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WORKING IN AND FOR CHARITY INSTITUTIONS: PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT AND ACTORS IN THE EARLY MODERN SAVOY-PIEDMONT STATE*

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ABSTRACT: *This article aims to analyse the range of labour performed by poor people in the charity institutions of the early modern Savoy-Piedmont State. It focuses especially on individuals that, in different ways, were involved in the working system of these institutions, analysing the nature of the work they were required to perform and the social and economic ties that bonded them both with their peers and the institutions. Apart from a few institutions that relegated beggars and vagrants, and workhouses that exploited their inmates for producing for the market, several institutions emphasized the fact that poor should be trained so as to gain some kind of skill and enter the labour market as soon as possible. Although with important differences between girls and boys, and among institutions, a temporary stay at a charity was an occasion for children to learn a job and even join the guilds at a favourable condition. At the same time, this system was profitable also for artisans and entrepreneurs enlisted by the institutions for organizing work and training the poor, since it endowed them and their families with economic privileges and social prestige.*

KEYWORDS: *charity institutions and work, apprenticeship, entrepreneurs, poor relief*

LAVORARE PER E NELLE ISTITUZIONI DI CARITÀ: MODELLI DI IMPIEGO E ATTORI NELLO STATO SABAUDO IN EPOCA MODERNA

SOMMARIO: *Questo articolo analizza il ventaglio di attività lavorative svolte dai poveri nelle istituzioni di carità in Piemonte in epoca preindustriale. In particolar modo focalizza sugli attori economici coinvolti in questo sistema, studia la natura del lavoro che erano tenuti a svolgere e i legami sociali ed economici che legavano gli uni agli altri e alle istituzioni. Al di là di poche istituzioni che rinchiodavano mendicanti e vagabondi, e di alcune workshouses che sfruttavano gli internati per produrre per il mercato, molte istituzioni enfatizzavano il fatto che i poveri dovevano essere formati e acquisire competenze tecniche per entrare il più presto possibile nel mercato del lavoro. Sebbene con importanti differenze tra ragazze e ragazzi, il soggiorno in queste istituzioni era un'occasione per i bambini per apprendere un mestiere e perfino entrare in una corporazione a condizioni favorevoli. Dall'altro lato, questo sistema creava vantaggi anche per gli artigiani e gli imprenditori che con l'avallo delle istituzioni organizzavano l'addestramento e il lavoro dei poveri: essi godevano infatti di privilegi economici e di prestigio sociale per sé e la loro famiglia.*

PAROLE CHIAVE: *istituzioni di carità e lavoro, apprendistato, imprenditori, Piemonte preindustriale, soccorso ai poveri.*

This paper aims to discuss the significance of the labour performed by the poor in the charity institutions of the early modern Savoy-Piedmont State. Historians have properly highlighted the harsh living

* Abbreviations: Ast sez. riun. = Archivio di stato di Torino, sezioni riunite; Ast I sez. = Archivio di Stato di Torino, I sezione; Asct = Archivio Storico della Città di Torino. The author acknowledges the funding received from the Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme under the Horizon 2020 (FemEcoMig project n.703737).

and working conditions of poor children in workhouses. According to several studies grounded in the seminal work of Foucault, during the eighteenth century the notions of punishment and discipline strengthened and the idea that poor, vagrants, and beggars should be monitored, relegated in controlled spaces and put to work, gained the attention of the authorities in several European countries ('Great Confinement'). An influential theoretical contribution to the issue was provided by the pamphlet *La Mendicizia sbandita* of the Jesuit André Guevarre, a well-known work by the authorities in France and in Italy (which included the duchy of Savoy and Piedmont). Between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, therefore, in England, Germany, France and Italy poorhouses and workhouses proliferated with the aim to confine poor people, considered a threat to social order, and to put them at work.

Charity institutions, workhouses and almshouses have received a great attention from Italian scholars. In early modern times, these institutions, which enjoyed great popularity across the Italian peninsula, provided relief to people in need: from orphans and abandoned children, to lone or endangered women, to vagrants and beggars. Scholarly literature has focused on the policies enacted by these institutions, which of course varied according to the categories of people towards whom relief was targeted, and was shaped by specific ideologies of masculinity and femininity. Scholars have also devoted their attention to the socio-economic profile of individuals and families receiving aid¹. A second strand of literature focuses on benefactors and those involved in the administration of these institutions². Overall, these studies underscore that work was a crucial aspect in relief policies. But the picture is more dynamic and complex: activities, time devoted to, and modalities of work varied from city to city and from institution to institution, influenced also by economic and social factors. Several studies grounded in economic history highlight that charity institutions, in Italy and Europe, provided cheap and disciplined labour force and served as reference

¹ Among recent works: V. Zamagni (a cura di), *Forme di povertà e innovazioni istituzionali in Italia dal Medioevo ad oggi*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000; A. Groppi, *Il welfare prima del welfare*, Viella, Roma, 2010; A. Cantaluppi, W. Crivellin, B. Signorelli (eds.), *Le figlie della Compagnia. Casa del Soccorso, Opera del Deposito, Educatorio duchessa Isabella fra età moderna e contemporanea*, Compagnia di San Paolo, Quaderni dell'Archivio Storico, Torino, 2011.

² S. Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and Their Motives in Turin 1541-1789*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995

point for factory owners and businessman³. Others pointed out that these institutions, in experimenting and promoting new forms of organisation of the labour force were *trait d'union* between the artisan workshop and the factory⁴. A third strand of literature takes into account recent historiographical issues about economic privileges, patents and technological innovations, and focuses on the role played by charity institutions in introducing and adopting, whether or not successfully, economic innovations and new technologies⁵. In this perspective, a crucial point is the controversial link between guilds and charity institutions: if the former established norms to regulate production, the latter were often allowed (by means of patents granted by the authorities) to produce and sell goods that were not compliant with the guilds' regulations⁶. Another controversial point about guilds and charity institutions concerns their role in the human capital formation and in training. S. R. Epstein has argued that 'the primary purpose of craft guilds was to provide adequate skills training through formal apprenticeship' and that 'in the absence in premodern societies of compulsory schooling and of efficient bureaucracies, the best available solution on all counts was arguably a system of training contracts enforced by specialized craft associations'⁷. However, recent research has shown the fluidity of apprenticeship in early modern society and moreover that (also) charity institutions played a crucial role in offering young boys and girls the opportunity to receive some kind of training, acquire specific skills and enter the labour market⁸.

³ J. Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010; R. Caty, *Enfants au travail. Attitudes des élites en Europe occidentale et méditerranéenne aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Publication de l'Université de Provence, Aix-en-Provence, 2002.

⁴ L. Gheza Fabbri, *Lavoro obbligato e lavoro coatto nella Legazione di Bologna (sec. XVI-XVII)*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *L'impresa. Industria, commercio e banca sec. XIII-XVIII*, Atti delle "Settimane di Studi", Istituto internazionale di storia economica, F. Datini, Prato, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1991, pp. 433-435.

⁵ L. Moccarelli, *L'esperienza delle case di lavoro volontario e coatto a Milano tra 1720 e 1815*, in M. Taccolini, S. Zaninelli (eds.), *Il lavoro come fattore produttivo e come risorsa nella storia economica italiana: atti del Convegno di studi*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2002, pp. 111-122.

⁶ B. Zucca Micheletto, *Privilegi economici, corporazioni e rapporti di potere negli stati Sabaudi (1680-1799). Una ricerca in corso*, «RISES Ricerche di Storia economica e sociale», III, 1-2 (2017), pp. 139-161.

⁷ S. R. Epstein, *Craft Guilds, Apprenticeship, and Technological Change in Preindustrial Europe*, «The Journal of Economic History», 58, 3 (1998), pp. 684-713, cit. p. 684 and p. 688.

⁸ R. Salvemini, *Formazione e avviamento al lavoro nei reclusori e nei convitti del Regno di Napoli alla fine del Settecento*, in M. Taccolini, S. Zaninelli (eds.), *Il lavoro come fattore cit.*, pp. 187-198; C. H. Crowston, *L'apprentissage hors corporations. Les formations professionnelles alternatives à Paris sous l'Ancien Régime*, «Annales HSS», mars-avril 2

This latter is also the point of view adopted by the present article that focuses on preindustrial charity institutions in Savoy-Piedmont State. It is certainly true that workhouses exploited their inmates' work, and treated them ambiguously. However, this article suggests that an in-depth analysis of the individuals that, in different ways, were involved in the working system of these institutions, the nature of the work they were required to perform and the social and economic ties that bonded them with their peers and families and with other institutions can nuance this assessment and bring to light a more complex situation. Indeed, the majority of the charity institutions here considered emphasized the fact that poor should be trained so as to gain some kind of skill and enter the labour market as soon as possible. Although with important differences between girls and boys, and among institutions, a temporary stay at a charity could be an occasion for children to learn a job and even join the guilds at a favourable condition. At the same time, this system was profitable also for artisans and entrepreneurs enlisted by the institutions for organizing work and training the poor, since it endowed them and their families with economic privileges and social prestige. By focusing on the economic actors involved in these charities as well as on the range of economic activities performed, this article improves our understanding of the work of the poor and shows its multi-layered features and multiple consequences on the life of the inmates.

The multiple meanings of work performed by poor

One of the oldest charity institutions in Turin was the *Ospedale di San Giovanni*, established and managed by the municipality, which received, and took care of abandoned children and orphans⁹. Another Turinese charity institution was the *Albergo di Virtù*, founded originally by the *Compagnia di San Paolo* and placed under the

(2005), pp. 409-441 ; M. Martinat, *Travail et apprentissage des femmes à Lyon au XVIII^e siècle*, «Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée MEFROM», 123, 1 (2011), pp. 11-24; R. Schalk, *From orphan to artisan: apprenticeship careers and contract enforcement in The Netherlands before and after the guild abolition*, «The Economic History Review», 70, 3 (2017). On the versatility of apprenticeship see: P. Wallis, *Apprenticeship and training in premodern England*, «Journal of Economic History», 68, 3 (2008), pp. 832-861; B. Zucca Micheletto, *A large "umbrella". Patterns of apprenticeship in eighteenth-century Turin*, in M. Prak, P. Wallis, (eds.), *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019, pp. 78-105.

⁹ S. Cavallo, *Charity and Power* cit.

protection of the duke since 1580. The aim the *Albergo* was to 'receive youths (*garzoni*) that spent their days in *contrade* playing and dealing in dissolute activities' by providing them with means to train 'virtuously in industrious occupations in the crafts, in order to flee idleness, the root of all ills'¹⁰. Since the middle of the sixteenth century special attention was paid also to the protection and control of women in economic and moral distress. It is precisely during this period that the *Monastero delle Povere Orfanelle* was established with the aim to host young orphaned girls from the middle classes (artisans and merchants). Other institutions were founded in those years: in 1589 the *Compagnia di San Paolo* set up the *Casa del Soccorso*, in 1683 the *Deposito* and in 1750 the *Casa delle Forzate*, with the aim to enclose girls and women whose behaviour placed them in danger or 'for women who were considered to have exposed their families to scandal'¹¹. The *Ospedale di Carità* was undoubtedly one of the most popular charity institutions in Turin. Founded in 1649, by the *Compagnia di San Paolo*, the sovereign, and a group of the municipality's elite, its *raison d'être* was supposedly to prevent mendicancy and the presence of infirm vagrants. Nonetheless, right from the start, its policy consisted mainly in providing relief to a great range of people in dire economic straits. Orphans, abandoned children, foundlings, unmarried women and men constituted important categories traditionally helped by the *Ospedale*: from 1762 to 1798 children alone accounted for about 20 per cent of the applicants. Data also shows the relevance of families with infants: 38 per cent of applicants (more than one third) were couples and over 72 per cent of them had at least one baby or a very young child. On the other hand, widows accounted for 20 per cent and one third of them had small children. As for the nature of the relief, ill and elderly people, paupers, the destitute and orphans were housed in the institution itself, while families in hardship received relief at their homes (namely, rations of bread), and their babies were cared for by wet nurses paid by the hospital. Of course, family members

¹⁰ T. P. Posani *Il Regio Albergo di Virtù di Torino (...) Brevi cenni storico-statistici*, Tip. Angelo Locatelli, Torino, 1884, pp. 5-7.

¹¹ S. Cavallo, *Charity and power* cit., p. 226; on the *Monastero delle Orfanelle* see: M. Maritano, *Sole sotto lo stesso tetto. Il monastero delle povere orfanelle di Torino nel Settecento*, Tesi di Laurea, rel. Prof. L. Allegra, Università degli Studi di Torino, Facoltà di Lettere, aa. 1999/2000; on the three institutions founded by the *Compagnia di San Paolo*: M. Maritano, *Le Case del Soccorso, del Deposito e delle Forzate dalla fondazione alla Rivoluzione Francese*, in A. Cantaluppi, W. Crivellini, B. Signorelli (eds.), *Le figlie della Compagnia*, cit., pp. 51-61. For the charity system in Piedmont in the first half of the nineteenth century see: F. Plataroti, *L'albero della povertà. L'assistenza nella Torino napoleonica*, Carocci, Roma, 2000; U. Levra, *L'altro volto di Torino risorgimentale: 1814-1848*, Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano. Comitato di Torino, Torino, 1989.

suffering from disease could also be hospitalized, if necessary (while the rest of the family received external aid), but their stay in the institution was temporary. Relief could be granted for many years and varied according to necessity and the family configuration. In this sense, a new birth in the family, illness or the death, emigration or imprisonment of one of the parents could determine supplementary relief, while, on the other hand, the return of a parent in the household, or the children's access to the labour market (starting at 14 years of age) entailed a reduction or cancellation of relief.

According to Sandra Cavallo, in the eighteenth century the traditional policy of poor relief, until then based on the idea of assistance, shifted toward a new ideology that emphasized the importance of work for poor people, with the purpose 'to attack the roots of the material and moral conditions that created the poverty, and not merely to mitigate some of poverty's consequences'¹². This shift concerned the majority of the charity institutions, the former - the *Albergo di Virtù*, the *Ospedale di Carità* - and other new institutions established during the second half of the eighteenth century. The *Casa di Correzione* (1757), the *Ritiro del Martinetto* (1776), and the *Ritiro degli Oziosi e Vagabondi* (1786) were set up with the aim of repressing unruly and idle youths; the already cited *Casa delle Forzate* (1750), the *Ritiro di San Gio di Dio* (1755) were workhouses for poor girls and the *Istituto delle Figlie dei Militari* (1774) helped the daughters of the military. Especially these new institutions 'directed their energies towards young people and able-bodied adults', with the aim 'to counter the devastating effects of unemployment and proletarianisation which was affecting both urban and rural workers in the last decades of the eighteenth century'¹³. In this perspective, old and new Piedmontese charity institutions explicitly started to promote their own economic activities, to provide work for their inmates and training for young people. These activities developed within a specific ideological context in which work had a crucial place. The welfare policy set up by the duke was imbued with a mixture of paternalistic and coercive attitudes: the inmates' work was aimed to establish order and discipline, based on the premise that idleness endangered society and that the deserving poor should be able to earn their livelihood by working. On the one hand, according to a well-known modern-age cultural model, the 'deserving poor' were people who worked to sustain themselves and their family but who fell into poverty or worse, to mendicancy and vagrancy, because of the absence of opportunities.

¹² S. Cavallo, *Charity and power* cit., p. 227.

¹³ Ead., *Charity and power* cit., p. 226.

Moreover these institutions required their inmates to perform some kind of paid and/or unpaid work and contribute therefore to the support of the institution itself, everyone according to his/her capacity, ability, age and physical strength. As specified in its regulation, the aim of these activities were twofold: to 'facilitate the support of the inmates with the product of their work and train them in earning their livelihoods when they left the institution'¹⁴. At the *Ospedale di Carità* no one was excluded from this commitment, and even partially disabled individuals were expected to perform some kind of work. In this perspective, as suggested also by Angela Groppi's research on the *Ospizio Apostolico* of Rome, the work of the poor had a further meaning: charity relief was not given as a free and unconditional present but it entailed duties, and especially the obligation for the beneficiaries to contribute to the economy of the institution which hosted them, according to their physical possibilities¹⁵.

The crucial role acquired by the enhanced ideology of work affected also the way in which the Piedmontese charity institutions were funded: they no longer appealed to traditional private charity, receiving instead consistent funds from the state 'as enterprises devoted to the public good', since they aimed to find solutions 'to social problems such as unemployment, public order, juvenile delinquency and prostitution'¹⁶. In the same perspective, as it will be clear in the last section of this article, during the eighteenth century a growing number of economic and fiscal privileges were granted by the authorities to these institutions, and especially to their economic activities, as well as to the entrepreneurs, artisans and merchants who were directly involved in them. Furthermore, the idea that the work of the poor was a way to cope with social and economic problems and that it could be channeled towards the achievement of the public good gained popularity among the kingdom's charity institutions, as testified by the numerous textile manufactures that were renewed or set up from the middle of the eighteenth century in mid-to-small towns of Piedmont and Savoy (i.e. Mondovi, Asti, Savigliano, Racconigi, Nice, Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne etc.). Some of them received special economic support by the central power or were

¹⁴ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta per ordine di materie delle leggi, cioè patenti, manifesti ecc.. pubblicate sino all'8 dicembre 1789 sotto il felicissimo dominio della Real Casa di Savoia (...)* Torino, Marcio Tip., 1818-1869, tomo 12, vol. 14, libro 7, *Arti introdotte nell'Ospedale della Carità*, pp. 250-251.

¹⁵ Contrary to what happened for the Turinese *Ospedale di Carità*, the Roman institution required also to inherit the majority of the goods and assets belonging to the inmates. A. Groppi, *Il welfare prima del welfare* cit.

¹⁶ S. Cavallo, *Charity and power*, cit. p. 227.

granted economic privileges. In November 1770, for example, the cloth manufacture implanted at the *Ospedale di Carità* of Nice received an annual rent while in 1771 and 1774 the entrepreneur Bonafous, and afterwards the notary Bertrand, were granted a monopoly for managing the carding and spinning manufacture of the *Ospedale di Carità* established in the community of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne¹⁷.

Jobs and economic activities performed by the inmates

An in-depth analysis of the documentation has evidenced the range of jobs and activities performed in the charity institutions. The inquiry reveals three patterns that will be analysed in this and in the ensuing sections : 1) the majority of the institutions hosted within their walls workshops and shops run by external artisans who, in exchange for favourable conditions, were required to employ internal labour force, in addition to some external workers; in some cases, the workshops were located outside the walls and the inmates (always males) were allowed to go outside the premises during working hours; 2) two of the most important Turinese institutions, namely the *Ospedale di Carità* and the *Albergo di Virtù* hosted wool manufactures. In this case the labour force was composed by external workers and inmates; 3) in addition to this, a range of jobs and activities (from service to clerical work) were performed to ensure the ordinary maintenance of the institution and to cater for the needs of the hosts.

The city's oldest hospital, the *Ospedale di San Giovanni*, which received abandoned babies, required that once the children were old enough they had to be trained and employed. Girls and (a few) boys worked in the silk workshop within the hospital, while other boys were placed in external workshops. Both the *Ospedale di Carità* and the *Albergo di Virtù* followed similar policies. At the *Ospedale*, many of the children who were placed in apprenticeship came from families in dire financial straits, and they were usually admitted temporarily when reached about seven years of age, to relieve their families. In 1664-65, the *Ospedale* established a ribbon-making workshop, and in 1767-68 it added workshops producing shoes, bonnets and woollens. The *Albergo* admitted children aged 11 to 15 who were sponsored by a guarantor, usually a court member or royal artisan. In 1721, it hosted

¹⁷ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 12, vol. 14, libro 7, *Regio biglietto (...) all'ospedale di carità di Nizza, per sostegno della sua manifattura*, p. 225; *Ibidem*, *Lettres-patentes du Roi (...) de la maison de charité de Saint-Jean de Maurienne*, pp. 238-239.

31 boys and 45 girls: boys were trained in crafts such as ribbon-making, shoemaking, carpentry and wool or silk weaving. Girls were instructed as silk-veil makers (*fabbricanti di garze*), in sewing linens and gloves, or in less skilled activities such as spinning silk thread¹⁸. In 1732, two entrepreneurs, Brunetta and Benissone, who produced Bolognese style veils and silk cloths, were allowed to employ apprentices from the *Albergo* in their workshop¹⁹. By 1798, fourteen masters and merchants worked in the institution's workshops, setting up to 119 looms. External workers and apprentices were also employed there, and 88 among these latter received patronage by the institution. Much like apprenticeship contracts with private masters, the agreements concluded for training in the charity institutions' workshops specified that the master had to teach the children 'like a good father' and could not ask them to perform jobs that were not connected with the craft, i.e. personal errands or service activities for the master's family. Apprentices received 4 or 5 *soldi* per day; they were not paid during holidays, absences or illnesses, and during the initial three-month trial period ('di tolleranza'). Trained silk and wool sock-makers in the *Ospedale di Carità*, on the other hand, worked gratuitously for the first twenty days of their contract, afterwards they would receive 5 *soldi* per day during their first four years, which would rise to 6 *soldi* for the following two years. Apprentices were required to adapt to the working conditions and working hours established by the *Ospedale* for all the inmates²⁰. The administration also expected the wage to be spent on clothes, although there is evidence that, despite the regulations, inmates used their salary to purchase foodstuffs or other goods with the complicity of guards and porters who could access the outside world.

Most almshouses dedicated to girls and women neither hosted workshops, nor allowed their inmates to leave the premises for training or working. Individuals admitted at the *Soccorso*, *Deposito* and *Forzate* were occupied in sewing, mending, starching and ironing, in spinning and manufacturing clothes and buttons under the supervision of internal mistresses. They produced for commissioned orders and for the institution ('a beneficio della casa'), and when they received a salary, the charity would withhold a part. However, since

¹⁸ Ast, sez. riun., *Albergo di Virtù, Fondazione e dotazione dell'opera*, 1700-1750, vol. 5. According to the available sources, girls were hosted in the *Albergo* only until the early eighteenth century.

¹⁹ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 13, vol. 15, libro 7, *Regio Biglietto (...) pel quale dannosi alcuni giovani dell'Albergo quali apprendisti alla manifattura di lustrini e di veli di Bologna (...)*, p. 213.

²⁰ Ast, sez. riun., *Insinuazione di Torino*, a. 1757, l. 2, f. 819r-823r.

the quality of their work was low and the inmates had scarce interest in it, the administrators introduced occasional rewards and often they did not withhold any sum (or reduced it). In addition, when in 1731 at the *Soccorso* was introduced the manufacturing of laces 'in the manner of Malines and Valenciene', a girl previously hosted at the *Ospedale di Carità* and trained by the French entrepreneur Boullement was accepted in the institution in order to teach to other girls and women²¹. In the same year, the *Opera della Provvidenza*, an almshouse for girls aged between 10 and 25, dispatched five girls to join masters working at the *Ospedale* and sent another six to work with Boullement, 'to learn how to make lace'²². The same *Provvidenza* around 1760 hired a Parisian mistress to teach girls the art of silk lace making²³.

Not all the work performed in the charity institutions required specific skills and training; almost all institutions also hired inmates in low-skilled activities. As stated, the *Ospedale di Carità* and the *Albergo di Virtù* hosted relatively large woollen manufactures since they were the only two admitted in Turin. Since 1733, the authorities banned this activity from the capital and its outskirts in order to encourage the local production of silk and increase the demand. The woollens workshop of the *Ospedale*, placed under the supervision of an entrepreneur who signed an agreement for nine years, made clothing for the army and clothes and blankets for the inmates. He was also required to supply the institution with woollen thread for socks and other underwear 'without any profits'²⁴. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the manufacture of the *Ospedale* was equipped with machines for spinning, weaving and dyeing. The entrepreneur was obliged to hire inmates who were paid by the piece and according to the different tasks they performed²⁵. In this context, most inmates – except weavers – performed repetitive, low-skilled tasks such as combing, spinning and processing thread. From their first day they received a fixed salary and they had to reach a minimum daily output. Excessive exploitation was prevented by placing a ceiling on daily

²¹ M. Maritano, *Le case del Soccorso* cit., pp. 144-148.

²² F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta* cit., tomo 13, vol. 15, libro 7, *Regio Biglietto (...) col quale si ordina di mandare cinque alunne dell'opera della provvidenza ad imparare l'arte dei merletti nella fabbrica Boullement (...)*, p. 262.

²³ S. Cavallo, *Assistenza femminile e tutela dell'onore nella Torino del XVIII secolo*, «Annali della Fondazione L. Einaudi», 16 (1980), pp. 127-155, p. 148.

²⁴ Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XI, fasc. 5.

²⁵ The tenancy agreements between the *Ospedale* and the entrepreneurs are preserved in : Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XIX, vol. 17, a. 1753 ; *Idem*, vol. 29, a. 1776 ; *Idem*, cat. XI, fasc. 5, a. 1793 ; Ast, sez. riun., *Insinuazione di Torino*, a. 1763, l. 3, f. 582r-588r ; *Idem*, a. 1784, l. 9, f. 961r-969r.

production. The weavers, who needed training, worked for free for the first three months. During the next two years they earned the same salary as external journeymen (plus a premium of one *lira* for every cloth, 'to encourage them to work'). Finally, they had to donate their last three months' wages to the *Ospedale* as reimbursement²⁶. A survey of the inmates reveals that in 1766 the *Ospedale* employed 293 men and boys and 262 women and girls (aged 7 and older) in the so-called 'lucrative activities for the institution': a range of jobs related to the manufacturing of wool thread and clothes or canvas²⁷. Fifty years later, in January 1809, the *Ospedale* hosted 481 inmates (370 women and 111 men) who were employed in manufacturing uniforms, socks, blankets and other textile goods²⁸.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, other institutions were more oriented to merely put children to work, and exploit this cheap labour force, rather than training them. The *Opera di San Giovanni di Dio*, for example, founded in 1755 by Rosa Govona, admitted young, poor girls aged between 13 and 25, and was essentially a coercive workhouse, where untrained girls were employed in low-skilled textile activities (wool spinning and weaving) and in manufacturing textiles, gloves, socks and silk ribbons. The commodities they produced were sold at low prices and in many cases fostered the guild hostility²⁹.

Family strategies

Prior to delving further into the discussion, it is useful to consider the importance of training for children. Indeed, an analysis of the family contexts of the children who were admitted in charity institutions sheds light on specific dynamics and reveals the medium-term strategies of poor families.

One of the reasons that encouraged parents to place their children in charity institutions, was that since the second half of the eighteenth century, those who were trained in these institutions could easily join the urban guilds and even achieve mastery at favorable conditions. Following a request from the *Ospedale di Carità*, and despite guild

²⁶ Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XIX, Atti, vol. 17, anno 1753; *Idem*, vol. 29, a. 1776; *Idem*, cat. XI, fasc. 5, a. 1793; Ast, sez. riun., *Insinuazione di Torino*, a. 1763, l. 3, f. 582r-588r; *Idem*, a. 1784, l. 9, f. 961r-969r.

²⁷ Ast, I sez., *Materie ecclesiastiche, Luoghi pii di qua da' monti*, m. 18, f. 8, *Stato generale delle persone*.

²⁸ Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XI, fasc. 6, *Etat de travaux aux quels se trouvoient occupés les recourrés de l'hospice de Charité le premier janvier 1809*.

²⁹ S. Cavallo, *Charity and power* cit., p. 229.

protests, two royal decrees dated 1758 established that children trained as silk sock-makers in the *Ospedale* had to be admitted as guild masters after four years as apprentices and a shorter period as journeymen (two years instead of the three years required by the guild), and without the usual charges (3 *lire* for apprentices and 4 *lire* for journeymen). Similarly, shoemakers trained at the institution had to work for only three years as journeymen (instead of four) and were exempt from paying the apprentices and journeymen fees (of 2 and 4 *lire*) and from the mastery fee (equal to 40 *lire* after the presenting the *chef-d'oeuvre* and 8 *lire* for the syndic of the guild)³⁰. Comparable privileges were granted to children trained in silk weaving at the *Albergo di Virtù*: according to the guild's 1738 statutes, former apprentices of the *Albergo*, or men who married girls trained there, were exempt from the 50 *lire* fee charged to new masters. In 1753, all former apprentices of the *Albergo*, irrespective of trade, were exempted from guild fees and given the right to enter as journeyman³¹. Children could therefore enjoy concrete advantages from their stay in the institution: some kind of training, and the access to the local guilds at favorable conditions. The case of Maria Maddalena Cerato, a young widow and mother of two children, formerly a servant but described in our sources as a 'beggar' is representative. In July 1772 her elder son, Carlo Giuseppe, aged 7 years old entered the *Ospedale di Carità* and started an apprenticeship which allowed him to leave the institution when he reached 15 years of age with a permission for 'working as a silk weaver in the workshop of the widow Gattié'³². A similar pattern concerns Carlo Domenico Ollivero, journeyman shoemaker and absent from the city, and his wife Lucia, who worked in the silk sector. His eldest son, aged 12 entered the *Ospedale di Carità* in January 1779 and stayed there until 1784 when he obtained an authorization to work with the master locksmith Morizio Ferrero. The second child of the couple entered the institution in 1781, aged 11, and left it six years later in order to join the workshop of wig-maker Osio³³.

This pattern has been detected also for girls. Giacinta Maria Monelli, for example, spent eight years at the *Opera delle figlie dei*

³⁰ Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XI, fasc. 3 ; F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 16, vol. 18, libro 9, *Regie patenti (...) a favore de' giovani ricoverati nell'Ospedale di Carità di Torino che apprendono ivi l'arte di calzettaio*, p. 893.

³¹ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 16, vol. 18, libro 9, *Memoriale a capi dell'Università de' mastri mercanti fabbricatori di stoffe d'oro, d'argento, e seta (...)*, pp. 322-326; *Ibid.*, tomo 13, vol. 15, libro 7, *Regie patenti (...) a favore de' giovani che ne fanno il tirocinio nell'Albergo di Virtù di Torino*, pp. 215-216.

³² Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. VI, *Libri delle informazioni per ricoveri*, vol. 40, f. 526.

³³ *Ibid.*, vol. 38, f. 21.

Militari, an eighteenth-century institution for soldiers' daughters: she was trained in silk weaving and, upon leaving the *Opera*, she was granted a royal patent which allowed her to establish an independent business³⁴. Similarly, Maria Margherita Revella, housed at *Ospedale* from infancy, learnt the art of weaving silk and taffetas. She left the institution in 1753 to marry (with a charity dowry of 60 *lire*), and the following year she was admitted as a mistress in the taffeta weavers' guild, while Anna Francesca Ferrari was trained in the same craft at the *Albergo di Virtù* and became mistress in May 1781³⁵. Despite this evidence, we can actually ask how representative was this pattern for girls: as it will be explained in the next section, the attitudes of the institutions toward the professional patterns of young children were influenced by specific ideals of masculinity and femininity.

The double standard: girls between protection of their sexual honor and work

Our analysis of the individuals involved in the charity institutions could not be complete without paying attention to differences in treatment between girls and boys. The fate of poor children depended on which institution they entered, certainly, but the way they were treated and how they were trained was defined by a gendered 'double standard'. While boys might be sent daily to one of the city's workshops, this was more problematic for girls, whose sexual honour and conduct had to be constantly monitored: therefore, girls were customarily trained within the institution. While boys' training was aimed at giving them the means to earn their living independently, often leading also to guild membership, this was not the case for girls, who were trained in a limited set of trades or domestic activities considered appropriate for their future as wives and mothers. Female apprentices who finished their training were not automatically allowed to leave: if they lacked a suitable place to live (i.e. in a family of sound morality or with a relative) or were not betrothed, they could be forced to spend their entire lives in the institution.

For boys, therefore, the stay in the institution was very often a transitory phase of their life, that came to an end with a permission to leave definitively ('licenza assoluta') at around 14-15 years of age, when they were expected to be able to fend off for themselves. Things

³⁴ Ast, sez. I, *Materie economiche, Commercio*, II add., m. 20bis

³⁵ Ast, sez. riun., *Insinuazione di Torino*, a 1758, l. 2, f. 85r-86v; *ibid.*, *Consolato di Commercio, Registro dei taffetieri*, vol. 66, f. n.n.

were quite different for girls, for whom the stay in the institution could be the only opportunity to spend a decent life.

All the institutions were committed to safeguard the sexual honor of women and girls, as well as to protect them from the risk of a dissolute life. Since this was the main goal of their stay in the institution, less importance was given to training, although, as previously explained, some female inmates could be trained in a trade and gain a respectable position in specific sectors of the labour market.

This cultural and ideological model permeated other Turinese charity institutions, especially those founded in the eighteenth century, such as the *Casa delle Forzate* and the *Opera di San Giovanni di Dio* (known also as *Ospizio delle Rosine*) and was grounded in the idea that the development of female skills spendable in the labour market were not a priority for women, whose natural duties were to be wives and mothers, irrespective of their social backgrounds. In this perspective, girls were firstly trained in good housekeeping, cooking and caring for the other household members; they were taught sewing, ironing, embroidering and needle work, all activities that were consistent with social expectations and that would be useful both in case they married or if they remained at the institution. The most significant difference was that for girls from lower classes, training in a craft aimed to provide them with basic skills useful for making an honest living, rather than to lead them towards a real professional path. Girls from the middle classes (such as those who were hosted at the *Casa del Soccorso*, and *Deposito*), instead, were expected to perform 'female' activities that were appropriate for girls of their social standing, and were aimed at steering them away from idleness and temptation and at teaching them good manners, even if, of course, they were not required to work to earn a livelihood³⁶.

These social differences are essential to our understanding of work in charity institutions. As pointed out by recent research, since the second half of the eighteenth century, the *Casa del Soccorso* and the *Deposito* shifted from their original aim of assistance towards explicit educational purposes that were targeted mainly for middle class girls. Since at least 1763, therefore, together with learning 'female' craft activities and supervising housekeeping, girls started to learn writing, reading and arithmetic, while they were no longer required to perform menial works (such as cleaning and cooking)³⁷.

³⁶ M. Maritano, *Le Case del Soccorso*, cit., pp. 144-148.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-157. On this point see also S. Cavallo, *Assistenza ed educazione in età moderna*, in A. Cantaluppi, W. Crivellin, B. Signorelli (eds.), *Le figlie della Compagnia* cit, pp. 39-48.

Like other Italian institutions, and at least in theory, at the *Ospedale di Carità* girls could be also hired to external families as domestic servants³⁸. It is likely that in order to protect the girls, private agreements were signed between the institution and the receiving families, with the consequence that these records have not been preserved in the *Ospedale's* archives. Finally, poor families were encouraged to place their daughters in charity institutions also because in case of marriage they would be provided with a dowry (a 'dote elemosinaria').

We cannot establish exactly how many youths were trained in charity institutions. The workshop census of the city carried out in 1792 registered five apprentices from the *Ospedale di San Giovanni* ('figli dell'Ospedale') placed with shoemakers, three in bakeries, and one with a silk weaver, while 26 'apprentices of the *Albergo di Virtù*' worked with silk weavers and 8 with silk stocking-makers. As in the guilds, the apprentices trained in the charity institutions experienced high rates of mobility to such a point that, since the seventeenth century, the *Albergo di Virtù* forbade youths from leaving before the end of their apprenticeship, and prohibited masters from hiring former apprentices from the *Albergo* who lacked their *benservito* certificate³⁹.

When evaluating the reasons of these high exit rates, we should not underestimate the harsh conditions that children faced and that probably encouraged them to flee, despite the offered prospects. Indeed, if poor families were ready to resort strategically to charity institutions, the life of the inmates was neither easy nor comfortable. At the *Ospedale* they were obliged to wear a uniform, and at the *Soccorso*, *Deposito* and *Forzate* women and girls were required to dress 'modestly and without vanity'⁴⁰. A typical day in the institution was organized around work and religious education. Discipline was a crucial issue: at the *Ospedale di Carità*, for example, inmates were required to go to work immediately after the bell ring, and those who were late or absent lost their salary (even if they were ill). When not working, adults and children were committed to pray, sing and listen to the recitation of holy texts. In addition, silence had to be always

³⁸ For Florence and Milan see: D. Lombardi, F. Reggiani, *Da assistita a serva. Circuiti di reclutamento delle serve attraverso le istituzioni assistenziali (Firenze-Milano, XVII-XVIII sec.)*, in S. Cavaciocchi (ed.), *La donna nell'economia secc. XIII-XVIII*, Atti della Ventunesima Settimana di Studi dell'Istituto Datini, Prato, 10-15 aprile 1989, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1990, pp. 301-319.

³⁹ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta*, tomo 13, vol. 15, libro 7, *Ricorso (...) e relativo decreto del consiglio dell'Albergo col quale si vieta ai giovani ivi ricoverati d'uscirne prima del tempo prefisso (...)*, p. 209.

⁴⁰ M. Maritano, *Le Case del Soccorso* cit., p. 137.

observed, and especially during work, common meals and during sleeping time (when girls and boys were separated)⁴¹. These difficulties explain, at least partially, the high rate of mobility of young people who entered these institutions, and, for the *Ospedale di Carità*, explain also why some families rejected the idea of leaving their babies and children there, and preferred to receive relief at their homes.

Working for the inmates

Another important group of people worked in the charity institutions providing a range of services and economic activities for the care and the well-being of inmates or for the ordinary management of the institution. According to a report issued in 1766, at the *Ospedale* 244 women and 211 men were employed in specific tasks for the advantage of the institution ('ad uso dello Spedale'). Cobblers, tailors, seamstresses and weavers of both sexes sewed and mended clothes, linen and shoes for the inmates; others performed cleaning chores, or took care of the ill and disabled. Men were also barbers and apothecaries, they worked in the stables, in the sacristy or in the Treasury of the *Ospedale*, while women were employed as laundresses or cooks, provided food and drink or manufactured communion wafers⁴². Forty years later, in 1809 during the French domination, the *Ospedale* employed 17 women and 10 men as nurses for the care of the inmates and 3 men in the apothecary; 75 men and 99 women were servants or gardeners in the estate of the *Ospedale*, while 60 men and 68 women worked as servants or workers for the maintenance of the institution's premises. In addition there were 3 porters, 3 butchers, 3 carters, 2 gravediggers and a small group of male clerks: 1 penmen at the archives; 1 officer ('huissier à la commission administrative') and 3 civil servants ('commis au bureaux')⁴³. It remains unclear whether these workers were external laborers or else they were chosen among the inmates. Similarly, the criteria according to which these were chosen remain unknown. Evidence from other institutions shows that

⁴¹ For a detailed analysis of a typical working day at the *Ospedale di Carità* see: B. Zucca Micheletto, *Temps pour travailler, temps pour éduquer : le travail des pauvres dans les institutions de charité (Turin, XVIIIe siècle)*, in C. Maitte, D. Terrier (eds.), *Les temps du travail. Normes, pratiques, évolutions (XIVe-XIXe siècle)*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, Rennes, 2014, pp. 81-99. Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. I, fasc. 31, *Distribuzione del tempo per li poveri nei giorni di lavoro e nei giorni di festa*.

⁴² Ast, I sez., *Materie ecclesiastiche, Luoghi pii di qua da monti*, m. 18, f. 8, *Stato generale delle persone*.

⁴³ Asct, *Ospedale di Carità*, cat. XI, fasc. 6, *État de travaux*. In French in the text.

the more 'veteran' inmates could remain at the charity and train other boys and girls. Such was the case of Gio Andrea Vacca who, in May 1758, having obtained his mastery as silk weaver at the *Albergo di Virtù*, made successful request to the board office to be appointed internal master weaver in velvet and brocade. Vacca was assigned 3 boys as apprentices and had to pay the *Albergo* 5 lire for each one of them⁴⁴.

At the *Soccorso*, *Deposito* and *Forzate* the inmates were supervised by the 'Madri' (lit. 'mothers') who lived in the institutions; for this reason, the task was always assigned to widows or unmarried women, almost all between thirty and forty years of age. The Madre could rely on the support of a so-called 'sottomadre' (lit. sub-mother) at the *Soccorso*, and of a 'governante' (governess) at the *Deposito* and *Forzate*. In addition, girls were educated by the 'maestre' (teachers/mistresses) charged with both imparting practical training and teaching basic grammar: since the seventeenth and until the nineteenth century these 'maestre' were recruited among the most skilled and capable veteran inmates, who, for several reasons, were unable to leave the institution. On the same premises there were also one or more servants, a physician and a surgeon, and at the *Deposito* and *Forzate* a porter who was often sent on errands outside the institution's walls⁴⁵.

Artisans and entrepreneurs between profit and paternalism

As previously explained, since the seventeenth century, and at least until the nineteenth century, the most important charity institutions in Piedmont and Savoy housed big textile factories and craft workshops which were rented out to entrepreneurs, merchants and artisans, who in turn, were expected to organize work, employ external workers, and apprentices alongside inmates and children, train children in the crafts and supply commodities to both almshouses and private customers. Despite the key role played by these entrepreneurs and artisans, scholars have seldom taken into account their personal lives, focusing mostly on individuals receiving relief or else on benefactors. In this last section of the article, therefore, I will explore the profile of some of these artisans, merchants and entrepreneurs through a micro-analytical and biographical approach. I will reconstruct the essential points of their biography and professional paths while focusing on their social, political and family background. This

⁴⁴ Ast, sez. riun., *Albergo di Virtù, Registro degli ordinati*, vol. 54, ff. nn.

⁴⁵ M. Maritano, *Le Case del Soccorso*, cit., pp. 140-144.

allows to better investigate the links between charity institutions, guilds and economic privileges granted by the royal power.

Firstly, of course, artisans and entrepreneurs were asked to perform different kinds of tasks, depending on the trade and on the size of the manufacture they had to organize. Cornelio Wanderkrik, for example, who produced woollens in one of the *Ospedale di Carità*'s mills, had to oversee around thirty workers, while the master Gio Sebastiano Eula managed 'just' a workshop, but we know he had up to 7 apprentices from the *Ospedale*, in addition to other workers. The case of the already cited French Jean Boullement, on the other hand, reveals another pattern. Native to Normandy, Boullement signed an agreement with the *Ospedale di Carità* to establish a workshop for the production of laces. He was expected to live on the premises of the institution with his family and two female workers and was required to train 25 to 30 female inmates for four years. In exchange of this, the *Ospedale*, granted him the right to keep and sell the outcomes of their work; he also retained the right to reject unmotivated girls. Not only the entrepreneur, but all his family – i.e. his wife and two daughters – were required to participate and perform work in this business.

Entrepreneurs, merchants and artisans could take advantage of the labour force made available by charity institutions more broadly, that is, not only by establishing a factory or workshop on the premises of the institution. In December 1725, for example, Claude Robert de Montincamp petitioned the king in order to set up a factory for processing hemp thread and cloths in the region of Nice. Apart from a range of fiscal, economic and symbolic privileges he was granted, he significantly asked for the permission to employ the labour force available in the local workhouses. 'Boys and girls able to work' were therefore encouraged (or forced?) to work in his factory, together with other external workers, who, in turn, were entitled to receive help from these charity institutions in case of necessity. The petition did not say explicitly if these poor boys and girls would be paid regularly; we know only that they would receive food and other goods to sustain themselves⁴⁶.

Finally, we should take also into account the fact that these entrepreneurs and merchants were wealthy, and could easily afford to found and fund their own charity institutions: such was the case for Ludovico Assom. Ludovico was a well-to-do merchant, born in Villastellone (a town 15 kilometres off Turin). After a life spent in the Piedmontese city, in January 1774 he founded in his native

⁴⁶ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 16, vol. 18, libro 9, *Memorial à articles avec les réponses (...)*, pp. 800-804.

town the *Albergo di Santa Croce*, renovating a previously-existing building that belonged to the local confraternity⁴⁷. In his words, the aim of the *Albergo* was to give shelter to paupers of all ages, and especially to those who experienced downward mobility. Apart from Ludovico's generous endowment, however, the survival of the *Albergo* would be ensured by the work of those housed in the institution, and for this reason he also set up a mill for processing hemp and cotton thread, and textiles. Using these arguments, Ludovico petitioned the king in order to obtain some benefits, and he was granted the right to expose the royal insignia and place his workers under the royal protection.

Another crucial question concerns how these entrepreneurs, merchants and artisans entered in contact with the charity institutions and were able to sign agreements with them. They were usually experienced individuals and well-connected with the urban institutions, the royal power and the local guilds. Some entrepreneurs held high-ranking positions in guilds: the already cited Boullement, for example, was a master silk-weaver and a guild officer⁴⁸. Some others were able to bring together activities and economic privileges from different institutions, such as was the case for the master silk-sock maker Gio Sebastiano Eula. In 1756 he was granted with a privilege for eight years that allowed him to produce woollen socks and caps and some fiscal exemptions. Some years later, in July 1761, he was also able to sign an agreement with the *Ospedale di Carità*: he rented a workshop within its walls, committing to train the young people hosted by the institution. In addition to this, in 1766 he was the recipient of a royal patent: he obtained a privilege for the duration of ten years for weaving and selling laces made with white silk and hemp thread - as explained in his petition, he invented a special technique which allowed him to use a frame usually used only for making stockings. Finally, his special relationship with the local power is also confirmed by the right to display the royal insignia outside his shop⁴⁹.

Even if in some cases the economic privileges accorded by the royal power to the charity institutions clashed with the opinion and interests of the guilds, as in the case of the *Ospizio delle Rosine*, often being a guild member and having a sound reputation facilitated

⁴⁷ Ast, I sez, *Materie religiose, Luoghi pii al di qua dei monti*, m. 20, I add.

⁴⁸ F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 16, vol. 18, libro 9, *Lettres Patentes sur requête de Jean Boullement (...)*, pp. 828-833.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, *Regie Patenti di concessione di privativa (...)*, p. 892; *Ibid.*, *Lettere patenti (...)*, pp. 363-364.

masters in gaining access to the manufacturing system of the charity institutions. This was true for Giacomo Filippo Brunetta and Gio Batta Benissone. In 1732 they were given permission to establish a manufacture for processing silk fabrics and gauzes in the *Albergo di Virtù*. Significantly, both were masters in the Turinese guild of the merchant-manufacturers of silk, gold and silver fabrics. Moreover, Brunetta was an officer of this guild while Benissone was the former director of the silk manufactory in Cuneo⁵⁰. It is likely that both the entrepreneurs were able to enter the economic system of one of the most important Turinese institutions thanks to their position in the guild, and presumably, to their reputation.

From another point of view, it should be noted that the ability of some entrepreneurs to enter the charity institutions was linked to the economic policy carried out by the central power, especially by Victor Amadeus II, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century. This exemplified in the case of Cornelio Wanderkrik, a Flemish wool cloths manufacturer, who arrived in the capital encouraged by the royal edict issued in April 1701. The edict stated that all foreigners bringing new business and manufactures in the state were welcome and could enjoy specific economic, symbolic and political privileges. A similar law was enacted also in 1723 (confirmed in 1725, 1729 and 1770), according to which artisans/entrepreneurs who settled in the state could enjoy a range of fiscal exemptions: they were granted lifelong exemption from personal taxation and any other tax required from foreigners by cities or local communities. In addition they were exempted for ten years from some indirect taxes, and were usually exempted from the *ubena law* (for people coming from the countries where this law applied)⁵¹. They could also freely profess their religion, as often they belonged to Reformed confessions.

The already cited Jean Boulement, instead, arrived in Turin in March 1728, after having signed the agreement with the *Ospedale di Carità*. Significantly, the agreement took place in Paris, in front of the secretary of the Piedmontese embassy. This elucidates yet another aspect: many merchants and artisans who were in business with the charity institutions were actually selected and employed by agents and officers who, on behalf of the king, travelled around Europe looking for motivated entrepreneurs who were ready to move to Piedmont and to

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, *Memoriale a capi colle risposte (...)*, pp. 305-310.

⁵¹ The *ubena law* settled the inheritance rights of those who were not subjects of the king. Basically foreigners were not allowed to transmit their estate and property to foreigner offspring. When a foreigner passed away, in theory, his/her goods and estate could be confiscated by the state. The *ubena law* could be bypassed by applying for naturalization or through an economic privilege.

set up new manufacturing activities and business. In other cases, the key role played by the central power is even more explicit: in September 1731, the board of directors of the *congregazione della carità* of the city of Chieri, petitioned the king in order to set up a textile factory to employ its poor inmates. Significantly, the *congregazione* obtained the privilege, but it did not provide the master. Instead, they explicitly asked to the *Consolato di Commercio* to appoint 'un buon mastro nell'arte suddetta' (an expert master in the craft)⁵². In sum, despite the great variety of patterns, entrepreneurs, merchants and artisans working for the charity institutions were embedded in the local social networks and were linked to the higher authorities and institutions.

In the last part of my article I will deal with the case of the already cited wool cloth manufacturer from Antwerp, Cornelio Wanderkrik, whose professional and personal life in the city shows that the opportunity to manage a business within the charity institutions was a key to integration. The sources reveal that Cornelio arrived in Turin following the invitation by virtue of the royal edict of April 1701. Although a foreigner (he clearly was not a subject of the king), he was able to establish a wool manufactory at the *Ospedale di Carità*, where inmates were employed to spin wool thread to be woven into cloth.

In July 1720, after almost two decades of activity in the Piedmontese city, he was granted several economic and symbolic privileges which allowed him to expand his business. In his petition Cornelio explained that, alongside woollens, he was able to introduce in the duchy of Savoy the production of a specific kind of good-quality blankets (wool covers). In his words, these 'commodities and goods have never been produced before in the country'. So he asked and obtained from the king the right to supply the army with clothes produced in his mill for the next three years, while committing to employ all the poor people of the *Ospedale*, resorting to external workers only if the labour force provided by the institution was insufficient. In addition, Cornelio obtained a large loan (10,000 *lire*), the right to build a *follone* (a fulling mill) near a channel, and an additional sum of 2500 *lire* necessary for its construction. He also obtained the right to use the tools belonging to the *Ospedale* for spinning and weaving wool as well as fiscal and custom exemptions for selling his cloths in all the state⁵³.

⁵² F. A. Duboin, *Raccolta cit.*, tomo 16, vol. 18, libro 9, *Memoriale a capi della congregazione di carità (...)*, pp. 855-857.

⁵³ Ast, sez. riun., *Ufficio di finanze, Regi Biglietti poi Patenti*, vol. 2, ff. 11v-13r.

His strong connections with the *Ospedale di Carità* are testified also by the fact that he was a tenant in a property of the institution, in the central parish of San Giovanni, where he lived with his family. Notarial deeds show that his business was successful and he could enjoy wealth and social prestige. In November 1744, having become widower, he celebrated his second marriage with Miss Francesca Cristina Pola, a woman belonging to an eminent family hailing from the city of Asti. Cristina's brother and her paternal uncle were both members of the local clergy. In addition, Cristina brought into the marriage a sizeable dowry of 1500 *lire*. Another evidence of Cornelio's successful career – or, at least, the position of social prestige he acquired – is the hefty dowry he was able to convey to his first daughter Ottavia. In January 1727 the girl received 4000 *lire* and a trousseau in cash and goods estimated more than 1600 *lire*.

A further step in Cornelio's path towards integration was achieved when, in September 1726, he was granted Turinese citizenship. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, citizenship, which was awarded by the city under the supervision of the king, was imbued less with an economic or political meaning than a symbolic value. The municipality motivated this concession on account of Cornelio's economic success, his effort to give employment to the poor and 'other good and valuable qualities and virtues'. Thus citizenship was a further acknowledgement of the entrepreneur's integration in the local community and his link with the public powers⁵⁴.

The marriage of Cornelio's daughter Ottavia with Gio Batta Iachasselli falls within this same perspective. Gio Batta belonged to an important family of Turinese merchants and in 1759 he was appointed *capitano di quartiere* of the neighbourhood (*isola*) of *San Federico*. The *capitano* was an officer, supposed to regularly visit all the households in the neighbourhood under his supervision and to report suspicious persons and occurrences. He was also expected to pacify altercations and intervene in case of violence in the streets or in private households. The post was on a volunteering basis but despite this entailed no remuneration, in addition to respectability and reputation, he and his family benefited from fiscal exemptions and other privileges. He also had the right to bear arms, could not be pursued for debts and was exempted from guard service to which all other male inhabitants were subjected⁵⁵. Ultimately, the case of Cornelio Wanderkrik is representative of a specific pattern that concerned many other foreign entrepreneurs who were able to enter the system of charity

⁵⁴ Asct, Coll. I, vol. 296, ff. 104r-v.

⁵⁵ Ast, I sez., *Materie economiche, Vicariato*, m. 2, II add., fasc. 10, *Viglietto di SM*.

manufactures thanks to an economic privilege granted by the king, and eventually become fully integrated in the Turinese social environment.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the range of trades and jobs available in the most important charity institutions of preindustrial Savoy-Piedmont and in Turin. It has shown that inmates could be hired as apprentices or low-skilled workers in workshops run by appointed artisans or in larger manufactories. In addition, external workers and inmates could be employed in a range of activities (from service to clerical work) performed to ensure the ordinary maintenance of the institution and inmates' necessities. Within these different working environments, especially during the eighteenth century, the majority of the institutions emphasized the importance of training youth, offering concrete opportunities to acquire some skills through the apprenticeship. In this perspective, it would be too simplistic to conclude that poor people were only a passive cheap labour force ready to be exploited. On the one hand, the policy of the charity institutions, supported by the central power, was based on a mixture of paternalistic and repressive ideologies: poor people – but also beggars and vagrants – had to be relegated and educated through the discipline of work; at the same time, they had to have the opportunity to join the labour market and gain an honest living. On the other hand, the poor relegated in these institutions could of course suffer from restrictions and discipline, but in some cases they were able to take advantage of their position, acquire skills, and even mastery, and guild membership. As a consequence, entrance in the charity institution did not entail (only, and always) lack of freedom, but could become an opportunity, to such an extent that people asking for relief did not hesitate to resort to recommendations and patronage links. Yet, these professional patterns were strongly influenced by specific models of femininity and masculinity: if for boys training and skills were a priority and aimed at entering the labour market, girls were especially encouraged to learn and perform 'female activities', from cooking and housekeeping to sewing and mending, in order to ensure primarily the good care of their family.

This article has also studied another group of people working for charity institutions: entrepreneurs, merchants and artisans who were able to build up different kinds of labour relationships with the institutions. Despite the variedness in this group, in the individual

backgrounds and experiences, the research has pointed out that these artisans and entrepreneurs were well-experienced and clearly connected to the local powers, the municipality, the guilds and/or to the state officers. These connections allowed them to obtain a privileged relationship with the charity institutions. At the same time, the work they performed within these institutions was crucial in order to strengthen their social prestige and wealth, so much so that for foreigners this was an effective way to become integrated in the new social and economic environment.