Urban welfare as a political tool. Rome in the early modern age.

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(draft, not ready for publication)

1. A sketch of the town.

The unceasing expansion of the State power over its capital town is a good key to understand the course of many economic and social roman events in the modern age. Since early XV century the full control over the town represented an essential step for the papacy. The roman municipality had to be deprived from any important function. The goal was reached little by little, after a restless period marked by violent episodes of struggle with the local noblemen, then ratified by a pax romana in 1511, which was unstable for a long period. However, by the end of the 1500’s, the city’s glorious autonomy was only a memory of the past.

The constitutions of 1580, which decreed the overturn of the power system, where considered so important to the Pontiffs that they were confirmed many times, up until even 1847. The position of Governor of Rome was assigned to the Vice-Chamberlain, a high rank prelate who in turn answered directly to the Pope. Among his prerogatives were the total civil and criminal jurisdiction over anyone that lived both in Rome and its districts, and, of course, his role as head of the police. The competence of the city’s magistracy was left to deal only with matters concerning minor issues. The Senator of Rome, elected by the people in the past, was nominated by the Pope, who, moreover, chose him amongst foreigners, thus bestowing upon him an honorary appointment that lasted for an indefinite period of time. The three Capitoline conservatori were left with duties of minor responsibility such as protecting religious and artistic heritage, keeping streets in order and clean, controlling the system of weights and measures, and, supervising in general regular daily commercial activities, with the authority of mediating in internal disputes among Roman corporations, from which the Curia rightly kept its distance. A city police corps made up of straordinari maggiori and straordinari minori controlled the city’s markets, fining people and pocketing the money. Nothing better describes the city’s humiliation than the few words spoken by Pope Sixtus V to the three Capitoline conservatori in 1586. The Pope scornfully informed the town administrators that, given their absolute incompetence, he was forced to exclude them from the roman annona, the important food-supply department. They would be left only with the role of executing the Pontiff’s decisions and little more.

In every-day life, discipline of the Roman economic, administrative, civil and religious activities was regulated through announcements and edicts, published in Campo de’fiori, the major basilicas and other traditional places. The edicts were roughly reserved to more important and ongoing issues, while the announcements pertained to occasional legislation and rules of daily life. Therefore, they help us in understanding who truly held power in the city. Between 1590 and 1623, out of a total of 428 publications, 54% resulted as having been issued by the Governor, in conformity with the will of Our Lord or by order expressed by mouth of Our Lord, 12% were issued by the Chamberlain, 7% by the Pope himself, and 6% by the Cardinal-Vicar concerning acts of moral and religious abuse. The Conservatori of Rome issued a little more than 5% of all the measures. The actual government of the city was therefore in the hands of the Pontiff and his delegates. They in turn were prelates of the Curia, often coming from other Italian or foreign states.
They rarely kept good relations with the Roman citizens, and were, however, not interested in promoting the economy of the city and its public services.\textsuperscript{5} Little by little, the position of Governor of Rome became an excellent stepping-stone towards a successful ecclesiastical career. In the 1500’s only 20\% of the Governors had become Cardinals, while in the 1700’s they had increased to 90\%.\textsuperscript{6} The city’s elite, who in the beginning had so proudly contrasted the Popes’ rise to power and ready to go against it, were rapidly engrossed by the Curial system of power. The Congregation of Barons, created in 1596, offered the Roman noblemen, heavily-indebted from the long internal wars and the high standards of living of their courts, the opportunity of paying their debts by directly entering the national administration’s debt, on condition that they also tie up their personal ground rent.\textsuperscript{7}

Dependence on the Apostolic Chamber emerged speculatively in the city’s finances. In the middle of the 1600’s, the Capitoline Chamber administrated a budget of about 150,000 \textit{scudi}, almost totally collected through taxes on meat. This amount, in turn, included the modest yield of the taxes on the wine of Ripa which was of 4 \textit{giulii} per barrel. In fact they were simply masked cash-transfers of money, because the amounts yield by taxes were to be used to pay the interests on a few loans considered as belonging to the city that had been however decided upon and issued by the central Chamber. The city was left only with a few taxes to cover expenses of the La Sapienza University, and which yielded about 40,000 \textit{scudi} per year. The Apostolic Chamber then contributed with another 12,000 \textit{scudi} taken from the national budget and used to pay the salaries of the Capitoline workers. In 1674 the earnings on meat were definitively diverted to the Apostolic Chamber, and the city’s income began to the miserable total of 50,000 \textit{scudi} per year, a sum that would later remain unchanged for almost two centuries.\textsuperscript{9} Vice versa, the yearly contribution from the town to the state balance sheets coming from taxes, gifts and various duties was extremely high, as it is shown in fig. n. 1: \textsuperscript{9}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig. 1 - Yearly State expenditures and receipts from Rome}
\caption{Fig. 1 - Yearly State expenditures and receipts from Rome}
\end{figure}

The Apostolic Chamber had good reasons to keep the town under control, because it could secure to the State about 40\% of the yearly expenses.

\textbf{Population}

Despite famine in 1504 and two episodes of the plague in 1522 and in 1525-26, the first reliable Roman census taken in 1526 registered a certain compared with the previous century.\textsuperscript{10} There were then 9,285 houses, with 55,035 inhabitants, therefore, equalling 5.9 individuals per family. The Sack of Rome in 1527 greatly decimated the population, probably by 40\%.\textsuperscript{11}
Since that moment a positive phase began with totals of 50,000 inhabitants in 1560, 80,000 in 1580 and 100,000 during the early 1600’s, and in other words, the same amount living in London during the same period.\textsuperscript{12} Naples, Palermo, Milan and Venice were more populated than Rome in those days. However, by the end of the 1600’s, the other Italian cities were in decline, whereas Rome reached 135,000 inhabitants. This was nothing extraordinary with respect to the rampant increase taking place in the large European capitals.\textsuperscript{13} Actually, the demographic increase was not due so much to an increase brought about by new births, as it was to urbanization from the nearby suburbs, which became ever so evident when the frequent periods of famine and plagues pushed a large number of poor people inside the walls. In addition, they were very much attracted by the Pontifical Curia, the Cardinals, the large embassies and the noble courts.\textsuperscript{14} What also greatly appealed were the endless building sites, which called in large numbers of workers from the Marche, Abruzzo and Romagna Regions, as well as from countries over the Alps. In the 1700’s, the population increase slowed down causing natural demographic settlement that was unquestionably negative, but was always compensated by immigration. The mortality rate reached 35 to 40 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants, and the birth rates remained anchored at about 30 for every 1,000.\textsuperscript{15} In 1794 the total population peaked at 167,000, but in 1781 about 10,000 deaths were registered compared to the mere 5,000 births.\textsuperscript{16} Another peculiar fact agreeably underlines the character of the city’s immigrants who were engrossed with the jobs in the Curia, the noble administrations and the building industry. Men in fact greatly outnumbered women, with a ratio of about 1.8 to 1, which decreased to a more balanced 1.4 only during the 1700’s.\textsuperscript{17} As of the mid-1600’s, with a population of about 120,000 inhabitants, in Rome there were about 30,000 houses and just as many families, with the total number of family members ranging from a little less than 6 to a little more than 4 in about 100 years. It was calculated that there were about 3,000 members of the Cardinal families, a Jewish community made up of about 3,000 people, around 1,500 including the poor and prisoners, almost 1,000 collegians or students and about the same number of prostitutes.\textsuperscript{18} As far as priests were concerned, the situation was not very different from that in other Italian cities. During the early decades of the 1600’s, in Rome there were approximately between 1,500 and 2,300 priests, in other words 2% of the population. There were 5,600 religious, both men and women, officially ordained in various orders, and distributed in 103 convents and monasteries. Religious houses then continued to multiply until reaching, by the end of the 1700’s, a total of 127 male convents and 54 female ones.\textsuperscript{19} On the other hand, the number of parishes decreased, due to high management costs. There were 130 in 1569, and then 98 by the end of the century, decreasing once again to 90 in the 1600’s and about 85 in the 1700’s with 24 official Baptismal Fonts entrusted to the matrici churches. On average, each parish was made up of less than 2,000 parishioners, a number suitable for good social control.\textsuperscript{20}

The population estimate of the entire Pontifical State during the 1500’s is quite uncertain. For long periods of time, one must not forget the demographic contribution of the territories of Ferrara, added in 1598, of the Dukedom of Urbino in 1631 and the Dukedoms of Castro and Ronciglione in 1649.\textsuperscript{21} From that period up until the Peace of Tolentino in 1797, the pontifical territory did not undergo any relevant changes. According to some estimates, in 1526 there were 1,500,000 inhabitants, increasing up to 1,700,000 in 1550 and to 2,000,000 in 1600.\textsuperscript{22} The first official census was an attempt to register the global demographic situation taken during Easter in 1656, and under the direct responsibility of the parish priests and based upon the stati delle anime following the indications of Trent. The global number totalled 1,681,184 inhabitants – including children under 3 years of age, who, although not registered under their own names, counted for approximately 7% of the population. In Rome, during the same year, a census was taken separately for the city alone, resulting in 120,596 people living stably between the Tiber River and the Aurelian Walls. In this manner, it was possible to determine a total of 1,801,780 individuals for the entire state. In 1701 an analogous census counted almost 2,000,000 inhabitants, and one hundred years later, on the eve of the Napoleonic Era, the total was 2,500,000.\textsuperscript{23}
Hence, at the beginning of the 1500’s, the capital’s population represented one-thirtieth of the entire state population of the state. One hundred years after the report, it had increased to one-twentieth and, towards the end of the 1600’s, one-fifteenth. After a period of stability, the tendency began to reverse. Figure n. 2 underlines the increase of Roman demography respect that of the entire state, at least from 1550. A certain balance seems to be reached, in the first forty years of the 1700’s. Since then the two curves diverge in quite a decisive manner, almost as if trying to demonstrate the capital’s loss of power of attraction. 

![Fig. 2 - Population in the Papal States and in Rome](image)

The city’s craftsmanship was of good quality and produced almost exclusively for internal commerce, while exportation was limited to luxury items, art, musical instruments and some weaving products. There was also satisfactory production of carriages, which too were exported. According to an effective definition by Jean Delumeau, who, in reference to the period at the end of the 1500’s, wrote that Rome *imported everything and exported only art and truth on faith*. Lots of trade and commerce simply took place on the streets, as is illustrated in *Ritratto di tutti quelli che vanno vendendo per Roma [A Portrait of the all those that go about trading in Rome]* which tells of 260 types of outdoor sellers, including money dealers and small stands set up with a simple booth. Nevertheless, a summarised outlook of 1625, with an estimated population of 114,000 inhabitants, revealed that particularly vivacious daily activities were performed. This outlook reported that there were 5,635 stores and handicraft workshops, and in other words, a shop every 20 inhabitants. Of these, 1,785 of them dealt with building activities or similar, with 388 master bricklayers and 78 stone-cutting shops. Another 1,736 shops were allocated to the food sector and 1,582 to textiles. There were as many as 89 booksellers and 97 jeweller's shops. In 1628 there were 39 merchant companies, 20 hotels, 625 inns and 20 public restrooms (called *stufe* – ovens). All together there were 5,635 stores and handicraft workshops, and in other words, a shop every 20 inhabitants. Of these, 1,785 of them dealt with building activities or similar, with 388 master bricklayers and 78 stone-cutting shops. Another 1,736 shops were allocated to the food sector and 1,582 to textiles. There were as many as 89 booksellers and 97 jeweller's shops. In 1628 there were 39 merchant companies, 20 hotels, 625 inns and 20 public restrooms (called *stufe* – ovens). All together there were 6,609 owners, given that at times there was more than one owner per shop, with a total of 17,584 employees. It was therefore possible to assume that in Rome more than 24,000 people worked for reasonably incessant periods of time, in other words, more that 20% of the entire population, more that half of the adult males. This figure was not at all bad for a population that was supposedly made up of only priests and vagabonds. Similar results were found when a poll was taken in 1645 concerning the 28 parishes. Given the city’s international characteristics, foreign colonies were well-represented: the French worked as casters, plasters, silversmiths, goldsmiths and weavers, while the Flemish traded musical instruments, clocks, keys, weapons and optical instruments. There were also esteemed painters, who built their houses and shops in the area between Via della Croce and Via Margutta.
Trades were practised almost exclusively within the corporate structure, which in Rome tried to preserve its own prerogatives maintaining discreet margins of autonomy, without clashing with the interests of the central government. In the beginning of the 1600’s there were a reported 71 corporations, with 24,000 members including the owners and workers. Even beggars founded in 1613 a corporation, from which women and rich people were excluded. Counting on the associates’ contributions, endowments and deeds of gift, the financial means which most of the major corporations could rely on were quite substantial, as demonstrated, for example, by the churches of Sant’Egidio, built by the goldsmiths, or the one built by the Florentines in Rome: the San Giovanni dei Fiorentini (Saint John of the Florentines). Regardless of an alleged economic Roman decline, at the beginning of the 1700’s the corporations continued to be in full swing. When, in 1708, the need for an extraordinary tax arose, the Apostolic Chamber turned precisely to the corporations. The tax was diligently paid by 8,693 taxpayers, as members of the 101 various corporations. The outcome of the situation of the city’s activities which emerged, still seemed particularly dynamic. Other sources of income included 545 blacksmiths, 478 carpenters, 162 hotel and innkeepers and 303 hosts. There were 64 different bankers who substantially contributed to taxes. In fact, one reason of the high standard of living stood in the Roman corporate system and in the network of confraternities headed by it.

2. The assistance network

**CONFRATERNITIES**

Since early middle age urban assistance developed within the confraternities, which for the most part stemmed from the corporations, but that, with respect to these, had more autonomy, and above all a much broader social foundation. The Council of Trent had emphasised the importance of works of mercy, reiterating that the *inalienable* duty of the Bishops was to act as fathers to the poor. As capital of Christianity, Rome should give a well-lighted example of charity and assistance to poor people. With the Reformation, the confraternities were motivated even more to dedicating themselves to charitable and social works, and by the end of the 1500’s, there were 107 lay confraternities operating in Rome. According to a rounded-off estimate, 85 new confraternities were created in the 1500’s, 35 in the 1600’s and 19 in the 1700’s. Confraternities woven an efficient network of assistance to the population, which was entrusted to the charity and activism of private citizens, and, at the same time, created new jobs. Their wealth was made up of endowments, donations and contributions of various sorts, which allowed them to collect quickly a solid estate. The Santa Maria dell’Anima confraternity, founded in 1450 for German area pilgrims, acquired in 50 years 23 houses and 2 vineyards. A good business came also from money collected in change for prayers to request indulgence for the deceased: the Santo Spirito hospital kept two third of the amount and left the remaining third in the hands of those that prayed. The parish priests had a front-line task in the face of pauperism, with the poor, whether real or not, knocking at the doors of their rectories. Nevertheless, the parishes dragged themselves along through thousands of financial problems they had, while the assets of the confraternity increased, just as the array of charitable activities to which they were dedicated. In the historic confraternity, or company, of the Gonfalon, the original penitential aspect was put aside by the Statutes of 1495, for the benefit of tasks of more social and humanitarian nature such as managing small hospitals, creating dowries for poor young girls, and paying homage to the deceased. The social composition of the confraternity, from its antique popular origin became more selective with the introduction of representatives from the noble casts, craftsmen and members of the city-magistracy. Later on, the confraternity became devoted to freeing slaves, and ended up gathering donations throughout the entire Pontifical State. The Company, or Confraternity, of the *Trinità dei Pellegrini* was founded in 1548 by a priest of Siena with the help of San Filippo Neri, with the goal of taking care of pilgrims in view of the upcoming Jubilee celebration of 1550, and in particular, those who were poor and ill. The *Compagnia delle Convertite di Santa Marta* (Company of the Converted of Saint Martha),
founded upon the initiative of Saint Ignatius, dealt with helping prostitutes. *The Arciconfraternita della pietà dei carcerati* (for Prisoners) was created in 1575 through the efforts of a young French Jesuit, Giovanni Tellier. The *Confraternity of Saint Anne* protected widows and unmarried girls; that of the *SS. Dodici Apostoli* took care of children, the shameful poor and widows. That of *Saint Elizabeth* helped the blind and the lame, and so on. The *Confraternity of the Annunziata alla Minerva* handled the dowries for poor unmarried girls, however, it was specified in its statues that the dowries were destined only to the impoverished ladies, because those that benefited could not be *servants nor peasants nor maids*. The activities of the “nations”, in other words, the groups that assisted their fellow countrymen, were close to those of the confraternities. Their presence was noted even through the building of important churches, often financed from abroad, but depended upon the influx of pilgrims. For example, the activities of the Germans were flourishing around the Church of Santa Maria dell’Anima, and the Flemish people were hosted in S. Giuliano dei Fiamminghi, very active until to the 1700’s.\(^3\) But on the contrary, the English College founded in the 14th Century began to fall into decay from the beginning of the 1500’s and in the end was transformed into a seminary.\(^4\) Only at the end of the 1600’s did the confraternities begin a slow decline which became more consistent when it then intertwined with the crisis of the regular orders halfway through the following century.\(^5\) The time had come to starting wondering whether it was necessary to understand the causes of pauperism and that giving assistance was a fundamental task of the state. Nevertheless, even in most troubled times, the economic situation of the confraternities thrived greatly. An analysis done on the major Roman confraternities in 1624 and in 1797 demonstrated that the annual income were in fact not that different, bearing price trends and population growth in mind. Figures of the 1700’s show, however, a strong increase of interests from public debt and other fruitful credits.

**Tab. 1 – Assets of five roman confraternities\(^4\)**

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<th>1624</th>
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<th>1797</th>
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<td>Estates</td>
<td>7,971</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8,316</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7,305</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>4,378</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tot</td>
<td>13,319</td>
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<td>19,999</td>
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**Hospitals**

There was not much difference between poorhouses and hospitals for the ill. When the rich were sick, they stayed far from the hospitals, which contributed to spreading diseases instead of fighting them and, as soon as they could, they preferred being cured or dying in their own homes. It was, instead, the poor who, continuously affected with all sorts of diseases, ended up by force in the hospitals. Thus, poor relief and health care were rather mingled in both institutions and the network of hospitals was designed upon the initiative of various institutions that carried out assistance as well. In the case of the big Santo Spirito, XIII century constitutions pledge the hospital to assist poor and ill people, or pilgrims and even noblemen and church clerks. In one word, everybody in need.\(^4\) Each hospital was linked to a certain promoter that gathered funds from prayers, charity and endowments. There was always a patron-cardinal who guaranteed the hospital with a large annual contribution, in exchange for the honours owed to that rank and for a diffused renowned sanctity. The more important hospitals were also explicitly supported by the pontifical court, therefore becoming a part of a privileged circuit from which they received other income.\(^4\) Foreign colonies which protected their own pilgrims had set up national hospitals. There were German, Indian, Polish, Armenian, Spanish and other ones that were often opened and closed with a certain rapidity. The confraternities were also active in the hospital field, managing institutions expressly destined to members of the corporations to which they belonged. The San Rocco Hospital treated boatmen, cart drivers and refuse collectors. The Santa Maria degli Angeli treated coachmen, and the
San Gregorio Magno ministered to the masons. In the area of the Port of Ripa Grande, there was the Santa Maria dell’Orto. It was founded in 1492 for the thirteen kinds of craftsmen that worked at the Roman port, and remained operational until the French restoration, after having been enlarged between the 1500 and 1600’s. It could keep up to 150 patients. The San Giovanni Battista dei Genovesi Hospital, founded by a Ligurian smuggler in the mood for patronage, was instead destined to the large Ligurian colony that worked at the Port of Ripa. Half way through the 1600’s it could take in 100 patients and was able to register a relatively low annual death rate of 9.5%.

Even the sick and poor priests could count on an ecclesiastical hospital, the so-called Centopreti, on the road along the Tiber River. However, nearby the hospitals which cared mostly for a small minority of groups, were the traditional Roman hospitals. Not far the Vatican was the Santo Spirito in Sassia Hospital, built precisely in 1198 as a national German hospital, and enlarged over and over again, which over time had become a sort of small city with towers, internal squares and buildings, and which could accommodate more than 500 people already by the beginning of the 1500’s. Martin Luther, in his trip to Rome in 1510 as an envoy from his monastery, during his visit to the Santo Spirito, a stop which all Germans transiting through Rome were obliged to make on route from Castel Sant’Angelo to Saint Peter’s, greatly admired how efficient the hospital was. Contrary to what occurred beyond the Alps, the patients were met with courtesy. A notary listed the personal objects of each new patient, who was then able to eat a good meal served on clean plates, after having been accompanied to a comfortable bed.

There were also large hospital complexes strategically positioned throughout the city. The Basilica of St. John the Lateran, also called the S. Salvatore (Saint Saviour), was able to house a large number of people. As for the area surrounding the Campidoglio, there was the Hospital of Consolation. The San Giacomo near Piazza del Popolo, already operational in the XIV Century and subsidised at the beginning of the 1500’s by the charitable works of the San Gaetano da Tiere institution, merits to be mentioned separately. It was reserved to the incurables, in other words, those affected with leprosy, plague and above all, syphilis. In those days the French disease was treated with mercury or with holy wood (lignum vitae), in other words, with a decoction of guajacum officinalis, a plant originally found in Central America. The therapeutic efficacy of the cure was quite low, however, in return the patients were able to take advantage of rest and good food. In fact, in the 1500’s the San Giacomo was astonishingly enlarged, thanks even to the financial munificence of Cardinal Salviati. According to John Henderson’s estimates, the total cost for treating 1,050 patients with holy wood in 1562 was of 3,509 scudi, including about 350 for medical treatment (to buy precisely the holy wood). In 1584 alone, 2,208 new patients were admitted, and between 1554 and 1599 about 50,000 patients stayed there, 20% of which were women. Despite the fact that it was a hospital for the incurables, the death rate of the San Giacomo stationed at an acceptable level ranging from 13% to 16% in the second half of the 1500’s. On the daily average, 250 ill people were usually cured at the San Giacomo, which yearly incomes were reported as 11,019 silver scudi. The daily cost was thus around 12 baiocchi per day.

The standard of quality of Roman hospitals was therefore quite high for those days and expenditures for food were continuously increasing. During the Jubilee of 1575, the Bavarian preacher Jakob Raus described the Santo Spirito with the same terms used years earlier by Martin Luther, praising its cleanliness, order and the doctors’ ability. In that period the hospital hosted many charitable services and was financially supported by a rich portfolio of bonds from the national debt and a great quantity of real estate, made up of flourishing agricultural land on the Tyrrhenian northern coast of Rome. In fact, it seemed that the hospital had unlimited resources. Thus, it is not surprising than an apostolic visit – or better: an auditing - in 1624 certified that the annual ordinary income of the Santo Spirito totalled more than 133,000 scudi, something which equalled about 7% of all the annual income of the Pontifical State budget. The amount included all kinds of services, as assistance to unmarried women, dowries and help to abandoned children. It was then calculated that one day of hospitalization, for food (500 grams of bread, 170 grams of meat or fish and a quarter litre of wine) plus generic assistance to the sick person, including physicians and nurses, cost about 10 baiocchi per day. Later on, in 1724, yearly expenditures
amounted to 122,746 scudi and hospital activities still covered all kind of assistance: 17% for health care, 28% for unmarried and dowries, 26% for abandoned newborns, 7% for salaries, 10% for administration of properties and 12% for various. In one hundred year, the hospital had not changed its institutional tasks. Corporations and confraternities could also be called to carry out tasks of public utility. From 1629 and 1632, cooperation between private bodies and public authority was put to the test by the threat of a plague epidemic that was spreading throughout many areas in Italy, but that was not able to break through into Rome. When the first signs of it appeared in Rome, the Apostolic Chamber established a health commission guided by Cardinal Francesco Barberini, who had the task of coordinating intervention. The commission also included Roman conservatives, who were in charge of executing the decisions made by the committee, involved with putting areas in quarantine, inspections and surveillance, involved thousands of volunteers. The corporations were called to cooperate by acting as a health police force and, above all, had the delicate task of blocking the entrance of goods and people that seemed suspicious into Rome. The first edict blocking trade from infected areas was issued in 1629, and it also included controlling goods arriving by river, stopping the barges with a large rope tied from one side of the Tiber to the other, thus permitting the necessary inspections to be made. After three years of active supervision, the plague emergency ended, and Roman life carried on as usual. It seemed that in three years of alarm and fear in Rome had there been no sort of social tension, quarrelling or judicial claims.

Medical research in that period was quite vigorous. Rome, for example, was struck by malaria, even along the much trafficked banks of the Tiber River. Pope Sixtus V died of malaria and so did his successor, after only twelve days of his pontificate. A frightened conclave who found himself electing a second pope after such a short time was able to say that the air at Saint Peter’s was the worst you could breathe in Rome. Finally, in the mid-1600’s, it became common to use powdered quinine bark, the powder of the Jesuits, which precisely allowed the Jesuit Onorato Fabbri to declare in 1655 that in Roman hospitals thousands of sick people had recovered from the fever. Later on the role of the mosquito in spreading malaria was discovered, and the whole city was cleaned up, starting specifically from ground level areas. At the beginning of the 1700’s, Giovanni Maria Lancisi, the Pontifical Archiater who had dared to open wide the windows of the suffocating bedroom of Pope Innocent XII during his illness, explained that the reason for so many diseases was not to be found in the poisonous miasmas in the air, rather in the overindulgence of food and habitual pleasures in such an opulent city. In 1715, together with the Santo Spirito Hospital, Lancisi inaugurated a permanent seminary for updating doctors, with the participation of 110 students including surgeons, physicians and chemists. Later, it was precisely thanks to a donation made by Lancisi, that the San Gallicano Hospital was opened, specializing in dermatology and curing venereal diseases. Along these cautiously renewing lines, in 1742 Pope Benedict XIV wanted to enlarge the Santo Spirito Hospital by adding a new anatomic theatre and announcing, a few years later, that it was opening to administer immunization against smallpox, a practise which was well-known abroad and that in Italy had already been authorized in Tuscany. The Santo Spirito continued to represent the reference point for the system of Roman hospitals, giving good general assistance. In 1741, its kitchen prepared meals with 56,000 kg. of bread, 26,000 kg. of meat and 355,376 eggs. Half way through the century it registered an average of 8,000 admissions per year, with exceptional peaks of 20,000, which required the efforts of a group of 150 people including 8 physicians, 4 surgeons, a lithotomist (a surgeon specializing in the removal of calculuses, or stones), 32 young people working in wards, a cicoriaro (an expert who used chicory and other plants solely for therapeutic purposes) and six young apprentices studying to become chemists. However, by the end of the 1700’s the number of physicians and other similar functions had increased to 285. Altogether, by the second half of the 1700’s, Roman hospitals offered 3,500 beds and provided work to 400 doctors and paramedics, even if the medical state of the art in Rome continued to remain quite ordinary and was not up to the level of the French or Austrians, or even the Lombards. The death rate at the Santo Spirito was fixed at about 10%, subsequently decreasing to
9% during the last two decades of the century, while the total of those discharged was 87%. There were also other services offered which were unknown to other European cities. The convalescents leaving the Santo Spirito were allowed to stay at the Trinità dei Pellegrini, for three or four days, benefiting of excellent board, before leaving on their own two feet. The dead were buried in the parish or in a nearby church or at most in the small churchyard cemeteries surrounding them. It would be necessary to wait for the arrival of the French in order to open the huge Verano Cemetery, outside the walls.

3. Public powers and poor relief

POOR PEOPLE AND PILGRIMS.

It is not easy to measure the exact level of Roman pauperism, most of all given the extreme variability of the economic phases and the multitude of reference points. It is therefore difficult to say whether Rome was more or less poor with respect to other European areas. According Sandra Cavallo records, in 1588 Augsburg, for example, about 5% of the population was in need of everything; however, in times of famine, this percentage increased to 10%. In 1582, in the English parish of Warwick, 11% of the families were in need of parochial assistance, but, five years later, due to reduced harvesting, 25% of the population needed assistance. In London, the percentage ranged from 5 to 10%, while in Lyon there was a more modest 6 to 8% in need of assistance. However, in Toledo given a severe food crisis in 1588, 20% of the population was in need of everything in order to survive. The English poor relief riched from 5 to 15% of population.

In Rome, at the end of the 1500’s, in addition to the yearly 6,000 prisoners who went in and out from prisons, it was considered normal the amount of about 10,000 poor people and beggars, in other words more than 10% of the population, who did not seem to represent a difficult social problem, except for deep famine periods. Begging in Rome was considered as a daily work, which required specific skills. It is well known the episode of a 15-year-old beggar, arrested in 1595 while begging in a Church, despite the numerous edicts issued severely prohibiting it. When questioned by the police, the young boy answered by describing, in detail, the activities of the 19 different groups of Roman beggars, each one specialized in stealing or begging with different techniques, and who had divided up into groups according to specific territories. Even if the boy’s confession had been extorted, there was no room for doubt that various forms of organized beggary did exist.

In addition, it was necessary to tackle the trend of farmers that filled the streets of the city during the winter season, not only because of famine, but also because there was no longer work to be done in the fields. In one only night, in the hard winter of 1584, 4,000 countrymen went beyond the roman wall, looking for food. Rome was no longer capable of getting rid of the poor, whether they were truly poor or not, even if on the whole they did not represent a particularly serious social phenomenon. On the contrary, the relatively prosperous living conditions of the city attracted the poor, even those from far away, as had occurred when famine hit between 1764 and 1767, causing crowds of beggars from the regions around Tuscany and Naples to swarm to Rome. In the 1700’s the registered poverty rate was stably set at 10% of the population, and this amount was still the same at the beginning of 19th century, according to Carlo Morichini data, who report in 1810 some 16,000 poor people in Rome, 10,000 of them wandering and 6,000 officially registered in prison or in various charity houses.

Then there were also the pilgrims. Each Holy Year, pilgrims represented an excellent opportunity for putting the Roman welfare network to the test. For the occasion, the Popes were used to inviting princes and dignitaries from all over the world, given that the Jubilee represented an excellent opportunity for putting into the limelight and propagating the holiness, efficiency and riches of the capital of the Catholic world, most of all before the Protestants. In 1574, on the eve of the Holy Year, new granaries were built near the Baths of Diocletian, capable of storing an extra 200,000 rubbia of grain, about 43,500 tons. In fact, this supply was considered sufficient.
The number of pilgrims coming down from the north along the numerous *vie francigene* increased every twenty-five years. Many religious buildings were used to house pilgrims during the Holy Years, as for example, the *San Luigi dei Francesi* that housed 6,000 people per year. About 30,000 pilgrims were distributed in various minor Roman hospices. However, in addition and before these, *Trinità dei Pellegrini* represented a privileged place for accommodation. It seems that in 1575, 145,000 men and 20,000 women stayed there. This inclination tended to increase, and in 1625, it reached the extraordinary peak of 550,000 pilgrims, a third of which were women. These were the figures, perhaps with some reduction, which continued throughout the 1600’s. There was never a short supply. The *Trinità dei Pellegrini*’s budget in 1600 indicated that half of its income came from various donations and a third from the Apostolic Chamber. A very slight deficit was documented:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 - Trinità dei Pellegrini. Budget 1600</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receipts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostolic chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal protector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts in money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts in kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering 200,000 pilgrims stayed at the hospice, each one for 3 days, for a possible 600,000 overnight stays, estimate cost of there is precisely a daily average cost of 7.7 *baiocchi* per guest, almost three times as much as assisting poor people. This figure is confirmed by a note relative once again to the *Trinità dei Pellegrini*, where in 1624 each pilgrim was given a dinner consisting of one and a half loaves of bread, a half a pound of meat (almost 200 grams), half a litre of wine with salad and soup, for a total cost ranging between 4 and 6 *baiocchi* per person only for food, without general expenses.

Many people described the efficiency of the *Trinità* hospice, not only in terms of supplies and accommodation. Upon arrival the pilgrims were able to wash their feet with lots of hot water, find decent accommodation with adequate bathrooms, and were subject to a medical visit, confession and questioning on Catechism. The porters would have to speak many languages in order to check certificates of origin, distribute proof of identification and avoid misuse. The number of tricks for earning accommodation for a period longer than the or free four days granted were infinite, such as the one used by a carpenter of Bruges who in 1738, equipped with two permits, presented himself twice after a few days’ time. The first time he presented himself as a beggar seeking help and then, after having used up his days of hospitality at the *San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi*, he was given accommodation at the *Pellegrini*, by passing himself off as a rich pilgrim. Once recognized, he was however accepted the second time, thanks to his actor qualities. In the 1700’s the number of pilgrims at the *Trinità dei Pellegrini* slowly decreased, maintaining however a high level of the number of its guests: 83,114 in 1725, 134,603 in 1750 and 99,423 in 1775.

## RULES AND PUBLIC INTERVENTION

Laws which prohibited begging or which intimidated beggars to remain confined within certain areas were routine, but in the 1500’s there were some new changes. Pius V, who had already stunned the court by renouncing to the ritual festivities held for his election and giving those funds to the poor, decided in 1567 to increase the capital of the Roman *Monte di Pietà* fund, in order to favour low-cost loans to needy families. Two years later imprisonment for debts totalling less than 7 *scudi* was abolished, and the debtors who were not fraudulent were let out of prison. In 1582, thanks to a private initiative, an orphanage was open that was then financed by eminent individuals.
of the Curia and, in particular, Charles Borromeo, as if it were a public project. By the end of the century, it took in 150 children. In 1607, Pope Paul V had a large storehouse built expressly in which to keep the grain to make bread for the poor and then had it extended two years later. These were just a few minor episodes, however it was quite clear that the problem of the poor was becoming a new care for the state. It represented a social emergency as well as a political threat, because pauperism was feared given the revolts it could trigger off, thus upsetting the consolidated political system. At the end of the 1500’s, the internment of the poor, a concept falling halfway between a prison and a charity house, seemed to represent the solution par excellence, just as most of the rest of Europe also believed. The policies to be adopted and concrete solutions to the problem were, however, very different and varied in relation with the role, which, from time to time, was assigned to the power of the state, and of course, on the grounds of religious tendencies. The English system of taxing well-to-do families in order to help the poor through the network of Anglican parishes did not receive much approval in Europe. The Protestants could not understand what need there was for giving alms, given that they were not able to save themselves through works of charity, whereas a system of centralized and efficient aid could represent an act of thanksgiving to divine generosity. The Catholic point of view was less sharp, and even if the idea of forced restriction in public poorhouses was acclaimed, it became clear that the solution always ended up being inadequate for solving the problem. In any case, after a while, the poor eluded inspections and returned to begging in the streets.

In Rome, the attitude of the public authorities towards the problem of the poor was quite confusing, at least in the beginning, most of all because the private charitable agencies promptly compensated for the shortfalls of the state. Lodovico Vives’ *De subventione pauperum* (Bruges, 1526), began to circulate in Italy in 1545; however in Rome, trust was placed more in concrete works than in cultural debate. In point of fact, the pontifical policy of internment was brief and began in 1575, when there was an attempt to redirect vagabonds to the convent of the Dominicans on the Appian Way, which was run by personnel from the *Trinità dei Pellegrini*. At first 1,000 poor people were interned, and they arrived in a festive public procession, animated by songs and coloured drapes, so as to demonstrate to the people how modern and good the papal solution was. However, two years later the initiative was abandoned given the obvious intolerance of the poor towards forced residence. Pope Sixtus V wanted to repeat the experiment a few years later by creating a hospice for poor beggars – entrusting its realization to his personal architect Carlo Fontana – through the restructuring of a series of old houses at the end of the Via Giulia. The project was interesting most of all from an administrative point of view, because this time the means of financial sustenance, nearly 20,000 *scudi* collected through tax on card-playing, association tax and other minor financial revenue, were accurately established, and qualified personnel were chosen. The hospice was established for an expected maximum of 2,000 poor people admitted. In other words, with an estimate cost of 2.75 baiocchi per person per day, even if the donations would have surely increased the income. Nevertheless, after some years the experiment failed demonstrating that during periods of famine the poor could surely be interned, but that once the emergency was over, they would return to begging in the streets, probably getting even better financial results. During the early years of the 1600’s, it seemed that the problem of the poor had taken a turn, changing from its philanthropic and Renaissance-inspired private nature, to one based on a sort of public protection, even if it was not clear how this could come about. However the idea of forced admission to poorhouses had not been totally put aside. During the period of the threat of the plague from 1629 to 1630, given that, according to the beliefs in those days, the plague was transmitted by air through miasmas and the poor were surrounded by terrible stenches, it was thought better to reopen the San Sisto hospice and put the blind and invalid there. The women were sent to the San Giacomo hospital for incurables, while the valid men who refused public jobs were obligated to live in the Convent of San Saba at the Aventino, which was, after all, well-stocked with good wine.
Then wider-ranging initiatives were developed. The papal alms were no longer distributed directly by the Apostolic Palace, rather by the parishes upon the consultation of two almoners who verified the level of need of the people who presented themselves for help. Given that the city of Rome was often described by the reformed world as being the new Babylonia, the capital of waste and sin, it was necessary to efficiently disprove this status.\(^{81}\) Camillo Fanucci in his *Trattato di tutte l’opere pie dell’alma città di Roma* published in 1601 underlined how much had been done in favour of the poor during the last two Jubilee Celebrations, praising the citizens for the charity given and initiating a pamphlet campaign which was supposed to illustrate, although in a much too emphatic manner, the dazzling aspects of the city. Following the same lines was the *De pietate romana libellus in Quater partes divisus, autore Theodoro Ameyden in romana curia causarum advocatu*, published in 1625 by Dirk (Teodoro) van Ameyden, a Flemish jurist whose career in the curia was just starting to take off in that period. The pamphlet was dedicated to pilgrims who arrived for the Jubilee, and who read or hear from someone else how great the virtues of the Romans were. The pompous descriptions of Roman compassion were however based on true foundations. In Rome there were then 186 different ecclesiastic institutions, parishes, hospitals as well as charitable institutions in general.\(^{82}\) By the end of the century, in 1698, in the list of the 13 different categories of charitable and cultural organisations in Rome described by Charles Bartolomeo Piazza in *Euseuologio romano, ovvero delle opere pie di Roma*, as many as 11 of them worked exclusively to help the poor through: poorhouses, hospices, conservatories, seminaries, arciconfraternities, companies, parishes and other various charitable works.\(^{83}\) The Chamber yearly balance-sheet contributed more or less with one silver scudo per capita, plus some donation which were sent abroad. In 1656, registered papal alms was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tab. 3 – Destination of papal alms in 1657(^{84}) (silver scudi)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rome, given out from the papal palace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, given out from Monte di Pietà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome, given out to various institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provinces of the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious schools and colleges abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuncios abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few innovative elements could be perceived, as in the case of the San Michele a Ripa, which superbly demonstrated the new public philosophy towards the poor. In 1692, Pope Innocent XII wanted to readapt and enlarge a poorhouse, near the Port of Ripa Grande, in order that it may house poor boys, girls and elderly people. Under the direction of the Scolopi fathers and two paid teachers, the young boys and girls of the San Michele began to weave wool, producing linen that was sold with discreet earnings. The whole idea was conceived as a form of introduction to work which was considered an essential element for introducing bewildered youth into civil society.\(^{85}\) In this manner there was no return to the old system of forced shelter. If they wanted to, the guests could leave the San Michele, to then return there. The Pope in person, referring to the philosophy of Giovanni Maria Lancisi, declared that a charitable effort could not become a prison for the poor, who aspired to the freedom that was to be guaranteed to *each poor Catholic* and above all to pilgrims.\(^{86}\) Throughout all the 1700’s, charitable activity carried on, having been jointly entrusted to private institutions and public authority. Seeing that God appreciated charitable works, it was not right that the state deprive the private institutions, by law, of the possibility of being appreciated by the Lord. Emergency situations were faced in a satisfactory manner, as occurred in a difficult year, 1764, when hoards of starving people coming from the countryside searched for help within the walls. In the second half of the 1700’s, apart from the network of parishes and convents, in Rome there were seven large hospitals, plus the national ones, which offered help to whomever came to
their door. There were also 50 institutions that helped any needy person of every age and origin. The Confraternita della Pietà Divina and the Santi apostoli resolved to find poverty in the most secluded and hidden places. The level of assistance to the poor remained at a high level even during the economic decline because in Rome political and religious incentive strongly intertwined. Perhaps he exaggerated a bit when Carlo Morichini affirmed that charity exceeded the needs of the poor, thus pushing them towards idleness, however the city proved itself to be the international capital to the eyes of others, according to a good definition given by Hanns Gross. As far as introducing orphans and poor young people to work was concerned, the San Michele poorhouse demonstrated itself to be so successful that it was chosen to become the linen supplier to the Apostolic Palace and the Pontifical armed forces. The building was extended in 1708 and again in 1790. During the last decade of the century its weaving factory more than 400 young people worked there and earned so much as to allow them to pay back the loans received under the form of life annuity with a very high 7.7% interest rate.

A particular aspect of public charity concerned in short the exposed, or projetti, and in other words the newborn that were abandoned at birth or during the early months of life. The Santo Spirito offered good assistance to the babies who were left by their mothers on the foundling wheel, which allowed for total anonymity. During the last period of the 1500’s, the Hospital cared for an average 600 newborns per year, then increased to 1,000 in the 1600’s and reaching a peak of 1,300 in the difficult period from 1630 to 1632.

In the 1700’s, the number of abandoned newborns registered at the Santo Spirito decreased, because analogous institutions started spring up in the towns in the northern part of the Lazio region. However, during the famine in 1764, the foundling wheel was to be used another 800 times. In any case, this phenomenon did not seem however so widespread. In Rome at the end of the century there were three or four newborns abandoned every thousand people, a number that was more than acceptable given that in other European cities, figures resulted up to ten times higher.

GRAIN SUPPLY

One of the biggest problems in public assistance was the grain supply. Rome was often short with grain, because of the scarce production capacity of the territory around it. Rome was surrounded by land but was isolated within its territory, with which it was unable to blend. The Roman district which headed the city, extended in every direction for 40 miles as an autonomous administrative unit that depended directly upon the Governor of Rome. Nevertheless, the agricultural area that should have guaranteed the food reserve to be used exclusively by the capital, given that there were no large urban towns nearby, was made up of the Roman plain, and in other words, of a strip of land 200,000 hectares long, from the sea up to the nearest hills in the South and South-East directions. In the Roman plain, in the mid-1600’s there were 423 farmhouses, real potentials for food production, two-thirds of which belonged to the noble and other private citizens while the remaining one third belonged to churches and convents. All the same, just one of the recurrent agricultural crises was enough to leave the capital without grain. Production in the Roman plain was poor on account of progressive urbanization of farmers and the continuous process of alienation of property, set off by the debts of the large landowners and the Roman barons. The new owners preferred sheep farming and cattle breeding which required less manpower and did not represent any risks linked to the unstable market of grain. Food supply to Rome was therefore quite uncertain and in the case of crisis, transportation costs multiplied prices, given that importing meant that it was necessary to pass through the port in Civitavecchia, transfer the shipload to then go on to Fiumicino and then go back up the Tiber river up to the Ripa Grande port. Supply of grain represented a very delicate problem both for the large sums to be invested in it, and the evident implications in keeping public order. During the great food crisis from 1533 to 1534, when Pope Clement VII had entrusted the Strozzi’s with the task of sounding all of Europe, from Sicily to Holland, there was near open revolt. A real institutional crisis was taking place, because, together with the protesting for bread came the intolerance towards the predominance of the Pontifical Curia over the city of Rome.
Since then, the discipline of grain was reorganized and then entrusted entirely to the Prefect of the Annona (food office), who in 1557 was granted very ample decision-making autonomy. The first Prefect, Bartholomew Camerario of Benevento, immediately intervened by importing very large quantities of grain from abroad pledging 160,000 scudi, taken from the savings market. The Annona was remodelled according to what was already being done in many other Italian cities: it assessed the quantity produced, with the obligation of collecting the assegne, in other words, the declarations of the quantities harvested, before August 15 each year, it disciplined sowing, set aside provisions – fixed at 20,000 rubbia – and sold the grain to bakers at a price which was set during a period of abundance, in that way making up for losses of the periods of crisis. Periodically threats against forestallers were reiterated and to whomever tried to obstruct the transportation of grain to Rome. Later those that supplied to Rome were granted tax exemption. The discipline of supplying grain became more controlled, in order to hinder speculation and forestalling of goods, to the point of establishing that each ship leaving the port of Rome could take on board no more than three giulii’s worth of bread. In 1575 Gregory XIII had large granaries built at the Baths of Diocletian and capacious warehouses at the Port of Ripa. The quantity of grain needed to feed the capital was then fixed at 150,000 rubbia of grain per year, and later increased to 180,000. That was about one kilo per day per person, including the poor. However, there was no doubt that this food-policy, more that any other public intervention, was strongly linked to the formation process of the state. The fact that grain represented a political problem was clearly noted with the death of Pope Sixtus V in 1590, when brigandage turned up again, committed by a group of Roman barons, who in turn appealed to discontent caused by famine. During a conclave the Spanish promised to import large quantities of grain for the famished city, in exchange for a pontifical candidate appreciated by Spain. Afterwards, discipline became even stronger. According to a truly widespread rule, the price of bread was anchored to the monetary unit and changed, at the most, the weight and quality of the dough. In the beginning it was expected that the weight of a loaf of bread bought in Rome for a baiocco, the smallest coin, was about 10 ounces. It then went down to 9 ounces, and after the difficult times at the end of the century the standard weight for a loaf of bread baked by the baioccanti bakers decreased to 8 ounces, around 230 grams, presuming that the normal price for grain was 7.5 scudi per rubbio. For that reason, in 1605 it was possible to establish what was then called the perpetual price, almost a citizen’s pact between the people and the authorities which lasted up until 1764. The weight of a loaf of black bread baked by the baioccanti bakers could vary, however only in proportion to the price of grain sold by the Annona. If the price of grain was 20 scudi then the loaf would have had to weigh at least three ounces while at the extreme opposite price of 4 scudi the weight would go up to 15 ounces. The fact was that still halfway through the 1700’s the Annona played an important role of controlling the prices that remained generally around 7 scudi per rubbio. However during the devastating famine of 1764, the price increased too much, and the system was abandoned. The sums managed by the Annona were immediately significant: in 1588 intervention on the market required the colossal sum of 200,000 scudi, which equalled one fifth of all the expenditures of the Apostolic Chamber in one year. The bakers’ corporation was put under the jurisdiction of the Annona, in order to carry out stricter controls. During the 1600’s the situation was less difficult with respect to the century before, thanks to the long period of good harvests that marked the last forty years of the century. This came about despite the fact that productivity in the fields remained quite low, even in the more flourishing northern provinces of the state, with yields that did not exceed 1 to 4 or 5. Volker Reinhardt demonstrated that the policy of the Roman Annona on the whole was discreetly successful making it possible to subject the price of bread to price-control. Based on ten-year averages, starting in 1563 up until 1749, the effort to maintain the weight of each loaf at 8 ounces was not observed only in 5,755 days, in other words, only 7% of the entire period. In 1648 a loaf went down to 4 ounces, a negative low point that was reached only in 1591. Under the guide of the administrator of Giuseppe Nerli, an important Genovese banker who had various business affairs with the Curia, 80,000
rubbia of grain were imported from the Roman Annona, that is, more than half of the city’s requirements, and of these, a whole 50,000 came from Amsterdam, at the great price of 19 scudi per rubbia. As a matter of fact, for 200 years Dutch grain represented one of the principal sources of supply of the Annona. Despite a very large purchases, financed by the National Debt, in the long run the board succeeded in maintaining a certain balance of the accounts, except during the last few decades of the 1700’s. The board’s accounts examined by Donatella Strangio indicate that in 1757 the surplus accumulated, between income and expenses from the beginning of the century, show very solid positive earnings of 420,000 scudi. Then the situation began to change, and the first sign of deficit came in 1765. Since then, up until the end of the century, the Annona went into debt for 4,000,000 scudi in 1797, entirely loaned to them by the Monte di Pietà and the Banco di Santo Spirito at very convenient interest rates.

4. The cost of Roman welfare

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC DEBT

The impressive costs for provisioning grain during periods of famine strongly emphasize the problem of cost for the social budget. Who in the city of Rome would meet the expenses for assisting the poor and pilgrims, for curing the sick, for food supplies, and how high were the costs? To all this it should be added the item of building activities, which were also very relevant for the social life of the town. Aqueducts, town planning and public works required huge budgets in the Roman Renaissance and Baroque period. It is not easy to single out all such costs giving back a precise picture, not only because of the fragmented nature of sources, but also for the complexity of financial flows coming and going through the town. Apostolic Chamber and Municipality were not at all alone in the Roman financial scenery. They were flanked by cardinals families, high prelates of the Curia, religious houses, ambassadors, patricians families, corporations, confraternities and charity institutions of all kind. All they managed with their own separate cashiers, separate budgets and separate streams of money. From a very general point of view, charity, health and public assistance services were prevalingly entrusted to the private sector, even if some greater institutions – like the Santo Spirito hospital - were in fact just on the border between the private and the public. The Chamber collected and destined the sums pertaining to the Annona and public works, given that obviously the charity of private individuals was given for hospitals and poorhouses, but not for food supplies or for works aimed at controlling the Tiber or cleaning up streets.

The public debt played a determining role in the large building costs and in food supply and was manoeuvred with extreme flexibility – even towards goals which today could be defined as being social. Among the 26 so-called Capitoline monti, launched between 1552 and 1661, almost exclusively rewarded with the meat tax revenue of the city of Rome, as many as 20 were created either for public works directly or indirectly linked to the city of Rome – above all to embark the frequent flooding of the Tiber – or for the annona or other purposes regarding the city including the fight against brigandage and strengthening the walls, aqueducts and public health system in general:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Int. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1552</td>
<td>Farina</td>
<td>Annona, walls</td>
<td>213,333</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1556</td>
<td>Carne</td>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1565</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Bridge and aqueduct</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1569</td>
<td>Sensali di Ripa</td>
<td>Aqueduct</td>
<td>26,500</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570</td>
<td>Fontane</td>
<td>Fountains</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1573</td>
<td>Ponte S. Maria</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
<td>57,600</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One must note the high costs for the annona, in view of the Holy Year 1625 and the period close to the 1629-30 famine. Many other costs for building and food supplies however do not appear in the list of the Roman monti and should be sought in the Chamber’s monti, whose denomination as soon as it was created was generic and corresponded only in part to the true use of the sums collected. However lots of the Chamber’s monti were launched for the specific needs of Rome, such as the moneta Pace of 300,000 scudi at a 5.25% rate which was created in 1585 to struggle against the Roman barons and the San Bonaventura, equally of 300,000 scudi, issued in 1588 at 10% for public works including the Roman aqueduct of Acqua Felice, which actually cost 300,000 scudi. During the first half of the 1600’s, three Fabrica monti collected 500,000 scudi to complete Saint Peter’s. Enrico Stumpo calculated that during the period from 1570 to 1660 the chamber collected with bonds 4,200,000 scudi for building and city planning and 2,800,000 for the annona, plus the first issue of 1552. Given an interest rate of 4% in 1650, the amount paid yearly by the Chamber to investors in bonds for the roman annona provisions could be roughly calculated in 120.000 scudi.

In addition, for each bond sold the tax of one giulio was destined to the Mercy of prisoners confraternity, for the sustenance of prisoners and another giulio was destined to the annona. However another 6 million scudi for the Roman building industry were probably taken from the proceeds of the datary. This inflow of riches springing from emissions of the public debt, particularly large starting from Pope Sixtus V (1585) and the first half of the 1600’s, left the observers dumbfounded, such as the Veneto Ambassador Molin who said that

…the pontiffs are showered with as many riches as they want from numerous directions... and they say that there will always be enough if one makes use of mouth and pen.....

However, it was not the pen or the mouth of the Pontiff that convinced the buyers of luoghi di monte, as much as it was the trust that the Apostolic Chamber had been able to earn itself among the investors, offering bonds with very solid guarantees, easily negotiable, so in demand that still by the end of the 1700’s the bond circulated well above their 100 scudi nominal value, reaching market prices from 127 to 130 scudi.

### DAILY AND YEARLY COSTS OF ASSISTANCE.

Apart from the expenses destined to city planning, buildings and the annona, it is possible to estimate the daily cost of assistance for a pilgrim or a poor or sick person, at least in the first decades of 17th century:

**Tab. 5 – Cost of assistance, based on daily expenses**

(first half of 1600)
It was more or less an yearly global amount for assistance going from 170,000 to 230,000 scudi. Just to confirm these figures, similar amounts have been indicated for the 18th century, considering that in the 1700’s the percentage of registered poverty was still stable at 10% of the population. According to Hanns Gross, the cost for assisting the poor in Rome could reach around 15 to 20 scudi yearly per person and therefore 150,000-200,000 scudi per year, a sum that, on the other hand, should have been partially considered as a kind of investment and as a contribute to supporting the level of consumption and artisanship. In one hundred year, therefore, nominal values have remained untouched or have slightly decreased, even if probably the quality of assistance has been lowered. As a matter of fact, the 1700’s Santo Spirito budgets show a sharp reduction from the 17th to the 18th century.

This was the theoretical level of charity, based on the supposed per capita daily assistance cost. However, the real cost of private and public relief was much bigger, nearly the double or even more. One forgot items, for example, consists in the enormous amounts spent for assisting unmarried and old women, for dowries and for abandoned newborns. In the Santo Spirito 1700’s budgets, those three departments cost as much as three times the hospital charged of health services. Moreover, charity was lavished from many minor institutions and families, without any record made.

A 1624 chamber visita or survey to all religious and private institutions, reported in a detailed archive document, helps us to understand the true amount of the Roman assistance business. Yearly revenue of 186 institutions are summed up from the auditors, giving a total amount of 761,000 scudi, i.e. nearly 50% of the entire Papal states revenue. The 73 institutions or bodies enlisted as entirely devoted to assistance, as hospitals, colleges and confraternities, budget a total yearly revenue of 377,000 scudi, 200,000 of which pertaining only to the eight main hospitals. As a matter of fact, this seems to be the real amount of social services in Rome. If we also could include the amount given out in charity from the other institutions enlisted in the visita, plus the return on debt collected for food supply through the annona, amounts should be the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Daily assist. in baiocchi*</th>
<th>Daily number of people assisted</th>
<th>Yearly cost in scudi*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10,000-12,000</td>
<td>110,000-131,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilgrims</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>250-300</td>
<td>7,000-9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick people</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>1,500-2,000</td>
<td>55,000-88,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 silver scudo=100 baiocchi

The yearly amount for the roman welfare, was thus very close to 500,000 scudi, i.e. to 4.5 scudi per capita, more than one daily baiocco, which is to say about 5% of an unskilled labourer daily wage.

THE PRICE OF PEACE
The Roman welfare network was greatly supported by public authorities both for humanitarian and religious reasons, and because it represented a strong social shock-absorber as well. Despite the overbearing State domination over the town, Rome did not meet relevant rebellions or tearing social fights, at least from the end of XVI century onward. Taxes were not too heavy and in any case they were yielded entirely from consumptions, which level was quite elevated. Outstanding financial flows run inside the town, originated from high consumptions and – at the same time – allowing high consumptions. Even in advanced 1700’s, in a declining economy, Roman consumptions still were considerable. During famine periods poor and ill people lived in very hard conditions, but in the normal years the Roman standard of living was enviable, without requiring too much fatigue for hard works. Michel de Mointagne, dropped in Rome in November 1580, noticed with amazement in his *Journal de voyage en Italie* how Roman people main occupation was that of taking long walks in the streets. Assistance was reasonably granted to all those in need grace to huge financial sources which were widely supported by theological motivations. There was a pact between the town and the government, unwritten but rigidly kept: the pope would have granted bread at the price of an eight ounces loaf for a baiocco, and the lower classes would have guaranteed tranquillity in Rome. In such a good climate, citizens could even wring some personal satisfaction from the central authorities through the congregation of *Terror of all Roman officers*, which had been created to repress power abuses and vexations. Of course, conflicts could suddenly explode as happened in 1585, at the beginning of the harsh and long period of hunger which lasted almost ten years. Some episodes of revolt took place, and there was obviously lots of social tension. Some religious rules which were rigorously respected, such as the *a non partirsi da messa innanzi dell’Ite missa est* (that of not leaving the Church until the last blessing was given), were beginning to be challenged. The small of amounts of grain that were available from a minimum of 4 scudi per rubbio had reached the price of 30 scudi on the free market, and it was possible to see poor people stumbling in the streets due to hunger: *si vedevano li poveri cascar per le strade per la fame.* However, there were few episodes that called into question any important privileges or economic power and, therefore, it was easy to create and maintain a climate of cooperation and harmony between social classes.

Prices rise of late XVI and beginning of the XVII centuries was then followed by a long settlement and decrease period. Corn price costed 7 scudi in 1586 went up to 8 in 1635 and down again to 7 scudi in 1758. Money debasements were acceptable for the economic system. The scudo lost only a 17% silver, nearly all in the 1700’s: there were 2.94 silver gr. in the 1566 scudo, 2.91 in 1684 and 2.45 in 1754. Given that inflation did not represent a danger, abundance of money could more easily sustain the Roman assistance network. The social equilibrium between local bodies and state powers, at least from the first 1600’s, was encouraged from the financial means widely dropped from the state chamber to the town. The Chamber did not drain riches from Rome, as it could be supposed, but on the contrary it fed the town with money, taking in case resources away from the periphery:
Figure n. 3 includes all amount yearly paid by roman citizens or institutions to the papa Chamber (taxes, gifts, duties of various nature) and vice versa, all expenses done by the Chamber inside the town (salaries, clerk fees, contributions, small public works, ceremonies, apostolic palace). It also includes yearly interests on public debt paid back to roman investors, whose amount has been recently esteemed as 50% of all papal public debt dividends. The third column shows the net balance between chamber financial flows in and out from Rome. It is nearly nothing in 1589, then rising to a surplus for Rome which in 1669 is more than 50% respect the overall roman contributions to the chamber. Even if in an indirect way, the generous roman welfare was settled grace to the money coming from the other provinces of the Papal states.

Lot of things changed in the XVII century Rome, in progressive connection with the state consolidation, with a peculiar speed in the last decades, which really represented a turning point. Public debt was already consolidated, nepotism was abolished, noblemen had to pay taxes partially loosing therefore privileges and exemptions, the sale of curial offices ended and a new bureaucracy was created. In witness of that, the roman toll system was taken away in 1698 from private bankers hands. It was thus run by a chamber staff, not very experienced after all, located in the new big tax palace, which is today the seat of the roman stock exchange. The Santo Spirito hospital just enlarged and the new palace of S. Michele a Ripa were witnesses as well of the new role in the town of the state, which now claimed the responsibility of the major public service, in good an compulsory cooperation with the private charity bodies. The town still represented an unexpected and huge source of financial means even in times of economic decline: the big projects for the Trevi aqueduct and fountain, the new S. Giovanni in Laterano palace and the Consulta palace were carried out grace to the lottery income, which Clemente XIV was compelled to authorize in 1770.

1 Michele Monaco, Lo Stato della Chiesa, Lecce, Milella, 1978, p. 188.


13 Il Cracas, *Diario di Roma*, indicated also as *Diario di Ungheria* because it was published with the aim fo informing people about the war between Emperor Charles VI and Sultan Achmet III, soon became a town diary. It was published weekly from the printing-shop of Luca Antonio e Giovanni Chracas and reported yearly the town population of the previous year.


21 Beloch, *Storia della popolazione italiana*, p. 636 report a Ferrara population of 157,000 and for Urbino of 144,500. The duchy of Castro was already included in the territory of San Pietro in Tuscia.

22 Monaco, *Lo Stato della Chiesa*, p. 120. Por and esteem of population in the Papal States at the beginning of the XVI century see Beloch, *Storia della popolazione italiana*, pp. 627-629


24 Elaborated from datas coming from essays as for notes 2, 7, 13 and 14.


30 Petrocchi, *Roma nel Seicento*, p. 67


The cost of poor people - being either shut in hospice or wandering and begging around in the town - could cost nearly the same yearly amount spent from the Chamber for alms. As for pilgrims, calculation has been made on an average of 30,000-35,000 yearly attendance, each one for the allowed three days free hospitality, far away from the Jubilee periods. Attendance in hospitals has been supposed in assumption of about max 250 daily people in the eight big Roman hospitals.

Criteria for the table are the following:

a. total revenue from the 73 charity institutions checked in the 1624 auditing, less 10% as amount for non-charitable purposes, in the same proportion of the Santo Spirito balance sheets

b. 10% from the remaining bodies revenue, in the same proportion of alms spent in the papal balance sheet

c. yearly papal alms, except all those lavished directly to Roman religious institutions

d. 5% interests on 1,000,000 capital presumably collected for the annona up to 1624

In the first decades of the XVIII century, the average daily foodstuff consumption was 600 gr. of grain, 100 gr. of meat, nearly 1 lt of wine, 20 gr. of fish, 25 gr. of seasoned cheese and nearly 2 lt. of olive oil per month. Cfr. Fausto Piola Caselli, Merci per dogana e consumi alimentari a Roma nel Seicento, in La popolazione italiana nel Seicento, Bologna, Clueb, 1999, pp. 387-409, pp. 402-403.


Simoncelli, Note sul sistema assistenziale, p. 147.

Paglia, «La pietà dei carcerati», p. 50.

Nussdorfer, Civic Politics, p. 160.

Delumeau, Rome au XVI siecle, pp. 180-181


Giuntella, Roma nel Settecento, p. 6.