	1732	4	-	1764	1	-
1669	-	-	1701	3	-	1733	-	-	1765	1	2
1670	2	-	1702	-	-	1734	4	-	1766	-	-
1671	1	-	1703	2+u	-	1735	8	2+u	1767	-	-
1672	-	-	1704	1	1	1736	2	-	1768	1	-
1673	-	-	1705	1	1	1737	1	-	1769	-	-
1674	-	-	1706	-	-	1738	2	-	1770	-	-
1675	-	-	1707	-	-	1739	5	-	1771	3	-
1676	1	-	1708	-	1	1740	4	-	1772	-	-
1677	2	-	1709	3	2	1741	4	-	1773	2	-
1678	7	-	1710	1	-	1742	-	-	1774	18	-
1679	1	-	1711	12	-	1743	3+u	-	1775	1	-
1680	4	-	1712	9	-	1744	1	-	1776	-	14
1681	u	-	1713	4	-	1745	1	-	1777	1	-
1682	3	20	1714	4	1	1746	3	-	1778	-	-
1683	2	-	1715	2	-	1747	5	-	1779	-	-
1684	2	-	1716	1	-	1748	2	-	1780	-	3
1685	2	-	1717	2	1	1749	1	-	1781	-	-
1686	-	-	1718	1	2	1750	4	-	1782	-	1
1687	2	-	1719	2	-	1751	1	-	1783	1	-
1688	2	-	1720	2	1	1752	3	40	1784	2	2
1689	1	-	1721	1	-	1753	-	-	1785	-	1
1690	-	2	1722	-	-	1754	4	1	1786	-	1+u
1691	3	-	1723	1	-	1755	7	-	1787	-	7
1692	-	-	1724	-	-	1756	2	1	1788	-	-
1693	2	-	1725	2	-	1757	3	-	1789	-	2+u
1694	1	-	1726	-	-	1758	4	-	1790	-	1
1695	3	-	1727	-	-	1759	2	-			
1696	-	-	1728	2	-	1760	21*	-			
1697	1	-	1729	1	-	1761	-	-			
1698	1	-	1730	5	-	1762	1	2			
1699	-	-	1731	6	1	1763	2*	-			

Inc. = Incurables; Cur. = Curables. Note. The dates are those of the disposition and they do not always coincide with those of the setting up of beds. Sometimes the testator did not indicate the exact number of beds but stated that as many as the estate permitted be established. In this case the letter u (undetermined) appears in the Figure. The asterisk indicates the acquisitions of rights of nomination for beds existing already.

mid seventeenth century to about 220 (including both beds for curables and incurables) in 1730, and 450 in 1792. More than 177 beds for incurables were founded by private benefactors between 1668 (when the new ward was started) and 1754 - the year in which the hospital started to place restrictions on the founding of this kind of beds in the attempt to encourage the founding of beds for curable patients. By this time, the governors had realized that the system created perverse effects. For benefactors had a

Fig.13 Hospital of S.Giovanni

Bequests and donations 1650-1789



clear preference for donations specific for the ward for incurables rather than for general donations to the hospital (Fig.13). The new section at the hospital of S.Giovanni became much larger than expected and threatened to distract it from what was by this time seen as its principal work - that of treating the ill. The hospital filled up with the elderly and those incapable of working who, as a paper on the state of the institution complained, had no need for treatment, 'but only food for their hunger'<sup>116</sup>. Those who benefited from the beds provided by donators were in fact mostly old people living on their own, and the system of beds for incurables gave them a kind of insurance for their old age; often, they were old servants who had passed their lives in the service of the family which owned the rights to the bed. Meanwhile, the

<sup>116</sup> LPqM, m.19, fasc.7, Sentimenti sugeriti dal Principe di Francavilla.., 1734.

places available for the sick grew much more slowly. Between 1668 and 1754, 78 beds were donated for the curable (as against 177 for incurables), and even this figure was only reached due to the existence of two large gifts from the Marquess Villa and from Costeis, the banker, who gave money for 20 and 40 beds respectively<sup>117</sup>. In over 80 years, just 17 benefactors opted for this kind of donation, as against 114 who founded one or more beds for incurables, with their nomination rights.

For much of the century, the board of governors did not feel able to stop or regulate a practice which attracted most of the donations and bequests received by the hospital. Measures were taken in 1754 and 1773, to at least limit the period in which a family had control over the nomination of inmates, and in 1762 the governing board went as far as to prohibit the acceptance of further endowments<sup>118</sup>. But the attitude of the governors was contradictory since, when money was needed, they resorted to this means which they knew would easily procure funds from the public. In 1760, for example, to face the extra expenditure for building, the governors put twenty-three entitlements to the nomination of beds for incurables up for sale at 3,000 lire each. The only modification was that these new beds should revert to the hospital on the death of the testator's immediate descendent. Some twenty-one of these beds were sold within a year<sup>119</sup>.

Finally, in 1780, it was decided to grant the right of nomination for beds for curables as well<sup>120</sup>. In this way it might seem that benefactors gained control over access to the hospital on the part of patients needing treatment -

<sup>117</sup> AOSG, Cat.4, cl.1, vol.7, fasc.16, (Costeis), *ibid.* vol.2, fasc.16, (Villa)

<sup>118</sup> The measures are mentioned in AOSG, Ordinati, 21.1.1754, 27.5.1775.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.1.1760.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.4.1780.

in rather the same way as in the English voluntary hospitals, where patients were admitted thanks to the letter of recommendation of one of the subscribers<sup>121</sup>. The measure was successful and 14 out of the 28 bequests received by the hospital in the next ten years were for the founding of beds for curables - a success which seems to show donors' appreciation of this new opportunity for patronage. This enthusiasm might lead us to think that, if the system had been introduced earlier, the large flow of funds which for decades had been going to beds for incurables might have gone instead to the sick. However, there are reasons to doubt this. The measure adopted in 1780 was never fully applied in practice and therefore never provided the same kind of control as did the beds for incurables. Only the first nomination made by the family was actually accepted; then, the bed passed under the control of the hospital. It is curious moreover, that these new beds were used the first time for incurables - even if they were designated as being for the sick. So it appears as if the medical men did not want to give up their control over access to treatment at the hospital, not even temporarily. I have no direct evidence that it was medical men who were responsible for preventing the 1780 provision from being carried out. But, unlike the English hospitals, where the letter of recommendation system had been incorporated at the time of foundation, in Turin the change was alien to the way in which access of the curable sick to the hospital had been regulated for over 100 years.

The support for the incurables section, and the dysfunctions this caused the hospital, clearly show that the expansion in charitable giving in the late seventeenth century was motivated much more by the desire of benefactors to increase their prestige and influence than by any consideration of the needs of the poor. Up until the

<sup>121</sup> See R.Porter, 'The gift relation: philanthropy and provincial hospitals in eighteenth-century England', in Granshaw and Porter (eds.), The Hospital.

middle decades of the eighteenth century, this search for symbols of social recognition remained a powerful motive behind charity.

## **7. The Management of Charity**

I wish now to discuss the social background and motivations of those who were most actively involved in managing and directing institutions, for they have a number of traits which distinguish them from benefactors.

First of all, it should be noted that being a governor might imply very different levels of commitment. For some, it meant no more than occasional attendance of the governing body's weekly meetings, and the willingness every so often to carry out some charge for the hospital or to intercede on its behalf. For others, it constituted a regular daily activity. At the Ospedale di Carità the most active governors were 'governors of the week' on a rotation basis, and this sub-committee oversaw the normal running of the institution, discipline, and the admission of new inmates. Apart from this, certain governors specialized in the management of one particular field of activity. So the task of obtaining the hospital's food supply, or the raw material needed for the inmates work, the supervision of that work itself, and the supervision of building work were all tasks entrusted to individual 'directors' who had wide powers and discretion. For example, in the 1670s and after, Count Giovanni Michele Vergnano was 'director' of the building works carried out at the three sites the hospital was responsible for (the reconstruction of the building the hospital was to move into, that of the ghetto for Jews, and that of the Albergo di Virtù). For over a decade, Vergnano had a free hand in deciding who should be employed on these three sites, where materials should be bought, even which architects and engineers should plan the buildings. Domenico Ubertino Romero, a lawyer, had



Figure 14. GOVERNORS AT THE OSPEDALE DI CARITA'. NUMBER OF YEARS IN OFFICE (1672-1700)

No. years	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 or more	Total
	88	28	14	10	5	1	2	4	3	15	170

Note: The governors in this table are those elected between 1672 and 1700.

similarly wide powers at this time in dealing with the Jews who rented apartments in the ghetto, as did the governors Vittone and Carlo, who were responsible for making indentures of apprenticeship for the 'sons and daughters of the hospital' and for seeing that they were trained properly.

The hospital was thus in reality run mostly by a small number of individuals who managed to keep the post of governor for long periods of many years. The rule requiring a quarter of the members of the governing body to be re-elected every year did create considerable turnover among part of the governing body, but the governors most involved in managing the hospital were continually re-elected and might remain on the board for ten or even fifteen years (see Fig.14).

At the hospital of S.Giovanni, long length of service was necessarily even more common, for up until well into the eighteenth century, governorships were life posts. Thus it was not uncommon for governors to remain in crucial positions within the institution for twenty years or more.

It is evident that the power of the governors was not only a power over the form that aid to the poor should take, or over which particular poor individuals should be selected for admission or out-relief, but was also a control over the various types of contracts and work relationships which the hospital was involved in; given the size of the big hospitals considered as enterprises, the ability to decide who should benefit from the allocation of

its resources was no mean economic power. To give concrete examples, we may note that the governors controlled the recruitment of the workmen employed in various functions for the hospital, of the artisans who set up their workshops in the hospital, or who worked outside but used the labour of the inmates, the choice of suppliers of corn, beef, wine, hemp, silk, shoes, bricks, lime, and so on. It is obvious enough that a governor could use this discretion to favour those under his protection, and to give out patronage which could later be called upon.

A particularly obvious case of the intertwining of management of the hospital and the pursuit of personal interests is that of the sending out of children and babies to wetnurses at the hospital of S.Giovanni. Nurses had originally been chosen from various areas in Piedmont, but in the late seventeenth century they were taken exclusively from one fairly small region (part of the Canavese). This was obviously the consequence of favouritism, since the area in question was the feudal domain of the Carroccio family, and for three generations, it was precisely this family which held the post of chairman of the board of governors. Carroccio's patronage allowed the population of this poor area to establish a real monopoly over the hospital's 'nurslings', and thus to secure for themselves a significant source of income. This case shows how control over the administration of an institution could be used to pursue strategies to create support and personal influence in social contexts outside<sup>122</sup>.

Nor should we forget the influence which control over the hospital offered its governors vis-à-vis other elites in the town. As I have already mentioned, the governors employed hospital funds in financial dealings with private individuals - lending money at reasonable rates of interest

<sup>122</sup> For a broader discussion of this case see my article 'Strategie politiche e strategie familiari intorno al baliatico. Il monopolio dei bambini abbandonati nel Canavese, tra Sei e Settecento', Quaderni Storici, 52 (1983).

to those who had urgent need of cash, and providing an opportunity (often in the form of an annuity) for those looking for a safe investment for their capital. It was not always easy to obtain these privileges which the hospitals had to offer and in many periods the governors maintained wide discretion over whether or not to take on a given commitment. We should remember in this context that there was a major shortage of safe places where savings could be employed - and of course, a shortage of opportunities for obtaining credit at non-usurious rates of interest - so control over access to one of these constituted a most significant power.

It seems likely, in fact, that, to some extent, the hospitals reserved these financial opportunities for their "clients", people who had already had dealings with them. There is no doubt, for instance, that having been a benefactor of an institution in the past improved at the least the terms of the agreement. Thus in 1731 the Compagnia di San Paolo loaned 5000 lire to Substitute Procurator General Brucco (money he needed to pay for a farmhouse) 'in memory of the generosity of the late Senator Giò Paolo' (his father) who had given the Company donations while he was alive, and, on his death, had left 1000 lire and silverware to fund spiritual exercises<sup>123</sup>. A few years later, during a time of economic crisis and very high prices, the governors of the hospital of S.Giovanni gave the Prince of Francavilla a loan at the very favourable rate of 4% - noting in the minutes that this was due to the substantial donations which the prince, and especially his mother, had given the hospital:

Although, given the money shortage and the circumstances of the present war, the hospital could obtain 5 or even 6 per cent interest from a sum of 24,500 lire, given that the matter concerns a family so beneficent towards the

<sup>123</sup> ASSP, Rep.Lasc.160, 12.8.1731.

hospital, and that the undertaking is so completely safe, the board has agreed to the request,<sup>124</sup>.

We might almost say, therefore, that there was a kind of exchange between charity to an institution and access to the financial resources the latter could offer. Often, a charitable donation should not be seen in isolation, but rather as part of a chain of exchanges which might go back to the previous generation or beyond. This kind of cycle-of-exchange perspective obviously leads us to modify the way we normally think of charity. Charity was not always a completely spontaneous gift, but might also contain an element of obligation, a repayment for a favour granted in the past, or at any rate a way of confirming one's bond with a particular institution. And even in those cases where a donation was given without any thought or intention of personal interest, a social link was in any case established which might, in the future, be used to advantage.

What kind of people actually occupied the position of governor of a charitable institution? Among governors who had the longest tenure on the board of the Ospedale di Carità, we find a marked prevalence of men from the mercantile and financial strata - 'merchants', 'bankers', 'wholesalers', or state officials with posts in the organs of administration and control of finance and commerce. The dividing line between these two categories was blurred in this period. As historians have noted<sup>125</sup>, and as the careers of my governors confirm, commercial entrepreneurship and speculation on state finances were intimately intertwined and private entrepreneurs and financial officers of the state were frequently the same persons. The governors of the Ospedale di Carità had made

<sup>124</sup> AOSG, Cat.10, cl.3, vol.2. The Princess had founded 7 beds for incurables in 1711, and her son had added another two in 1731.

<sup>125</sup> Bulferetti, Assolutismo; Stumpo, Finanza.

their fortunes through activities which range from commercial deals (mainly with foreign states) to dealings in foreign exchange, to loans to the state, to tax-farming, to victualling and contracting out state services. At the same time these same men often held posts in the financial apparatus of the state, and sat in the special forum which judged disputes between workers, masters and merchants (the Consolato) which had been set up in 1676. Giò Michele Vergnano, whom I have already had cause to mention, supplied salt to the government salt-tax offices in the 1650s, and wheat and luxury goods to the court in the 1660s, and loaned money to the Duke during the war with Genoa. He acquired a title of nobility and was granted feudal land and rights to community taxes<sup>126</sup>. The Vernonis, a family of booksellers who also lent money to the Duke, figure among the governors for over twenty years - first with Giuseppe, who was on the board from 1674 to 1686, then with Giovanni Battista (from 1691 on). The Marchisios - a family engaged in banking and finance along with the state auditor Garagno (who was also a governor from 1691 on) and a family which had repeatedly undertaken contracts for the military reserve in the 1660s and '70s - were present on the board of governors first with Matteo (up until 1665), then (from 1676 to 1686) with his son Michel Angelo, who was an official at the Consolato, and with Carlo Antonio (up until 1688). These seem to be cases of genuine family dynasties maintaining control over an institution. Other cases of family succession are not hard to find: for example, the lawyer Domenico Ubertino Romero who became a governor in 1688 on the retirement of Carlo Romero, a goldsmith who had been a governor from 1681 to 1687; or Gabriele Grondana, master auditor, who took the place of his father Giò Matteo, a tax-farmer. Members of

<sup>126</sup> All the biographical data on these individuals was taken from wills and from the files Patenti Controllo Finanze (PCF) in AST, s.r., art.689 and from Patenti e Concessioni sovrane e camerali (ibid., art.687).

these same families also met, in these years, on the smaller governing board of the hospital of S.Giovanni, in spite of the fact that there turnover was limited by the tendency for governors to remain in office for life. Thus Giovanni Andrea Marchisio, brother of Michel Angelo, was a San Giovanni governor from 1681 to 1683, and Ludovico Vernoni was on the board for over thirty years (1685-1719).

It is clear that the careers of these individuals and families closely resemble those of the financiers who only a few decades before had reached the top of the social scale through their dealings with state finances and had had a prominent role in the formation of a court. Historians usually draw a clear-cut distinction between the rapid upward-mobility experienced by this latter group and the opportunities open to subsequent generations. They see social advancement and enrichment through exploitation of the state's financial needs, and through the combining of private entrepreneurship with public office, as one which was restricted to the early seventeenth century, and which later declined<sup>127</sup>. However this seems unlikely if we remember that management of a large part of the services the state offered, and of much of its tax and customs and excise income remained in private hands, via the farming-out system. In the early eighteenth century, tax collecting, contracting for supplies and provisions to the army and the making of loans to pay for wars were still all making fortunes for many individuals; two of the most spectacular cases were Baron Marcello Gamba and Count Olivero, both of whom were auditors of the Camera dei Conti (the organ which had jurisdiction over fiscal matters), and both very active governors at the Ospedale di Carità. Men like these managed to accumulate large amounts of wealth in a short time partly through taking advantage of the urgency of the state's needs in time of war, but also partly through more

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Stumpo, Finanza.

permanent conditions. For the shift toward a situation where the state managed its own finances directly came very late. It was only during the Spanish war of succession at the beginning of the eighteenth century that, for example, an attempt was made to collect the general excise duty directly, without the help of intermediaries<sup>128</sup>. And it was not until the end of the reign of Vittorio Amedeo II (1684-1730), and the beginning of the reign of his successor, that a network of salaried officials began to be built up and a gradual centralisation of state finances thus became possible<sup>129</sup>. The shift towards direct management of public services also took a considerable time. One of the very earliest steps in this direction came in 1697 with the transfer of responsibility to public functionaries of the postal dispatch system - which up until that time had been farmed out to the Gonteri family (an arrangement which had brought in very little income to the state)<sup>130</sup>.

Thus cases of enrichment and social rise were still very frequent in the late seventeenth century; it is true, however, that they appear less spectacular than a few decades earlier. The growth of a more rigid pattern of social barriers now blocked access to the highest honours and entry into the ranks of court aristocracy, and this might have led historians to underestimate the persistence of processes of social mobility. As we shall see below, it was precisely the isolation of court families, and in particular their separation from careers in the state rather than in the Dukes' personal service, which a few

<sup>128</sup> L.Einaudi, La Finanza Sabauda all'Aprirsi del Secolo XVIII e Durante la Guerra di Successione Spagnola, Torino 1908, pp.1-43.

<sup>129</sup> See the brief comments in Quazza, Le Riforme, vol.I, p.127 and 133-4. Quazza's comments are, however, all too brief and it would be very valuable to know more about this important transformation.

<sup>130</sup> Einaudi, La Finanza, p.38.

decades later led them to go down in the social scale as rapidly as they had risen. From the 1720s onwards, in fact, they became the principal victims of measures taken to restore to the royal desmene fiefs which had been acquired through favouristic procedures, and to restore the state's rights to taxes. In symbolic terms, too, their pre-eminence in the status hierarchy came under attack. However, in the decades at the end of the seventeenth century and the very beginning of the eighteenth, this fall from grace was yet to come, and the pattern of a closed court society at the top of the social hierarchy meant that there were many individuals and families who experienced a dissonance between their notable economic rise and the fact that they were denied full recognition in social and status terms. This is a crucial element if we wish to explain the search for prestige which led certain social strata to invest a great deal of energy and money in charitable institutions, and to construct them as arenas for the celebration of prestige which were open to all the elites of the town.



**1. Women and Convents**

I wish now to consider whether there is any gender specificity in the patterns of donations to charity. Did women and men support charity financially to different degrees, and did they favour some forms of initiatives rather than others? Did patterns of male and female involvement in charity change over the period considered?

The first point to note is that, overall, the contribution made by women was much smaller than that of men; if we take our period as a whole, only 21% of bequests came from women. However, if we divide the period into thirty-year chunks, the picture becomes somewhat less uniform, and we can see that women's contribution reached its peak in the period 1671-1700. In these decades the number of bequests left by women made up 28% of the total (and if we consider the 1690s alone, over 30%). It then went down to 20% in the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, and subsequently rose slightly in 1731-60 (mainly due to a high-point of 30% in the 1750s), and finally fell to an average of 16% in 1761-90 (see Fig.15). These figures for legacies confirm (albeit less strikingly than one might have hoped) the impression one obtains from the other sources examined in this chapter, that there was considerable oscillation over time in women's involvement in charity. Women, and in particular aristocratic women, appear much more active in charity in the later seventeenth century and the earlier decades of the eighteenth, after which they rather sink into the background.

The general picture historians have offered us of women's involvement in charitable initiatives is a two-sided one. Many studies have emphasised that Counter-Reformation preaching contributed to the exiling of women from the public sphere brought about by the ongoing

Figure 15. LEGACIES AND DONATIONS BY WOMEN 1671-1790

	Excluding those to asylums for penitents	% of M/F donations	Including those to asylums for penitents	% of M/F donations
1671-1680	13	26.5	16	32.7
1681-1690	14	25.5	19	34.5
1691-1700	12	31.6	14	34.2
1701-1710	21	18.9	22	19.8
1711-1720	19	21.8	21	23.0
1721-1730	14	26.9		
1731-1740	14	16.3		
1741-1750	15	21.1		
1751-1760	21	30.0		
1761-1770	13	18.3		
1771-1780	9	16.4		
1781-1790	11	14.1		

restriction of their work opportunities and economic independence, and to the rise of an ideal which saw women's roles as lying primarily in the family and the domestic sphere<sup>1</sup>. The principles of female inferiority, subordination and obedience that the Church's moralizing literature was propagating, were not dissimilar from those which the Protestant Reformation was bringing about elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. In the context of these changes, charity - in the Catholic as in the Protestant world - remained one of the few public activities open to women (in as much as it was consistent with the motherly and caring talents held to be especially feminine). However, even in the fields of charity and of religion, women were expected to be less prominent than in earlier periods. For, after the "Indian

<sup>1</sup> S.Marshall (ed.), Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe. Private and Public Worlds, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1989; J.R. Farr, 'The pure and disciplined body: hierarchy, morality and symbolism in France during the Catholic Reformation', JIH, 3 (1991).

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of the parallels between the effects the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation had on women, see N.Z.Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France, Stanford 1965 (especially ch.3); L.Roper, The Holy Household. Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg, Oxford 1989; Marshall, Women in Reformation.

summer" that the late Middle Ages had represented for female spirituality, the Church now engaged in sharp repression of exactly those types of religious expression in which women had had a special role - like prophecy and mysticism<sup>3</sup>. It discouraged excesses and charismatic attitudes in female religious behavior and preached an ideal of plainer virtue to be achieved through prayer, obedience, and humility. The official model of what saintliness consisted of also changed in this period, and this too had the effect of limiting modes of religious expression which had been peculiarly female. The tendency was to shift from an ideal of saintliness linked to the bearing of apostolic witness within society (an ideal which thus also applied to the laity) to one which identified perfection with the contemplative life, and with a virginal and religious life<sup>4</sup>. It is this repression of non-orthodox forms of religious expression that has usually been seen as the background to the transformations of convents - in particular the fact that Tridentine norms forced them to become strictly secluded, cloistered institutions, and forced the more informal female communities to take solemn vows<sup>5</sup>.

A rather gloomy picture of women's involvement in religion thus emerges from a line of investigation which relies heavily on ecclesiastical prescriptions. These studies portray the impact of the Counter-Reformation essentially in terms of an imposition from above of forms of religious expression which were somewhat foreign to women. Historians who have adopted a view of the Church's

<sup>3</sup> Vauchez, Les Laics; O. Niccoli, Profeti e Popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento, Bari 1987.

<sup>4</sup> G. Zarri, 'Le sante vive. Per una tipologia della santità femminile nel primo Cinquecento', Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico di Trento, 1980, reprinted in Zarri, Le Sante Vive. Profezie di Corte e Devozione Femminile tra '400 e '500, Turin 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Zarri, 'Monasteri'.

policy as less independent of forces emerging from society, in contrast, have tended to present the religious models that the Counter Reformation proposed to women as partly an adaptation of forms of devotion which were already gaining an irresistible hold on them<sup>6</sup>. According to this view, devotion was becoming "the style" among higher status women<sup>7</sup>; numbers of women were giving themselves over to religious fervour to an extent which was unexpected and not entirely welcomed by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Church thus found itself in the position of having to cope with this new pattern.

The rapid rise in the numbers of convents, and in the numbers of women taking holy vows in the post-tridentine period, also needs to be seen as to some extent a movement from below. It would be wrong to see this "feminization" of religious orders as solely a question of forcible confinement and exclusion. The flood into the convents got out of hand and the ecclesiastical authorities were even driven to change tack in their preachings and moral tracts, and re-evaluate the dignity of marriage (traditionally looked down upon by comparison with the religious state, praised as the nearest to perfection attainable on earth), in order to counterbalance the appeal exercised by the convent<sup>8</sup>.

In Turin, as in other parts of Europe, there was a major expansion of women's activity in charitable and pious works in the seventeenth century, at least among aristocratic women. Part of this activity took place within formal organizations of pious lay women, the most important of whom was the Company of St. Elizabeth (later renamed Company of the Humbled). This had ceased activity after the

<sup>6</sup> L.Chatelier, L'Europe des Dévots, Paris 1987; E.Rapley, The Dévotes. Women and Church in Seventeenth Century France, Montreal and Kingston 1990, and the references Rapley cites.

<sup>7</sup> Rapley, The Dévotes, p.17.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.18.

1598 plague, but took on new life under the Jesuits, who assumed its spiritual direction from 1605 on<sup>9</sup>. In the early decades of the Company's existence, members visited patients and guests at the Ospizio dei Pellegrini, but this duty was soon transferred to those of the Hospital of San Giovanni. In groups of friends, relatives or neighbours, the 'sisters' of the Company went every week to the women's infirmary where they 'visited, consoled and served' the inmates, handed over the alms they had collected in the town and those obtained from the 'most comfortable and most pious' among the sisters, and gave back the linen they had washed. They also kept lists of names and addresses of the infirm poor in town and went to visit them in their homes, informed themselves as to their needs and helped them with a little money<sup>10</sup>. At least if we go by the numbers of prominent women on its membership lists, the Company of the Humbled seems to have involved most of the female representatives of the elite groups of Turin<sup>11</sup>.

Other organisations of pious women were created in this period which however had a more transitory existence, and have left only fragmentary traces of their activities<sup>12</sup>. It is likely that a study of these companies would reveal a trend similar to that already highlighted by scholars examining other situations - a flowering of devotional and charitable organization in the most lively decades of the Counter-Reformation, which was subsequently squashed, or at

<sup>9</sup> Tesauero, Istoria; A.Monti, La Compagnia di Gesù nel Territorio della Provincia Torinese, Chieri, 1914-20, vol.1, p.183.

<sup>10</sup> AAT, 17.8.4, c.413, Avisi per il Padre che succederà nella directione della Compagnia dell'Umiltà, no date.

<sup>11</sup> Membership lists are held in Ibid. 17.8.2, Libro della Tesoreria della Compagnia dell'Umiltà 1646-1658 and 17.8.3 Libro della Tesoreria etc. 1669-1768.

<sup>12</sup> An example is the Company of the Seven Sisters. Ibid. 17.8.16, Libro dell'entrata e spesa, 1634.

least regimented, by the ecclesiastical authorities<sup>13</sup>. Much of women's energies, however, also went into charitable and religious activities outside the companies, although these practices have been so far largely under-investigated.

In Turin, this less formalised area of female commitment seems to have become particularly widespread from the 1620s on. It was aristocratic women who were behind the setting up of three new nunneries at this time - that of the Capuchins in 1624, of the Carmelites in 1623, and the convent of the Visitation in 1638. It was women, in fact, who arranged for the orders in question to come to Turin, and they who financed the buildings to house them<sup>14</sup>. Women were also crucial in the establishment and maintenance of two institutions for penitents - that of St. Mary Magdalene and that of St. Pelagia - which were later also converted into convents (in 1671 and 1692 respectively). The asylum of St. Mary Magdalene was set up by pious court ladies in 1634; the daughters of the Duke were especially important since they donated the building and its land<sup>15</sup>. We know less about the details of who founded the house of St. Pelagia in 1659<sup>16</sup>, but we do know that it was primarily women who were responsible for its financial upkeep - 12 out of the 16 legacies received between 1659 and 1714 came from women. Some of these were also very sizeable, enough

<sup>13</sup> Jones, The Charitable Imperative; Part II, Rapley, The Dévotes.

<sup>14</sup> Cibrario, Storia, vol. II p.58; Claretta, Storia della Reggenza, Part II, p.553, 558-60.

<sup>15</sup> AST, n.s., Conventi Soppressi, m.658, Monastero di Santa M.Maddalena in Torino, Memorie della Fondazione.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. m.654, Breve relatione de' successi del Monastero di Santa Pelagia, 1722. This account contains little information on the institutions foundation, which is simply attributed to 'the piety of certain pious persons'.

to set up a pharmacy or to add an extension to the building<sup>17</sup>.

As I have already mentioned, donations to convents and asylums for penitents are not registered in Figure 6 (p.127), which charts the level of bequests in various years, since, for the sake of consistency, it seemed sensible to omit in that graph both institutions which were clearly religious, like convents, and also those which had a hybrid nature, as was the case with institutions for penitents at this time. Female charitable impulse, which at least in selected periods was largely directed to religious institutions, is thus underestimated in the overall trends of charity I present. If we include at least asylums for penitents in Figure 6, the proportion of charitable legacies coming from women in the period 1671-1700 increases from 27% to 34%.

An important feature of women's charitable activism before 1730 is its being aimed at women. Overall, 35% of the charitable acts prescribed by female benefactors in the period 1671-1730 were destined to women. If we take the 1680s and 1690s on their own, over half were so directed<sup>18</sup>. Apart from bequests and donations to convents and institutions for penitents, many other of women's charitable acts bore this characteristic. The setting up of funds for dowries is an important example. These funds (the administration of which was usually entrusted to the Company of St. Paul) provided young women with the sum necessary to marry or, more commonly, that required to enter a convent. Many women also left bequests for

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, the bequests of Giovanna Solara di Govone (T.P. XIV, c.5, 15.4.1680) and of Cristina Villecardet S. Giorgio (Ins. 1.5, c.363, 18.6.1705) for gifts to be used for additions to the building, and that of Angela Trucchi Gromo di Ternengo for the pharmacy (T.P., vol XX, c.147, 15.2.1713).

<sup>18</sup> Male legacies for women were also common but such bequests constitute only 13% of the male total in the period up to 1730.

unmarried and 'dangerous' young women at the Soccorso and the Deposito, the institutions I described briefly in the previous chapter. Others set up funds to distribute alms to widows and, in one case, even to found a community of poor widows 'in which they can maintain themselves and live holily'<sup>19</sup>. Finally, a large legacy was left for the founding of an institution for the malmaritate, women with marriages which were recognised to have failed.

One feature is common to these various charitable initiatives for women: they are largely concerned with the vulnerability inherent in a single woman's position - not only financial vulnerability but also in terms of honour. Thus the typical recipients include widows, women who albeit married are unable to live with their husbands, and women not yet married and unable to do so because they do not have a sufficient dowry. We can see that women's charity shows in this period distinctive features in relation to its male counterpart. I will return to this further on. First, however, I wish to discuss another striking characteristic of female charity.

If we put the bequests left directly for convents together with those left to provide dowries to enter a convent, we can see that the largest slice of women's charity, particularly in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, went towards the financing of what we might call the cloistering of women. This leads us to question the image of forced segregation from the world which we usually associate with taking vows in this period and to ask what the convent really represented for women.

Recent studies of religious life have shown very clearly how -in accordance with the prescriptions issued by the Council - the doors of convents closed on nuns in the post-

<sup>19</sup> Legacy of M.Margherita Dal Pozzo di Voghera (ASSP, 146, 16.5.1658 for the will, and 25.1.1674 for the codicil). The first women admitted were all Marchioness Dal Pozzo's servants.



tridentine period, and how excursions to, and activities in, the secular world came to be forbidden<sup>20</sup>. We should note, however, that although - from the early seventeenth century on - convents were sealed with regard to exits from their walls, they did not prohibit entry. Indeed, precisely in the decades when Counter-Reformation propaganda was at its strongest, they seem to have developed into centres of a female social life focused on religious and mystical practices which involved both secular and religious women. Convents were visited daily by ladies of the aristocracy and even provided the latter with periods of temporary retreat from the world. Even Duchess Cristina herself kept apartments at the Carmelite convent<sup>21</sup>, and other ladies of her court had similar arrangements. Thus for example we discover from her will (dated 1705) that Cristina Villecardet S. Giorgio kept 'silver, provisions and other effects' in the convent (and ex-institution for penitents) of St. Pelagia. Probably, she kept for her own use an apartment in that wing of the convent whose construction she paid for. It is significant that she considered these parts of the convent as in some sense hers: there, as her will specified, the nuns were expected to allow her son 'to store harvest and forage during the present war'<sup>22</sup>. Convents at this time were to some extent private spaces; the nuns themselves had their "own" apartments, built by their families when they entered the convent<sup>23</sup>. It seems

<sup>20</sup> For the by now large bibliography on the subject see M.L.King, Women of the Renaissance, Chicago 1991; Zarri, 'Monasteri'.

<sup>21</sup> On the religious habits of Cristina, see Harangue Funèbre, and S.Guichenon, Le Soleil et son Apogée ou l'Histoire de Christine de France, no date.

<sup>22</sup> For Cristina Villecardet's will, see above, note 17.

<sup>23</sup> The custom of providing nuns with their own appartments seems to have lasted much longer in Turin than in other Italian cities, where it seems to have disappeared with Tridentine policy (Zarri, 'Monasteri'). An example is to be found in the dowry contract of Cristina Piosasca

likely that these rooms may have been used to temporarily put up other women friends or of the family.

The architectural structure of convents thus encouraged contacts between outside and inside, and gave related lay and religious women - sisters, aunts and nieces, mothers and daughters - the chance to maintain selected elements of a shared life. When we are interpreting women's enthusiasm for financing the cloistering of women, we should bear in mind that convents and institutes for penitents in this period were not distant and foreign institutions for female donors but familiar places, part of their daily social life.

We should also note that it was quite common for upper class women - either widowed or older unmarried women - to go into a convent permanently for the last part of their lives<sup>24</sup>. So although it is usually the involuntary and coercive aspects of segregation in convents which have been emphasised, we should remember that, in this period, at least in certain social ambiances, the cloistered life could also be a choice, and one which was idealized by many women<sup>25</sup>. In this context it is interesting that signs of an emotional bond with the convent often show through in the wills of women leaving property to religious

which laid down, apart from the dowry, payment of a sum for 'the building of two rooms for the use of the said Cristina' in the nunnery of the Crucifix (Ins. 1667, 1.11, 5.9.1667).

<sup>24</sup>See for example the cases of the Marchioness of Pancalieri, cited in the will of her daughter, Maria Valperga di Masino (T.P. vol. XIV, c.7, 12.10.1675); Francesca di Sale, widow without issue, who withdrew into the convent of the Visitation in 1689 (Ins. 1689 1.10, c.55, 26.9.1689); and Francesca S.Giorgio, who entered the convent of St. Annunziata in 1670. (This last case is cited in the financial agreement drawn up between Francesca's son, Guido Aldobrandino and his wife Cristina Villecardet, *Ibid.* 1682, 1.3 c.1399, 27.2.1681).

<sup>25</sup> This more positive view of the convent is increasingly emphasised in recent studies. King, Women, p.81 ff.

institutions where they had been brought up, or where they often went as adults. Many women broke with the usual and expected practice of having themselves buried in the family vault in some church, and ordered instead that they should be buried within the walls of the convent to which they were affectively linked, often wearing a nun's habit. This wish recurs frequently in wills up until the early eighteenth century. Perhaps one of the last women to ask for this was Ludovica Fleurì Villecardet who, in 1727, arranged to be buried alongside the 'beloved and revered nuns of St. Clare, in the habit which is already prepared in the house'<sup>26</sup>. Some of those who still wanted to maintain the custom of family burial nonetheless asked to have a part of their body sent to a convent. Thus Margherita Falcombella Perachina wanted her heart to be sent to the nuns of the Visitation at Pinerolo, the convent where she had been 'one of the first young pensioner' and where her daughter had taken vows. She also prescribed that a plaque should be affixed to commemorate the bond of affection which linked her to the convent<sup>27</sup>.

The use of convents by lay women thus did not disappear during the Counter-Reformation decades; indeed it tended to increase, for during the seventeenth century it became widespread practice among women to join a religious order via 'simple vows'. At Turin the example was set by the Duke's daughters, Maria and Francesca Caterina, who became members of the third order of the Franciscans in 1629. Together with their ladies in waiting, they rejected worldly dress and clothed themselves only in 'woollen cloth of friar-like colour', under which they wore 'girdles with little sharp objects sewn into them'. The life of this female court clustered around collective confessions and prayers, flagellation and fasting, and many of these

<sup>26</sup> AOSG, cat.4, cl.1, vol.24, fasc.9, 20.3.1727. Many wills also prescribe burial in the vault of the Company of the Humbled.

<sup>27</sup> Ins. 1986, l.7, 10.7.1686.

mystical practices were centred on the convent. The Duke's daughters went every day to the convent of the Capuchins (an order which they themselves had brought to Turin) and every two weeks they led there a 'public self-accusation'. The institution for penitents of St. Mary Magdalene, which had been founded by the Duke's daughters and remained under their protection, was another stage for the court's religious life. Here the ladies of court took part in the prayers and in rituals of self-mortification such as serving the converted women at table<sup>28</sup>.

The rituals which took place in convents thus extended to institutions for penitents. Further evidence of the analogies existing between the two types of institutions comes from linguistic usage: although they were not officially convents, the two institutions supposedly for penitents were, right from their foundation, normally referred to as such, and documents of the time refer to their inmates as 'nuns' or 'sisters'. Was there a real basis for this linguistic usage? What was the nature of these institutions?

## 2. Asylums for Penitents

If we are to believe the hagiographic literature, it seems that the conversion of prostitutes - 'insatiable beasts sucking the blood and the wealth of men' - was the activity in which the institutions for penitents were initially engaged<sup>29</sup>. All the other documents which have survived, however, suggest that the women in the asylums were far removed from being ordinary prostitutes. Some interesting evidence is provided by the deeds made by women when they granted their dowry to one of the two

<sup>28</sup> Alessio, Vita della Serenissima.

<sup>29</sup> For St. Mary Magdalene, see the account of its inauguration in Ibid.

institutions. My search for these contracts, registered in the notarial records at Turin, uncovered a small number of dowry deeds - ten over a period of twenty years<sup>30</sup>. Data from this small sample of contracts, plus information on two other inmates gathered from other sources<sup>31</sup>, give us some idea of the type of women who were resident in the institutions for penitents in the period before their official conversion into convents.

Three of these twelve women on whom we have information were widows, three are described as unsatisfactorily married, and five were unmarried (on one we have no data on marital status). It is, however, difficult to see which, if any, might be identified as "penitents". There is just one case where sin and penitence are referred to. Anna Marchetta from Saluzzo did decide to enter the convent of St. Mary Magdalene in 1646 'given the vanity of the world', to 'do penance for her sins'<sup>32</sup>. Should we take this as an allusion to concrete facts in this woman's past life, or simply as a highly generic formula, a general allusion to

<sup>30</sup> I examined 20 years of notarial records in the case of St. Mary Magdalene (20 years in the period between 1636 and 1671, chosen on the basis of the availability of an index) and 17 years (1659-75) in the case of St. Pelagia. The figure of ten contracts officially registered is low, given that the institutions housed between 40 and 50 'sisters'. This might be thought to suggest that most of the women entered the institution without a dowry. It seems, however, more likely that registering contracts of this type with the state register was still by no means universally adhered to. I performed a check on the reliability of the notarial records by searching for dowry contracts at an officially recognised convent - i.e. an institution in which it was not possible to enter without a dowry - of similar size (the convent of the Crucifix), and found only eight contracts over twenty years.

<sup>31</sup> One of these women is cited in the will of Carlotta Baron Servan (AOC, Cat.XV, Parte 1a, Eredità, vol.2, 1676-92, 14.1.1678), the other in the documents regarding the institute of St. Mary Magdalen (AST, n.s., Conventi soppressi, m.658).

<sup>32</sup> Ins. 1646, 1.7, 22.6.1646. Anna Marchetta is also the woman whose marital status is not specified.

the temptations or risks which might potentially beset a young widow or unmarried woman? It is possible that these women may have been involved in some scandal; but it is equally likely that it was merely their isolation and the absence of marital control over them that made their reputation extremely vulnerable and retreat into the institution desirable.

The social ambiguity intrinsic in being a woman not under the protection of a man seems at any rate to have been the reason why the malmaritate were in the institutions. It seems significant that both Orsola Maria Castelli and Vittoria Oddonina requested admission to the House of St. Mary Magdalene immediately after the judgement of the archbishop's office which formalised their separations from their husbands. In other words, they applied for entry precisely at the moment in which they would otherwise have had to move into the difficult situation of a woman who was both "single" and "married" - a woman, for whom society could propose no safe matrimonial solution<sup>33</sup>. The third "unhappily married" woman, Teresa Bene, had been married for 14 years but had been abandoned 11 years previously by her husband who had gone to live outside the territory of the Savoy state. As was the case with the other women, as soon as she succeeded in reclaiming her dowry from her husband in 1661, she used this to pay the dowry required for admittance to the convent of St. Pelagia, putting an end to her long ambiguous sojourn in the secular world<sup>34</sup>.

We do not know the reasons why these women came to be partially "freed" from the bonds of marriage. Only in the case of Vittoria Oddonina do we have an interesting piece of information: a few days after the signing of the contract, the convent returned the dowry on the grounds that 'having taken her vows, the said Vittoria was

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 1670, 1.5, 19.5.1670 and 1671, 1.12, 3.8.1671.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 1662, 1.7, 7.10.1661.

discovered to be possessed and so haunted that she cannot continue to wear the habit'<sup>35</sup>. Probably the husband too had rejected her on the ground of her insanity.

Vittoria Oddonina represents an extreme case of the range of inconvenient women of one kind or another the institutions for penitents seem to have catered for. Their main function seems to have been to defend personal and family honour, accepting women whose position was such that their reputation was open to insinuation if not open attack. But their protective role extended more generally to women with life-histories which for some reason did not run along the expected tracks.

For some women entry into one of the institutions for penitents seems to have been determined less by direct social pressures than by a genuine desire of retreat. Angela Gariglio seems to have entered the House of St. Mary Magdalene simply because, after the death of her husband and of the daughter who was her only child, she felt no reason to remain out in the world<sup>36</sup>. We should not forget that even women whose very high social status made their sexual honour almost invulnerable to attack - such as court ladies - were often tempted by the idea of retreat. The two institutions for penitents also made this ideal accessible also to women who were not sufficiently well-off to enter a real convent. The latter all required much higher dowries than the institutions for penitents. Even the poorest, the convent of the Crucifix, whose rates were lowest, asked for between 2000 and 4000 lire<sup>37</sup>. This compared with the 600 to 1500 lire paid to enter the institution of St. Mary Magdalene.

Considerations of cost probably also explain why younger

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 1671 l.12, 8.8.1671.

<sup>36</sup> AST, n.s., Conventi soppressi, m.658, 1.2.1635.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Ins. 1663 l.6, 1.6.1663 (dowry of Orsola M.Benedicti) and 5.6.1663 (dowry of M.Clara Ruschis).

women of good families 'made themselves nuns' in institutions for penitents. The Alpe sisters, who entered the asylum of St. Pelagia in 1666, seem to be a good example. The death of their father, who had been a tax-farmer, threw the family into financial straits. The mother was under pressure from her husband's creditors and in dispute with her son, who was the heir; she was thus forced to withdraw her daughters from the more costly convent of the Annunziata at Pancalieri, where they had taken vows, and place them in the institution of St. Pelagia, where they were admitted for a dowry of about 1300 lire (as compared with the 2000 lire given to the nuns at the Annunziata)<sup>38</sup>. In the institution, the two girls found themselves in the company of women of very different age and experience. But this mixture of conditions and moral states does not seem to have represented a problem. Were they equal to the other inmates at least in terms of social background? We do have some information on the social origin of 7 of the 12 women I have been able to identify. The widows Vasar and Gariglio came from families of merchants, the widow Galla from a family of artisans who owned their own workshop. As we have seen, the Alpe sisters were daughters of a failed financier, and the young women Lucia Rolandi and Passerona came from the minor nobility<sup>39</sup>. So the institutions seemed to take in women who were not poor but came from the middling strata, or women of good social status whose families had fallen on hard times. The idea that the asylums for penitents represented an alternative to the much more elitist city

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 1666 l.11, 4.11.1666 (dowries of the Alpe sisters), 1665 l.10, 31.7.1665 (for the will of their father Gioanetto Alpe), and ibid. 8.8.1665 (for the inventory of possessions, debts and credits drawn up after the death of Gioanetto).

<sup>39</sup> For Caterina Vasar see ibid. 1665 l.10, 30.8.1665; for Caterina Galla, ibid. 1662 l.7, 27.6.1662; for Lucia Rolando, ibid. 1670 l.9, 6.9.1670; for the Passerona girl see the will of her godmother, Carlotta Servan Baron, cited note 31.



convents, crowded with daughters of the aristocracy and upper classes, thus seems to be confirmed: these institutions gave women of respectable and yet more modest social origin, who could not afford to pay a large monastic dowry, the opportunity to pursue the ideal of retreat and contemplative life which was widespread at the time among women.

In Turin we do not find evidence to substantiate the claim that in Italian institutions for penitents 'most inmates came from the working classes, although the asylums occasionally sheltered women from the upper levels of society'<sup>40</sup>. The situation was quite the reverse: if there were any women of the labouring classes (and I have not found any examples), they were the exception. The profile of inmates in Turin also throws doubts on the assumption that, as proclaimed by the documents of foundation, these institutions aimed at redeeming common prostitutes. Although it is not impossible that the sexual behaviour of some in the institutions had evoked disapproval or scandal, the term "streetwise ex-prostitutes" seems totally inappropriate<sup>41</sup>. As I already mentioned when discussing the asylums for women 'in danger of losing their honour' run by the Compagnia di San Paolo, institutional protection of sexual honour was provided only when social honour was also involved<sup>42</sup>. A similar pattern seems to be observable in the institutions for penitents, with the difference that these were places of permanent retreat, while the Soccorso and Deposito aimed at restoring the damaged reputation of

<sup>40</sup> S.Cohen, 'Asylums for women in Counter-Reformation Italy', in Marshall, Women in Reformation, p.169.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.175.

<sup>42</sup> More generally on female honour and the connection between sexual honour and social honour, see S.Cavallo and S.Cerutti, 'Onore femminile e controllo sociale della riproduzione in Piemonte tra Sei e Settecento', Quaderni Storici, 44 (1980), reprinted in E.Muir and G.Ruggiero, Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective, Baltimore and London 1990.

a young woman and at returning her to the outside world in socially safer condition.

Other sources confirm the fact that penitent women, with a history of moral corruption behind them, were in a minority among the residents in the asylums. In 1671, the Constitution which admitted the institute of St. Mary Magdalen into the order of the Franciscans was mainly concerned with justifying deviation from the institution's supposed original functions<sup>43</sup>. The articles of the Constitution tried to play down the numbers of 'pious women and virgins' among the inmates, arguing that this category of woman was essential for the good government of the institution. Thirty years later, in 1700, new articles of Constitution expressed the same concern for the lack of adherence to the wishes of the founders<sup>44</sup>. The articles invited the convent to 'admit virgins and widows in limited numbers only, so as to remedy the disorders resulting - as experience has shown - from an excessive number of pious women and virgins' and encouraged it to accept also women not capable of bringing a dowry, at least at times 'when the income of the nuns was sufficient'. Clearly, the entry of women without a dowry was not expected to be very frequent.

The case of the St. Pelagia refuge was no different. As an account of the institution's history recounts, at St. Pelagia's, too, the inmates were made up of 'three classes of persons'. Apart from the penitents, there were 'the unsatisfactorily married' and the 'young women in danger'; all categories were 'governed by young women or widows of

<sup>43</sup> Regole e constitutioni delle Reverende Monache del Terz'Ordine di s.Francesco, dette Convertite del Monastero dei sta. M.Maddalena nella città di Torino...confermate da Monsignor Illustrissimo e Reverendissimo Arcivescovo Michele Beggiamo..., Torino 1671.

<sup>44</sup> Costituzioni per le Molto Reverende Monache del Monastero di Sta. M.Maddalena Eretto in Torino..., Torino 1700.

impeccable honour and repute'<sup>45</sup>.

The fact that women of different age, marital status, sexual experience and social background shared the same domestic space and life for the remainder of their years certainly represents the most striking feature of institutions for penitents. Moreover these asylums attracted women even of higher social status, as we have seen, as regular visitors from outside. The account above cited also mentions the habit of 'certain ladies of the first rank' coming in and staying in the institution for a period at certain times of the year. The unifying feature was of course the vulnerability of female honour common to the widowed and unmarried women and the deserted wives who made up both the inmates and the visitors. It is hard to understand however, how a society which placed a paramount emphasis on social boundaries and distances could have allowed this phenomenon. We can only assume that criteria of stratification were different for men and women: while male society was highly segregated by age, marital status (which, for men, was primarily a question of dependence on, or independence of the father), and above all social status, women's stratification was shaped by a hierarchy defined by their position in terms of sexual honour.

Institutions for women maintained this heterogeneous composition dictated by a notion of honour up until the eighteenth century. By the 1720s a clear segregation of moral, social and marital states became the norm. The new institutions for women created in this century, such as the Forzate and the Provvidenza, now addressed precise categories of women, either girls or adult women, either married or virgins, etc. But even within the existing institutions, changes were taking place, promiscuity had to be eliminated.

The timing of this change is well documented by the fate of a bequest left by Enrichetta Ponte di Scarnafigi. In

<sup>45</sup> Breve relatione (cited note 16).

1695 the Countess Ponte laid down in her will that the handsome sum of 50,000 lire should be left for the construction of a refuge for malmaritate within the walls of the convent, to be under the direction of the nuns. By 1695 the institution of St. Pelagia had been an official convent for three years - yet it was evidently still entirely conceivable that a convent could manage this kind of institution<sup>46</sup>. Twelve years later, in 1707, the Countess felt already sufficiently uncertain about the project to add a codicil to her will, to the effect that 'if the nuns say they are unable to comply' the legacy should pass to the Company of St. Paul, which was to establish a fund for dowries instead<sup>47</sup>. When the Countess eventually died, in 1720, the legacy had become totally incompatible with the new identity of the convent. It was refused indignantly by the nuns 'because of no profit, and indeed of considerable prejudice to the convent and its decorum, liable to disturb their tranquillity, and the label of malmaritate most odious to the relatives of the nuns and the pupils.'<sup>48</sup>.

Within the space of a few decades both the presence of lay women, and the presence of women with a somewhat ambiguous past had become something embarrassing and even to be ashamed of. Perhaps it is no accident that it was soon after the rejection of the Ponte di Scarnafigi legacy (in 1722) that an account of the convent's history came to be written. This record of the institution looks back on the years when it was an asylum for various ambiguous categories of women with a certain amount of disdain, and as something belonging definitely to the past. The main intent of this account seems to be to construct a new and completely respectable image for the convent, laying to rest as part of obsolete history former practices which, in

<sup>46</sup> T.P. vol.XX, 17.12.1695.

<sup>47</sup> Ins. 1720 1.8, 2.4.1707.

<sup>48</sup> Breve relatione.

reality, were integral to its all too recent past.

It was not just the asylums for penitents which changed their character, for convents in the full sense underwent transformations along similar lines. A whole series of features which had previously been common - the use of the convent by lay women, either for pious, devotional practices, or as a retreat or refuge, or for female company, the custom of being buried within the convent - had more or less disappeared by the end of the 1720s.

It is interesting to note the relationship between these institutional changes and ecclesiastical prescriptions. As we have seen, certainly, the prohibitions on nuns to pass beyond the convent walls is to be attributed to the instructions emanating from the Council of Trent; but the other kind of closure, to entry from the outside, occurred much later and does not seem to have been directly linked to explicit Church policy. Similarly independent of institutional changes appears the transformation undergone by asylums for penitents: the mixed composition of their inmates was not affected by the assumption of the monastic rule; the resulting convents became a more homogeneous entity only some decades after the official adoption of this new status and the change in their intake of inmates was not in any sense encouraged or foreseen by the statutes adopted on that occasion.

The reshaping of the nature of convents that I have briefly outlined should be analysed in the more general context of changes at the level of the way social hierarchy was defined. It has recently been suggested that a new concern for boundary making in the wider society emerged during the Counter-Reformation century which made large use of concepts of honour and social purity<sup>49</sup>. It could well be that the process of differentiation which we see emerging in the convents represented an aspect of this tendency towards greater hierarchization in the body social

<sup>49</sup> Farr, 'The pure'.

more generally. It could also be that criteria of stratification were deeply gendered. If this is the case the convent would be not just an example of a general trend but an ideal vantage point for the analysis of the relationship between gender and the creation of social boundaries.

### **3. Women and Property**

The chronology of changes affecting the convent closely corresponds to that of the previously noted decline of female initiative in charity. As I have shown at the beginning of this chapter, women became much less prominent as benefactors from the 1720s onwards. How can we explain this trend of female contribution to charity?

I have already mentioned that the bringing of the new Counter-Reformation religious orders to Turin, as also the growth of female religious rituals, was partly encouraged by the need of the ducal authorities to strengthen the court and the court's image in the town. In the 1620s and '30s, a whole series of public religious events sponsored by the ladies of the ducal court - such as the founding of the Capuchin convent, the taking of vows by the Duke's daughters themselves, or the crowning of the statue of the Madonna in the Capuchin church - can be seen as occasions for celebrating the court entourage. We should be aware of the impression that this kind of ceremonies must have made: for example the opening of the asylum of St. Magdalen was marked by a procession of the first penitents to be received with crowns of thorns on their heads, and carrying a large wooden cross. Each penitent was flanked by two ladies of the court and followed by their royal highnesses, by male and female courtiers and by ecclesiastical dignitaries - all singing and chanting prayers and litanies, accompanied by trumpets and the firing of muskets

and artillery<sup>50</sup>. This kind of baroque theatrical event displayed the link between privilege and piety, between court and religion, and legitimized the social distinction of this elite.

It is true that some did criticize these forms of religious expression as excessive and see them as unseemly for women. Thus the account of the life of Infanta Maria of Savoy mentions people at court who disapproved of the practices of flagellation and mortification of the flesh practiced by ladies of the court. Others said that 'the redemption of prostitutes is no business of princesses',<sup>51</sup>. On the whole, however, at least at first, the explosion of new forms of religious expression among women met with official approval - both from the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities. The fact that a hagiographic literature developed describing the saintly lives of several of the ladies of court most involved is itself evidence of this approval<sup>52</sup>.

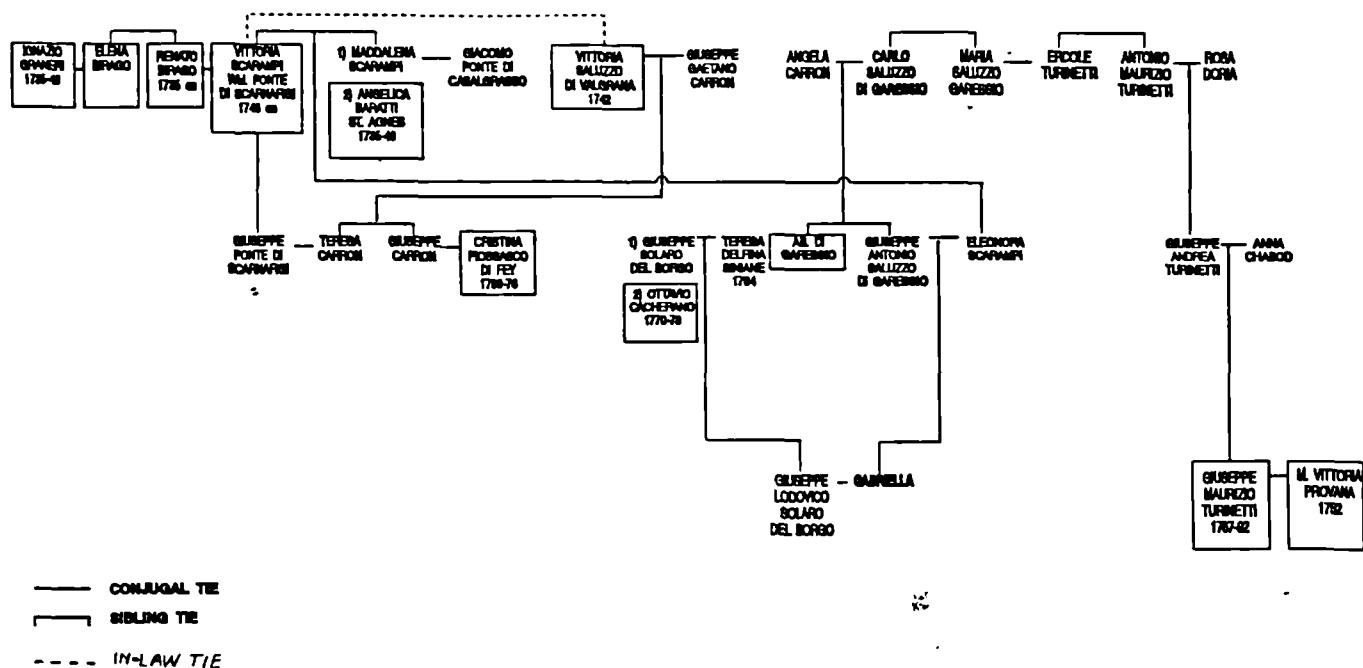
We may say, therefore, that the peak in women's initiative in charity and religion was simply the female contribution to a ~~C~~ounter-Reformation fervour which to some extent characterized the male court as well. But it would be quite wrong to reduce this kind of activity among women solely to the strategy of reinforcing the legitimacy of the court. Apart from anything else, this motive was strongest in the first decades of the seventeenth century but died out later on; in later years, the persistence of female religious and charitable activism, can only be explained by

<sup>50</sup> Alessio, Vita della Serenissima.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> See the works cited in note 17 of chapter III and especially La Virtù Educata in Corte, the account of Donna Margherita Forni, who was a lady in waiting to Infanta Maria until the latter's death, when Margherita was 38. At this point Margherita entered the Carmelite convent, where she died at 56, having acquired a considerable reputation for saintliness and for healing powers.

Fig.16. The House of the Provvidenza: Kinship Relations among Governors and Benefactors



Names in boxes are benefactors or governors of the institution.  
 Dates refer to the year of they donation or to the period during which they were administrators, when this is known precisely.

reference to women's subjective motivations. Why did they respond so enthusiastically to the appeal of the Counter-Reformation? What needs did the activities centred around convents and institutions fulfil?

Let us look in detail at the decline in women's charitable giving after 1720. First of all, no new initiatives were launched specifically by women after this date; whereas in the earlier period they had founded convents and asylums for penitents, from the early eighteenth century they contented themselves with giving to existing institutions; or, when they did have a prominent role, this seems to have been together with their husbands, or else they seem to have been acting as a representative of the family group. An obvious case of this pattern is to be found in the asylum for girls of the Provvidenza. Right from its foundation, this institution seems to have been very much a family affair (see Fig.16). The asylum was



started in the 1730s by the husband and wife Ignazio and Elena Graneri, by Elena's brother, Renato Birago, and by Renato's sister-in-law, Angelica Ponte di Casalgrasso. When Angelica died, it was Renato's wife, Vittoria, who took over her place as superintendent of the institution<sup>53</sup>. Three lines of people related by marriage thus directed the asylum in the first two decades of its existence. Two of them were also major donors. In the decades which followed, management of the institution passed into the hands of families (the Carrons, the Saluzzo di Garessios and the Turinettis di Priero) who were closely related to the Graneris and Biragos, as well as interconnected between each other<sup>54</sup>. The distance between this kind of pattern in which wives and husbands, and women and men of a kinship group, found and manage an institution, and the essentially autonomous activity of women in the organization of convents and asylums for penitents a few decades earlier, is self-evident. It must be emphasised, however, that women were often instrumental in creating new bonds with the institution: sibling and in-law ties are in fact as strong as marital ties among the governors and benefactors of the Provvidenza (Fig.16). Although women had lost the prominent independent role in charity enjoyed a few decades earlier, it would be simplistic to say that in the more family based pattern of charity of the mid eighteenth century they simply adhered to a policy set out by their husbands. Women continued to take initiatives in charity, although their contribution

<sup>53</sup>The list of the directors of the asylum of the Provvidenza is in P.Gribaudo, Il Regio Educatorio della Provvidenza nei suoi Due Secoli di Vita (1735-1935). Notizie Storiche, Turin 1935. For the donations of Renato Birago, his wife Vittoria Scarampi and that of Vittoria's son's mother-in-law, Vittoria Saluzzo di Valgrana, see T.P. vol.XXIV, 16.4.1746, Ins., 1743 l.10 c.117, 18.9.1743, and T.P. vol.XXIII, p.408, 11.12.1742.

<sup>54</sup> For the donations of Teresa Delfina Simiane Solaro (later Cacherano) and Vittoria Provana Turinetti, see Ins., 1764 l.6, 23.5.1764 and 1752 l.7 c.175 17.6.1752.

now appears more hidden and difficult to detect.

A similar kind of tendency seems to have been at work in legacies to existing institutions. Here too, women's bequests seem to have become subject to the logic of a wider family strategy. Thus it became frequent for a wife's will to favour the same charitable institution as that favoured by her husband. An example of this kind of case is the widow Peyrone Martin, who founded a bed for incurables at the hospital of S.Giovanni, just as her husband had done two years previously. Similarly, Anna Teresa Agili Richa made the Ospedale di Carità her main heir in 1758, leaving them approximately 26,000 lire. Five years later, her husband did the same, leaving around 103,000 lire<sup>55</sup>. The Ospedale was also the principal heir of the Murenas, husband and wife, who (like the Riccas) had no direct descendants<sup>56</sup>. In these latter two cases the woman's will actually pre-dates that of her husband, but nonetheless one has the impression that both wills were products of a single family strategy. The wills contain evidence, for example, that both the city treasurer Ricca and Giovan Battista Murena had long-standing business relationships with the Ospedale di Carità, where they had kept capital invested for many years. We might see their wives, therefore, as using their own wealth to reinforce the policies pursued by their husbands. A significant number of wills were even signed by husband and wife jointly<sup>57</sup>.

This tendency to share a strategy with the husband was sometimes made explicit in eighteenth-century wills; especially in the later decades of the century, phrases like 'according to the will of my husband' or 'wishing to

<sup>55</sup> Ins. 1758 1.10, vol.2, 14.9.1758; 1763, 1.8, 30.6.1763.

<sup>56</sup> Rosa Rivolat Murena drew up her will on 22.9.1767 (OC, Cat.IX), her husband Giovan Battista on 9.6.1771 (Ins. 1771 1.6).

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. the will of Anna Gioanna and Pietro Baldassare Boggio, Ins. 1751 1.6 vol.II, 4.6.1751.

obey the will of my husband' became quite common in wills leaving bequests to charity<sup>58</sup>. It is true that these women were widows who enjoyed usufruct of their husband's money until their death, and who therefore, in a sense, were disposing of money which was not their own. Widows, however, not only followed these guidelines faithfully, but frequently left a part of their own, independent wealth to the same institution chosen by their husband<sup>59</sup>.

Another frequent destination of female charity in the eighteenth century was the creation of resources for patronage for future use by the marital family. The purchase of rights of nomination of beds for incurables to be transmitted along the inheriting line within the family was a typical expression of this type of charity. The peak in charitable legacies from women in the decade 1751-60, is to be attributed almost entirely to this legacies with such a destination. In 1760 a large number of rights of nomination to beds for incurables (founded by families which had died out) were put onto the market at lower prices than usual by the Hospital of San Giovanni and women in particular took advantage of this opportunity<sup>60</sup>.

The fact that a significant number of women used their own property to back up a policy benefiting the family of their husband, seems a phenomenon particularly worth noting. Up until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the normal pattern was for women who had no direct heirs, or only step-children, to leave their wealth to someone in their family of origin. During the following decades, in

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. the wills of Clara Lucia Capella Valfré, Ins. 1731 l.4. vol.2, 20.3.1731; of Paola Racchia Campana, AOC, cat.IX, 4.5.1771; and of Teresa Scapuj Bussano, AOSG, cat.4 cl.1 vol.64, fasc.18, 10.4.1786.

<sup>59</sup> For example Delfina Cavoretto Leone did not just conform to the wishes of her husband who had drawn his will four years earlier but in addition left 1000 ducats of her own for the same purpose. Ins. 1749 l.3, 17.3.1749 (for Delfina's will); ASSP 161, 28.4.1745 (Pietro Paolo's will).

<sup>60</sup> See above, chapter III, note 119.

contrast, the tendency to identify with the family of marriage grew. Even charitable bequests which might benefit the family line followed this pattern. Whereas previously women without issue generally left nomination rights over beds for incurables to a brother or a sister and their descendents, there was an increasing tendency to leave them to someone in the husband's family. Even step-children or heirs designated by the husband might benefit. Thus Caterina Quaglia, the widow of a well-off merchant, founded a bed in 1704, to add to that donated in 1687 by her husband, and she left the nomination rights to his brother's son, who was also her husband heir. Similarly, in 1731 the Countess Maria Vittoria Valperga Trotti di Masino, who also had no children of her own, left rights over two beds to her step-son<sup>61</sup>. These two cases also illustrate another feature of the transformation - the fact that the change tended to occur earlier in families engaged in merchant or administrative activities than among the court nobility.

These changes seem to testify to a growing sense of obligation and loyalty towards the family of marriage. Previously, a wife's links with her family of origin - in the broad sense, including not only her relatives in the patrilineal line but also those in the lines springing from her brothers and sisters or her parents' brothers and sisters - seem to have been given more importance than links with her husband's family, especially among the aristocracy. Of course wills favouring the family of origin continued to be common, especially among widows without children. But it came to be quite normal for women to distribute their property between the lines springing from the family of origin and those deriving from the family of marriage. To cite a couple of examples: in 1725 Ludovica Roncha Lionne founded two beds for incurables and left nomination rights of one of them to her sister, those over

<sup>61</sup> AOSG, Cat.10, cl.3, 11.4.1704; *ibid.* Cat.IV, cl.1, vol.65, fasc.6, 22.3.1731.

the other to her husband and subsequently to his brother (who was again her husband's heir); in 1755, Giacinta Brunetta, widow of Davico, founded three beds and left rights over two of them to her husband's brother, over the other one to her brother's sons<sup>62</sup>.

Another major change which needs to be taken into account is that by mid-eighteenth century women no longer tended to have large sums of their own to give away to charitable institutions. In the 1760s, 1770s and 1780s, 38% of the legacies left by women are very small sums left for the saying of masses for the donor's soul. Legacies which took the form of life annuities or pensions were also very numerous in these years. The hospital or institution was required to pay the income of the sum donated to the benefactor or to the persons designated by her, as long as they were alive. Only after the death of the beneficiaries (who were often young and numerous) could the institution fully dispose of the sum to its wish. In 1771 for instance, Caterina Ferri, widow of Carbonelli, left the hospital of S.Giovanni a sum for the establishing of a bed for incurables - but on condition that the income on this money should go to Caterina's mother and sister as long as they were alive. In 1783 Teresa Margherita Gherzi Finasso made the Ospedale di Carità her main heir, but on the condition that they paid 100 lire per year to each of her sister's sons and daughters<sup>63</sup>.

Entrusting charitable institutions with the task of paying pensions and annuities seems to have been a way of defending what little wealth many women had from the pressures of heirs - a way of asserting a socially unorthodox desire to benefit some particular relative rather than the one who was the expected beneficiary or even people outside the family. These arrangements involving small annuities or pensions were generally agreed

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. Cat.10, cl.3, 19.1.1730 and 17.12.1755.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 3.9.1771; Ins. 1783 1.12, 11.11.1783.

in a contract with the institution in question which was made before the will, and they seem to have rather taken the place of legacies to the institutions in wills themselves. We have to remember that, compared to this kind of contract, the making of a will was a much more public and controlled affair, given that wills were often made in front of members of the family, or its delegates. Thus Caterina Viglietti, widow of the banker Casabianca, drew up a contract in 1778 with the hospital of S.Giovanni, in which she designated the hospital as her main heir, on condition that it paid a pension every year to persons nominated by her. When she came to make her will, two years later, she could refer to the agreement with the hospital as a past commitment by which she was already bound. In this way, charity became a means of circumventing prescribed norms and expected behaviour as to who should benefit from women's property, and transcending in particular the growing obligations towards the family of marriage and patrilinear ties.

This is an extreme example of how charity could be shaped to respond principally to the needs of benefactors. These arrangements often saddled institutions with a long list of duties to perform. The case of widow Casabianca - who obliged the Hospital to pay nine annuities and a number of other payments - is not exceptional<sup>64</sup>. For many years the Hospital derived no benefit from the money it had been donated since the cost of paying these annuities and providing Caterina's nominees with beds more than absorbed

<sup>64</sup>The Hospital had to pay 100 lire per year to Father Carlo Cerruti, 250 a year to the widow Rosa Grogardi, 150 to the lawyer Giuseppe Gioanni Calcino, 150 the daughter of Sig. Franco Scotto (Caterina's goddaughter), 100 to master mason Franco Pagano, 100 to Sga. Domenica Vietti, 500 to the servant Caterina De Marchi (plus providing the latter with a bed for incurables and a mattress and blankets), 150 to Maria Teresa Garola, 100 to the taylor, Giuseppe Mayner. It also had to give another bed for incurables to one of Caterina's nipoti (nieces) who was unwell. AOSG, Cat.IV, cl.1, vol.65, fasc.9 - 16.4.1779 for the agreement with the Hospital, 12.9.1780 for the will.

all the interest they could obtain by lending it out<sup>65</sup>.

A number of pieces of evidence, therefore, suggest that women's ability to exercise their own discretion in the way they disposed of their property tended to become significantly more restricted in the eighteenth century. Does this tendency reflect major transformations in the legislation concerning female inheritance and control over property? Until the mid-seventeenth century no system had been developed which excluded women from becoming the main heir to the family property. Piedmont was in fact one of the areas in which Lombard law - which prescribed equal division between all the children - persisted longest. Then, under Spanish influence, the first restrictions appeared on making women the heir, and on women's share of inheritance<sup>66</sup>. In 1648 an edict was introduced which consented to, and encouraged primogeniture, but only in highly general terms<sup>67</sup>. This edict in fact does not seem to have altered practice very fundamentally. It was only in 1680 that a need was felt for an edict which laid down more precisely the rules for defining primogeniture<sup>68</sup>. In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, primogeniture really began to be introduced. According to Bulferetti's calculations, the number of cases in which inheritance by

<sup>65</sup> The annuities on their own amounted to 1600 lire, i.e. to 5% of the capital donated (32,031 lire), whereas the interest obtainable was normally calculated as being 4%.

<sup>66</sup> S.J.Woolf, Studi sulla nobiltà piemontese all'epoca dell'assolutismo, Turin 1963, p.151. This process occurred much earlier in the south of Italy - which was under Spanish rule. Cf. M.A.Visceglia, Il Bisogno di Eternità. I Comportamenti Caritativi a Napoli in Età Moderna, Naples 1988, ch.1. For a comparison of various different systems of inheritance, see J.P.Cooper, 'Patterns of inheritance and settlement by great landowners from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries', in J.Goody, J.Thirsk and E.Thompson, Family and Inheritance. Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800, Cambridge 1976.

<sup>67</sup> Borelli, p.849-50, 16.7.1648.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.850-51, 3.4.1680.

primogeniture was followed remained very small in the two decades following the 1648 edict (just 8 in the 1650s and 11 in the '60s), but doubled (to 22) in the 1670s<sup>69</sup>, and it seems likely that this rising trend continued in the following decades (for which, however, no calculations are available). It is true that many families never opted for primogeniture - which not only created a hierarchy between the various children, but also made part of the family property unsaleable<sup>70</sup>. However, there is no doubt that from the late seventeenth century onwards, the tendency came to be to concentrate inheritance in the hands of one (male) heir - whether or not this was formalized as primogeniture. The rules on primogeniture did not explicitly exclude a woman from becoming the principal heir. In legislative terms, it was only in the eighteenth century - with the Royal Constitutions of 1723 and 1729 - that women came to be actually barred from becoming general heirs to the family property<sup>71</sup>. But in practice this occurrence had become very unlikely much earlier. With the consolidation of primogeniture, increasing emphasis was placed, at the ideological level, on the male line capable of keeping the family name and estate, and the role of women appeared more and more linked to their family of marriage.

Inheritance of fiefs was regulated by a separate legislation, but here too we encounter a trend toward a restriction of women's rights, as in the regulation of inheritance to ordinary property. Whereas an edict of 1648 concerning 'dowries to daughters of vassals and other provisions for the conservation of fiefs' could still declare that women should inherit when there were no direct male heirs, the 1729 constitutions made female succession

<sup>69</sup> Bulferetti, Feudalità e Patriziato, p.427.

<sup>70</sup> Woolf, Studi, p.152-3.

<sup>71</sup> On the Royal Constitutions, see M.Viora, Le Costituzioni Piemontesi 1723, 1729, 1772, Turin 1928.



to fiefs virtually impossible by laying down that a male 'even if of another line' took precedence over a woman<sup>72</sup>.

Another consequence of the establishment of primogeniture was that it tended to reduce the slice of the family property women did receive. Laws existed to ensure that women were not forced to give up all their remaining rights to the family inheritance when they received the dowry. In these same years the proportion of the family property women could be deprived of increased. In 1679 it was prescribed that women could surrender no more than half of the legittima (the proportion to which they were entitled by right); by 1723, on the other hand, it had become acceptable to surrender up to two thirds<sup>73</sup>.

Severe limitations were introduced by the Royal Constitutions of the 1720s not just on women's rights to inherit but also on their freedom to dispose of their own property afterwards. Women were made subject to the same restrictions binding minors and the feeble-minded, and they could only leave their property to others in the presence of a judge or prefect and five other witnesses, of whom two had to be members of the family<sup>74</sup>.

What seems clear, however, is that the 1720s Constitutions set their seal on a transition towards a new system governing women's access to and control over property, which had been going on for some time. The decades at the turn of the century in which women were so active in religious and charitable activities in the convents and elsewhere also seem to have been the years in which their financial power was under attack. By the middle of the eighteenth century women's financial position had been significantly eroded: the impression that they had

<sup>72</sup> Borelli, p.843-6, 2.6.1648; D., T.VII, p.577, section I, clause 4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. p.279, Regie Costituzioni, Lib.V, Tit.XII, capo 2, 20.11.1723.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. clause 9, p.322.

less money for charity and less scope for independent charitable initiatives appears to be justified. Ideological changes were taking place at the same time: for women, the conjugal link was becoming dominant, and replacing a wider configuration of kin relationships based more on the family of origin. This new perception of the family was also reflected in the joint charitable ventures of husband and wife and in the tendency for female charity to be in any way part of the policy of the family of marriage.

### 3. Charity as an Expression of Conflict in the Family

A number of wills of female benefactors provide us with a key source in our attempt to link the changes affecting women's relationship with property and the family to the changing patterns of female involvement in charity. Wills provide evidence of fierce conflicts with husbands and elder sons - conflicts which seem to reflect growing tension in women's relationships with the family of marriage, and with the principles of patrilineality and primogeniture. The conflict was a conflict over property, but it is interesting that this did not focus on the dowry, as we might have expected. When disputes arose over the dowry, these took place between a wife's father and his son-in-law. In contrast, those conflicts which placed wives directly in contraposition to their husbands or sons centred on what were termed "extra-dowry items" (stradotali).

Historians have largely ignored this component of women's property, concentrating instead all their attention on the dowry as if this was the only economic resource at women's disposal. Even legal historians have devoted little attention to the matter, and have shown anyway much uncertainty on what the rules regulating the use of stradotali were. The initial basis of extra-dowry property was a gift made to a daughter by her father at marriage -

which did not, however, form part of the dowry, and was not subject to the same rules of inheritance. Unlike the dowry, extra-dowry items were fully property of the woman herself; it seems that any interest on this property was usually recognized as being due to the husband, but a wife had full rights of transmission, and could leave the property to whomever she wanted. However, the question of who had rights over interest was unclear and controversial legally; some judgements implied income from extra-dowry property was due to the husband only if such interest was employed for the benefit of both husband and wife, others that a husband had unconditional rights, and some even that the interest belonged to the wife<sup>75</sup>. The presence of various, incompatible interpretations in the jurisprudence on the subject may be an indication that there was a change over time in attitudes towards extra-dowry property - a change which, however, left no trace in actual legislation.

My comments therefore, will be based mainly on the evidence provided by the wills. It seems that fathers' gifts to their daughters - the gifts which formed the initial kernel of extra-dowry property - were common for much part of the seventeenth century. Substantial sums could be involved, but there also seems to have been a tendency for the size of these gifts to diminish later on in the century. It was also common for other relatives (mothers, sisters, brothers, uncles) to give gifts at the time of marriage. However, extra-dowry property might also be added to substantially after marriage via gifts and legacies from relatives and friends. Once again, it was mainly relatives of a woman's mother - uncles and aunts on the mother's side - or a woman's own brothers and sisters, who were involved; but sometimes relatives from the family

<sup>75</sup> F.Arro, Del Diritto Dotale Secondo i Principi del Gius Romano e della Giurisprudenza dei Magistrati, Asti 1834, vol.II, p.447; M.A.Benedetto, Ricerche sui Rapporti Patrimoniali tra Coniugi nello Stato Sabauda, Turin 1957, p.84.

of marriage, especially brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law might be involved. The existence of extra-dowry property therefore seems to show a kind of alternative circulation of property, parallel to the official circulation which sent wealth down the lines prescribed by the principles of patrilineality and primogeniture. Part of family wealth seems to have been transmitted, through collateral relatives or down the matrilineal line, to women and younger sons - those who were excluded by the normal form of transmission.

The first reason why extra-dowry property is interesting is that it seems to reflect the way in which social and emotional bonds really worked within a woman's family of origin and family of marriage. In this sense, the circulation of stradotali may be seen as providing us with a sketch of the family as it was experienced emotionally by women as opposed to the image of the family derived from the formally prescribed transmission of wealth<sup>76</sup>. We might, therefore see the size and the circulation of extra-dowry property as an indication of the vitality of loyalties which lay outside the official ones laid down in the rules of inheritance. Second, extra-dowry property brings out the fact that the economic resources which women possessed were often much more significant than is normally assumed, and, above all, that they were more complex - and not limited exclusively to the dowry, nor totally controlled by their husbands. Finally, the most intriguing aspect of extra-dowry property is that - unlike dowries, or the shares allotted by law to younger sons, or to a mother - it was not rigidly defined by the automatic and ascriptive criteria of gender and birth-order within the family. Extra-dowry property grew in size in accordance with the relationships women had with various members of

<sup>76</sup> S.T.Strocchia has an interesting discussion of gender-based experiences of kinship in 'Remembering the family: women, kin and commemorative masses in Renaissance Florence', Renaissance Quarterly, 4 (1989).

their families of origin and of marriage. Rather unexpectedly, we can see that women had an active - if circumscribed - role in building up part of their personal wealth.

The misleading notion that a woman's dowry was her only property seems to have gone unchallenged - partly because historians have made use of a very limited number of sources. Dowry contracts, in fact, have been virtually the only documents used by most attempts to estimate the extent of women's independent wealth. Wills like those I have used are more complete documents than dowry contracts since they often contain information which gives us some idea of the extra-dowry property accumulated by the end of a woman's life. The wills I have examined show that, among aristocratic women, stradotali could be worth a considerable amount, sometimes even more than the dowry. Countess Gazzelli left 14,000 lire in extra-dowry property - a sum which compares well with an average of roughly 10,000 lire, which was what women of the new nobility de robe (the stratum to which the countess belonged) normally received as a dowry. Delfina Solara, a woman of the court aristocracy left extra-dowry property amounting to over 40,000 lire - which again is more than the largest dowries given even within this elite in the late seventeenth century (30-40,000 lire)<sup>77</sup>.

Wills therefore, demonstrate the quantitative significance of extra-dowry property. To obtain a clearer idea of what a woman's real economic position was, however, we would need to have details of all the property she received in her lifetime, and what she did with it.

It was precisely over this variable part of female property, the part which could be actively managed, that conflict became increasingly frequent in the late

<sup>77</sup>Ins. 1717 l.1, 11.9.1716 (testamento Gazzelli) 1716. The reference to Delfina Solara's extra-dowry property is in the will of her sister, Irene Simiane (see below, note 80). Sizes of average dowries in the various elite strata are given by Woolf, Studi sulla Nobiltà, p.156.

seventeenth century. It is at this time that husbands started to claim rights over stradotali, arguing that they constituted part of household property rather than a wife's personal wealth. Wills provide retrospective evidence of these disputes, some of which had been going on for decades. We may take the case of Cristina San Giorgio - who we have already encountered as a generous benefactress of the St. Pelagia institution, where she liked to retreat and to which she donated a new wing. Her will, which was drawn up in 1705, refers to various incidents in a long conflict with her husband (covering the whole of their married life) over rights to her property. Cristina married the Marquis Aldobrandino in 1657, but in 1664 she had already asked for a formal 'recognition of her extra-dowry property', allegedly partly usurped by her husband. Further incursions on this wealth which Cristina considered her own continued, and indeed increased, in subsequent years. In 1681, she succeeded in obtaining a second public agreement, in which the marquis was obliged to acknowledge an impressive list of 17 loans which Cristina had made 'from her own property' at various times from 1662 onwards. This long document gives us an idea of the form that conjugal relationships within this class took on an everyday basis when it came to questions of property. For sixteen of the loans in the list written documents existed, each one drawn up in the presence of a notary; some of these loans were for quite modest sums, but Cristina had faithfully preserved all of the documents and was able to produce them. Item 17 consisted of a series of other 'transactions' which Cristina also claimed back, but 'for which there is no documentation or obligation at all'. As witnesses verifying the truth of her claims, Cristina was able to call on four prestigious men, including the Rector of the College of the Jesuits and the first President of the Senate. With the help of their mediation, the couple succeeded in reaching an agreement by which Aldobrandino agreed he owed his wife 20,000 lire. The Marquis handed

over 2,500 lire and promised to pay the rest later<sup>78</sup>. However, in 1705, when Cristina drew up her will, he still owed the remaining 17,500 lire. It will come as no surprise to learn that the will left nothing to the Marquis, except for the interest (which belonged to him by law) on her dowry and on his debt to her. One more detail of the will indicates how she still felt threatened by her husband: mistrust of him had led her to deposit a box containing the precious deeds documenting the long struggle with the Compagnia di San Paolo, which she also designated as her executor<sup>79</sup>.

The use of public deeds drawn up by notaries for every transfer of money from wife to husband, added to the involvement of noted dignitaries to act as arbitrators, seems to indicate that the keeping of separate accounts, and an independent management of a wife's property were commonly accepted principles in the late seventeenth century, at least among the aristocracy. In theory at any rate, attempts on the part of husbands to appropriate extra-dowry property seems to have been still considered illegitimate at this time. In later years, in contrast, women's rights over personal property were less and less likely to be recognized. Evidence from wills seems to suggest that the appropriation of stradotali by the family of marriage became increasingly common, and in the end it came to be taken for granted that gifts and legacies of this kind formed part of the general property of the family of marriage, and that they should be managed by the husband. / 9

As I have said, no legislation was passed during this period explicitly regarding extra-dowry property; however, I believe we can find at least indirect evidence of a shift in attitudes also at the judicial level. As I have

<sup>78</sup> Ins. 1.3, 1682, 7.2.1681.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 1.5, 1705/1706, 18.6.1705; and 1.5, 1706, 24.5.1706 for the codicil.

mentioned above, the Royal Constitutions of 1729 imposed restrictions on womens' rights to donate property; and this may have been an attempt to give the patrilineal family firmer control over extra-dowry property and reduce this deviant circulation of property contrary to the principles of primogeniture. The 1723 Royal Constitutions laid down that 'women and persons of unsound mind' could not make donations (outside wills), unless a judge or prefect was present, plus five witnesses, two of whom had to be members of the family<sup>80</sup>. It is not specified who the two relatives had to be nor from which side of the family they had to come; but the mere fact of making a simple transfer of property such a highly public act reflects the extent to which the idea of a woman having the right to dispose of a portion of her own property autonomously had come to seem abnormal.

It seems that the erosion of women's control over extra-dowry property took place first on the ground of domestic expenditure; husbands and husbands' families started to claim that household expenditure was a wife's responsibility. This attack on their property seems to have been resisted at first by some women. At the end of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth, Vittoria Teresa Zuchetti-Caissotti was involved in a long legal action against her father-in-law, whom she accused of not having ever paid her the annual pension, victuals and clothing which he had promised in the dowry contract of 1692; this had obliged her to dig into her own resources (which in this case were very substantial, since she was her father's main heir) in order to keep herself, her husband and her children. When making her will in 1715, Vittoria reaffirmed the claim that her father-in-law was obliged to pay her heirs the money she had been forced to spend, but she also had to admit that she had given up the long lawsuit. She justified this on the grounds of 'the age

<sup>80</sup> D. t.VII, pp.322-332, Delle donazioni, 1723, clause 9, and 1770, clause 14.



of over seventy years' of her father-in-law; but her withdrawal seems to have been more the result of her inability to win, the willingness of the courts to decide in favour of a wife in this kind of case having decreased<sup>81</sup>.

Irene Simiane was involved in a similar claim - though this time, on behalf of her non-inheriting son and against her husband. Her husband had failed to keep to the commitments he had made in his second son's marriage contract to furnish food and clothing to this son, his wife and servants, and Irene had thus been forced to use up some of her own property for this purpose. In the will she drew up in 1724, Irene denied her husband any right to use her extra-dowry property, and laid down that all her goods, including the money that she claimed her husband owed her, should go to the person she had always intended it should, her second son<sup>82</sup>.

As we can see, then, women stubbornly continued to claim back money they saw themselves as having been forced to spend unjustly out of their own funds; however, by this time, these claims seem to have been mainly assertions of principle, without much hope of actually regaining the money owed them. The situation is very different from that in which we saw Cristina San Giorgio obtain her husband's signature to a punctilious reckoning of his debts to her under the approving eye of local dignitaries. And it does not even seem to be conceivable to attempt action through the courts, as it had been for Vittoria Zuchetti.

Cases like those I have described may, in fact, be seen as the last flickering of an older system of property rights. By the end of the 1720s, wives' wills normally show substantial identification with the new lineage of marriage. Ludovica Spatis, for example, in 1727 agreed to her husband paying for 'expenses incurred in his house with

<sup>81</sup> Ins. 1.10, 1715, 7.9.1715.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 1.2, 1725, 16.12.1725.

her extra-dowry property'. These were expenses incurred in repairing houses at Turin and at Villareggia (where her husband's fiefs were) and a country residence outside Turin<sup>83</sup>. The wording shows that Ludovica did not consider use of extra-dowry funds for the benefit of her family of marriage as a legal obligation, but rather as a favour, and it is clear that she was anxious to point out that the expenses had been met from her own money; nonetheless, she seems to have basically accepted that it formed a legitimate part of her role as a good wife to use her own property to refurbish the family homes.

Similarly, in 1728, Gioanna Amabilia Isnardi Caraglio willingly exonerated her husband from any repayment of the 2,000 ducats which she had received at the time of her marriage from her family, along with her dowry and trousseau<sup>84</sup>. The family of marriage seems to have been successful by this time in asserting itself as the unit to which women owed their first loyalty. At the same time, the idea that there was a part of a wife's property which was not subject to a husband's control seems to have weakened; often, indeed, the very concept of extra-dowry property ceased to appear in the documents.

These changes in property relationships between spouses seem to run parallel to the changes I described earlier in the pattern of women's charitable donations: in both cases, we can observe a growing tendency for women to consent to using their own property in pursuit of strategies benefiting the lineage they had married into. There would seem, therefore, to be a strong relationship between changing patterns in the form taken by female charity and changes in relationships within the family.

It also seems legitimate to see women's enthusiasm for religion and charity in the late seventeenth century as one aspect of the conflict arising within the aristocratic

<sup>83</sup> AOSG, cat.4, cl.1, vol.24, fasc.9, 20.3.1727

<sup>84</sup> Ins., 1728 l.5, vol.1, 30.4.1728.

family, for the period in which such enthusiasm was strongest was also the period in which husbands and elder sons were putting pressure on women over their right to dispose of extra-dowry property. In some cases, such as that of Cristina San Giorgio, the link existing between her large donation and conflict with her husband and son seems clear. But in general, a decision to donate large sums to convents and other institutions often seems to have been connected with a desire to challenge the claims husbands and/or sons were making. In her will of 1713, Angela Truchi-Gromo - who had inherited her father's estate - left large bequests to the convent of St. Pelagia and most of her remaining wealth to the Hospital of San Giovanni. To her son she left only the minimum she was obliged to leave by law (the legittima); and she conceded this only on condition that he quit the hemp factory and land which her parents had bequeathed to her and which he had 'unjustly occupied', and that he returned the property which her brother-in-law had left her for the duration of her lifetime, as well as compensated her for the expense to which she had been forced to go in order to regain possession of her dowry<sup>85</sup>. In this case, too, it seems clear that Angela was using charitable donation as a socially and morally acceptable way of preventing her son (with whom she had been in conflict for years) from obtaining a substantial part of the property which normally, under the conventions of primogeniture, would have been due to him.

The particular form taken by female charity in this period seems also to be connected to women's personal experience within the family. The preference for convents and female asylums, especially, becomes explicable in this context - for it may be seen as one aspect of the anti-matrimonial rhetoric which was widespread in benefactresses and in general in women of this social class. Retreat from

<sup>85</sup> T.P. vol.XX, 15.22.1713.

the world was idealized as a refuge against men and the difficulties of married life. We should be clear that this had paradoxical effects - for women were, in fact, making themselves the principal patrons of an institution which had a crucial role in securing the working of the primogeniture system (since it provided the way for the elimination of undesired female heirs). Subjectively, however, the financing of convents and female asylums, or the setting up of funds for widows or women with broken marriages, was evidently a way of expressing conflict in the family of marriage, via a rhetoric of women's vulnerability and isolation.

In the late seventeenth century women with broken marriages became the deserving poor par excellence in the eyes of aristocratic women seemingly through a kind of projection of their own personal experiences. The emphasis on the risks to which a widow was exposed and on the plight of women separated from or deserted by their husbands was thus a way of talking about themselves and of the conflict rife in the aristocratic family. Once again, we can see that the setting up of particular types of charitable initiative was the product of discourses which reflected the conflicts in which benefactors were involved as well as the needs of the poor. The emergence of new definitions of poverty was not only due to a new way of perceiving the poor, but also the result of a metaphorical transposition of conflicts existing within the world of the elites.

## CHAPTER V. HOSPITALS AND POOR RELIEF IN THE AGE OF ABSOLUTISM

### 1. **The Rise of State Functionaries and the Attack on the Independence of Hospital Administration**

The early decades of the eighteenth century are generally considered to be the period in which the Piedmontese state set about the reorganization of poor relief and medical assistance. In the field of poor relief, King Vittorio Amedeo II issued edicts in 1716 and 1717 which launched his plan for establishing a network of Ospedali di Carità in the larger towns and Congregazioni di Carità in the smaller ones. These institutions which were supposed to reform poor relief throughout the state in accordance with a uniform model, clearly resemble the French Hôpitaux Généraux and Bureaux de Charité: at least on paper, the policy adopted in Piedmont appears to be the only Italian initiative of ambition and magnitude comparable to that carried out by Louis XIV a few decades earlier. As far as medical assistance was concerned, the reform of the Turin Faculty of Medicine was drawn up in the 1730s, and it is claimed that this transformed the city's principal hospital, S.Giovanni, turning it into an institution for medical training as well as patient care<sup>1</sup>.

These measures have been seen as showing the leading role which the absolute state was taking on in the field of welfare organization. Control over the provision of relief and medical care is thus portrayed as an example of the absolute state extending its functions<sup>2</sup>. In spite of their reputation, however, these provisions have not really been

<sup>1</sup> D.Carpanetto, 'La facoltà di medicina a Torino nel XVIII secolo', Giorn. Acc.Med., vol.CXXXX (1977); D. Balani, D. Carpanetto and F. Turletti, 'La popolazione studentesca dell'Università', BSBS, LXXVI (1978), pp.129-175.

<sup>2</sup> Quazza, Le Riforme, Vol.2, pp. 385-398.

the object of careful research, and very little is known about their real impact. The positive assessment of Piedmontese welfare policy is mainly the corollary of a glorification of the Savoyard state as a particularly successful example of absolutism. With regard to the edicts of 1716 and 1717 interpretation has been considerably coloured by the general acclamation afforded to King Vittorio Amedeo II, under whose government they were adopted. This sovereign, who is often depicted as the Italian equivalent of the Sun King, has been given the credit for reorganizing almost every aspect of the state administration<sup>3</sup>.

The reputation of these edicts also owes much to the influence exercised on subsequent chroniclers and historians by the pamphlet La MendicITÀ Sbandita, written by the Jesuit André Guevarre to coincide with the issuing of the edict<sup>4</sup>. Later accounts have unquestioningly accepted Guevarre's rhetorical presentation of these measures both as novel and as a product of King Vittorio Amedeo's fertile mind<sup>5</sup>. In the following pages, I will attempt to show that Guevarre's pamphlet must be read as a work of propaganda on behalf of the absolutist monarchy. If it is analysed in the context of how poor relief in Turin developed, the 1716

<sup>3</sup> Quazza, Le Riforme; G. Symcox, Victor Amadeus II. Absolutism in the Savoyard State 1675-1730, London 1983.

<sup>4</sup> A. Guevarre, La MendicITÀ Sbandita col Sovvenimento dei Poveri, Turin 1717. The work is part of the tradition of pamphlets printed in this period in various Italian and French cities to mark the inauguration of similar projects for the poor, beginning with the publication of La Mendicité Abolie par un Bureau de Charité à Toulouse, Toulouse 1692. On the activities of Father Guevarre, see C. Joret, 'Le père Guevarre et les Bureaux de Charité au XVII et XVIII siècle', Annales du Midi, 1 (1889).

<sup>5</sup> This interpretation can be found in A. Carutti, Storia del Regno di Vittorio Amedeo II, Turin 1897, p. 460. It is taken up by G. Prato, La Vita Economica in Piemonte a Mezzo del Secolo XVIII, Turin 1908, p. 332; Quazza, Le Riforme, vol.2, p. 313 ff; and more recently G. Symcox, Victor Amadeus II, pp. 199-201.

reform in the capital hardly seems innovative in relation to existing policy. And if we take the most ambitious part of the plan - the creation of a centralized structure of Congregazioni di Carità covering the entire territory of the state - it was not until the 1760s that there was any real attempt to translate this idea into practice. The revolution in the welfare system that the edicts proclaimed never materialized. Their real consequences lay elsewhere, in their ideological and symbolic contribution to the image of power and efficiency which the newly-constituted Savoy monarchy sought to foster in this period. In spite of its centralist rhetoric, Vittorio Amedeo's policy seems to have been not to offend local sensitivities and the corporate system of government, at least as far as poor relief policy was concerned.

It was only in the 1730s, during the reign of Vittorio Amedeo's successor, that the government started to interfere significantly in the management of charitable institutions in Turin, with the result that the hospitals, particularly the medical hospital, were for several decades subject to confrontations between state officials and governors. However this is not necessarily a clash between conservative and modernizing forces, as we might be induced to believe by analogy with the French situation - or rather the interpretation which has been given of the similar conflict in French hospitals. According to the established view, the traditional administrations put up a strenuous resistance to the medical reform of hospitals, advocated for by the more progressive medical profession and more enlightened representatives of the state<sup>6</sup>. Study of the

<sup>6</sup> See in particular L.S. Greenbaum, '"Measure of civilization": the hospital thought of Jacques Tenon on the eve of the French Revolution', in BHM, 49 (1975); 'Nurses and doctors in conflict. Piety and medicine in the Paris Hôtel-Dieu on the eve of the Revolution', Clio Medica, 1979. Also T.Gelfand, Professionalizing Modern Medicine. Paris Surgeons and Medical Science and Institutions in the Eighteenth Century, Westport Conn. and London 1980. For a critical view C.Jones, '"Professionalizing modern medicine"

situation in Turin however, gives a much more peaceful example of relations between the medical profession and traditional hospital management, and shows a pattern of transformation of the medical institution which developed, from the late seventeenth century, within the framework of the existing administration and not in conflict with it.

The clash which did occur was that between state officials and hospital governors in the mid-eighteenth century; but this was not centred on an attempt by the former to impose reform, rather it was a struggle for control of the hospital, related to the rise of a social group, i.e. state functionaries, within the city's power structure. The significance of this attack on the autonomy of institutions was not lost on the benefactors themselves, for they immediately adopted counter-measures to challenge the exclusion of private citizens from the management of charitable resources. It became increasingly common in this period for benefactors to place rigid conditions on the use of their donations. The outcome of this social conflict over the handling of poor relief was thus far from positive. On the one hand, this dispute over authority paralysed the hospital's activities for years, making it chaotic and ungovernable, and on the other, the hoarding of charitable resources, as donators reacted by restricting their donations to particular categories of recipient, did not help the poor, but made access to welfare more complex and laborious.

The era of so-called reform should therefore be seen as a period of conflict between elites arising from the emergence of a bureaucratic class which was claiming a monopoly of control over city institutions, and eliminating direct lay participation in government responsibilities. Up to the 1720s and 1730s, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between bureaucratic duties and professional and entrepreneurial activities. Public appointments were

in French hospitals', Medical History, 2 (1982).



common amongst the richer members of society, and the duties of civil servants were taken on alongside the tasks of merchant, entrepreneur, lawyer and landowner. The political identity of a particular individual was defined by his membership of the cliques and bodies which made up the city's elites (the Municipality, the Compagnia di San Paolo, the guilds, the Camera dei Conti, the Senate and the Court), rather than by any position he might hold in the state apparatus. Thus those who were entrusted with the management of charitable institutions acted as representatives of the political, devotional and professional bodies which had nominated them, more than as state officials. Even representatives of consultative and judicial bodies which to our eyes would seem to be ramifications of the state, such as the Camera dei Conti and the Senate, should be seen in the context of this corporate structure as the expression of a social milieu - namely the magistrature - rather than as spokesmen for a central authority.

A departure from this corporate model emerges only in the late 1720s, when the role of state representatives in civic institutions begins to expand. This process occurs partly through turnover in the individuals involved in the management of the hospitals and partly through changing attitudes. We can observe how members of the judiciary who were already sitting alongside the governors as representatives of the Senate or the Camera, now became advocates of central government directives and wished to take on a supervisory role over and above the administrative boards. In other words, their identity as government officials became more important than corporate loyalty; being an administrator increasingly became a specialised and professional task. This caused a gradual separation of activities and roles which had previously been blurred; the various social groups came to be more clearly defined. This process of specialization in administrative duties did not simply arise from a central

design of absolutism, but should be seen as part of a social group's strategy for advancement. The ideology of the superiority of professional administration had started to take hold particularly in the legal profession and amongst the officials of the judiciary, who were coming to dominate positions as state functionaries. From the 1720s, these groups launched an open attack on the existing system of privilege, in an attempt to achieve greater status for the bureaucratic office. The clearest expression of this tendency was the attack on the privileges of the court aristocracy which, as we have seen, had reached a position of supremacy amongst the elite by the mid-seventeenth century. In 1720, the very families which only a few decades earlier had been the beneficiaries of extremely rapid social mobility, and had monopolized the most important court appointments, were now the victims of expropriation of land and income acquired via ducal favours in the previous century - a measure which was orchestrated by the bureaucratic elite. This expropriation decree was an attack on the dominant position of the court families, not just on their wealth<sup>7</sup>.

The assault on the previous social order also occurred at an ideological level. One example is the attempt by jurists to justify the primacy of bureaucratic duties in doctrinal terms. In 1738, on the basis of lengthy juridical arguments, it was proposed to introduce a new definition of the concept of nobility which would include a broad swathe of officials. It was in fact claimed that those deserving the title of noble included:

amongst the magistrates [...] not only the presidents [of the Camera and the Senate], senators and referendari [presidents of the provinces], but also assistant magistrates, lawyers from various judicial bodies, procurators, down to the master auditors, while

<sup>7</sup> The decree is dated 7 January 1720. Quazza, Le Riforme, vol.1, p.164.

amongst those with political and administrative duties not only secretaries in the cabinet and offices of the state, but also the court archivist, upper officials, the general treasurer, the general auditor for war expenditure, and general and provincial intendants. Amongst the military, not only governors and fortress commanders, but also colonels, lieutenant-colonels, regimental majors and captains with more than ten years in that rank. And that is not all: even the local officials are to be considered nobles - judges, prefects and provincial intendants. Finally the assistants of the general attorneys and procurator-fiscals ...'<sup>8</sup>

Service to the state was now emerging as a new basis on which to achieve status. Public office was becoming just as prestigious as noble blood or nobility bestowed by the sovereign.

It is interesting to note that a similar revolution in social hierarchy had occurred a few years earlier in a statute of the Compagnia di San Paolo which redefined the social categories which could benefit from the special assistance for poveri vergognosi (those of some social standing who had fallen on hard times and were assisted in secret in order to avoid damaging their reputation). A minute in the 1734 minute-book lays down four categories of *poveri vergognosi*: to the traditional ones for 'nobles by birth' and 'nobles nominated and created by sovereign kings', they added one for all 'those who have been made noble by their profession'. These were 'military officers down to and including ensigns,... graduate officials,... officials of the Royal Court,... lawyers, petitioning professors and doctors,... city councillors and the brothers of this Company'. The fourth category consisted of

<sup>8</sup> Quazza, Le Riforme, p. 345.

'the rich who had fallen on hard times', with the proviso however that 'greater regard must be given to the said second and third categories [i.e. recently-created nobles and those ennobled by their profession] than to the impoverished rich'<sup>9</sup>. Thus we encounter in this document of 1734 parameters for defining status which were similar to those used shortly afterwards to reformulate the entire concept of nobility. In this case however, it was not purely an ideological matter, but also a provision which would actually affect who benefited from the Company's charitable activities. Evidently, the enhanced prestige of the state official was already such by the early 1730s as to have some impact on social practices. It is particularly striking that the 'profession' had achieved greater status than wealth. In other words, failed merchants who together with impoverished nobles had once been the typical candidates for condition of povero vergognoso now found themselves marginalized as beneficiaries of charitable assistance. It was no coincidence that the merchant class, which still wielded considerable economic power, was the group that reacted most strongly to its ejection from public office and the affront to its prestige, and invested significant energy and resources in creating areas of charitable activity under its own exclusive control.

## 2. The 1717 Congregazioni di Carità

The state takeover of welfare is usually considered to start with Vittorio Amedeo's edicts of 1716 and 1717 concerning the 'suppression of begging'. The new measures were primarily introduced in the capital, where in August 1716 a first edict outlawed begging and alms-giving within the city's territory, and assigned the role of chief relief agency to the Ospedale di Carità. All beggars were ordered

<sup>9</sup> ASSP, Rep.Lasc. 161, Elemosine, 21.2.1734.

to report to the hospital within three days. Here they were to be examined and given relief if they deserved it, or expelled from the city if they were foreigners or undeserving. Anyone caught begging after the three days had elapsed was liable to arrest and punishment by the hospital guards<sup>10</sup>. Similar measures were extended to the rest of the kingdom ten months later with the edict of May 1717<sup>11</sup>. Hospitals for the poor (based on the existing model in the capital) were to be established in all the towns, and Congregazioni di Carità in all those centres not large enough to justify a hospital. The whole system was supposed to be a pyramidal organisation made up of a number of Congregazioni Generali which superintended the Congregazioni di Carità and hospitals within their area, and these supervising bodies in turn would be subordinated to the Congregazione Generalissima based in the capital<sup>12</sup>. The objective of the edicts was to establish a uniform system of poor relief across the kingdom, which would be capable of responding to the needs of the poor at local level, while being subordinated to central control. But to what extent were these proposals put into practice?

In Turin, the reform is supposed to have reached a full and early implementation. It is usually maintained that the new provisions radically reformed poor relief in the capital, and placed it under the control of the Ospedale di Carità. The volume and scope of the hospital's activities were expanded, and it was given a new repressive function, which led to a policy of confinement on a massive scale. Historians even talk of a 'reopening' or rebirth of the

<sup>10</sup> D., T. XII, p. 280, Regio editto col quale si proibisce di mendicare nella città e nel territorio di Torino, 6.8.1716.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 34, Regio editto per lo stabilimento di ospedali generali o di congregazioni di carità in tutti i Comuni dello Stato, 19.5.1717.

<sup>12</sup> All the provisions are published in D., T. XIII, p. 31-92, and partly in Guevarre, La Mendicizia.

hospital which is said to have fallen into decline shortly after its foundation, thought to be in 1627<sup>13</sup>. This account clearly conflates two different stories. As mentioned in Chapter II, a hospital for the poor (named Annunciazione della Beata Vergine) was actually set up by the Duke in 1626, but it had a very troubled existence, and closed down only a few years later. This brief episode has no connection with the creation of the Ospedale di Carità which, as we have seen, was set up in 1649, not by the Duke but by the various representative bodies of the city's elites<sup>14</sup>. After early difficulties, the new hospital was able by 1683 to win enough financial support from the citizens of Turin to commence the construction of a large building, which was completed in 1715, shortly before the edict banning begging was issued.

The Ospedale di Carità was thus in very good shape when Vittorio Amedeo introduced his measures. Far from being re-established or revived by the 1716 edict, it had been operating continuously since its foundation. Equally, the number of inmates does not point to an expansion in the practice of confinement. Annual reports available from 1715, show that this did not rise as a consequence of the 1716 edict (Fig.17). If anything, there was a decline in the hospital population between 1715 and the mid 1720s, when the numbers started to rise again<sup>15</sup>. It was not until the late 1730s however, that the numbers of poor in the hospital exceeded the figures for the crisis years at the

<sup>13</sup> Prato, La Vita, p.337; Symcox, Victor Amadeus, p.200.

<sup>14</sup> The separate identity of the two hospitals is also proved by the fact that the Ospedale di Carità did not benefit from the income of the 1627 hospital when it closed; this income was in fact incorporated into the patrimony of the hospital for the sick of S. Maurizio e Lazzaro, which was also a product of the Duke's patronage.

<sup>15</sup> ACT, Collezione XII, Statistica della Popolazione 1714-1832. The series is incomplete, as can be seen in Fig.17.

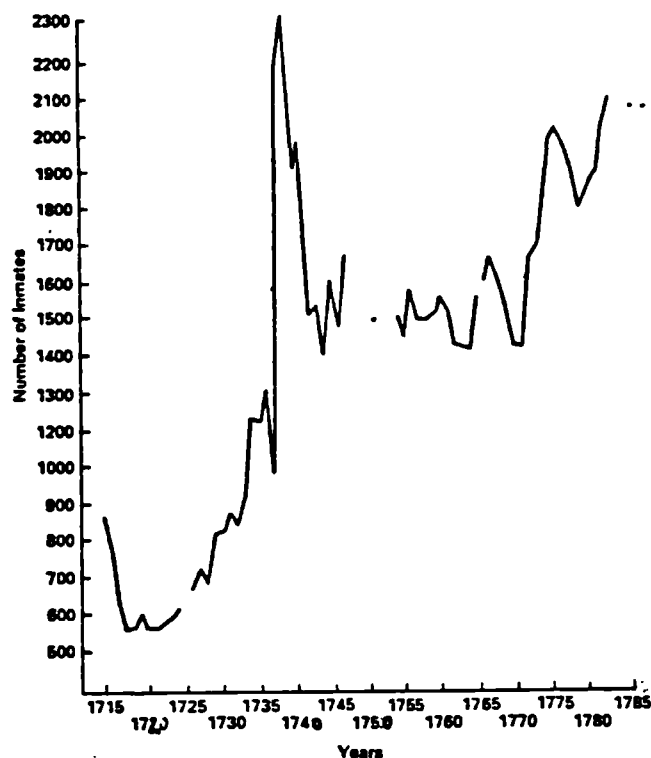


FIGURE 17 Numbers of inmates at the Ospedale della Carità, 1715-1785. Source: ACT, Collezione XII, *Statistica della popolazione 1714-1832*. The series is incomplete but I was able to supplement data (drawn from various records of the *Archivio dell'Ospedale di Carità*) for 1765, 1768, 1776, 1779. However, the years 1748-1750 and 1752-1753 are not covered. Turin population (with suburbs): 1733, 67,734; 1743, 67,892; 1753, 71,128; 1763, 76,504; 1773, 83,175; 1783, 86,510.

beginning of the century, such as 1709 when the number of inmates had reached 1,359<sup>16</sup>. The volume of relief provided was therefore already considerable several years before the edict; evidently numbers fluctuated in correspondence with war, epidemics and the economic situation in general.

The minute books and a detailed report on the hospital's activities written in 1700 reveal a striking continuity in the measures adopted towards the poor rather than any rupture. The hospital was already giving shelter to children, the old and the disabled, and organised weekly distributions of bread to poor families in the community - exactly as in the guidelines contained in the 1717 edict.

<sup>16</sup> AST., s.r., Confraternite e Congregazioni, m.1, fasc. 2, Congregazioni per provvedere all'emergenza dello Spedale di Carità di Torino, 1709.

The hospital was also arresting, punishing and expelling able-bodied and foreign beggars<sup>17</sup>.

The changes introduced by Vittorio Amedeo were thus marginal when viewed in the context of the history of poor relief in Turin. They amounted to instructions to exclude children aged under seven from admittance ('so that the hospital does not fill up with useless persons') and to make more effective the traditional ban on admittance of those infected with contagious diseases. The new measures did not redefine the nature of hospital administration, and far from marking a shift towards state control, they confirmed the existing corporate structure of management. A minor amendment increased the number of governors from 31 to 35, but this did not involve an alteration in the balance of power in the governing board. In fact the number and distribution of the eleven 'nominated' governors (i.e. those elected by various representative bodies) remained unchanged. It was only the number of governors co-opted by this core body which increased from 20 to 24. It was not until the 1730s that central government started to lay claim to the management of the hospital and other charitable institutions, with the introduction of a royal official (Regio Protettore) to supervise administration. Up to this date, however, the hospital retained a mixed and uncentralised form of administration, remaining dependent on the corporate bodies which had founded it in 1649. This corporate structure was by no means nominal or formal, but clearly shaped the decision-making process not just in the day-to-day administration, but also in important matters of policy. The decision in 1683 to build a new hospital is a significant example. The grandiose lines of this building did not emanate from royal planning -as architectural

<sup>17</sup> Compare the Deliberazione della congregazione dell'ospedale della carità di Torino, 1.6.1700 (D., T. XII, p. 272) with the regulation contained in the Regio editto col quale Sua Maestà conferma l'erezione e le prerogative dell'ospedale della carità di Torino, 17.4.1717 (ibid., p. 286).



historians have generally interpreted institutional building of this kind<sup>18</sup>. The minutes record that the governors examined the plans on several occasions and sent them to the different bodies they represented. The last mention of these negotiations is to be found in March, when the order is made to show the final drawings 'to the magistrates [of the Senate and the Camera dei Conti], the City of Turin [City Council], the Archbishop, the Marquis Pallavicino [the court representative] and others, so that, after careful consideration, they could be presented to His Highness for approval'<sup>19</sup>. The sovereign appears only at the end of the decision-making process, as the one whose signature is required to finalize an agreement which has already been reached.

Let us now consider the most ambitious part of the plan - that which concerned the provinces. There is no dispute over the failure of Vittorio Amedeo's plan to unify the poor relief system. The report on the number and conditions of the Congregazioni di Carità which was ordered in 1725 and completed a year later, leaves little doubt: only 76 of the 399 Congregazioni which had been planned were actually able to give any relief to the poor. The other 323 were classified in the report as either 'very poor' or 'extremely poor' and as inactive for this reason: the lack of funds in turn was attributed to a lack of local initiative<sup>20</sup>. Historians have accepted this explanation without questions, which reinforces the long prevailing view of the relationship between central government and localities as one of aggression versus resistance. The failure of the project is imputed to local inertia in the face of central directives, not to any inherent weakness in

<sup>18</sup> See for instance Comoli Mandracchi, Torino.

<sup>19</sup> AOC, *Ordinati*, 21.3.1683.

<sup>20</sup> AST, s.r., Confraternite e Congregazioni di Carità, m.l., fasc. 3, Stato delle Congregazioni di Carità date per insufficienti al soccorso quotidiano de' poveri, 1726.

the plan itself<sup>21</sup>. However, we should note that the 1717 measures were extremely vague and deficient. First, the definitions of the territorial units in which the Congregazioni di Carità were to be set up were ambiguous. The lengthy regulations sometimes refer vaguely to 'all the lands and places' of the state where these organizations were supposed to be set up, and at other time refers to 'communities' or even 'parishes'. The same lack of clarity is to be found in the territorial definitions of the supervisory bodies, the Congregazioni Generali. It was unclear whether these were to be based on the diocesan seat or the provincial capital. Finally, no attempt was made to define the tasks of the Congregazione Generalissima (or Congregazione Primaria), the apex of the pyramidal structure based in Turin: 'the Congregazione Primaria will supervise the good management of the various Congregazioni in its province and also deal with the petitions and requirements of the Congregazioni Generali'<sup>22</sup>. However it would appear that for about ten years the only activity carried out by the Congregazione Generalissima was to arbitrate disputes between the various Congregazioni<sup>23</sup>. The need to define the duties of the Congregazione Generalissima more precisely was not expressed until 1744 and 1745. For the first time, it was underlined that it should keep regular contacts with the provincial congregations, and require a report from them at least once a year. The provincial congregations were described as

<sup>21</sup> Prato, La Vita, pp.322-26; Quazza, Le Riforme, p.316.

<sup>22</sup> Although a hierarchical structure had been discussed from the outset, it was not until 1719 that a royal edict ordered the foundation of the Congregazioni Generali and the Congregazione Generalissima in the Capital. Cf. Editto regio per lo stabilimento di una congregazione primaria e generalissima sopra gli ospizi e congregazioni di carità, 20.7.1719, in D., T. XII, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup> LPqM, m.18, Fasc. 9, Lettere e memorie concernanti l'erezione, interessi e maneggio degli Ospedali di Carità ne' stati di S.M., 1718-1728.

having fallen completely into disuse, and most of them existed only on paper; they had not met for years and had not observed the rule obliging them to obtain a report from their local Congregazioni every six months<sup>24</sup>.

One has the impression that the edict was more effective at projecting an ideal image of the bureaucratic state than at putting into action a system of supervision capable of functioning. Nor did the edict create direct administration by state functionaries at the local level. In fact it demonstrated complete respect for local power structures in the formation of governing bodies for hospitals and Congregazioni, stating that their composition should depend on 'the custom of the locality'<sup>25</sup>. It gave very few guidelines on how the Congregazioni should be managed (how often the governors should meet, etc.), but it allowed even these few directions to be altered 'according to the necessities of time and place'. Finally the edict did not attempt to introduce standard criteria for the distribution of poor relief throughout the country. It only supplied very general guidance on the age groups and categories to be preferred (the old, children, women living alone, etc.), acknowledging that more precise criteria had to be established by local administrators 'according to the needs of the poor, the customs of the locality and its forms of government'<sup>26</sup>.

However the edict was not completely without effect, and 399 Congregazioni nominally existed by 1726, although the majority had already ceased to function, or perhaps had never functioned. The figures show that the edict did

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., m.19, Fasc. 23, Memoria in risposta alla lettera del Sig. Conte di Laurent delli 23 febbraio 1745, 10.3.1745.

<sup>25</sup> 'Istruzioni degli Ospizi Generali dei Poveri', Part I, Paragraph I, Clause 3, and Paragraph III, Clauses 3 and 6, in Guevarre, La Mendicizia.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., Part I, Paragraph III, Clause 9, and Paragraph IV, Clause 3.

stimulate local initiatives, but not of the kind that its rhetoric would have us believe. Poor relief agencies (some of which were totally new, some revivals of defunct organizations, and some mergers of existing ones) sprang up in this period, out of the local conflict over influence and prestige<sup>27</sup>. But these initiatives occurred independently from each other and had various meanings and characteristics. In terms of setting up a single coherent poor relief system across the country, the 1717 plan proved to be a failure.

As I have already mentioned, it was in 1745 that the issue of centralization was finally raised. In particular an attempt was made to transform the Congregazione Generalissima into a body with real functions. It certainly had very little authority at the time: when its secretary wrote to the Congregazioni in the Province of Turin, requesting them to answer a number of questions for the compilation of a general report, only fourteen out of a hundred replied<sup>28</sup>. Records of the consultations which took place in 1745, also confirm the impression that the Congregazione Generalissima never operated effectively and had hardly any knowledge on the state of the local Congregazioni. In fact most of the discussion revolves around the necessity of getting a map of the state showing where the various Congregazioni were located, and a blank book for each province in which to register the local and provincial Congregazioni<sup>29</sup>. For some reason however, the attempt to resume Victor Amadeus' plan did not lead to concrete action. We have to wait another two decades before seeing any substantial achievement in the direction indicated in 1717. In the 1760s steps were taken which

<sup>27</sup> A. Torre, 'Il consumo di devozioni: rituali e potere nelle campagne piemontesi nella prima metà del Settecento', Quaderni Storici, 58 (1985).

<sup>28</sup> LPqM, m.19, Fasc. 23, Lettera dell'abate di Rodi al Conte di S. Laurent, 11.6.1744.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Memorie in risposta ....

involved more serious central government involvement in the organization of poor relief in the kingdom<sup>30</sup>. On this occasion, an inquiry into the conditions of the poor and their specific needs in the different regions was ordered, and the task was assigned to the intendants, the royal representatives in the provinces. The results of this inquiry formed the basis for the plan which was submitted in 1767 for the establishment of a network of hospitals for the poor (now called ospizi) throughout the country. More informal structures of the type envisaged in the original plan for the Congregazioni were definitively dropped, but at least this less ambitious project was partly implemented, and many of the planned hospitals were in fact built in the last decades of the century<sup>31</sup>.

More extensive study of the provincial archives would reveal a more detailed picture of the result of the plan at local level and its various stages of development. This initial examination of the documents kept in Turin suggests that different dynamics underpinned government poor relief policy between 1717 and the 1760s. The rationale which led to the 1717 edict was quite different to the one which stimulated its review in 1745 or the achievements of the 1760s. Historians have tended to perceive these events as episodes in the same story, whilst in fact they were quite unrelated.

The 1717 plan was not a piece of legislation designed to be acted upon, but rather an exercise in propaganda, a manifesto on behalf of the absolute monarchy proclaiming its centralizing aspirations. The plan itself was a paper tiger, and it did not envisage real reform, nor did it expect any to take place, as analysis of the text of the

<sup>30</sup> D., T. XII, R. P. con cui S.M. istituisce una giunta ..., 22.9.1766, p. 139 and 141.

<sup>31</sup> P. Chierici and L. Palmucci, 'Gli Ospizi di Carità in Piemonte. Appunti per la lettura del fenomeno insediativo', in E. Sori (ed.), Città e Controllo Sociale, Milan 1982.

edicts has revealed. Further support for this view can be found in Father Guevarre's account in his pamphlet of the ceremony which accompanied the announcement of the measures. A huge publicity campaign surrounded the event, and the Jesuits, led by Father Guevarre, broadcasted it in a series of sermons in the city churches and alms collections around the houses. The high point of the celebration was the procession which took place on Wednesday 7 April 1717, with the participation of all the inmates of the Ospedale di Carità, the poor to whom the hospital distributed bread at home every Sunday, the hospital governors, the confraternities, religious orders and Canons of the Chapter. They assembled at the cathedral in the morning, and then paraded through the city, until they reached the hospital door where Father Guevarre delivered a sermon. So far there was nothing new. A procession with the involvement of the assisted poor, the clergy and the city authorities recalls the earlier ceremonies which had accompanied the launch of the city's first poor relief plan in 1541, and the opening of the first and second hospitals for the poor in 1627 and 1650. In addition, similar displays of the assisted poor in a place noted for its symbolic or sacred character had been re-enacted every time orders had been re-issued for the prohibition of begging and the census, examination and selection of those in need. But while the ceremony was not in itself new, important symbolic innovations were introduced to the well-established ritual.

Traditionally the gathering of all the poor would take place at the cathedral, the hospital or the town hall. In 1717, Piazza Castello by the Royal Palace was used for the first time. Guevarre describes how, after the sermon at the hospital door, the procession departed again and in the same order reached Piazza Castello in which six long lines of tables were waiting, three for the men and, some distance away, three for the women. All the tables faced the windows of the palace from which the royal family would

have watched the spectacle. The poor were served a meal by court pages and maids of honour, to the sound of trumpets and under the direction of courtiers and ladies in waiting. A line of 200 soldiers enclosed the square (which Guevarre described as the 'theatre') and held the crowd back. The meal concluded with a ritual thanksgiving and the poor sang choral orations to the health of the King.

Piazza Castello and the royal palace had thus acquired a crucial importance in the proceedings, and the royal family had become the focal point of the celebration, an exalted role which had never been enjoyed by any previous sovereign. Traditionally royalty had held a place of honour in the processions, ahead of the clergy, but now they came to occupy a distant and superior position which was exclusive to them. More than that, the ceremony gave the appearance of being arranged in homage to the royal family: the thanksgiving was exclusively directed to them, and the employment of courtiers to serve the meal to the poor made the monarch and his entourage the primary dispenser of charity.

There can be little doubt then that the novelty of the 1717 edicts has been overemphasized. They were a version of old measures, but their originality lay in their use of traditional ritual in the search for identity and consensus for the recently established monarchy. It should be recalled that this period was a turning-point in the history of the Savoy dynasty. In 1713, the House of Savoy had emerged from the Treaty of Utrecht with its position considerably enhanced not only in terms of territory and power, but also in status<sup>32</sup>. It represented the only Italian state acknowledged as an interlocutor and courted as an ally by the great powers. The attribution of the

<sup>32</sup> The two treaties secured the restoration of the territories of Nice and Savoy (which had been occupied by the French), the recognition of Victor Amadeus' rule over the Monferrato area (which had been contested for a long time), and the acquisition of territory in Lombardy and the Kingdom of Sicily.

title of king, granted for the first time to a sovereign of the House of Savoy, amounted to recognition of the new respect in which the state was held on the international scene. Thus these measures towards the poor were taken in the crucial period in which Victor Amadeus' was forging his prestige as an absolute sovereign. The way in which such initiatives were presented undoubtedly contributed to building the image of an efficient and strongly centralized state, which is still shared by many historians. Guevarre's work betrays such a purpose by its constant glorification of the 'supreme monarch', Victor Amadeus, and his reforms, as do the edicts which lay great stress on the rhetoric of renewal. The publication and circulation of this work contributed considerably to the survival of the myth.

### **3. The First Lying-in Ward and School for Midwives**

The first episode involving encroachment by state officials into the administration of charitable institutions occurred in 1730, with the appointment of a Regio Protettore (Royal Protector) to all boards of governors. This supervisory position was responsible for relations between the hospital administration and central government. The First President of the Chamber was appointed to the Company of St. Paul, the Grand Chancellor to the Ospedale di Carità, the First President of the Senate to the Hospital of San Giovanni<sup>33</sup>. The establishment of these posts represented the first case of direct state interference in the administration of what were then autonomous institutions, and it was greeted with great resentment. For years to come the Regio Protettore was to remain the object of controversy, and was continually accused of exceeding his authority. In 1739, the request for limitations to be put on interference from

<sup>33</sup> All these appointments were dated 10.8.1730. D., T.XII, p. 73, 363, 647, 891.



the Regio Protettore was the major item in a long document protesting over the state of their hospital submitted to the King by the board of governors of the hospital of S.Giovanni. The various complaints and requests included:

that the First President continues to be protector for the hospital [...] by giving the hospital advice, favours and assistance, when so requested by the governors and administrators, without interfering in the business and management of the hospital. That said administration be entirely in the hands of the Hospital Governors without the Riformatori [government officials placed in charge of the University] or any other person interfering, as Your Majesty can rest assured that it will continue to be administered with due care and charity [...] and Your Majesty can in all confidence hope for greater advantage to the Hospital under the sole administration of the governors from the Cathedral Chapter and the City Council than from any other addition or new intendance that you are about to confer to it.<sup>34</sup>

We will return to this document of 1739 on further occasions, as it represents the most explicit expression of the violent conflict which for some years had been afflicting welfare institutions. In it the governors denounced what appeared to them to be unacceptable interference by central government in the running of the hospital. It all had began in January 1728 when it was proposed that the board of governors should set up a new maternity ward and school for midwives: the project was presented as the King's personal wish but it was to be funded by the hospital. This was requested to make three rooms available for the initiative in the recently-

<sup>34</sup> ACT, C.S.666, Rappresentanza del venerando spedale maggiore di San Giovanni Battista e della città di Torino, 1739.

constructed wing. One room with eight beds was for the expectant mothers, one small room was for delivery, and one living quarters for the chief midwife, a French woman called Chevassus whom the King had had trained in Paris. The governors attempted to oppose the King's project on the grounds of shortage of space and the bad example to the foundling girls, especially the older ones, constituted by the presence of the kind of women who were more likely to require this service. The protest fell on deaf ears, and the sovereign refused even to hear the governors' envoy's arguments through to their end. Faced however with the intransigence of the governors who then resorted to sending their protest in written form, the King finally requested documentary proof that the hospital had been founded as an ecclesiastical institution, arguing that only in this case it could be free from temporal control. It proved a clever move, which forced the governors to reject the secular and civic identity of the hospital they had proudly displayed for two centuries and to claim that this was a religious institution, after all. However, research into the hospital archives could not substantiate this claim: the hospital's origins were obscure, and all the governors could prove was that it had been administered by the clergy from 1300 to 1541, when the City had become part of the board of governors (see chapter I). The dispute was finally entrusted to the Senate for arbitration, and this issued a predictable verdict: the Hospital of San Giovanni was a 'lay institution' and therefore subject in every sense to the King's authority.

The governors managed to delay the implementation of the royal plan for a couple of years, but finally in 1730 the Maternity Ward was established in the hospital building and entirely at its expense. The hospital was made responsible not only for maintaining the patients, but also for paying the chief midwife's salary which the King had fixed at the far from negligible figure of 300 lire a month. The hospital was also obliged to provide her with the rich food

reserved for hospital officials, as well as with candles, firewood and coal<sup>35</sup>.

Interference by government officials in the management of welfare institutions continued in the following years, and not only at the hospital of S.Giovanni. Their attitude became particularly aggressive during the crisis in the early 1730s, which saw royal appointees decisively taking control of the emergency measures to deal with the sick and destitute. In spite of resistance from the boards of governors, the three principal welfare agencies, the hospital of S.Giovanni, the Ospedale di Carità and the Compagnia di San Paolo, were obliged to expand to maximum capacity both in terms of hospital patients and home relief 'without any distinction between persons', whatever their place of origin, and 'without concern over whether the income of the institution is sufficient, it being our precise intention that debts should be made in order to deal with the situation'<sup>36</sup>. These provisions, which were greeted with hostility by the governing bodies, presented the Regi Protettori with the opportunity of asserting greater authority within the institutions. At the hospital of S.Giovanni for example, the Regio Protettore (who was also the President of the Senate) personally gave out the instructions for dealing with the emergency and ensuring that the sovereign's directives were acted upon. The extraordinary measures he ordered all aimed to increase the number of patients the hospital was able to treat: these included the conversion of a few rooms which were otherwise used as an infirmary, the delay on the return of foundlings from the towns of their wet-nurses (which had traditionally occurred at seven years and was now temporarily changed to

<sup>35</sup> The disputes over the Maternity Ward can be found in the hospital minutes for 20.1.1728, 30.1.1728, 8.2.1728, 22.2.1729, and 13.3.1730, and in the Rappresentanza of 1739, which was referred to above.

<sup>36</sup> ASSP, Rep.Lasc.161, Elemosine, 8.7.1734; a similar order was issued to San Giovanni on 7.1.1734 (D. Vol. XII, p.652).

ten), and the appointment of an additional doctor whom he chose himself<sup>37</sup>. The total relief package imposed by central government had important ideological implications, because the institutions which until then had also played a role in relation to the elites (from the supply of credit to the celebration of prestige), were now being changed into a purely welfare structure. In fact the insistence on the fullness with which the needs of the poor had to be financed, even to the point of disinvestment and sale of property to meet the demand, had the effect of significantly changing the economic policy and character of these institutions: there was a drastic curtailment in the investment of profits in financial operations and in expenditure with a symbolic aim (rituals, buildings, etc.); hospitals were increasingly restricted to the primary role of assisting the poor<sup>38</sup>.

It is arguable, however, that these royal initiatives in the field of poor relief increased efficiency and were therefore to the public advantage, as they were proclaimed to be. Equally it is questionable that they expanded and innovated medical practice. The maternity ward is an ideal example for examining the question. The idea of a ward to deal with a category of patient which traditionally had been excluded from early modern hospitals and the institution of a school of midwifery, may at first appear an extremely progressive initiative, not only in Italy but in the European context as well. With perhaps the single exception of the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, the introduction of maternity facilities into hospitals was very much an

<sup>37</sup> AOSG, Ordinati 20.6.1734.

<sup>38</sup> On the serious financial problems of the Hospital of San Giovanni which was obliged to consume some donations intended for expanding the number of beds, and to contract debts in order to deal with far-reaching welfare responsibilities, see *Ibid.*, 21.5.1744, 21.3.1746, and 28.8.1747.

eighteenth century phenomenon<sup>39</sup>. In Italy there were already refuges where unmarried mothers could go to give birth (e.g. in Ferrara from 1580, Rome from 1600 and Orbetello from 1679), but they are generally considered to have been typical expressions of policies designed to protect a woman's honour in the atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, and very different from the maternity wards which appeared from mid eighteenth-century on, prompted by medical arguments and demographic concerns, and therefore interested in the health of the mother and child<sup>40</sup>. Yet the links between the old refuges for unmarried mothers and the eighteenth century institutions should not be underestimated, given that the early maternity wards were principally for unmarried mothers<sup>41</sup>.

The Maternity Ward in Turin was motivated for social rather than medical reasons. It was not connected to demographic concerns, and if anything, reflected the paternalism which the government, or rather the King in person, wished to show to subjects suffering from the breakdown in the protection afforded by the community to female honour. Early documents concerning this institution concentrated on the need to offer unmarried women somewhere to give birth in secret and abandon the child, while there

<sup>39</sup> The early initiatives emerged in Strasburg (1728), Berlin (1751), Vienna (1752) and Copenhagen (1762). See N.M. Filippini, 'Gli ospizi per partorienti e i reparti di maternità tra il Sette e l'Ottocento', in Società, Scienza e Storia, 2/1990-1/1991, Gli Ospedali in Area Padana fra Sette e Ottocento, edited by M.L.Betri and E. Bressan. On the English case M.C.Versleysen, 'Midwives, medical men and "poor women labouring of child"', in H.Roberts (ed.), Women, Health and Reproduction, London 1981; A.Wilson, 'The politics of medical improvement in early Hanoverian London', in A.Cunningham and R.French (eds.), The Medical Enlightenment of the the Eighteenth Century, Cambridge 1990. On the Parisian Hôtel Dieu, J.Gélis, La Sage-Femme ou le Médecin, Paris 1988, pp.56-61.

<sup>40</sup> Filippini, 'Gli Ospizi'; Gélis, La Sage-Femme; Andrew, Philanthropy and Police.

<sup>41</sup> Filippini, 'Gli ospizi'.

was no reference to greater safety in childbirth<sup>42</sup>. It was not until the last two decades of the century that concern over the health of the mother and child began to motivate welfare policy on maternity<sup>43</sup>. But in earlier years, even the desire to eliminate infanticide is not mentioned as a reason for establishing the maternity ward, but only appears some ten years after its foundation in the previously mentioned Rappresentanza of 1739, where the prevention of 'frequent infanticides' is included in a list of the benefits brought about by the institution. The fact that unmarried women were admitted in the seventh month of their pregnancy, while married women only in the ninth, would certainly seem to be an anti-infanticide measure, but this rule also demonstrated the traditional concern over concealing pregnancy in its most visible stage.

There would appear to be two principal motivations in the foundation documents: 'to give a safe refuge to those young women who incautiously lose their greatest gift' and the charitable desire to assist 'married women without a permanent dwelling and who because of their poverty do not have the opportunity or the means to give birth in their own homes'<sup>44</sup>. However the former reason was the more important in practice: unmarried women were certainly preferred and considerably more numerous. While the former were admitted directly by the midwife without having to supply any document, the admission procedure for the latter was considerably more complicated. Married women had to obtain a declaration from the parish priest attesting to their state of poverty, and then an authorization from the

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Memoriale per lo stabilimento di una sala per le donne gravide ... 6.5.1728, in AOSG, Cat. 10, Cl. 1, Fasc. 3, and Regolamento per l'opera stabilita a beneficio delle partorienti ..., 9.7.1732, in D., T. XII, p. 649-51.

<sup>43</sup> See for example the new municipal provisions further in this Chapter (N.57).

<sup>44</sup> See also Manifesto del Vicario di Torino, 19.6.1728, in D., T. XII, p. 644-6.

director of the institution. Records show that over 80% of the women who were admitted to the ward for childbirth were, in fact, unmarried or at least declared themselves to be so. They nearly all left their babies at the hospital, while nearly all the married women took theirs away<sup>45</sup>. It is striking that there were not more stringent checks to prevent married women passing for unmarried in order to abandon the child. The regulations do mention this possibility, and dictate that 'where this deception is discovered, it shall be the husband rather than the wife who will incur the punishments prescribed by Royal Constitutions', but there does not seem to have been any way that these abuses could have been discovered, given that the concealment of the pregnant woman's identity seems to have been the major concern of the institution. Provisions to protect the woman's anonymity, in fact, take up the greater part of the regulations:

The above-mentioned maids shall open and close the door of the ward without allowing any persons to enter unless they have the midwife's consent, and shall accompany said persons to the bed of the woman with whom they wish to speak, and shall not allow the said persons to go to any other bed, so as not to inconvenience the women who do not want to be seen. [...] Each woman admitted shall give her name to the midwife who shall enter it in the register, and any of them who do not wish to be known, they shall inform the midwife so that, if she were asked, she shall not say it. [...] All those who shall serve in the above-said ward, in whatever capacity, shall be

<sup>45</sup> AST, p.s., IPIM, Libro degli esposti 1 and 2 (1736-45, 1760-66); *ibid.*, LPqM, m.16 d'add., Fasc. 6 (1780-89). For the characteristics of the abandoning mothers see my article 'Bambini abbandonati e bambini "in deposito" a Torino nel Settecento', in Enfance Abandonnée et Société en Europe XVIe-XXe Siècle, Collection de l'Ecole Française de Rome, Rome 1991.

required and obliged to keep silent on and conceal the things which cannot be divulged without offending other people's honour. [...] In the event that a woman with labour pains should present herself with a mask in order not to be known, she shall be served by the midwife without the latter ascertaining who she is. [...] The midwife may not show the woman even to a good friend, without her consent.<sup>46</sup>

The preservation of the woman's honour and not the health of the baby would therefore seem to be the main concern of the new institution. This in turn would appear to be a response to the decline in the community's control over sexual behaviour which traditionally had protected unmarried mothers by identifying the father and forcing him to take responsibility of the child thus re-establishing the woman's reputation<sup>47</sup>. Institutions like the maternity ward took over the role which the community was no longer able to carry out. Even though it did not undertake to search out the father as occurred in France and in some Italian states (such as Lombardy), the institution maintained the traditionally protective attitude to the mothers; it did not punish them, nor did it hold them responsible for their behaviour, but rather it considered them unfortunate victims and justified in abandoning the symbol of their dishonour.

The second objective in establishing the lying-in ward was that of opening a school for training midwives. Immediately after the foundation, a notice was issued by the police authority, the Vicario, which ordered all the midwives in the city and boroughs to report to his office within fifteen days, and state their name, age, address and the period of time in which they had continuously exercised the art, 'so that they can demonstrate their sufficient

<sup>46</sup> Memoriale per lo stabilimento.

<sup>47</sup> Cavallo and Cerutti, 'Onore'.



experience for approval and permission to continue said exercise, and those who are not qualified can be placed [at the hospital] where they can be trained'<sup>48</sup>. The establishment of the Maternity Ward was therefore an opportunity to introduce a licensing system for midwives, and from that time, midwives were obliged to follow a six-month course at the Maternity Ward if they wished to practice in the Turin area. During the course, the chief midwife was to make them 'closely observe the nature of the disturbances both before and after delivery, and lead them by the hand through the various phases under her supervision and direction'. The hospital surgeon was to give a lecture on anatomy twice a year to the student midwives, which would also be open to those who were already practising. At the end of the course, the students obtained a certificate of good conduct from the governor and a certificate of competence and obedience from the instructress. With these documents, they could then apply to sit the exam and finally obtain the licence from the College of Surgeons which would allow them to carry out their trade and display their sign. The examiners were the Professor of Surgery at the Faculty of Medicine and another college surgeon 'experienced in the obstetric profession'<sup>49</sup>.

However the training at San Giovanni did not become the only route by which to enter the profession. It had little effect, especially as far as the provincial midwives were concerned, as it would have been extremely difficult to attend a course in the capital. Course attendance required residence or at least an undertaking to work full-time in the hospital, and it was certainly not free. The students

<sup>48</sup> Manifesto del Vicario di Torino, 19.6.1728, in D., T. XII, p. 644-6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.; Regolamento per l'opera stabilita a beneficio delle partorienti, 9.7.1732, in D., T. XII, p. 649-51; Regolamento per l'Università di Torino, 20.9.1729, Capo 12, Par. 14, in D., T. XIV, p. 734.

had to pay the chief midwife one golden *scudo* (about 7 lire) as a one-off charge, and the hospital's treasurer 15 lire per month for their board. Admission to the course was also limited to married women who were literate and possessed a certificate of good behaviour issued by the parish priest, and an authorisation from the husband.

Even in Turin, the school for midwives co-existed for a long time with traditional forms of training. It is notable, moreover, that the merits of the new institution were not used to launch an attack on those women whose knowledge was based on practice. The latter indeed were still treated with a certain benevolence: as late as 1772, a royal ordinance recognized that not just in the provinces but in the capital too, many unauthorised midwives were practising this profession who were genuinely skilled and prescribed that they should be allowed a licence<sup>50</sup>.

In spite of its limited impact, the 1728 project is of substantial interest as it shows the kind of instruction and practice of obstetrics which at that time was considered most progressive. It reveals the division of labour considered appropriate for male and female practitioners, which tasks were to be carried out by the midwife and which by the doctor and surgeon.

Undoubtedly the key role in training was assigned to the instructress-midwife who had been trained at the Hôtel Dieu of Paris, the temple of European obstetrics, and was herself French. The male medical profession would appear to have been able to give only a very limited contribution to the training of midwives through twice-yearly lectures on anatomy. In the 1760s, doctors were assigned a somewhat wider role in education: a course in obstetrics was introduced at the university and attendance at this became obligatory for prospective midwives wishing to obtain a

<sup>50</sup> D., T. X, p.232, Regio Biglietto al Magistrato della Riforma, 16.11.1772.

licence<sup>51</sup>. It was however a purely theoretical course held with the aid of a 'machine', and of a 'small book' which was supplied to the students. All practical understanding of obstetrics was still handed on by women to women. Not surprisingly, the course was mainly attended by female pupils, and only a small number of student surgeons, who saw little need to learn about a profession which was almost entirely exercised by women<sup>52</sup>.

The surgeon's role was also extremely restricted within the Maternity Ward. The regulations restate the traditional prohibition on the use of surgical instruments by a midwife 'in the case of a dead foetus in the womb, if it is impossible for her to extract it with her hands', and her duty to call the surgeon should delivery prove to be 'extremely difficult'. It is interesting on the other hand that with regard to another field that the medical profession had tried to monopolise - i.e the prescribing of medicines and therapies - the regulations were somewhat contradictory. The first regulation, which was drawn up in 1728 by the Royal Surgeon Rouhault (another French import by King Vittorio Amedeo II), permitted the midwife to 'bleed patients and give enemas during delivery without notifying the doctor, and she can also do it during the period of pregnancy, except in the case of illness when she shall leave the treatment to the doctor'<sup>53</sup>. But four years

<sup>51</sup> Regio Biglietto 17.3.1761, in D., T. XIV, p. 625.

<sup>52</sup> T.M.Caffaratto, 'I primordi dell'insegnamento universitario dell'ostetricia a Torino e la figura di Michele Aliprandi', Minerva Ginecologica, 2 (1963).

<sup>53</sup> Pietro Simone Rouhault was a surgeon in Paris and a member of that college, when he was called to Turin by the King in 1718. He was initially appointed the King's Surgeon and Surgeon General of the Royal Armed Forces, and then Professor of Anatomy at the University. In his Osservazioni Anatomico-Fisiche, Turin, G. F. Meiresse, 1724, he wrote on the anatomy of the placenta, foetal circulation and alimentation and the causes of childbirth. Cf. G. G. Bonino, Biografia Medica Piemontese, Turin 1825, Vol. 2, p. 63.

later, in the officially approved regulation of 1732, the midwife was prohibited from 'ordering and giving internal medicines to women in labour, and also bleeding without a doctor's authorization'. Thus the monopoly over therapeutic operations had not yet been unambiguously established in the early eighteenth century. However both regulations agreed on another point: the midwife was given absolute dominion over attendance at the delivery, this being justified for reasons of decency. The surgeon could be admitted only in exceptional circumstances and after considerable precautions:

the surgeon responsible for bleeding shall immediately withdraw on completion of his operation and shall not go to any bed other than the one where the woman lies whose blood is to be let; if said surgeon were called upon to let blood during the delivery, he shall leave after letting the blood, and shall not wait to see the birth.

Even the surgeon called to deal with difficult deliveries 'may not bring another surgeon under the pretext of requiring assistance, and shall not be permitted to enter the room until requested'<sup>54</sup>.

The limitations on the male practice of obstetrics continued at least until the end of the century, and not only in the Maternity Ward at San Giovanni. There would appear to have been a certain conflict between the government and the medical profession over this question, and the former seems to have resisted pressure from the latter. In fact restrictions which had previously only been imposed by tradition were now put down on paper: the Royal Constitutions of 1771 introduced a prohibition on the profession being practised by surgeons unless they had

<sup>54</sup> 'Memoriale per lo stabilimento di una sala per donne gravide, 6.5.1728, in AOSG, Cat. 10, Cl. 1, Fasc. 3; Regolamento per l'opera stabilita a beneficio delle partorienti, 9.7.1732, in D., T. XII, p. 649-651.

obtained a special licence from the King<sup>55</sup>. This measure aroused protest from the College of Surgeons who pointed out the discrepancy in requesting them to examine and licence the midwives, while they could not exercise the profession. A few months after the publication of this decree, they sought to obtain authorisation to practise at least for those who were appointed to examine the midwives. But the request was not conceded, and only the six most renowned surgeons of the city obtained the licence as a personal concession<sup>56</sup>.

The restrictions on practising midwifery probably explain the lack of interest amongst young surgeons in the university course in obstetrics. It is only in 1789 that we find any notion that obstetrics could constitute a desirable part of a surgeon's curriculum. An order concerning the establishment of a council service using salaried midwives to assist poor women giving birth at home, declared that all new appointments of surgeons for the poor should give preference to those who had attended a course of obstetrics, so that they could be of assistance to the council midwives. The same document however, reasserted the purely supplementary role of the surgeon who 'although not normally admitted to the practice of obstetrics', could assist the midwife in an emergency, should she request him to do so<sup>57</sup>.

So at the end of the century, it does not appear that the 'profession' of midwife as it had by then become defined had lost any status or had its authority eroded. Although in Piedmont as elsewhere, there were attacks by enlightened thinkers such as Muratori and Giovan Battista

<sup>55</sup> Regie Costituzioni, Tit. IX, Capo I, Par. 17, in D., T. XVI, p. 742.

<sup>56</sup> Lettera della Segreteria Interna al Magistrato della Riforma, 2.11.1772, in D., T. XIV, p. 749.

<sup>57</sup> Manifesto della città di Torino per la destinazione di alcune levatrici in soccorso alle povere partorienti, 1789, in AST, C.S.4793, Capo XVII.

Vasco on untrained midwives and on empirics practising medicine more generally, it appears that these opinions were far from universal<sup>58</sup>; certainly, the discredit of female control over childbirth was not as violent and effective as in other parts of Europe, and did not lead to a takeover by the male medical profession<sup>59</sup>. On the contrary, the responsibilities of the authorised midwife were extended in the late eighteenth century. The duties of the six midwives employed by the city now included registering the women who called them out, monitoring the condition of mother and baby for fifteen days after the birth, and, if death should occur during this period, recording the probable causes in the register<sup>60</sup>. Midwives were therefore being given administrative tasks which also involved an element of control over maternity, aimed at protecting the health of mother and child, and preventing desertion of the baby, infanticide or simple neglect. This transformation in the midwife's function has generally been considered substantially negative. The new supervisory role is supposed to have broken the traditional trust and solidarity between the pregnant woman and her midwife, and introduced an element of suspicion and hostility<sup>61</sup>. This

<sup>58</sup> On eighteenth century writings against midwives, T.M.Caffaratto, 'Mammane, levatrici, ostetriche', Minerva Ginecologica, 14 (1957).

<sup>59</sup> On the late chronology of this process in Venice, N.M.Filippini, 'Levatrici e ostetricanti a Venezia tra Sette e Ottocento', Quaderni Storici, 58 (1985). On the English case J.Donnison, Midwives and Medical Men: a History of Interprofessional and Women's Rights, London 1977. For a comparative overview, Gélis, La Sage-Femme, p.291.

<sup>60</sup> The city was divided in three areas, and each was assigned a midwife (with a salary of 72 lira) and an assistant (with a salary of 24 lira). They were required to have attended the course at the Maternity Ward, and had to reside in the area and never leave without notification.

<sup>61</sup> In some countries (particularly Germany), this supervisory role already appeared in municipal instructions in the late sixteenth century. M. Green, 'Women's Medical

interpretation should perhaps be qualified by the consideration that the new measures, although limited to licensed midwives, showed confidence in them and a recognition of their ability. The midwife was promoted to the status of health official, and her medical and diagnostic abilities were acknowledged, as can be seen from the instruction to record the cause of death. It should not be forgotten that the 'profession' (and this definition was in itself an act of recognition) of midwife was perhaps the only female occupation which underwent an increase in status during the eighteenth century.

The esteem in which a qualified midwife was held can already be seen in 1728 in the economic and social status of the midwife appointed to the Maternity Ward at San Giovanni. Her salary was identical to that of the four hospital doctors in 1732, and she enjoyed other privileges such as the requirement for the hospital to supply her with a personal maid and the food reserved for officials. The innovative thrust of the 1728 project thus lies in having given enhanced status to midwifery and to a midwife trained in a hospital under the guidance of an educated and expert instructress. This project certainly did not imply any theoretical or practical superiority of the man-midwife, but it did introduce an element of differentiation between midwives.

How then are we to explain the fierce conflict over the establishment of the Maternity Ward between central government and the hospital governors which continued for about a decade? It might be argued that the governors were guilty of traditionalism in resisting a reform from above. In reality however, the opposition of the governors never concerned the nature of the initiative; they never questioned the usefulness of 'a safe place for daughters

Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe', Signs, 2 (1989); R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture, Ithaca and London 1990 (Chapter III); Gélis, La Sage-Femme, pp.45-49.

who go astray' or the 'instruction of Piedmontese women in the profession of midwife', nor were they sparing in their praise of these intentions. The reason for their opposition was firstly the financial burden and the possible effects on the morals of the abandoned girls in their care. Once the institution had been established, the conflict continued on apparently trivial grounds whose significance is at first difficult to grasp. The governors' grievances were concerned with the chief midwife appointed by the King, whom they accused of being negligent, dishonest, avaricious, and only interested in grabbing all she could, whether it was money or food. Food took on a particular symbolic importance, and the insinuations relating to the midwife's gluttony became the main pretext for their hostility towards her. According to a rumour which the governors attributed to the cook, the main courses served to the midwife were 'of such abundance that they would have sufficed three people'. Her husband, also French, ate 'continuously' with her in the hospital. Finally they doubted whether all the food prepared for the patients was actually eaten by them. The governors had other examples of how she was supposed to have exploited her office: one maid had not been sufficient for her needs and she had brought in another two 'outsiders' paid by the hospital and it was suspected that it also paid for their board. She took money from the patients and demanded 33 soldi for swaddling, even if they had brought their own. She made the patients work for her and pocketed the proceeds<sup>62</sup>. In the end, the governors requested the dismissal of Chevassus and her replacement by an indigenous midwife in the *Rappresentanza* of 1739:

the above-said midwife believes that she is not responsible to the hospital administrators, but only to the riformatori. She has not fulfilled and continues not to fulfil her duties as

<sup>62</sup> Document quoted in Caffaratto, L'Ospedale, p.66.



prescribed by the Regulations. There have been serious disorders, and she has been absent from work for more than three months, having returned to her own country with the intention of staying until next spring. She has substituted another Frenchwoman during her absence, and she has left with only the permission of those whom she believes to have authority over her.

The documents perhaps gives some hints to clarify the real nature of the conflict: the controversy concerned not the purpose of the Maternity Ward, but who controlled it. It was the alleged flouting of their authority that rankled the governors. Even their xenophobia which was reflected in continuous references to the 'French woman' and her 'foreign' relatives and servants, demonstrated their sense of impotence: she appeared uncontrollable not only because she came under the authority of the university rather than the hospital, but also for the more subtle reason that she was not appointed by the governors and therefore did not come from the network of personal contacts and common interests which had traditionally affected the recruitment of hospital personnel. She was a 'foreigner' in terms of the 'family' which made up the hospital, and in the eyes of the governors this was tantamount to unreliability and an absence of loyalty to the institution.

After ten years of sterile argument with the university officials who had authority over the Maternity Ward, the governors adopted a different strategy which aimed at the gradual absorption of the new institution into their control. They wrong-footed the government representatives by competing with them on their own ground, i.e. by using the rhetoric of innovation and the myth of French progressiveness which until then had been the justification for undermining the hospital's independence. They criticized the inadequacy of the anatomy lessons in the training programme, and offered to organize themselves a course of regular twice-weekly lessons for midwives to be

given by Verna, a surgeon who enjoyed their confidence. They even added that women should be uncovered during delivery, according to 'the practice in Paris'(!).

The proposal to reorganize the teaching of anatomy was a clever move which showed them not to be traditionalists or incapable of change. The important thing for them was that it was under their control and carried out by their men, such as the surgeon Verna, a member of the family that for generations had monopolised the greater part of the medical posts in the hospital<sup>63</sup>. Thus they managed to place one of their men in the Maternity Ward, which until then had been a kind of autonomous body within the hospital. The governors finally took full control of the institution in 1740, when they succeeded in sacking Chevassus and appointing Anna Libonis in her place. The latter was in every sense the perfect candidate for the governors: not only was she 'from the country', married and a qualified midwife, but she was also a 'daughter of the hospital', a foundling who had been brought up by the hospital, and who had continued to live and work there after she had grown up and married. She came from the traditional pool of labour that the hospital used for recruitment. She had been trained by Chevassus for several years and had taken over during her absences in Paris. She had never been out of the governors' sphere of authority, and she had the respect of the Verna uncle and nephew team of surgeons, who in fact supported her nomination and vouched for her ability<sup>64</sup>. From that time the conflict over the Maternity Ward ceased as it had now been brought under the control of the old administration and its protégés.

<sup>63</sup> From 1689 until the end of the eighteenth century, the family held posts as surgeons and doctors at San Giovanni. See Bonino, *Biografia Medica*, Vol. 2, pp. 59-60; 219-21, for the more famous of them, Alberto, Andrea (Alberto's nephew) and Giovan Battista (Andrea's cousin).

<sup>64</sup> AOSG, Ordinati 5.12.1740.

#### 4. The Hospital Reforms of the 1730s

The conflict between royal officials and hospital administrators which started with the maternity ward proposal in 1728, and then rekindled in 1734 by the appointment of the Regio Protettore, erupted violently towards the end of the 1730s when the government reforms of the Faculty of Medicine carried out between 1720 and 1738 as part of the more general reform of the University, finally caught up with the hospital. The new medical curriculum attached particular importance to practical medicine which took up three of the five years of study, and assigned a key role in their training to the hospital. Students were required to attend demonstrations on cadavers in the hospital regularly during the last two years of study. This period would involve lessons at the patients' bedside, and they would discuss the illnesses observed and the most interesting cases at weekly meetings. Only those who had been awarded with degrees could practise medicine, and then only after a further two years of training in a hospital or with an accredited physician. Practical hospital experience also became essential for students of surgery. As a result of probably the most innovative of the reforms, surgery became a university faculty from 1721. The period of study was originally set at three years, but was lengthened to five years in 1738, in line with the courses in other faculties<sup>65</sup>.

The reforms clearly assigned a pivotal role to the hospital in medical training and research. They increased the number of medical and surgical students training in the institution, and boosted the number of doctors employed

<sup>65</sup> On the University reforms, see T. Vallauri, Storia delle Università degli Studi, 3 Vols., Turin, 1816; Quazza, Le Riforme, p. 385-398. The text of these provisions is in Duboin, T., XIV, Capo IV, 'Dell'insegnamento della medicina', p. 643-49; Capo V, 'Dell'insegnamento della chirurgia', pp. 655-66; Art. IV, p. 723; Art. V, p. 733.

from one to four, in order to meet the growth in teaching duties. A final provision linked the hospital even more closely to the university by stipulating that its chief physician and surgeon were to be chosen by university professors<sup>66</sup>.

However, the claim that these reforms medicalised the hospital is not correct<sup>67</sup>. When these provisions were put into effect, the hospital of San Giovanni did not conform to the model of 'indistinct refuge' which Italian scholars consider to be typical of hospitals in this period<sup>68</sup>. It is true that, as we know, it contained a large section for incurables, and another for foundlings, but at least from the sixteenth century, the section dealing with the sick had a specifically medical approach. Witness to this fact is the 1541 regulation stipulating that the hospital physician and surgeon had to do rounds of the sick patients twice a day<sup>69</sup>. In the following decades, as we have seen in the second chapter, the hospital of San Giovanni had become increasingly specialized in the treatment of the sick, and transferred responsibility for the poor to the municipality and a system of outdoor relief. Moreover, at the time of the eighteenth-century reforms, the hospital of S.Giovanni was already carrying out the functions of training and maintaining the profession, albeit on a fairly minor scale. From the second half of the seventeenth century, if not earlier, young surgeons resident in the hospital carried out the duties of dresser, in accordance

<sup>66</sup> Regio Biglietto, 29.7.1739, in AOSG, Ordinati, 2.8.1739.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. D. Carpanetto, 'Gli studenti di chirurgia', in Balani, Carpanetto and Turletti, 'La popolazione studentesca'.

<sup>68</sup> A. Scotti, 'Malati e strutture ospedaliere dall'età dei Lumi all'Unità', in Storia d'Italia. Annali 7, pp. 250 ff.; G. Cosmacini, Storia della Medicina e della Sanità in Italia, Bari 1987, pp. 234 ff.

<sup>69</sup> ACT, C.S. 657.

with the chief surgeon's instructions. Originally there were just three of them, but their number increased from four to five in 1702, to six in 1716, and finally to thirteen in 1738 to keep pace with the increase in beds<sup>70</sup>. These surgeons were assisted with simple duties by a group of nurses who were drawn from the ranks of the ex-foundlings taken back by the hospital. Moreover in the late seventeenth century, a private benefactor donated funds to create the post of assistant hospital physician, which was reserved for a young doctor to work full time in residence in the hospital, 'to observe the progress of diseases and report on them to the chief physician, and take action in cases of emergency'<sup>71</sup>.

Both the position of dresser and assistant hospital physician were occupied by young practitioners who wanted to enter the profession. Judging from the number of applications for this kind of practical experience, the posts must have been considered prestigious and useful additions to a curriculum vitae. They were initially employed by the board of governors, with the chance of having their periods of service extended if they proved suitable. Some young surgeons and physicians, after a long stint in the hospital, obtained important appointments, like that of chief regimental surgeon, court surgeon or even protomedico. Many acquired more modest positions in

<sup>70</sup> AOSG, Ordinati 24.7.1702 and 10.12.1716. There were 6 'nurses' in 1730, but their number was increased to 13 in 1738 (for the 1730 figure, see the regulations published in Caffaratto, L'Ospedale, p. 218, and for the 1738 figure, see the Rappresentanza referred to above).

<sup>71</sup> The donation was probably in the last 25 years of the century, but in any case before 1690 (as can be inferred from the minute of 3.2.1690). The benefactor, Canon Giordano, reserved the right to nominate the doctor for the post during his life.

the army medical service, and a great number went on to practise in the provinces<sup>72</sup>.

Although the available information on careers is limited, the governors' statement in 1739 that 'nearly all the surgeons in his Majesty's cities and states have been trained in the hospital' does not appear to be without foundation<sup>73</sup>. There is no doubt that when the reforms were introduced, the hospital of San Giovanni had for many decades been an important centre for medical training. Moreover informal but solid links already existed between medical staff employed in the Hospital and the university. The chief physician in the hospital often held a chair at the medical faculty, while the chief surgeon the office of anatomist. In any event, they usually were both very prominent figures in medical circles.

The reforms did not therefore completely redefine the hospital's identity. Apart from the increase in the number of students and doctors, the real changes occurred in the political life of the hospital. The language of reform supplied an ideological justification in terms of innovation for the expansion of university control over the hospital. By attaching greater importance to teaching than patient care, the reforms subordinated the management of the hospital to the Faculty of Medicine, or rather to the authority of the Magistrati della Riforma (or Riformatori, the civil servants to whom the administration of the university had been assigned).

<sup>72</sup> This information can be found in the minutes, which sometimes mentioned the future position of a surgeon or doctor leaving the hospital. Among the more successful careers, there was that of Antonio Maria Reyna, assistant doctor in 1700, qualified doctor at the hospital of San Giovanni in 1708 and finally Protomedico in 1739, the surgeon Schina, hospital dresser until 1708, then Surgeon-Major in the Artillery Regiment of Carignano, or Giovan Battista Balbis, hospital dresser from 1710, and then member of the Turin College and Surgeon to the Prince of Carignano.

<sup>73</sup> Rappresentanza.

Before the reform, it had been the Board of Governors who had appointed the dressers and doctors, and made sure that they fulfilled their duties as required. This also took disciplinary measures in cases of negligence and breaches of the regulations<sup>74</sup>. Certainly the opinion of the chief physician and surgeon had a significant bearing on the choice of dressers and medical assistants, who were often the doctors' pupils or even their relatives. For instance Alberto Verna, who held the post of chief surgeon at the hospital of San Giovanni for over forty years (having served seven as a dresser), established a veritable medical dynasty in the institution. Two of his nephews succeeded him, after serving long periods as his assistants, while a third nephew became an assistant physician. However, on paper, every decision on the various aspects of hospital life remained in the governors' hands until the 1730s, when their authority became the object of fierce attacks.

It should be emphasized that these attacks did not come from the medical profession, but essentially from the King and his reformers, government officials who were pressing for bureaucratic control. Central government gradually deprived the governors of all their authority. On the pretext of wishing to avoid straining the hospital's finances, it was established that the hospital would pay only a fraction of the salaries for the four physicians (whose numbers had been increased to meet the growth in teaching duties), and the rest would be paid by the University<sup>75</sup>. This measure weakened the authority of the governors, as the doctors were no longer financially dependent on them. Then two weeks later, the Board was suddenly stripped of its traditional prerogative to select doctors, on the pretext that its recent selection had been

<sup>74</sup> For example AOSG, Ordinati 8.2.1689 and 3.4.1731.

<sup>75</sup> Regio Biglietto dated 29 July published in D., T. XII, p. 653.

disappointing and the new appointees were unable to meet the standards required of the post<sup>76</sup>. In the same period, it was decided that the dressers would also be appointed by the Riformatori, and chosen from among the surgical students at the Collegio delle Provincie, an institution created to promote university education by providing a royal scholarship to over 200 young men from the provinces (another example of the development of royal patronage in the eighteenth century)<sup>77</sup>. All these measures and more generally the emphasis on the teaching role of doctors rather than their obligations to the sick, had the effect of reducing the governors' authority over the medical staff. Although the hospital's administrative structure had not formally changed, in reality two powers were daily disputing its control within its walls. The governors give the impression in the Rappresentanza of 1739, that they were less and less in control of the management of the hospital:

The Royal Constitutions concerning the University have stipulated that the doctor and surgeon in the Hospital must always be professors in the said University. The poor have been adversely affected by these provisions, for as the doctor and surgeon are not seen to be under the authority of the hospital administrators, the latter can no longer correct the former if they do not carry out their duties, much less dismiss them. The hospital doctor is currently advanced in years, with infirmities which prevent him from visiting the sick twice a day. Thus he instead visits only some of his patients during his rounds, or sometimes none at all, and then sends the assistant physician on the rounds, and the

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 9.8.1739.

<sup>77</sup> Regolamento de' Giovani studenti di Cirugia nel Collegio delle provincie che serviranno all'ospedale S. Giovanni, in D., T. XIV, p. 658, 18.8.1738.



chief physician comes in the evening when he can. The surgeon is deemed to have great theoretical knowledge but insufficient practical experience, and although it is his duty to carry out the difficult operations of removing gall stones, cleansing cataracts, suturing arteries or performing surgery on what is called the 'king's evil' [scrofula] and similar things, these duties are actually being performed by former surgeons of this hospital, the Vernas uncle and nephew who continue their charitable work in the women's ward [...]. The Hospital is full of praise for the royal decree that physicians and surgeons also be university professors. However, conscience requires it be reported that it is not advantageous to the Hospital, because neither the physician nor the surgeon have any real dependence on it, and it is harmful to the sick because they are no longer treated with the punctuality and charitable feeling that previously existed [...] and the said abuses which were introduced a few years ago have probably cost the lives of many who could have been cured.

Further on, the Rappresentanza broadened its complaints to include the young students of the Collegio delle Provincie who had replaced the 13 young surgeons previously employed as dressers by the Hospital, and who worked five at a time on 24-hour shifts. They were not only accused of not treating the sick properly, but also of having been guilty of several 'instances of insubordination' which even the Riformatori were unable to stamp out although they took action on two occasions.

The document is obviously a biased source and the portrayal of the hospital as slipping into chaos is perhaps an exaggeration. It is however quite believable that the dispute over its control was creating serious disciplinary

problems. It is also plausible that the underlying ideology of the reforms, which shifted the emphasis to the training of medical staff, was reducing the treatment of the sick to a secondary role. Hence the persistent references by the governors to the discrepancy between theoretical and practical ability.

The situation had not changed a few decades later, when an anonymous report complained that 'the university professors only do one round a day, and some go months, other years without setting foot in the Hospital. [...] The result is that the sick get inexpert and inappropriate treatment from the two young physicians'<sup>78</sup>. It is also significant that the most serious failures in hospital organization, such as the disproportion in beds for curable and incurable diseases, were not addressed in the reforms. Indeed the rate of growth of beds for incurable diseases was increasing in this very period of conflict (in the thirty-year period from 1728 to 1757, about ninety new beds were created, while 104 had been created in the previous sixty years).

The reforms were not part of a conflict between 'progressive' and 'conservative' forces, but merely promoted the changes in the power structure which were occurring at the same time in other charitable institutions. The most acute conflict with the representatives of central government occurred in the following decade. In spite of the apparent victory over the Maternity Ward which was brought back under the control of the board of governors, the traditional administration was losing in the long term. By the 1750s, state control appears to be consolidated, and we find that the Riformatori are now in the administrative board. This was partly due to the bureaucratisation of the City Council which supplied four of the eight governors. In the second

<sup>78</sup> Relazione anonima, (written towards the end of the century, but before 1793), quoted in Caffaratto, L'Ospedale, p.143.

half of the eighteenth century, the Council was no longer an independent power base, but simply an extension of the King's administration. The councillors and the Vicario had become government officials in charge of management of the city's affairs<sup>79</sup>. Another expression of this development can be observed in changes to the Municipal medical outdoor relief which had been operating for nearly two centuries. Its original duties were abandoned, and it essentially became a medical service for inmates in the prisons and the new houses of correction founded by the state<sup>80</sup>.

The change which the hospitals and charitable institutions underwent in mid-century, concerned the exercise of power rather than the organization of poor relief. However the attack on institutional autonomy did eventually affect the recipients, because it caused the threatened elites to take action to defend their usurped power, and this altered the opportunities for assistance open to the poor. The fact that the institutions were still entirely dependent on private charity for their survival, meant that benefactors could maintain their control by placing restriction and conditions on the use of their donations.

## **5. The Privatisation of Charitable Resources**

The conflict over charitable institutions in this period had a considerable impact on charitable donations. One might expect the expulsion of private citizens from the

<sup>79</sup> The Vicario was one of the posts with the closest links to the sovereign, through daily consultations. For the transformation of the post of Vicario and the bureaucratisation of the City Council, see also D. Balani, Il Vicario tra Città e Stato. L'Ordine Pubblico e l'Annona nella Torino del Settecento, Turin 1987, pp. 33-79.

<sup>80</sup> ACT, C.S.4793. By contrast, the service to the sick and destitute of the city was frozen (see above, Chapter II).

control of charitable resources to have a paralysing effect on private charity, by removing the incentive for benefactors. However the opposite occurred and legacies and donations reached consistently high levels in the period from 1730 to 1770, after the decrease in the 1720s - albeit without ever reaching the peak which occurred in the first decade of the century (Fig. 6). If we now shift our attention from the quantity to the quality of charitable initiatives, we realize that they also have some new features. Firstly they have pronounced social connotations. During this period new institutions appear which are managed and financed by restricted and homogeneous social groups, unlike previous initiatives which were virtually open to all civic elites. In the context of that more fragmented elite structure described at the beginning of this chapter, investment in charities became a means by which to reassert the dignity and prestige of one's own social group, and consolidate separate spheres of influence.

Charitable activity appears to have been particularly marked amongst the groups most affected by the campaign of centralisation carried out by state officials: the court aristocracy which suffered a substantial decrease in privilege and status, and the merchants who were being ousted from those (mainly financial) positions in the state they had previously occupied. The House of the Provvidenza was founded in the 1720s by the court aristocracy, and very soon was accommodating about a hundred girls aged between 10 and 25<sup>81</sup>. From 1731, with the sole exception of the treasurer (responsible for the accounts and organizing work for the girls) who was usually a merchant, the five directors and the lady directress were all drawn from the most exclusive court milieu, where they held the highest

<sup>81</sup> The exact year of its foundation is unclear, but in 1735 the institution obtained royal recognition. The identity of the governors and benefactors can be found in LPqM, M. 228. See also Gribaudo, Il Regio Educatorio della Provvidenza.

offices. In some periods, the institution appears indeed to be run solely by restricted kin groups within the court<sup>82</sup>. Another example of this trend is the Bogetti Institution for infectious diseases, established with the huge donation which the banker Ludovico Bogetti made available to the Ospedale di Carità in 1733 (it was the largest recorded donation in the two hundred year period under examination). For the rest of the century, this hospital was entirely financed by members of the mercantile and banking elite, who thus upheld the founder's desire to provide a form of display of the munificence and prestige of this social group<sup>83</sup>.

Bogetti's wishes are particularly worthy of attention, because they illustrate very well how the exclusion from public life was affecting charitable activity in this period. His donation would appear to be an attempt at radical reform which aimed at breaking down all the barriers which had traditionally barred access to the early modern hospital. In fact, he left his gift on the condition that the Ospedale di Carità from that time on, admitted all people in need without distinction, 'not only the healthy, but also the sick, and among these, sufferers of any disease, whether contagious or not contagious, curable or incurable, and coming from this city or any other of his Majesty's territories'<sup>84</sup>. The inspiration for the donation

<sup>82</sup> Renato Birago, his brother-in-law Ignazio Graneri and his sister-in-law Agnese Ponte di Casalgrasso were involved in the administration in the 1730s and 1740s, and later his wife, Vittoria Birago, took over from the sister-in-law. The other families who appear in the lists of governors and benefactors (the Saluzzos, the Carrons and the Turinettis) were also closely related. See Chapter IV.

<sup>83</sup> AOC, Cat. VIII, Busta 1, Fasc.11, Stato e riparto delle piazze nell'opera Bogetti eretta nel Regio Spedale di Carità.

<sup>84</sup> For the will of Ludovico Bogetti, see Ins., 1.9.1733, 26.8.1733. After some discussion over the admissibility of accepting a donation which challenged the hospital's regulations over admission, his instructions were enacted by the creation of a separate institution

appears therefore to have been the ideal of an all-inclusive charity, which would transcend all preference and privilege. However, if the whole will is taken into account, the polemic against the exclusions which, at least in theory, had typified the hospital, appears to be a metaphor for the exclusions that were occurring amongst the elite groups, for all the other instructions in the will were concerned to uphold exclusive and corporative forms in the allocation of charity. Its only innovative feature was that it supported social groups other than the ones which were being favoured at that time. Thus Bogetti entrusted the Compagnia di San Paolo with a fund to supply alms regularly to poveri vergognosi on the condition that distribution started with 'bankers and merchants, and working down' and 'to the exclusion of the nobility'. Bogetti therefore favoured those social groups which had been marginalised by the new definitions of hierarchy and privilege, while he excluded the nobility which was by then largely made up of state officials<sup>85</sup>. The corporative character of his instructions is also explicitly stated in the donation which funded the merchants and bankers to take part in the annual spiritual exercise organized by the Jesuits. This was an important symbolic occasion which brought together the male elites of the city, and to which the merchant class was evidently having difficulty in gaining admittance.

Bogetti's instructions therefore should not be read simply as an attack on the discriminatory aspects of charitable organizations, but have a powerful symbolic value, and this becomes even more evident if the 'exclusions' blamed in the will are seen in the context of Bogetti's personal experience. Gabriele, Ludovico Bogetti's brother and business partner, was one of the last

named after the benefactor for the treatment of infectious illnesses and venereal diseases in particular.

<sup>85</sup> Another fund for the same purpose was given to the Congregation of Merchants. Ibid.

representatives of independent administration in welfare institutions. He had been a governor of the Ospedale di Carità for more than ten years, and had died shortly before this institution came under the control of the *Regio Protettore*, and the introduction of other antidemocratic measures which lowered the quorums for voting and deliberations<sup>86</sup>. Ludovico himself was the last representative of a trade organisation to hold the highest office of Primo Console within the Consulate, which had jurisdiction over legal cases concerning industry and craft organizations, as well as carrying out a consultative role in the economic field. It was in 1733 (the very year that Bogetti made his will) that the three members of the Consulate which until then had been members of the Merchants' Guild chosen by the King from a short-list presented by the Guild itself, had to be state-employed lawyers, while merely consultative duties were left to the two leading bankers in the city<sup>87</sup>. We cannot know how much these events impinged on Ludovico's last wishes, but there can be little doubt that these experiences, this exclusion from the local centres of power, must have considerably embittered the non-bureaucratic elites and influenced the nature of their charitable donations.

Another aspect of the changes which affected existing and newly-founded institutions in the mid-eighteenth century is the "privatisation" of welfare resources: there was a growth in the number of those donations which restricted their use either by specifying the beneficiaries or by preserving nomination rights, thus allowing benefactors to continue to influence welfare policy in spite of government interference. The ratio between

<sup>86</sup> Gabriele's last testament (which he made with Ludovico) was in 1730 (Ins., 1730 l.4, vol. 2, 29.4.1730). The introduction of the *Regio Protettore* occurred in 1734 and that of the regulations which changed the voting rules in 1737 and 1738 (D., T.XII, p. 306 and 313).

<sup>87</sup> Regio Editto pel nuovo stabilimento de' Consolati, 15.3.1733, in D., T.III, p.781.

restrictive testamentary dispositions and open ones in the period 1730-1789 was three times the ratio for the previous sixty years (1670-1729). The hospital of San Giovanni for instance, recorded a considerable increase in the endowments of beds for incurable diseases (over which the donating family maintained the right to nominate the occupant): in the forty-year period 1728-67 there were 112 new beds of this kind, while there had only been 104 in the previous sixty years (Fig.12). As I have already mentioned, administrators attempted to obstruct this tendency in the 1750s (although they were only partially successful in their results), by restricting the endowments for beds for incurable diseases. But prospective benefactors did not give up, and indeed attempted to extend nomination rights to beds for curable diseases as well. This condition was occasionally accepted: in 1765 for example, Michel Antonio Giacobino, an apothecary, ordered the foundation of two beds for curable diseases while stipulating that patients had to be chosen from amongst his relations and servants from his household<sup>88</sup>. An even more significant reaction to the new restrictions was that the practice of nominating beds for incurables, which hitherto had been limited to the hospital of San Giovanni was now extended to the Ospedale di Carità, which had never accepted this type of qualified endowment: 16 new beds controlled by benefactors were created between 1740 and 1789<sup>89</sup>.

The nomination of the beneficiary of a charitable donation became increasingly common even for the smaller institutions, especially those for women. Benefactors started to found piazze or 'places', donations of capital which yielded sufficient income to maintain facilities for one or more patients in perpetuity, and these would be nominated by the benefactor, or by persons chosen by him.

<sup>88</sup> Ins., 1.12., 1765, 4.12.1765.

<sup>89</sup> AOC, Cat. XV, 43, Fondazioni letti per Incurabili, 1724-1839. Before 1740 there was just one nominated bed for incurable diseases, founded in 1724.



This practice became normal in the institutions founded in this period (such as the Provvidenza and the Bogetti Institution), but was also introduced into existing establishments. The House of the Soccorso, a small institution which had previously held no more than about twenty young girls, grew between 1734 and 1789 through the gift of at least 26 places reserved for relations or young women chosen by benefactors' families<sup>90</sup>. During the 1770s, as many as 41 of the girls at the Provvidenza out of a total varying between eighty and one hundred, were 'placed'<sup>91</sup>. Even the ruling dynasty entered in this contest over influential resources. Members of the royal family were in fact responsible for 19 of the 41 places, and these were used to reward groups of civil servants. They were in fact allocated to 'the daughters of well-deserving persons in the state or royal service, and employment in the court, judiciary or treasury'<sup>92</sup>.

Attitudes to the funding of charity had therefore changed again: in the latter part of the seventeenth century (which had witnessed the sharp increase in private contributions), charity had turned from a civic duty into an expression of status, and now it became an instrument of protection and self-defence. At that time, a donation was essentially a way to display one's prestige, a search for honour and ritual acknowledgment. The influence over the allocation of charity's resources was not clearly held by individual persons, nor was it precisely delimited, as it

<sup>90</sup> Two places were created by the Maid of Honour Francesca Gabuti (ASSP Rep. Lasc. 161, 8.7.1734), another two by Giuseppe Gianinetti (ibid., 30.4.1752), fifteen by Tomaso Crosa (T.P., Vol. XXIV, p.368, 22.10.1751), two by Domenico Borbonese (T.P., vol.XXIX, p.93, 31.1.1776), an unspecified number by Giuseppe Bernocco (ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 160, 31.1.1774) and by Rosa Teresa Foassa Arpino (ibid. 161, 15.1.1786).

<sup>91</sup> This can be inferred from the accounts of the Opera della Provvidenza in LPqM, m.20, Fasc. 1, m.18 d'add., Fasc. 3.

<sup>92</sup> OPCB, m.228.

was always possible to exercise influence by becoming a member of administrative boards, which were relatively open, or through personal contact with their members. But in the new climate of the mid-century people demanded from involvement in charity a more immediate and tangible "return". The exact amount of patronage to which a donation entitled the benefactor now had to be negotiated in advance and written down. Charity became for the non-bureaucratic elites' removed from the administration of institutions a vehicle for preserving some of their influence. Indeed donations were increasingly used to constitute their own areas of group protection. It should be observed that funds were often reserved for very restricted groups, specific occupational categories, the poor in a given locality, or even the benefactor's own kinship group.

One group of donations were for the poor in localities where the benefactor had influence. On the one side there were donations restricted to the poor of certain parishes, which gave the parish priest the role of arbiter and executor of the testator's wishes. This was probably a sign of the new importance the parish had taken on in stating identity and defining social relations. In passing it should be remarked that for the first time, thanks to these kinds of funds, the clergy were being directly involved in the distribution of charity, whereas until then their role had been restricted to issuing the declarations of poverty required by charitable institutions (and thus assessing who was poor and who was not)<sup>93</sup>. On the other hand, there were numerous provisions for the poor living on the donator's feudal lands. These were generally funds for the sick and the weakest sections of the community (often widows), and for one or more annual dowry for daughters of poorest families in the lands controlled by the testator's

<sup>93</sup> See for example the legacy left by Michel Antonio Defontaine to the Parish of Carmine, ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 161, 12.9.1754.

family<sup>94</sup>. But there was no shortage of donations which sought to create privileged access to institutions in Turin for the poor of an estate. For example Ottavio Nicolo Provana di Leynì left 1,500 lire in 1736 to the hospital of San Giovanni with the proviso that requests from the sick of Leynì should always be given preferential treatment<sup>95</sup>. Finally, there were also 'moral' legacies which intended to save (or discipline) the souls of the poor rather than their bodies; these were used for financing 'missions' - series of sermons and religious initiatives organized by Jesuits and Capuchin monks in the villages where the benefactor was lord<sup>96</sup>.

Another example of restricted legacies was that in favour of the testator's trade or social group. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Turin witnessed the development of forms of corporative welfare which are generally associated with a much earlier period<sup>97</sup>. While only 17 donations and legacies were left to assist members of respected social groups who had fallen on hard times in over half a century from 1677 to 1729, there were twelve in just a decade from 1730 to 1739. Donations of this type also changed in their nature: in the early period, the great majority of legacies are in favour of those who have fallen on hard times, without further specifications. The few exceptions around the turn of the century concerned funds especially reserved for 'nobles in the strict sense of the word', and these were clearly an attempt to reassert

<sup>94</sup> For example Count Giuseppe Bonaventura Orsini di Rivalta made the Company of St. Paul his sole heir in 1761 with the obligation to use the profits to give alms to the sick and widows on his feudal lands and the payment of two dowries per year to daughters of needy families living in one of the villages within those lands, Rivalta. ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 162, 5.4.1761.

<sup>95</sup> AOSG, Cat. 4, Vol. 38, Fasc. 11, 11.5.1736.

<sup>96</sup> ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 160, 31.1.1762.

<sup>97</sup> Ricci, 'Povertà'.

the privileges and exclusiveness of the court aristocracy when it was being subjected to the first attacks on its supremacy<sup>98</sup>. From the 1730s onwards the purpose of the legacy becomes increasingly specific and the social category which was beneficiary more clearly defined: for some benefactors poveri vergognosi are only 'first class, feudal landowners having been installed for ten years'; for others 'merchants having lived in Turin for at least three years before becoming impoverished', etc.<sup>99</sup>. In particular a distinction between 'first' and 'second class' poveri vergognosi appears repeatedly after the previously mentioned will by Ludovico Bogetti in 1733. Bogetti left several legacies in his will to assist 'the categories which are excluded from the alms given by the Compagnia di San Paolo to poveri vergognosi, that is to say starting with the merchants, bankers and those of similar condition, and carrying on down'. This category, which in other wills expressly included also doctors and notaries, came to be defined as 'second class poveri vergognosi',<sup>100</sup>. These directions were clearly a response to the exclusion of these non-noble impoverished rich from the Company's new provisions for who was to be defined shamefaced poor. Although this regulation which put nobility acquired through office on a par with established noble families as preferred beneficiaries, was formally laid down in 1734, a year after Bogetti's will, there are several reasons for

<sup>98</sup> See for example the wills by marchioness Francesca Maria Crivelli Scarampi Germonio di Sale (Ins. 1689 l.10, c.55, 26.9.1689), by marchioness Giovanna Maria Grimaldi Simiane di Pianezza (ASSP, scat.107, fasc.147, 15.12.1692), and by marchioness Maria Margherita Provana Tana d'Entraque (Ins. 1714, l.12 vol.1, 15.11.1714).

<sup>99</sup> The wills of Count Pietro Paolo Leone di Leynì, 28.4.1745 (ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 161) and Gio Francesco Bossone, 27.11.1756 (Ibid. 160).

<sup>100</sup> See for example the first will of the doctor Carlo Amedeo Alberito, 13.12.1730 (Ins., 1.3, c.445), and the donation by Pietro Francesco Bosso, 13.2.1781 (ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 160).

believing that the changed definition of povero vergognoso had already been applied for several years. In 1730 Ignazio Gabuto, a representative of the ennobled bureaucrats, had in fact already mentioned in his will the 'regulations which have been introduced or are to be introduced' by the Company concerning 'who shall be truly considered such' (i.e. povero vergognoso)<sup>101</sup>. Moreover, the distinction between first and second class shamefaced poor was already being applied in 1719 to applicants to the House of the Soccorso, the institution for girls and young women run by the Company<sup>102</sup>

Over the coming years and ensuing boom in donations to poveri vergognosi, Bogetti's clear wording became a model for many other benefactors from the same merchant and professional background. Bogetti's instructions were also imitated in wills which provided funds for spiritual exercises, which increased considerably during this period. The beneficiaries were sometimes occupational groups, elites in the area of the benefactor's feudal lands, or even kinship groups<sup>103</sup>. The late development of assistance to poveri vergognosi in Turin is a further indication that large sections of the elites were now increasingly anxious to set up forms of group-defence in order to counter-balance their loss of power and prestige.

<sup>101</sup> ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 161, 5.9.1730. See also Alberito's will mentioned in previous note.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., Soccorso.

<sup>103</sup> Gio Francesco Spatis, Count of Casalgrasso, Lombriasco, Corvegna and Moriondo, and Baron of Villareggia, left the Company of St. Paul his sole heir on condition that they organized every year two series of religious ceremonies lasting eight days for the people born in the villages on his feudal estates or residing there for at least ten years (ASSP, Rep. Lasc. 162, 2.8.1773). Paola Racchia widow of Campana instructed the Padri della Missione (who had taken over the Jesuits on their suppression) to accept four family members every year for religious ceremonies (AOC, Cat. IX, Chiesa e Camposanto 1665-1882, 4.5.1771).

This widespread sense of impotence had another important consequence: the family and kinship group acquired particular significance in this period as beneficiaries of legacies reserved for particular groups. This is without doubt a new phenomenon. Until a few years earlier it would have been unthinkable to have explicitly mentioned that the benefactor's relations might need to use the legacy themselves. Now, however, richer relations, or those without direct descendants, increasingly felt the need to provide for the poorer branches of their families by creating permanent trusts for a whole variety of purposes. Reserved places multiply in institutions assisting women and girls, but there are also funds for the education and training of boys, or for their religious careers, and funds for matrimonial or conventual dowries. The new importance of the family may in part have been caused by a democratisation of participation in charity, which brought in benefactors who were from social groups themselves at risk. However this narrowing of the gap between benefactor and beneficiary seems to have been mainly an effect of the general climate of insecurity. With the diminished opportunity to exercise patronage and, conversely, receive protection, the family identity acquired greater emphasis, and even distant and perhaps forgotten links were revived. Family became the guarantee against destitution, adversities and changes in fortune. The centralisation of charitable resources caused a return to more restricted forms of solidarity: not only the occupation, the community and the immediate locality, but also and above all the family.

But what is meant here by 'the family'? It is striking that the kinship group seen as relevant encompasses several lines of descent, as the following examples illustrate. In 1752 the apothecary Giuseppe Gianinetto left 20,000 lire to the Soccorso, on condition that it accommodated two daughters of his 'relations or descendants' in perpetuity: one had to be a descendent of Signor Vachiere, the

benefactor's nephew through his sister, and the other had to be a descendent through either the male or female line from his deceased father-in-law, Giacomo Filippo Fiando. The merchant Giuseppe Bernocco left 21,000 lire in 1774 to the same institution for the maintenance of daughters between 12 and 20 years of age, giving preference to any descendants of his married sister, and his wife's brother and sister (i.e. the Mattieu, Vay and Demode families). The Boggios, husband and wife, founded a dowry fund in favour of their kinship group: they left 20,000 lire in 1751 to the Company of St. Paul in order to pay every two years for a dowry of 1,200 lire (a far from modest figure) for the temporal or spiritual marriage of descendants of the husband's father, the wife's grandmother and the husband's paternal uncle, in that order. Daughters between 12 and 40 years could be accepted but priority had to be given to the older applicants and the dowry could also be allocated to a daughter whose marriage had not yet been arranged - all instructions which attempted to avoid giving the dowry to anybody outside the family. Prior Beffa made the Ospedale di Carità his sole heir in 1763 on condition that for three years the income was used to benefit his relations whether through consanguinity or marriage, and not only by helping the destitute, but also by supplying clothes, dowries and money for a religious career or professional training. In any case, relations were still to be given priority in the following years<sup>104</sup>.

It is clear that by the term 'family', benefactors mean both branches of the male and female lines, as well as acquired relations. There is parity between the relations of each spouse, and they merit the same solidarity. We find here a confirmation of the observations made in Chapter IV:

<sup>104</sup> Giuseppe Gianinetti's will of 30.4.1752 (ASSP Rep. Lasc. 161); Giuseppe Bernocco's will of 31.1.1774 (ibid. 160); agreement between the Boggios, husband and wife, and the Company of St. Paul, of 4.6.1751 (Ins., 1751, 1.6, vol.II); Prior Gio Antonio Beffa's will of 12.12.1763 (AOC, Cat. XV, Lasciti dotali, 33).

the importance that the family on both sides assumed amongst the upper classes in the eighteenth century in relation to the previous model based on patrilineal descent. The consequence of this re-definition of the family is that kinship was now defined in terms of relationships emanating from the household nucleus and the married couple. This meant the expansion of kinship groups and their transformation in permanent micro-systems for protection and patronage.

This tendency to found trusts for the benefit of the group of kin reached considerable proportions and began to be a source of concern for some. This can be shown by criticism it drew in the Senate and in the new legislation on this matter included in the Royal Constitutions of 1770. These practices were accused of constituting a 'new form of entailment', a way of preventing the free circulation of property<sup>105</sup>. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the problem did not so much concern the flexibility of property as reflect the state's anxiety over the growth of these interest groups.

The nature of the systems of protection appears therefore to have been undergoing change during the mid-seventeenth century. The concentration of control over welfare resources and urban policies in the hands of state officials severed the many vertical channels whereby the poor could obtain protection when a wider range of elites had access to control over institutions. This created a powerful sense of impotence and frustration amongst the non-bureaucratic elites, and widespread insecurity throughout the social fabric. The response was to create new forms of self-defence, and society fragmented into a myriad of different identities which were usually horizontal (a profession, a trade or more especially a family) that constituted a basis for tiny systems of

<sup>105</sup>Cf. Ordinanza del Senato di Piemonte of 5.7.1730 and Capo 3 of the Regie Costituzioni of 1770, clause 3-4, in D., T. VII, p. 165 ff.



solidarity based on the direct control of limited resources. In this changed situation, the opportunities for the poor to obtain assistance were considerably diminished, and linked to membership of a solidarity group or family. Private charity had by this time created a more elitist welfare system, and resources were mainly channelled towards the poveri vergognosi. In this situation where a deterioration in one's social position had recently become a real possibility, the rich were involved in looking after themselves, and those who were close to them. Patronage which for a long time had been a widely accessible resource and therefore used flexibly, now became rigid and restricted, and directed above all through family links.

## CONCLUSION

In this concluding section I would like to draw together some of the main themes and arguments which have emerged from my study of Turin, focusing in particular on those which might most fruitfully be pursued in other contexts.

The discovery that organised and well-established policies towards the poor existed in Turin well before the Savoyard restoration suggests that there is less of a gulf than has perhaps been assumed between the sophisticated organisation of charity in the Italian cities with a strong tradition of self-government and the provision for the poor available in cities such as Turin, whose local governments have often been portrayed as mere reflections of feudal relations. Turin's City Council and the patrician class which ran it in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were much less passive and subordinate actors than this traditional interpretation might lead one to suppose, and the arrangements for the relief of the poor adopted in this period by the Municipality place Turin within the European mainstream of social policy.

However it is not simply similarities with the measures towards the poor adopted in cities such as Venice, Milan or Florence which emerge from my study of Turin. For, unlike the patterns which have been described for these cities, in Turin a thriving system of municipal government lasted well beyond the Renaissance. Indeed the civic system of assistance to the poor became more extensive and more sophisticated precisely in the later sixteenth century, when according to the traditional periodisation, local autonomous governments gave way to the rise of central governments. The history of poor relief in Turin thus tends to endorse what recent studies re-evaluating the relationship between urban and central governments have argued: that the social and political role of the city and its ability to assert its authority and jurisdiction over important areas of life was consolidated rather than eroded

in the early period of the formation of the nation states<sup>1</sup>.

Turin seems to differ from other Italian cities not only in terms of the chronology of these developments but also in terms of the forms of assistance which were typical. In Turin, with the notable exception of the Compagnia di San Paolo, the confraternities - usually seen as one of the main distinguishing features of the system of assistance to the poor in Italy - are notable for their absence from the charitable scene. There were a couple of dozen confraternities in the city, but they mainly concerned themselves with devotional activities. They only acquired modest charitable functions in the eighteenth century, when a few of them were endowed with funds providing one or two dowries a year<sup>2</sup>. However, these dowries mostly went to members of the benefactor's family, or to members of his trade or profession. These provisions can thus be seen as an expression of that "privatized" form of charity which, as described in Chapter V, was widespread precisely in the eighteenth century. The Company of St. Paul is an exception to this pattern, but I doubt that this can be adequately described as a mere association of devout laymen. It seems rather to have been one of the main sites for the exercise of power in the city. This is also evident in the scope of the Company's charitable activities and the vastness of financial resources it had at its disposal, factors which made it one of the main agencies of charity in the town.

<sup>1</sup> P. Benedict (ed.), Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France, London 1989, in particular the article by R.A. Schneider. For an Italian case, F. Benigno, 'La questione della capitale: lotta politica e rappresentanza degli interessi nella Sicilia del Seicento', Società e Storia, 47 1990.

<sup>2</sup> A list of confraternities and of the charitable funds some had at their disposal is given by Cibrario, Storia di Torino, vol. II and by G. Martini, Storia delle Confraternite Italiane con Speciale Riguardo al Piemonte, Turin 1935. There were 14 funds in all, administered by 5 confraternities and providing around 20 dowries a year. 10 of these 14 were set up in the eighteenth century.

Another feature which figures prominently in accounts of Italian measures towards the poor - the early development of policies of confinement and institutionalisation of the poor and sick - also seems to be absent from Turin. Up until the mid seventeenth century, in fact, the hospitals in the town were establishments of very modest size, and institutional care represented only a minor part of overall provision. Outdoor relief was much the prevalent form of assistance. Is this a feature which is specific to Turin? I suspect not, for I believe that the scale of residential care available in Italy may have been exaggerated, and other forms of relief neglected, as a result of an institutionally-oriented type of approach which takes hospital records as the obvious source for a history of poor relief and medical care. The focus on institutions has been reinforced in recent years under the influence of Foucault's work, which has turned all attention on the process of confinement of the poor and away from forms of assistance in the community. If we look at the numbers of patients involved, however, we can see that in many other Italian cities, too, the importance of institutional care was very modest in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and even in part of the seventeenth century. This is particularly true for the sick poor. Even in a city like Venice, which was notable for its initiatives towards the poor and for its dense network of institutions, residential care for the sick poor was negligible for a long period; in the mid-sixteenth century only two hospitals accepted medical patients and only one of these took non-contagious patients (about 20 in 1556, in a city of 150,000), the other being devoted to syphilis sufferers and patients with skin diseases)<sup>3</sup>. It is possible, then, that historians have extrapolated unjustifiably from the cases of Florence and Milan, and that 'the great hospital of the Renaissance' was

<sup>3</sup> R. Palmer, 'L'assistenza medica nella Venezia Cinquecentesca', in B. Aikema and D. Meijers Nel Regno dei Poveri, Venice 1989.

an exception rather than the rule. In the case of Turin, the creation of a system of medical outdoor relief in the later sixteenth century - which continued to expand until as late as the 1670s - has received scant attention in the historiography of the city, although these accounts discuss the activity of the city hospitals extensively. Even less attention has been paid to the compelling sense of civic identity and community that made aid to the poor and sick appear as a civic duty well into the seventeenth century. It is possible that a similar bias has operated elsewhere, and that this has led to similar forms of provision being overlooked: it may well be that in other Italian cities too, there were systems of regular outdoor relief and more informal arrangements providing aid to the sick and poor in times of particular needs.

Analysis of Turin thus suggests the importance of paying more attention to sources of relief (especially medical) outside the institutions; it also suggests a chronology for the development of the hospital as principal resort for the sick poor which needs to be tested against evidence from other cities. For a long time, Turin's hospitals seem to have been small establishments serving a relatively elite clientele (able to pay in order to gain admittance), rather than providers of charity. In addition, except in the case of syphilis patients, the hospitals were long-stay institutions, furnishing a response to social isolation rather than mere treatment for medical complaints. The Turin case thus suggests that it might be fruitful to shift the focus of attention from the Renaissance hospital to the Baroque hospital, and examine the great wave of hospital building that occurred in various parts of Europe from the mid seventeenth century as the expression of a major transformation in the provision of medical care. What factors lay behind this new policy? In this work I have argued that the construction of large Baroque establishments for the poor and sick needs to be seen in the context of the search on the part of elite groups for

opportunities for the public display of status given their exclusion from existing celebrations of and rituals designed to enhance prestige. However, the transformation of hospitals into the principal provider of medical relief also needs to be related to the wider use that members of the medical profession came to make of these institutions. In Turin, as elsewhere, there was from the second half of the seventeenth century on, a major increase in the number of medical personnel (especially surgeons), and in their involvement in hospital life. An analysis of this process which brought medical practitioners into the hospitals cannot be undertaken here. What would be needed is an investigation into the changing characteristics of the medical profession outside the hospital - its strategies and the manner in which it reproduced itself.

Another area on which my material from Turin can perhaps shed new light is that of policies aiming to preserve or restore women's honour. Refuges for fallen women or women in danger of falling have often been described in rather unchanging and ahistorical terms as attempts to control female sexuality. Important differences between female institutions have therefore been neglected in favour of a view which lumps them all together. In Turin, institutions specifically for women continued to be set up throughout a period of over a century; it is clear, however, that there were major changes in the nature and functions of these institutions and the kind of women they catered for. One element of change is represented by the social origin of the inmates. For a long time the women in these establishments continued to come from socially elite groups. Thus the declared aim of saving the honour of fallen women - a rhetoric which historians have accepted as reflecting the institutions' real functions - was applied almost exclusively to women from privileged social groups. These institutions do not seem to have accepted the kind of women who made up the majority of prostitutes - adult, unmarried, unprotected women of low social status. For the

behaviour of these women damaged no one but themselves; it did not harm the name of distinguished family ancestors, nor the still vulnerable reputation of a late husband and his family. This close link between concern for women's sexual honour and concern for social honour implies that these institutions need to be seen (much more than has hitherto occurred) within the context of the rise and decline of elite groups and within the context of general trends in assistance to the shamefaced poor. With few notable exceptions, this is an area which has been somewhat neglected by research on charity, because it has been thought of as a phenomenon of limited proportions belonging only to a much earlier period. My research on Turin however, has revealed the existence of aid to the shamefaced poor throughout the period examined, and indeed has shown it to be particularly significant precisely in the eighteenth century, the period when a rationalisation of poor relief was supposed to have been introduced by the enlightened state.

Not until the late eighteenth century, did society deem it necessary to set up institutions for the rehabilitation of ordinary prostitutes. Perhaps prostitution at this time assumed such proportions that it came to appear a major problem of public order; but it is also possible that the emergence of disciplinary institutions for women of low social status reflected a shift in the meaning of honour or even a decline in the significance of this concept. A shift of this kind seems, in fact, to have been an underlying factor in another type of change which affected institutions for women. For a long time establishments for the socially elite accepted women of very different moral, economic, marital status and age - a promiscuity which can only have been justified on the basis of the overriding importance of the fact that they were all in situations which put their honour at risk. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the institutions lost this promiscuous character and women inmates came to be classified and

segregated along the same lines as males. This seems to suggest that for a certain period the notion of honour had a crucial role as a specific principle in female stratification.

Finally I would like to say a word about the general methodological approach I have taken in this study. In trying to find out what motivated a person to become involved in charitable activity, I have given particular importance to the personal experience that donors and other dispensers of charitable resources had of social dynamics and in particular dynamics of conflict, seeing these as the main motor behind different attitudes to the poor and acts of charity. I believe that this approach has proved fruitful and it seems to me that it could be applied to even more precise areas of personal identity, such as position within the family. It is clear for example, that a high percentage of male benefactors were younger sons, and that many were unmarried, whereas heads of families feature rarely by comparison. This seems to indicate the specific social role played by members of the family who were excluded from the main line of inheritance and the possibility of constructing a less undifferentiated picture of the family and of its internal logics.

It seems to me that the usefulness of such a micro-analysis tracing in detail the social identities of individuals is confirmed also in relation to the other group of social actors considered in this work: the poor who were recipients of relief and medical care. It is often assumed that an analysis of the characteristics of recipients is only feasible when data are available for a large number of people, allowing quantitative analysis of statistically significant numbers. I hope I have shown that analysis of small numbers can offer a particularly vivid and detailed picture of who recipients were. This approach allows us to make use not just of aspects of social identity which recur with frequency, but of all the features mentioned, including scraps of individuals' life



histories which would be lost (since devoid of statistical representativeness) in a quantitative analysis. In this way we can form a picture of how the life of the poor in an institution or as recipients of outdoor relief connects with their previous circumstances (and sometimes with their future life), allowing a clearer understanding of how the world of charity intersects with wider social dynamics.

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