CHARITY AND POOR RELIEF IN A CONTEXT OF POVERTY: COLOMBIA, 1870 - 1930

A thesis submitted for the degree of

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To *Lauris*

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Brief Abstract

Colombia in the second half of the nineteenth century was a country with extensive poverty and vulnerability was the main characteristic of the poor. A general concern about the conditions of the poor, particularly in urban areas, was broadly manifested. Poverty was seen basically as a moral problem, and poor relief was implemented within a process of moralization.

Between 1870 and 1930 poor relief underwent significant transformation: it grew appreciably, became more complex, more dynamic, more professional and more specialized; it passed gradually from being strongly localized to a departmental and national orientation. Poor relief involved the decision from the state to incorporate the 'social' in the government agenda and by 1930 started to be more grounded in political reality. An identifiably modern 'social policy' came into being, even though it contained some ambiguities and traditional values.

There were two main forms of poor relief: institutional and outdoor. Institutional poor relief was predominantly carried out by the state and some private societies. Some

state poor relief establishments continued to be run by religious orders. Outdoor poor relief was only implemented by private societies and institutions.

For poor relief public *beneficencia* and private charity were equally important. In this period the state attempted to consolidate resources for *beneficencia* and for social assistance; it created specific poor relief taxes and established special funds. Private giving was linked to traditional Christian charity. Charity was constant, large and participants covered a broad social spectrum. Modern ideas of charity were progressively introduced, generating a professionalization of voluntary activities.

Alongside poor relief there were other survival strategies promoted by the poor of which mutual aid societies were the best example. They grew considerably and they gave support to their members in an any eventualities. They were certainly important in the formation of 'social capital'.

Sources for this research are dispersed; most of them came from institutions, societies, establishments that carried out poor relief activities. Research about poor relief generally and inevitably has to face a lack of informal data on many aspects of the subject, though much can be gained through the study of wills.

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Long Abstract

The central aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the different strategies for poor relief in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

Colombia at that time was a country with precarious economic development and with extensive poverty. Preoccupation with poverty and concern for living conditions of the poor in the towns were manifested.

Poverty was seen as a moral problem, and poor relief efforts as strategies of moralization. Work, saving, education, family and hygiene were the five divisions that were generally considered to compose the different strategies of poor relief. The gradual process of implementation of these different poor relief strategies implied a process of differentiation of the poor. The deserving and undeserving poor came to be more accurately defined.

Poor relief strategies mainly took two forms: the institutional and the outdoor. They were mostly implemented in urban areas.

Institutional poor relief was present from the early colonial period and is seen in the foundation of hospitals, but after 1870 it expanded and became more complex. Local initiatives were vital in promoting and creating establishments of poor relief. The

activities of institutional poor relief were concentrated in three areas: health, protection and education. Health was mainly promoted by the state, through some establishments continued to be run by religious orders. Protection was shared between the state and private institutions. Education was carried out more by private institutions, and again the religious orders had an important role. The general tendency of institutional poor relief was to became more professionalized and more specialized. Poor children became the main concern.

Outdoor relief appeared in an organized way in the second half of the nineteenth century. The St. Vincent de Paul society was the leader for almost fifty years mainly through its practice of domiciliary visiting. It had significant success in the largest cities: Bogotá and Medellín. By 1910 institutions linked with the Jesuits -The *Círculo de Obreros* and *Acción Social*- started to carried out activities of poor relief. These institutions tended to aid more artisans and workers, and to be more linked with political militancy.

Together with institutional poor relief and outdoor relief, mutual aid societies spread as a survival strategy among the poor, particularly after 1910. They were principally founded to give help to their members in case of illness or death. They created small savings banks and fostered in education. Their members were principally artisans and workers. Some of them were transformed in trade unions and political participation became the central concern, though other followed the original purpose.

Poor relief activities ranged from the public *beneficencia* to private charity. Private giving was realized through voluntary work, donations and bequests. It was linked to the Christian idea of charity, in which the motive of salvation was still relevant. More modern ideas of charity were progressively introduced, generating a professionalization of voluntary activities.

Public *beneficencia* was steadily transformed to social assistance. The state tried to find stable resources for poor relief. Specific taxes were instituted to try to give constant and adequate funds for the state establishments. State funds were also given

to private institutions or societies. Municipal funds were fundamental, to start with early public source. Departmental and national funds gradually became more important. Distribution of national funds became more controversial, and more a political issue.

The general tendency was for state establishments to become more dependent on public funds and taxes, and for the private institutions and societies to depend more on private donations. Differentiation became clearer.

Between 1870 and 1930 in Colombia poor relief was placed firmly on the government agenda. The 'social' became slowly an important issue for the Colombian state.

To explore the development of poor relief in Colombia we have structured this thesis in six chapters. In the first chapter we present the general context of Colombian poverty. We introduce the chapter with descriptions by contemporaries of Colombian poverty, and stress that urban poverty was the main concern even though Colombia was still an overwhelmingly rural country. We then present two general forms of references that we consider basic. First, a general account of the process of demography of Colombia related to the development of living conditions, and second, the evolution of the material infrastructure of cities, as a reflection also of living conditions, and as related to the problem of poverty and hygiene. Finally we describe the living conditions of the urban poor, an estimation of the proportional numbers of the poor in the principal cities, and some socio-economic characteristics of different groups of the poor.

In the second chapter we look at the different categories of the poor, the prevailing notions of the undeserving and deserving poor. The process of constructing the categories of the poor corresponds to the kind of poor relief the poor are going to receive. Among the categories we include the category of the 'ideal poor' which represents the moral expectations about how the poor should be when they receive relief, in other words what kinds of behaviour donors expected from recipients.

In the third chapter we present the development of institutional poor relief and in the fourth chapter the evolution of outdoor poor relief in Colombia. These two chapters focus on the study of the institutions and the societies that carried out poor relief. It can be seen as traditional history. However, a study of poor relief is drawn almost inevitably to the study of organization. It is the organization which leaves behind the records on which historians are dependent. Informal charity is notoriously difficult to assess, because of the lack of sources. Organizations of poor relief proliferated during this period, and began to mark out the terrain of public *beneficencia* and private charity. We also desire to show in these chapters how responsibility was shared between the state and private organizations.

In the fifth chapter we explore a survival strategy: one of the most institutionalized, the mutual aid societies. Mutual aid societies were by their nature not accessible to the very poor, but they were a way of self-help among the poor. Mutual aid societies were at least in principle warmly approved by those concerned about the condition of the poorer classes, right across the contemporary political spectrum.

In the sixth chapter we explore how important was the participation of society through funds and donations. This chapter is written largely from the perspective of donors. In relation to state founding, it looks at the motivations and incentives, and the modes and extent of private giving.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have accumulated many debts in the course of writing this thesis. I started this dissertation in 1986 after completion of my M. Phil thesis when I 'discovered' my interest in the subject of charity and poor relief and its importance in historiography. Since then I have continuously looked for information related to this subject.

There were two opportunities which were significant and which I would like to mention. The first was between 1987 and 1988 when I researched the history of the city Bogotá. I looked at sources on charity and poor relief activities in Bogotá during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. And the second opportunity arose between 1996 and 1998 when I researched 'El Tratamiento de la pobreza urbana en Colombia, 1869 - 1922'. This research was sponsored by the University of Valle and Colciencias. It is here, that I for the first time came to understand the national panorama of charity and poor relief activities.

I would like to thank the following for the help and support they have given me while I was working on my thesis: to the University of Valle , particularly the Social Sciences Department, who allowed me to complete my work in Oxford.

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St. Antony's College
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ABBREVIATIONS

AGN	Archivo General de La Nación
BSVP	Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl

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INTRODUCTION

Poor relief has been broadly researched in European historiography, first in local and in ecclesiastic history, and later in social and cultural history. There has been an emphasis on two periods in particular: the sixteenth century, marked by a shift from ecclesiastical to lay control, a firm desire to separate out the deserving poor from the mass of beggars, and, in England, by the assumption of state responsibility;[1] and the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, when the rise of welfare states has been the dominant theme.[2] Recently research has begun to fill the gap between these two periods and show the gradual transformation of poor relief practices: it is common to find public and private agencies coexisting.[3]

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[1] See N. Davis, 'Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy', in N. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: eight essays*, (London, 1975), pp. 17-64; R. Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, 1994); P. Slack, *Poverty & Policy in Tudor & Stuart England*, (London, 1988) and *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early England*, (Oxford, 1998); B. Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice. The Social Institutions of a Catholic State, to 1620*, (Oxford, 1971); S. Cavallo, *Charity and Power in Early Modern Italy: Benefactors and their motives in Turin. 1541-1789*, (Cambridge, 1995); L. Martz, *Poverty and Welfare in Habsburg Spain. The example of Toledo*, (Cambridge, 1983); C.C. Fairchids. *Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence 1640-1789*, (London, 1976); J. Colin, *Charity and Bienfaisance: the Treatment of the Poor in the Montpellier Region, 1740-1815*, (Cambridge, 1982) and *The Charitable Imperative: Hospitals and Nursing in Ancien Regime and Revolutionary France*, (New York, 1989); A. Lindermeyr, *Poverty is not a vice: Charity, Society and the State in Imperial Russia*, (Princeton, 1996).

[2] See B. Jonathan and J. Colin (ed.), *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State*, (London, 1991); S. J. Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (London, 1986); P. Mandler, *The Uses of Charity: the Poor on Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, (Philadelphia, 1990); G. Himmelfarb. *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, (London, 1984); M. Gorky, *Patterns of Philanthropy. Charity and Society in the Nineteenth-Century Bristol*, (Suffolk, 1999); M. Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1995); A. Shubert, ' "Charity properly Understood": Changing ideas about Poor Relief in Liberal Spain', *Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1991), pp. 36-55; P. Carasa Soto, 'La Pobreza y la Asistencia en la Historiografía Española Contemporanea', *Hispania*, vol. 1/3, no. 176, (1990), pp. 1475-1503; Y-S. Hong, *Welfare, Modernity and the Weimar State, 1919-1933*, (Princeton, 1998).

[3] See H. Cunningham and J. Innes, *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform. From the 1690s to 1850s*, (London, 1998); G. Procacci, *Gouverne la Miserie: la question sociale en France, 1789-1848*, (Paris, 1993); M. H. D. van Leeuwen, *The Logic of Charity. Amsterdam, 1800-1850*, (London, 2000); W. J. Callahan, 'The Problem of Confinement: An Aspect of Poor Relief in Eighteenth-Century Spain', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 51, no. 1, (1971), pp. 1-24.

Historians widely accept that poverty and the poor are relative rather than absolute concepts. They recognize that different societies define need and the necessity of relief in different ways. The relative nature of these concepts is usually attributed to a series of conventions about what is regarded as a necessity, what defines acceptable standards of living and the changeable boundaries for distinguishing the deserving and undeserving poor. 'The poor' is an expression which for contemporaries carried a rhetorical rather than a precise sociological significance. Yet for anyone involved in policy-making or implementation, the poor did have socio-economic characteristics which remained remarkably constant: those most likely to be afflicted by poverty were the young and the old, and the old were more likely to be female, frequently widows, than male. Poverty was also likely to strike anyone disadvantaged by illness or handicap. Historians stress that the poor are obviously distinct from the working class.

Historians also understand that state and voluntary actions, charity and philanthropy, were equally important in poor relief, and that both were concerned with formulating and implementing policies towards the poor. Contemporaries were also quite as likely to attempt to distinguish charity from philanthropy, as voluntary action from state action. They often then accorded to charity a religious inspiration and purpose, and to philanthropy a more secular orientation. No one, however, doubted that for both charity and philanthropy the primary concern was the problem of poverty. What was new in the nineteenth century compared with the earlier periods, in the way it conditioned the very language of the debate, was the recognition that justification for assisting the poor could no longer be couched in traditional religiously-inspired terms. The critics of Christian charity successfully shifted the content of the debate. The

people responsible for poor relief, without necessarily abandoning their religious motivations, were obliged to give pride of place the social and administrative reasons for assistance, while relegating moral arguments to a subsidiary position, which in any case now tended to be presented in secular language.

Historians also agree that charity is a complex concept. Charity was a religious duty, a moral commitment to social progress, a solution to threatening social problems and disharmony, a means to gain status. The diversity of meanings shows how flexible a concept of charity can be, and how sensitive to underlying cultural values, social structures and trends. Charity could be interventionist, it was of course always so to some degree. Any form of donation involved donor and recipient in a relationship of power and reciprocity: it was an intervention in the recipient's life and almost always entailed some wish on the donor's part to remodel the life of the recipient. Its practice involves then a number of different motivations.

Historians also stress that state policy could be interventionist. The recognition of society's responsibilities towards the poor led to the emergence of centralized social policy, formulated by the state and directed in practice towards the creation of a state system of social aid. Desire for control social coexisted with equally strong attitudes of compassion towards the poor. It may be more productive to admit that both humanitarian and moral interpretations can be valid rather than to believe that they have to be mutually exclusive.

These kinds of studies are relatively new in Latin America historiography. Mexico and Argentina are the countries where more research has been carried out in Latin

America. The periods most studied are the second half of the eighteenth century and the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.[4]

Research on the second half of the eighteenth century focuses on the Bourbon reforms. Some studies look at the change in the Catholic church and its institutions of assistance, and others focus on the new social control that was imposed on vagrants and beggars through the creation of the police as an institution. Studies about the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries centre on the different processes of secularization and modernization of poor relief. These processes in Latin America show conflict between the Catholic church and the strategies and programmes of public assistance that the different states carried out with their difficulties and contradictions.

In Colombian historiography there have been few recent studies of poor relief in this period. There are some that explore regional and local developments focusing on the urban poor.[5] From these studies it is possible to see that even though there were

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[4] See C M. Lewis and C. Abel, *Welfare, Poverty and Development in Latin America*, (London, 1993); D. S. Chandler, *Social Assistance and Bureaucratic Politics: the Montepíos of Colonial Mexico, 1767-1821*, (New Mexico, 1991); C. B. Lewis, 'Medical Care for the Poor in Mexico City, 1770-1810: One Aspect of the Spanish Colonial Beneficence', (Maryland Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1975); A. S. Blum, 'Children without parents: Law, Charity and Social Practice, Mexico City, 1867-1940', (California-Berkeley Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1999); S. M. Arrom, 'De la caridad a la beneficencia ? Las Reformas de la asistencia pública desde la perspectiá del hospicio de pobres de la ciudad de México, 1856-1871' in C. Illades and A. Rodriguez, *Ciudad de México: instituciones, actores sociales y conflicto político, 1774-1931*, (Mexico, 1997); E. A. Crider, 'Modernization and Human Welfare: The Asistencia Pública and Buenos Aires, 1883-1910', (The Ohio State Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1976); C. J. Little, 'The Society of Beneficence in Buenos Aires, 1823-1900', (Temple Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1981); K. Mead, 'Oligarchs, Doctors and Nuns: Public Health and Beneficence in Buenos Aires, 1880-1914', (California-Santa Barbara Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1994).

[5] See B. Castro, 'Caridad y beneficencia en Cali, 1848-1898', *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. xxvii, no. 22 (1990), pp. 67-80; J. Vargas and G. Vera, 'Formas asistenciales y de beneficencia en Santafé: hospitales, expósitos y hospicios' in J. Vargas, *La Sociedad de Santafé Colonial*, (Bogotá, 1990), pp. 261-295; P. Castro, 'Beneficencia en Medellín, 1800-1930', (Antioquia Univ.-thesis, 1994);

regional dynamics, there were also aspects that the different localities shared in relation to poor relief development. These include the new importance given to poor relief and the general interest taken by local government, the elite and the new professionals in relieving the poor, and the participation of the municipalities and the departmental governments with private societies in poor relief activities.

There are other studies that have been about the more prominent outdoor poor relief societies in specific towns.[6] They stress the significance and the importance of these societies and analyse their ideas and programmes.

Other research has examined specific categories of the poor: beggars, artisans, workers. On beggars there have been two recent studies.[7] These emphasize more control than relief, and they do not contain much about their characteristics or how they lived. Studies about artisans and workers have a longer historiographical tradition. However, they are more related to their political participation than to their social and economic condition.[8] There are some which treat at greater length the

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S. Simancas, 'El papel de los religiosos y de los médicos en la caridad y asistegñia pública Cartagena, 1895-1925', (Cartagena Univ.-thesis, 1998).

[6] See S. A. Gamba and M L. Montoya, 'Contribución al concimiento de la asistencia social en Bogotá entre 1850 - 1920: Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl', (Nacional Univ.-thesis, 1989); F. Botero, 'La Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl de Medellín y el mal perfume de la política, 1882-1914', *Historia y Sociedad*, no. 2, (1995), pp. 39-74, and 'Los talleres de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl de Medellín: 1889-1910', *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. xxxiii, no. 42, (1996), pp. 3-20; R. Londoño and A. Saldarriaga, *La Ciudad de Dios en Bogotá, Barrio Villa Javier*, (Bogotá, 1994), and R. Londoño and G. Restrepo, *Diez Historias de Vida. 'Las Marías'*, (Bogotá, 1995).

[7] See J. Vargas, 'Vida inquieta y gente baldía', in J. Vargas, *La sociedad de Santafé colonial*, (Bogotá, 1990), pp. 296-321; J. C. Jurado, 'Vagos, pobres y mendigos: control social en Antioquia, 1750-1850', (Nacional Univ.-thesis,1992).

[8] See M. Urrutia, *The Development of the Colombian Labor Movement*, (London, 1969); M. Kenneth, *The Church and Labour in Colombia*, (Manchester, 1984); J. Jaramillo Uribe, 'Las sociedades democráticas de artesanos y la coyuntura política colombiana de 1848', *Anuario de Historia Social y de la Cutltura*, no. 8 (1976), pp. 5-18; D. Sowell, 'The early Latin America labour movement: artisans and politics in Bogotá, Colombia 1832-1919', (Florida Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1986); C. Escobar Rodríguez, *La revolución liberal y la protesta del artesanado*, (Bogotá, 1990); D. Acevedo, 'Consideraciones criticas

social characteristics and relief they could receive, specifically in Medellín.[9] In these we find some of the programmes to help specific workers.

There are other investigations which though their theme is not poor relief, are relevant to this subject. Research about the evolution of education in Colombia discloses educational programmes that are concerned with poor children and workers and artisans.[10] In research about health and the improvement of sanitation and living conditions, we find programmes to decrease infant mortality among the poor, and a high participation of doctors in these activities, and in programmes for building housing for the poor.[11]

All this research indicates that in the second half of the nineteenth century there was a growing concern in Colombian society about the conditions of the poor, mainly in the urban areas. Poor relief involved both the state and many elements in Colombian society. No study has attempted to give a general panorama of poor relief in Colombia. The aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the development of forms of assistance to the poor in Colombia between 1870 and 1930.

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sobre la historiografía de los artesanos del siglo XIX', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, no. 18-19, (1990-1991), pp. 125-144; M. Aguilera, *Insurgencia urbana en Bogotá. Motín, conspiración y guerra civil. 1893- 1895*, (Bogotá, 1996).

[9] See A. Mayor, *Etica, trabajo y productividad en Antioquia*, (Bogotá, 1984); H. D. Villegas, *La formación social del proletariado antioqueño, 1880-1930*, (Medellín, 1990); L. G. Arango, *Mujer, religión e industria. Fabricato 1923-1982*, (Medellín, 1991).

[10] See F. González. *Educación y Estado en la historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1979); A. Helg, *La educación en Colombia 1918-1957. Una historia social económica y política*, (Bogotá, 1987); J. M. Raush, *La educación durante el Federalismo. La reforma escolar de 1870*, (Bogotá, 1993); A. Martinez, C. E. Noguera and J. O. Castro, *Educación, poder moral y modernización. Historia de la acción educativa de la Fundación Social. 1911-1961*, (Bogotá, 1996).

[11] See C. Abel, *Ensayos de Historia de la Salud en Colombia 1920-1990*, (Bogotá 1996); C. Reyes, 'Higiene y salud en Medellín, 1900-1930', *Estudios Sociales*, no. 7, (1994), pp. 12-43; C. E. Noguera,

What we find in this period is that poor relief gradually emerges from the domain of charity to become more a social-political issue. Concerns about urban poverty appeared strongly at the end of the 1860s, particularly in Bogotá. In the 1870s the state began timidly to implement some strategies of institutional poor relief, with special emphasis on hospitals, and this intensified in the next decade. Besides, private initiative was important in both institutional and outdoor poor relief, and with a new dynamic after the 1910s.

Debates about poor relief first concentrated on the difference between charity and *beneficencia*, particularly during the Liberal reforms of 1851, 1863 and 1876. In Colombia this was related to Liberal differences with the Catholic Church. The Liberal reforms tried to remove the colonial privileges of the Church, and to establish a more secular state.[12] In this era of Liberal reform the concepts of *beneficencia* and charity were seen as opposite alternatives. *Beneficencia* was presented as secular poor relief, linked with state activity. Charity was seen as Catholic Church activity in poor relief, together with the work of the few lay societies that had links with the Church.[13] Newspaper articles stressed this distinction.[14] Poor relief was one of the key issues that the Liberals saw as part of the secularization process. The debate about

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'La higiene como política. Barrios obreros y dispositivo higiénico: Bogotá y Medellín a comienzos del siglo XX', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, no. 25, (1998), pp. 188-215.

[12] The liberal reforms related to the Catholic church were the abolition of tithes, the *diezmos*, control of clerical parish funds and the election of parish priests, the *demortización de bienes manos muertas* (rationalization and sale of Church properties), the expulsion of Jesuits, and lay educational reform.

[13] It is important to notice that in Colombia the concept of philanthropy was not widely accepted and was little mentioned. It was sometimes used to refer to people giving donations to poor relief organizations, but who were not involved in the actual activities.

[14] See for example the newspapers *Los Principios*, *El Tradicionista*, *La Doctrina* and *La Ilustración*.

beneficencia and charity was not an ideological debate; it was more political, rooted in the strong division and opposition between Conservatives and Liberals.

After the era of reforms related to the Church the debate over charity and *beneficencia* almost disappeared. Poor relief came to be more inspired in social and economic reality, rather than a political question. In a way both concepts, charity and *beneficencia*, were revitalized and almost homogenized. The state and private poor relief activities became more complementary.

By the 1920s a new debate about poor relief was taking place, with the growth of concern and deliberation about the 'social question': debate about the conditions of the workers and the relations of production, the emergence of news concern about public health and the development of agencies to promote it by improving the urban environment, and the associated concern about working-class housing. This debate, together with changing social conditions, demanded of the state and of the private agencies new forms of poor relief. The state began to implement social assistance instead of *beneficencia*, and the lay societies tried to replace the concept of charity with that of 'social action'. Social assistance was the new strategy with which the Colombian state proposed to implement a more centralized and more modern system of aid to the poor, looking in the long term to establish a welfare system.[15] 'Social action' corresponded in great part to developments in Catholicism after the promulgation of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 by Pope Leo XII, in which the central idea was social justice: in a well-organized society the classes are not 'born

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[15] See *Acto Legislativo* 1, art. 16, 1936, which declares social assistance a state function and, Law 93 of 1938, by which the Department of Social Assistance was created.

enemies'; employers and employees ought to recognize reciprocal duties. One remedy for ills lay in the formation of Christian associations, whether of owners and workers in combination, or of workers by themselves. Another remedy lay in intervention by the state. The secular power had the duty not only to keep order but also to ensure distributive justice, and to protect the weak. Social Catholicism encouraged the clergy and the faithful to become more involved in social issues. Yet both, social assistance and social Catholicism tended to be focused on the poor who had regular work.

This was a turning point in poor relief in Colombia. Poor relief started to be more centralized, more specialized, more professionalized, more scientific, but also more grounded in political reality. However, during the period 1870-1930 a network of institutions and societies for poor relief had been established which was going to be the basis for developing state social assistance and the new private aid.

To explore the development of poor relief in Colombia we have structured this thesis in six chapters. In the first chapter we present the general context of Colombian poverty. We introduce the chapter with descriptions by contemporaries of Colombian poverty, and stress that urban poverty was the main concern even though Colombia was still an overwhelmingly rural country. We then present two general forms of references that we consider basic. First, a general account of the process of demography of Colombia related to the development of living conditions, and second, the evolution of the material infrastructure of cities, as a reflection also of living conditions, and as related to the problem of poverty and hygiene. Finally we describe the living conditions of the urban poor, an estimation of the proportional numbers of

the poor in the principal cities, and some socio-economic characteristics of different groups of the poor, though we do not attempt to establish a 'poverty line'.

In the second chapter we look at the different categories of the poor, the prevailing notions of the undeserving and deserving poor. The process of constructing the categories of the poor corresponds to the kind of poor relief the poor are going to receive. Among the categories we include the category of the 'ideal poor' which represents the moral expectations about how the poor should be when they receive relief, in other words what kinds of behaviour donors expected from recipients. We do not attempt to explore how far those expectations were realized.

The more prestigious and specialized forms of poor relief were urban. That is why the thesis focuses mainly on urban poor relief even though Colombian society was so rural throughout this period. Poor relief can be divided mainly into two strategies: institutional and outdoor poor relief. In the third chapter we present the development of institutional poor relief and in the fourth chapter the evolution of outdoor poor relief in Colombia. These two chapters focus on the study of the institutions and the societies that carried out poor relief. It can be seen as traditional history. However, a study of poor relief is drawn almost inevitably to the study of organization. It is the organization which leaves behind the records on which historians are dependent. Informal charity is notoriously difficult to assess, because of the lack of sources. Organizations of poor relief proliferated during this period, and began to mark out the terrain of public beneficence and private charity. We also desire to show in these chapters how responsibility was shared between the state and private organizations.

In the fifth chapter we explore a survival strategy: one of the most institutionalized, the mutual aid societies. Mutual aid societies were by their nature not accessible to the very poor, but they were a way of self-help among the poor. Mutual aid societies were at least in principle warmly approved by those concerned about the condition of the poorer classes, right across the contemporary political spectrum.

In the sixth chapter we explore how important was the participation of society through funds and donations. This chapter is written largely from the perspective of donors. On the one hand it explores how the state tried to establish enough funds for poor relief activities, and on other hand, it looks at motivations and incentives for the people to give far more than monetary contributions.

I. COLOMBIAN POVERTY: THE GENERAL CONTEXT.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Colombia was a country of precarious development, with much poverty. Of course, poverty had existed long before this period. During the colonial period New Granada was not the richest or most significant colony of the Spanish Empire. As David Bushnell has pointed out 'New Granada was one of the less dynamic, economically, of Spain's American colonies'.[1] Gold mining was the most important economic activity. There were two gold cycles during the colonial period, the first between 1550 and 1620 and the second from 1680 to 1820. In the second period, the most substantial production was at the end of the eighteenth century.[2] Agriculture and commerce were developed around the gold mines and their exploitation. After Independence, Colombia suffered a period of economic stagnation. In the second half of the nineteenth century the economy experienced two short export booms with tobacco and quinine, but only coffee brought to Colombia a more extended and stable export economy at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the greatest obstacles that Colombia faced for the development of exports was the difficulty of communications; it was a country of near isolated regions. Colombia also had during the nineteenth century a conflictive political evolution: there were nine national civil wars.

For a general picture of Colombia in the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, the records of foreign travellers and

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[1] D. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself*, (Berkeley, 1993), p. 15.
[2] G. Colmenares, 'La formación de la economía colonial, 1500-1740', in J. A. Ocampo (ed.), *Historia Económica de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1997), pp. 3-54.

contemporary Colombian authors are useful sources.[3] In these there are some rich descriptions of the social scenery. They agree on the precarious condition of the life of the people, as well as on the precarious development of the country. They stress especially the poverty in the towns.

For example, the description that the Argentine writer Martín García Mérou made when he first arrived in Bogotá in 1880 on a market day:

> 'Después sigue la invariable sucesión de frentes deprimidas, de rostros cobrizos, de todos los tipos más curiosos de las bajas capas sociales. A cada paso, el espectáculo de la miseria oprime el corazón. Los mendigos se arrastran por todas partes, no se oye más que voces quejumbrosas que piden el óbolo de la caridad, no se ve más que informes masas humanas, acurrucadas al rayo del sol y ostentando llagas sanguinolentas'.[4]

Or the Bolivian writer Alcides Arguedas, who travelled through Colombia in 1929:

> 'El pueblo es pobre, sufre y tiene hambre. Basta darse un paseo por los barrios excéntricos para ver en ellos que la miseria hace estragos. Basta ver a las gentes para saber que comen mal y poco, que viven en tugurios infectos y entre harapos; que jamás se dan el lujo del baño con agua limpia..... Las gentes del pueblo, en su mayoría, no gastan calzado. Van, o con alpargatas, o con los pies desnudos..... los mendigos abundan'.[5]

Other examples are to be found in the descriptions provided by the organizations which looked after the poor at that time, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society:

> 'La población de esta ciudad [Bogotá] se ha aumentado rápida y muy considerablemente, sin que este aumento tenga ni por causa ni por efecto un desarrollo de la industria, de la riqueza ni del bienestar, que guarde proporción con él. Con la población se han aumentado las necesidades y el número de los pobres, y el número de los ignorantes y el número de los enfermos'.[6]

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[3] See G. Giraldo Jaramillo, *Bibliografía colombiana de viajes*,(Bogotá, 1957).
[4] M. García Mérou, *Impresiones*, (Madrid, 1884), p. 248.
[5] A. Arguedas, *La danza de las sombras*, (Bogotá,1983), first publication 1934.
[6] *Memoria del presidente y discurso del socio José Joaquín Ortiz leídos en la sesión solemne de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl el día 24 de julio de 1881*, (Bogotá, 1881), p. 16.

Another type of document is to be found in the more systematic reflections on the urban poor published during the period we shall be analysing. The best known is the article by the merchant, politician and publicist Miguel Samper, which appeared with the eloquent title *La miseria en Bogotá*. This text was written in 1867 at the express request of the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its foundation. Miguel Samper depicts the situation of the poor as a social problem. Rather than just giving a description of the poor, he called attention to the social dangers posed by their existence and put forward some solutions, while naturally commending the work performed by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, especially by the Sisters of Charity, who to a large extent were the ones who kept the services offered by the Society going.

Let us look at the description which Samper provides of Bogotá:

> 'Los mendigos llenan las calles y plazas, exhibiendo no tan sólo su desamparo, sino su insolencia, que debe dar mucho qué pensar, pues la limosna se exige y quien la rehuse, queda expuesto a insultos que nadie puede frenar. La mendicidad en un país fértil, de benigno clima y en donde la industria apenas empieza a explotar los recursos con que le brinda la naturaleza; en un país cuyas instituciones abren la puerta a todas las voluntades, a todos los esfuerzos, para adquirir riqueza; y en donde, delante de la ley escrita todos los derechos son iguales y no hay derechos de que algunos esté destituido por la ley escrita; la mendicidad, decimos, desarrollada en grandes proporciones y con caracteres que le son extraños, es un hecho alarmante en más de un aspecto.
>
> Pero no todos los mendigos se exhiben en las calles. El mayor número de los pobres de la ciudad, que conocemos con el nombre de vergonzantes, ocultan su miseria, se encierran con sus hijos en habitaciones desmanteladas y sufren en ellas los horrores del hambre y la desnudez... Las escenas que pasan en esas familias a quienes el pudor mantiene encerradas, que se alimentan como por milagro, o que perecen de hambre, antes de importunar en las calles, conmoverían el corazón de todos aquellos que directamente o indirectamente han contribuido a crear esta situación".[7]

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[7] M. Samper, *La miseria en Bogotá y otros escritos*, (Bogotá, 1969), p. 8 and 9.

Many years later, in 1896, in response to a request from the St. Vincent de Paul Society for another text on the same theme, Miguel Samper wrote a piece entitled *Retrospecto*, which proceeds along much the same lines as the earlier one, though Samper acknowledges that there had been what he terms 'material progress' as well as other changes to the picture of poverty which he had portrayed in 1867, thanks to the development of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* and activities such as those promoted by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

However in these descriptions of poverty in Colombia we do not find a vision of pauperism as we find in European cases. As the Venezuelan writer Fermín Toro had earlier assented: 'América no conoce el pauperismo, esa mancha o, más bien, ese crimen de la civilización europea'.[8] European pauperism is seen as a product of the process of industrialization and urbanization. We even find some descriptions written by Colombians of the horrible poverty and tense social situation of the biggest European cities, especially London. The Colombian writer and politician José María Samper gives a long description of the living conditions of the poor in London. He walked around the St. Giles neighbourhood because he wanted to see things for himself, travelling around Europe in 1862.[9] He was astonished and shocked by the living conditions of the poor, and by the contrast between the rich and the poor in London. In his chronicle, he underlines this: 'Y qué contraste el que hacen las carrozas doradas de esos banqueros millonarios y esos nobles opulentos, con los harapos

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[8] F. Toro, 'América y Europa', in *La Doctrina Conservadora*, (Caracas, 1960), p. 71. This article was actually ten short articles published in *El Correo Nacional*, Caracas during 1839.
[9] J. M. Samper, *Viajes de un colombiano en Europa*, (Paris, 1862).

hediondos y ridículos de millares y millares de mendigos !'.[10] Some pages later he gives a more detailed description of living conditions:

> 'Muchas de las callejuelas [de San Gil] se hallaban, aun a medio día, a una oscuridad casi completa, producida por la estrechez de las casas y la elevación de los muros; y muchos de los patios, lo vericuetos y las encrucijadas de aquel cementerio de cadáveres ambulantes, tenían frío, la fetidez y todo el aspecto de una fosa de cien cuerpos removida por los cerdos..... En efecto, tuve valor para acercarme y ver. Una estrecha escalera de piedra bruta descendía de la abertura o puerta, practicada al pie del muro, al fondo una cueva o sotano húmedo y pestilente, sin más luz que la muy confusa que entraba de la calle por entre los barrotes de una reja de hierro. El piso de esa cloaca era de tierra apenas apretada y estaba casi todo cubierto de montones de paja sucia y empapada por la humedad. Ningún mueble se veía en el centro, y sólo en dos rincones se destacaban las sombras de algunas esteras de tamo en formas de colchones enrollados..... -Y sin embargo, me dijo mi compañero, U.[sted] no ha visto sino la muestra. La cueva esta vacía porque sus habitantes andan ahora por las calles opulentas, buscando la subsistencia con la mendicidad, el hurto ratero, lo más viles oficios, los tratos de la prostitución, o los desperdicios, huesos y cortezas que recogen a las orillas de los caños o en las puertas de los mercados y las tiendas de víveres. Cuando llegan la ocho de la noche, se ve un largo cordón de miserables que vuelven lentamente por sus oscuras callejuelas a buscar el rincón de sus cloacas. Hombres, mujeres, ancianos y niños todos van entrando, descendiendo esa escalera y aglomerándose como insectos sobre una charca pútrida, para pasar alli la noche, confundidos, revueltos, medio ebrios, medio idiotas, extenuados de fatiga y hambrientos'.[11]

The conditions of poverty and pauperism in London that horrified this Colombian, have of course been also extensively described and analysed by English contemporaries and by later historians.[12] José María Samper and other Colombians who travelled to Europe in the same epoch were conscious of European poverty and

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[10] Idem, p. 91.
[11] Idem, pp. 102-104.
[12] One of the best known English contemporaries was Charles Booth, who led with research about living conditions of the poor in London in the 1880s and produced seventeen volumes. In one volume he distinguished between poverty and pauperism and he also tried to design and measure the line of poverty. Around him and since his studies a group of social scientists and philosophers, economists, philanthropists, reformers, and socialists produced a lot of writings about poverty in London. Later historians such as E. P. Thompson and Gareth Stedman Jones have explored poverty and the poor during the industrial revolution and after.

pauperism.[13] They were alarmed at the danger that pauperism might grow in Colombia and threaten political and social disorder, as in the Paris Commune.[14] The information about social conditions in Europe that Colombian travellers published in their books was reinforced by European publications imported to Colombia, as well as by articles translated and published in the local newspapers. *Les Miserables* of Victor Hugo was advertised in the local newspapers for many years, and is perhaps the most prominent example.

We do not find reports of periods of starvation in Colombia, as are found in parts of Europe in previous centuries.[15] Foreign observers noted that even though most of the population in the nineteenth century lived under material conditions that often appeared infrahuman, hunger was less widespread than in the industrial nations. Such essentials of the common diet like potatoes, corn and *plátanos* were abundant and inexpensive. A British report of 1888 illustrates these rural conditions in Colombia:

> 'The farm labours on the sabana of Bogotá have their cottage free, and always a piece of land on which they can grow sufficient maize, potatoes, beans, & c., to feed themselves and their fails, and they generally keep a few pigs or fowls, the sale of which provides their luxuries, such meat, tobacco, and drinks. On the whole, they are probably better off than people of the same class in England, especially as the standard of respectability and comfort, so far as concerns food, clothing, and lodgings, much lower. In the hot country the wages are lower, but the requirements are smaller as regards clothing, lodging, & c., and food is cheaper'.[16]

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[13] See F. Pérez, *Episodios de un viaje*, (Bogotá, 1946), first edition in 1882 and M. Rivas, *Viajes por Colombia, Francia, Inglaterra y Alemania*, (Bogotá, 1885).

[14] F. Martinez, 'Le nationalisme cosmopolite . La référence á l' Europe dans la construcion nationale en Colombie. 1845-1900', (Paris I Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1997), pp. 520-534.

[15] Starvation in Europe was generally related to a hard winter or some other kind of natural disaster, that produced a bad or failed harvest with the accompaniment of famine and sometimes of plague. See O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France 1750-1789*, (Oxford, 1974).

[16] *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. No. 446. Report on the Agricultural Condition of Colombia*, (London, 1888), p. 18.

Even if poverty in Colombia was not a matter of mass pauperism or eventual starvation, it was a reality and a fact familiar to everybody. Poverty was a reality that had to be admitted, and a reality that had to be lived with. Poverty in the urban context became more evident with urban growth, and more of a contrast with the wealth that Colombia could sustain at that time. The presence of the poor was more striking in the cities, they were more concentrated and they were more visible, in certain ways. According to Marco Palacios, in Medellín it was reported in 1880 that 3,000 of its 37,000 inhabitants were begging and without a place to live.[17] Moreover urban poverty had become a political and social concern by the second half of the nineteenth century, as we can see in the quotation from Miguel Samper.

In this chapter, therefore, we will try to arrive at a more precise picture of urban poverty in Colombia: who the poor people were, what kind of work they did, where they lived, what were their living conditions. The question is to be addressed by reference to both long-term and short-term considerations; in the first, for instance, to the growth of population pressing on inadequate resources, and in the second to the types of economic crisis which might occur at any time, that might bring about a conjunctural poverty. There were, in addition, the permanent poor: the old who were past work, the sick who were unable to work, the widow and her children, and the orphaned, a structural poor.

Before we present two general forms of references that we consider basic. First, a general account of the process of demography of Colombia related to the development

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[17] M. Palacios, *Entre la legitimidad y la violencia. Colombia 1875-1994*, (Bogotá, 1995), p. 54.

of living conditions, and second, the evolution of the material infrastructure of cities, as a reflection also of living conditions, and as related to the problem of poverty and hygiene.

Demography

Demography is one the best starting points to reveal the development of any society. During the period from Independence until the middle of the nineteenth century -in general a period of economic stagnation, or of only modest economic growth- the population of Latin America as a whole grew at a rate of about 1% per annum. In contrast, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth -in general, a period of export economic growth- Latin America experienced a more rapid growth of its population. Between 1850 and 1900 the population of Latin America doubled, from a total of 30.5 to 61.9 million inhabitants. From 1900 to 1930, it increased by a further 68%, reaching 104.1 million. The demographic growth rate in Latin America between 1850 and 1900 was 1.4%. In Colombia it was 1.2%, the figures for 1900 to 1930 are 1.8% and 2.2% respectively. Countries exceding Colombia were Argentina with 3.1%, and Cuba 2.8%.[18] The growth rate in Latin American increased mainly due the reduction of the mortality rate. After 1930 the rate remained very high until the second half of the century. The main causes of mortality were wars, epidemics and poor harvests. More frequent and less erratic were the epidemics, some of which were endogenous, such as smallpox, measles, and yellow fever, while others, such as cholera, were imported. At a time when antibiotics were

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[18] N. Sánchez - Albornoz, 'The population of Latin America, 1850-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, (Cambridge, 1986), vol. iv, pp. 121-150. See also R. Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion. An Economic History of Latin America in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1998).

still unknown, prevention of contagion depended to a large extent on the standard of hygiene and the availability of public and private health services. This was the age when most Latin American cities were endowed with drinking water and sewerage systems, when the municipal, state, or public hospitals were built, and when the medical profession was growing in size and receiving better training. There was investment in public health. The decline of the death rate, especially in the largest cities which could afford water and sewer works. Infant mortality from gastro-enteritis fell dramatically, above all in the lower classes, while measures to control epidemics such as yellow fever added their impact. After 1850, urbanisation was mainly associated with the development of commercial, banking, exporting and simple processing activities in the larger cities and ports. Some urban centres also appeared in new agricultural zones.

The growth of population in Colombia was very similar to the general patterns of development of Latin American demography. After the wars of Independence, the rate of growth in Colombia was one of the lowest in its history; at the end of the colonial period the growth of population in New Granada had been a little more rapid. In 1778 the population of New Granada was about 800,000 inhabitants and in 1817 it was estimated, maybe exaggeratedly, at 1'300,000. According to the censuses made during the nineteenth century the increase in Colombia between 1825 and 1835 was 33.2%, between 1835 and 1843 was 17.2%, between 1843 and 1851 was 21.4% and between 1851 and 1870 was 13.3%.[19]

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[19] J. O. Rueda, 'Historia de la población de Colombia: 1880-2000', in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1989), vol. v, pp. 357-396.

The overwhelming majority of the population remained in rural areas at the end of the nineteenth century; and most urban centres were still only small towns. By 1938 the distribution of the population had begun to change, the rural areas held 70% and the urban 30%.

The growth of the principal towns and cities of Colombia reflects the growth of the population. From 1850 there was apparently slow growth of the population until the beginning of the decade of 1870; thereafter population growth became more rapid. The major dynamism is seen in the second decade of the twentieth century, when most cities significantly increased their populations. Between 1870 and 1938 the population in the main cities grew one and half times as quickly as the national.[20] For example Bogotá, the most important city, had a growth rate between 1840 and 1881 of 2.0% and between 1912 and 1918 of 5.0%. Cali had a growth rate between 1850 and 1870 of 0.39% and between 1905 and 1912 of 4.42%.[21] The pattern of urbanization was more one of the growth and increasing density of population in cities founded in the colonial period rather than the creation of new cities.[22]

The increase of the population in the cities was partially due to migration, as well as to the slow increase of life expectancy and the decrease in mortality. Bogotá, the capital, was a commercial and bureaucratic city; Medellín an industrial city and a mining and agricultural centre; Cali a centre of communication with some industrial development

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[20] M. Palacios, op. cit., p. 86.
[21] E. Vásquez, *Historia del desarrollo urbano de Cali*, (Cali. 1982).
[22] M. Palacios, op. cit., p. 86.

and an agricultural centre; Barranquilla, a port with some industrial expansion and commercial activity.

Life expectancy slowly improved. The average life expectancy in Latin America in 1900 was 29; in 1958, it was 47 and in 1990, 68. In 1900 life expectancy in Colombia was 28 and of one thousand births, 250 died in their first year. In 1910 life expectancy had increased to 31, in 1920 to 32, in 1930 to 34, in 1940 to 38.[23]

Material Infrastructure and Hygiene

The growth of the population and the increase in life expectancy were linked to the development of the material infrastructure of the cities, particularly the management of water, and to the improvement of sanitary conditions. The increase in material infrastructure was seen as an element of progress and a priority. In 1934 only 14% of Colombian towns had water supplies, electricity and sewerage.[24]

One of the most important concerns of the larger cities at this time was water: to have clean water to wash, drink and cook, to build a system to supply water with security, to be able to separate clean and dirty water, to drain sewage and manage rubbish. It was a long and slow process. In Europe the 'conquest of water' took place extremely slowly between 1880 and 1940, and certainly less rapidly than the later expansion of the electricity grid, in most places.[25] In Latin America, although there had been some

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[23] R. Thorp, op. cit.
[24] M. Palacios, op. cit., p. 87.
[25] J-P. Goubert, *The Conquest of Water*, (Cambridge - Oxford. 1989), p. 23.

efforts by the end of nineteenth century to build this material infrastructure, it was for most cities more a reality of the early twentieth.[26]

The water supply in Bogotá was precarious until the end of the nineteenth century when the aqueduct began to be constructed.[27] The previous water supply was elementary and dated from the colonial period. The water was conducted from the rivers near the town through pipes to *pilas de agua,* public fountains. For most of the nineteenth century there were six fountains in the town. From these fountains water was collected, mainly by women called *aguateras*, in large jugs. They carried the water from the fountains to the houses and asked one peso a month for carrying two jugs of 25 litres per day. These 50 litres were considered enough for cooking, drinking and for washing floors in the average family. Clothes were washed in the rivers by other women, the *lavanderas*. The toilets were mainly latrines on the back of the houses and a personal bath was had maybe once a week. There were a few houses which had water pipes direct to the house; they had to pay a fee for the service, the *merced de aguas*. In 1882 there were only 300 houses in Bogotá which enjoyed this service, the majority in the neighbourhood *La Catedral*. The charge was 200 pesos for installing the service, and 10 pesos per year.

The main problem of the water supply was that the pipes were frequently broken. The damage to water pipes caused two problems: the water supply decreased or even

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[26] For example, in the mid-1870s, public fountains still supplied the vast majority of urban dwellers in the main cities of Brazil.
J. E. Hahner, *Poverty and Politics. The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870-1920*, (Alburqueque, 1986), p. 33.
[27] See *Historia de Bogotá*, 3 vols., (Bogotá, 1988) and J. Vargas and F. Zambrano, 'Santa Fe y Bogotá: evolución histórica y servicios públicos, 1600-1957', in *Bogotá 450. Retos y realidades*, (Bogotá, 1988), pp. 11-92.

disappeared altogether, and the water became dirty, impossible to drink, polluted. Sometimes these water problems brought further crises in public health, the spread of epidemics and of contagious illness.

The aqueduct was improved when in 1886, the municipality of Bogotá made a contract with a private company. It was to replace the old water pipes with cast-iron ones and to ensure a permanent supply of good water. The construction of the main new cast-iron pipes took two years, and during this period many difficulties were reported in the newspapers. In 1897 the houses with *mercedes de agua* had increased to 2,763 and the water pressure had improved, which made it possible to supply water to most parts of the city.

The dirty water was also a problem for the city. Dirty water ran in the middle of the streets. The streets built in the colonial period had conduits in the middle to transport rain water, rubbish and even excrement. Cleanliness of the streets depended on the rain and on the animals, especially the pigs. The first sewer system in Bogotá, built in 1872, served only one block in the city. By 1890 one third of the capital had a sewage system.

The other big concern was the handling of rubbish. Most of the garbage was deposited in the drains, in the middle of the streets and the rain water carried it away. It was common during the nineteenth century to employ the prisoners to sweep the streets and to collect the waste. Only in 1901 did the municipality organise the collection of rubbish with 50 handcarts and 80 road sweepers. It also obtained machines for cleaning the streets, but the machines did not work properly because the streets were

irregularly paved with bricks or stones. The municipality tried to repave the main streets of the capital in order to keep them clean. One of the places that had the most problems with waste was the market. Until 1864 the weekly market took place in the main square of the capital on Fridays, which produced a lot of clutter and rubbish. The solution of the municipality was to construct a new market place, inaugurated in that year and called *Plaza de la Concepción.*

In 1924 the *Junta de Empresas Municipales* was created to manage all the institutions related to the material infrastructure of the city. The main aim was the development of an adequate uncontaminated water supply, a satisfactory sewer system, an effective street-cleaning service and a good energy provision. In 1914 the municipality made a contract with entrepreneurs to build the aqueduct. However the municipality took several years to develop a proper water main. 1927 saw the first steps in the construction and enlargement of the new aqueduct, but the inauguration of a suitable system was delayed until 1938.

In Medellín the municipality had had the right to manage the city water supply since 1888. In 1892 the aqueduct of Piedras Blancas was built and the water was carried through clay pipes to the fountains and to some private houses, but it only provided water to a part of the town.[28] In 1905 the use of water was declared a public resource. Dirty water infiltrated the clay pipes and they were contaminated in some places by the water of the drains. In 1911 the municipality started to build a cast-iron main, finished in 1925. It was also decided to chlorinate the water. The construction of

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[28] See *Historia de Medellín*, 2 vols., (Medellín, 1996).

proper sewerage came later. The sewer system was an achievement of the mid-twentieth century. In 1911 the *Policía de Aseo*, afterwards called *La Sanitaria*, was responsible for cleaning the city streets and the streams that flowed through the town.

In Cali the *alcalde* gave a report on the activities of cleaning and embellishing of the city and its surroundings in 1886, and in 1889 the municipality organised a group for the embellishment of the city. A new marketplace and a new cemetery were constructed. However at the end of the nineteenth century there were complaints of the citizens about the cleanliness of the city:

> 'Que la higiene de Cali está descuidada, porque en la ciudad hay mucho desaseo, porque las cañerías y desagues no son buenos, porque el cuartel y la cárcel están situados en el centro de la población y los locales no son propósitos para el objeto, porque las aguas de una laguna que se llama Aguablanca, y queda al oriente, llegan hasta muy cerca de la ciudad, porque tolera marranos dentro de la ciudad y porque, etc, etc'.[29]

In 1911 the municipality of Cali approved the construction of a new aqueduct; in 1919 the first cast- iron one was built and in 1930 the purification plant was inaugurated.[30]

The electricity grid was introduced at the same time that the 'conquest of water' was carried out. Lighting for the main streets of the towns was achieved in the main cities in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Bogotá had electricity in 1889, Bucaramanga and Barranquilla in 1890, Santa Marta in 1893, Medellín in 1898 and Cali in 1910.

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[29] *La Aurora,* Cali, 20 October 1898.
[30] J. A. Ocampo, 'El desarrollo económico de Cali en el siglo XX', in J. A. Ocampo and S. Montenegro, *Crisis mundial, protección e industrialización. Ensayos de historia económica colombiana*, (Bogotá, 1984), pp. 367-400.

The development of the water management and the introduction of electricity in Colombian cities were retarded by the scarcity of municipal funds. The majority of cities made a contract with private companies to construct water supply systems. Sometimes the contracts with private companies did not work out as the municipality hoped, and the municipality had to make new contracts with other companies. Technical and administrative problems caused long delays. At the beginning of the twentieth century many municipalities took over the responsibility for expansion. This meant contracting large loans. On the other hand the citizens sometimes did not accept the new water system or the sewerage because they did not understand their importance and they sometimes did not know how these new systems worked.

Although the conquest of water brought other changes in everyday life, perhaps the biggest change was in public health. The main changes in the life of the people were related to domestic and personal cleanliness.[31] Direct access to clean water in the houses connoted a transformation in cooking and in the general cleanliness of the house, and in the washing of clothes. Of course there were also material changes in the houses due the conquest of water, but these were mostly in the houses of the elite. The introduction of the bath in the back garden and more slowly the introduction of the different accessories related with the bathroom, the basin, the toilet, the bath-tub and later the shower. As life indoors became more hygienic, many activities previously taken place outside gradually moved into the interior of the house, and some occupations progressively vanished, like the *aguateras* and *lavanderas*.

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[31] C. Reyes, *La vida cotidiana en Medellín, 1890-1930*, (Bogotá, 1996).

The changes in public health were significant. The conquest of water together with management of garbage brought more control over epidemics and mortality, principally in infant mortality. During this period the principal attempts were concentrated in sanitation and hygiene, mainly in the cities. By the 1920s broader notions of public health began to prevail in most Latin American countries, and by the 1940s these ideas had penetrated central government agencies, which now possessed at least the rudiments of a modern public health policy.[32]

In 1887 the *Junta Central de Higiene* and the *Juntas Departamentales de Higiene* were set up in each department of Colombia. These Juntas were promoted and managed by medical doctors. They had the responsibility for public health organisation throughout the country. Before these institutions associated with public health were set up, actions concerning public health were taken only in emergency conditions, mostly when epidemics spread. For example, in 1803 the Viceroy Pedro Mendinueta ordered the main cities to clean their streets, to look to their water supply and to cut the grass all around the city, at a time when some epidemics had broken out.[33] In Cali, when an epidemic of dysentery appeared in 1857, the municipality ordered the cleaning of all the streets, squares and drains, prohibited the killing of pigs in the streets and the sale of fish. The municipality also commandeered all 'Brandreth' and 'Holloway' patent medicine to distribute in the parishes and to give away free to the poor. After 1887 the *Juntas de Higiene* tried to lay down laws about cleanliness in

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[32] C. Abel, 'Health, Hygiene and Sanitation in Latin American, 1870 to 1950', Paper, (London, 1996).
[33] 'Relación del estado del Nuevo Reino de Granada, presentado por el Exmo. Sr. Virrey D. Pedro Mendinueta a su sucesor el Exmo. Sr. D. Antonio Amar y Borbon. 1803', in G. Colmenares, *Relaciones e informes de los gobernantes de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1989), vol. iii.

the cities, mostly concerning water supply and rubbish. This hygiene legislation appeared together with some technical innovations -the construction of the cast-iron mains or the chlorination of water-, with the participation of qualified doctors in the administration of certain activities in the municipality, and with the intervention of the state in public health matters.

However in 1903 public health continued to have difficulties according to a British report:

> 'The public health is never very good, and sanitary precautions are very primitive. If it were not for the action of the sun in disinfecting refuse, the death-rate would be enormous. There are no statistics on the subject. In many of the towns on the coast, and lately in the interior, yellow fever is endemic. The mountain towns, including the capital, are generally fairly healthy and, with ordinary sanitary precautions, would be as healthy as any part of the world. Bogotá, the capital, is built on a natural slope and is, therefore, naturally drained during the rainy season, but, otherwise, scarcely any attention is paid to its sanitation, and few sanitary regulations that exist are seldom respected. Typhoid fever is always prevalent to a greater or less degree. In the public market at Bogotá the people stand selling their wares over an open sewer, it is a common sight to see vendors in the market who are just recovering from small-pox'.[34]

In 1918 the *Junta Central de Higiene* was renamed the *Dirección Nacional de Higiene*. The most important aspect of this transformation was that the new *Dirección Nacional de Higiene* had the power to create new legislation related to hygiene by itself, without any interference from the political sphere. It had complete autonomy in relation to sanitation and hygiene matters.[35] The people accepted sometimes decisions that were taken by the Dirección Nacional de Higiene only with some difficulty.[36] The

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[34] *Diplomatic and Consular Reports. No. 3114. Report for the year 1903 on the Trade of Colombia (excepting the Panama District)*, (London, 1903), p.32.
[35] *Reportorio de Medicina y Cirugía*, vol. xviii, no. 1, (1926).
[36] See writings by J. A. Osorio Lizarazo.

law which declared certain illnesses to be a matter of public interest was resisted; for the doctors it was important to declare certain diseases matters of public interest in order to be able to control the epidemics. In 1922 these illness had to be reported: cholera, yellow fever, bubonic plague, typhus, diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever, leprosy, tuberculosis, meningitis, infectious pneumonia and dysentery. As these illnesses were declared the subject of public concern, a person who was ill might be inspected, as well as his or her living place and the other people who were living there. Sometimes after the inspection the place had to be closed, and the people who were living with the sick person confined.

In 1924 the *Ministerio de Instrucción y Salubridad Públicas* was created. The section of health was divided into two: *higiene* and *asistencia pública*. The *higiene* division had the responsibility for controlling the urban infrastructure -water supply, sewerage and rubbish- and epidemics, for keeping statistics, and for carrying out vaccination campaigns. The *asistencia pública* division had responsibility for managing the institutions such as hospitals, asylums and orphanages (see chapter three).

The development of medicine as a scientific discipline together with the formation of doctors' -trained mostly in France, particularly at Montpellier, and in England- brought some improvement in public health conditions mainly in the towns. New hospitals, some with philanthropic aims, were established by doctors. In 1891 the *Academia Nacional de Medicina* was created as a society in which the doctors came

together as a guild.[37] In 1889 the Academia started to publish the *Revista de Higiene* to support the hygienic activities that were expanded through the *Junta Central de Higiene*. Subsequently throughout the country nine medical societies were founded, each with its magazine.[38] The *Sociedad de Medicina del Cauca* was established in 1887 in Cali, and issued a monthly publication, *Boletín de Medicina del Cauca*. In this *Boletín* disquiet about the public health of Cali was frequently expressed, which demonstrates a consciousness of the need for better conditions. Medical societies would help the development of public health, and would be the forum for discussions and the new thinking and knowledge applicable to hygiene and health.

Furthermore, the creation of hygiene organizations depending on the municipal authorities of the biggest cities, together with the gradual process of centralisation during the 1920s, shows a change in the role of the state. The state had intervened occasionally in public health even in the colonial period, when epidemics led to legislation and government action.[39] By the 1920s the state, due in part to the scientific discoveries of Pasteur and the discovery of bacteria, had to change its role. Its hygienic rules now had to be permanent and extend across all the national territory. The sanitary regulations were made by a group of doctors, a new group with autonomy in its decisions, whose decisions were based more on scientific criteria than political

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[37] This new academia was founded as a reorganization of the *Sociedad de Medicina y Ciencias Naturales de Bogotá*, which was founded in 1873. The old Society had the *Revista Médica* in which translations of articles from foreign magazines were published.
See D. Obregón, *Sociedades Científicas en Colombia. La invención de una tradición. 1859-1936*, (Bogotá, 1992), chapter two.

[38] In 1887 the Academia de Medicina de Medellín was founded with its publication the *Anales de la Academia de Medicina de Medellín* 1887-1913 and *Boletín Clínico* in 1932, the Sociedad de Medicina y Ciencias Naturales de Bolivar with the *Gaceta Médica* in 1893, the Sociedad de Ciencias Médicas de Santander, the Sociedad de Medicina de Barranquilla. Taken from D. Obregón, op. cit., pp.66-67.

[39] R. Silva, *Las epidemias de viruela de 1782 y 1802 en la Nueva Granada. Contribución a un análisis histórico de los procesos de apropiación de modelos culturales*, (Cali, 1992).

ones, which could define private and public norms. Public health, a new notion and practice which tried to protect society and to bring some well-being to all people, was nonetheless based on traditional practices of 'police' and created during a conservative government. These new hygienic rules continued to be the agenda of government. The state had to include public health in its functions and had to create institutions to be able to attend this new function.[40] However, the state often had to look for private support. The private societies, mainly medical ones, or even international organizations like the Rockefeller Foundation, brought assistance to the public health.[41]

Despite the different efforts made, mortality was still high at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Evidence of epidemics in Colombian cities is plentiful. In Bogotá there were epidemics of smallpox in 1881, 1882, 1883, 1896 and 1897, and in 1918 an influenza epidemic in which 567 people died in one week. Medellín had epidemics of dysentery in 1886, 1889 and 1901, and yellow fever in 1889, 1894 and 1905. Influenza also appeared strongly in 1898, 1901, 1917 and 1918.[42] Infant mortality was more constant. In the first thirty years of the twentieth century the rate of infant mortality was 186 dead per thousand born in Colombia.[43]. In

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[40] See P. Rosanvallon, *L'état en France. De 1789 a nos jours*, (Paris, 1990), chapter two.
[41] C. Abel, 'External philanthropy and domestic change in Colombian health care: the role of the Rockefeller Foundation, 1920-1950', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 75, no. 3, (1995). pp. 339-376.
[42] C. Reyes, 'Higiene y salud in Medellín, 1900-1930', *Estudios Sociales*, no. 7, (1994), pp. 13-43.
[43] From 1935 the infant mortality rate began to reduce during the century when the rate became 35 per thousand. The best achievement was during 1950s and 1960s with a reduction of 50% in the infant mortality rate. C. E. Flórez, *Las Transformaciones Sociodemográficas en Colombia durante el siglo XX*, (Bogotá, 2000), p. 16.

Bogotá infant mortality represented 23% in 1918 and 18.6% in 1935.[44] Between 1915 and 1938 in Medellín infant mortality reached its highest point in 1922 with 60% and the lowest in 1934, with 44%. The principal cause of death of children was illness related to gastro-enteritis problems, due mainly to bad water, followed by pneumonia.[45]

Topography of Urban Poverty

The cities had played a dominant role in the development of Spanish America, even when they contained only a small percentage of the area's total population. Even the largest Latin American cities appeared small in the nineteenth century, in large measure because of their main plaza-centred orientation. Both the residences of the wealthy and powerful and the principal urban activities of administration, services and trade were concentrated around the central plaza. These areas, often extending no more than five or ten blocks from the main plaza, had the appearance of an urbanised zone: substantial housing, pavements and street lights. Located in this central district were markets, offices, shops, clubs, theatres, churches and schools. Beyond this core extended the hovels of the poor, the rutted lanes of outlying districts, and an environment that appeared more rural than urban to the casual observer.[46]

In these small urban centres, the homes of families, especially of the upper class, were protected from the city. Hispanic patio architecture prevailed. Behind thick walls,

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[44] C. Muñoz and X. Pachón, 'Mortalidad infantil, crecimiento demográfico y control de la natalidad: una lucha por la supervivencia de la infancia bogotana, 1900-1989', *Maguare*, no, 6-7 (Bogotá, 1988-1991), pp. 101-152.
[45] *Reportorio de Medicina y Cirugía*. Bogotá, vol. x, no. 171, (1923).
[46] J. R. Scobie, 'The growth of Latin American cities, 1870-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin American*, (Cambridge,1986), vol. iv, pp. 233-265.

solid wooden doors and grilled windows a self-contained social existence, depending little on the outside world, had developed. Set on extended urban lots running back from the streets, these comfortable residences sheltered patios, wells, gardens, fruit trees, woodsheds, latrines, chickens, ducks, occasionally even some goats, pigs, or horses, and servants, cousins, maiden aunts, or some employees and their families. The bulk of the urban population -labourers, servants, artisans- lived much more modestly. Their houses, made of the cheapest local materials, such as cane, timber, straw or stone, were erected on the urban fringes, often as much as a couple of miles from the main plaza.

Despite the variation in the size and function of Latin American cities, all shared a common experience in the type of physical expansion brought about by growth. In every case this growth pushed outwards from the main plaza, the focus for the colonial city, towards suburbs. The housing and life-styles of the upper classes changed substantially in the latter part of the nineteenth century under the impact of rising commercial profits diverted into the cities. The wealthy began to move their homes away from the central plaza, often in search of higher and consequently more pleasant and healthier environments or, more simply, of more space, and these moves determined the direction of urban expansion. The upper classes changed not only the location but also the appearance and structure of their homes. The enclosed patio style fell out of favour, to be replaced by French, Italian, British and, by 1930, United States models.

A very large proportion of the poor lived in grim slum dwellings. Buildings were severely overcrowded and unhealthy, and their rent absorbed a substantial part of most

workers' incomes. In Buenos Aires probably as much as a third of the working class lived in such single-room tenements at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.[47] In Lima, colonial houses with high ceilings and big rooms were also divided at the beginning of twentieth century into multiple dwellings with small rooms.[48] In Brazil the old mansions, whose owners had moved from the city centre to newer residential areas, had been turned into warrens of rented rooms and cubicles, by landlords' efforts to create the largest possible number of spaces which could be inhabited, resulting in rooms of any shape, even three feet wide and thirty feet long, carved from underneath stairs, from storerooms, hallways, kitchens, and even from bathrooms, all to make sleeping areas.[49]

The development of the principal cities in Colombia followed this general Latin American tendency. One of the important features of Bogotá was a heavy demographic density. In Bogotá in 1928 the average number of inhabitants per house was fourteen people, and it is estimated that one third of the population lived in single rooms opening directly on the street, called *tiendas*.[50]

These small rooms in Bogotá were often also divisions of the old colonial houses, once rich in space. The *tiendas* were used as the living place for a family, and one space was everything at the same time: kitchen, sitting room, and bedroom. The most

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[47] M. M. Hall and H. A. Spalding, 'The urban working class and early Latin American labour movements, 1880-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin American*, (Cambridge, 1986), vol. iv, pp. 325-365.
[48] M. Cueto, *El regreso de las epidemias. Salud y sociedad en el Perú del siglo XX*, (Lima, 1997), p. 29.
[49] J. E. Hanner, op. cit., p. 167.
[50] M. Palacios, op. cit., p. 90.

difficult problem was their hygienic conditions, because most of these rooms did not have any latrines. The colonial houses usually had the latrines at the end of the garden. When these houses were divided, most rooms did not have any communication with the back garden of the colonial house, so the streets were in a way the obvious public latrines. There was heavy overcrowding. In 1890 Isaac Arias Argaez in his medical doctor's thesis on the hygiene of Bogotá counted about 30,000 inhabitants living in *tiendas*, predominantly settled in the neighbourhoods of *Catedral* and *Santa Barbara*. He pointed out that the conditions of the *tiendas* of *Santa Barbara* were the worst. The average size of these *tiendas* was five metres long, four metres wide and three metres high. Isaac Arias gave a detailed description of these *tiendas* in his thesis:

> 'Al penetrar a las tiendas se percibe un olor nauseoso debido a la mezcla que produce la ropa sucia, los excrementos líquidos y aun sólidos de los muchachos, los restos de la alimentación y diversos objetos de la profesión ó industria y el humo del fogón; esos olores aglomerados le forman una atmosfera especial recargada con el olor agrio del hacinamiento. Como el obrero no dispone sino de aquella única pieza, ella le despempeña todos los servicios de la vida diaria: cocina, comedor, taller, alcoba. Los muebles inútiles y desvencijados; los roperos cubiertos de harapos; los estantes con sus haces de leña y sus botellas con mistelas y aguardientes; las cuerdas en las cuales cuelga la manteca; y, por último, las mesas con frutas y el depósito destinado al expendio de carbón, estrechan el espacio y disminuyen la masa de aire. En otro ángulo de la pieza, detrás de un biombo de tela ó papel, se hallan uno ó dos lechos sucios y desprovistos de cobertores suficientes, destinados a toda la familia que mora allí en la promiscuidad más asquerosa'.[51]

He compared these *tiendas* with the small huts that had developed at the foot of *Monserrate* and *Guadalupe* mountains. Other huts were registered near the neighbourhood of *Las Nieves*: it had 243 huts lived in by 3,000 people.[52] Despite the unsteady condition of the huts he concluded that the people who lived in the *tiendas*

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[51] I. Arias Argaez, *Observaciones sobre la higiene de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1890). pp.77-78.
[52] Idem.

were in worse hygienic conditions. The advantages that the huts had were more ventilation and the stove was in another room; but they had floors of mud and they did not have latrines. However, there were other kind of huts, smaller and more precarious, and their conditions were poorer even than the *tiendas*: Isaac Arias outlined them as follows:

> 'de proporciones exiguas, de paredes desplomadas, de techos aplastados, de puertas desvencijadas y sin cerraduras, dejan á sus habitantes casi en la intemperie; los infelices que las ocupan laas tapan con lienzos sucios, periódicos, tablas y latones recogidos en los basureros'.[53]

Descriptions like the overcrowding in the *tiendas* of Bogotá are not easy to find for the other cities in Colombia at that time. There is, however, a mention for 1935 by Jorge Zalamea in his social study of Nariño. He mentions the *tiendas* in Pasto, as places where '[el proletariado] vive en compañía de las bestias, soporta el contacto inmediato y constante de sus propias miserias, se pervierte allí en su sentido moral y se rebaja el concepto de dignidad humana'.[54] It is common to find descriptions of the precarious condition of the houses of the poor. For example, in Medellín according to the Census of 1918 there was an average of 8.7 inhabitants to one house. However 12.4% of the houses had between 11 and 30 inhabitants.[55] This last kind of household had similarities with Bogotá's *tiendas*. Some of the big houses were also divided into several rooms and each room rented as a single dwelling. Many rooms did not have latrines and ventilation. In the hallways people who slept in the rooms shared a stove for cooking. The municipality had worries about the hygiene of such places and tried

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[53] Idem.
[54] J. Zalamea, *Esquema para una interpretación sociológica del departamento de Nariño*, (Bogotá, 1936), p.81.
[55] H. D. Villegas, *La formación social del proletariado antioqueño*, (Medellín, 1990) and F. Botero Herrera, *Medellín 1890-1950. Historia urbana y juegos de intereses*, (Medellín, 1996).

to enforce some improvements to control epidemics. The main problem with this kind of habitation was the disposal of excrement. There were proposals to build some private and public latrines around the cities in order that people should not use the rivers, given that some rivers at times did not have enough water to remove all waste. It was also proposed to canalise the main rivers of the cities.[56]

Building a different kind of house for the poor in certain districts of the cities, apart from the areas where the rich built their new houses, became the predominant tendency in the twentieth century. This geographical disposition became a clear differentiation of the urban space, and the contiguous living of poor and rich in colonial houses with a frontage of *tiendas* tended to disappear.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were some initiatives to build better houses for working people. Some of these initiatives were from charitable societies like the St. Vincent de Paul Society or the *Círculo de Obreros* (see chapter four). In 1918 a law was passed which determined that each municipality had to give 2% of its income to this end and in 1922 this was increased to 5%. These laws seem to be more linked with the hygiene and health improvement that was taking place in the principal cities to better public health conditions than with any poor relief policy. One of the principal worries of the hygienists was the *tiendas* and the poorest neighbourhoods because they saw these places as the foci where epidemics generated and then spread.

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[56] N. Osorio, 'Informe sobre limpieza de la vía pública'. in *Higiene de la ciudad de Bogotá*. (Bogotá. 1886), pp. 10-14.

Domestic overcrowding made other meeting places for the poor vital. A popular place in the Andean region was the *chicheria*, where *chicha* -an alcoholic drink made by the fermentation of corn- and food were sold, and where the people who came from the countryside could stay. Similar to the *chicherias* in other regions were *cantinas* or bars. Most of the meeting places for poor people sold alcoholic drink.

The belongings of poor people were generally few. In most of the cases they had mats to sleep on or if they could afford more, mattresses, sometimes just one for the whole family; they probably possessed a trunk, that was also used as a seat, or they might have a wardrobe; sometimes a table with some chairs. In the kitchen they had two or three pots generally of ceramic, and sometimes of pewter, a sieve, some baskets, a stone used as a mortar, a few dishes, maybe a glass or two and a few wooden eating implements, mainly spoons, used also for the cooking. The most common foods were bread, potatoes, *mazamorra* -a dish made of corn- , or *plátanos*, sometimes beef or lamb, or in certain regions fish, and hot drinks like chocolate or coffee with *panela*, a kind of unrefined sugar.

Their clothes were very simple and most of the people did not wear shoes. The medical doctor Evaristo García of Cali gives a nostalgic description of Cali in the magazine *Cromos* in 1916, in which he describes what the artisans used to wear, which gives a good idea of the more common clothes in Cali at that time:

> 'Cuando la ciudad era villa, el vestido popular de los jornaleros se componía de pantalones de género a listas denominado amotape, camisa de tela a cuadritos, poncho de algondón tehido con hilos de colores y sombrero de junco o de paja de palmas llamada raspones. Pero había una clase de artesano leídos que gastaba una indumentaria mejor: pantalón de paño oscuro, camisa blanca con pliegues aplanchados, ruana fina de paño encima de la camisa, sombrero

> de paja blanca, muy limpio, con cinta negra angosta en la base de la copa, calzado de alpargatas atadas con rebordes del corte de paño'.[57]

In this description the differences between artisans are very evident. Some artisans had better living conditions than others, or at least had more possibilities of consumption; they would be the more skilled artisans. The majority were unskilled artisans. This large mass, called workers or artisans embraced a large number of activities. There were bricklayers, shoemakers, woodworkers, cabinetmakers, dressmakers, washerwomen, house-painters, potters, ironing women, butchers, florists, smiths, jewellers, brass workers, engravers, barbers, hairdressers, storekeepers, tailors, hatters, saddlers, upholstery makers, weavers, caretakers, coal-sellers, needlewomen, quarrymen, bakers, water carriers. Some of these were effectively workers linked to some specific enterprise like a textile mill or a coffee-processing establishment, and maybe these were those who received higher incomes.

To have a clear idea how numerous were the poor, or what proportion they were of the urban population, is not an easy assignment. However, we can offer some approximate data. The sources of this account are mainly the censuses that were made at that time and some contemporary statistical publications. In relation to the censuses there are some critical observations about their accuracy. [58] Each new census exposes

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[57] Quoted by J. Escorcia, *Desarrollo político, social y económico, 1800-1854,* (Bogotá. 1983), p. 65.

[58] Colombia was of course not the only country which had problems with statistics before 1940; most of the Latin American countries had the same problems with the accuracy of their data. General Census and Vital Statistics of the Americas in 1943 provides some measure of the problems faced by those seeking to compare urban population data prior to 1940 in different Latin American countries as Sánchez - Albornoz pointed out. To give some examples: Argentina and Chile had better censuses at that time, although they had some problems related with the distinction between rural and urban population. In Brazil, all censuses 1872, 1890, 1900 and 1920 are criticised for serious defects in enumeration. In Mexico, the first national census dates from 1895; the following ones of 1900, 1910 and 1921 are criticised for serious defects in enumeration. The Peru 1876 census suffered from serious under-enumeration, and there was no subsequent census until 1940.

the problems that the previous census had. The censuses, which cover the period we are looking at, are those of 1870, 1905, 1912, 1918 and 1938. The last two provide some information from which we can derive some quantitative conclusions.

Before starting making estimates it is important to make two observations. First, the group which was called poor was not a homogenous one; on the contrary, it was very heterogeneous, not only for the variety of activities embraced but also for the wide denomination covered. Second it is difficult to find the same categories in different censuses, as the classification changed from one census to another.

In the census of 1918 appeared a particular category, the non-productive or *improductivos*. This classification represented a significant percentage of the population in the largest cities in Colombia. In Bogotá 18% of the total of the population was given as non-productive, in Medellín the figure was 35%, in Barranquilla 21% and in Cali 39%.[59] It is not clear whether this non-productive population includes the infant population, that is children of 9 years old and less. If infants are excluded the percentage decreases because the infant population was large. The infant population in 1918 for Bogotá was 20% of the total of population, for Medellín 22%, for Barranquilla 25% and for Cali 26%.

See N. Sánchez - Albornoz, op. cit.

[59] *Censo de población de la República de Colombia, levantado el 14 de Octubre de 1918 y aprobado el 14 de Septiembre de 1921 por la ley 8 del mismo año*, (Bogotá, 1924). According to M. Aguilera there were in Bogotá 259 artisans in 1881 and in 1919, 1,893.
M. Aguilera, *Insugencia Urbana en Bogotá. Motín, conspiración y guerra civil. 1893- 1895*.(Bogotá, 1996), p. 111.

There are some categories which are repeated in two censuses with the same denomination, and which could help to clarify our ideas about how many the poor were in the cities. In the census of 1912 is a category of '*artes, oficios, aprendices*' that could be artisan, and '*jornalero*', day-labourer. In Bogotá there were 8,968 artisans and 2,895 day-labourers, in Medellín 7,880 artisans and 3,306 day-labourers, in Barranquilla 2,726 artisans and 3,286 day-labourers, and in Cali 1,522 artisans and 729 day-labourers.[60] The two categories represent 7% of the total of the population in Bogotá, 15% in Medellín, 12% en Barranquilla and 8% in Cali. In the census of 1918 the category of '*artes, oficios, aprendices*' was denominated as '*artes, oficios, industria manufacturera y fabril*'. In this new category were included both artisans and industrial workers. However, we do not know if this category also included the owners of industries. Nevertheless we think that it is possible to compare the category of artisans and day-labourers of 1912 with the category of artisans and workers of 1918. In Bogotá there were 21,162 artisans and workers in 1,918, which represented 11% of the total of the population, in Medellín there were 9,287, 12%, in Barranquilla 5,167, 8%, and in Cali there were 9,287, 10%. As we can see these categories were around 10% of the total of population in the largest cities in Colombia.

In the census of 1918, the category of domestic servants was significant in number, and it was predominantly female. In Bogotá there were 1,631 men and 38,668 women domestic servants; in Medellín 565 men and 24,314 women; in Barranquilla 229 men and 21,106 women; and in Cali 398 men and 10,868 women. For Bogotá this was

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[60] *Censo General de la República de Colombia levantado el 5 de Marzo de 1912. Presentado al Congreso en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1912 por el Ministro de Gobierno Pedro María Carreño.* (Bogotá, 1912).

21% of total of the population, 31% in Medellín, 33% in Barranquilla and 25% in Cali. Taking the average of the four cities, 27% were domestic servants.

If we put together the categories of artisan, worker and domestic servant we find that 37% of the total of the population in the four cities were in the group that we can denominate loosely as poor. If we add the category called '*improductivos*' the percentage rises to 64%. That may indicate that at least half of the population approximately in Colombia lived in precarious conditions. To give South American comparisons, a contemporary Peruvian writer Joaquín Capelo estimated in 1895 that there were 50,000 people in the *clase obrera* in Lima where the total population was 108,340 inhabitants.[61] The historian Antonio García Ponce researching the poor of Caracas, gives a similar estimate of the percentage of the poor for Caracas.[62] He concludes that 61.6% of the total population in Caracas in 1891 could be considered poor. He adds that if the estimate takes into account only the economically active population, the percentage then reaches 72%. This increase takes into account women who worked. Some recent research by an economist on the distribution of income in Colombia, with perhaps a more rigorous statistical approach, concludes that in Colombia in 1938 three-quarters of the population were poor.[63]

To be precise about the living conditions of this heterogeneous group is an even more difficult task. However, there are wage data for some occupations that can be used, at

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[61] R. M. Morse and J. Capelo, *Lima en 1900. Estudio crítico y antología*, (Lima, 1973), p. 19.
[62] A. García Ponce, *Los pobres de Caracas, 1873-1907. Un estudio de la pobreza urbana*, (Caracas, 1995), p. 168.
[63] J. L. Londoño, *Distribución del ingreso y desarrollo económico. Colombia en el siglo XX*, (Bogotá, 1995), p. 6. See also R. Thorp, op. cit. Table 2.5 in p. 28.

least for the working poor. In Bogotá the average wage of a building labourer was $0.64 per day in 1924; a government-employed labourer earned $1.32, and a skilled artisan $2.34. In the private sector the average daily wage for an ordinary labourer was $0.88, and for a craftsman $1.56.[64] In Medellín the average daily wage for a worker in industry was $1.38 in 1922, and for women $0.65.[65] In Cali the average daily worker's wage was $1.17 in 1924; for women it was $0.83 and for children $0.65.[66]

These data help to show that in a poor family the work of the women and children could be important. However, we have no precise knowledge of these working patterns. The average daily wage of male workers in these cities was $1.2 and of the women, $0.74. Although it is also difficult to calculate with any great precision what a family needed daily to supply its necessities, in most research on living conditions historians agree that the three major expenses are food, rent and fuel.[67] For Colombia we do not have much precise information about daily expenses. José Antonio Osorio Lizarazo in his novel *La Casa de la vecindad* of 1930 suggests that a man living alone needed $0.85 a day for the rent of a room and for food.[68] This literary estimate is approximate and maybe imperfect, but it gives us an idea about essential expenses at that time. If we compare it with the average daily wage of $1.2 it shows that it could

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[64] M. Urrutia, 'Estadística de salarios en Bogotá 1863-1933', in M. Arrubla and M. Urrutia (ed.), *Compendio de Estadísticas Históricas de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1970). pp. 31-71.
[65] *Anuario Estadístico del Municipio de Medellín*, (1923).
[66] *Boletín Estadístico Municipales*, (1922-1926).
[67] See C. H. Feinstein, 'Pessimism perpetuated: real wages and the standard of living in Britain during and after the industrial revolution', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 58, no. 3. (1998), pp. 625-858. For a contemporary Latin-American example see J. A. Re (commissary), *El problema de la mendicidad en Buenos Aires. Sus causas y remedios*, (Buenos Aires, 1937).
[68] J. A. Osorio Lizarazo, *La casa de la vecindad*, (Bogotá, 1900), p. 6-11.

hardly cover the expenses of a family of five persons.[69] If the woman also worked they could live better. However the data on textile workers during the 1920s show that 85% of the women employed were single; only 9% were married and 6% were widows.[70]

By 1938 some progress in statistics had been made and the *Contraloría General* reports a survey of the cost of living for a worker's family of five people in Bogotá. It is the first modern study of statistics in urban context. It concluded that such a family needed $37 per month, distributed as $24.31 for food, $6 for rent, $2.15 for fuel, $2 for clothes and $2.54 miscellaneous.[71] The wage of a worker with a certain specialisation in an industry was $79 per month in 1938, but the wage of an unskilled worker was only $30.[72] A skilled worker or artisan would cover such expenses, but there were few in this situation in an industrialisation process that had just begun. The standard worker's living conditions were more difficult; his wage alone was not enough for himself and his family.

These estimates show only the living condition of employed workers, the group that enjoyed the best conditions among the poor. It is also supposed that workers had stable employment with a permanent wage, but a common phenomenon was seasonal work without any guarantee of stability. Illness or a death in the family could cause

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[69] These average of five persons for a family is taken from V. Gutiérrez de Pineda, *La familia en Colombia: Transfondo histórico*, (Bogotá, 1963), vol. i.

[70] S. Montenegro, 'El surgimiento de la industria textil en Colombia. 1900-1945', in J. A. Ocampo and S. Montenergo, op. cit., pp. 141-232.

[71] C. Lleras Restrepo, *La estadística nacional. Su organización y sus problemas*, (Bogotá, 1938), p. 304.

[72] M. Urrutia, op. cit.

calamity; there was scant labour legislation at that time.[73] Vulnerability then was the principal characteristic of the poor.

This picture suggests the importance of informal help from family, friends or neighbours, but we do not have direct evidence for this. Researchers of Colombian rural communities in the mid-twentieth century show such informal assistance and it may have been a feature of town life at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Gerardo and Alice Reichel-Dolmatoff, writing on Aritama, describe food-exchange as a very important economic institution: 'every member of the community is obliged to make gifts of food at certain intervals to certain other members, who are obliged to make similar gifts in return'.[74] Lynn Smith stressed the importance of the family as a social institution which sheltered and fed the old and incapacitated in his study of Tabio, a Cundinamarca village.[75] Fals Borda analyses *compadrazgo*, baptismal godparenthood. It worked particularly when the parents of a child died; in many cases the godparents took care of the orphan.[76] However we have no knowledge of such practices in urban areas, where sometimes familiar links were broken through the process of migration. There is a description of help between neighbours in the novel of J. A. Osorio Lizarazo when he describes how the *tienda's* neighbours aid a woman for the funeral when her child died.[77]

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[73] In 1923 the labour law for state workers was reformulated. For private workers between 1915 and 1927 accidents of work were included as protection law, in 1921 obligatory insurance was covered and 1926 Sunday was noted as a free paid day. See M. Palacios, op. cit., p. 113.
[74] G. and A. Reichel-Dolmatoff, *The people of Aritama. The cultural personality of a Colombian mestizo village*, (London, 1961), p. 247.
[75] L. Smith, *Tabio. Estudio de la organización social rural*, (Bogotá, 1944), p. 58.
[76] O. Fals Borda, *Campesinos de los Andes. Estudio sociológico de Saucío*, (Bogotá, 1961), p. 244, first English edition 1955.
[77] J. A. Osorio Lizarazo, op. cit.

Other kinds of informal aid might derive from vertical relationships. Where the owners of the big house and the poor tenants of the *tiendas* lived in the same building, it was impossible for the former to ignore their necessities. Some informal help might result: clothes, food or even money. The tendency of the better off to move to new neighbourhoods diminished the proximity between the wealthy and the poor. Distance maybe made informal charity less frequent. Whatever the distance, this informal charity was also common between the owners of the haciendas, who in most cases lived in the towns, and their workers. The owners might send old clothes, old shoes or any sort of thing that they thought could be useful to their workers.[78] Domestic servants, one of the largest categories of the poor in the cities, lived in the family houses, and some support for their families and relatives might be forthcoming in times of exceptional needs.[79] Occasionally, when the relationship between a family and its servants became close, there are records of help. In a few wills, we find money left to servants. Manuel Vicente Umaña, who died in 1927, and left one of the largest Bogotá fortunes of that time, left $2,500 gold pesos for his wife to distribute among his servants. In another more modest will, Rosa Rubio, who died in Bogotá in January 1918, left $100 gold pesos to her servant for her good behaviour.[80] Informal charity seems to have been a common act among the relatively better off with most people having their 'own poor' to help.

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[78] See M. Deas, 'Una Hacienda Cafetera de Cundinamarca: Santa Bárbara (1870-1912)', in M. Deas, *Del Poder y la Gramática*, (Bogotá, 1993), pp. 233-268.
[79] The wife of a Protestant missionary paid two dollars a month to the servants in 1918. See M. N. Williams, *The Least of These in Colombia*, (New York, 1918), p. 18.
[80] AGN, Notaria 1, t. 2 bis, no. 710, fol. 93, 1927 and t. i., fol. 333, 1918 respectively.

To complete the picture of structural poverty in Colombia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it is not easy to be precise about cycles in which the number of poor people might grow or their living conditions might deteriorate. The civil wars brought difficulties; however, not all civil wars caused severe economic recession and not all brought the same emergencies to all regions.[81] However, the civil war of the Thousand Days was one of the worst, without doubt. It has been accepted in the historiography as knowing as a period of economic stagnation and it has been broadly described.[82] This difficult time was marked by special activity on the part of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to help the poor, but also by a decline in donations for poor relief (see chapters four and six). It was obviously a period in which poverty was accentuated.

Riots and strikes also show some cyclical causes. The riot of 1893 in Bogotá, according to the artisan leader José Leocadio Camacho, was due to the poverty of Bogotá's population, the high prices they were forced to pay for necessary goods, and unreasonable taxes on shops and food. All accounts relate that food prices in Bogotá had been rising faster than wages since the late 1880s, and municipal taxes undoubtedly aggravated that situation, but the fundamental problem lay with the inflationary monetary policies of the *Regeneración*, lower real wages.[83] The first

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[81] See A. Tirado, *Aspectos Sociales de las Guerras Civiles en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1978) and M. Deas, 'Pobreza, Guerra Civil y Política: Ricardo Obeso y su campaña en el río Magdalena en Colombia, 1885, in M. Deas, op. cit., pp. 121-174.

[82] See in J. A. Ocampo (ed.), *Historia Económica de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1997), chapter IV and V and M. Palacios, *El Café en Colombia, 1850-1970: una historia económica, social y política*, (Bogotá, 1983).

[83] This situation can been confirmed by a British report: 'The rates of wages for the different classes of workmen and labourers have not materially changed in the last few years, but the prices of all the necessities of life have risen very considerably; so that condition of working classes, which in ordinary times is fairly comfortable, according to their standard of comfort, has become very hard. This year [1888], owing to a long continued period of drought, which has ruined the potato crop, and seriously

strikes in 1910, however, were movements of the best-paid workers, a small proportion of the poor, in which they fought for better working conditions. They do not show specifically a general economic crisis in which poverty was increasing. On the contrary it was a time of a certain economic recovery.[84]

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damaged the wheat and maize crops, has been one of unusual hardship'.
Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. No. 456.Report for the year 1888 on the Trade of Colombia, (London, 1889), p.11.
See also M. Aguilera, op. cit. and D. Sowell, 'The 1893 Bogotazo: Artisans and Public Violence in late nineteenth-century Bogotá', in S. M. Arrom and S. Ortoll (ed.), *Riots in Cities. Popular Politics and Urban Poor in Latin America 1765-1910*, (Wilmington, 1996), pp. 137-154.

[84] See M. Palacios, op. cit. and M. Medina, *La Protesta Urbana en Colombia en el siglo XX*, (Bogotá, 1984).

Table 1

Colombian Population

1851 - 1938



Source: D. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself*, (Berkeley, 1993), p. 286.

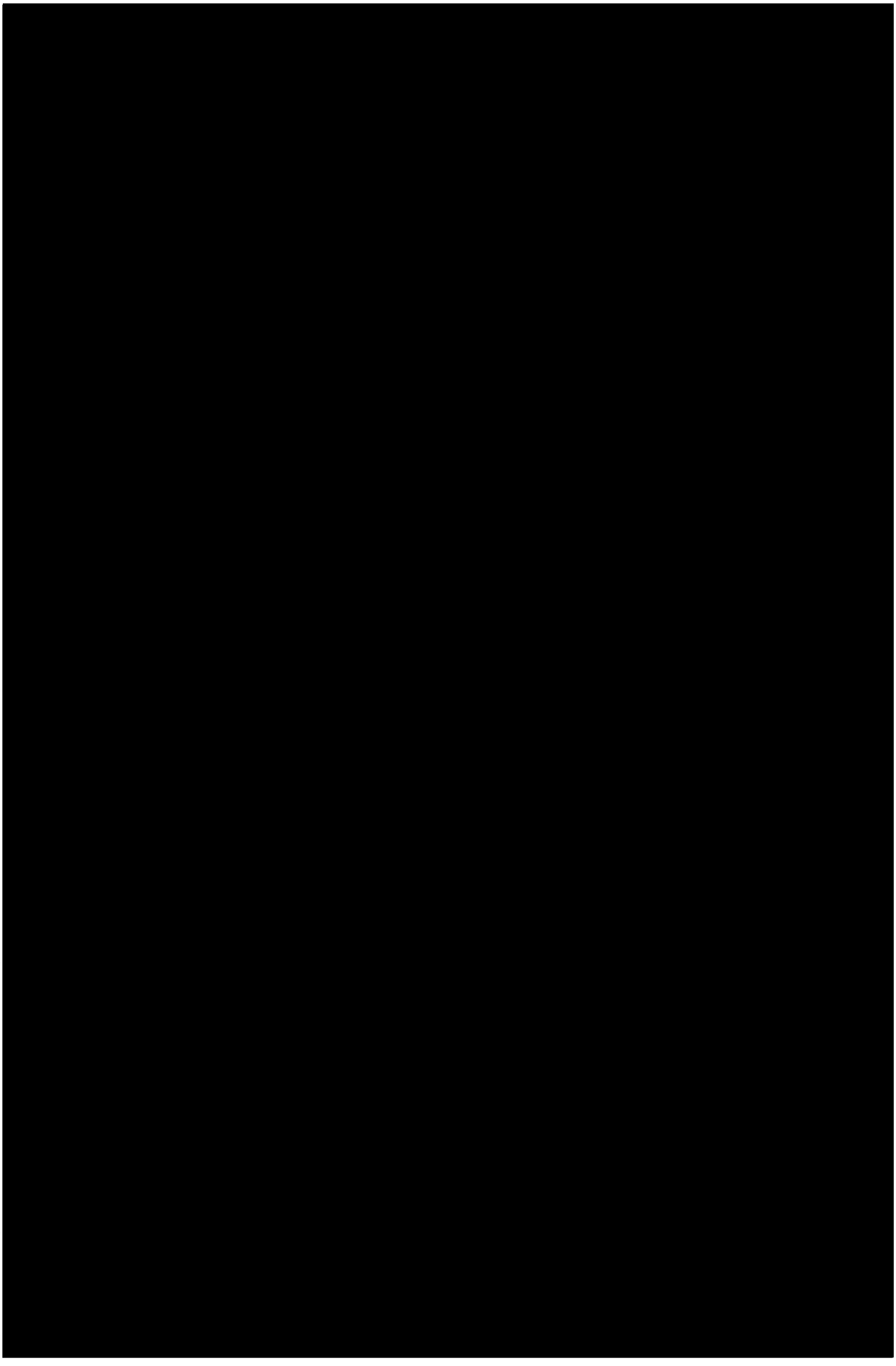
Table 2

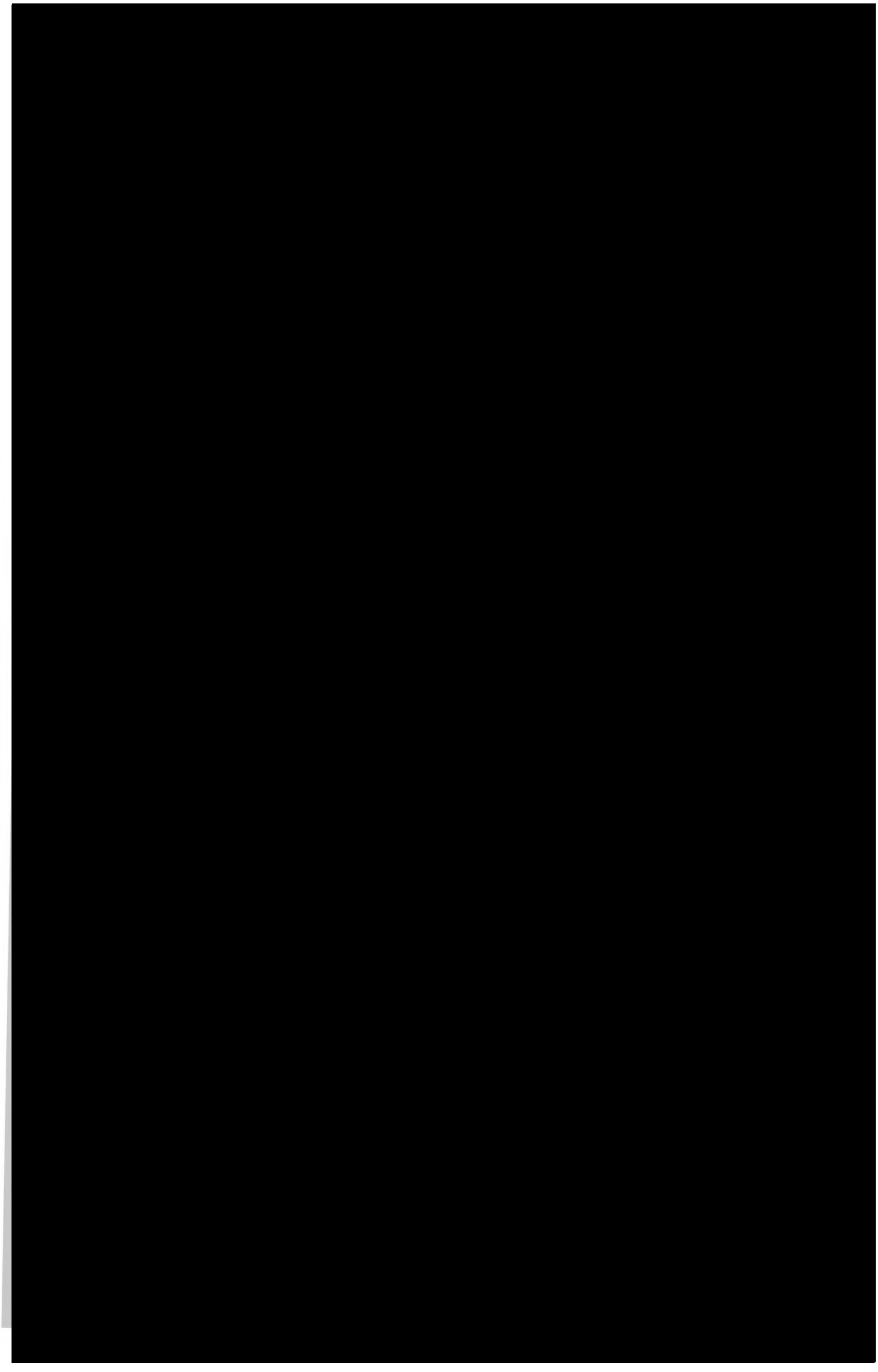
Population of Major Cities in Colombia

1851 - 1938



Source: D. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia. A Nation in Spite of Itself*, (Berkeley, 1993), p. 287.





II. CATEGORIES OF THE POOR

In the terms used by any standard dictionary, a poor person is defined as someone who scarcely has sufficient means to live on, or one who has no means at all, someone who lacks, or is deprived of, the bare minimum necessary to sustain life. As an adjective the word can mean scarce, inadequate, needy, indigent. As an adjective applied to people, it can also convey the sense of someone who is unhappy, unfortunate, deserving of pity, humble, and even someone of little valour, lacking heart or spirit. Likewise, in Spanish the words 'pobrería' and 'pobretería', nowadays regarded as anachronisms, are to be found in the dictionary as collective nouns for the poor people living in a particular place. Similarly, we find the word 'pobrero' applied to someone who gives alms. Finally, there is the word poverty, to indicate the characteristic or state of being poor, implying need, shortage of money, scarcity, or one's state after the voluntary surrender of all one's possessions.

The most common element found in these definitions of poor and poverty is scarcity, shortage of essentials, but along with this we repeatedly find the feeling of pity associated with the state of poverty. Pity leads immediately to a feeling of compassion for someone, and also to the act of helping. What we are trying to emphasize here is that somehow implicit in the definitions of the notions of poor and poverty is the act of offering help. This help appears to be accompanied by feelings not only of pity but of benevolence.

What emerges from these simple semantic observations is not that far removed from the sociological approach to the problem. Thus, for example, George Simmel asserts that 'The poor person as a sociological category is not someone who suffers particular insufficiencies and hardships, but someone who receives assistance, or ought to receive it, in accordance with social norms'.[1] That is to say, being poor, suffering poverty, does not only refer to a state of want and shortage, but also to a particular social situation which includes help amongst its specifications. Thus any consideration of the poor equally implies a consideration of assistance. Simmel goes on to enlarge on his remarks, pointing out that 'consequently in this sense, poverty cannot be defined in itself as a quantitative state, but only in terms of the social reaction produced in a given situation'.[2]

This is not an aberration on the part of the great German sociologist. In his definition of poor and poverty, he is simply acknowledging that any social phenomenon is by definition a social relation and therefore a specific social form, that is to say, both a condition which is not purely quantitative, one which cannot be defined from absolute standpoints such as biological ones, a situation which as a matter of principle involves the presence of others and at the same time an interaction which always presents problems of meaning, forms of interpretation, systems of expectation.

As far as the historiographical conception of the notions of poor and poverty is concerned, this has followed the same tendency as sociological analysis in proposing

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1 G. Simmel, 'The poor', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, (New York, 1950), p. 517.
2 Idem.

that such notions form part of a specific social reality. The contribution made by historical analysis is to have established on the basis of empirical study that the concept of poverty is 'social', in other words that it is dependent on the material conditions and prevailing values of a particular period.[3] Likewise, and this is a more polemical conclusion about which we shall have to keep some reservations, a large proportion of assistance given to the poor at different periods has always had the same objective: to search for possible areas of supposed harmony between opposing social groups, and to ensure a respectful acceptance of the existing social order.

Taking those propositions from sociology and history which demonstrate the greatest consensus and avoiding the more polemical areas, we shall show how the reality which can be construed as poverty in a particular society cannot be established on the basis of mere biological or economic factors, for there are many other variables relating to the whole of society to consider, and in particular that set of standards and values structured in the form of a symbolic order which we call culture, and which are decisive in the particular historical construct which each society makes for its poor and the possibilities for changing their situation.

In this chapter then we shall attempt to explain the main outlines of the categorization of poor and the main ideas that guided poor relief, trying to shape an 'ideal poor' in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The presence of poor people and beggars in the urban centres of our country in that period

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3 See S. Woolf, *The Poor in Western Europe in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (London, 1986).

constituted an inescapable reality for any observer, as we could see in the previous chapter.

The other type of document providing information on the urban poor and their situation, different from the accounts of the travellers that we already quoted in the previous chapter, are the regulations of the establishments which are concerned with looking after them. These documents contain definitions and classifications of the poor, in order to determine who should be helped and what level of care they should receive. Although we do not know whether there was strict compliance with what was proposed, we do find in this type of document a certain perception of the problem, a general account of what type of person could be seen as needing help of some sort, as well as allusions to the overall picture of poverty.

Although these sources provide us with descriptions of groups of poor people in an urban environment, and details of some of the solutions for controlling the problem which were examined or implemented, what is of most interest to us here is to find out what were the prevailing notions about the poor, the ways in which they were classified, how they were viewed or perceived within society.

All these types of document referred to above are characterized by having been written either by external observers, by politicians or men of letters describing a social problem, by people connected with those institutions engaged in seeking some solution to the problem of the poor; by those who endeavoured to make sure the poor were kept in order, or else by those who sought to define and locate them in order to offer them some sort of care. We are not talking about writings which emanated from

the people being characterized as poor; they are not writings in which the poor participated in the construction of that which defined them, and to some extent determined their fate. It is possible that the historian might come close to discovering the image which the poor had of themselves if he could come across a significant collection of information such as the requests for assistance which the needy themselves had, in some cases, to tender. But for the moment no such evidence has materialised; it would be difficult to find this type of document given the level of illiteracy amongst the majority of the population of Colombia at that time, and in particular amongst those designated as being poor. Consequently the conceptions of the poor and poverty which we are able to trace and recreate are those which were implicitly or explicitly formulated by the people or institutions involved in the general policies towards the poor or the care of the poor.[4] When we examine these categories, we should bear in mind that they are to some extent coloured by an ideal conception of the poor, a conception to which those deserving of help had to conform, some prototype of the 'ideal poor'.[5]

As a start in developing the categorization of the poor, it is illuminating to observe how a group of institutions arrive at a social definition of who is not classed as poor, for it involves a conceptual effort, but one which has practical consequences, to differentiate the poor from any other social group with which they might be confused.

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4 D. Natalie in her article 'Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy' in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*, (London, 1975), pp. 17-64, explores the problem of the social or institutional origin of the documentation from which the historians make their analyses of the lower classes.

5 O. Hufton remarks that the 'ideal' poor person in modern Europe was 'an individual who was remarkable for his industry, thrift, and patient resignation in the face of hardship'. O. Hufton, 'Life and death among the very poor', in A. Cobban, *The Eighteenth Century: Europe in the Age of Enlightenment*, (London, 1969), pp. 293-310.

An illustration of this is to be found in the decision which was reached by the Cali town council in 1911 with regard to the creation of posts designated 'People's Doctors'. What happened was that only a few days after the decision was made, the town council felt obliged to change the name from 'People's Doctors' to 'Doctors for the Poor', perhaps in recognition of the fact that the new post referred to the duties of a public official responsible for looking after those people in the city specifically of slender economic resources, rather than all working people or those belonging to the 'popular sectors'.[6]

This minor local legislative incident of little consequence nevertheless reveals a significant attempt to define the notion of poor, making clear the difference which the town council, and possibly local society, perceived as existing between the two concepts. It emerges from this and other documents that the concept of 'the people' apparently had complex connotations, with implications which were more political than social.[7] To speak of 'the people' calls to mind ideas of men gathering together and mobilizing; it suggests that they might have leadership, and summons up ideas of struggle and active participation.[8] On the other hand, the term 'poor' sends us another message, as long as only a section of the people is defined as poor. So the 'Doctor for the Poor' looks after a social group which is a popular one, but much smaller than 'the people', and above all one which does not constitute a group corresponding to any

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6 Archivo Histórico del Concejo Municipal de Cali, t.i, capitular 188, 1911.
7 For the discussion about the meaning of 'people' and 'popular' in the French context, see G. Bollème, *El pueblo por escrito. Significados culturales de lo 'popular'*, (México, 1990), first French edition 1986.
8 Idem.

political definition. Thus, the poor are characterized as a social group within society as a whole as well as within the popular sector of it. We might infer from this distinction that the designation 'poor' was preferred for groups for whom assistance was being provided, in part as a way of demonstrating the 'apolitical' nature of the help being offered.

Looking at it the other way round, it would seem in turn that what we term 'people' is a much broader group than that which we designate as poor, just as the poor form part of what is understood or designated by the term 'people'. The 'people' can include social groups other than those which might be designated as poor.

Let us examine then who were those who made up that social group designated as poor. On the basis of the sources consulted and the earlier analysis carried out, we can say that it was a heterogeneous group, not always very well defined in content or profile, within which several social attachments can be observed.

The classifications of the poor which we find in Colombia for the period under review seem to derive from the early categorizations of the poor which were established in Western Europe. The poor were classified into two large models, the deserving poor and the undeserving poor. Most historians agree that this categorization spread throughout Western Europe in the sixteenth century.[9] One of the main goals of this division was strict regulation against mendicity on the streets, together with the aim

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9 See C. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1989) and L. Martz, *Poverty and Welfare in Habsburg. Spain. The Example of Toledo*, (Cambridge, 1989).

of confinement of the poor.[10] The deserving poor would receive assistance from religious institutions and philanthropic individuals, while the undeserving poor would be subject to secular control and discipline.

This dual categorization has been gradually refined and some new categories have appeared. However, these new categories seem not to have brought to bear on the issue any different conception from that which was embodied in the model of the undeserving and the deserving poor; rather they are new sub-categories within the larger divisions. For example, towards the end of the eighteenth century in Spain the Asturian reformer José del Campillo outlined three categories in his classification of the poor: the physically handicapped poor who had no means of survival other than begging; those whom it suited to be poor, in other words the bone idle; and vagrants who shunned work and became habitual beggars.[11] The first group was seen as being deserving of help, the other two of punishment. Thus the two-fold division within the poor is once again established.

This great division of the poor is a product of society's wish to establish certain social order. Consequently the classification is arranged in groups with different grades, ranks and categories to reflect a hierarchical society, but also the classifications of the poor are related to the type of attention which each is to receive.[12]

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10 One of the most important thinkers who provided the basic arguments for promoting the abolition of mendicity and organization of relief was the Benedictine monk Juan de Medina, in 1545 with his text *De la orden que en algunos pueblos de España se han puesto en la limosna.*

11 N. F. Martin, 'Pobres, mendigos y vagabundos en la Nueva España, 1702-1765: antecedentes y soluciones presentadas', *Revista de Estudios Novohispánicos*, (1985), pp. 94-126.

12 See R. Jütte, *Poverty and Devience in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, 1994), chapter two.

Vagrants

The first group which we should point out is one which, within the poor as a whole, is the poorest of all, and is designated generically as the vagrants.

After 1750 the concerted effort undertaken by the Spanish crown to develop a system of poor relief was designed to limit the distribution of alms to the deserving poor, to impose severe restrictions upon mendicity, and to establish institutions of confinement for the indigent. The state viewed mendicity as a source of disorder. The truly poor were defined as honest widows incapable of work, aged artisans who could not earn enough to sustain their families, impoverished peasants who lacked the means to sow their fields, the infirm, orphans. However, it was not until 1760 that the crown began to put together a coherent programme of relief, expanding the role of the government in the field of assistance through the creation of *Juntas de Caridad* and hospices. The legitimate poor who had a right to charity and assistance had to be separate from undeserving indigents.[13]

In New Granada, as part of the Spanish Monarchy, a number of government orders were promulgated to deal with vagrants and beggars in the second half of the eighteenth century. These aimed at prohibiting begging in the streets, but they did not clearly distinguish between vagrants and beggars. The orders were issued beneath the banner of the 'enlightened charity', which attempted to centralize assistance for the poor as well as presenting charity as a political and moral duty. With these objectives

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13 W. J. Callahan, 'The Problem of Confinement: an Aspect of Poor Relief in Eighteenth-Century Spain', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 51, no. 1, (1971), pp. 1-24.

in view, Santafé de Bogotá set the process in motion in 1782 with an order giving vagrants and beggars eight days to leave the city, and subsequently in 1785 an order was issued for vagrants and beggars to be picked up and confined in the *hospicio*.[14]

This was an attempt to sweep up poor people who begged for alms on the streets and to end the custom of giving alms indiscriminately in public spaces. These measures were strengthened in 1796, when the city's *hospicio* was more firmly established, and it was recorded that the object was 'desapareciendo de las calles y plazas de esta capital aquel tropel de mendigos, verdaderos o fingidos, que incomedaban al paso, que complace y quitándose de la vista del público el lastimoso objeto'.[15] The *hospicio* took in all types of poor people; there was no clear categorization of those who could be looked after in the institution. There were old men, widows, orphans, lunatics and sick people.

However the central idea of division between the deserving and undeserving poor was clear by the end of the colonial period, as was the need for punishment for the undeserving. After Independence there were some further laws enacted related with this concept. However only in 1836 do we find a clearer distinction between beggars and vagrants in Law 9, '*Sobre las licencias de mendigos, penas de vagancia, y procedimiento en las causas de hurto de menor cuantía*', which was still the law being used by the police in 1842.[16] In this law, vagrants are defined as follows:

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14 J. Vargas and G. Vera 'Formas asistenciales y de beneficencia en Santafe: hospitales, expósitos y hospicios", in J. Vargas, *La sociedad de Santafe colonial*, (Bogotá, 1990), pp. 261-297.
15 *Papel Periódico de la ciudad de Santafe de Bogotá*, t. iv, fol. 1287.
16 The laws were: Law 8 March 1825, Law 3 May 1826, Law 6 April 1836, Law 18 May 1841, Law 14 June 1842. See J. C. Jurado, 'Pobres y miserables en la Provincia de Antioquia. Control social en un período de transición, 1750-1850', (Nacional Univ.-Medellín, 1999), p. 58.

> 'Los que sin oficio ni beneficio, hacienda ó renta, viven sin saberse los medios lícitos i honestos de donde les venga la subsistencia. Los que, aun teniendo rentas ó emolumentos de que subsistir, no se les conoce otra ocupación que la habitual compañia i amistad de hombres vagos i criminales, ó la frecuencia de casas de juego, ó de mujeres tenidas y reputadas por prostitutas. Los hijos de familia que o sirven en su casa i en el público, sino de escandalizar por sus malas costumbres i poco respeto a sus padres, sin manifestar aplicación a la carrera a que ellos los destinen. Las prostitutas ó mujeres públicas, tenidas y reputadas por tales. El que a pretesto de jornalero, oficial ó aprendiz de algun oficio, si trabaja un dia lo deja de hacer en muchos, sin tener otro medio lejítimo de subsistencia, i que el tiempo que deberia estar ocupado lo consume en la ociosidad. Los muchachos forasteros, que andan en los pueblos prófugos, errantes ó sin destino. Los que habiendo emprendido la carrera de estudios, viven sin sujeccion a sus respectivos superiores, sin cumplir con sus obligaciones escolares i entregados a la ociosidad'.[17]

In this law we now find a definition of vagrants and a distinction between them and the group of poor people categorized as beggars, that is to say those who may be begging for alms on account of their incapacity for work. Now, within this legal definition, vagrants were lumped in not only with poor people, but also with other people on the margins of society: idlers, wastrels, gamblers, drinkers and brawlers. In this group of vagrants we will also find people who for varying motives may have decided at a particular time to opt out of society's established order.[18] The separation of vagrants from beggars was a judicial one, based on a legal concept. However, one of the problems which arose from criminalizing vagrants was that they had not always committed deeds that were strictly criminal; they were not, in other words, common criminals.

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17 Lei 9. Abril 6 de 1836, in *Recopilación de leyes de la Nueva Granada, formada y publicada en cumplimiento de la lei de 4 de mayo de 1843, i por comisión del poder ejecutivo por Lino de Pombo*, (Bogotá. 1845), p. 160.
18 J-C. Schmitt, 'La historia de los marginados', in J. Le Goff , R. Chartier and J. Revel (ed.), *Diccionario del saber moderno. La Nueva Historia*, pp. 400-426, first French edition 1978.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were attempts in most cities to control begging and to restrict permission to beg, but there was no clear distinction between vagrants and beggars.[19] In 1922, vagrants were only clearly defined in the Police Code, which proposed that they be dealt with more specifically, differently from other poor people:

> 'Repútanse vagos: a los que sin tener oficio ni beneficio, hacienda o renta, vivan sin ocupación lícita u otro medio legítimo de subsistencia, y cuyos malos antecedentes legales, por delitos contra la propiedad, estén comprobados plenamente; a los que mendigan públicamente contra la prohibición de la policía y sin inconvenientes graves para trabajar, a juicio de dos facultativos nombrados por el funcionario que conozca del caso, a falta de dicho facultativos podrá nombrarse a dos personas honorables del vecindario; a los ebrios consuetudinarios, debiéndose acreditar este hecho con declaraciones de personas honorables del vecindario, siempre que aquellos no tenga oficio ni beneficio, ni otro medio lícito de subsistencia; los que hayan sido condenados por tres veces por alguna autoridad, como violadores de disposiciones sobre juegos prohibidos, e incurran nuevamente en la misma falta; los que sean convictos de proyecto o proyectos fingidos de falsificación de moneda o de documentos de crédito bancario o del Estado; y toda persona bajo cuya dirección, protección, consejo o ayuda, otra persona ejerza la prostitución pública o privadamente'.[20]

The vagrants were regarded practically as delinquents from the 1920s on, and supervision and control of them were given over to the police. The National Police, an institution founded in 1890 with aspirations to professional standards and a modern vision of its role, operated with different norms and structures from the bodies responsible for charity and social assistance. The legislation, and up to a point the practice, which rested both on all sorts of social prejudices and on more 'modern' and

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19 For Medellín see C. E. García, *Niños trabjadores y vida cotidiana en Medellín, 1900-1930*, (Medellín, 1999), p. 19.

20 Ordenanza No. 22 de 1922 sobre reformas del Código de Policía, in *Compilación de Leyes y Ordenanzas de la Beneficencia y Asistencia Social de Cundinamarca. 1869-1942*, (Bogotá, 1942).
Maybe one of the reasons why an accurate and strong law related to the prohibition of begging took so long to be implemented was the lack of a proper police force as well the lack of establishments for placing the beggars.

allegedly scientific opinions, laid down that vagrants were to be located, caught and detained in prison-type establishments. In the first instance the vagrants received some 'punishment', but might subsequently receive some help or care aimed at their rehabilitation through training in some occupation within the prison precincts. The chance to go out again into society was not provided by their new training -or retraining, 'reeducation', as it was called-, through their now having proper knowledge to do a job, but rather through their having served a sentence. The vagrant was still classified according to the yardsticks of criminal justice, and so was not considered deserving of any charitable treatment or social assistance.

Previously the distinction between vagrants and beggars and those who were indigents had not appeared to be so clear-cut. They were all considered to belong to the same group and were all looked after in the asylum of indigents, albeit at a minimal level and in basic fashion, given the lack of resources and the deprived conditions. Sometimes they were used as workers in the construction of new roads and railways, as a way of correction.[21] The distinction made between vagrants and beggars, and hence the separation of these two groups from each other, appears to be related at least in part to the establishment of the Police as the body for controlling civil disorder and keeping the peace. At the same time the process went ahead of separating poor people regarded as delinquents from the group constituted by beggars and the indigents. Thus vagrants in a way were moved out of the broad group of the poor, and specifically even from the group formed by the 'undeserving' poor, and joined the other group constituted by the delinquents, or at least they were moved closer to that group from

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21 J. C. Jurado, op. cit., p. 127

the standpoint of the new definitions which were being formulated and the forms of supervision and control which were being devised. However, we must bear in mind the rather formal and merely theoretical nature of these distinctions in a society such as Colombia's at that period, where the minimum elements necessary to ensure the functioning of the administrative apparatus of the state were barely beginning to be constructed.

Beggars and indigents

The next group up from the vagrants, if we may build up a picture of stratification within the poor, would be the beggars, later designated also as the indigent. It was in this category that the distinguishing line between the deserving and the undeserving poor tended to become blurred, so that it is here that we encounter more ambiguous positions with regard to care.

In 1836 the definition of beggar was related to the legislation for determining who had permission to beg for alms publicly. The mayors of the parish districts were responsible for deciding which beggars could beg for alms in the streets. Permission to beg for alms was granted to those beggars who were 'invalids manifestly incapable of sustaining themselves through work', but at the same time there would be no granting of such 'permission to beg for alms publicly to those invalids or people unfit to work who had fathers or sons in a position to maintain them through their income or their work'.[22] And there was a warning that if they did not observe the law they would be pursued as vagrants.

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22 Lei 9. Abril 6 de 1836, op. cit.

The first signs indicating the presence of another social classification are to be found in the censuses of the period, which were used to try to identify and single them out in order to control them. The idea of conducting censuses of beggars, which had precedents in the colonial days at the end of the eighteenth century, reappeared again simultaneously in several Colombian cities at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Cali it came up in various discussions and was embodied in a variety of measures which from 1910 on led to the agreement for the establishment of the Beggars' Asylum in 1915.[23] The first of these measures gave public expression to concern about the heavy presence of beggars of both sexes on the streets. The first decision was to conduct a census of beggars, as a first step to gain some measure of control over this population in the public spaces of the city.[24]

The proposed census also required beggars to undergo an examination by a doctor, who was to certify that the beggar did not suffer from any contagious illness, especially looking out for leprosy. He was then given a board bearing information about him and this board permitted him to continue as a beggar: it authorised him to beg for alms in the city streets.

The civic and government authorities continued to be concerned about the problem, and it was decided in 1912 to found the Beggars' Asylum to bring the beggars

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23 Archivo Histórico del Concejo Municipal de Cali, t. I, capitulares 187, 1910, capitulares 188 y 189, 1911; t. ii, capitulares 190, 1912, capitulares 192 y 193, 1913, capitulares 195, 1914, capitulares 196 and 197, 1915.
24 There is no surviving information about the census.

together and look after them in one place. One of the aims in founding the Asylum was to end begging in the streets. The Asylum opened its doors in 1915, but not all beggars were taken in and looked after, since only natives of the District or those resident in it for 10 years or more, whom the District Doctor had declared unfit for work on the grounds of age or incurable illness were considered deserving of being looked after there.[25] Thus the inmates, those entitled to assistance as local beggars, were those who could not work whether through incapacity, illness or some other reason, and not those who just could not find work.

In Medellín too, up to 1909, the year in which begging in the street was banned, the mayor's office issued beggars with a board bearing their personal details, which served as a certificate allowing the holder to beg for alms in public as an 'official beggar'. One of the reasons for this was that the *Casa de Mendigos*, founded in 1891, did not have enough room for them.[26]

In Bogotá the Mayor's order banning begging was issued as Decree 24 of 23 May 1905. Several arguments had been taken into consideration in arriving at this decision. The first of these was that charity was misunderstood and misplaced if it actually encouraged begging, and thus acted as an incentive for many to abandon themselves to a life of idleness and vice. Other considerations taken into account in the decree were that begging was a way of life which was conducive to thieving and also one

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25 Gaceta Municipal, Cali, 18 June 1917. Although the problem of being an outsider and an insider among vagrancy and begging was stressed in all laws, we do not find in the Colombian case this to be a central issue in discussions in the establishments that attended them. Probably when there was not capacity enough in the asylums, the priority of belonging to a specific place was taken into account.
26 P. Castro, 'Beneficencia en Medellín, 1800 - 1930', (Antioquia Univ.-Medellín, 1994), pp. 101-104.

invariably accompanied by lack of personal hygiene, thus encouraging the spread of disease. The decree laid down that beggars be detained in the Asylum, and it invited charitable people to give their alms or donations to the Asylum trustees.[27]

Another concept which recurs constantly during this period is that of the indigent, although it appears little different from that of the beggar. The indigent were one more category within the group of poor requiring provision. In 1888 the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca* regarded as indigents 'the blind, the lame, the handicapped; those with arms missing; heads of family suffering from chronic illness which makes it impossible for them to work; widows with children who are thus unable to work for a living; and orphans under ten years old'.[28]

Later, in 1917, the *Junta General de Beneficencia* laid down three criteria for classifying beggars and indigents to decide which establishment they should be sent to and what sort of care they should receive. First were those who were suffering from acute illness, who were to be sent to a hospital for treatment. The mentally deranged were normally included in this group of the infirm, but they would be gradually separated from the beggars and the infirm as more specialized establishments were founded, such as lunatic asylums. Second were those who were unfit to earn their living; these would be sent to the Community for Indigents and Beggars. Third, there were those who exploited public charity and who were considered to be vagrants;

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27 *Bogotá*, Bogotá, 30 May 1905. In another newspaper from Bogotá there is an article about the order that describes: "Como por encanto han desaparecido los enjambres de ciegos, mancos y viejas que no dejaban vivir en paz ni a Dios no al diablo. No dudamos que muchos de esos tendrán necesidad, pero cuantos lo hacían por negocio". *El Escudo*, Bogotá, 17 June 1905.
28 Ordenanza No. 12 of 1888, in *Compilación*, op. cit.

these would be sent to a Penal Colony by the appropriate authority.[29] If we look back at the classifications which had been most frequently used previously, and the groups of which they were comprised, we will note that orphans, who had always featured in these classifications, now no longer appear, which would perhaps indicate not only that the idea was catching on of founding establishments for providing assistance and technical education to orphans, but also that possibly the social conception of childhood itself was to an extent being revised.

All these legislative measures strengthen the idea that the distinction between vagrants and beggars or indigents had finally prevailed, although we would repeat that in a practical sense things were not so clear. However, it must be emphasized that the foundation of a Community for Indigents and Beggars springs from a different conception from that of an Asylum. In the rules for the foundation of the Community for Indigents and Beggars the co-operation of the Police is specifically requested for dealing with the inmates of the establishment. With the involvement of the Police as an integral part of the Community, the inmates of the latter are now being treated differently from the poor generally, for with the Police it is not considerations of education and benevolent assistance which have priority, but those of supervision and security. Consequently the dividing line between vagrants and beggars or indigents, which had previously been so clear-cut, appears to have become blurred with the foundation of this new establishment, which tends if anything to merge together these two subgroups of the poor and even to move them closer to the delinquent group.

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29 Ordenanza No. 19 de 1917, Idem.

Thus by the end of 1920 we find that a significant proportion of the poor is now dealt with by the police, and not by the establishments of *beneficencia*.

All this is indicative of the close relationship which exists between the general conception of the poor at any given moment, and of the various groups going to make up this sector, and the particular methods by which they are treated. The treatment of the various groups and the ways in which they are assisted offer us some indications of how they are defined. We are thus able to state that towards the end of the 1920s the criteria used in assisting the groups of beggars, indigents, vagrants and even delinquents were changing, with the criterion of control and confinement beginning to outweigh other criteria.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the beggar or indigent was someone who could not work, except in the case of children and minors, as we are about to show. Work then is the deciding factor in this situation. Children are put in homes, and those who have any prospect of work in the future are educated and trained for different trades. For indigent or beggar children, as well as for orphan children who had nobody to maintain them, the idea of education through work is continually present. When in 1920 the *Casa de Menores* were founded, it was conceived as an independent section of what was previously the *Escuelas de Trabajo*.[30] But in the 1920s the dividing line based on whether an individual has prospects of work or not continues to be important in classifying the beggars and the indigent. Another

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30 Ley 9 de 1930 sobre asistencia social y escuelas de trabajo, con sus antecedentes, in *Historia de la Leyes*. (Bogotá, 1931).

characteristic is added to the concept of beggar or indigent with the prohibition of begging for alms on the street, which is coming to be regarded as a criminal act.

As well as the establishment of asylums for vagrants and indigents, prohibition orders on begging were issued. Controls on this group were becoming tighter, although there was always a certain ambiguity in combining care with punishment when shutting them away. This ambiguity is perhaps related to the fact that the distinction between vagrants and some beggars or indigents was not very clear either, because what formed the difference between them was whether they were delinquents or not, a difference which subsequently became blurred, so that they all seemed to be lumped together in one group.

However, some differences remained in the way they were assisted and dealt with, for vagrants were assigned to prisons or penal colonies, while beggars and indigents were placed in asylums. The difference between these two types of establishment resides clearly in the type of care provided, but lies equally in the forms of control. Being a beggar or an indigent was equated with being undeserving in the urban milieu and so such a person should be locked away. Consequently a paradox can be perceived in the treatment given to the beggar and the indigent, for though there existed the will to look after them, at the same time they were removed and excluded from society, in the same way as vagrants.[31] In any case it must be said that all these forms of classification bore a very provisional stamp and there was a great deal of ambiguity

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31 For this issue see P. Ariés, 'La actitud frente los minusválidos', in *Ensayos de la Memoria, 1943-1983*, (Bogotá, 1995), pp. 257-271, first French edition c.1983.

even in the language of the legal provisions. Above all, there prevailed a pragmatic approach which did not always coincide with the law itself.

The poor who had work

The poor who had work was a large and heterogeneous group. In it was included on the one side men, women and even children with different wages, and on the other side various types of work and crafts with distinct incomes.

All the documentation of the period mentions artisans and workmen as forming part of the general group of the poor. They grew in number during this period, as we could see in the first chapter. However, it must be pointed out from the start that the vocabulary applied to social groups, like the institutional categories themselves and even the vocabulary used by specialists in social sciences and history, is characterized by considerable ambiguity and even some confusion.

Within the class designated as 'artisans' there is an ambiguity which is not easily resolved. At all events this broad and varied group, of loose definition, ought to have at least some element of occupational identity, for it is certainly the case that such a large group of workers was grouped 'occupationally', that is to say, on the basis of an acknowledgement of something which their different jobs had in common, in order for them to be able to provide mutual help to one another through associations linked by bonds of solidarity. They looked upon themselves as being separate, a particular category within the workers as a whole.

Although we know that the artisans are classed amongst the poor, we do not know with any certainty whether 'workmen' are similarly included in the group of the poor or whether they too regarded themselves as a group apart with greater economic resources and perhaps a different social position from other workers. It is a complex issue, for the contemporary classification of industrial establishments included the premises of cabinet-makers, tailors, shoemakers and carpenters, places and jobs which are traditionally considered to be artisan occupations, and which commonly prefer the term 'workshop' to 'factory' precisely in order to underline the difference.

Behind this apparent confusion created by the clash of census groupings, institutional vocabulary and common sense, lie at least two hard facts. On the one hand, from the point of view of the social division of work in our society during this period, we find a low level of demarcation and specialization, which would suggest that industrial and artisan work had not really separated, which obscures the difference between artisans and workmen. On the other hand, and although it may appear contradictory, on the basis of the same information it is possible to detect, albeit at an incipient stage, the beginning of a process of transformation in the labour sphere, in which urban work activities, whether industrial or artisan, are starting to carry more weight than rural work activities.

At all events what does confirm our interpretation of the information available is that the emergence of groups which were strictly speaking of workmen, but workmen belonging to very small industrial establishments and receiving wages which were not markedly different, at least initially, from those of more traditional artisan groups, resulted in an apparent homogeneity in which they were all lumped together as poor

workers, although years later the process of social differentiation did crystallize to produce the forms which we know today. Among the workers, women and children were important in certain activities such as textiles and coffee processing.

Although artisans and workmen might appear to be classifiable more by economic group -according to the nature of their income- rather than by social category, in practice the cut-off point at which they part company from each other within the poor as a whole is dictated by whether they are in work or not, and consequent on this, their capacity to guarantee their own sustenance and that of their dependants. Thus work, and the relationship with the world of employment, is the element which differentiates them from the group of the poor, which should thus be ranked below them. However job loss for whatever reason would put both the artisan and the workman under threat of falling into misery and becoming a beggar or an indigent.

It should be pointed out that maybe the difference between artisans and workmen , in terms of systems and practices of assistance, is that the artisan's status is considered to be more vulnerable since he is always under threat of crossing the boundary of the group should he suffer some calamity, such as the decline of the craft he practises because of a change in consumer habits, or its disappearance as a result of the creation of new industrial processes, or perhaps an illness, or a death in the family. Any of these eventualities could relegate him into the group below, that of the indigents and beggars. Consequently, in line with the conception of assistance prevailing at that time, artisans seemed to require a different type of care from workmen, and to require it more frequently. However within the artisans there were differences. There were artisans who had their own workshop and some employees; other artisans had their

own workshop, and relied on family labour, women and children; there were artisans who did not possess their own workshops...

The problem posed by this is that at that time the label 'workman', *obrero*, was not used in today's restricted sense to refer exclusively to an industrial worker, but was applied broadly and loosely to a variety of jobs, in both the artisan and the industrial fields. In some documents the word 'workman' is even used as a synonym for a poor man. But perhaps the most important issue here is to begin to recognize a new form of division or separation within the group known overall as the poor, a separation which is based on work, no matter what the level of income, on labour viewed as an activity which bestows dignity, very much in keeping with Christian and socialist doctrines.

In a different context, that of English society at the end of the nineteenth century, we can find evidence which may help us to make headway in this area. According to Carlyle, for example, the issue at that time in England was no longer one of poverty, but of work. People no longer spoke in terms of indigents and poor people but of workers. It was in a way a means of elevating the poor and the indigent to the status of workers, or more specifically workmen, thus affording a greater measure of self-respect. Work was man's great unique miracle. Work was salvation, the fount of saintliness. Modernity had transformed the poor into workers.[32]

Although we do not have any clear point at which to draw the dividing line between artisans and workmen for that period, we find that there is a slight shade of difference

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[32] See G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty. England in the Early Industrial Age*, (London, 1984).

in the treatment that was offered them. Technical schools were set up for artisans, with the aim of training them in some manual activity which would enable them to work and to earn a more stable income. Night schools were established for artisans and workers to give them a minimal education: reading and writing and basic arithmetic. For both artisans and workmen housing programmes were launched and savings banks opened.

There was another group which might be included among the poor who had work and they without doubt endured worse conditions than workers and artisans, the domestic servants. It was a very large group as is shown in chapter one. In each family there were several servants, each servant commonly dedicated to a single task, as was emphasized by one observer in 1918: 'Most Colombian servants are specialists of the highest degree'.[33] The majority of domestic servants were women and, according to Maude Newell Williams, around two out of three of the domestic servants were single mothers in 1918.[34] Even though the domestic servants had work and a 'home' they were paid the lowest wages, two dollars per a month at the highest. They were typically regarded as poor, but the fact of their being in a 'family home' afforded them the possibility of keeping themselves at least at subsistence level, having a shelter and food, but also with very particular relations with their masters. They were, however, a

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33 A Protestant missionary's wife added: 'She who cooks will not serve the meal; she who serves at table will not cook; she who irons will not sweep; the dining-room girl will not wash dishes; only a cook can be prevailed upon to do the marketing but the cook cannot be induced to approach an ironing-board'.
M. N. Williams, *The Least of These in Colombia*, (New York, 1918), p. 75.

34 M. N. Williams, op. cit., p. 16. She adds 'No man in this class takes the slightest responsibility for the upbringing of a child; that is for the mother alone. There is no home life'. The illegitimate birth rate in Bogotá was estimated to be as high as 51 % in the 1890s and by 1964 was 28.9%. according to M. A. Urrego, *Sexualidad, Matrimonio y Familia en Bogotá. 1880-1930*, (Bogotá, 1997), p. 224.

most vulnerable group and the aid that they might receive was not for all. The relief was concentrated mainly on helping young single poor women, particularly those who came from rural areas, by teaching domestic labour, such as ironing, washing, cooking; this was not the case for the majority that were single mothers. There were few working options for women at that time.

The last group that we could include within the poor who had work were hawkers, a group whose presence on the streets was high. However information about them is scant. They had many informal activities -selling coffee, cheese, newspapers, bootblacks, carrying water, cleaning streets- but no stable work. They received least help because they worked independently. Probably these were the most vulnerable of the poor who had work.

Though the conditions of the poor who had work varied, and there was a big gap between workers and hawkers, to have any work was valued in a society with high rates of unemployed and hence unoccupied.[35]

Permanent poor

The poverty of this group was due to structural causes and is linked with undesirable events in the life-cycle, the most common being the break-up of families by the death or desertion of one parent. The group was mainly formed by orphans and the substantial number of children whose parents or guardians could not afford to

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[35] *Informe de la Comisión de la Asamblea Depatamental, encargada de estudiar el problema de los obreros sin trabajo*, (Medellín, 1930).

maintain them: widows with children, large families with children very close in age, and the aged who were too old to work and did not have anyone to maintain them. The permanent poor are the most traditional group.

They have been defined as the deserving poor, who have nearly always received some form of help. Among this group the extended family and neighbourhood network was the most common source of help. However, if they did not have any informal aid, they might receive some institutional relief. Children were taken in on a temporary basis in the hope that as they grew up and acquired a minimal level of training, they might then be able to go out into the working world to earn their living. They stayed in hospices and orphanages where they were given bed and board as well as receiving some smatterings of education and training in some occupation, together with a great deal of spiritual guidance. Widows were helped in various ways, one of which was by offering the whole family bed and board in a hospice temporarily until their situation was resolved. Another possibility was to take the children into a home or orphanage and provide the mother with some sort of job which she could do at home to earn her family's keep, perhaps by providing her with one of the famous Singer sewing machines, prized appliances in poor families. The assistance offered to this group was always short-term and varied in nature, but it was closely linked to work possibilities. For a single mother to find help was not easy in the case of institutions linked with the Catholic church.[36] Large families might receive support through employment and gifts of food and clothes. For the aged the solution, albeit a gradual one, was to build old people's homes which could take them in, offer them bed and board and treatment if

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36 For example St. Vincent de Paul Society did not help single mothers; this was part of its statutes.

they fell ill, and generally care for them until they died. Before such separate homes were opened, those too old to work were shut away with the beggars and indigents.

What we find then is a process of differentiation. There were the deserving poor who were looked after and the undeserving poor who were punished. There were poor people with work and poor people without work. There were vagrants, beggars and indigents, even if it is often hard to establish the difference between them. There were orphans, poor widows and old people who were abandoned and in need. In the case of workmen and artisans, who had direct and visible links with the world of labour, some of them, in periods of unemployment and even at times when in work, or in old age, became dependent on forms of public social assistance or forms of private charity. In the case of the large group of urban beggars, who were cut off from the world of employment, social assistance had nothing to offer them except in well substantiated cases where there were justifiable reasons why they were not working or could not apply for work. In the case of individuals categorized as vagrants, this situation was associated not only with lack of work but also with presumed engagement in criminal activity. As for orphans, penniless widows and the aged who found themselves abandoned, all of whom formed a group which could be relatively 'multiclass', they received particular forms of care, though in limited supply.

The 'ideal poor'

Among all categories of the poor there was a theoretical idea about how the poor should be. Hence the 'ideal poor person' should be someone who worked responsibly and honestly, who spent his or her wages carefully and moreover tried to save part of them as well, a person who wanted to improve his or her skills, a person who had an

orderly personal life with a stable family, living in a tidy and clean house. To reach this exemplary life was almost an impossible task for anyone. However what we can see behind this conception of the 'ideal poor' is a notion which oriented and gave a certain homogeneity to poor relief, even though there were different categories of poor who received different kinds of aid and there were differing strategies in public *beneficencia* and private charity.

The main urge of poor relief in Colombia at the end of nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was the desire of the majority of the elite and the professionals to incorporate the poor as far as possible, as useful elements into a society which wanted to modernize. This main aim was not strongly linked with any political party or any particular government.[37] Poverty and poor relief were more and more included in the political debate and agenda, and in a way this inclusion gave certain legitimization to the political power.[38] Though between 1870 and 1930 we find some distinct emphases and priorities related with poverty and poor relief in each government, there was a general agreement about what sort of poor relief they desired to implement.[39]

We find that there were five main divisions -work, saving, education, family and hygiene- in the strategies of poor relief that were implemented in Colombia in these

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[37] See the contemporary writings of Salvador Camacho Roldán, Miguel and Jose María Samper, Rafael Nuñez, Miguel Antonio Caro, Rafael Reyes, Marco Fidel Suárez and Carlos E. Restrepo.

[38] See F. Martinez, 'Le Nationalisme Cosmopolite. La référence à l'Europe dans la construction nationale en Colombie, 1845-1900', (Paris 1 Univ. PhD. thesis, 1997), chapter eight.

[39] This atmosphere was not only developed in Colombia, we find it in most Latin American countries. See C. A. Hale, 'Political and social ideas in Latin American, 1870-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, (Cambridge, 1986), t. iv, pp. 367-441.

decades.[40] Poverty was still understood as a moral question and the strategies of poor relief were conceived as a process of moralization of the society.[41]

Provision of work was the central issue in poor relief. Work was the cure for poverty, it was redeeming; it was virtue. This idea was not new: in the sixteenth century the reformer Juan Luis Vives had stressed the significance of work and Jacques Le Goff has written that work had been seen as the best escape from poverty since early medieval times.[42] By the end of eighteenth century in New Granada work was being more and more related to wealth and well-being.[43] However, it is only at the end of the nineteenth century that work was stressed as the source of wealth, and the evangelical idea of redemption through work reappears as the idea of rehabilitation. Work was seen as a duty and it had to be done in a disciplined and honest way. Work categorizes the poor and helps to draw the line between the deserving and undeserving poor. It coloured the other issues, such as education and the family, encouraging the learning of any remunerative activity, to search for an honest job.

Work would not be seen only as a duty. Work gave wages but offered also the prospect of independence and freedom. To gain a surplus was essential: as Salvador

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[40] For similarities with other Latin American countries and with Europe, see for example W. E. French, 'Prostitutes and Guardian Angels: Women, Work and the Family in Porfirian Mexico', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, no. 72 (1992), pp 529-553, and A. Shubert, ' "Charity Properly Understood": Changing Ideas about Poor Relief in Liberal Spain', *Comparative Study of Society and History*, vol. 33, no, 1 (1991), pp. 38-55.

[41] See G. Procacci, *Gouverner la Misère. La Question Sociale en France, 1789-1848*, (Paris, 1993), chapter seven, and *Poor Citizens. Social Citizens and the Crisis of Welfare States*, (Florence, 1996).

[42] J. Le Goff, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages, (Chicago, 1980)*, p 199. Juan Luis Vives was a humanist and poor relief reformer. A Spaniard by birth, he spent the last years of his life in Bruges. His famous treatise about poor relief was dedicated to the magistrates of Bruges in 1526 but soon gained a European audience.

[43] See R. Silva, *Prensa y Revolución a finales del siglo XVIII*, (Bogotá, 1988), p. 107.

Camacho wrote 'el origen del capital es el ahorro'.[44] Encouraging savings was another main concern in poor relief. Saving was an important and vital complement of work. It meant moderation and dignity. Saving was seen as the salvation of vice. Saving taught frugality in life. Even though saving was desirable for all classes of society, it was stressed as a necessity for the poor. Saving was probably the issue that was most promoted at that time through articles in newspapers and magazines. Some of them were translations from the English or the French.[45] Public lectures were announced in newspapers. Near obligatory saving in small savings banks was promoted in industries, factories, workshops, mutual aid societies, and in educational establishments. These not only taught how important saving was, but also created small savings banks (see chapter three, four and five).

Moreover, the developing of saving was part of what was going to be the beginning of social security in Colombia. In 1916 the Congress organized a savings committee to counter the role of savings banks for retirement and insurance.[46] In 1936, La Caja de Ahorros y Previsión Social was established, a first step towards obligatory saving for all Colombian employees and workers to provide health and life insurance, and pensions.[47] Social security was first considered as saving.

Together with work and saving, provision of education was also seen as central to poor relief, not only in the sense of technical training, although great emphasis was

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[44] S. Camacho Roldán, *Notas de viaje, 1887*, (Bogotá, 1973), p. 59.
[45] For example, translations of *El Ahorro* of Samuel Smiles and *Artimética del ahorro y de la previsión*, of M. du Caju. See also *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 15 April 1920.
[46] *Memoria del Ministerio de Instrucción Pública al Congreso de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922).
[47] Law 66 de 1936, *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, 16 May 1936.

mathematics, side by side with spiritual education. Education for the poor was no longer considered in the restrictive, practical, and exclusively instrumental sense of the Enlightenment, but in a broader, more altruistic manner, serving utilitarian purposes and the formation of moral character.[48] In this respect it is worth pointing out the rarely mentioned fact that the various forms of assistance also provided an opportunity to promote technical training, and reorganized the need for workers to possess at least a minimal cultural level. Education was seen as morals, wealth, well-being.[49] Arts and crafts schools, night schools, Sunday schools, free primary schools were founded to teach poor people. Education in orphanages and beggars' asylums, was a central activity (see chapters three, four and five). Moreover it was held that certain categories of the poor, especially the undeserving, might be rehabilitated through education and work. The idea of rehabilitation was the optimistic side of positivism. This specific type of education was more directed at vagrants and criminals, and later, with exceptional emphasis, featured in prisons for juveniles.

An orderly life could not only be achieved through work, a proper control of spending and an adequate education. The family was the other fundamental institution for the process of moralization in poor relief. The family was seen as the corner-stone of society. The traditional Christian ideal of the family still had importance.[50] However

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[47] Law 66 de 1936, *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, 16 May 1936.

[48] The newspapers stressed that there were different kinds of education, moral, physical and intellectual, and that they should be taught all together. See for example *Los Principios*, Cali, 14 January 1876.

[49] S. Camacho Roldán, *Escritos Varios. Estudios sociales, intereses americanos, agricultura colombiana*, (Bogotá, 1892), p. 665.

[50] See O. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her. A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800*, (London, 1995), chapter one.

at that time there was growing emphasis on and respect for the family as a social unit.[51]

A stable family in which at least one parent was working had more possibilities of leading a dignified life than a single mother with her children, and ran less risk of falling into misery. A family which kept together was seen as the best. A permanent family was seen as the best protection for children. A stable family could offer better food, a better caring, a better growing environment for its children. Concern about childhood was pronounced at that time due to high infant mortality, and because there were few institutions that could protect children. (See chapters one, three and four). Most poor relief was indeed directed to established families rather than to single mothers who may well have needed it more. From 1912 legitimate children born began to outnumber the illegitimate.[52]

Moreover a stable family was seen as important for social hygiene.[53] Cohabitation, concubinage, illicit union, prostitution, and vagrancy were seen as promoters of illnesses such as tuberculosis, syphilis, and other venereal diseases, seen sometimes as epidemics. The family and education were linked with another new and vital issue, hygiene.

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[51] See H. Cunningham, 'Introduction', in H. Cunningham and J. Innes, *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform. From the 1690s to 1850*, (London, 1998), pp.1-15 and T. Martínez-Vergne, *Shaping the Discourse on Space. Charity and its Wards in Nineteenth-Century San Juan, Puerto Rico*, (Austin:1999), chapters four and five.
[52] See M. A. Urrego, op. cit., p. 224.
[53] See J. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, (New York, 1979).

Hygiene was seen as progress, morality and well-being. The main thrust of policy was to improve public hygiene and sanitation, especially in the cities. As we have seen in chapter one, hygiene policies were progressively included in the government agenda from the end of the nineteenth century, and by 1920 there was a board specifically for hygiene planning, for improvements in the urban infrastructure such as water-supply, sewers and drains, clean streets and backyards and garbage removal. The advance in general conditions was in part due to the increase in the number of Colombian doctors educated abroad, who encouraged significant improvements in social health as well as in medical practice.[54]

Poor health conditions related to the urban infrastructure were linked with defective housing. The most glaring example of this problem of inadequate urban housing were the *tiendas* in Bogotá, as we described in the previous chapter. An article in *El Tiempo* clearly exposed the importance of better housing for the poor: 'La casa debe corresponder a las exigencias sociales, morales e higiénicas... La casa limpia, aireada y amplia, no sólo se presta mejor para impedir la aparición y propagación de enfermedades infecciosas, si no que en ella la vida orgánica se cumple más armoniosamente y las generaciones nuevas crecen y se desarrolan sanas y vigorosas'.[55] There were housing programmes for workers and artisans in most of the big cities, carried out by private institutions or societies and by municipal councils

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[54] See C. Abel, 'Health, Hygiene and Sanitation in Latin American, c. 1870 to c. 1950', Paper, (London, 1996) and *Ensayos de Hsitoria de la Salud en Colombia, 1920-1990*, (Bogotá, 1996); A. Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, 1890-1940*, (Lincoln,1995). See chapter three.

[55] *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 5 April 1920.

(see chapter four), as well as programmes to eradicate illnesses which were thought to be linked with bad housing conditions, like tuberculosis.[56]

Hygiene was also linked to nutrition, especially as regards poor children. The programmes of the *Gotas de Leche*, described in chapter three, were an aspect of hygiene policy, as well as teaching programmes for mothers in charity hospitals on how to feed their children. In the free primary schools concern for nutrition was shown in the *restaurantes escolares*, supported by the parents of the children of each establishment and by ladies of the localities. (see chapter three). Teaching hygienic habits in primary schools and orphanages was considered important and it was an obligatory subject in the curriculum. The hygienic condition of the educational institutions was controlled through visits by the *Junta de Higiene*.

But there were also other policies that involved police control that were concerned more with most of the marginal poor, vagrants and particularly prostitutes. Venereal diseases programmes for women and men were set up to control and cure these types of illness in many municipalities. From 1918 the *Juntas de Higiene* and the police co-operated to control prostitutes, in the name of health and of social order.[57] And finally, combating vices, particularly alcoholism was also part of hygiene policy. In 1921 a programme was started to reduce the production, sale and consumption of alcoholic and fermented drinks, reinforced two years later.[58] In the 1940s there was an intense

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[56] In 1916 law 66 was passed to fight tuberculosis; it was modified in 1919 by the law 112.
[57] The dispensaries for venereal diseases, particularly for syphilis, were created by law 66 in 1916.
[58] Law 12 of 1921 and law 88 of 1923.

campaign against the production and consumption of *chicha* in Bogotá that ended with closing most of the *chicherias*.[59]

These five issues formed a moral pattern but also a rational model for poor relief that linked progress and poverty and, mixed moral commitment and social and economic exigency and expectation. This was the prominent pattern for most poor relief actions carried out in Colombia at this time.

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[59] See *Historia de Bogotá*, t. iii (Bogotá, 1989). *Chicha* was seen as the favourite alcoholic drink of the poor, and in fact was the drink most consumed.

III. INSTITUTIONAL POOR RELIEF

After giving a picture of poverty and a description of the categories of the poor in nineteenth century Colombia, particularly in the largest cities, the next step is the study of poor relief. In general terms, the practices of poor relief there can as elsewhere be grouped in two broad categories: institutional poor relief and outdoor poor relief. Institutional poor relief was the strategy of founding different establishments to give help to poor people. Outdoor poor relief was the strategy for giving aid to the poor outside these establishments in an organized way. It is important to stress that this division between the two strategies of poor relief was never absolute. Many institutions had multiple functions. Hospitals, almshouses and foundling homes were establishments that had various aims, and only in the nineteenth century did they acquire more specific functions. Many societies and organizations that participated in outdoor poor relief, founded, or cooperated with the institutions of poor relief.[1]

Institutional poor relief has been one of the most traditional ways of aiding the poor since the Middle Ages. The early establishment was the hospital, initially a house for travellers and for people who had nowhere to sleep, later designed to help the sick. Numerous such establishments were created, and with time with more specific functions. However, these establishments share some characteristics. Some of them, like orphanages, almshouses or asylums for beggars were closed establishments at the

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[1] See S. Woolf , 'Prefácio: Ideologias e prácticas de caridad na Europa ocidental do Antiguo Regime', in I. Do Guimarães Sá, *Quando o rico se faz pobre: Misericórdias, Caridad e Poder no Império Português, 1500-1800*, (Lisboa, 1997), pp. 7-13.

beginning, where the inmates were not allowed to have contact with outside people or not allowed to go out; slowly some were opened, while others remained closed. They were mainly established in towns. In the beginning they depended on the municipal governments and their foundation came from the initiative of the local people. It was common for these establishments to be ruled by religious orders.

Research into these institutions and establishments is a traditional approach in the history of charity. However, it can be carried out in a somewhat different manner. Institutions can be seen not only as places where certain activities happen and many people come together; they can also provide evidence of ways of thinking, in this case of ways of helping the poor.

In Colombia institutional poor relief commenced timidly in the colonial period. Some establishments were founded as early as the sixteenth century. Some colonial survivals were transformed during the nineteenth century, and others were created anew during the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth. Institutional poor relief at the beginning was a responsibility of the state, through the municipal authorities, and was supported by religious orders. During the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century the picture in Colombia becomes more broad, diverse and complex. This chapter outlines the evolution of institutional poor relief in Colombia. The sources for this chapter are diverse; however, the official reports of the establishments and the standing rules of the governing societies are the most important.

BEFORE 1870

Institutional poor relief, as we have stated, in Colombia began during the colonial period. The first establishments were the hospitals founded in the sixteenth century. The idea of the hospital was a broad one: a place to care for the sick poor, a place to give shelter to the elderly poor and to orphans, a place of rest for travellers and the homeless poor. Moreover they were also places for finding consolation and spiritual support at the approach of death. In Colombia the hospital was a place for 'el común remedio de los pobres enfermos y espiritual auxilio en las extremidades de la vida', as it was defined at that time.[2] It was the poor people who went to the hospitals for help, for shelter, or sometimes just looking for a place to repose with some attention, some food and a bed and, perhaps compassion and words of hope and forgiveness. Better off people would stay at home when they were ill, they would send for medical attention and the priest would visit.

The hospitals would provide the only institutional poor relief in most places during the colonial period and even until the first four decades of the Republic. It was only in the largest cities that the hospitals saw some transformations, and came to provide some medical education and some minimal scientific investigation. Only in Bogotá was a foundling house established in the seventeenth century; it had become a *general hospicio* by the late eighteenth century. It would remain almost the only institution of poor relief besides the hospitals until the 1860s.

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[2] 'Defensa del gobierno del Virrey Eslava hecha por el oidor Eslava', in G. Colmenares, *Relaciones e Informes de los Gobernantes de la Nueva Granada*, (Bogotá, 1989), t. 1, p. 58.

Hospitals.

The first hospitals in Colombia were founded in 1513 in Santa María La Antigua de Darién and in Cartagena. The Santa María La Antigua de Darién hospital was translated to Panama in 1524. Six years later a hospital in Santa Marta was established and fifty one years after these first hospitals, one was founded in Bogotá.[3] Not until the second half of the eighteenth century were hospitals founded throughout New Granada.[4] By the end of the colonial period there were hospitals in Santa Marta, Cartagena, Panamá, Bogotá, Popayán, Medellín, Cali, Velez, Pamplona, Tunja, Villa de Leyva, Mariquita, Mompox and Honda.

The foundation of a hospital was a process in which the local authority intervened and local resources were employed. The Hospital of San Pedro in Bogotá was founded by the first Archbishop Fray Juan de los Barrios y Toledo. He donated one of his houses in order to establish the hospital, and the Crown endowed it with an income. Ten years after its foundation the hospital showed irregularities in its administration, so the city council decided that it should be managed by a steward under its supervision. In 1603 the public prosecutor Aller de Villalobos wrote a detailed report about the hospital in which he records irregularities in its running and complaints about the attention it

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[3] A. Soriana Lleras, *Crónica del Hospital de San Juan de Dios desde su fundación hasta su administración por la Junta de Beneficencia de Cundinamaraca, 1564 - 1869*, (Bogotá, 1964), p. 7 and I. C. Bermudez, *Hospital de San Juan de Dios, remedios y júbilo eterno para Santiago de Cali*, (Cali, 1997), p. 42.

[4] A similar pattern can be found in some other parts of Spanish America, where the first hospitals were founded in the most important cities during the sixteenth century, with some new foundations in the eighteenth century, and significant growth of the network of hospitals in the second half of the nineteenth century. See C. Bradley Lewis, 'Medical care for the poor in Mexico City, 1770-1810: One Aspect of Spanish Colonial Beneficence', (Maryland Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1975); C. Escudé, 'Health in Buenos Aires in the second half of the nineteenth century', in D. C. M. Platt, *Social Welfare 1850-1950. Australia, Argentina and Canada compared*, (London, 1989), pp. 60–70, and R. F. Pineo, 'Misery and Death in the Pearl of the Pacific: Health Care in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1870-1925' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 70, no. 4 (1990), pp. 609-637.

provided, as well as outlining its structure. The staff of the hospital consisted of one doctor, one surgeon, one barber, one chaplain, one steward, one nurse and two persons responsible for the kitchen and cleaning. The chaplain and the ecclesiastic prosecutor lived in the hospital, occupying two beds that could be useful for the sick. The doctor was meant to visit the hospital every day, but he did so only every three or four days. The only person who actually supervised the hospital was the steward. Water and food were scarce. The *Real Audiencia* decided to improve the hospital under the supervision of the *oidores,* and replaced the persons who were in charge. However, there were still many complaints about the institution. By 1630 the King had entrusted the religious congregation of the Brothers of St. John of God with the running of the hospital, but it was only in 1635 that four members of the order came from Cartagena to take on the responsibility. The religious order of the Brothers of St. John of God had a long tradition, and aimed to treat illnesses which were considered curable. The surgical techniques and medical treatments then available to surgeons, physicians and nurses were known to them. They gave the sick poor the best treatment they could and the best attention, together with spiritual support.[5] Nevertheless the hospital still belonged to the diocesan chapter. By 1640 the hospital had thirty beds, twenty for men and ten for women.

A century later, by 1739, Bogotá had acquired a new hospital. Construction had started in 1723, based on the plan of the hospital of Granada in Spain. The new hospital was spacious, had one room for sick men and another for sick women, a room

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[5] See J. Riley-Smith, *Hospitallers. The History of Order of the St. John*, (London, 1999).

for a chaplain, an exceptional person, a room for the dying, one for lunatics, one for the disabled and a room for incurables. There was also a linen room and a pharmacy.

There were eight days of festivity in Bogotá to celebrate the inauguration of the new hospital. The new hospital and its reputation for sound administration brought donations. Viceroy Solís in 1762 gave new beds and linen.

In 1739 there were 403 sick people who went to the hospital in the course of the year and in 1767 the numbers had increased to 1,989.[6] In 1761 there were 150 beds, and by 1807 they had increased to 300. In the hospital at the end of the eighteenth century 'no sólo acogían a los pobres sino a clérigos, soldados, hombres y mujeres, no sólo de la ciudad y villas, que no hay hospital que recurren a éste, como que es lo único, y donde sin excepción de personas se admiten cuantas a él ocurre'.[7]

The foundation of the small hospital in Cali had some similarities to the Bogotá's, even though it occurred later, in 1752. Around 1740 the French doctor Leonardo Sudrot moved to Cali. He had arrived first in Bogotá in 1725 with the post of doctor to the Archbishop, attached to the church of Santo Domingo. He ran this obligation until 1732. When he was on his return trip to France via Buenaventura, he stopped in Cali and decided to stay. He made his first petition to the council for the foundation of a hospital in the city in 1748, and a second one in 1751. By 1752 he had obtained a house for the hospital and he received donations and alms to establish it. A year later

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[6] J. Vargas and G. Vera, 'Formas asistenciales y de beneficencia en Santafé: Hospitales, expósitos y hospicios', in J. Vargas, *La Sociedad de Santafé Colonial*, (Bogotá, 1990), pp. 261-297.
[7] Ibid.

the council requested the *alcaldes ordinarios* to appeal for alms on Sunday. The hospital was allowed funds from the *diezmo*, but this had to be shared with the hospital of Popayán. The hospital proved difficult to run, and Sudrot renounced the stewardship and recommended inviting the Brothers of St. John of God to run it. In 1759 two Brothers arrived. By 1805 the hospital had two rooms for the sick with thirty beds, and a room for the Brothers. However, to maintain the hospital in good condition and to provide food was a difficult task. It not only looked after poor people from the city, it also received outsiders: '... pues no son pocas las personas que de ella entran y salen por esta ciudad como preciso tránsito y muchos de los que llegan a ella son enfermos de la interperie y humedades de los caminos y como por lo general son cargueros, gente pobrísima y forastera padecen enfermedades, fuera de la dolencia, notable desabrigo'.[8]

As we can see, although hospitals were founded by particular persons, like clergy, doctors or citizens, they were controlled by the local authorities, and supervised by religious orders. They received donations from local residents and after a certain time they received support from the local government through specific taxes and endowments. Viceroy Pedro Mendieta in 1803 trusted the funds of the hospitals as 'haciendas de ganado, o posesiones urbanas que producen un arrendamiento; capitales procedentes de donaciones u otros títulos que se dan a censo redimible; la parte de diezmos que les está asignada y perciben en metálico, y las limosnas y agencias

[8] I. C. Bermudez, op. cit., p. 57.

honestas de los religiosos. Este último artículo es poco cosas del día'.[9] Although the funds appear substantial, managing them was a difficult task. The Viceroy stressed that the Brothers of St. John of God were not prepared for it, and suggested that it was important to have an official to manage the resources of hospitals who was not a Brother; Brothers were only good at looking after the sick poor. Managing the funds was undoubtedly more of a problem than finding resources. When Pedro Fermín de Vargas wrote the plan for the foundation of a hospital in Zipaquira in 1790, one of his major worries was the handling of the funds of the hospital.[10] He noted that it would be better for the local authorities to designate an official to run the hospital rather than any religious community. This person was to be under the supervision of the council. He thought that it was certainly possible to find sufficient funds to provide and to maintain the hospital. In this case we can see that the ambiguous situation of the Brothers of St. John of God -themselves depending on Spain directly, but running hospitals which depended on the local council- led to certain doubts, related chiefly to the handling of funds.

The hospitals were modest places, generally a small house with a few rooms. One of the most important needs was to have enough room to separate the sick by sex and by kind of illness, to have separate rooms for the infectious or for the gravely ill, to have rooms for the dying. They also needed to have enough space for the pharmacy, for a linen room, and for the Brothers. Few hospitals met these conditions; most of them

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[9] 'Relación del estado del Nuevo Reino de Granada, presentado por el Excmo. Sr. Virrey D. Pedro mendieta a su sucesor el Excmo. Sr. D. Antonio Amar y Borbón, 1803', in G. Colmenares, op. cit., t. III, p. 27.

[10] 'Plan de las constituciones que se presentan al excelentísmo señor virrey del reino para el hospital real de San Pedro de la parroquia de Zipaquira', in P. F. de Vargas, *Pensamiento político y memorias sobre la población del Nuevo Reino de Granada*, (Bogotá, 1953), pp. 97-111.

even had difficulty in providing two rooms in order to separate the sick by sex. They were generally precarious. They were inadequate for the necessities of the cities or towns where they were founded, and they were always helpless when faced with epidemics.

The hospitals were mainly founded to shelter the sick poor who did not have anywhere to suffer in their illness and no place to die. Throughout the colonial period the hospitals in the biggest cities, like Bogotá and Cartagena, were slowly transformed in to more 'scientific' establishments. They improved their attention to the sick in treatment and diet, as well as in conditions. By the eighteenth century some of the hospitals were also able to teach medical and surgical practices. In Bogotá the hospital was the origin of a faculty of medicine.

With the Independence movement it was considered important to know how many hospitals there were in New Granada, and where they were located. The Viceroy Don Francisco Montalvo attempted to carry out a hospital census. Besides the hospital in Bogotá he found hospitals in Pamplona, Popayán, Antioquia, Santa Marta and Cartagena. Cartagena had the only military hospital with a good endowment and it was also the only city which had two hospitals, one for the poor and one for lepers. He found that there were no hospitals in Veraguas, Darien or Riohacha and he did not receive any information from Neiva or Chocó.[11] The Brothers of St. John of God had the care of the hospitals in Cartagena, Santa Marta, Panamá, Bogotá, Tunja, Villa de

[11] 'Instrucción sobre el estado en que deja el Nuevo Reino de Granada el Excelentísmo señor Virrey don Francisco de Montalvo, en 30 de Enero de 1818, a su sucesor el Excelentísimo señor don Juan Samano', in G. Colmenares, op. cit., t. III, pp. 264-265.

Leyva, Vélez, Pamplona, San José de Cúcuta, Mariquita, Mompox, Soatá, Medellín and Cali. According to Viceroy Cerda, in 1772 the Brothers maintained 760 beds for the sick.[12] The order of St John of God, as we have said, was governed directly from Spain; however, the hospitals under their care were under local authority and subject to the inspection of the Viceroy. The hospital of Popayán was run by the Jesuits.[13]

The lack of official knowledge about how many hospitals there were and where they were situated shows that their foundation depended more on local initiative and local resources than on any general policy of the central government. However by the end of the colonial period there was a network of hospitals and a structure that would continue after Independence.

During the Independence period most of the hospitals had a difficult time. Charity hospitals were transformed into military hospitals. In Bogotá and Cartagena, military hospitals had to be established separately because there was not enough space for attending all the sick. The other problem was that the funds shrank. During the first three decades of the nineteenth century the hospitals faced an uncertain future regarding their funds, administrative staff and objectives. It was only after 1830 that the situation of the hospitals became more defined.

During the first years of the new republic, reforms tried to resolve the ambivalent situation relating to Brothers of St. John of God. By 1834 this was partly solved. The

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[12] G. Colmenares, op. cit., t. I, p. 265.
[13] After the Jesuits were expelled from New Granada, the Bethelemitas were in charge of this hospital.

government declared that the hospitals were the property of the new state with the rents and alms that they received. The Brothers were only servants with the duty of attending the sick poor. The state was to name two officers for the management of the hospitals, a trustee in charge of funds and a steward. The government recognized that the hospitals owed their existence to donations from various benefactors, and it tried to establish an obligation for the municipalities to support their hospitals. The Governor of a Province or his delegates was to oversee the condition of the institutions and see that their needs were provided for.

In 1837 the Hospital of San Juan de Dios in Bogotá was the object of two visits, one in August and another in October. Both reports said that the hospital was clean and tidy and that the sick people were happy with the attention they received; however the room for mad people was too small and inadequate. The second report suggested creating a special commission to find a solution for the lunatics. Both reports stressed that there were not enough beds, blankets or linen. They suggested that the charity and military hospitals should be combined together to reduce costs. The first report recommended better administration of the funds and clearer accounting; by the time of the second report, two months later, this problem appeared to be solved.[14]

However, this happy state of the hospitals in Bogotá did not survive twenty years after this. The report by doctor Jose Félix Merizalde, in charge for the hospital in 1858, showed a more complicated situation.[15] The Governor had made a contract in 1857 with the Archbishop, the director of the Congregation of Charity, to manage the

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[14] *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*, Bogotá, 20 August and 15 October 1837.
[15] J. F. Merizalde, *Informe del Hospital de Caridad*, (Bogotá, 1858).

hospitals. This Congregation was made up of women and they were placed in charge of the institution. Even though they acted from good motives and made some improvements, there were a lot of complaints relating to the accounts and the disorder in the hospitals. The complaints were intensified by a smallpox epidemic in the city: the demands on the hospitals increased without adequate response. This situation would have been very difficult for anyone managing the hospital, but it came on top of other complaints and made explanations necessary. The duties of the women of the Congregation of Charity were not clear. The hospital still had all the normal staff: a trustee, a steward, a doctor, nurses, a chaplain, cooks, washerwomen and cleaners: what then were the duties of the Congregation ? It is not easy to answer. Merizlade´s report tried to explain what the women did: they put in order the linen, repaired the watercourse for the hospital, had the hospital painted and the archbishop gave them money to provide better rooms for the lunatics. The money was collected through a charity bazaar and alms. However, the report showed the lack of sufficient funds for running a hospital of 130 beds.

Similar to the hospital in Bogotá were the hospitals in Cali and Medellín. During the Independence period the Cali hospital was transformed into a military one, by 1826 it had been moved out of the city and declared the responsibility of the municipality. However running it was fraught with difficulties and by 1844 it had to be closed.[16] By that time the building of the hospital in Medellín was also in ruins.[17] The ideas of hospitals as centres of institutional poor relief faded; concern for poor relief

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[16] I. C. Bermudez, op. cit., p. 107.
[17] P. Castro, 'Beneficencia en Medellín, 1800-1930', (Antioquia Univ.-Medellín, 1994), p. 70.

diminished temporarily, though when epidemics arose, crisis was evident and the worries emerged again.

By the 1860s the ambiguity of the colonial period concerning the management of the hospitals still remained, despite the *Desamortización de Bienes de Manos Muertas*, a political reform in 1861 by which the state took control of all church properties. In 1863 the local government of Bogotá reported that the hospital was in a really bad condition because its income from properties had ceased with the *Desamortización.*[18] Two years later the municipality set up a commission to see what funds it could recover.[19] In 1864 the municipality drew up a plan to ensure enough income from the *Desamortización* and to reduce expenditure, but it did not last much longer.[20]

During the Federal Period, 1863-1880, most of the hospitals suffered administrative changes. The hospital of Bogotá became the responsibility of the federal state government, then reverted again to the municipality; for a short period the hospital depended on the executive power of the national government itself.

These were years of confusion and difficulties for the hospitals because of all the administrative changes and these implications for the income of the hospitals. The municipality remained the body most commonly in charge of hospitals in Colombia at this time, with the support of some religious orders and lay societies.

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[18] *El Cundinamarques*. Funza. 9 July 1863.
[19] *Libro de Acuerdos de la Municipalidad de Bogotá.* (Bogotá, 1938).
[20] Ibid.

As a part response to this confusion and inefficiency, in 1860 the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá founded a new hospital, with the approbation of the municipality and with the assistance of Doctor Venancio Ortíz. The hospital started with four beds and provided medical attention in the Las Cruces neighbourhood. After a few months it moved to a bigger house in the Plaza of San Diego, and it was much occupied in attending casualties during the civil war of 1861. In 1865 the hospital moved again, to a bigger building in Las Aguas that had formerly been owned by the Dominicans. In 1872 the hospital was closed, as it was very expensive for the Society to maintain, and because the Hospital of San Juan de Dios was once again working well by that date.[21] During its twelve years in existence the hospital had looked after 1,255 people. Supporting the hospital there was a Society of *Beneficencia* formed by ladies, who helped to raise funds and to provide food and linen. After the Society had closed the hospital, it continued to make health visits to poor people. The building in Las Aguas became a primary school for boys and girls.

By 1870 strong current opinion insisted on the necessity of hospitals in the main cities. The ideas was supported by politicians, and particularly by the medical profession. There was greater clarity about how a hospital should be run, and about how important hospitals were, not only for sheltering the sick poor, but also for all the health of all the population in times of epidemic, and for improving the general level of medical knowledge.[22] In Bogotá the *Junta General de Beneficencia* was created in

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[21] *Papel Periodico Ilustrado*, Bogotá, 15 May 1883.

[22] In 1868, for example, the Universidad Nacional held its medical classes in the hospital of St. John of God and the students had to help attend the sick there. A. Soriano Lleras, op. cit., p. 66.

1869, having responsibility for all charitable institutions, and in Medellín and Cali the hospitals were also declared public charities.

Orphanage and *Hospicio*

Colonial society was also concerned about orphans. Although it was common to welcome into the family an orphan relative, many towns desired the foundation of an orphanage. However, it was only in Bogotá that an orphanage became a reality in the colonial period. In the middle of the seventeenth century the local authorities asked the Brothers of St. John of God to give lodging to orphans in their house, as long as there were not enough resources to open a proper orphanage. The local authorities tried to take over the ground floor of the hospital for an orphanage. This presented health problems for the foundlings. They decided to establish the orphanage in a house near the church of San Victorino, where it remained for more than a century. This foundation was relatively early, if we take into account that the foundling house in Mexico was only established in 1766 or 1767.[23]

The orphans were looked after by the institution until they were six years old. After six, the white and mestizo boys were adopted by families or were sent out to work with skilled workmen. The white and mestiza girls were sent to 'good' houses. The Indians were sent back to their birth places and black children became slaves again.

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[23] P. Gonzalbo, 'La Casa de Niños Expósitos de la ciudad de México. Una fundación del siglo XVIII'. *Historia Mexicana*, no. 123, (1982), pp. 409-430.

The orphanage was under the authority of an *oidor*. He had to raise funds for the maintenance of the institution. A steward managed the funds, a *madre beata* was in charge of the daily activities of the orphanage, supported by a priest and servants who cooked and cleaned and, wet-nurses looked after and fed the children. The wet-nurses had to stay in the orphanage while they weaned the children; they could then take the children to their homes and come every week to the orphanage with the children to show their state of health. They received a sum of money and help for food. However, the wages were inadequate to attract any but the most desperately poor and frequently unhealthy women. The occupation of wet-nurses was typical of the kind of work done by wives of the working poor. It could be done in addition to caring for a family, and in conjunction with other jobs that kept the family going.

The child often arrived wearing no more than a shift or a shawl, to the tattered ends of which might be pinned a note. Unless wrapped in bloody rags, which was sometimes the case, or in lace and finery, which was unusual but not unheard of, the baby went out to the nurse dressed as it had come in. Many were sickly, frail, and weak. Some were half dead from the journey in a cart or on the back of some porter, who took them along as he would have any other package to be delivered. Others had been left by desperately poor parents who could not bear to watch their child starve. The children were left in a revolving door. Some money might be left as well. The orphanage only asked whether the children were baptized.

The reasons for abandonment at the orphans were related to the migration to the cities and the processes of miscegenation, with the birth of illegitimate children that these process brought, and were a product of poverty in general.

Together with the orphanage there was the *Casa de Recogidas o de Divorcio*, a place to shelter women abandoned by their husbands or women of 'not good life'. The women of this establishment led an enclosed conventual life.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the orphanage and the *Casa de Recogidas* became part of the *Real Hospicio*; the male section was organized in the house of the orphanage, and the *Casa de Recogidas* and the female section were accommodated in the house of the Jesuit noviciate, at the time the Jesuits were expelled from the New Granada by the Spanish Crown. Both institutions followed the rules of the *hospicio* and shared the problem of funding resources. The *Real Hospicio* received the seventh part of the *diezmos* that were paid for *fábricas* and hospitals.[24] The problem of finding funds for these sort of institutions was not only a problem in New Granada or in the other Spanish colonies; it was a problem as well in Madrid. The income the *Inclusa* in Madrid received from parish alms declined dramatically over the eighteenth century. By 1800 this form of support had become as obsolete and inadequate as the collection box had been at the end of the sixteenth century. However, it is clear that the Crown and the city of Madrid, despite their own financial problems, were always generous. [25]

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[24] J. Vargas and G. Vera, op. cit., p. 284.
[25] J. Sherwood, *Poverty in Eighteenth-Century Spain. The Women and Children of the Inclusa*, (Toronto, 1988), p. 23.

The *Real Hospicio* founded in Bogotá was the only one in New Granada for almost a century. It was established by the Viceroy Zerda around 1770. It was seen as a solution to the presence of numerous beggars in the city. According to the census of 1800 there were 500 beggars in Bogotá.[26] Moreover, the establishment of the *hospicio* was also a response to the new legislation after 1750 which developed a system of poor relief designed to limit the distribution of alms to the deserving poor, to impose severe restrictions on mendacity and to establish institutions of confinement for the indigent. The new ideas of charity considered it desirable to centralize alms in an institution with the clear aim of education, in the place of individual charity to beggars. One supposes that giving alms to beggars was a common practice at that time. Greater police control was desirable; beggars should be confined in an institution instead of wandering the streets. Archbishop Córdoba synthesized in 1789 the aims of the foundation of the *hospicio*: 'Para conseguir ambos objetos de recoger y hacer útiles los ociosos y acaso criminosos disfrazados con los trapos de la mendicidad, y alimentar los que estan verdaderamente impedidos de trabajar, se pensó en el establecimiento de hospicio'.[27]

In 1774 the council issued its ban against begging. The *hospicio* had to be improved. The male and female sections were located together in a large house in the neighbourhood of Las Nieves. Twenty years later the *hospicio* was enlarged through the intense activity of the Viceroy Ezpeleta to raise funds. In 1789 the *hospicio*

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[26] J. Vargas and G. Vera, op. cit., p. 288.
[27] 'Relación del estado de Nuevo Reino de Granada, que hace el arzobispo de Córdoba a su sucesor el excelentísimo señor don Francisco Gil y Lemos, 1789', in G. Colmenares, op. cit., t. I, p. 421.

contained 222 men and women, and 47 children.[28] In 1796 the *hospicio* is recorded as sheltering 200 poor people.[29]

However the running of the *hospicio* was not always easy. Sometimes the problem was funds and, at other times the difficulty was control over the institution. Francisco Silvestre criticized the establishment and gave a good view of the problem of begging: 'Desde su principio [los hospicios] tomaron auge. Y comenzaron a decaer en el tiempo en que parecerian debe tomar mayor buelo a favor de la verdadera necesidad, y para correcion y contencion de la Ociosidad Vagamunderia. Dicen que resulta de la decadencia de las Rentas. Quando no puedan restablecerse deben proponerse nuevas y mayores al Rey; pues no dudo que las conceda, para que, ya no pudieran mantenerse estas Casas públicas en otra parte, fuesen a lo menos la de esta Capital para ambos sexos, como la Casa y Caja General de Correcion del Reyno. Por este y otros defectos de policia, resulta que es por el contrario esta Capital el receptaculo donde se hallan a cubierto todos los viciosos de otras partes, a mas de los propios; aunque aplicados los remedios convenientes podria emplearse mucha gente ociosa, quitandola de ellos; y aun sacarse varias familias para otras nuevas poblaciones donde convenga, y hacer retirar muchos yndios a sus pueblos, o hacerlos trabajar, igualmente que otros que no lo son'.[30]

He also recommended that the Viceroy should ask the King to appoint a *corregidor* for the *hospicio*, as was done for the *hospicio* in Mexico City and had been done in

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[28] Ibid.
[29] J. Vargas and G. Vera, op. cit., p. 292.
[30] F. Silvestre, *Descripción del Reyno de Santa Fe de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1950), p. 42

Quito.[31] Archbishop Córdoba advised that one way to get more funds for the *hospicio* was to put the paupers to work for the institution which would also help to reform them. Some looms were installed in the *hospicio*. The *Real Hospicio* at the end of the colonial period was an institution more open than the orphanage and *Casa de Recogidas*; it was a correctional and educational place.

The *hospicio* in Bogotá was part of the reform of poor relief carried out after 1750 by the Spanish crown which represents a clear stage in the secularization of assistance. The everyday functioning of the hospicio depended on the municipality.

During the Independence period the *Real Hospicio* housed the first battalion of volunteers. The space for the inmates was reduced considerably and the funds for the institution almost vanished.[32] It was a difficult time for the establishment. After Independence the *hospicio* was re-named the *Casa de Refugio* and was completely reorganized, like the hospitals. By 1834 the *Casa de Refugio* was controlled by an administrative council, which was part of the provincial government. The council had the duty of inspecting the establishment and appointed the person in charge of it. There was a director, a treasurer, a chaplain, a steward and a doctor. The director had the obligation of visiting the *Casa* every day, and once a week in the evening, to determine what was necessary; he had also to organize the expenditures, and had to present every four months to the administrative council a report on everything related to the establishment. The treasurer had to keep three books, with the income,

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[31] The *hospicio* of Mexico, the largest in all the Spanish colonies during the colonial period, was founded in 1774; the Quito *hospicio* disappeared around 1780.

[32] J. M. Cordovez Moure, *Reminicencias de Santafe y Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1976), p. 918, first edition 1895.

expenditure, and information about the people in the hospice. The chaplain, besides having the duties of a priest, -the mass every Sunday, the other sacraments and spiritual help- had the duty of teaching the male inmates how to write, read and count, and had to teach all inmates 'las reglas de buena moral'.[33] The stewards, one for the men and one for the women, lived in the establishment and were in charge of order in everyday life. They had to provide the clothes and food to all.

The inmates had to get up at five thirty every morning and they then had one hour to wash themselves and to tidy the rooms. They then had to go to church to the mass, and they had to say the rosary during the week, before breakfast. Later they went to their different labours; carpentry, shoemaking and tailoring, until ten thirty when they had lunch. From eleven thirty to four in the afternoon they had to continue their work and then had dinner. At five they had to show their work to the person in charge and finally at seven they had to go to church again to attend moral and Christian instruction. By eight they had to be in their rooms. On Sundays or holidays they had entertainment and the inmates of good behaviour were allowed to go out after lunch until two; the women could only go out in the company of the steward.

The *Casa de Refugio* sheltered adults, young people and children at the same time. They were divided only by sex. The foundlings were received in the women's section, after they were christened by the chaplain and the steward had found wet-nurses. The wet-nurses had the obligation to bring back the child every Sunday. In 1837 there

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[33] *Reglamento de la Casa de Refugio, instrucción i beneficencia de Bogotá, acordado por el Concejo Administrativo de la misma casa, i aprobado por la Camara de Provincia*, (Bogotá, 1834), p. 11.

were 120 inmates and 60 foundlings, according to the visitation made by the Governor.[34]

The *Casa de Refugio* was a state institution, depending on a provincial government, and was run by people named by this government. A priest was in charge of part of the education. Craft training was substantial in the establishment. The leaders saw in this the only way that the inmates could be made useful to society afterwards, especially the young. The report of the visit of June 1839 suggested that it was important to check which adult people were in suitable condition to be put out of the institution, on condition that they did not beg in the streets, in order to give more space to young people.[35]

In 1865 the *Casa de Refugio* was declared an establishment of instruction, *beneficencia* and charity; 'destinado exclusivamente a proporcionar la subsistencia a las personas desvalidas, que no pueden trabajar, expuestos a los riesgos de la miseria, y a la crianza y educación de lso niños expósitos hasta aquela edad que se puedan valerse por sí mismo y adquirir con el producto de su trabajo lo necesario para subsistir'.[36] It was stressed that the institution was not a place of punishment or correction; it was a place for honest people. Children were admitted under twelve years old when they were orphans, or under ten years old when they were children of a prisoner. They could stay until they were fourteen years old, or until some relative came to ask for them with sufficient proof of the relationship. The municipality

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[34] *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*, Bogotá, 15 October 1837.
[35] *Gaceta de la Nueva Granada*, Bogotá, 30 June 1839.
[36] *Libro de Acuerdos de la Municipalidad de Bogotá*, op. cit.

created two primary schools, one for boys under the rule of a chaplain, and one for girls under the direction of a teacher.

The income of the *Casa* in 1868 came in part from the municipality and the department, some from the letting of its properties, and from the sale of things that the inmates made and donations.

The *Casa de Refugio* from the republican times almost fulfilled the aim of the enlightened people who had encouraged the *Real Hospicio*, as a place to shelter and to reform as well as to educate the poor people. These first two periods of the *hospicio* result in the consolidation of this establishment and was the model for the following institution involed in sheltering the orphans and beggars. Later this institution tried to break the ambiguity that it had been involved in since the colonial period, the relation between the state and the church. The principles of education for the inmates would continue together with the idea of being useful for society mainly through work. The *hospicio* was seen more as a place to shelter and reform the beggars than a place of confinement. Although the *Casa de Refugio* could respond to a general notion about poor relief the actual functioning of it still remained the responsibility of the municipality.

BETWEEN 1870 AND 1920

Institutional poor relief before 1870 was precarious was concentrated in the largest cities and focused mainly on attention to sick poor, but with a desire to give more help to the deserving poor, and to control the beggars. The establishments concerned were hospitals mostly in the large cities, the *hospicio* in Bogotá and some foundling houses and orphanages. After 1870 institutional poor relief changed, and establishments grew in number and spread throughout the country.

The process of secularization which started in the liberal governments of mid-century and the reallocation of responsibilities between the local, regional and national governments during the period of federalization affected the running of institutional poor relief. At the same time worries about the multiplication of beggars in the cities increased, and were expressed in many articles in the press. The classic, the best known, was the article by Miguel Samper about poverty in Bogotá published in 1867. By 1870 the Liberal governments had tried to design and to implant some reforms. For the first time there appeared a clear 'social policy', independent from other policy areas like economics or the law. Though the Liberal governments introduced the 'social' into the agenda, the subsequent Conservative governments were to contribute significant developments.

At that time the Liberals directed their main effort towards institutional poor relief in the field of education. They separated education from *beneficencia*, giving the *Junta de Instrucción Pública*, the responsibility for education, and the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*, which received the duties of the institutional poor

relief in 1869.[37] The aim was to establish a structure for the running of institutional poor relief.

The *Junta de Instrucción Pública* was to promote education with particular emphasis on free primary schools. The *Junta General de Beneficencia* was charged with health and poor relief. The Junta was the leader which organized the hospitals, the *hospicio* and the poor relief establishments that were then founded. It was the institution for control of all the establishments of *beneficencia*, the first attempt to centralize institutional poor relief. The Junta was an official organization. It was a regional organization, and it was dependent on the department. Although this type of Junta at first existed only in the Cundinamarca department, it was conceived as the model for structuring poor relief that was to be followed by the other departments in the country. When the Conservatives reached power and throughout the period of the *hegemonía conservadora*, 1880-1930, the structure of the Junta remained.

The Junta had the responsibility for administrating all the properties related to the establishments of *beneficencia*. The Junta had to draw up the rules of the establishments, to designate those responsible for managing the institutions; it had to check all accounts, had to find enough income and had to visit the establishments once a month. In the 1900 codification of the laws of Cundinamarca, the *Junta General de Beneficencia* is treated in the *Tratado Septimo*.[38] This again gave all the responsibilities of the Junta in detail, but it did not change the duties that the *Junta*

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[37] *Compilación de Leyes y Ordenanzas de la Beneficencia y Asistencia Social de Cundinamarca, 1869-1942*. (Bogotá, 1942), p. 3.
[38] J. Restrepo Hernández, *Codificación de Cundinamarca*, (Bogotá, 1900), p. 649.

had had since 1869. It added the duty of controlling all the establishments of *beneficencia* in Bogotá. In the *Tratado* also appear other new juntas called special juntas. They tried to reinforce the small juntas that had been founded in 1888, where there were hospitals outside Bogotá, which received some help from the department of Cundinamarca.[39] These small juntas had not worked properly. There was a network of twelve hospitals in Cundinamarca.[40] In 1912 the Junta received another duty: it was to visit and check up on all the establishments which obtained some public help in Bogotá.[41]

The structure of the Junta had a clear hierarchy. The members of the Junta were designated by the regional authority -the president of the federal state during the Federal regimen and then the governor of the department-. Although members of the Junta were nominated by the political authorities, they usually remained in the office for many years. It seems that political changes did not imply changes in the make up of the Junta. There was stability. Bernardino Medina was president of the Junta for fourteen years, Juan Manuel Restrepo and Lino de Pombo both for ten years, and Clemente Matiz Fernández for four years. Domingo A. Maldonado was the secretary of the Junta for sixteen years and Carlos N. Maldonado for twenty-six years.[42]

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[39] *Compilación*, op. cit., p. 21.
[40] By 1894 there were hospitals in Ubaté, Zipaquira, Pacho, Guatavita, Guasca, Sopo, Chocontá, La Mesa, Guaduas, Facatativá, Cáqueza, Fusagasugá. Ibid., p. 691.
[41] Ibid, p. 37.

[42] *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922), p. xi.

The Junta nominated those in charge of the establishments which depended on it. All the establishments had a director; in the case of very small establishments one person could be director and trustee; otherwise there was also a trustee; and a secretary. There were also doctors and chaplains. The domestic administration was generally in the hands of a religious order.

The stability of these people in their duties was also well known. Daniel Merizalde was the trustee of the *Asilo de Locas* from 1886 until his death in 1921; Luis Brigard was the trustee of the *hospicio* for seven years; Carlos Michelsen and Eugenio Umaña were trustees of the hospital of St. John of God and the *hospicio* respectively for five years.

However, there were worries about the bureaucratization of the Junta. They were expressed in a newspaper article 'Los peligros para la Beneficencia', when a proposal was made to have the trustee named by the governor: 'entrarán en juegos las intrigas para las designaciones; los puestos de que tratamos serán codiciados sólo por los sueldos.... Siempre ha estado ella [la Beneficencia] compuesta de caballeros de la más alta respectabilidad social; y en la conciencia pública está que si este ramo se burocratizara, los establecimientos de caridad, de que la Junta cuida y ha cuidado con solicitud extrema, sufrían inmesamente'.[43] This suggests that although the Junta was a state agent, its functioning was seen as standing apart from politics; the Junta had a special way of acting, independent from political pressure and apart from the political confrontation.

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[43] *El Correo Nacional*. Bogotá, 27 June 1892.

Although we do not have information about all the members of the Junta, we know that some of them had important political responsibilities. Manuel Murillo Toro was Colombian president twice: 1864-1866 and 1876-1878; Alvaro Uribe was Mayor of Bogotá from 1908 to 1909, and Juan Obregón had a political career in Santa Marta. Some of the others members pursued scientific activities, like Francisco Bayón who was a teacher and member of the Society of Medicine, and Carlos Michelsen who was a naturalist. However some members were entirely dedicated to charitable activities; this was the case of Luis de Brigard, who 'consagro su fecunda existencia en forma total y ejemplar al servicio de los desvalidos, especialmente a la Beneficencia de Cundinamarca'.[44] Although we do not have detailed information on all the members of the Junta, most of them were professionals and belonged to Bogotá's elite.

By 1919 there were eight establishments in Bogotá dependent on the *Junta General de Beneficencia*: *Hospital de San Juan de Dios*, *Asilo de Locos*, *Asilo de Locas*, *Hospicio*, *Asilo de San José para Niños Desamparados*, *Asilo de Preservación para Niñas*, *Asilo de Indigentes de Mujeres* and *Colonia de Mendigos de Sibaté*. Meanwhile in the other large cities institutional poor relief began to expand, at first mostly under the aegis of municipal governments, eventually by the departmental governments, but without replicating the *Junta General de Beneficencia*.

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[44] J. M. Restrepo Sáenz, *Genealogías de Santafé*, (Bogotá, 1991), p. 348.

Hospitals

The hospital of San Juan de Dios was still the only hospital in Bogotá in 1870. The hospital belonged to the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca* and had very clear rules. The main aim of the hospital was to give free help to poor people. The hospital also continued to teach medicine. The hospital was slowly transformed into a hospital for social assistance, with a certain scientific purpose as well.

The hospital had its own clear internal structure. There were three kinds of employees: superior, scientific and inferior. The superior were named by the Junta: an inspector, a trustee, a chaplain and a steward. The scientific ones were also named by the Junta: two doctors, one for the male and another for female sections; three teachers, one for obstetrics, another for chemistry and another for clinic medicine; four students of medicine, two internal and two external; and two persons for the pharmacy. The inferior employees were named by the trustee: four nurses, who could name up to twelve servants; one assistant for the pharmacy, one porter, one messenger, one person in charge of the linen, who named six washerwomen; one person in charge of the cooking, who named four cooks; a servant who cleaned the lavatories and the pathology section, and one sacristan named by the chaplain.

The superior employees of the hospital had the responsibility for the institution. The inspector had to visit the hospital weekly to check the accounts and give a report to the Junta. The trustee had to visit the hospital daily, to keep all the accounts, to supervise all the new acquisitions and the behaviour of all employees, to represent the hospital in any judicial problem. The steward had to control all the activities, to take care of the infrastructure of the hospital and to help keep the register of deaths. The

chaplain had to take care of the moral behaviour of the institution, to teach religion to the employees and the sick, to give the sacraments when the sick needed them and to keep the register of births and deaths. The hospital was not only a centre of social assistance and teaching; it was also an important place of registration of births and deaths, a state responsibility.

The internal running of the hospital did not change until the coming of the Soeurs de la Charité de la Présentation. Six sisters arrived in Bogotá in 1874 to take care of the internal running of the hospital. The Sisters of Charity were a well-known French religious order, founded in 1696 and following the Filles de la Charité, which had been founded sixty-three years before.[45] They were mainly dedicated to education and nursing. A long diplomatic and political process had been needed to bring the Sisters of Charity to Colombia.[46] The Junta had to collect enough money to pay the passage and maintenance of the first sisters, and before that to make the right connections in France to convince them that Colombia was a safe place for the sisters. After the first nuns arrived in the hospital in Bogotá, more came to serve in futher establishments in Bogotá and elsewhere. By 1891 when Sister Marie Saint-Guatier came to visit all the places where the Sisters of Charity were established, there were Sisters of Charity in sixteen cities.[47]

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[45] J. Colin, *The Charitable Imperative. Hospitals and Nursing in Ancien Regime and Revolutionary France*, (London, 1989), p. 99.
[46] F. Martinez. 'Le nationalisme cosmopolite. La référence à l'Europe dans la construction nationale en Colombie. 1854 -1900', (Paris I Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1997), pp. 570-587
[47] Sister M. Saint-Gautier, *Voyage en Colombie*, (Paris, 1895). The cities were Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Pamplona, Tunja, Sogamoso, Chiquinquirá, Honda, Ocaña, Bucaramanga, Piedecuesta, San Gil, Socorro, Manizalez, Neiva.

The Sisters of Charity ran the internal daily life of the hospital of San Juan de Dios in Bogotá. They had the care of the sick, the responsibility for the pharmacy; they had to arrange all the cleaning and cooking in the institution, and keep the linen. According to the report of the Junta for 1875, the hospital was running well and the aid of the sisters had been vital to the institution. This report mentions a girls' orphanage in the hospital; the sisters took care of them.[48] A visit of 1918 gives the data of 46 girls between fifteen and eighteen in the orphanage. The girls helped in the running of the hospital while they received basic education from the sisters.[49]

By 1883 the hospital had 300 beds. The hospital was still seen mostly as a charity institution for the poor. Pedro María Ibañez wrote in that year that: 'La clase pobre, que sufre enfermedades mas frecuentes que la acomodada, y que por lo mismo hecho de la pobreza no puede atender su curación a domicilio, encuentra en el Hospital todos los auxilios que la ciencia posee para aliviar y curar las enfermedades'.[50]

During the decade of 1910 the hospital gradually increased its assistance. By 1911 the hospital attended 5,907 sick; in 1913, 5,407; in 1917, 7,757; in 1918, 7,930; 1919, 8,736 and 1920, 8,488.[51]

However, in 1918 a commission designated by the *Asamblea Departamental* visited the hospital and found worrying conditions. The sick were overcrowded, some were

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[48] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta Jeneral de Beneficencia dirije a la Gobernación del Estado Soberano de Cundinmarca en 1875*, (Bogotá, 1875).
[49] *Informe de la Comisión que visitó los Establecimientos de Caridad dependientes de la Junta General de Beneficencia*, (Bogotá, 1918), p. 5.
[50] *Papel Periodico Ilustrado*, Bogotá, 15 May 1883.
[51] See Reports of the Junta of 1914, 1918, 1919 and 1920.

even on the floor; the rooms had a nauseating smell; the linen was dirty; the lavatories were few and were in bad condition; the pharmacy did not have basic medicines.[52] They proposed that the hospital should be moved to a new location: La Hortua. This was purchased by the Junta to build a mental hospital.

Nevertheless the hospital improved in other ways during the decade. The surgery room, the men's room and the external consulting room were repaired; an ambulance and an x-ray machine were bought. The teaching was improved, with new classrooms and more modern equipment. In 1920 the decision to build a modern hospital in the Hortua was taken.[53]

Apart from the Hospital of San Juan de Dios, in Bogotá there was another hospital for the poor: the hospital of La Misericordia which had been founded by the doctor José Ignacio Barberi in 1897, for looking after poor children. Although it was a hospital founded by a private citizen, in this case by a doctor, it received aid from the state and charity donations, and help from the Sisters of Charity.

Similar in its evolution to the hospital of San Juan de Dios in Bogotá, was the hospital of San Juan de Dios in Medellín. Both had the same internal structure. The hospital of San Juan de Dios of Medellín established a medical faculty in 1872, and asked for

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[52] This description of a servant's operation in 1918 illustrates the condition of the hospital in Bogotá: 'Shortly after departure the doctors said that María should undergo an operation, and she was taken to the city hospital, at the time so crowded that one-half of the patients, nearly one thousand in number, some of them surgical cases, were lying on the floors -the cold brick floors of clammy Bogotá! María was operated upon, successfully, and the doctors said that she should be quite right within a few days. Two nights later the nuns, who are the only nurses, had the patient sit up in a chair while they changed the bed linen. María died from a haemorrhage a little later -a useful life sacrificed to ignorance'. M. N. Williams, *The Least of These in Colombia*, (New York, 1918), p. 64.

[53] See Reports of Junta of 1914, 1918, 1919 and 1920.

four Sisters of Charity in 1876. The hospital of Medellín encountered more problems than the one in Bogotá, until in 1904 a decree reorganized the hospital. There had been complaints about the general performance of the hospital, and even about the Sisters of Charity.[54] The most difficult moments were during civil wars: casualties and prisoners increased the demands.

In 1890 the hospital had 109 beds and between 1888 and 1890 it looked after 1,341 sick people. During the decade of 1910 new wards were opened, and the capacity was enlarged to 200 beds, and the teaching was improved. In 1913 the decision to build a new and modern hospital was taken. The initiative was shared by the departmental government and some Medellín citizens.

The history of the only hospital in Cali followed the evolution of the hospitals in Bogotá and Medellín, but more slowly. The hospital of Cali also experienced difficult times during the civil wars, especially during the civil war of 1876. In 1884 four sisters from the well-known French religious order Daughters of Charity arrived.[55] A group of citizens led by a Franciscan had worked to bring them and prepare the hospital for their arrival. The hospital improved, but only experienced a major change in the decade of 1910. In 1911 a new agreement between the hospital and the municipality of Cali was made in order to establish a clear structure and more modern

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[54] P. Castro, op. cit., p. 73.

[55] The religious order of the Daughters of Charity was the largest and most important women's religious order in France at that time. There were over 9,000 sisters in 1878. Oddly in Colombia this religious order was less important than the Sisters of Charity. The Daughters of Charity were only established in the south west of Colombia. By 1907 there were 158 Daughters of Charity who looked after 21 institutions.

care. In 1919 the hospital was extended, giving a new surgery and maternity rooms; a pharmacy and new equipment.[56]

A similar process can be seen in the hospital of Cartagena. For several years the hospital was moved from one place to another, until in 1884 the Saint Clara convent was designated for the hospital. Sisters of Charity arrived to assume the duties of running the hospital. In 1888 a new decree reformed the structure of the hospital along the lines of the hospitals in Bogotá, Medellín and Cali. In 1890 some material improvements were started, new wards for the sick, for surgery and maternity. In 1922 a junta was formed of the governor and the local doctors to promote a modern hospital.[57]

In Bucaramanga in 1873 the hospital was partially reformed with the support of doctors and the ladies' society of *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*. In 1888 four Sisters of Charity arrived to take responsibility for the hospital, after a long campaign to collect the money in bazaars led by the parish priest and the *Junta de Beneficencia*. In 1893 a total rebuilding of the hospital began.[58]

During this period the hospitals experienced some improvements, found better locations and more scientific attention. The fulfilment of these improvements depended on the local resources and on the enterprise of the directors, doctors or local or regional authorities. The administration of the hospitals depended on the municipal

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[56] I. C. Bermudez, op. cit., pp. 129-142.
[57] E. Simancas, 'El papel de los religioso y de los médicos en la caridad y asistencia pública en Cartagena, 1895-1925', (Cartagena Univ.- Cartagena, 1998), pp. 19-36.
[58] J. J. García, *Crónicas de Bucaramanga*, (Bucaramanga, 1944).

governments, but began to receive some support from the departments, as happened with the hospitals of Medellín or Cartagena. The presence of female religious orders in the hospitals was new, and it signified a big change in the hospitals' daily life and in care of the sick, even though these changes sometimes brought conflicts. The hospitals remained public institutions but under the management of these religious orders.

The Leper Villages

Apart from the hospitals, the other health institution that was important in the relief of certain poor people was the leper villages. At that time leprosy was known as an incurable and contagious illness, lepers needed different and special treatment. The first leper hospital was founded in Cartagena around 1608-1610. Only in 1861 a leper village was founded in Contratación, Santander and ten years after, in 1871, the third in Agua de Dios, Cundinamarca. They were known as Lazaretos.

The first leper asylum was conceived as a hospital for lepers, and was called the Hospital de San Lazaro. It was established in Cartagena and it was only moved to an isolated location between 1790 and 1795. The Crown ordered its removal to an island called Caño de Loro. This hospital became more like a leper village, and it served for interning all the lepers of New Granada. The Lazareto of Caño de Loro received support from the state; however, charity was also important for maintaining the village.

Confining lepers derived from the idea that leprosy was a highly contagious illness and therefore required isolation. This was related to the prohibition of begging in the streets and the general notions of city order at the end of the eighteenth century.

Until 1860 this leper village remained the only one in Colombia. When the other two new leper villages -Contratación and Agua de Dios- appeared, the leper population was distributed. The Lazareto de Caño de Loro received lepers from the north of the country, the Lazareto de Contratación assisted lepers from the east and the Lazareto de Agua de Dios was for lepers from the centre and south west.

The Lazareto de Agua de Dios was an institution of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*; the Caño de Loro had *Junta Administradora* named by the department of Bolivar. Although all departments were meant to levy a tax to support the Lazaretos, the departments where they were situated complained that they did not receive enough funds from the others. There was a permanent confrontation on this issue. The three departments which had the Lazaretos made more effort to keep them in good condition.

According to a British report of 1890, the Lazareto de Agua de Dios held 500 lepers and Contratación 390.[59] The conditions in Agua de Dios were precarious: 'No attempt has been made to secure any sort of isolation. Anyone who wished, whether a leper or not, has been allowed to build a house there and live in the village. In consequence, whilst the government of the department has been occupied in providing house room

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[59] *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. No. 804. United States of Colombia. Report for the year 1889 on the Trade of Colombia*, (London, 1890), p. 7.

for 500 lepers, over 1,000 people of the neighbourhood, not affected with the disease, have provided accommodation for themselves. Lepers and healthy people live there on terms of perfect intimacy..... There is a very insufficient water supply, drawn from a small stream nearly two miles from the village, and carried there by donkeys, and it lies on a public road, where the people are constantly passing. Many people of the inhabitants of Tocaima go there every week, chiefly on market days, to buy and sell goods and agricultural produce, and mix quite freely in every sense with the population of the Lazareto. The lepers can leave the place when they like, as there are no police to prevent them, and a large proportion do leave after a time. In 1890, 90 out of 485 deserted'.[60] The Contratación was not an isolated place either: 400 healthy people lived in the town together with the 390 lepers.

The report stressed that most of the lepers were poor people, or at least most of the lepers were in the villages. The lepers received housing with some land to work and some money to buy food and clothes. The amount of money was variable, depending on how much money the Lazareto received.

The Lazareto of Caño de Loro was in a similar situation. There were twelve huts with bad hygienic conditions, in which lived 40 lepers. There were also complaints that the lepers could easily escape and go to Cartagena. There were no controls. In 1897 a society called the *Sociedad contra la lepra* was founded, to try a new treatment for the illness. However it lasted for only a year.[61]

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[60] Ibid.
[61] E. Simancas, op. cit., p. 52.

In 1903 the national government declared that each department should have a leper colony. These three Lazaratos plus the Lazareto of San Pedro Claver founded in Medellín in 1902, were not enough. The problem of maintaining the Lazaretos was still unsolved. The following year, the Lazaretos were placed under the *Junta Central de Higiene*. It was an attempt to centralize the management of these institutions and to treat the problem as one of health rather than of charity. Numbers were estimated at 4,000 lepers in 1909.[62]

However in 1918 the Lazareto de Caño de Loro underwent a crisis. It was almost closed; the lepers were going to be moved to Agua de Dios. Many associations came together to help the Lazareto. One ladies' society, the *Junta de Beneficencia de Señoras* of Cartagena, was the leader in the campaign for the leper village. They found help from a similar society in Barranquilla, the *Estrella de la Caridad*; and from medical students and associations of workers and artisans. The workers and artisans showed solidarity with their friends in the leper village. By 1920 the Lazareto was receiving some funds from the national government and could boast better conditions. In 1925 it had 70 lepers, and the Salesian Sisters were in charge of the institution.[63] At that time, the Lazareto de Agua de Dios was also served by the Sisters of Charity, a priest and a doctor and many charitable societies. Even though the Lazaretos came to be public health institutions and not charities, they were still seen as institutions which needed donations and assistance. In 1905 a donation was made to the Lazareto de Agua de Dios by the mutual aid societies and the guilds of carpenters, bricklayers and

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[62] *Diplomatic and Consular reports No. 4187. Report on the Finances of Colombia*, (London, 1909), p. 8.

[63] E. Simancas, op. cit., pp. 61–68.

quarry-workers of Bogotá.[64] In 1912 the St. Vincent de Paul Society from Manizalez created the *Sociedad Protectora de los Leprosos* to help with food and clothes for lepers in the Agua Dios.[65] In 1930 in Bogotá there was organized the *Junta Organizadora del Obsequio de Año Nuevo a los enfermos del Lazareto de Agua de Dios*.[66] Although the main aim was to organize an annual visit to the Lazareto in order to give the lepers gifts, the Society also wanted to improve the conditions of the lepers.

***Hospicio*, Orphanages and Asylums**

During this period worries about indigence were frequently expressed, and edicts to forbid begging were issued, but with the disadvantage that there were no establishments for confining the beggars. The hope of solving the problem of the presence of the beggars in the streets of the larger cities, together with new ideas of hygiene, explained the foundation of establishments to enclose the deserving poor and the vagrants as well.

In 1870 the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca* began a process of transformation of the *Casa de Refugio*, the only establishment in Colombia to enclose the poor. The first decision that the Junta took was to divide the *Casa de Refugio* into three establishments, to separate the poor children and poor adults. The Junta set up the *Hospicio* for orphan and poor children, and two *Asilos de Indigentes*, one for men and one for women, for poor people who could not work and did not have any

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[64] *La Fusión*, Bogotá, 24 June 1905.
[65] Archive of St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá uncatalogued.
[66] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 18, fol. 69-77.

relatives or benefactors who could provide for their maintenance. In 1873 the Junta tried to found two more establishments for lunatics, men and women, who were still in the *Asilos de Indigentes*. However the Junta did not have premises funds for such a separate asylum. They would remain together.

In the official report of the Junta in 1875, we can see some improvements in the three establishments. The *hospicio* was run by sixteen Sisters of Charity, who took care of 104 children and supervised 117 children that were in the charge of the wet-nurses. The wet-nurses had to come monthly to collect their wages and they had the obligation of bringing in the children to have a health check. The building of the *hospicio* was said to have enough space and to be in good condition, clean and organized.

There was a small school where inmates were taught to read and write, with some arithmetic, and another school to teach arts and crafts. There was also another primary school where thirty girls from outside the *hospicio* came to study, together with the girls from the institution who knew how to read and write.

In the *Asilo de Indigentes* for men there were 81 indigents and 28 lunatics. This establishment was under the direct supervision of the Archbishop and conducted by Sisters of Charity. The Junta had redecorated some rooms and made a garden. There was weaving of woollen blankets, at which some indigents worked. In 1888 the *Asilo* received the support of the *Sociedad de Hijos de la Santísima Trinidad*. This society

helped with food, clothes and beds and played an important role as improver and educator during some years.[67]

In the *Asilo de Indigentes* for women there were 114 indigents and 34 lunatics. The establishment was managed and directed by a ladies' society *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*. They made the effort to reform some rooms to separate the poor from the incurables and the lunatics. The number of women in the asylum was always higher than that of the men, in part because poor women were more vulnerable. They had fewer opportunities to work and had more moral restrictions in cases of divorce or widowhood. The migration of women to the larger cities looking to become domestic servants was more intense than that of men.

During the following twenty years there were two main achievements for the institutions of the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. The first was to define with more precision the kind of people they wanted to help. They gave priority to the blind, the lame, and the crippled; to fathers who could not work from chronic illness, to widows with children who could not work, and orphans of both parents under ten years old. The second achievement was to find a better place for the *Asilo de Indigentes* in order to separate the poor and the lunatics and to have more space to establish workshops. During these years there were continued attempts to forbid begging made by the Police, but without much success. An article in *El Correo Nacional* announces the prohibition of begging, and at the same time asks for donations to the *Asilo*; an article two years later in the same newspaper, stresses again the necessity of helping the *Asilo*

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[67] See *Memoria del Presidente de la Sociedad de Hijos de la Santísima Trinidad*, (Bogotá, 1887) and *El Orden*, Bogotá, 4 April 1887, 1 May 1887, 14 June 1887, 27 June 1889 and 7 June 1890.

and not giving money on the streets to beggars, and expresses broadly the necessity of helping principally poor children, and of making clear which poor should be aided.[68]

Selling San Diego where the two *Asilos de Indigentes* were housed and buying La Hortua and completing the new building took thirty years. This long process shows the financial problems that the Junta had. The new building at La Hortua became a hospital, not the modern lunatic asylum that had been intended.

However by 1914, according to the official report of the Junta, all the establishments had grown; the *Asilos de Indigentes de Hombres y Mujeres* was separated in administration from the *Asilo de Locos y Locas*; and a new establishment was from 1896 placed under the Junta, the *Asilo de Niños Desamparados*.

The *Hospicio* housed 382 children in the institution itself and 694 children were with wet-nurses. The *Asilo de Indigentes* had 114 men and 465 women; the lunatic asylum had 129 men and 237 women. All the establishments of the Junta were managed by the Sisters of Charity. In the hospice there were fifteen sisters, in the asylum of indigents nine and in the lunatics asylum thirteen.

The way the *Asilo de Niños Desamparados* came under the control of the Junta was a special case. The orphanage was founded by the society for helpless children, mainly by people who belonged to the Liberal party.[69] The formation of this society was

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[68] *El Correo Nacional*, Bogotá, 21 April 1891 and 23 April 1893.

[69] According to the newspaper *Los Hechos* 'algunos de los benefactores del establecimiento son Carlos Plata, Manuel Ancízar, Pedro Cortés Holguín, Salvador Camacho Roldán, M. A. López, Sáenz, De la Roche, Alvarez, Esguerra, Herrera y centenares más, sin olvidar al distinguido extranjero Bodmer'

partly the result of a decree issued in September 1871 which gave permission to private societies to create poor relief establishments.[70] Nevertheless, in 1888 law 100 required all societies, corporations and firms which had been recognized before the Constitution of 1886 to apply again for *personería jurídica*, otherwise the State would take possession of them. In this process of acquisition or reacquisition of *personería jurídica*, a society had to present all the papers required, first to the regional government and the ecclesiastical authorities. When the approval of these authorities had been obtained, the application needed the final approval of the Ministry of Government.

When the society for helpless children asked for renewal of its *personería jurídica*, it was denied. According to the official report of the Ministry of Education for 1932 the reason for removing the management of the orphanage from this society was because the moral teaching that the children received was against the Catholic religion and inadequate to imbue the children with spiritualist beliefs.[71] According to the newspaper *Los Hechos*, the orphanage was 'creación de los liberales, y que el Gobierno se había apoderado de él hacia siete años para evitar que se dieran allí enseñanzas heterodoxas, y para que en su recinto no se formara una nueva generación de gente del pueblo, en la aversión a las nuevas instituciones'. However a few lines after it added 'los liberales han negado siempre que aquel establecimiento fuese foco revolucionario, ni político en ningún concepto, y mucho menos antirreligioso'.[72]

Los Hechos, Bogotá, 19 January 1895.

[70] *Revista de los Establecimientos de Beneficencia*, no. 13 (1871), p. 195.

[71] *Memoria del Ministerio de Educación al Congreso de 1932*, (Bogotá, 1932), pp. 62-63.

[72] *Los Hechos*, Bogotá, 19 January 1895.

The government decision was seen as arbitrary. It was made in a time of strong political confrontation and of total exclusion of the opposition. That political situation could explain the abolition of the society for helpless children and the order to the Junta to take care of the orphanage. This episode shows that the interest in poor relief was a general interest, but that during the time the Conservative party was in government, it wanted to exert control over all poor relief institutions.

The *Asilo de Niños Desamparados* was passed to *the Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca* in 1888, and extensive and detailed regulations were made the next year. The establishment was an orphanage which gave shelter to parentless children and also a school of arts and crafts which received pupils. The children had to be between seven and fourteen years old and to be baptised.

The children led a strict daily life. They had to get up at five in the morning; after fifteen minutes they had to be standing in front of their beds to pray. After that they went to the toilets and had breakfast. They had lessons from six to nine, when it was time for a meal and recreation. Between eleven and twelve they had a drawing class, followed by dinner. At four they had workshops and a music class. At six they had to go to chapel to pray for fifteen minutes followed by refreshments. After that they had a further religion and music class to finish the day. Each month they had a day for swimming and exercises. Each child had a savings account for his work and they

would receive money or tools when they left the orphanage.[73] The establishment had 109 children by 1914 and by 1920 it had 192.

After 1896 the orphanage came under the responsibility of the French religious order of the Christian Brothers.[74] In 1905 it was transformed into a School of Arts and Crafts depending on the *Ministerio de Instrucción Pública*, but still under the Christian Brothers. In 1919 it was converted into the *Instituto Central Técnico*.

In 1930 the Education Ministry attempted to amalgamate it with the engineering faculty of the *Universidad Nacional*. The Minister pointed out that the national Government had sustained the establishment since its foundation: 'el colegio es y ha sido oficial; sus edificios, dependencia y enseres de propiedad de la Nación, y la dirección del establecimiento ha estado bajo la dependencia del Ministerio de Educación Nacional, sin que haya mediado contrato alguno con ninguna comunidad ni persona, sino mediante una situación de hecho en virtud de la cual los Gobiernos hasta la fecha han tenido a bien que esa dirección haya estado a cargo de la comunidad de los Hermanos Cristianos, sin condición ni plazo de duración ni compromisos alguno del Gobierno para con la comunidad de los Hermanos Cristianos citada, que obligue al Gobierno para la dirección del Colegio continué indefinidamente a cargo de los mismos Hermanos Cristianos'.[75] The problems arose from the imprecise contracts that

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[73] J. Restrepo Hernández, op. cit., pp.682-687.

[74] The first Christian Brothers arrived in 1875 to teach in Pasto, but they had to retire to Ecuador due to the civil wars. Later six Christian Brothers arrived in Medellín in 1889 to open a private school; and later they opened a school of arts and crafts. They had extensive experience in education in France, particularly in technical schools.

[75] *Memoria del Minsiterio de Educación Nacional al Congreso de 1932*, p. 62.

had been made with the religious orders since 1870, which relied on trust with the religious orders and in which details were frequently left out.

In 1918 a special inspection of all the establishments of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* brought some changes. The general condition of the *hospicio* was pronounced satisfactory. The commission gave some advice related to the education of the children. They recommended that they should have gym classes, and a school of arts and crafts, to better their chances when they left the orphanage. Later a savings bank was started. They also showed concern over the high mortality, 16.5%, among the children entrusted to wet-nurses: more controls were imposed; an inspector was appointed to visit monthly the wet-nurses in their homes to see the real condition of the children. A *Gota de Leche* programme was started to give milk to babies and to end the wet-nurse system.

The commission found the building of the *Asilo de Indigentes* for men and women too small. They found an orphanage for girls between twelve and fifteen years in the same building under the control of the Sisters of Charity. They recommended that these 80 girls should be housed apart from the indigents. In the following years a new site was bought for the *Asilo de Indigentes* for men. It was a large site outside the city. In 1919 the asylum was moved to this new location, the *Colonia de Medigos de Sibaté*. The indigents were to cultivate the land, to practice carpentry and other works. This improvement in the asylum of indigents was partly linked to the law prohibiting begging of 1917. This law lay down for the first time that those begging in the streets could be put in jail.

The move of the asylum of male indigents meant that part of the building in the city could be used to enlarge the asylum of women indigents, and to separate completely the girls' orphanage. The orphanage was called the *Asilo de Preservación para Niñas.* The aim was 'salvarlas de la perdición y prepararlas para que puedan ganar la vida honradamente, conservando su posición humilde y ocupándose exclusivamente en trabajos domésticos'.[76] The girls received basic lessons in domestic work: cooking, washing, ironing and mending clothes. The new establishment was under the responsibility of five Good Shepherd Sisters from a French religious order founded in 1892.[77] A new *Asilo de Niños Desamparados* began to be built in Chapinero, in the north of the city.

The asylum for lunatics did not see any changes in these years, through some members of the Junta began to think of it as a mental hospital rather than a simple asylum. They proposed bringing in the Brothers of St. John of God to give the lunatics modern care in a new building outside the city.

The pattern of institutional poor relief in Bogotá under the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*, was in varying degrees replicated in other cities. In Medellín there were two important establishments for poor relief which depended on the local and regional governments, apart from the hospital. These were the *Casa de Mendigos* and the *Casa de Enajenados*, founded in 1878 and in 1891 respectively. Both establishments began with the initiative and support of the municipality and received further support from the regional government and from donations. They were

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[76] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 7, fol. 181-185.
[77] The Good Shepherd Sisters arrived in Colombia in the 1890.

for a time administered by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the *Casa de Mendigos* between 1893 and 1898 and the *Casa de Enajenados* between 1897 and 1904. The municipality later made contracts with the Sisters of Charity for running both institutions, in 1900 for the *Casa de Mendigos* and in 1906 for the *Casa de Enajenados*.

The *Casa de Mendigos* in this foundation housed old people, men, women, the sick, mad people and children in the same establishment. Sometimes the asylum was too small to house all the beggars, and the municipality had to give permission to the deserving poor to beg for money in the streets. The authorized poor carried a small wooded notice on which the municipality gave authorization for begging. The directors of the asylum tried to have some strategy for separating people by age, sex and illness; however this was not easy to do. In 1914 most of the sick were housed in the hospital, particularly the *Casa de Maternidad*, which was inside the establishment. A year later the orphanage of San José was founded in order to remove children between five and twelve years old; the primary school inside the establishment was transferred. This institution was directed by the Sisters of Charity as well. The children received primary education; the boys, after primary education in the orphanage, would be moved to a school of arts and crafts. The girls after the primary level would learn domestic activities. The *Casa de Mendigos* housed 300 inmates on average in the years between 1900 and 1920.[78]

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[78] P. Castro, op. cit. pp. 101-113.

The *Casa de Enajenados* attempted to provide better conditions of care for the mad. The first steps were to change the notion that mad people were criminals in increasingly hopeless cases and what they needed was medical attention. This step was barely achieved before 1930. There were improvements in the buildings of the establishment, but they were not enough. The official report of 1913 stressed overcrowding, the poor condition of the cells for violent lunatics and the absence of gardens or spaces for fresh air.[79] By 1916 there were 265 inmates between twenty and forty years old; they were mainly poor peasants and women servants.

In Bucaramanga the beggars' asylum was established in a house donated by a citizen and with municipal support in 1890. The reason for the foundation was that the hospital housed old people and invalids without having enough space and resources to care for them.[80] In Cartagena there was one establishment depending on the local and regional governments: the *Asilo de Mendigos*, established in 1906 by a private initiative with the support of the regional government. The need for an asylum for beggars had been recognised since the end of the nineteenth century, in order to improve the order and cleanliness of the city. The asylum was moved to a bigger and better place in 1910. In 1920 the prohibition of begging was declared by the municipality, and people were asked to give the money to the asylum. In Cali the need for an asylum for beggars was first expressed in 1894 in the local newspaper; the asylum was only founded in 1917 by the *Sociedad de Beneficencia*, with the support

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[79] Ibid., p. 94.
[80] J. J. García, op. cit., p. 408.

of the municipality.[81] A prohibition of begging was immediately imposed when the asylum was opened. By 1920 it housed 50 beggars.[82]

Apart from establishments promoted by or linked with the regional and municipal governments there were some which were founded mainly by lay societies, or patronized by the regional ecclesiastical authorities, or in a few cases by religious societies themselves. These establishments were mainly for children, particularly for girls. Some of them started caring for to both boys and girls, but all of them by 1910 were divided by sex. The *Casa de Huérfanos* in Medellín began in 1881 under the direction of the señora María de Jesús Upegui, with the support of the Bishop. It aimed to provide a place to live, food, clothes and education for the orphans. After the Christian Brothers arrived in the city, they were charged with the boys' section in 1890, with the undertaking to open a primary school. The girls' section was moved to a private school of the Sisters of Charity.

At the beginning more boys' establishments were founded than girls', but later, by 1920 there were more institutions for girls than boys. The *Asilo de la Santa Infancia* in Bogotá was organized by the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1895, supported intermittently by the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca.*[83] In Medellín the Society had already established the *Talleres de San Vicente* in 1889. This asylum gave shelter to orphans between six and fifteen years old and offered education in arts and crafts. In 1895 the *Asilo de la Infancia Desamparada de San Antonio* was set up

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[81] *El Ferrocarril*, Cali, 19 February 1894 and 30 August 1895.
[82] *Gazeta Municipal*, Cali, 15 April 1920.

[83] AGN, Sección República, Fondo Policía, t. iv, fol. 680-682.

in Bogotá; in 1907 a donation from a lady enabled it to build a new asylum, and later under the direction of Manuel María Camargo the orphanage was completely organized as an institution of shelter and education. By 1918 it had 150 children.[84] Similar to these, the *Instituto Cristiano de San Pablo* was built in 1920 with the legacy of Lorenzo Cuellar.[85] The inmates of both of these institutions led a strict daily life, like the orphanages mentioned before, where basic education and training for work were the principal aims.

The girls' institutions shared the same aims as the boys', but in a slightly different way. The female establishments were more closed than the male. The boys were allowed to go out more and were educated in schools where other pupils attended. The girls had to be prepared to work as servants, and had to learn mainly domestic activities. They had to stay in the institution until they were ready to work in private houses and a situation was found for them. Most of them had a Sunday School where the girls that used to be in the establishment could return and meet their friends. These establishments were ruled by upper-class ladies, some of them guided by priests. In Bogotá there were the *Casa Protectora Niñas* directed by Ana Vergara de Samper in 1914, the *Asociación de Caridad para Niñas*, directed by Margarita Fonseca in 1919, and the *Casa de María Imaculada para el Servicio Doméstico* in 1921; in Medellín the *Casa de Beneficencia* led by María Escobar Uribe in 1855, and the *Casa de Jesús, María y José* in 1893 directed by the *Asociación del Sagrado Corazón* and later by the

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[84] *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 30 Noviembre 1918.
[85] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 7, fol. 199-214.

Little Sisters of the Poor, a French religious order.[86] Some of them looked for support from female religious orders but it was sometimes not easy to find. Ana Vergara explained that they had hoped to gain the support of the Salesian Sisters, but they did not agree with the kind of girls they had to take care of and in the case of the Good Shepherd Sisters, the institution did not have the money to bring the seven sisters they needed.[87] There were examples of establishments led by religious orders, like the *Asilos de Huérfanas* in Medellín and Cartagena. These orphanages were set up in some rooms of the hospital in 1880 in Medellín, and in 1897 in Cartagena, under the direction of the Sisters of Charity. The Sisters gave basic education and taught domestic activities. The Cartagena orphanage got a new building in 1916 with the support of the regional government and donations. There were 40 girls in 1930.[88] These female establishments had the style of life of a convent. The idea of protection of the girls was uppermost in them.

These new foundations independent of the local authorities placed more restrictions on receiving children. Some of the institutions asked for references about the children, some required that the children were baptised and came from 'respectable' families. In the establishments dependent on the municipal authorities such requirements were not made. In the state institutions all children were welcome in general terms, the problem

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[86] The *Asociación del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* of Medellín was established in 1871 on the initiative of upper-class ladies with the support of a priest. The Little Sisters of the Poor arrived in Colombia in the 1910s. It was one of the female religious orders which had grown most in nineteenth century in France. It was founded in 1839, and there were 2,700 sisters by 1878 and the order spread widely outside France. They looked after the aged and infirm that nobody wanted.

[87] *Informes sobre la organización y marcha de la Casa protectora de Niñas*, (Bogotá, 1917).
The Italian religious order of Salesian Sisters were founded in 1859 and arrived in Colombia in the 1900s.

[88] E. Simancas, op. cit., pp. 36-39.

was that the majority of them did not have enough room. Therefore there was some selection of the children, but that was done in ways which were not made public.

During this period the increase in the number of institutions for sheltering poor people was marked. It was the period when institutional poor relief related to the shelter of and enclosure of the poor was firmly established in Colombia, as in many other Latin American countries.[89] Most of the largest cities had at least an asylum for beggars. Some cities also had places for lunatics and orphans. These establishments were state supported. The new establishments that were founded in the largest cities promoted by individuals and private societies were complementary to the efforts of the local authorities. Both sorts of enterprise were limited to local attempts and local efforts.

Most of them were managed by religious orders, mainly female. Among the female religious orders the French stood out. France saw a mushroom growth of female religious orders: they came, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to outnumber the men of the secular and regular clergy put together. The female orders of the nineteenth century came increasingly to adopt a new form, the religious congregation. They were sisters rather than nuns. They did not have to take solemn vows. The crucial innovation was the vesting of authority in a single Superior General, who, in turn, received authority directly from Rome rather than from her local bishop. The change brought together an active uncloistered religious life with a centralized

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[89] See K. Mead, 'Oligarchs, Doctors and Nuns: Public Health and Beneficence in Buenos Aires, 1880-1914', (California Univ.-Santa Barbara Ph.D. thesis, 1994); A. Garcia Ponce, *Los pobres de Caracas, 1873-1907. Un estudio de la pobreza urbana*, (Caracas, 1995); T. Martínez-Vergne, *Shaping the Discourse on Space. Charity and its Wards in Nineteenth-Century San Juan, Puerto Rico*, (Austin, 1999).

organization under the authority of a female superior. That allowed them to move freely.[90] This phenomenon of the French female religious orders brought to Colombia a new development in the establishment of poor relief. It helped the growth of these institutions and reinforced the notion of charity for the poor. Even though the idea of bringing in the religious orders first occurred during the Liberal government, it was during the Conservatives that the majority of them arrived. The usual reason given to explain the strong presence of religious orders in Colombia during the *Regeneración* is the agreement made between the Conservative government and the Catholic Church, the Concordato, but this explanation is incomplete. In France by the 1860s the lay personnel of hospitals and hospices, dependent on the *Assitance Publique*, had been largely replaced by the congregations. They developed their own paramedical establishments and then expanded into a bewildering variety of social services. In Argentina, one of the most secular countries in Latin America at that time, hospitals and hospices were also managed by the Sisters of Charity. The phenomenon of the female congregations involved in institutional poor relief is a general one, not confined to Colombia with its Conservative government. We cannot endorse the agreement that the *Regeneración* transferred completely the responsibility of social assistance to the Catholic Church. The picture is more complex. The state promoted, established and controlled some of the poor relief institutions. Some of the establishments dependent on the state were managed by religious orders. There were also present poor relief establishments promoted, founded and controlled by lay societies and individuals; some of these were also run by religious orders. The picture shows that there was a general concern for the destiny of the poor.

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[90] See S. O'Brien, 'French Nuns in Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, No. 154, (1997), pp. 142-180 and R. Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism. 1789-1914*, (London, 1989).

Free Primary Schools and Schools of Arts and Crafts

Education was an important activity in institutional poor relief. Although the education was separated from the *beneficencia* in 1870 by the formation of the *Junta de Instrucción Pública*, some of the activity in education was aimed specifically at the poor. Education for the poor was mainly focused on children, and artisans. For children, it was a basic education, plus education in arts and crafts for boys and in domestic activities for girls; and for the artisans it was education in arts and crafts mainly, although sometimes they needed basic education as well. The institutions which led the way in education for the poor were free primary schools and sometimes orphanages for children, schools of arts and crafts for boys and artisans and Sunday schools for all. Most of the establishments of education were not as closed as the asylum and orphanages; they dedicated some hours of the day to teaching the poor.

To give a complete picture of the free primary schools throughout the country is an almost impossible task. The first really effective step in establishing free primary schools was made during the Liberal government, in 1876. Before this reform there had been two pioneering attempts relating to education after Independence. In 1826, the government of Francisco de Paula Santander, had created the *Dirección General de Instrucción Pública* to promote public education. Primary schools received some support with books and educational materials, but free schools remained a dream. In 1842 President Ospina declared primary education obligatory; schools had to receive children and parents had to send their children to schools. However implementation

was again a dream; the state did not have the necessary resources.[91] Many schools were in the hands of the religious orders. In 1876 a number of reasons explain the controversy surrounding the Liberal programme of education at that time: strong political disputes between the two parties; the alliance of the Catholic church with the Conservative party; the introduction of new teaching methods that were seen as foreign and anti-Catholic and new taxes for the new programme of education.[92]

In Bogotá in 1878, there were 37 primary schools and only six were free primary schools. Two were in the *Catedral* neighbourhood under the responsibility of the Sisters of Charity, and four in *Las Nieves*, two under the St. Vincent de Paul Society and two in the hospice directed by the Sisters of Charity. There were 781 children in the free primary schools. Three schools were for boys with 271 children and three for girls with 510 children. The biggest school had 300 girls, it was directed by the Sisters of Charity in the *Catedral* area.[93] According to the *Catastro de Cundinamarca* there were sixty public primary schools in the federal state of Cundinamarca in 1863.[94]

In 1876 there were 1,646 primary schools with 79,123 students in Colombia. However they were closed during and after the civil war of 1876, and it was only during the 1880s that the primary schools could recover their dynamic. By 1883 there were 1,297 primary schools and 68,261 children attended.[95] In the constitution of 1886 primary

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[91] See A. Helg, *La Educación en Colombia, 1918-1957. Una historia social y política*, (Bogotá, 1987) and F. González, *Educación y Estado en la Historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1979).
[92] For the complaints about taxation see *Los Principios*, Cali, 26 November 1876.
[93] *Diario de Cundinamarca*, Bogotá, 7 May 1878.
[94] S. Camacho Roldán. *Escritos Varios. Estudios sociales, intereses americanos, agricultura colombiana*. (Bogotá, 1892), p. 585
[95] J. M. Rausch, *La Educación durante el Federalismo*, (Bogotá, 1993), chapter five. The departments of Antioquia, Santander, Boyaca and Cundinamarca were leaders in primary schools.

education was declared free, but not obligatory; and was organized in concordance with Catholicism.[96] According to a British report in 1887 in Colombia 'public instruction, in its higher as well as a primary branches, is patronized by Government, and is steadily progressing'.[97]

Besides, lay societies, like the St. Vincent de Paul Society from its foundation in 1857, took on an important role in education for poor people. In Bogotá it started with a small free primary school with twelve girls, annexed to the hospital that the Society maintained. The Society subsequently registered free schools in eight neighbourhoods of the city: *Las Aguas*, *Egipto*, *La Catedral*, *Las Cruces*, *Santa Bárbara*, *Las Nieves*, *San Victorino* and *Santa Isabel.* These free primary schools occasionally received support from the municipal or departmental government.[98] In 1914 the Society reported two free primary schools in Bogotá, one under the direction of the Christian Brothers with 300 children, and a small one near the thirty-two houses that the Society had built in the neighbourhood of *Las Nieves*. In 1917 the *Escuela Modelo* was established; it was a big building where poor children would have hygienic and ventilated rooms, enough space to do exercises and land to cultivate. In 1919 there were three free primary schools depending on the central committee of the Society: the free school of *Calle Octava* with 230 children under the direction of the Christian

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[96] Some historians have pointed out that the role of the Catholic Church in Colombian education had practical explanations. G. Colmenares wrote that 'Investigaciones recientes se inclinan a concluir que, en el caso de la educación, se impusieron más bien consideraciones pragmáticas. El Estado no poseía los recursos para sostener el fervor que habian mostrado los radicales por una educación laica. G. Colmenares, *Ricardo Rendón. Una fuente para la historia de la opinión pública*, (Bogotá, 1984), p. 712.

[97] *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance. No. 253. Report for the year 1887 on the United States of Colombia*, (London, 1888), p. 6.

[98] A. J. Uribe, *Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl de Bogotá. Celebración del Quincuagésimo Aniversario 1857-1907*, (Bogotá, 1908), p. 71.

Brothers, the *Escuela Modelo* with 180 children, also under the responsibility of the Christian Brothers, and the school of the *Habitaciones de los Pobres* with 52 children.[99] Besides, there were other free primary schools depending on the 'conferences' of the Society: the Conference of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes established a school for 'niños de las clases más desvalidas' where poor children were taught to read and write, and given food and clothes. The Conference of San Pedro, with the support of the parish priest of the neighbourhood of *Egipto*, founded a school for children 'que por su extramada pobreza se encuentran imposibilitados para concurrir a las escuelas públicas del municipio'.[100]

As well as free primary schools there were other sorts of informal education for poor people. In many schools run by religious orders there was also some free primary education for poor people. In 1930 half the public and private schools were run by religious orders; of these 59.6% were for girls and 42.9% for boys.[101] The Christian Brothers for example, had in each school they directed, a small free primary section.[102] It was common that in the girls' schools of the Sacred Heart of Jesus there was a free school for poor girls and some of the girls' schools of *La Presentación* also provided free schools.[103] Even in the male religious orders that were not very active in institutional poor relief like the Franciscans, Fray Damián González founded several night schools in Cali.[104]

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[99] *BSVP*, no. 111, (1920), p. 89.
[100] *BSVP*, no. 114, (1920), p. 161.
[101] A. Helg, op. cit., p. 76.
[102] Ibid., p. 78.
[103] According to *Los Principios*, Cali, 14 January 1876, the religious order of Sacred Heart had free primary schools in Popayán and Santander de Quilichao.

Another type of free education for poor children was the *Oratorio Festivo* that the Salesians established. This was a school meeting held on Sundays and holidays through which the Salesians reached out to the masses of poor children. The programme of these meetings included religion, games and sports, theatre and drama, and libraries. Such *Oratorios* were located in parishes administered by the Salesian Fathers, and were associated with the Salesian schools. The *Oratorio* of the neighbourhood of Bavaria had a free primary school with canteen, dormitory and deposit for free clothing, night schools for workers and activities and sports on Sundays and holidays.[105] In the mid-1930s there were seventeen *oratorios*.[106]

The Jesuits, linked with the *Acción Social Católica* founded in 1916, also organized *Oratorios Festivos* for children and a programme of popular libraries in the parishes assigned to them. They also included Sunday schools and night schools for children and workers in their plans. Father Rufino Beristain opened eighteen night schools in Bogotá with public support; by 1915 it had 1,200 workers registered.[107] Free primary schools were also supported by the *Liga de Damas Católicas*, created in 1924. The ladies' *Centro de Acción Social de San Pedro Claver* established ten free primary schools in Cartagena in 1919 to 'enseñar a los niños y niñas más pobres la vida cristiana, los primeros rudimentos y los oficios domésticos'.[108] In 1940 the parish of

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[104] J. M. Fernández, *Obra Civilizadora de la Iglesia en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1936), p. 239.
[105] *Historia de Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1925), p. 591.
[106] R. V. Farnell, 'The Catholic Church and Colombian Education: 1886-1930, in Search of a Tradition', (Columbia Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1974), p. 89.
[107] J. M. Fernádez, op. cit., p. 385.
[108] E. Simancas, op. cit., p. 88.

the Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro in the neighbourhood of *Olaya* maintained free primary schools.[109]

Free primary schools for poor people in the parishes had been common in the colonial period.[110] A general conclusion for the nineteenth century suggests that free primary schools in parishes did exist, but they were patchy in coverage, informal and not always registered. In 1871, when the dispute about the reform of education was particularly intense, the *Concejo de Instrucción Pública* proposed the foundation of two free primary schools, one for boys and one for girls, in each parish, even in the poorest and most distant areas.[111]

Another informal process of education for the poor was very common and naturally not registered: servants were taught some basic education by the people in the family where they worked. A good example could be what a Protestant missionary described in 1918; 'So honest and painstaking was Valentine that we felt he deserved a chance in life, so the Missionary decreed that the demands upon the boy's time should be fewer in number and he should enter the primary grade of the school and learn to read and write. This was a great and unusual privilege to grant to one of his class and he was appreciative of it. We secured him clothes which, if they were not much of an improvement in fit, at least were more of a sameness in colour and texture than original his suit. When Valentine left us some years later it was to be apprenticed to

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[109] *Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 4 June 1978.
[110] F. Guerra, 'La difusión de la modernidad: Alfabetización, Imprenta y Revolución en Nueva España', in *Modernidad e Independencia. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hipánicas*, (Madrid, 1992), pp. 275-318.
[111] *La Unión Católica*, Bogotá, 16 July 1871.

learn a trade at which a man in Colombia may at least keep himself alive'.[112] The duty of the education of poor people, particularly children and artisans, was not absent from the minds of the elite.

In addition the St. Vincent de Paul Society developed schools for arts and crafts. These emerged as perhaps the strongest sector of education for poor people in urban areas, particularly artisans and workers. In Bogotá the Society established the *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* in 1877, the *Talleres de San Vicente* in 1890, the *Taller de Costura* in 1890, the *Escuela de Oficios Domésticos* in 1894, the *Escuela Práctica* in 1900 and the *Talleres María Auxiliadora* in 1919.[113] In Medellín, a night school was founded in 1887; by 1890 145 artisans attended.[114] The municipality provided exercise books, pencils and lighting. In 1892 three more were founded and by 1894 the Society decided to unite all the night schools in one, the *Escuela Central* with 160 artisans. In the civil war of 1899-1902 the night school was closed, but it promptly reopened in 1903. In 1907 the night schools received support from the municipal and departmental governments. They were now seven, with 682 artisans and workers. In Cali the main achievement of the Society was the *Escuela de Artes y Oficios* of 1898. The technical school was founded due to a legacy that the Society received, and was under the direction of the Marists Brothers.[115] In 1933 the Society entrusted the school of arts and crafts to the Salesians.[116] This Italian religious order was the male order most concerned with the technical and general education of the working classes and the

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[112] M. N. Williams, op. cit., p. 26.
[113] J. A. Uribe, op. cit., p. 71 and *BSVP*, no. 114, (1920), p. 162.
[114] P. Castro, op, cit., p. 24.
[115] The first Marists Brothers arrived to Popayán in 1889.
[116] *Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl de Cali. Primer centenario de su fundación 1870-1970*. (Cali-1970).

poor in Colombia. By the mid-1930s there were nineteen Salesian establishments in Colombia.[117]

Besides these there were other private initiatives to create schools of arts and crafts. In 1888 a schools of arts and crafts was opened in Bucaramanga with the support of the municipality.[118] In 1890 the *Escuela León XIII* was founded in Bogotá, with half the students being poor children. Besides basic education they could choose between carpentry, metalwork, tailoring, shoemaking, saddlery and printing. This school belonged to the Salesians. In 1905 they founded a similar school in Ibagué at the initiation of the departmental government. In 1912 they opened a *Juan Bosco* school where 100 boarders and 50 children of artisan and worker families received basic education in the morning and technical lessons in the afternoon. In 1915 the Bishop of Medellín asked them to open an asylum for poor children; but in 1921 this was transformed into an *Escuela de Artes y Oficios*. After a successful exhibition of work made in the school the departmental and municipal government in 1926 decided to convert it into the *Instituto Pedro Justo Berrio.*[119]

The network of informal education for adults, artisans and workers was also broad, informal and dispersed. In the parishes there were night schools and Sunday schools. It was also common that in the free primary schools there were also night schools for adults.

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[117] R. V. Farnell, op. cit., pp. 85-96.
[118] J. J. García, op. cit., p.385.

[119] A. Helg, op. cit. p. 93.

Although providing education for poor children was among the aims of municipal governments at the beginning of this period, the development frequently depended on the enterprise of lay societies supported by religious orders or on the religious orders themselves. The schools of arts and crafts mostly depended on initiatives from lay societies, though some of them were taken over by the municipal or departmental government. The presence of the religious orders in the education of the poor was shared between male and female orders. During this period the Christian Brothers and the Salesians were the male counterparts of the female religious orders in education. Education for poor people was not a programme of the state between 1880 and 1920; it developed through lay societies and individuals, but most importantly through the religious orders. It developed independently and privately in different places and had a degree of informality.

AFTER 1920

By 1920 there was a broad network of institutional poor relief in Colombia. Most towns had tried to lay the foundations for helping the poor. Institutional poor relief could help more poor people. It became more specialized through the founding of establishments for specific groups of people, divided by categories: orphans, beggars, sick people. These categories were subdivided by sex: boys and girls, men and women; by age: children up to seven years old, children between seven and fifteen, old people; by illness: lunatics, people with contagious illnesses and the dying. Its buildings were modernized and it grew in its scope, mainly in the larger cities. In its

activity, it tried to incorporate scientific developments in health and new methods in education, according to the resources available.

Moreover, the panorama of institutional poor relief was more complex. The initiatives for founding these establishments came from departmental and municipal governments; from archbishops, bishops or from religious orders, male and female; from citizens like doctors, managers or entrepreneurs, local or regional leaders, or women. There were establishments which depended on municipal or regional governments but at the same time were directed by religious orders; there were some ruled completely by religious orders; there were others founded by private citizens and guided by religious orders; there were others founded and directed by citizens.

The three main areas of institutional poor relief were health, protection and education. In health the direction lay in the development of hospitals through departmental governments, supported by doctors and religious orders from the locality and by notable efforts from citizens in the largest cities, particularly related to the health of children. In this area the participation of women was significant. In most of the cases the hospital was the centre for poor relief and the centre to which other institutions like orphanages, lunatics or asylums were at first appended as annexes. The only exception was Bogotá, which had a hospital and a *hospicio*. In this case the *hospicio* was the centre from which other initiatives spread out in institutional poor relief. In the provision of shelter for beggars and lunatics the tendency was for the establishments to depend on departmental government, though some of them were

managed by religious orders. The tendency in the sheltering of orphans and poor children was towards more lay societies supported by religious orders. In this area female societies were prominent. The protection of the children was combined with their education. In education, the provision of free primary schools continued to be informal and dependent on private initiative, particularly that of the religious orders. For adult education it was a combination of departmental activity, especially in the school of arts and crafts, and of the initiative of private societies.

The improvement in institutional poor relief owed something to criticisms of the old establishments, but also to more general changes in the idea of *beneficencia*. One critic was Marcelino Vargas, who worked for many years in the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*. He wrote articles in the newspaper *El Diario Nacional* strongly critical of the Junta and its establishments. These articles provoked answers and clarifications. They were published as a book, *La Beneficencia en Cundinamarca*.[120]

Vargas argued that institutional poor relief could not any more be a matter of charity or *beneficencia* but had to be a matter of public social assistance: 'Basta por hoy. Ojalá que la Junta de Beneficencia, integrada como está por personas inteligentes y honorables, se haga cargo alguna vez de que en sus manos está la asistencia pública de Cundinamarca y que los establecimientos que maneja no son de caridad, como los califica el informe tantas veces mencionado'.[121] A few pages later he added: '*El Nuevo Tiempo* y el señor Síndico del Hospital se empeñan en confundir la

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[120] M. Vargas, *La Beneficencia en Cundinamarca*, (Bogotá, 1920).
[121] Ibid., p. 10.

beneficencia pública con la privada y en sostener que los establecimientos a cargo de la Junta General de Beneficencia son de caridad, sin considerar que así le hacen mal a la entidad misma y desconocen la obligación en los poderes públicos de proveer suficientemente a ramo tan importante de la administración. La máxima evangélica Amaos los unos a los otros, no tiene que ver con el Estado. Este no hace ni debe hacer obras de caridad auxiliando establecimientos destinados al servicio de los menesterosos... Muchos de los errores en que se ha incurrido en esto de la Beneficencia, y muchas de sus deficencias, provienen de la confusión de beneficencia por caridad, de beneficencia por asistencia pública'.[122]

The other important question that he raised was who should be responsible for the institutions of poor relief. 'En todas partes del mundo este organismo de aquí llamamos beneficencia se llama de asistencia pública y funciona organizado como un ramo muy importante del gobierno. El nombre de beneficencia que aqui le hemos dado a esa dependencia oficial, y la manera despreciativa con que se la ha mirado y administrado, perturban el criterio con que se juzga, haciendo creer que es asunto de caridad y filantropía, y que debe tratarse como tal lo que es simplimente un deber administrativo. A los establecimientos que el gobierno costea y que son o deben ser parte integrante de la administración pública, en donde no entra la caridad como móvil, sino el cumplimiento de ineludibles deberes gubernativos, debemos darles su verdadero nombre y organizarlos y reglamentarlos bajo una oficina pública, con su personal de empleados, sus rentas, su materia, etc'.[123]

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[122] Ibid., p. 17.
[123] Ibid., p. 28.

After several public discussions on the subject of *beneficencia*, in 1921 in the Ordenaza No. 51 the state established the new concept of public assistance.[124] The introduction of this new concept did not bring substantial changes in the practices of institutional poor relief, as the Junta continued looking after the same establishments, using and improving the same programmes. The changes were more related to how the Junta's resources were to be managed. However, the President of the *Junta General of Beneficencia* in 1922, Francisco Samper, expressed his fears: 'Esa reforma será muy conveniente, y aún necesaria, cuando las entradas pecunarias justifiquen la existencia de empleados superiores técnicos y bien remunerados; por el momento sería preciso disminuir las partidas destinadas a alimentos y drogas para costear en cambio los sueldos del personal directivo superior, el cual carecería por lo demás, de campo de acción para sus conocimientos e iniciativas que encallarían en todas partes en la falta de recursos. De otro lado la formación de una burocracia en la Beneficencia retraería el apoyo de los particulares, cuyas donaciones, herencias, legados y servicios personales constituyen un importantísmo renglón de entradas para esta rama de la administración departamental. En cuanto a la creación de una tesorería general que centralice las cajas de los Establecimientos, quizás se imponga cuando la situación y orden del Fisco Nacional le permitan atender, puntualmente y sin constantes cobros, el pago de auxilios; por el momento es irreemplazable la acción simultanea de ocho a diez caballeros de grande influencia social, quienes por caridad y filantropía desempeñan las sindicaturas, y recaudan las rentas de los establecimientos y cobran los auxilios con mayor asiduidad que si se tratase de sus intereses particulares'.[125]

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[124] *Compilación*, op. cit., p. 63.

[125] *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Beneficencia a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922).

By 1920 institutional poor relief was adopted as social policy by the state. However there were still certain ambiguities in practices.

Hospitals

The number of hospitals in the central region of Colombia by 1927 was large: there were 175 hospitals. There was at least one hospital in each departmental capital; in some there were more than one like Bogotá, Medellín, and Pasto. Antioquia was the department which had most hospitals, 36, and there were hospitals in most of its municipalities. Boyacá had 25, and Cundinamarca, including Bogotá, had 24[126] (see table 4 and map 3).

Most of these hospitals were the product of joint efforts. The most common was the initiative of local leaders with the support of the municipal, departmental and even national government. Among the local leaders, the presence of doctors was prominent. Most of them went to Bogotá to study medicine; when they finished their studies, many returned to their native towns to open a consulting room and to serve in the hospital, if there was one, or tried to promote the foundation of one, as Jaime Mejía from Salamina records in his memoirs.[127]

Although we do not have complete information about the situation in all hospitals, the official report of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca* in 1922 gives an example of the general conditions of these establishments: '... en los centros

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[126] *Historia de la Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 405-445.
[127] J. Mejía Mejía. *Historias médicas de una vida y de una región*, (Medellín, 1960).

poblados del Departamento existe un servicio de asistencia pública, aunque imperfecto. Pero para las gentes pobres, diseminadas en los campos, se hallan en completo desamparo por circunstancias de miseria individual y colectiva, que no podra modificarse en mucho tiempo'.[128] The *servicio de asistencia pública* basically represents the hospitals of the department. The same report added that most of the hospitals were in a state of misery and neglect.

Although the situation in rural areas was precarious, in the largest cities improvements were notable. In Bogotá the situation of the main hospital improved with the move to the new building of La Hortúa in 1926. Previously, the reports stressed that the capacity of the hospital was insufficient for the demand of the sick; there were not enough beds and patients were laid on the floor. The new rooms were large enough, tidy and antiseptic, and the new hospital provided good treatment.

There were conflicts between the demands from the doctors of the medical faculty and what the Junta could give according to its funds. There were also conflicts between the care that the doctors wanted to give and the care that the Sisters of Charity used to provide. These conflicts appeared in other cities with more drastic consequences. In Cartagena the process of modernization of the hospital started in 1922 with the formation of the *Junta Reformadora del Hospital* by order of the departmental government. The reform of the hospital brought complete reorganization; new rooms with new services, for example specific care for syphilitic people, a new internal structure, and additional nurses. The reaction of the Sisters of Charity to this reform

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[128] *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922), p. lvi.

was their resignation in 1923, supported by the Bishop. The hospital was supervised by the *Junta Reformadora* until 1929, when the Sisters came back to look after the hospital again, but now after the modernization of the establishment.[129]

Disputes between doctors and nuns came about not because the nursing sisters altered their standards and levels of care, but rather because of a change in attitude on the part of the doctors. This was partly a consequence of the growing professionalization of the medical body, and its tendency to view any medical practitioner who had not undergone proper instruction as unsuitable. However the nuns felt that they had a greater commitment to the sensibility of the poor within the hospitals, and better a record of humane care than the doctors.

The moving of the hospital of Bogotá to the new building diminished conflicts due to the lack of space and antiquated conditions. Now the sick could be properly separated in their own area, the doctors could have a suitable maternity room and an external consulting room. In addition the hospital of San José was founded in 1926, promoted by the *Sociedad de Cirugía* with the support of the Junta. This hospital also treated poor people and was the place for most cases requiring surgery. The hospital of Misericordia was also operating and treated children; by 1932, it had 240 beds and free consultations.

The hospital and the *Sociedad Pedíatrica* were the leaders in the programme called *La Gota de Leche* in Bogotá, which started in 1919.[130] It also had the aid of a group of

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[129] E. Simancas, op. cit., pp. 28-36.
[130] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 6, fol.129-131.

ladies who raised funds.[131] It was in part an answer to new ideas of hygiene which were already incorporated and as a response to high child mortality (see chapter one). The main aim of the programme was 'ejercer una supervigilancia médica sobre los niños de la clase pobre por medios de institutos de puericultura y de dispensarios lactantes donde se pesan y examinan los párvulos, y se preparan y se enseña a preparar a las madres la leche y fórmulas alimenticias adecuadas para los niños'.[132]

The *Gota de Leche* was accompanied by a programme of *salas-cuna* in the *hospicio*. This strategy had developed in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay in the 1910s.[133] In Colombia it was extended to many parts of the country. In Medellín it began in 1917 as an initiative of the Archbishop and the *Asociación de Madres Católicas*, under the direction of the Sisters of Charity and with the general support of the medical profession. The principal goal was to care for orphans and children from poor families.[134] By 1925 it cared for 100 children. A group of ladies with the support of the doctors and the municipality in Cartagena started the programme there in 1919, and it was also established in Bucaramanga, Popayán and Sonsón.

In Medellín the hospital gave over to the *Club Noel* an unfinished building annex in 1923 to become a hospital for children.[135] The *Club Noel* was a society which had been created to provide Christmas presents for poor children. The *Club Noel* hospital

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[131] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 6, fol.111-112.

[132] *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Benficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922).
[133] A. Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, 1890-1940*, (Lincoln, 1995), pp. 97-124.
[134] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t.6, fol. 276-278 and t. 8, fol. 17-18.
[135] P. Castro, op. cit., p. 81.

had sixty beds by 1924 and ran the *Gota de Leche*. In a similar way the *Damas Católicas of Cali* also had the custom of giving Christmas presents to poor children; in 1924 they received a donation of a piece of land to build a childrens' hospital and, in 1934 they opened the *Hospital Infantil Club Noel*.

By 1920 the hospitals in the largest cities had a clear health function: they aimed to provide more modern and specialized services. They were places of rehabilitation and cure, as well as places for education and training.[136] They were still engaged in poor relief, especially with children, and were involved in new hygiene reforms.

Hospicio

Concern for infant mortality brought change in the *hospicio*, but these encountered serious difficulties. The Bogotá *hospicio* created a *sala-cuna* in 1920 for unweaned children. It was thought that this was the best way to reduce the mortality of children entrusted to wet-nurses, to give them better nourishment. However, after they had opened the *sala-cuna* with 54 children, 42 died within four months. The *sala-cuna* was closed temporarily, and an inquiry was held to find out what had happened. There were no clear answers. One explanation was that the children brought from the wet-nurses were already very weak, some of them premature and some clearly sick. Another was that the room was too big, without sufficient heating; the nourishment was completely artificial, and the staff not competent. The *sala-cuna* was nevertheless reopened the follow year.

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[136] See G. B. Risse, 'Before the Clinic Was Born', in N. Finzsch and R. Jütte (ed.), *Institutions of Confinement. Hospitals, Asylums, and Prisons in Western Europe and North America*, (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 75-96.

It imitated the French model. This defined the *salas-cuna* as 'establecimientos semejantes a la Gota de Leche, también destinados a la crianza artificial y en común de niños menores de un año, en general huérfanos o expósitos, al cuidado de enfermeras que los vigilan permamentemente'.[137] The leaders in these initiatives wanted a complete programme for poor children, and made ambitious proposals for that time: free consultations for mothers during pregnancy, maternity rooms where the mother could stay for some days and in this way avoid giving birth at home with the help of midwife; a free *sala-cuna* for children of mothers who had to work, or payments for mothers to stay with their children.

At the end of 1924 Congress passed a law about childhood protection.[138] In this law the national government undertook to subsidize the hospitals' maternity wards, free consultation for women in pregnancy, and for children under ten years old. Industries, who employed more than 50 women, were obliged to open a *sala-cuna*. All departments were to promote the foundation of *salas-cuna* and the *Gota de Leche* programmes in the departmental capital. Children under fourteen could not be employed.

The *sala-cuna* was reopened in the *hospicio* in Bogotá, and was extended with the move of some girls and boys to the *Casa de Prevención de la Infancia* and to the *Asilo de Niños Desamparados*. More *sala-cuna* rooms allowed the *hospicio* to reduce the

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[137] *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Benficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922).
[138] Ley 48 de 1924, *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, 2 December 1924.

employment of wet-nurses. The next project was to move the *hospicio* outside the city. The *sala-cuna* programme of the *hospicio* was complemented with the *salas-cuna* of the Red Cross founded in Bogotá in 1928.

In Medellín these two programmes -*Gota de Leche* and *salas-cuna*- ran in the building of the *Patronato de Obreras*; by 1937 these cared for 900 children. In Cartagena a group of ladies promoted the two programmes in 1925.

The *hospicio* in general became more specialized; there were *sala-cuna* for children under seven years old; houses for boys and girls between seven and fourteen also started to appear as a distinct type of institution. Poor children were clearly divided for purposes of assistance by age and by sex.

The *hospicio* was distinctive by this time: it was an establishment only for children up to seven years old. Attention was focused on health at the start and this was followed by some education. These establishments came to depend on lay societies linked to health programmes. Care was modernized in the largest cities. The *hospicio* of Bogotá was the model, and was one of the few state establishments of the kind.

Orphanages for boys and girls

By this time the orphanage was seen as the next institution for the orphan children after the *sala-cuna* and the *hospicio*. A strong belief in the protection of children, especially orphans and poor children was the thinking behind it. The foundation of

orphanages spread throughout the country, but the majority came from initiatives of individual citizens, and citizens supported by religious orders, or set up by religious orders on their own.

The division by sex among orphanages was also clear. Orphanages for girls outnumbered those for boys, as girls were seen as more vulnerable than boys. The *Acción Social Católica* had an important role in promoting houses for the protection of girls. It established the *Sociedad Protección de la Joven* in 1923 and the *Casa de la Misericordia* in 1926, both in Medellín.

Orphanages were for the protection of children between seven and fourteen years, and were also seen as institutions of education. Education was seen as providing a respectable way of life after the orphanage. Education for work was also seen as providing an income for the establishment and savings for the children. There was a clear division between the teaching of boys and girls: the boys were trained as artisans and in agricultural activities, and the girls in domestic ones. In Bogotá the *Casa de Preservación de Niñas* took in the washing of the *Asilo de Niños Desamparados* and received payment for the work.

The idea of rural education was preferred, and many orphanages moved or tried to move to rural areas. In Bogotá the Junta wanted to move the *hospicio*, the *Asilo de Niños* and the *Casa de Preservación* to rural areas near the city. In Medellín the *Hogar Campestre* for boys was founded as late as 1960.

Except for the orphanages in Bogotá and Medellín that had a large number of children, the majority were small. Several were founded in other capitals of departments. In Pasto an orphanage for girls was founded by the Bishop in 1886 with the support of the municipal and departmental government. It was directed by the Bethlemitas Sisters. By 1924 there were 24 orphanages.[139] In Cartagena the orphanage had 40 girls in 1934. There were orphanages in smaller towns like Armenia, Pamplona, Socorro, Chinacota, Caloto, Zipaquira and Cartago.

Other establishments for children were founded with different aims. These were the *Casas de Correción y Escuela de Trabajo*. These were established to receive children who were beggars, or who had committed crimes, and the children whose parents were in prison and who did not have any relative who could take care of them. The majority were founded after a law on juvenile crime was passed in 1930.[140] However, in Medellín there had been a *Casa de Correción* since 1914, run by ex-soldiers. These houses were to educate and 'correct' children through work.[141]

By the 1920s the group of poor children between seven and sixteen years was also clearly defined, separated from smaller children and from adults. Boys and girls had to go to different establishments. These institutions were enclosed, with a strict daily life. Education was the main activity, and in the teaching instruction for work was fundamental. The poor children had to leave the institution at sixteen and find a respectable way of life. Few of these establishments depended on the state. The

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[139] A. Santander, *Biografía de Aldana y Coregografía de Pasto*, (Pasto, 1895), p. 98.
[140] *Historia de Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1930), pp. 287-292.
[141] C. Reyes. *La Vida Cotidiana en Medellín 1890 -1930*, (Bogotá, 1996), p. 238.

majority were established by private societies, mainly the religious orders, although they sometimes received economic support from the municipal, departmental or national governments.

Asylums for beggars

By 1920 there was a consensus on the prohibition of begging. Strong legal dispositions sought to control the presence of beggars on the streets.[142] Vagrants were to be restrained and made to reform.[143] This law promoted asylums in most of the departmental capitals. There were asylums for beggars in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Cartagena, Tunja, Pasto and Cúcuta. To enforce this law was not easy. The *Junta General de Beneficencia* in Bogotá complained that the police did not take all the beggars off the streets; they proposed to constitute special police solely to do that. By 1936 the law related to begging was made tougher.[144]

The asylums first separated the beggars by sex; the asylums for men were entrusted to male religious orders, and those for the women to female orders.[145] The sick and the mad were further segregated. Children would be placed in the orphanages and old people would go to the new *ancianatos* which began to be founded as well.[146] Beggars in the asylums had to work. In Bogotá, the male beggars helped to build the new asylum for women in Sibaté. There most beggars came from towns near the city: 15%

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[142] *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 11 March 1920.
[143] *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 16 March 1920.
[144] Lay 48 de 1936, *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, 28 March 1936, p. 669.
[145] In Bogotá the Colonia de Medigos was now ran by the Brothers of St. John of God.
[146] There were houses for old people in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Manizalez, Chiquinquira and Pamplona by 1920s. There were generally private initiatives.

were from Bogotá, 40% from the towns of Cundinamarca and 45% from other parts, mainly from Boyacá.

The asylums remained state institutions, dependent on the departmental government, with some support from the national government. A distinction was made between the beggars who needed shelter and those who needed punishment. The deserving were shut up and attempts made to reform them through work. The undeserving beggars were sent to jail. The requirements necessary to be classified as deserving became stricter and less compassionate.

Lunatic Asylums

Although lunatics were gradually separated from beggars and in some cities now had their own asylum, in others they were still kept together with the beggars or with the prisoners in jail. In general they were the institutional poor relief group in the worst conditions. From 1920 lunatic asylums were transformed gradually into proper mental hospitals in some cities, and in others the lunatics were at least separated from common prisoners. One big step to improve the conditions of the lunatics in Bogotá was to bring the Brothers of St. John of God to take care of the men. They knew something about mental illness and could give some proper care to mad people. Women received no such benefit.

The mental hospitals came progressively closer to the health area rather than just giving shelter. The development of mental hospitals depended on the departmental governments sometimes with the support of the national. They were state institutions.

Free Primary Schools and Schools of Arts and Crafts

By 1920 primary education had been made theoretically obligatory and parents could choose the school, however this reform did not mean much for the poor children.[147] It is estimated that in 1918 6% of the total number of children in Colombia went to school and in 1938 7%.[148] And the Catholic Church between 1914 and 1938 controlled approximately 660 primary schools with nearly 39,000 students.[149] However we do not know how many poor children actually received education.

Particularly for poor children a new programme called the *patronato escolar* was created, chiefly through private initiative. In 1925 the department of Boyaca began it, afterwards followed by Cundinamarca, Santander, Tolima and Cauca. By 1927 2,000 children in Boyacá were receiving some help through the *patronato*. The *patronato escolar* helped the schools with support in acquiring teaching materials, food for children when they were in school, clothes and shoes. The *patronatos* were supported by the municipalities and by groups of ladies organized in each locality. There were cases where the *patronato* was promoted by a single individual, *Patronato de la*

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[147] R. Silva, 'La Educación en Colombia, 1880-1930, in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1989), t. iv, pp. 61-86.
[148] Muñoz Cecilia, 'The Working Child in Colombia since 1850', in H. Cunninghan and P.P. Viazzo (ed.), *Child Labour in Historical Perspective 1800-1985. Case studies from Europe, Japan and Colombia*, (Florence, 1996), pp. 91-105.
[149] M. J. La Rosa, *De la Derecha a la Izquierda. La Iglesia Católica en la Colombia Contemporánea*, (Bogotá, 2000), p. 62.

Escuela del barrio de las Nieves in Bogotá, founded by Manuel Umaña Camacho in 1919.[150]

Schools of arts and crafts were founded in a number of provincial cities, like Barranquilla, Mompox, Manizales and Bucaramanga. They had the same structure and followed the model of the first ones. Education continued to rely heavily on private initiative, especially from the Catholic Church. Catholic religious orders which had been invited or recalled to Colombia by the government in the late nineteenth century ran most of the limited number of schools that provided training in arts and crafts.

The picture of education in Colombia at this time varies as A. Helg has pointed out: 'In rural areas, very little schooling was available. Disparities between the countryside and the cities were exacerbated by regional economic imbalances, because the financing of primary education was mainly the responsibility of departmental government. The highest rates of literacy and of school provision were found in the most prosperous and urbanized departments, namely Cundinamarca, Antioquia, Valle and Atlántico. Before 1940, the role of the state in education had been limited by such factors as scarce funding, the absence of trained personnel, and traditions of decentralization. Educational reforms consisted heavily of legislation that could not be enforced -compulsory elementary education in 1927 and minimum salaries for public

[150] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 7, fol. 28-30.

primary school-teachers in 1934- or that fell into abeyance when budgetary retrenchment occurred'.[151]

By the 1920s the increase in institutional poor relief was notable. Although the poor relief establishments were mainly concentrated in the largest cities, some were now being founded in small towns. The regions where institutional poor relief was most dynamic were Cundinamarca and Antioquia. There was a proliferation of institutions, and they were flexible and capable of implementing very different social agendas. The concepts and practices of these institutions derived from notions of moral obligation, religious duty, social exigency and expectation. The patterns of the establishments often followed the models of European institutions. Europe, particularly France, was the reference for social policies, for ideas and practices of poor relief and for the structure of the establishments, and this influence was reinforced by the religious communities. Some Latin American experiences, specifically Chilean, were sometimes examples for the institutional poor relief.

The founding of establishments of poor relief by private initiative grew considerably, more than that by the state. Doctors, nuns, clergymen, women, managers and the political authorities all contributed. The participation of women, lay and religious was new and remarkable. Here women entered into the public sphere. The participation of the religious orders was most noteworthy. Each congregation had a specialized approach. New categories of poor, and new ways of seeing the poor began to appear.

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[151] A. Helg, 'Education and Training in Colombia, 1940s to 1960s', in C. M. Lewis and C. Abel, *Welfare, poverty and development in Latin America*, (Oxford, 1993), pp. 239-255.

Institutional poor relief developed in a varied pattern. Health establishments depended more on the state and were spread more widely throughout the country, although health institutions related to children were promoted more by the private sector. The picture of establishments giving shelter was more complex. The institutions for beggars were more a matter for the state; those for children were shared by the public and private sector, with a notable increase by the 1910s. Establishments for education depended more on private initiative, particularly from the religious orders.

The chief shift in the poor relief institutions run by the state was that they came to depend on the departmental government, not on the municipal government. The link with the national government came through the laws relating to poor relief that demanded changes in existing establishments or the foundation of new ones, and through the funds that the different establishments received from the central government by the decision of members of Congress. Although the municipal authorities and urban elite lost some responsibility in the direct control of institutional poor relief, the local level still remained important. Efforts and initiatives to create new establishments to help the poor came from local people.

Table 3

Presidents of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*

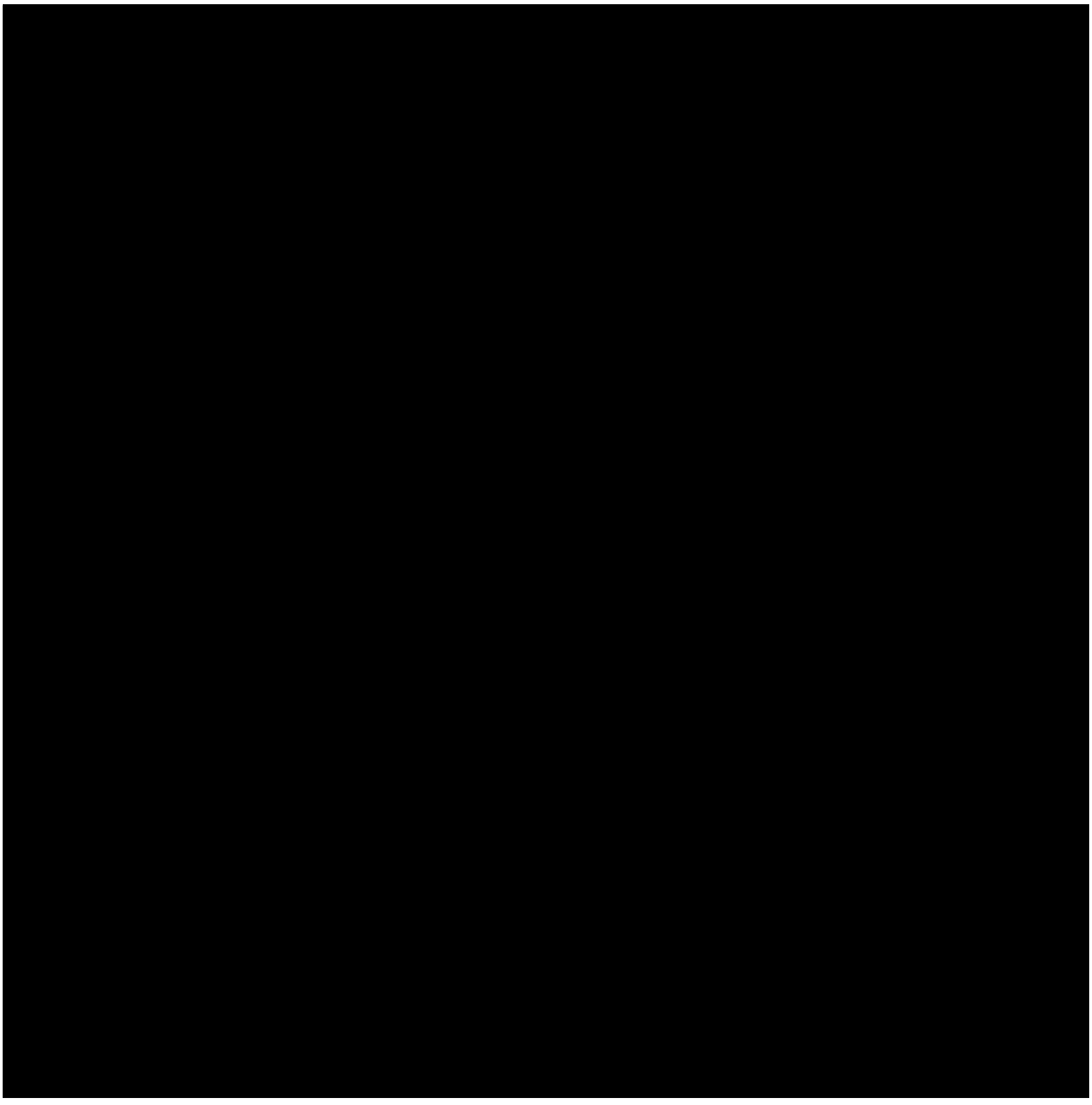


Source: *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en su sesiones de 1922*, (Bogotá, 1922).

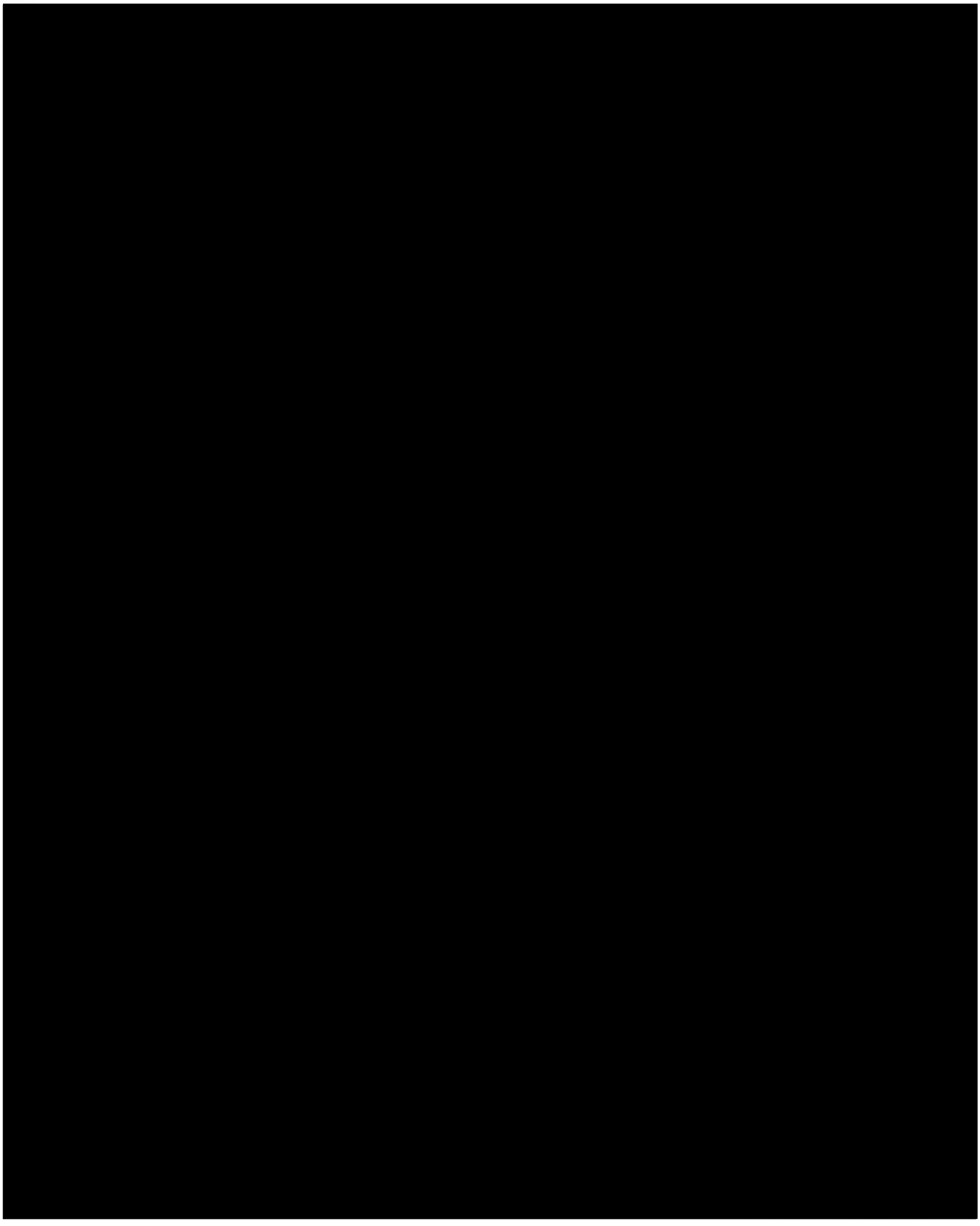
Table 4

Hospitals in Colombia.

1927



Source: *Historia de las Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 790-801.



Source: *Historia de las Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 790-801.

Table 5

Number of people attended in the

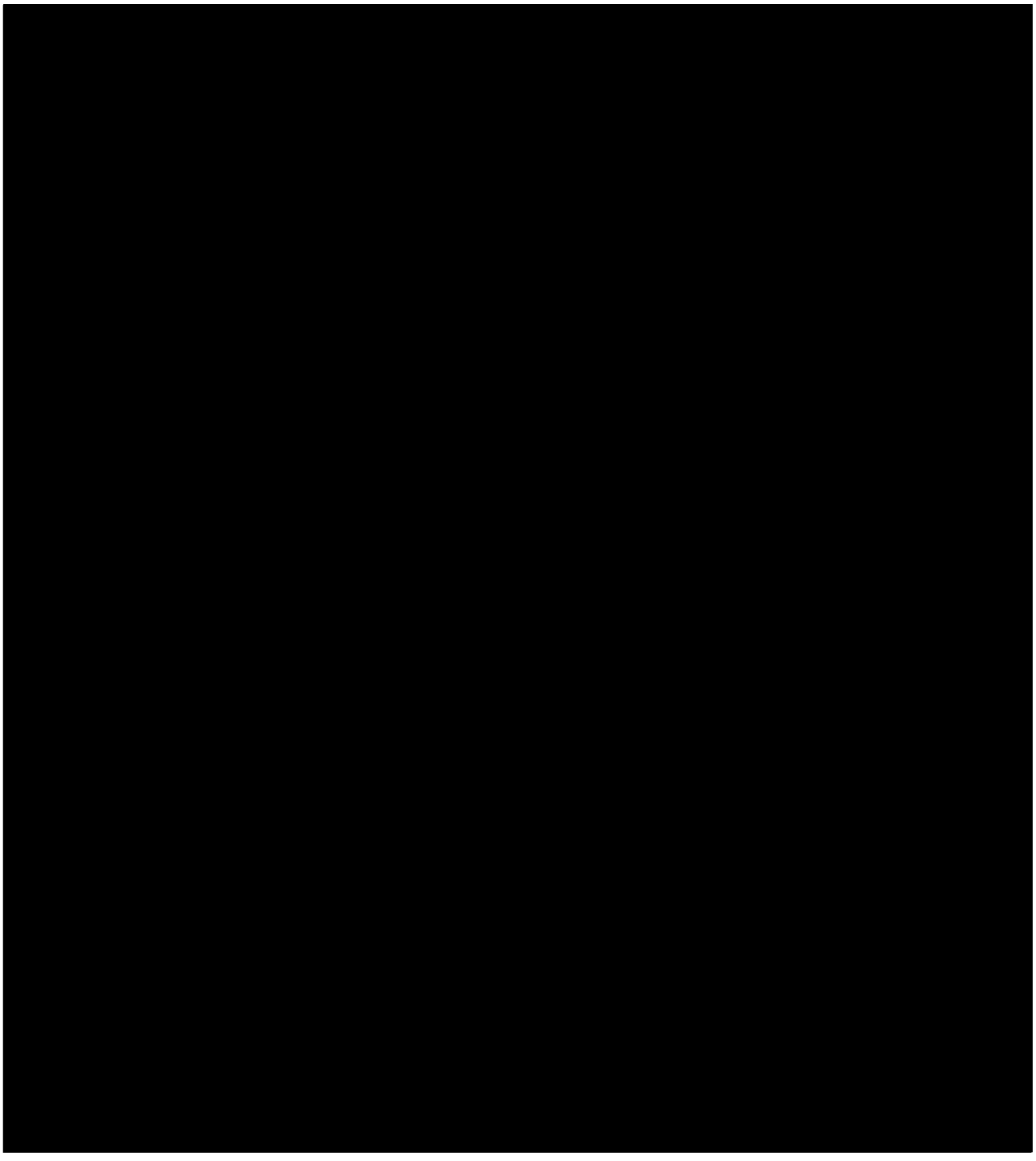
***Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca's* establishments.**



Sources: Reports of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca*.

Table 6

Relation between numbers of people attended and the spending in the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca's* establishments



Sources: *Informe que el presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinarmarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento en sus sesiones de 1921,* (Bogotá. 1921), pp. xviii and xix.

IV. OUTDOOR POOR RELIEF

As well as institutional poor relief there was also outdoor poor relief. Outdoor poor relief was seen as being assistance that was better organized, more rational and more useful than aid which was offered on an individual, sporadic and indiscriminate basis, as in the case of alms. This form of poor relief is not found in a systematic way in Colombia until the middle of the nineteenth century with the foundation of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. There is no previous record of this type of relief as an organized strategy of assistance for the poor. There is no doubt that from the colonial period individual parishes regularly provided assistance for the poor, and perhaps the best demonstrations of this are the statues and paintings depicting the poor begging for alms at church doors at religious ceremonies. However, there is no evidence of this parish assistance being organized in a systematic way or of its being a product of state or church policy. Rather it could be said that it was random, casual relief dependent on the generosity of parishioners and the parish priest, and as such was bound up with the spirit of Christian charity.

From the middle of the nineteenth century outdoor poor relief was carried out in Colombia predominantly by private agencies, some of which were fairly well organized and structured, while others were informal, fragmentary and scattered. The state took practically no part in this type of relief, nor was there any national legislation about outdoor relief. Even policies on the prohibition of begging were not linked with promoting this type of aid. The state, as we have already seen, at that time

put the emphasis on institutional poor relief through the setting up of foundations.[1] The state did occasionally provide financial relief to support the activities of these private agencies, but it was only from 1918 that the state began cautiously to involve itself with this type of relief, particularly with housing policies. Consequently outdoor poor relief in Colombia was to be shaped by the policies of private agencies which specialized in this form of aid.

It is clear from the documentation examined, as well as from other historical studies on the subject, that during the period under consideration it was the St. Vincent de Paul Society which undoubtedly led the way amongst the societies offering outdoor poor relief in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, whether measured by the amounts of economic aid it provided, the numbers of people it assisted, or by the extent of its coverage of the country, for the Society grew to become a veritable national network.[2]

By 1907, the Society had offices not only in Bogotá, but throughout Cundinamarca in the following towns: Zipaquirá, Facatativa, Fómeque, Chipaque, Cáqueza, Suesca, Cajicá, Machetá; also in Medellín and the following towns in Antioquia: Abejorral, Marinilla, Rionegro, Antioquia, Salamina, Sonsón, San Vicente, Aranzazu, Yarumal,

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[1] It should be emphasized that for many European countries as well as the United States, outdoor poor relief formed a central part of the poor relief policies of government. See I. Joanna, 'State, Church and Voluntarism in European Welfare, 1690-1850', in H. Cunningham and I. Joanna (ed.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Reform. From the 1690s to 1850*, (London, 1998), pp. 15-65, and A. Y. Lui, 'Political and Institutional Constraints of Reform: The Charity Reforms Failed Campaigns Against Public Outdoor Relief, New York, 1874-1898', *Journal of Political History*, vol. 7, no. 3, (1995), pp. 341-364.

[2] The majority of sources about outdoor poor relief are from the private societies and institutions that carried out this activity. It is very difficult to find other kinds of reference. However these sources give a lot of information which helps us to reconstruct their development.

Guarne, Supía, Santa Rosa de Cabal, Angostura, Prado and Anserma; in Cali and Popayán; in Buaramanga and Cúcuta as well as neighbouring towns such as Zapatoca, San Gil, Socorro, Girón, Málaga, Piedecuesta, Chinacota and Pamplona; in Tunja and the surrounding areas: Chiquinquirá, Barbosa, Simijaca and Ramiriquí; in Manizales and Pereira; in Cartagena and Barranquilla; and in Ibagué. In many other places branches had been set up only to disappear subsequently for reasons unknown, as was the case with Sopetrán, Nemocón, Aratoca, Pasto, Vélez, Neiva, Puente Nacional, Barichara, Gachancipá, Pesca, Arbeláez, Chía, Chaparral, Guasca, Sopó, Ráquira, Fusagasugá, Ubaté, Santa Rosa de Viterbo, Sogamoso, Honda, Suaita, Garzón, Ubaque, Funza and Cogua. There is no data on Pacho, Santa Marta and Convención, where branches of the Society also existed at one time or another.[3]

The broad outlines of the St. Vincent de Paul Society with regard to doctrine and organization came from the Société Générale which originated in France in the nineteenth century and had its headquarters in Paris. The origins of this Société Générale were constantly recounted and recreated in Colombia in the reports which appeared in the early years in the journals *La Caridad* and *El Catolicismo*, then from 1869 to 1871 in its own publication entitled *Anales de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl*, and subsequently in local journals such as *El Orden* during the 1880s and the *Correo Nacional* in the 1890s, until the *Boletín* began to be published on a regular basis from 1911 on. These publications were produced to provide information for its members and to promote its activities.

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[3] A. J. Uribe, *Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl de Bogotá. Celebración del Quincuagésimo Aniversario 1857-1907. Memoria Histórica*, (Bogotá, 1908). pp. 266-270.

The different versions of the story in these publications agree in so far as around 1833 in Paris a group of young people had inaugurated the Conférence d'Histoire at which religious, literary and philosophical questions were aired, shared preoccupation over the situation of the poor and underprivileged was expressed and wide-ranging discussion was devoted to what was known at the time as the 'social question'. The solution to the 'social question' was presented in liberal catholic circles as the broad practical application of the principles of justice, morality, humanity and charity, and this was seen as the only alternative to a violent uprising by the proletarian classes as a result of growing pauperism.

This preoccupation was gradually transformed into a more practical form, leading eventually to the formation of the *Conférence de Charité*, the aim of which was to immerse those involved in 'Christian faith' by engaging in activities which provided assistance for the poor, both materially through donations in kind, and spiritually through spiritual instruction.[4] At first this league of young people had no clear idea of how to carry out its activities, but it was apparently the work performed in a slum area of Paris by the Daughters of Charity, where they visited the poor and gave them assistance in kind, which provided the inspiration for this group of young liberal Catholics.[5] From the very beginning their motto was 'let us stop talking about charity and do it instead by helping the poor'.[6] A year after embarking on this work, five

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[4] M. L. Montoya and S. A. Gamba, 'Contribución al conocimiento de la asistencia social en Bogotá entre 1850-1920: Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl', (Nacional Univ.-Bogotá, 1989).
[5] B. Cattenéo, *Frédéric Ozaman le bienhereux*, (Paris, 1997), p. 138.
[6] Idem., p. 136.

young men from the group of whom Frédéric Ozaman emerged as leader, gave the name Society of St. Vincent de Paul to their infant organization and its activities, in memory of the Franciscan priest canonized in 1737. By now it was no longer an organization for discussing Christianity or the 'social question'; it was already an organization for serving and giving assistance to the poor. For Frédéric Ozaman, the founder of the Society, the challenge was to set the members of the Society up as mediators to help prevent the collision already being anticipated between the pauperism of the workers and the insatiable, unscrupulous rich.[7]

The main motivating principle of members of the Society is always described in its papers by the word 'charity' in the sense of material and spiritual assistance offered to whoever needed it, a distinction being made between charity and on the other hand alms, which were regarded as indiscriminate and indeed damaging, and also *beneficencia*, which was seen as cold heartless assistance lacking any spiritual base. But assistance was also viewed as a desirable goal in itself in as far as it improved the lives both of the members and of the recipients of the aid.

The practice which became a distinctive feature of the Society from the outset and has always formed the core of its activities, its main 'modus operandi', was the domicilary visiting.[8] On the strength of this specific practice, the Society was able from the beginning to establish a particular method of looking after the poor and needy:

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[7] Idem., p. 115.

[8] The domiciliary visiting was widespread in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe as a better way of individualizing and controlling the outdoor poor relief. Visiting was extremely labour intensive, and the spread of its popularity was necessarily concomitant with the

> 'La visita domiciliaria a las familias pobres es la obra fundamental de la Sociedad; es fácil de hacer y no requiere mucho tiempo; agrada y cautiva, porque tiene siempre un efecto inmediato, el de proporcionar un alivio material, y ninguna obra como ésta contribuye tan eficazmente a nuestra propia edificación y santificación. La sociedad envía sus miembros a la morada de los que socorre, no sólo a llevarles el pan y a que se cercioren de la verdadera situación de los agraciados, sino también y principalmente a que les lleven el alimento del alma, dándoles consejos prudentes y oportunos, así como religiosos consuelos, que abran los corazones a la fe y a la esperanza'.[9]

The domiciliary visiting was a form of direct care, the object of which was to get to know the real situation of a particular family, in order to be able to determine as accurately as possible its needs and the type of assistance it should be offered. But above all, the domiciliary visiting made possible the creation of close personal bonds with the groups being looked after.

> 'La Sociedad adopta verdaderamente a las familias a quienes socorre: entre estas y los socios que deben visitarlas se establece un verdadero parentesco espiritual, de estrechos vínculos, como son los que forman la caridad cristiana'.[10]

In carrying out domiciliary visiting members of the Society were given four recommendations which were constantly impressed on them as being essential if this practice was to advance successfully. The first of these was frequency, or at least regularity, of visits to enable the member to gather experience and win the confidence of those being looked after. The second covered the duration of the visit, which ideally should be lengthy, so that those being visited could be listened to unhurriedly and

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devolution of responsibility for it to religious and other voluntary groups. Concerned with the methods of ensuring effective private charity the publication of *Le Visiteur du pauvre* written by Joseph-Marie de Gérando in 1820, was an important issue first in France and later in Europe and the United States.

[9] A. J. Uribe, op. cit., p. 87.
[10] Idem., p. 102.

encouraged to talk about themselves and thus provide a fuller picture of their lives. The third recommendation was that the member carrying out the visit should act responsibly and adopt a gentle, kind and patient manner. The last recommendation was for the member to show discretion, not be impatient to discover secrets, to try not to register surprise and to be careful not to give the impression of knowing all there is to be known.

The custom of the domiciliary visiting was carefully developed by the active members and was the main instrument in forming close bonds between those giving help and those receiving it. For the latter it was the chance to show their gratitude for having been selected, as well as offering the opportunity to analyze whether the petitioner satisfied the conditions for him to merit the relief of his most pressing needs. It was also the time for the recipients to enter into or confirm a commitment to lead respectable lives, this being a key element of the contract entailed in receiving assistance. For the members carrying out the visit it was a moment of social awareness, in which the objectives pursued by the Society were actually bearing fruit, providing satisfaction for the individuals concerned and the group as a whole at fulfilling their duty to serve the needy.

From the outset the Society's regulations provided a clear definition of who were to be assisted. Moreover, these criteria were apparently never revised; at least there are no explicit statements introducing modifications to the original criteria.

> 'La Sociedad no socorre sino a los pobres que propia y verdaderamente se llaman vergonzantes, y en este orden de preferencia, madres de familia enfermas, con hijas y sin apoyo: madres con niñas y sin apoyo: huérfanas sin quien las ayude: artesanos honrados e imposibilitados de trabajar'.[11]

Within the broad criterion the Society divided the needy into six classes: households in which the head of family was unfit to work through old age or infirmity and which had no other means of support, the majority of family members being girls; households similar to the above where some family members might be working but producing insufficient income to cover the family's basic needs; orphan girls with no means of support for whom it was not possible to find a place in a home; boys and girls who needed a place in care either because they did not have parents, or had a tendency to misbehave or who had been abandoned or because it was impossible to feed or educate them; honest craftsmen who could not earn sufficient to live on; people who desperately needed to be found work.

With regard to the selection criteria for determining who were to be deemed most deserving of aid, three appear to have carried the most weight: sickness, the inability to find work and the fact of being a minor who had been abandoned in some way. If we examine these factors carefully, it is striking to what extent these criteria resemble those used by the state in its social welfare initiatives; they are selective criteria which had still not moved beyond the traditionally vulnerable groups: widows, orphans and the sick. However, within the Society there were also other criteria. Firstly there was the granting of special status to households in which females were present, since it was considered that this reduced the potential of a family to have sufficient income to

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[11] *Reglamentos de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl*, (Bogotá, 1859), p.13.

support itself. Secondly, there was the decision to help some families who did have some work if this was inadequate to live on, provided that the decency condition applied, although this latter concept was used broadly and was not strictly defined. This is important because in later annual reports of the Society's activities, it would be emphasized that the initial study to determine whether families would be assisted should include certain lifestyle elements such as whether couples were legitimately married, whether the children of parents to be assisted had been baptized or had taken first communion, whether hygiene and orderliness were taught in the household, all of which were seen as elements which constituted decency or at least were attendant on this virtue, which involved a great deal more than mere economic virtue.

Similarly, the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Medellín specified explicit conditions, although these were not very different from those which we have examined above. In 1893 it was laid down that 'debía darse limosna tan sólo a personas vergonzantes que carecieran de comer y de vestir y que no se atrevían a implorar la limosna en público, dejando de lado aquellos que conservaran una pequeña renta que les diera con qué comer y vestir'.[12]

In 1921 new regulations once again stressed the criteria by which poor families were selected, on this occasion far more emphatically, underlining criteria, which had been mentioned ever since 1860, but which by the early twentieth century had apparently lost their validity or over time had been discarded.

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[12] P. Castro, 'Beneficiencia en Medellín, 1800-1930', (Antioquia Univ.-Medellín, 1994), p. 15.

The first of these criteria which was now revived was that 'no nos incumbe misión alguna respecto a mujeres jóvenes .... elijimos, pues, familias en cuya visita no se encuentre ningún inconveniente, y dejémosles a las señoras la misión que más bien les corresponde, de socorrer a las señoras solas cuando son jóvenes', an approach which was subsequently toned down in so far as there was some acknowledgement that innocent children should not be allowed to suffer.

The second criterion which was now mentioned once again was that 'indulgencia debe tener un límite: cuando una familia vive en el concubinato, y viola no sólo las leyes civiles sino las de la Iglesia'. Only if the family agreed to legitimize its situation can it be considered as being fit for adoption.

Finally the criteria were established for dealing with cases where several families were suffering similar levels of poverty and determining why the largest families should be given priority.[13] It is possible that this stiffening of the relief criteria was due in part to the fact that by the beginning of the twentieth century requests for assistance had risen and the Society was unable to satisfy all the requests submitted to it. A return to the more traditional relief criteria which had been followed in the nineteenth century inevitably brought about a reduction in the number of families eligible for assistance even if it meant reintroducing in an even tougher form criteria which were more Catholic than humanitarian, indeed more Catholic than Christian.

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[13] *BSVP*, no. 126, (1921), p.180-183.

Before offering assistance to a family or individual, the Society's first step was to draw up a secret report on circumstances and perceived needs, a job performed by the active members. This report was then presented at the weekly meeting of Society members to decide who should be offered assistance, in what form and how much. Nobody had the right to make demands on the Society or its members, nor were those assisted entitled to make complaints about or appeal against the assistance received.

Without doubt the domiciliary visiting was, and continues to be, the distinctive feature of the St. Vincent de Paul Society's work. This type of personal approach and social relationship, especially when viewed in the context of its particular historical development, might be analysed as being the building up of an experience, a practical model which is arrived at through a series of probes and exploratory encounters. Naturally before an experience of this nature, both parties have their own idea about it and adopt positions which depend on their expectations and on the image which they have of themselves and of the other. But the encounter can only produce solutions by taking place, and only by being repeated can it create a lasting model and, as we have seen, produce a guide and criteria.

Thus it can be said that the domiciliary visiting, as a form of social relationship, consists of different stages. The first approach contains an element of relative 'chance' within the 'poor' group selected and, it should be said, something of a 'surprise' element for both parties, since the active member and the family being visited do not know each other and have no exact knowledge of each other's activities, even though this is always likely to happen within a framework of expectations built up beforehand. At least it must have been like that in the early years. Later when the

Society's activities were much better known, the families being visited could draw upon a much larger fund of information, although the element of 'chance' always remained as long as there were still no well-defined criteria for the selection of the favoured group.

The second stage consisted of the 'interview' and the 'investigation' of the family concerned by the active member. By now the member should have had slightly clearer criteria, and although the criteria being used here were clearly unilateral ones, in this phase of the encounter we cannot rule out the presence of purely chance elements such as any mutual liking which might develop between the active member and the family being visited, and many other subjective elements. However, we can say that in their home visits members tried to be guided first and foremost by the 'rational' criteria which had been established by the Society and had been adopted by each one of the *conferencias*.

The third stage was when the family was selected by the Society to receive the assistance which had been decided. This is when a relationship of reciprocal exchange began. The members granted families what the Society had established as the amount required to cover their needs, as far as the Society's resources allowed. The recipient had to accept this gratefully and with no right of appeal. On the surface the member was giving with no expectation of repayment and the family was receiving with no intention of offering anything in return.

However, the family had to follow certain norms of Christian, or strictly speaking Catholic, behaviour, as evidenced by the undertaking to give up illegitimate

relationships by entering into Catholic marriage, to accept on behalf of themselves and all members of the family each of the sacraments of the Catholic religion -especially baptism and first holy communion- and in general to adopt what might be termed a Christian way of life, or even a Christian life model, which had a large 'civilizing' content, with its rules on courtesy, cleanliness and hygiene. As long as these norms were followed, the assistance would continue, but as soon as they broke down, the assistance was withdrawn.

The members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society were laymen. According to the regulations of the Society, its members were divided into two classes: the active members, engaged directly in Society work, and the contributing members whose role seems to have been limited to contributions to the financing of the Society through donations and charitable aid. To be an active member, one had to be good-living, a Catholic, and to have one's admission to the Society approved by the other members; new entrants had to adhere strictly to the Society's rules. To be a contributing member, one had only to demonstrate an interest in assisting the society. The documents uncovered up to now contain no evidence of anyone ever having been turned down for active membership. As a general rule new names for active membership were submitted by a serving member, which facilitated admission. But the documents give the impression that the absence of rejections for admission had more to do with the fact that almost all the applicants had close relationships with active members, on the basis of which they had actually been invited to apply.

The Society's records provide information about those who occupied the presidency at different times, and occasionally the names of those who acted as secretary. Other

members are mentioned only in very particular circumstances and even then invariably without their full names, except in the case of deceased members, whose names were recorded.

What emerges from the records for Bogotá and Medellín is how many members of the Society were prominent politically in the highest echelons of the State. For example, some were Presidents of the Republic, as was the case with José Manuel Marroquín, Mario Fidel Suárez and Carlos E. Restrepo. Very many more may not have risen to the very top rank of national leadership, but were important political figures, such as José Caicedo Rojas,[14] Juan Nepomuceno Nuñez Conto,[15] Eduardo Restrepo Sáenz,[16] Antonio José Uribe[17] and Justino Valenzuela.[18] There were also some prominent doctors of the day such as Nicolás Osorio, José Félix Merizalde and Nicanor Restrepo, educators such as José María Arrubla[19] and even a miniaturist painter, Manuel Dositeo Carvajal.[20]

We can see that members of the Society were for the most part 'society people', well known to the public through their involvement in politics and the high offices of state, people from professional backgrounds such as law, medicine or education.

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[14] Parliamentary representative for Bogotá 1850-51, president of the Chamber and also a writer.
[15] Representative for Buenaventura in 1837, judge in Cali in 1846, rector of the Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario.
[16] Governor of Cundinamarca in 1894, member of Bogotá City Council, representative for Bogotá in the Asamblea Constituyente in 1910.
[17] University teacher, Foreign Minister 1901, Minister of Education 1903-1904, Senator 1909.
[18] Member of Bogotá City Council and Senator.
[19] J.M. Restrepo Sáenz, *Genealogías de Santa Fe*, (Bogotá 1991).
[20] G. Giraldo Jaramillo, *La miniatura, la pintura y el grabado en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1982), p. 56.

The Society and each of its members maintained strong links with the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The initial group in Paris always sought to report its activities to some high-ranking member of the church in the hope of gaining approval for their work as a way of legitimizing their organization, and the Society continued to do this. The situation was very much the same in Colombia. The foundation of the first Society sprang from the visit of the Chilean Jesuit Víctor Eizaguirre; the annual meetings of the Society, at which reports of its activities were presented, were always preceded by mass and the meetings were presided over by the president of the Society and some member of the upper hierarchy of the Church. In Bogotá it was usually the Archbishop who represented the Church on these occasions.

Similarly, the regular statutory meetings of some sections, and later some *conferencias*, took place in church or chapel sacristies, in convents, or in the case of Bogotá in the Archbishop's Palace itself. Likewise in other cities meeting-places were always provided by parish priests. In addition, many of the activities were carried out and establishments founded by the Society working in conjunction with some religious community or member of the Church. Thus it can be said that although it was a lay Society, it had strong spiritual, social and institutional links with the Catholic Church, with important groups of parish priests and with the highest-ranking Church hierarchy, as well as with other religious societies and communities.

The religious communities with whom the Society had most frequent contact were the Daughters of Charity, the Sisters of Charity and the Christian Brothers, although it

also maintained very special links with the Jesuits. One of the founders and prime movers of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Colombia was, in fact, the Jesuit priest Mario Valenzuela and Father Campoamor also took an active part in the meetings of the Society in Bogotá from 1912 onwards. Similarly, the proposal to create the *Círculo de Obreros* was published in the Society's *Boletín* in 1915, and also the ideas of *Acción Católica* were circulated in several numbers of the same publication[21].

But although the Society had links with the Church, so too did it with the state. Relations with the state took different forms. Among these was obviously its support for the foundation of new establishments, calling on the experience it had been acquiring in this field, as well as contributions to the funding for these, especially in the case of hospitals and schools through its education and hospital sections. For instance, the Society supported some of the establishments which came under the *Junta General de Beneficencia*, together with other establishments sponsored by different municipalities and departments. For its part the state, as we know, gave the Society financial support, which constituted an important source of its revenue. The Society received frequent assistance from national, departmental and municipal sources and there were even cases of a municipality imposing taxes to benefit the Society, as occurred in the city of Cali where in 1905 25% of the tax on brandy was earmarked for the School of Arts and Crafts which was run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society at the request of the city council.[22] The Society's links with the state, with religious groups and communities and with groups of prominent citizens enabled it to

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[21] *BSVP*, nos. 51, 207 and 241, (1915, 1928 and 1932).
[22] Archivo Histórico del Concejo Municipal de Cali, Acuerdo no. 51, t. 173, 1905.

construct a vast network of support amongst the various charitable establishments which existed in the major cities and even in some smaller towns, as well as amongst other societies and institutions offering assistance to the most under-privileged sector of the population. The Society had little difficulty in fixing people up with other establishments or in recommending them to other societies. It had the advantage of having extensive connections in the urban societies where it had bases. The work of the Society was never claimed as offering a total solution to the problem of poverty, but only a partial remedy which might assist in solving the existing problem, although today we can see that they were small-scale remedies and not without compensation.

Though the St. Vincent de Paul Society took pride in its apolitical nature, which it frequently sought to emphasize in its writings, nevertheless there is no denying that a high proportion of its members were very prominent in the political field and, in some cases, outstanding national figures. The apolitical character of the Society was one of the secrets of its success in its early years. The Parisian founders believed that partisan politics was a divisive force and perverted spiritual transformation and improvement.[23]

There is no doubt that this characteristic of the Society must have contributed greatly to its strength in Colombia, in view of the heavily confrontational and partisan nature of politics in the country at that time. The Society was thus able to avoid becoming involved in party confrontation. However, it cannot be claimed that its unconcern was total, since its strong links with the ecclesiastical hierarchy and with some religious

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[23] B. Cattenéo, op. cit., p. 129.

orders left the Society no option but to adopt a position when there were political clashes over the secularization process. In 1863 the Society decided to give the meagre funds it had at that time to the Candelaria who were being sent into exile.[24]

The apolitical nature of the Society was reflected in the rules both for the admission of members and for selecting those to be assisted. At least on a formal level it was the religious ethos of the Society which predominated as it aspired to respond always to humanitarian considerations: 'Dicen nuestras reglas, que es todo caridad: la política es absolutamente ajena a ella'.[25] However it is difficult to establish beyond the suggestions of common sense, how much specific weight this political involvement and the system of influences derived from it carried in the Society's activities. We can only assume that it was, in fact, the case that the Society acted apolitically, but we do not have at our disposal all the evidence necessary for absolute proof.[26] What is quite clear is that its members were part of a social, cultural and political elite, as evinced by their financial status, their educational qualifications, their power to shape public opinion and by the fact that they held such high-ranking public offices.

The Society organized two big feast days each year: one for the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the first Sunday in January, and one for St. Vincent de Paul on the first Sunday in July. Both members as well as others with no direct connections with the Society supported these events by providing special help in the form of donations or the offer

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[24] *Anales de la Sociedad de San Vicente,* Bogotá, 5 April 1870.
[25] A. J. Uribe, op. cit., p. 114.
[26] This assertion agrees in part with views expressed by Fernando Botero Herrera in his article 'La Sociedad San Vicente de Paúl de Medellín y el mal perfume de la política, 1882-1914', *Historia y Sociedad*, no. 2. (1995), pp. 39-74.

of services. The proceedings consisted of a mass which all members were obliged to attend and a meeting afterwards in a place prearranged by the president of the Society, at which the reports were presented and elections were conducted for offices whose holders had come to the end of their terms.

By 1912 records show that the special feast-days of the Society numbered four: the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin on 8 December; the first Sunday of Lent; the Sunday of the Good Shepherd, which is the second one after Easter; and the Saint's-day of the Society's patron saint, St. Vincent de Paul, on 19 July. However, the Society actually celebrated only the two annual feast days on 8 December and 19 July.[27] Photographs which survive of these feast days show that large numbers took part, especially for the July celebration at which the traditional bazaar was organized to collect funds for the Society, an event which was always publicized in the city's various newspapers, while its success, numbers attending and amounts collected were reported afterwards in the press as an important 'social' event in the city.

It is difficult to find anything 'new' to say about these celebrations, which took place year after year apparently without any major modifications, like a rather empty ritual. In reality they provided a means for the Society members themselves to get to know one another as well as introducing the Society to the outside world, through the press reports, but it is hard to imagine that they had any definite function in relation to the less exalted sectors of society or even to the very groups the Society assisted, since the

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[27] *Reglamento General de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl con las notas aclaratorias publicadas en 21 de noviembre de 1853 por el consejo general de la misma*, (Bogotá, 1912).

latter groups seem to have had nothing to do with the celebrations or at least only minimal contact.

Before 1910

The first Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Colombia was founded in Bogotá in 1857 and sprung from the initiative of a group led by some very prominent people in the city, namely Rufino de Castillo, the Jesuit Mario Valenzuela, Ricardo Carrasquilla, Francisco Quijano, Francisco de Paula Franco, Matías De Francisco and José María Trujillo Herrero, under the leadership of the Chilean Jesuit priest Víctor Eizaguirre, who was in Bogotá at the time giving lectures and promoting the Society, its objectives and its scope. However, its legal status was not recognized until 1883.[28] By then the Society of St. Vincent had headquarters in almost every European country, in the United States and Canada, and in Mexico, Chile and Argentina.[29]

Although the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Colombia followed the broad outlines of its French original, it remained administratively independent until 1911. In that year it was taken over by the Société Générale in Paris, which brought about changes in its hierarchical structure and in the organization of its work and activities, in order to bring it into line with the restructuring which the Societé Générale in Paris had introduced in 1850.

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[28] *Boletín de la Academia de Historia*, vol. xxv, no. 28 (1938).
[29] D. T. Mc Colgan. *A Century of Charity. The First One Hundred Years of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States,* (Milwaukee, 1951), p. 45.

The General Council was its highest authority, and this body was responsible for putting into effect the major principles and positions adopted by the organization. It had its headquarters in Paris. Below this were the National Higher Councils, which were responsible for directing activities in each country and served as chains of communication between the world body in Paris and the national ones in the individual countries. Below these were the Central Councils, which brought together the c*onferencias* into groups of dioceses, thus using the ecclesiastical structure of each country as the basis for its own organization. At the bottom of the pyramid were the local c*onferencias* which were the bodies charged with carrying out the grass-roots activities of the Society.

Although in Colombia the Society expanded fairly rapidly throughout the country, only the Societies in Bogotá and Medellín were at all dynamic in the sense that they operated continuously from their foundation and organized activities which made an impact in the two cities. The Societies in other cities found it more difficult to establish a stable group of members to operate on a long-term basis; and were unable to carry out such notable work as those in Bogotá and Medellín. It is not easy to explain fully why the Societies managed to be more successful in these two cities, but it may be that their stronger financial position and the fact that they had members who were more committed and had more resources provided these two Societies with a greater stimulus.

In Bogotá the Society started out with three sections: the Charity section, responsible for collecting funds for the Society to operate and also for giving out the vouchers; the

Education section, responsible for Christian teaching, and the Hospital section charged with caring for those who were both poor and sick.

In 1866 the Society extended its activities to include home visits, with the support of the Sisters of Charity, as well as feeding the old and helpless through the Soup of St. Vincent programme. Likewise the Sisters of Charity, who had come to the city to run the San Juan de Dios hospital, supported the Society's activities, and the Hospital section in particular.

A decade later in 1868 the Society was expanding its work and there was a proposal to establish a Publicity section. A year later the publicity group had been set up, but was unable to start work immediately through various difficulties. In 1880 the Charity Section was divided into two, the new division being called the Mendicant Section which was charged with requesting funds from members and then distributing them amongst the other sections. In 1882 the Education Section was divided, thus bringing into being the new Catechism Section. The Protection Section was created in 1887, and its was responsible for looking after abandoned children. In 1898 the Education section was abolished because it was considered that educational needs should be the responsibility of official establishments, and only the Catechism Section was retained. Although this appeared to bring to an end the St. Vincent de Paul Society's direct collaboration in the field of formal education, the Daughters of Charity and the Sisters

of Charity did retain responsibility for some schools maintained from official funds, especially girls' schools.[30] In 1904 the Publicity Section was re-established.[31]

The work of the Protection Section during its first fifty years was involved mainly with providing poor people with the work equipment they lacked. They did this in various ways, for example by giving out sewing-machines to enable poor people to undertake work at home, 323 sewing-machines being issued under this scheme. They also contributed financial aid for the support of arts and crafts workshops. The Catechism section was engaged on a permanent basis in teaching Christian religion in the prison, the Charity Hospital and the Military Hospital, in the parish churches, institutions and asylums, military barracks and schools. It also fostered the spiritual exercises and retreats of San Ignacio. The Charity Section during its first fifty years distributed 287,000 pesos among 18,770 families.[32]

Alongside the sections, the Society also undertook what it designated as special projects. These mainly consisted of establishments to provide assistance for the poor on an institutional basis. However, it would appear that the operation of these projects was sporadic and irregular, and of those established during the first fifty years of the Society's life, many were subsequently closed or there is simply no trace of their having operated continuously. We referred in the previous chapter to the temporary

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[30] Thus the growth of the private education sector which is associated with some legal changes introduced in 1886, did not follow the same time-scale as the Regeneración project, for private education as a socially significant phenomenon was not to gain strength until a much later date. See R. Silva, 'La Educación en Colombia, 1880-1930', in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*,(Bogotá, 1989), t. iv., p. 61-86.

[31] A. J. Uribe, op. cit.

[32] Idem., p. 70.

establishment of a hospital and several free schools for poor children, as well as the schools of arts and crafts and some orphanages. It should not be assumed, however, that all the foundations which were announced or started were able to keep going without any setbacks from the first day on. The impression is rather that many of these establishments had an uncertain existence. The Hospital undoubtedly represented the Society's most outstanding project during the 1860s and was particularly important in the war of 1863 for attending to the wounded[33] (see chapter three).

Besides the special projects in institutional assistance which were carried out, there were others which were equally important. From the earliest days of its operations the Society established the Soup of St. Vincent, the object of which was to provide a meal for several families each week. In 1877 a fourth section was set up to provide a permanent food distribution service to families which had been made destitute by the recent war. In 1895 the Soup of the Poor was started up again, and 1902 saw the start of the Charity kitchens, which by 1904 had given out 468,436 meals.[34]

In 1895 as a result of the civil war the Maestranza was founded, run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society with the aim of providing work for poor women by sewing uniforms for the Defence Ministry.[35] Work was thereby created for 3,180 people. The Society calculated that this sustained 20,000 people in the difficult times of the war.[36] In

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[33] *Anales de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl,* Bogotá, Bogotá, 5 March 1870.
[34] A. J. Uribe, op. cit., p. 75.
[35] *Memoria del Presidente de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl*, (Bogotá, 1901).
[36] Idem., p. 75.

periods of crisis such as civil wars, both outdoor relief and its institutional counterpart were most energetic, despite the scarcities which prevailed.

As part of its special projects, the Society also worked to provide housing for poor families. The construction of small dwellings started in 1885 and by 1907 72 houses had been handed over.[37]

The revenue of the Society came mainly from the charitable donations of the active members, assistance from contributing members and from donations by private individuals. To these sources should be added the proceeds of the bazaar organized by the Society on 20 July each year, in which not only food was sold but all manner of objects which the members had prepared, made or obtained in the course of the year, or which wealthy ladies of the city, craftsmen or other charitable people had supplied.

The collection of funds to cover the material assistance which constituted the Society's chief objective appears to have been subject to one rule or premise, namely that people should offer assistance within their means and according to their own judgement and free will. The unwritten rule was apparently to offer proportionately to what one possessed: 'Si tienes mucho, da mucho; si tienes poco, da poco; y lo poco que tienes, dalo de buena gana'.[38]

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[37] *Memoria de Presidente de la Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl. Acta de la sesión solemne celebrada en la Capilla del Sagrario el domingo 20 de octubre de 1907 y otros documentos*, op. cit.
[38] A. J. Uribe, op. cit., p. 84.

The distribution of this income was divided proportionally between sections, with priority being given to the activities of the Charity Section. However, this relative balance in distribution varied according to the changing needs and emphases of the Society during its evolution. From the start it agreed a policy to keep a reserve fund deposited in a savings bank to cover any contingency. In 1907, 67% of the Bogotá Society's income came from donations, and of this, 72% went to the Charity Section which in turn used half of its allocation on aid associated with home visits. The Protection Section received 13% and the Hospital Section 7%. Usual money donations would range from 50 pesos to in excess of 1,000 pesos.[39] Alongside the large contributions there were countless smaller ones, from benefactors of only average or modest means.

The priority in the distribution of the income received were the Society's own characteristic activities. Next in the order of priorities were the establishments which it looked after at the request of the municipality or the department, among which refuge activities were looked on most favourably. This expenditure structure is partly explained by the fact that municipalities and departments were obliged to provide funding for establishments which were state-run in the true sense. As we have pointed out above, the contributions received by state-run establishments which were administered by the St. Vincent de Paul Society in some cases came from taxes that the municipal or departmental bodies had introduced for this purpose like, for example, the tax on liquor.[40]

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[39] Idem.
[40] Archivo Histórico del Municipio de Cali, vol. 173, 1905.

In its first fifty years the Society had a secure income that totalled 12'025,829 pesos, a substantial sum which was obtained basically from donations. Its expenditure of 11'301,500 pesos amounted to almost the whole of its income.

The most significant changes in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's expenditure seem to have taken place between 1897 and 1907, and it is worth providing a detailed breakdown of expenditure over those ten years in order to gain a better picture of how and when these various changes occurred, and how the different sections dealt with their expenditure, particularly the Education, Charity and Protection sections.

The first leap in the Society's expenditure took place in 1901, followed by another rise in 1905 which was not so sharp. The sections showing the most notable increases in expenditure were firstly the Protection section between 1901 and 1905, which appears to have been connected with the building of the *Hospicio de San Antonio*, and secondly the Catechism section in 1905. The other sections had a gradual growth in expenditure following a consistent pattern of increases each year, except for the Education section which does not register any expenditure from 1900 on, from which we may assume that this operation had been closed down.[41] The section with the highest expenditure was from its inception the Refuge section, thus replacing the traditional predominance of the Charity section, which was consistent with what the Society saw as its fundamental activity, namely home visits and the delivery of

[41] It is not obvious why the Society decided to suspend the Education section. One possible explanation is that all teaching activity was transferred to the special projects sector.

assistance to families in their own homes. It appears to have taken years of trial and error by the society in its different activities before it was able to consolidate activities on the basis of its actual experiences. At least this was what happened in Bogotá in the case of home relief, hospital activities and protection, which emerged as the three great mainstays of the Society's aid activity.

In Medellín, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was from its beginnings in 1882 organized into four sections: Charity, Education, Catechism and Protection. The Charity section was responsible for handing out assistance vouchers to selected families as well as visiting families which had requested assistance in order to obtain accurate and up to date information on their financial situation and way of life. Between 1887 and 1888, 256 applications for assistance were processed, of which 203 were approved, and 110 families were visited. The assistance given amounted to 30 centavos per week. It was this section which in 1897 launched the special project Housing for the Poor, or Houses of St. Vincent, when it bought up 20 houses located in the district of that name, next to the House of the Mendicant, for families which needed to be housed. In 1896 the Charity Section was subdivided into three in an effort to step up its operations, its purpose being to provide rented houses for some of the families being looked after by the Society. The objective was partially achieved since a number of families were assisted with the help of 38 rented houses.[42]

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[42] P. Castro, op. cit, p. 21.

In this initial period the Education section carried out its activities within the framework of the special projects, although the content of its activity was no different from that of the Society in Bogotá. The teaching establishments set up were both day and night schools, the latter being particularly dynamic. These was also the *Talleres de San Vicente* which acted not only as shelters but also as providers of technical and moral education and work for the inmates. In 1907 there were 97 children involved.[43]

The Catechism Section was charged with the religious education carried out in the schools. It began a programme of spiritual retreat, and in 1901 a house was allocated for this activity, considered to be of prime importance. All those in receipt of the Society's services were regularly invited to this house. Similarly, Sunday sections for children were set up, promoting Christian teaching from 'a tender age'.

The main work of the Protection Section was to provide assistance in the form of basic working tools to enable people to perform work which would bring them some income. This Section also acted, through the medium of the Poor Agency, as a sort of employment exchange for people recommended by the Society. Another job which the Section took on from 1895 onwards was that of feeding the inmates in the penitentiary and the women's jail, under contract with the government department concerned and with the help of the ladies of the *Apostolado de la Oración.* It also founded establishments to provide shelter and work for young girls.

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[43] F. Botero Herrera, 'Los Talleres de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl de Medellín, 1889-1910', *Boletíb Cultural y Bibliográfico,* vol. xxxiiii, no. 42, (1996), pp. 3-21.

Also within the area of special projects, the Section was responsible in 1892 for the Charity Kitchens which, with the help of the *Asociación del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, distributed daily food rations. It later received help in performing this task from the department and the municipality. Another project was the savings bank, founded in 1890 to encourage saving among the working classes.

The special projects which the Society started during this period continued with slight modifications into the second period. The projects which were to register a fall in numbers, or even be phased out completely, in the second period, were those connected especially with education, just as had happened with the Society in Bogotá. The remainder continued, some quite successfully, as appears to have been the case with the Savings Bank. By 1907 the Society in Medellín had 176 members and the following sections: Charity, Mendicant, Education, Catechism, Protection and Publicity.[44]

Up to 1910 the St. Vincent de Paul Society was the only society to develop outdoor relief in an organized way in Colombia. The Societies in Bogotá and Medellín devoted their efforts to carrying out domiciliary visiting, handing out vouchers to selected families, undertaking teaching work in the schools, and last but not least, to protection activities. The Society in Bogotá was very active in the area of hospital care, medical consultations and the distribution of medicines. The Society in Medellín was particularly successful with the Savings Bank.

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[44] A.J. Uribe, op. cit., p. 270.

After 1910

From 1911 the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá was linked to the Société Générale in Paris, whose regulations it adopted, and this entailed an organizational restructuring of the Society. The major change consisted of the setting up of *conferencias*, organized by special 'chapters' in accordance with the map of the city's parishes, the names of which they adopted. This layout corresponded to the area which they had to cover in looking after the poor families.

However, the fact that the new *conferencias* were modelled on the layout of the parishes and organized along the same lines did not mean that they had to work under the tutelage of the parish priests. They maintained their autonomy and independence as part of the Society, and the Society again centred its activities on domiciliary visiting, which was the basic responsibility of the Charity Section, this being one of the most dynamic of the sections and therefore one of the highest spending during what we might term the first phase of the Society. The other activities continued to be designated as special projects and were carried out independently of the *conferencias*, though linked with them in some cases.

The first nine *conferencias* set up in Bogotá were those of Santa Bárbara, Nuestra Señora del Carmen, San Pedro, Nuestra Señora de las Aguas, Nuestra Señora de las Nieves, San José, Inmaculada Concepción, Las Cruces, and Nuestra Señora de Lourdes. Subsequently three more *conferencias* were created in 1915: San Pablo, Sagrado Corazón de Jesús and Nuestra Señora del Rosario. The next year three more were created: San Francisco de Asís, Nuestra Señora de Belén and María Auxiliadora, so that by 1930 there were fifteen *conferencias* in the city. Some of the new ones were

formed from discussions with an old one to produce a new distribution of 'territory' in cases where it was considered that a growing urban population could no longer be adequately served by a single unit, but required two *conferencias*. But the new divisions were also created because the Society took the view that no *conferencia* should be excessively large, either from the point of view of the number of members or of the number of families looked after. It preferred there to be general uniformity of size both with regard to numbers of members and of families looked after, seeing this as a guide for ensuring that it discharged the work with which it was entrusted more efficiently.

The *conferencias* met weekly. The meeting-place varied but was always either in the parish church where the *conferencia* carried out its activities, or in one of the Society's establishments, assuming this lay within the area of the *conferencia*, or else in the house of one of the members. At the beginning of the meeting there were prayers, after which a text was read from one of the recommended readings of the Society, the most frequently used one being Thomas á Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. This was followed by an exchange of general information about the Society and then a discussion of the activities being undertaken. There was an evaluation of work carried out to date and it was decided who were to receive assistance next; the following week's activities were planned and finally a collection was taken among the members. Each month a balance-sheet was drawn up of the receipts and expenditure of the *conferencia*. Attendance at these meetings varied and records reveal complaints about the failure of many of the members to attend meetings regularly, as well as recommendations to seek more people who might help with the work of the

conferencias. Nevertheless for twenty years between 1911 and 1931 the *conferencias* functioned more or less regularly, as is evident from the Society's *Boletín*.

The average total number of members attending meetings of all *conferencias* was 164 per year, the average per *conferencia* being between eight and ten. The regular meetings of the *conferencias* fostered close bonds of friendship between members who attended, which in turn produced strong links of mutual support between members when any difficulty arose. In the 1924 report this is defined as 'una amistad más fuerte que la muerte'.[45] The members really formed something akin to a brotherhood, though they themselves stressed that they should not be seen as a lodge. Nevertheless, their modus operandi as well as other privileges they enjoyed, such as that of receiving indulgences for their good deeds, bound members together in the traditional bonds of a society. Members of the Society were exclusively male until the 1920s, when female *conferencias* were founded in various cities such as Cali and Cartagena, and these began to perform the same activities as their male *conferencias* and indeed in some cities they were even more active than their male counterparts. The tradition of female conferencias in the Society goes back to 1850 when the first one was set up in Bologna.[46] They were specially created to allow the attendance of women and young girls.

The main activity of the *conferencias* was the 'adoption of families', in other words, to assist families selected by them. The selection process carried out by the members

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[45] *BSVP*, no. 158, (1924), p. 23.
[46] D. T. Mc Colgan, op. cit., p. 392.

was extremely thorough. Families were subjected to a meticulous examination in accordance with the Society's criteria. The main benefit received was a weekly voucher to provide assistance with food, but this entitled the family adopted to avail itself of the other benefits offered by the Society. Thus they would be given clothing, shoes, coats and furniture just as soon as the members had verified their needs, and if a member of the adopted family fell ill he or she would receive medical attention and medicines. The *conferencias* also tried to provide help with seeking employment.

Apart from this routine relief, the *conferencias* also offered special assistance to the families they adopted. This sometimes consisted of money when it was necessary to buy tools or sewing-machines, or to pay the rent of a family under threat of eviction. Some children were sponsored for admission to schools, for religious training or for preparation for first holy communion, and were given Christmas presents. The families adopted entered a network of support and concessions, not only through the charity and *beneficencia* of the Society itself, but also through the more extensive system of assistance to which the Society was linked. Obviously the moral requirements made of these families were considerable and had to be complied with; their behaviour was subject to strict surveillance.

On the weekly visits members reminded adopted families of the rules on hygiene, cleanliness and the observance of certain sanitary standards at home, and also endeavoured to persuade cohabiting couples to request the marriage sacrament and to have their children receive the sacraments of baptism and first communion when they had not done so already.

There is no doubt that there was a strong bond between the member of the Society and the adopted family, not only on account of the frequency of the visits and the assistance received, but also by virtue of the method of assistance itself, which allowed access to a family's most private space. The member also became a secure and dependable link between the adopted family and other public and private charitable institutions, since the Society was able to provide recommendations for medical attention, primary or technical education and job seeking.

Between 1911 and 1931 the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Bogotá provided relief for an average of 320 families per year, representing around 1,300 people cared for.[47] The years in which the most number of families were helped were 1911 and 1917, more than 400 in each of those years. The *conferencias* cared for an average of 20 to 25 families each year. There appears to have been little variation in the number of families adopted by each of the *conferencias*, not only because the *conferencias* were all more or less the same size but also because they operated along similar lines. By 1918 the number of families being looked after had risen to 365, representing some 1,825 people receiving assistance, that is to say, approximately 1.2% of the total population of Bogotá. Thus the St. Vincent de Paul Society was able to achieve a percentage only slightly lower than that achieved by the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. The two bodies between them managed to care for only 3.4% of the total population.

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[47] See the annual reports of the *conferencias* and the Society published in the *Boletín de la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl* in the years referred to. The average works out at approaching five persons per family.

One should not underestimate the importance and influence of the charitable institutions, much less the social, political and cultural significance of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, on the purely quantitative basis of these percentages, which are on the surface small but from the point of view of their effects large. In this respect we should at the very least bear in mind that for each family cared for, there were five or ten others awaiting attention, and many more who had heard about the benefits and so were themselves anxious to belong to the group of families privileged enough to be looked after by the Society.

In providing relief for the adopted families the St. Vincent de Paul Society handed out an average of 10,000 pesos per year in vouchers and other assistance. The vouchers had values of one peso, 25 centavos or 5 centavos. A family could receive several vouchers per year.[48] The amount of assistance, including the value of the vouchers to be issued, was decided by the members following the domiciliary visits, which were always conducted in a very strict fashion, and after a selection process in which a large number of requests had to be balanced against a smaller capability to provide assistance.

Now if, for the sake of illustration, we work on the basis of averages, we can say that a family might receive approximately 31.25 pesos a year from the Society. Each family care for might receive an average of fifty vouchers per year. The average annual amount received was equivalent to 12 or 13 % of the annual wage of an

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[48] *BSVP*, no. 97, (1919), p. 152.

unskilled labourer in the public sector, according to the statistics on salaries in Bogotá between 1863 and 1933 compiled by Miguel Urrutia.[49]

Apart from the main activity of the Society, which had come to be that of providing relief for its adopted families, each *conferencia* offered some sort of support to one of the special projects of the Society, so that each *conferencia* eventually came to specialize in an activity to which year on year it gave such support. After the restructuring of the Society, the special projects remained basically similar to the work carried out during the Society's first fifty four years of existence: education, health, protection and building homes for the adopted families, the latter activity assuming greater significance from around 1920 onwards.

In the area of protection, the Dormitory of St. Vincent for Children was established in 1910 by the Society's Governing Council, to provide accommodation for children up to the age of twelve who were victims of extreme poverty and neglect. At first this shelter was the responsibility of the Catechism Section, but the Society as a whole earmarked 3,000 pesos per month for its upkeep on account of its importance. When it opened, it took in around 200 children who previously slept on the street. Between six in the morning and eight at night they received some basic schooling, mainly moral and religious, were subject to strict rules of hygiene and were given food and a bed. Next to the dormitory a savings bank was also opened.[50]

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[49] M. Arrubla and M. Urrutia (ed.), *Compendio de Estadísticas Históricas de Colombia,* (Bogotá, 1970), chapter ii.
[50] *BSVP,* nos. 1-2, (1911), p. 76-78.

In addition the Society pursued its protection work by helping to create other establishments for this purpose, by giving assistance to establishments already founded by other societies or by helping to find places for people in other establishments while paying the cost of their maintenance. By 1911 the Society owned the *Casa de la Providencia* and the *Casa de la Merced*, both maintained by the council, providing shelter for women who had nowhere to spend the night. The former accommodated 35 people and latter 49.

The Society also helped to found the *Casa de Oficios Domésticos* on the Plaza Las Nieves, an establishment which provided both shelter and education, under the tutelage of the Sisters of Charity, and had places for 64 abandoned young girls. The Society provided assistance to the House of Sacred Heart of Jesus with shelter for 77 people, and supported the foundation of the San Antonio Home for neglected children, run by the priest Manuel M. Camargo and the Sisters of Charity. It also gave assistance to the Old People's Home, run by the Sisters of the Poor (see chapter three).

In 1919 the *conferencia* of Nuestra Señora del Rosario pledged itself to assisting the *Casa de la Infancia Desamparada*, which could accommodate around 200 children.[51] Likewise it paid full board for thirty four orphan girls for whom it found places with the Dominican Sisters or the Good Shepherd Sisters in an effort to give them a decent way of life.[52] In 1919 the *conferencia* of Santa Bárbara arranged places selected from

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[51] *BSVP*, no. 111, (1920), p.82 and 83.
[52] *BSVP*, no. 8, (1911), p. 282-284.

adopted families, as well as three places in the *Asilo de Preservación* and one more in the *Taller de María Auxiliadora*[53] (see chapter three).

The St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá was also active in medical assistance. Free consultations were offered by doctors in some of the surgeries belonging to the Society, and medicines were also supplied free of charge through the Pharmacy. In 1911, 7,491 patients had surgery and 8,088 prescriptions to the value of some 177,086 pesos were issued. The hospital commission's expenditure came to 207,149 pesos.[54] In 1915, 5,216 patients were seen and the Pharmacy spent 1,269 gold pesos in dispensing medicines.

1918 saw an increase in the number of doctors in the Society available to attend to patients and the Society's own surgeries closed temporarily, the idea being that patients should travel to the members' private surgeries, but there were numerous requests to reopen the surgeries of the Society, which acceded by reopening those next to the Pharmacy, where 2,033 patients were seen in 1918 and 2,493 in 1919. These activities carried out by the hospital section were additional to the free consultations arranged by the *Junta General de Beneficencia* in the Hospital San Juan de Dios

As far as education was concerned, in 1911 the Society was running the schools of St. Vincent in which free primary and religious education were offered to 130 children. Later an elementary school was opened for children living in the Houses of St.

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[53] *BSVP*, no. 111, (1920), p. 67.
[54] *BSVP*, no. 8, (1911), p. 276.

Vincent. On one of the school sites a Night School for craftsmen operated in the evenings by agreement with the national government. Agreement was also reached with the Christian Brothers to open two more free schools in two houses which had been donated to the Society, *Plazuela de las Nieves* and *Calle Octava*. It was hoped also to open night schools for workers and craftsmen in these two schools.[55] In 1914 the only new school mentioned in the reports was that run by the Christian Brothers with capacity for 300 children, plus a small school near the 32 houses built by the Society in the *Las Nieves* neighbourhood (see chapter three).

However, running alongside these schools which were dependent on the Central Council, some *conferencias* also supported other schools (see chapter three). For example, the *conferencia* of San Francisco de Asís founded a School of Commerce for poor young men in part of the building occupied by the *Orden Tercera de San Francisco*.[56] By 1929 the following schools were recorded in the *Boletín*: the School of St. Vincent with 300 children, the *Escuela Modelo* with 350, the *Talleres of María Auxiliadora* with 98, the Schools of *Chapinero* with 200 and the School of *Calle 24* with 90, making a total of 1,038 children.[57]

Within the special projects, house building programmes were given priority, for it was considered that 'the construction of homes for poor families is one of the most effective means available in the world today of solving the social problem in a

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[55] Idem., p. 278.
[56] *BSVP*, no. 114, (1920), p. 161-164.
[57] *BSVP*, no. 225, (1930), p. 176.

Christian way. The public authorities and the charitable organizations are working side by side on this'.[58]

In July 1910 the Housing for the Poor project handed over the first 18 houses built by the Society, located in *Calle 24* near the *Parque de la Independencia*, an undertaking in which 633,349 pesos had been invested. The Society's Governing Council granted free use of these houses to 'familias honorables y vergonzantes', thereby putting a roof over the heads of 90 people. Contracts were signed in 1911 to build 14 more houses next to the first development over the following year, the Society having acquired a plot with such a scheme in mind.[59] These houses were handed over the next year, thus providing housing for another 209 people.[60]

In 1916 the Housing for the Poor project moved new families into 15 of the houses to replace the existing families, with no explanation as to why the latter were being moved out. However, building had virtually come to a halt, with only one new house in course of construction, and there is reference to expenses for the repair of the existing houses. The project decided to devote itself to helping these families in different ways: by donating clothing, blankets, mattresses and occasionally food; by giving school grants to some of the children who lived in these houses; by offering the sick free medical care and medicines at the pharmacy; by giving toys to the children at Christmas.[61]

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[58] *BSVP*, no. 164, (1924), p. 122.
[59] *BSVP*, no. 8, (1911), p. 280.
[60] *BSVP*, no. 13, (1912), p. 121.
[61] *BSVP*, no. 73, (1917), p. 124.

In 1918 these houses were once again allotted to new families and those whose aid was being withdrawn were given assistance in the form of a month's rent. In this particular year, the change had to do with the fact that the families who had been occupying the houses had come upon better days and could now afford to pay for their own housing.[62] But the assistance with clothing, food, education and health care continued. The following year the Society possessed a total of 38 houses and concentrated its resources on building better premises for the school which was situated in *Calle 24* near the houses of St. Vincent, from where it operated alternately as a boys' and girls' school, and in the evenings as a night school for workers.[63] The *conferencia* of Nuestra Señora del Rosario received a plot of urban land as a donation from Tadeo F. Macharaviaya, which it decided to use to build 15 houses.[64]

At the beginning of 1922 the Society presented a fairly full report on its housing projects for the poor, on the strength of which we are able to establish how many houses and other dwellings it put at the disposal of its adopted families. It would appear that there were 35 houses in *Calle 24*, with two assembly halls which provided accommodation for the schools, this being their first project; a house in *Calle 17*, 2 houses in *Calle 26*, 12 houses in *Calle 10*, the *Jardines Obreros* and one building in *Calle 15* with 16 rooms.[65] The following year the accounts show that there were 53 houses available for families, occupied by 392 people, an average of 7 people to each

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[62] *BSVP*, no. 97, (1919), p.159-160.
[63] *BSVP*, no. 111, (1920), p. 87.
[64] *BSVP*, no. 114, (1920), p. 164.
[65] *BSVP*, no. 137, (1922), p. 149.

dwelling.[66] In a census carried out in 1925 in the *San Vicente* and *Jardines de Ozanan* neighbourhood, it is recorded that in these neighbourhoods 65 families lived in 65 houses, comprising 275 people in *San Vicente* and 187 in *Jardines de Osaman*.[67] By 1931 the number of houses had risen to 120.[68]

The state had attempted to encourage the building of houses by trying to attract aid to support this type of programme. In the apt words of President Marco Fidel Suárez, 'La casa para el hombre es la mitad de su vida. Si alimentación debe ser sana y bastante, si el vestido ha de ser decente y adecuado, la casa es el hogar donde el hombre experimenta más que en otra parte su libertad, y donde puede sentir la dicha que produce los afectos domésticos y la educación de la familia. Es muy satisfactorio que una ley del presente año haya decretado un considerable auxilio para el fomento de estas habitaciones.'[69] In 1918 the city council of Bogotá decreed law 46 under which the municipality gave 100,000 pesos to build houses for workers. In 1919 the *Junta de Habitaciones Obreras* of Bogotá was created to build houses based on plans that were used in Buenos Aires for building new houses for workers. The new neighbourhood of *Buenos Aires* was built in 1924 and the land for the *1 de Mayo* and *Acevedo* neighbourhoods was bought.[70] In 1925 the Bogotá newspaper *El Catolicismo* reported that in addition to the houses for the poor built by the Society and the *Círculo de Obreros*, the Municipality had also built houses, for example in the *1 de Mayo*

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[66] *BSVP*, no. 147, (1923), p. 94.
[67] *BSVP*, no. 182, (1926), p.47.
[68] *BSVP*, no. 250, (1932), p. 180.
[69] *Bisemanario Religioso*, Bogotá, 21 December, 1918.
[70] C. E. Noguera, 'La higiene como política. Barrios obreros y dispositivo higiénico: Bogotá y Medellín a comienzos del siglo XX', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, no. 25 (1998), pp. 188-215.

neighbourhood, despite there being unresolved problems of water and drainage.[71] However the state's success in promoting such housing programmes was open to doubt during this period.

Around 1919 saw the start of the Rent Funding programme, aimed at assisting families adopted by the *conferencias* with paying the rent on their houses. Over the course of the month families would deposit money towards their rent in the fund whenever they could, and when they had reached the required amount at the end of the month, this would be returned to them plus a bonus of at least 20% of the total. The *conferencia* of Nuestra Señora del Carmen originated this practice which later became widespread.[72]

A special project which was begun rather late in the day in Bogotá compared with Medellín was one concerning spiritual retreat. In 1925 the Society devoted a great deal of effort to fostering the practice of spiritual retreat, with the backing of the Archbishop and the assistance of the Sisters of Charity and the Jesuits. Unfortunately, we are unable to find precise data on what this experiment consisted of and the forms it took, but we do know that it was of great significance both on a spiritual and a cultural level and that it was such an important practice in religious communities like the Jesuits that it must inevitably have been one of the major influences on the St. Vincent de Paul Society for various reasons. However, apart from merely mentioning this, the records throw up no other information.

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[71] *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 27 October 1925.
[72] *BSVP*, no. 114, (1920), p. 164.

For its part the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Medellín was, like its Bogotá counterpart, organized during its first 28 years into sections and had its special projects, though an issue of its *Boletín* admits that in 1910 the Society in Medellín had 'manifestly declined', without offering any explanation for this. One reason might have been the closure of the *Talleres of San Vicente*[73]. From 1911 on, the Society in Medellín, like its Bogotá counterpart, unanimously adopted the Universal Regulations of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. As a result of this restructuring, the Society in Medellín created a Central Council and twelve *conferencias* which by 1915 had to all intents and purposes been set up. The first twelve *conferencias* were those of Santa Ana, Inmaculada Concepción, Veracruz, San José, San Ignacio, Salvador, San Antonio, Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes, San Joaquín, Santa Teresa, San Pedro Claver y Nuestra Señora de los Dolores at the University of Antioquia.

Of these twelve *conferencias*, the first seven corresponded to the seven sections which the Society had by 1919 organized according to neighbourhoods. Then in 1919 the *conferencia* of San Juan de Dios at the *Escuela Normal de Varones* was created; in 1922 the *conferencia* of San Juan Bautista de La Salle belonging to the *Colegio de San José*, and in 1923 the *conferencia* of San Gregorio, belonging to the *Escuela de Minas*. By 1930 the number of *conferencias* had stabilized at 14, three of those which had operated from educational establishments having disappeared: those of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores of the University of Antioquia, San Juan de Dios at the *Escuela*

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[73] See F. Botero Herrera, op. cit.

Normal de Varones and San Gregorio at the *Escuela de Minas*, whilst a new one had been established: the *conferencia* of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes.

The number of active members in each of the *conferencias* of the Society in Medellín tended to be larger than was usually the case with those in Bogotá. Although there is no consistent information with regard to this point, some reports mention that the numbers of member of the Medellín *conferencias* fluctuated between 100 and 200. This was at variance with the policy of the Society in Bogotá, where the tendency was for *conferencias* to be smaller in size in order to work more effectively. However, the size of the Medellín *conferencias* may be interpreted as showing that there was greater participation by members in the Society in Medellín.

The average number of families cared for annually between 1912 and 1930 by the Society in Medellín was 544. In 1918, 691 families were looked after, that is to say approximately 3,455 people representing 4.3% of the total population. This entailed contributions by the Society in Medellín of an average of 8,311 pesos per year over these 19 years. Each family received 12 pesos per year, equivalent to 6.2% of the wage of a factory worker in the city.[74] The Society in Medellín handed out only half as many vouchers per family each year as the Bogotá Society, but it dealt with a larger number of families.

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[74] Information on the annual wage of workers in Medellín is taken from L. Ospina Vásquez, *Industria y protección en Colombia, 1810-1930*, (Medellín, 1974), p. 488.

In addition there were the special projects which the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Medellín pursued. In 1911 these comprised housing for the poor, the savings bank, clothes distribution to the poor, school kitchens, night schools, the house of spiritual retreat and reading rooms. With the restructuring of the Society in 1915, certain special projects became the responsibility of some of the *conferencias* while others remained under the direct control of the Central Council.

From 1915, the housing for the poor special project became the responsibility of the *conferencias* of Santa Ana and La Inmaculada Concepción, the former having 20 houses in the neighbourhood of St. Vincent accommodating 180 people and 9 houses in the neighbourhood of *Santa Ana* accommodating 38 people, while the latter looked after ten houses in *Banco de Sucre* and ten in *Caja de Ahorros*, housing 96 people in all. This relief programme, designated as a special project, progressively expanded until most of the *conferencias* took part and it became one of the most characteristic work programmes of the Society, with one or two new houses being acquired each year. By 1921 there were 70 houses, by 1925 101 and by 1930 there were 138, housing 710 people. The municipality of Medellín like Bogotá's tried to get involved in building houses for workers. It created the *Comisión de Asuntos Sociales* that built 63 houses between 1924 and 1928.[75]

The Savings Bank was assigned to the *conferencia* of La Inmaculada Concepción, which had been founded in 1896. The main objective in setting up the Bank was to

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[75] C. E. Noguera, op. cit.

encourage the workers and the poorer sections of society to develop the habit of saving, which was considered to be a virtue.

The Savings Bank was characterized by rather surprising dynamics. Its activity in 1917 showed a 12% increase compared with the previous year, the main benefit being that its deposits increased also. At the end of 1910 its deposits stood at 5,061 gold pesos; by 1915 they had risen to 32,612, and by 1919 to 118,434 gold pesos. It was precisely as a result of this substantial growth, together with its unexpected dynamics, that a decision was taken, through the mediation of the Archbishop, to transfer the management of the Savings Bank from the St. Vincent de Paul Society to a system of joint administration with *Acción Católica*, in order to make it more dynamic. As a consequence of this, the Savings Bank came under the aegis of a Higher Council consisting of the Archbishop, the President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Medellin and the President of *Acción Católica*, and was administered by a board of management comprising three private members nominated by the Higher Council, a manager and a secretary-accountant. *Acción Católica* was also to gain control of the Savings Bank founded by the *Círculo de Obreros* in Bogotá, which had been similarly successful.

The school kitchens, also known as 'soup for children', was the responsibility of the *conferencia* of San José and was in receipt of regular aid from the Municipality of Medellín. This special project was able gradually to increase the quantity of food rations which it supplied to schools. By 1921 it was also supplying day-nurseries with food rations under a programme which had been set up in parallel with the *Gota de Leche* programme, operating on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week. In 1916 100,000

rations were distributed at a cost of 2,359 gold pesos; in 1922, 119,870 rations, costing 8,463 gold pesos (see chapter three).

The *conferencia* of El Salvador was put in charge of the house of spiritual retreat special project. Its work consisted of maintaining the establishment in perfect condition and in organizing groups to undertake spiritual retreats during the year for periods of several days, or else lending the house to groups which requested to use it, provided that it was used exclusively for this purpose. During these days of spiritual reflection, there were readings from and about the Gospel, and a variety of Christian teaching was offered. As with nearly all the special projects of the Society in Medellín, the activities of the house of retreat increased year by year: in 1916, 15 courses of spiritual exercises took place with 915 people attending; in 1922 540 people attended fewer courses; in 1930, attendance rose again to 1,287. The gatherings at the house of retreat were organized by affinity groupings, usually according to profession or status: priests, workers, domestic servants, gentlemen, ladies, college students.

The other special projects for which the Central Council was responsible were the *Granero* of St. Vincent, the supervision of the night schools, the reading rooms, and the 'Catechism'.

The *Granero* of St. Vincent was a provisions centre, supplying foodstuffs at lower prices and where the vouchers given to adopted families by the various *conferencias* could be exchanged at fair rates. The decision to set up the *Granero* was due to the difficulties which families being assisted by the Society were experiencing in cashing

the aid vouchers with which they had been issued in private grocery stores, as well as the frequent abuses of the system by both the voucher holders themselves and by speculative traders who offered unfair rates in exchanging the vouchers for cash. Consequently the Council decided to set up a warehouse stocked with the basic foodstuffs in heaviest demand, from which the favoured families could be supplied with their weekly rations.[76]

From 1920 the *Granero* not only supplied the *conferencias* of the St. Vincent de Paul Society with 11,909 vouchers to the value of 8,413 gold pesos, but also distributed vouchers both to *Acción Social*, 845 vouchers worth 545 gold pesos, and to the Catholic Mothers, 320 vouchers worth 204 gold pesos. The *Granero* mainly supplied meat, chocolate, brown sugar, maize, beans, candles, matches, coffee, milk and materials.[77]

The inspection of the night schools was a task which according to the documents which we have consulted, was not carried out consistently and was eventually phased out. It may be that the Society decided that this was not one of its jobs, that it was not sufficiently important within the general framework of its statutes and regulations or simply that it did not fall within the guiding principles of the Society. At any events, the task appears not to have been carried out with any regularity.

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[76] *BSVP*, no. 61, (1916), p. 215.

[77] A commission from the Society in Bogotá presented a plan for a *Granero* in 1912, but came up with some objections: the high starting-up cost, and the high running costs of premises and staff, which would have left little scope for offering reduced prices on food.

Reading rooms were in more or less permanent operation over these years, providing somewhere for people to read on Sundays and holidays, although we have not been able to establish whether they offered a lending service. The 'Catechism' -teaching of the catechism- was a wide-ranging and continuing commitment to teaching Christian doctrine mainly to children. In 1918, for example, 320 children received catechism classes, a figure which by 1920 had risen to 500.

The information available on the Societies of St. Vincent in other cities is limited and patchy. In the Society's *Boletín* in 1921, there is a small note on the Society in Cali, reporting that it met every Sunday and that it had sufficient funds to carry out charitable works, such as the arts and crafts school, but complaining that 'we cannot find any information in the aforementioned report about domiciliary visiting to the poor... or about the impact on their funds of collections amongst members... or about charitable donations collected by members... nor are there records of the number of families assisted or the amount spent in offering them charity, whether in kind or in the form of vouchers'.[78] The piece ends by suggesting that the Cali Society be reorganized by adopting the established form of *conferencias* responsible to a Central Council. In 1925 there is an application to register the legal status of the Association of Ladies of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.[79] To judge from its reports, which appear more regularly after 1947, this women's association appears to have been more dynamic than the male-led Society itself. In Popayán the Society boasted 80 members

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[78] *BSVP*, no. 124, (1921), p. 125.
[79] AGN, Fondo República. Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 11, fol. 101-110.

in 1912, and had 84 families under its wing; it had also drawn up plans to open an old people's home.

There is also only scant information on the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Barranquilla. We know that it was founded in 1907, but there is no record of its operations until 1911 when the *Boletín* began to publish information supplied by the Society. In 1911 it reported that in the previous year the Society was made up of 39 active members and was assisting 16 families; by the following year the number of members had gone down to 32, whilst the number of families adopted had risen to 25; in 1912 it comprised 35 members and was assisting 22 families with vouchers worth 562.47 gold pesos; in 1913 it spent 454.10 gold pesos on vouchers. All the reports express regret that the Society was not as dynamic as would have been desirable. The Society in Cartagena was founded in 1907 with the support of the Archbishop, and in 1909 it adopted the regulations of the Société Centrale in Paris. Like its counterpart in Cali, the women's *conferencia* in Cartagena, which was founded around 1918, showed more dynamism than the men's in adopting families, distributing vouchers, and drawing up housing and school sponsorship programmes.[80]

In Bucaramanga the Society comprised 50 members who carried out home visits to 40 families, sponsored schooling for 57 children and maintained a home for young girls, whilst in Cúcuta the Society had 41 members in 1912 and 50 to 60 adopted families. Elsewhere the Society seems to have been more active in the field of institutional aid,

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[80] E. Simanca, 'El papel de los religiosos y los médicos en la caridad y asistencia pública en Cartagena. 1895-1925', (Cartagena Univ.-Cartagena, 1998), pp. 78-87.

as in San Gil and Socorro, where its work was primarily devoted to the home for poor children, and in Pasto, where its main involvement was with state schools.

There followed a second period in which the Medellín Society came to be characterized by a greater dynamism than the Society in Bogotá, as is shown by the larger number of members recruited and the fact that it was managing to provide assistance to a much more extensive collection of families. Despite this, the Society in Bogotá continued to distribute vouchers worth a higher gold peso value. The Society in Medellín seems to have preferred to attempt a broader social coverage even though the vouchers it handed out were lower in value, while the Society in Bogotá preferred to give out higher value vouchers without aspiring to such a broad range of operation. A possible explanation for this feature might be that the *Granero* of St. Vincent in Medellín effectively reduced the sum of the vouchers distributed by the Society without affecting their real value, thus enabling the latter to look after a larger number of families without the need for more resources.

The greater dynamism of the Medellín Society is also reflected in the housing for the poor programme, for by 1930 it had built 138 houses, while its counterpart in Bogotá in 1931 managed to build 120, though that was still a substantial number which quite possibly improved on the State's own efforts in this field. Particular attention should be drawn to the Medellín Society's success with its Savings Bank programme and its house of spiritual retreat, just as Bogotá's hospital work is worthy of special mention. It should also be stressed that the Medellín Society received on average larger contributions from the state, whether from the municipality, the department or the national government, than the Bogotá Society did. It would appear that there existed a

greater sense of commitment towards the Society on the part of the municipality of Medellín than was the case in the capital.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was the agency that had the greatest impact and the longest tradition in outdoor relief at that time, for by 1927 it had 5,000 members, was distributing 130,000 pesos in relief and had built almost 400 houses occupied by around 3,000 poor people.[81] However, there were other societies which also performed outdoor poor relief work, albeit with a different emphasis. None of these societies were carrying out classic outdoor poor relief through the controlled delivery of assistance through domiciliary visiting. Their activities revolved more round a combination of institutional aid, such as education and protection, and a more modern variety of aid involving features such as savings banks and house building. One of the societies which played a really outstanding role in caring for the poor was the *Círculo de Obreros* in Bogotá, although its work never matched the importance of the St. Vincent de Paul Society's activities during the 1920s. However, from the 1930s onwards, in association with and supported by *Acción Católica*, its work became more dynamic and wide-ranging, maybe even surpassing the activities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, though it should be said that *Acción Católica* incorporated an explicit political element which the St. Vincent de Paul Society did not, at least not so obviously or directly.

The activities of the *Círculo de Obreros* were, as its name suggests, centred mainly on groups of urban workers. However, the term 'workers' was taken, in fact, to include

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[81] *BSVP*, n. 213, (1928), p. 146-147.

anybody who performed any form of manual work which was poorly paid, so that this category embraced craftsmen and other poor urban employees, thereby endowing the word 'workman' with a sense somewhat akin to the modern-day usage of the expression 'popular urban sectors'. Thus the *Círculo de Obreros* basically looked after those in the category which we have designated here as poor people in work.

In Colombia the *Círculo de Obreros* traced its origins back to the work begun in Bogotá in 1910 by the Jesuit Father Campoamor. Campoamor was a Spaniard who had studied in a Jesuit college in Spain and entered the noviciate at 16 to begin his ministry. He arrived in Colombia in 1910 to join the Jesuit school of San Bartolomé.

The idea of Catholic workers' circles was born in 1871 after the end of the Franco-Prussian War and the events of the Paris Commune.[82] It originated with the work of a group of Christians in Paris led by Count Albert de Mun. The original prospectus laid down the basis of the movement as 'the devotion of the directing class', very often consisting of aristocrats or army officers, which provided a club for workers and ruled over it through the supervisors and chaplain it appointed. The charades, concerts, gymnastics, billiards, and visits to places of interest provided by the Circles did not attract the militant industrial workers wanting help to fight the factory owners; the applicants who queued in Paris at the four Sunday roll calls for free tombola tickets were, often as not, young men fresh from the provinces who were there on the suggestion of their parish priests back home; the influence of the duchesses and baronesses on the auxiliary organization of the Dames Patronesses did not extend

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[82] *Reglamento General de los Círculos Católicos de Obreros*, (Bogotá, 1915).

beyond the fashion trades and the big department stores of the capital. Yet there was the simple alleviation of misery, even if there were no long-term reforming consequences, but de Mun had at least set up machinery to bring the rich into touch with urban poor.[83] Subsequently the Circles spread throughout France and Europe, bearing particular fruit in Belgium and Spain. In Spain the *Círculo de Obreros* had strong links with the Jesuits, and their activities were centred on education and the promotion of savings banks, thus providing Father Campoamor with a model for his work in Bogotá.[84]

The primary objective of the *Círculo de Obreros* was 'desarrollar el celo de la clase principal en favor de la clase obrera', under the aegis of the Catholic Church.[85] They were driven by the idea of setting up 'circles' or committees made up of people prepared to accept the rules, who would organize themselves into districts or parishes with the prime aim of establishing centres which would operate as organizational bases for political and spiritual action. These centres provided spaces where workers would find 'un abrigo para conservar su fe, el ejercicio organizado de la práctica religiosa y la caridad cristiana, las institu ciones económicas, los medios de instrucción y los esparcimientos honestos;[86] in other words, they catered for a whole range of functions from economy to culture.

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[83] J. Mc Manners, *Church and State in France, 1870-1914*, (New York, 1972), p. 82.
[84] See J. Andrés-Gallego, 'Los Círculos de Obreros, 1864-1887', *Hispania Sacra*, vol. xxix, (1976), pp. 256-310.
[85] *Reglamento General de los Círculos Católicos de Obreros*, op. cit., p. 9.

[86] Idem., p. 14.

In short, they wanted to set up centres where Catholic principles could be proclaimed as a way of life and where workers could be offered instruction in different branches of knowledge, including basic, technical, scientific and even artistic knowledge; centres which would incorporate savings banks, institutions for mutual aid and other similar establishments for providing workers with assistance in finding jobs and obtaining the tools they needed to practise their trades, as well as placing at their disposal cheap hygienic housing and places for recreation and leisure.

It was with this idea, which originated in the Catholic workers' circles in Europe, that Father Campoamor set out to promote in his work in Bogotá. He started off in 1910 with a canteen-cum-school where, with the assistance of some of the ladies of the city, he gave lunch to poor children. The school room had been provided by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, with which Campoamor had naturally developed a close relationship.[87] Before lunch the children were given a bath so that they would return to their homes or to the streets clean and disinfected, and during the meal there would be prayers and some instruction in rules of Catholic behaviour. A school was subsequently opened on the same site to teach these children reading and writing, as well as arithmetic and some elements of Christian education and morality.[88]

Later the Jesuits provided Father Campoamor with an old house next to the School of San Bartolomé to enable him to open a school for workers' children. At the same time he set up a Sunday school for girls, originally at the house of the Rivas Groot

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[87] In 1913 the Society records the canteen-school as one of its special projects.
[88] M. Casas, *El padre Campoamor y su obra. El Círculo de Obreros*, (Bogotá, 1995). First edition 1953.

family, until the Betlhemitas offered him a hall next to, but independent of, the school run by the Sisters, where he was able to open a free school for girls with the help of the Sisters and some ladies whom he had been gathering round him to help him carry out his activities. The girls were taught to read, write and sew as well as being prepared for the sacraments of confirmation and first holy communion.

Father Campoamor's teaching methods were described as follows:

> 'A la hora señalada para comenzar la escuela se reúnen todas las niñas o niños de aquel grupo, ordenado en filas según las correspondientes secciones, empieza la repetición en coro de la señal de la cruz, el credo, señor mio Jesucristo, Yo pecador, Padre Nuestro, Dios te salve María. En seguida la table de multiplicar, la tabla de sumar, la declinación del "niño" y de la "niña", las partes de la oración. Inmediatamente, desfilan las diferentes secciones, cada una a su clase y a su puesto, y sigue la distribución de materias según el horario de la escuela. En esta repetición las secciones más adelantadas encabezan a los nuevos, y a todos, nuevos y viejos, se les queda grabados indeleblemente y sin darse cuenta, los fundamentos de la religión, de la aritmética y de la gramática. Después el maestro de cada sección les hará reflexionar cuando lo conveniente, sobre lo que aprendieron al repetir casi entonando musicalmente'.[89]

The groups of ladies recruited by Father Campoamor assisted him with his activities and held a weekly meeting with him at which there were prayers, a reading consisting of a chapter of the *Imitation of Christ* or some other work connected with the secular ministry, and then a discussion of work carried out and pending. However, we have little in the way of details about these activities, their frequency or their duration, though we can observe some similarities with the activities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The following provides an indication of how the groups of ladies carried out their activities:

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[89] Idem., p. 39.

> 'Cada semana irán las señoras de dos en dos, y por ningún motivo una sola, a visitar a las familias pobres, y el lunes siguiente en la junta darán cuenta, con la mayor brevedad posible, de las necesidades materiales y morales que hayan advertido, y en vista de ello, se procurará allegar recursos materiales y proporcionar los medios de remediar los males que tengan su origen en el descuido de la práctica de los mandamientos divinos'.[90]

The group of women who joined up with Father Campoamor to help him with his work for the Circle would later become members of the League of Catholic Ladies established in 1921 as part of the organizational set-up of *Acción Católica*. This female organization expanded rapidly throughout Colombia, with branches in Bogotá, Tunja, Cali, Medellín, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Sogomoso, Villapinzón and Fontibón. Its work was centred on the protection of young girls through the foundation of institutions and by opening canteens for working women whose places of work were far from home rather than making home visits.

January 1911 saw the formal opening of the Savings Bank of the *Círculo de Obreros*, an establishment which had been developing on an informal footing through the work of María Teresa Vargas, who would receive deposits of savings from servants on Sundays and from ladies on Mondays. She took charge of the accounts of this newly formed institution. This money, which had been collected on a trial basis, formed the Bank's initial deposit upon its foundation.

Within three months 383 members had joined the Savings Bank, and these new members received training on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. However,

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[90] Idem., p. 50-51.

by March 1912 126 members had got cold feet and backed out,[91] because they disagreed with how the Bank was being run, and particularly with the fact that profits were being earmarked for the maintenance of schools and other projects which the *Círculo* was setting up, with no provision for paying interest to savers.

It is calculated that by 1912 the Bank had deposits amounting to 1,700 pesos and that up to 70 pesos might sometimes be deposited in a single day.[92] That same year saw the foundation of the *Centro de Acción Social*, where the concept of saving was presented in a different way, with more funds being attracted thanks to workers' support. These funds were also bolstered by state aid of some 4,000 pesos annually between 1913 and 1927, aid which was subsequently provided on a regular basis. In her memoirs, María Casas mentions that the *Círculo* received aid of 80,000 pesos, an unusually large amount for that time, thanks to the influence of Senator Marcelino Uribe Arango.[93]

As the projects and activities of the *Círculo* gradually expanded, it was decided to put in place a new organizational structure which was originally proposed to be along the following lines:

> 'El Círculo de Obreros es una sociedad -no política- que tiene por objeto atender al perfeccionamiento de la clase obrera en el orden económico, moral y religioso. Como las clases sociales están íntimamente ligadas y no es posible levantar una sin el concurso de las otras, hay un en el Círculo de Obreros cuatro sesiones: primera, de obreros; segunda de obreras, tercera de señores; cuarta de señoras. Cada sesión tiene su junta directiva, que funciona con entera independencia de las otras; pero la parte administrativa está a cargo del

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[91] G. and J. González Quintana, *El Círculo de Obreros. La Obra y su espíritu de 1911 a 1940,* (Bogotá, 1940), p. 20.
[92] Idem., p. 20.
[93] M. Casas, op. cit., p. 64. That can be confirmed by Law 18, 2 October 1926. The amount was divided equally in four years.

> Consejo de Administración, formado por los presidentes y presidentas de las cuatro sesiones y por el padre Consiliario. El Consejo de Administración nombra un gerente y le da instrucciones para el manejo de los fondos'.[94]

In 1913 the funds which had accrued in the Savings Bank were used to buy a piece of land from Raimundo Umaña for 8,000 pesos[95]. This enabled a start to be made on the *Villa Javier* project to build houses for workers. It received enough financial support to build the first two houses from people of means in the city as well as from the Primate of the Catholic Church. In 1914 14 houses were handed over and four more in the following two years, the figure of 20 soon being reached. By 1918 39 dwellings had been completed and negotiations were in hand to put in lighting and a purpose-built water supply.

In 1922 the project appears to have taken an important leap forward with a start being made on the building of 96 houses, which turned out to be a lengthy process taking several years as all the necessary resources were not immediately available. Between 1923 and 1927 the major project was the building of the parish church.[96] By 1933 120 houses had been built, as well as a building to accommodate the schools, a hostel for young female school teachers, a theatre, an assembly hall and canteens. In 1940, the houses were finally connected to the power supply.

In 1916 iron railings were erected around the estate and these were locked every night al 8 o'clock. This applied to all residents on the estate, whether they lived in the

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[94] Idem., p. 62.
[95] G. and J. González Quintana, op. cit., p. 89.
[96] A. Saldarriaga, 'Villa Javier: un experimento en vivienda social en Bogotá', in *La Ciudad de Dios en Bogotá, Barrio Villa Javier,* (Bogotá, 1994), pp. 71-125.

houses or the hostel. It was a compulsory rule by which residents had to abide regardless of their status. The day began with the ringing of a bell at 6 o'clock in the morning for mass at which Father Campoamor officiated, after which residents got on with their daily tasks, whether it was work, education in the schools and nurseries, selling food in the shops, or if there was any time left over, healthy recreation such as theatre or sport.

The seemingly odd practice of closing the estate and controlling residents' movements during a set period of the day was a mechanism not only for physically controlling trips in and out of the estate, but also for introducing a special way of life which was different from that of the rest of the city through being isolated from the city's corrupting environment. It was a way of life based exclusively on Catholic morality, which in a way reproduced some of the major characteristics of communal utopias.

The houses in the *Villa Javier* were let to workers and poor labourers at a rent set at slightly less than 10% of their wages.[97] By 1933 it is calculated that some 38,832 people fulfilling the following conditions were living in *Villa Javier*:

> 'Las casas son solamente para obreros manuales, y de ninguna manera para empleados, aunque sean de ínfima categoría; y tampoco se les puede arrendar a los obreros que por razón de su oficio tengan que trabajar de noche.
> Al obrero que trabaja con sus manos y en su trabajo suda y se fatiga, recibiendo un jornal que sin despilfarro y bien administrado dificilmente alcanza para atender a la más estrictas necesidades de la familia, es al que se propone apoyar y favorecer de manera especial nuestro Círculo de Obreros. Para esos son nuestras casas'.[98]

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[97] Idem., p. 82.
[98] R. Londoño, 'Villa de San Francisco Javier. Pueblo de Dios y palacio de la pobreza', in *La Ciudad de Dios en Bogotá. Barrio Villa Javier,* op. cit., pp. 129-163.

Another important activity carried on within the framework of the *Círculo de Obreros*, and significant in relation to the *Villa Javier* estate, was the *Santa Teresa de Jesús* Farm, which operated from lands donated by María Teresa Vargas. Here products were cultivated to be sold to the residents of *Villa Javier*, with the aim of supplying the estate with staple necessities and thus making it self-sufficient, like some autarkic world -this being a major feature of communal utopias-, completely self-sufficient and so able to break its ties with the outside world of the city with its temptations and dangers.

The *Santa Teresa de Jesús* Farm appears to have marked the origins of the 'Marías', who played a fundamental role in carrying out various activities within the *Círculo de Obreros* and were significant in granting a specific role to women, a role which was admittedly conditioned by the absolutely traditionalist concept of female occupations, but which, for better or for worse, at least brought women closer to the world of work which lay beyond the family. The 'Marías' were defined as follows:

> 'Ellas son la providencia del Círculo de Obreros, son las columnas básicas, como maestras en las escuelas, contabilistas, inteligentes y hábiles de la Caja de Ahorros, tenderas atentas, obreras manuales, bajo cuyas manos se multiplican los medios de hacer el bien en manera prodigiosa'.[99]

The 'Marías' had a code of conduct which shaped their way of being, based on three fundamental virtues: poverty, chastity and obedience.[100] The first 'Marías' were established in 1915, living on the Farm and studying at the girls' school run by the *Círculo*. Under the tutelage of Father Campoamor, they were trained in a way of life

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[99] M. Casas, op. cit., p.83-84.
[100] R. Londoño and G. Restrepo, *Diez Historias de Vida "Las Marías"*, (Bogotá, 1995).

which began at the age of thirteen and seems to have lasted almost all their lives. They subsequently performed various activities in the *Círculo*, being the people upon whom Father Campoamor felt he could most rely. They were practically a 'family', leading almost a convent life.

By 1927 the *Círculo* had developed considerably and it was necessary to legalize its status and provide it with a new administrative structure. The *Círculo's* aim was declared once again to be 'el perfeccionamiento de la clase obrera en el orden económico, intelectual, moral y religioso', and to this end encouragement would be given to the establishment of savings banks, the building of houses, the setting-up of producers' and consumers' co-operatives, school canteens, night schools and farms, as well as outings, drama and other honest pastimes".[101]

By now the *Círculo* consisted of an Administrative Council comprising the four presidents of the sections and the Father Counsellor, who had to be a Jesuit priest and whose eventual replacement would be appointed by the Archbishop. The managers could attend these meetings, but without voting rights. The sections had a board of management made up of the president, vice-president, secretary and four other board members, and the Father Counsellor also attended the obligatory monthly meetings. The *Círculo de Obreros* was maintained from the profits of the Savings Bank, donations from individuals, especially donations of urban lands and properties, and from some state aid.

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[101] G. and J. González Quintana, op. cit., p. 26.

The *Círculo de Obreros* extended its activities beyond Bogotá, and the activity which enabled it to undertake this expansion was the Savings Bank. In Facatativá, thanks to a bequest from Manuel Vicente Umaña which was used for the purchase of a large house, a Savings Bank was founded in 1929, as well as boys' and girls' schools. Branches of the Savings Bank would be opened subsequently in Sogamoso in 1932, Duitama in 1933, Manizales in 1941, Pamplona and Málaga in 1942, Cali in 1943 and Tunja in 1945. These activities were usually accompanied by the founding of schools for boys and girls. By 1961 the schools belonging to the *Círculo de Obreros* were attended in total by 2,148 boys and 1,358 girls.[102]

As well as this, the *Círculo de Obreros* in Bogotá expanded as a base for the formation of organizations of a more political nature. In 1924 the guilds of Catholic workers formed an organization founded on the social doctrine of the church, and particularly the Catholic church itself, which was regarded as a central pillar of social order. This entailed, amongst other things, promoting Catholic marriage, encouraging respect for private property, combating alcohol abuse and promoting education at all levels, as well as the establishment of savings banks and the building of houses.

In 1925 the *Círculo de Obreros* in Bogotá, representing the registered guilds of agricultural workers, bricklayers, potters, sawyers, stonemasons, cart drivers, carpenters, builders, cabinet makers, electricians, sculptors, foundry workers,

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[102] A. Martínez, C. E. Noguera and J. Castro, *Educación, poder moral y modernización. Historia de la acción educativa de la Fundación Social, 1911-1961*, (Bogotá, 1996), p. 32.

engravers, blacksmiths, jewellers, panel beaters, mechanics, ornament makers, hairdressers, painters, fireworks manufacturers, silversmiths, watchmakers, tailors, saddlers, upholsterers, printers, shoemakers and employees, was of the opinion that :

> 'que el llamado Congreso de Obreros, reunidos el año pasado en la capital de la República, no era representación genuina de la clase obrera, pues resultó una junta de carácter político, antisocial y antirreligioso, en completa disonancia con los sentimientos católicos de la inmensa mayoría de los obreros del país, que sus sectarias disposiciones no resolvieron ninguno de los problemas sociales, y dejaron a la clase obrera en la misma postración y miseria en que se encontraba; y que los principios allí problamados ofrecen ancho campo a las ambiciones personales de algunos agitadores que pretenden medrar y entrar en la burguesía, sirviéndose como peldaño de la ignorancia e inexperiencia de muchos infelices obreros'.[103]

The leadership of the *Círculo de Obreros* in the organization of workers' guilds was committed to one of the objectives of *Acción Católica*, which was already established in Colombia by that time. In its early days around 1913, *Acción Católica* was more akin to those private societies which were formed to help the needy, since its aims were 'to help the working class to keep the faith and to maintain healthy habits, and to bring the depraved and those who have gone astray back to the right path, thereby preserving social peace and procuring the salvation of souls'. It acknowledged that the means at its disposal for achieving this were limited to 'providing workers and their children with financial institutions and establishments offering education and Christian teaching'.[104] The Eucharist Congress in Bogotá in 1913 and Marian Congress in 1919 helped to promote the idea of social Catholicism.[105] In 1923 Monsignor Vicentini reorganized *Acción Católica* invoking the imperatives of social

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[103] R. Londoño and G. Restrepo, op. cit., p. 128-129.
[104] 'Acción Social Católica 1913' in *Conferencias Episcopales de Colombia,* v. 1 (Bogotá, 1956), p. 53-54. For example, the Centro de Acción Católica had been formed in Barranquilla in 1918 with the brief of carrying out only the economic projects of Acción Social Católica.
[105] E. Cárdenas, 'La Iglesia Colombiana', in Q. Aldea and E. Cárdenas, *Manual de Historia de la Iglesia*, (Barcelona, 1987), t. x, pp. 1110-1137.

justice and Christian charity.[106] In 1944 the administration of *Acción Católica* was entrusted to the Jesuits, who had, to all intents and purposes, been running it from the beginning, based primarily on the developing Catholic trades-unionism. By 1950 the *Acción Católica* had 120,000 urban members and 200,000 rural.[107]

As we have seen, the *Círculo de Obreros* revolved essentially around a group of workers who were poor but had jobs, and its activities were mainly educational and doctrinal, in addition to providing housing and promoting the establishment of savings banks. It differed from the St. Vincent de Paul Society both on account of the social group upon which it focused and the specific activities which it performed. Although there might at times be an overlap between the sectors of the population dealt with by each, the St. Vincent de Paul Society had a broader but more traditional coverage, for it also looked after orphans, the old and the destitute, the permanent poor. With regard to activities carried out, they shared a commitment to housing programmes and savings banks.

However, as the St. Vincent de Paul Society reduced its teaching activities, so the *Círculo* began to set greater store by them. The gap between them widened when the *Círculo de Obreros* became the centre of trades union activity, in which the St. Vincent de Paul Society never actively participated. This may have been one of the

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[106] A.M. Bidegaín de Uran, *Iglesia, pueblo y política. Un estudio de conflicto de intereses. Colombia 1930-1953*, (Bogotá, 1985).
[107] E. Cárdenas, *La Iglesia Hispanoamericana en el siglo XX*, (Madrid, 1992), p. 200. Between 1930 and 1950 the Acción Católicas was organized in Argentina, Chile and Cuba.

reasons why it faded from view in the 1930s and 1940s, a period during which the *Círculo*, through *Acción Católica*, became militant.

All this begins to make sense if we bear in mind that a society undergoing a rapid process of modernization was presented with the inescapable challenge of facing up to the 'social question' by looking beyond traditional forms of social assistance towards more modern means such as trades unionism. In this sphere, Catholicism, the church hierarchy and *Acción Católica* proved equal to the challenges of the day, as is evident from the end result of their plan to construct a Catholic trade union movement which would act as a force for integration between management and workers, which would rely on the teaching of the church for its ideological substance and would have a sector of the clergy on hand to give it constant guidance. This was the role which the U.T.C. was to play in later years.

However, some of the unions formed during that period not only had a direct political objective, but combined this with a sense of commitment to social assistance. For example, the National Union of Working Women of La Aguja, under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, had as its aims: "la educación de jóvenes que por virtud y el trabajo se basten a sí mismas, la defensa de los intereses morales y materiales de la clase y aun en consecuencia su mejoramiento social y la protección, por cuantos medios sea posible, de aquellas personas que por su condición no puedan valerse por si solas, facilitándoles trabajo en los talleres o a domicilio".[108]

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[108]AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 4, fol. 290 to 292.

To fulfil these broad objectives, which went beyond considerations of trade-unionism or party politics and formed part of a wider perspective of solidarity and support, as well as the promotion of moral standards and the ideal of leading a virtuous life as a member of the community, they established closed shops, producer and consumer co-operatives, dowry saving funds, funds for those compulsorily laid off, canteens, labour exchanges, clothes distribution centres, job centres, information offices, as well as classes in domestic science, religion, good manners, dressmaking, and the rudiments of literature and music, thus following fairly closely the work of the *Cículo de Obreros* and the social work of *Acción Social Católica*. In carrying out their activities, *Acción Social Católica* used the parishes as their points of reference, especially those in poor districts and those where the parish priest was a Jesuit. The relief which was offered, and continues to be offered, is wide-ranging and diverse: institutional relief through medical centres and schools for children, young people and adults, outdoor relief such as house building schemes and assistance in kind such as clothing and food. At first this type of aid which *Acción Católica* organized in the parishes depended to a large extent on the dynamism of the parish priest and the resources available to him and the parish. They were actions which were scattered and uncoordinated and would only come to acquire more unity and vitality in the 1930s.[109]

The other notable form of assistance which can up to a point be classified as outdoor poor relief was that provided by the *Patronato de Obreros* in Medellín. It was a form of relief which combined institutional assistance, such as education and protection,

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[109] See the newspaper *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá

with another rather more modern type of relief as demonstrated by the *Círculo de Obreros*.

As industrial work increased and became more widespread, so the number of establishments which could be described as factories in the modern sense of the term grew accordingly in a city with the vigour of Medellín at the beginning of the twentieth century. But this initial period of what undoubtedly formed part of the national process of industrialization was to a large extent underpinned by an extensive female proletariat, this being a distinctive feature of the Colombian industrial process. It was this rapid growth in industrial work in Medellín which gave rise to the setting up of female *Patronatos Obreros*. The first of these was founded in 1912 under the direction of Jesuits associated with *Acción Católica*, in order to have an institution 'which acted as a refuge to enable working girls to earn an honest living and learn both about the dangers of the world and about the fundamental truths which may serve as a shield for them in the future'.[110]

In its early years the *Patronato* was promoted and maintained by the Colombian Textile Company -Coltejer-, by the Escobar, Restrepo & Co. Factory, by Compañia de Tabaco, by the Hernández Textiles, Jacinto Arango & Co. Textiles, and Olano Matches Factory.

The *Patronato Obrero* was administered by a board of management made up of women, backed up by Jesuit priests. Its various activities were structured into sections,

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[110] A. Mayor Mora, *Etica, trabajo y productividad en Antioquia*, (Bogotá, 1984), p. 260.

rather on the pattern of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The first of these to be formed was the *Sección de Conferencias Religiosas*, which was charged with visiting factories where they would persuade the female workers to attend talks given monthly by the Jesuits. Likewise the Canteen Section was formed to provide soup for the female workers. Between 1912 and 1919 it served 93,200 meals.[111] Also set up was a Mutual Aid Section which, with the help of monthly contributions by the female workers, built up a fund to assist those who fell ill. In 1915 a doctor was appointed to treat female workers of the *Patronato* who were ill.

In 1914 the Dormitory of St. Javier Section was formed to provide accommodation for unmarried workers who came from outside Medellín, and was looked after by the Sisters of Charity. It started off with four women and by 1919 was providing accommodation for as many as 150 workers.[112] That same year the Savings Bank Section was founded to encourage saving amongst female workers belonging to the *Patronato*.

In 1915 the Religious Section was formed, not only to organize the religious talks which by then were taking place weekly, but also to promote the spiritual exercises which were open to all staff in the factories. This Religious Section was dependent on the support of the *Congregación de Hijas de María*, which promoted piety and by 1919 had 500 members.[113] These arranged talks, masses, and first holy communions and acted as choirs to accompany the Eucharist.

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[111] Idem., p. 266.
[112] Idem., p. 264.
[113] Idem., p. 262.

That same year the Sunday School Section was set up to give classes in dressmaking and embroidery, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and cookery. It was estimated that between 130 and 150 female workers attended each Sunday.[114] Regular attendance at this school entitled the women to take advantage of the benefits of the *Patronato*. Some 820 women were members of this Section by 1919.

In 1916 there was an increase in the number of sections in the *Patronato*. The Publicity Section sprang up charged with encouraging good reading habits, to which end newspapers, magazines and leaflets were distributed in the factories. There was also the Recreation Section, which promoted artistic evenings, musical gatherings, walks, raffles and Christmas carols. Its aim was 'to give the female workers some time for relaxation... in this way the poor workers can spend some very pleasant hours without this detracting from their desire to work'.[115] There was also a Job Placement Section, aimed at helping unemployed women to find work through contacts obtained by the *Patronato* or on the strength of its recommendations, which it was hoped would act as a good letter of introduction. Between 1916 and 1919 the *Patronato* helped 307 women to find work out of 599 who had requested assistance.[116] Finally there was the Loan Fund Section for providing female workers with financial assistance, in particular for housing needs, in the sure knowledge that they were able to repay the credit. The following year the Dowry Fund Section was formed to enable women to save for their marriage. In 1918 the Tutelary School was founded to look

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[114] Idem. p., 265.
[115] Idem.
[116] Idem., p. 264.

after females other than working women. Its purpose was to take in young girls who were destitute or had gone astray and educate them sufficiently for them to take up work, if that was at all possible.

In 1919 the Trade Union Section was established, aimed at forming a union which brought together working women from different factories throughout the city in the hope of forming them into a single grouping of workers belonging to a single organization. That year they had 215 members. Their first task was to oppose the First of May celebration organized by the Socialist Society of Medellín. With this in mind they distributed fly sheets explaining the dangers of such a celebration. On 4 May the women belonging to the *Patronato* celebrated labour day by holding a mass and a recreation evening attended by around 1,300 female workers.[117]

By 1918 the Female *Patronato de Obreras* of Medellín had 2,164 members. Some factories such as Fabricato set up schemes along similar lines to the *Patronato* to look after their female workers. Fabricato established a free school to educate the women working in the factory, as well as providing lunch in the factory, musical evenings, dormitory facilities for unmarried employees and a house-building programme. It also sent its female workers to attend the spiritual exercise classes organized by the *Patronato de Obreras* of Medellín.[118] Later Fabricato set up a scheme called *Patronato de Fabricato*, run by the Sisters of Charity, offering a basic dormitory service for its female workers. The daily working routine of the women who availed

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[117] Idem., p. 267.
[118] L. G. Arango, *Mujer, religión e industria. Fabricato 1923-1982*, (Medellín, 1991).

themselves of this began with mass, after which they went straight to work, and at the end of the working day they had to return to the *Patronato*, where they said the rosary and went to bed at 8 o'clock. Sundays were devoted to prayer, study and needlework, as well as occasional recreational activities. In 1933 the Saving Society of Workers in Fabricato was founded by the *Patronato*.

There were other organizations which modelled themselves along the same lines as the most outstanding *Patronato* but did not attain the growth or the standing of the earlier ones. For example, in 1925 the *Círculo de Obreros de la Sagrada Familia* was founded in Bogotá, organizing housing programmes, a savings bank, a day school for children and a night school for workers, as well as a library.

Apart from these societies with their impressive structure and organization, other methods of providing outdoor relief for the poor were practised informally. It is very difficult to find the proper records, but they were also important in the particular localities where they were found. These activities were carried on in particular by small groups of women who would meet weekly to carry out some activity which they considered important or which they had been asked to perform. A common practice was for them to meet to knit or make clothes for poor children, or to prepare a weekly lunch for school children or working women. There would be meetings of other groups to prepare for annual events such as organizing Christmas presents for poor children or special luncheons for first holy communions. In addition, the monks and nuns would provide informal relief, most commonly in the form of canteens in poor neighbourhoods or by distributing food and clothing which they had managed to collect amongst their parishioners. Some of these outdoor relief activities were

publicized in the local newspapers, such as a lunch which was arranged in Cali for 80 children, or the canteen organized in Bogotá during 1912 by the Jesuit Lucas A. Toledo.[119]

From 1910 onwards, more societies sprang up to take an active part in outdoor relief, and it was then too that institutional relief acquired a significant dynamic. Outdoor relief, like its institutional counterpart, developed mainly in the larger urban centres without being as widespread as the former, being concentrated mainly on Bogotá and Medellín. There was some activity in other urban centres, but it was not as enduring or as important.

Outdoor relief was practised almost entirely by private agencies which had begun their activities in the middle of the nineteenth century, so that there was little state participation in this area. Although outdoor poor relief activities were carried out by some lay societies, there can be little doubt about its close links with the Church hierarchy and some religious orders, particularly the Jesuits.

For a multiplicity of reasons which have been repeatedly disclosed in a wealth of literature on the subject, the Jesuits are perhaps the most complex of the religious societies to have emerged in the history of the Catholic church. Among the reasons which are most relevant here, it is worth mentioning the variety of their activities, some of which were far removed from the traditional activities of other societies which we have described previously, as well as their overriding pedagogical

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[119] *El Ferrocarril*, Cali, 28 September 1894.

commitment, based on teaching techniques which even today continue to be debated amongst educationalists. As far as Colombia is concerned, it should be pointed out that as early as the seventeenth century, as in other territories belonging to the Spanish Crown, the Jesuits had emerged as the cultural and spiritual leaders of society, to such an extent that when the Jesuits were first expelled in 1767, Colombian society appeared to have lost what for years had provided it with its compass and sense of direction, for the Jesuits had not only dominated the intellectual culture of the age in the fields of theology and law, but had also set up and subsequently monopolised the entire educational network of the Viceroyalty, from the smallest schools, to the *aulas de latinidad* and the university. When they finally returned to the country in the nineteenth century, the Jesuits did not encounter too many obstacles in restoring their close ties with society, for some sectors continued to regard the Jesuits as society's great guiding light, especially in the field of education.

Other societies offering outdoor poor relief were overtly religious, usually led by a priest backed by a board also largely made up of priests. Lay persons could become members of the subordinate divisions of the society, generally by making some financial contribution, through the savings bank for example; but in reality they never achieved full membership of the society proper. This structure was characteristic particularly of those societies led and organized by the Jesuits, such as the *Círculo de Obreros*. Of lay persons who took part in outdoor relief, men were most prominent in the early years, but by the beginning of the twentieth century women were starting to play a more active role and they even surpassed the men in some of their activities. Such people, both men and women, were clearly members of the elite in the particular locality.

There was no state policy on outdoor relief. The policies and actions of the state were focused on institutional relief through the various establishments providing shelter and health care. Those private agencies which carried out outdoor relief set up establishments independently in the same areas as those covered by the state, as well as supporting those establishments which the state itself had instigated. It was perhaps in the area of health that these private agencies were least conspicuous because this was one of the areas in which the state proved to be most dynamic by founding many hospitals, but they did perform health-related activities which were more in line with outdoor relief such as free consultations. In the area of education, where the state was not much in evidence in the 1910s, private outdoor relief agencies, especially those run by the Jesuits, can be found participating actively.

The various agencies carrying out outdoor relief catered for different groups of poor people. The St. Vincent de Paul Society embraced a broad sector of the poor and its selection criteria followed a rather traditional pattern: widows with several small children, orphans and the sick. However, other agencies such as the *Círculo de Obreros*, the *Patronatos* and *Acción Católica* were primarily concerned with the artisans and the workers. Although for these agencies the notion of workers covered a broad sector which had more to do with people who worked on a low income, the idea of workers constituting sectors to be looked after collectively signalled the gradual introduction of what was destined to become a more modern concept of what constitutes a sector whose interests should be looked after, although at the same time they were ultimately the group of poor people who were best placed, for they did at least have work and therefore some income.

Although, as we have demonstrated, different agencies carried out their commitment of care in different ways, the modern idea of charity provided the inspiration and motivation for giving and helping, and this was ultimately based on the philosophy of liberal Catholicism. This notion of assistance embodied as a primary objective the ideal of assisting in the moral and spiritual improvement of the people being aided. This combination of material, spiritual and moral assistance was the relief ideal to which the private agencies carrying out outdoor relief in Colombia at the beginning of the twentieth century subscribed.

Perhaps the most important distinction between these outdoor relief agencies was the position they adopted with regard to political involvement. The decision on whether or not to take part in the party political context was what was destined to take the outdoor relief agencies down different roads in the years ahead. The agencies which stood aside from political involvement, such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, gradually faded from public view as their activities were apparently wound down, though they were never discontinued completely, and indeed their relief work continues up to the present day, albeit less prominently. On the other hand, those agencies which opted for political involvement, as did the *Círculo de Obreros* and *Acción Católica*, adopted a more militant public face, and their relief activities acquired an increased dynamism in the 1930s and 1940s, to the point where some activities came to be more motivated by syndicalism than by any concept of charity.

Table 7
Presidents of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Bogotá
1857 - 1907

Source: A. J. Uribe, *Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl de Bogotá. Celebración del Quincuagésimo Aniversario. 1857 - 1907. Memoria Histórica*, (Bogotá, 1908), p. 263 - 265.

Table 8

Spending of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Bogotá.

1857 - 1907

(moneda corriente)



Source: A. J. Uribe. *Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl de Bogotá. Celebración del Quincuagésimo Aniversario. 1857 - 1907. Memoria Histórica*, (Bogotá, 1908), p. 276.

Table 9

Spending of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Bogotá

1897 - 1907

(current money)

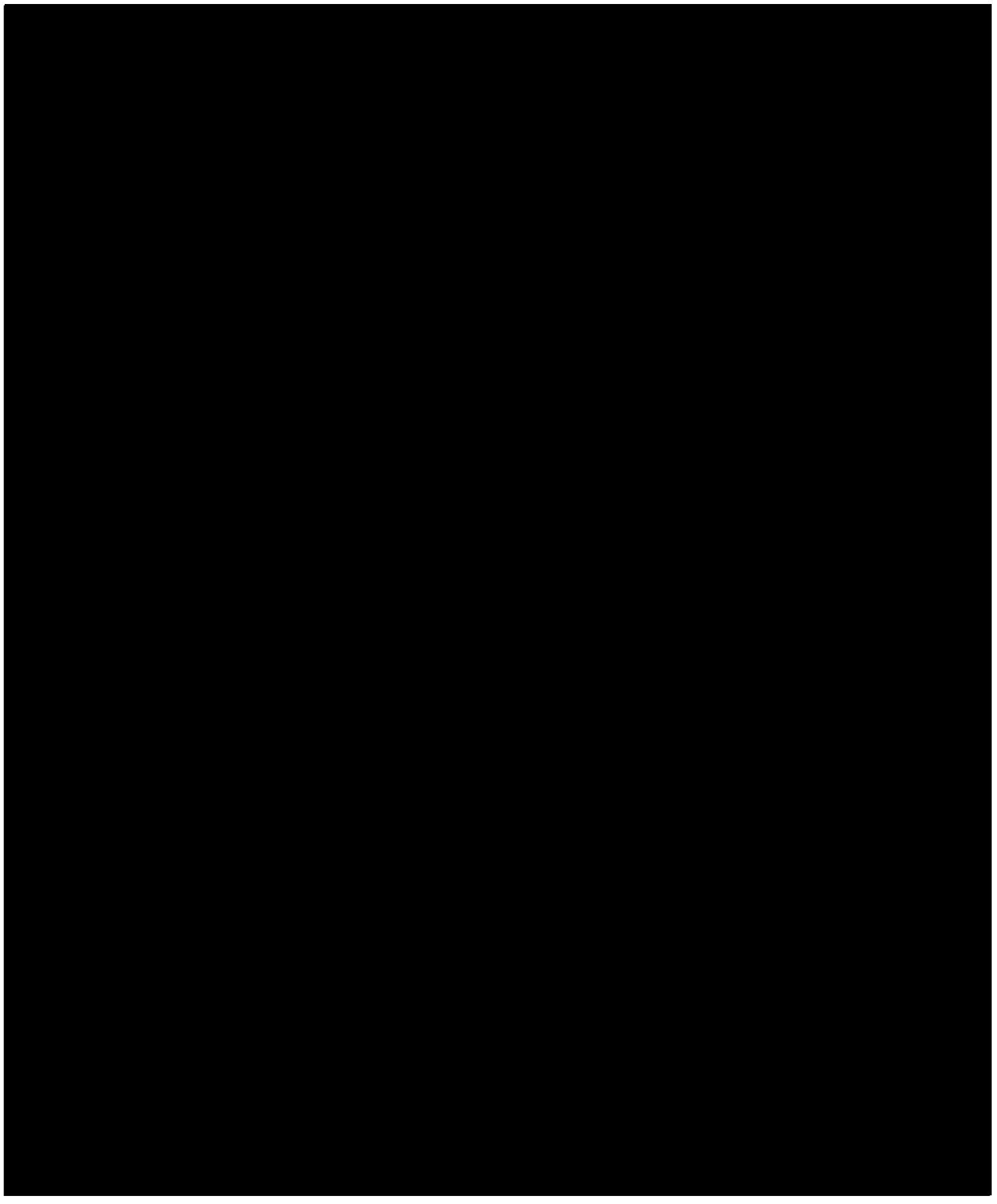


Source: A. J. Uribe, *Sociedad Central de San Vicente de Paúl de Bogotá. Celebración del Quincuagésimo Aniversario. 1857 - 1907. Memoria Histórica*, (Bogotá, 1908), p. 275.

Table 10

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Bogotá

1911 - 1931

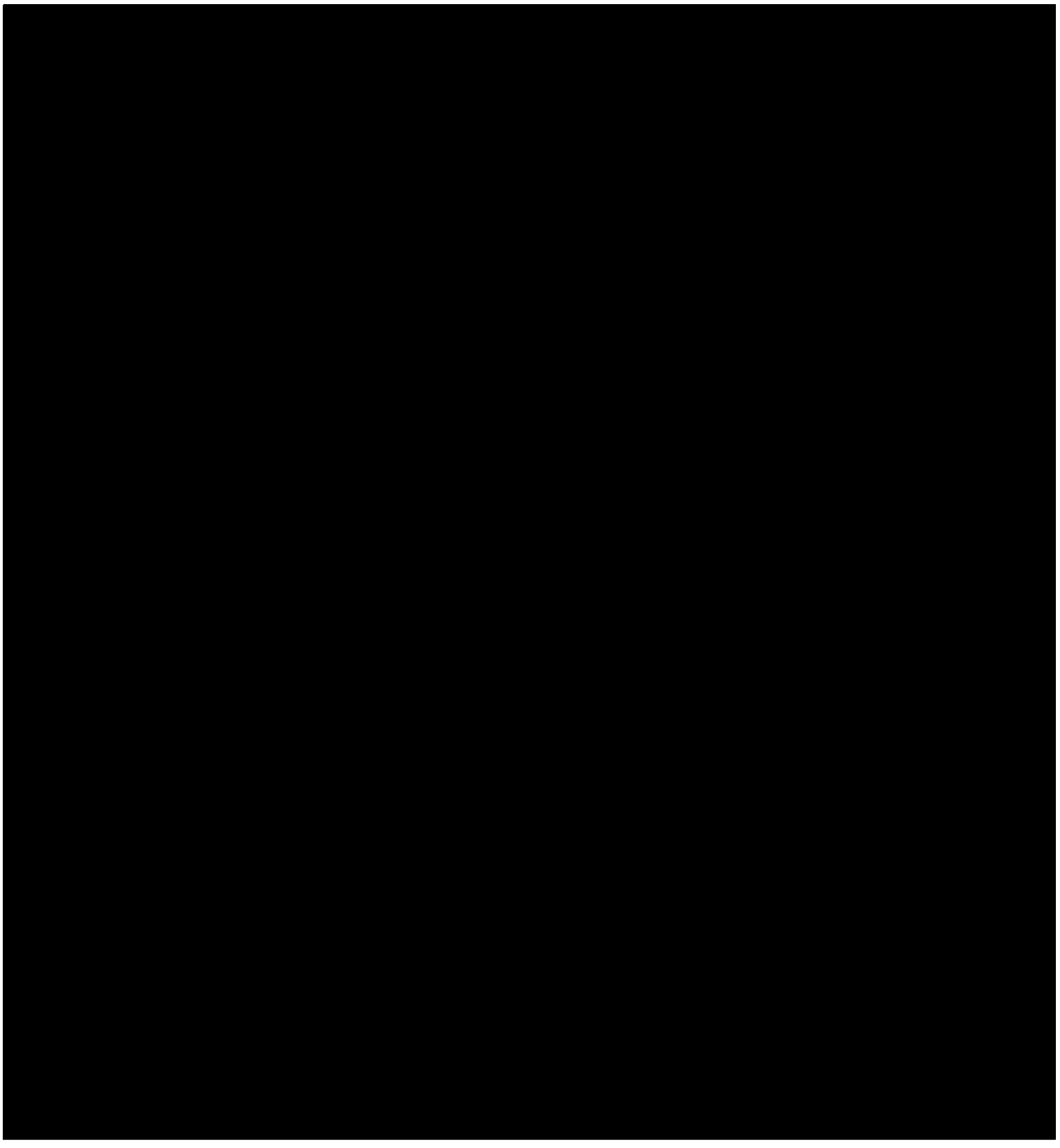


Source: *BSVP,* no. 12-241, (Bogotá, 1911- 1932).

Table 11

St. Vincent of Paul Society of Medellín

1912 - 1930



Source: *BSVP*, no. 12-241, (Bogotá, 1911- 1932).

V. SELF - HELP

Mutual Aid Societies

Self-help has been seen more as a survival strategy for the poor rather than a poor relief strategy. In general terms survival strategies included legitimate jobs, for women and children in an adaptive family economy, the pawning of goods, buying on credit, owing money, receiving help from neighbours, family members, acquaintances and illegal or semi-legal activities. Most of them were not registered. Survival strategies also included resources to social assistance, or appeals to one of the countless mutual aid societies, run and financed by artisans and other skilled workers, which might include the guilds.[1] In this chapter we will present a specific survival strategy in Colombia at that time: mutual aid societies. They began to be founded during the decade of the 1870s, and multiplied particularly in the 1920s.

In a recent essay on the historiography of voluntary societies, Martin Daunton underlines that 'the voluntary societies also included a large number of mutual organizations such as the friendly societies, which were run by their members to provide "contingency" insurance against illness. Although these bodies had a membership which was considerably larger than the trade unions, they have only recently been the subject of serious analysis. They have suffered from a dual historiographic neglect, from historians of social policy who have seen them as withering away with the rise of the welfare state, and from historians of the working

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[1] See M. H. D. van Leeuwen, *The Logic of Charity. Amsterdam, 1800-1850*, (London, 2000). See chapter one.

class who have seen them as ideologically suspect as bearers of bourgeois values. Their significance is now more readily accepted, and has indeed become the subject of debate. To some historians, they were associated with the "labour aristocracy" which separated itself from the rest of the working class. To others, they were the means by which a wider identity could be formed, moving beyond the highly particular artisan identity to a wider social grouping, and developing an ideology of collective assistance which was distinct from the individualistic self-help of the middle class. Others have argued that the values of the friendly societies should not be found in the process of class formation in the nineteenth century; rather, the societies should be seen as a continuous tradition based on guilds, with their active cultural life, participation in civic ritual, and sense of group solidarity. On this account, participation and sociability were more important than simple economic advantage, at least until the second half of the nineteenth century with the growth of national, affiliated societies and the development of tension between conviviality and economic rationality'.[2] At the end of his article, Daunton, stresses that the nature of friendly societies needs more attention.

In Colombian historiography the mutual aid societies have also been neglected. They have been seen as a continuation of the colonial *cofradías* or of the artisans guilds, or as somehow related to the *Sociedades Democráticas* of the mid-nineteenth century, which have been extensively studied.[3] The mutual aid societies, particularly those which were created in the nineteenth century, have mostly been studied in relation to

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[2] M. Daunton, 'Introduction', in M. Daunton (ed.), *Charity, self-interest and welfare in the English past.* (London, 1996), pp. 1-22.

[3] See D. Acevedo, 'Consideraciones críticas sobre la historiografía de los artesanos del siglo XIX'. *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, no. 18-19, (1990-1991), pp. 125-144.

the artisans and their participation in political activities.[4] With the same orientation, mutual aid societies founded at the beginning of the twentieth century have been seen as a preamble to the first trade unions, with possible links to risings or strikes.[5] However, not much attention is paid to the mutual aid associations themselves.

If we look at the origins of mutual aid societies, they were, as we noted , related to the colonial *cofradías* and with artisan guilds of the mid-nineteenth century. We can see many features of pre-industrial Europe confraternities and professional guilds, with their work-a-day ethos of mutual aid, which were to be reproduced later on in more secular and complex forms in trade unions, co-operatives and friendly societies.[6] However, though the mutual aid associations certainly inherited some aims like mutual support, fraternity, and brotherhood from the confraternities and guilds, they were created with new goals, that make them a separate case.

Throughout the Middle Ages in Europe, and often beyond, many villages contained one or more such confraternities, sometimes embracing the whole parish community. Their basic principle was spiritual mutuality.[7] By the sixteenth century the confraternities emerged as voluntary associations of people who came together under the guidance of certain rules to promote their religious life in common and to provide

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[4] See D. Sowell, 'The Early Latin American Labor Movement: Artisans and Politics in Bogotá, Colombia, 1832 - 1919', (Florida Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1986) and M. Aguilera, *Insurgencia urbana en Bogotá. Motín, conspiración y guerra civil. 1893- 1895*, (Bogotá, 1996).

[5] M. Urrutia, *The Development of the Colombian Labor Movement*, (New Haven, 1969) and M. Archila, 'Ni Amos ni Siervos. Memoria obrera de Bogotá y Medellín, 1910-1945', *Controversia*, no. 156-157, (1989).

[6] R. Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, 1994), p. 97.

[7] A. Black, *Guilds & Civil Society in European Political Thought from Twelfth Century to the Present*, (London, 1984), p. 5.

vital forms of social insurance in life and death.[8] Among these confraternities were guilds; craft-guilds first appeared in Italy around 1100, and they proceeded to spread quickly over western Europe. They provided mutual aid, mainly in illness and death, but their activities focused upon the communal feast, usually once a year, at which food was distributed to the poor.

Cofradías or confraternities were created in Latin American from the sixteenth century onwards, another institution of Spanish colonial society. The Spanish American confraternities followed the European association model and were primarily urban-based institutions. *Cofradías* were lay corporations functioning within the broad structure of the Church. As a corporate group, the *cofradía* gained specific spiritual benefits in exchange for fulfilling a set of obligations which provided the Church with economic support so that the clergy could perform their religious rituals. The organizational purpose of the lay brotherhoods was the veneration of a particular patron saint and the support of the Church's ritual. In return for participation in a confraternity, the members expected to receive a specified set of indulgences and prayers for the soul after death. Members of the confraternities provided the Catholic populations of New Granada and the other parts of the Empire with a form of 'spiritual life insurance': the correction of their faults, the honouring of death, the succour of souls in purgatory and the consolation of widows. In some cases, they helped widows and orphans, old and handicapped family members; sick members and their families would not only receive spiritual help but sometimes material help too; prisoners' families might occasionally receive relief. Members also visited hospitals

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[8] C. F. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, (Cambridge, 1989), p. 1.

and jails as an expression of their concern for the community. However, the assistance to people outside the confraternities was in our case limited. The sacramental roles of the confraternity in New Granada prevailed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Unlike many confraternities in Spain or Mexico, few brotherhoods in New Granada engaged in direct poor relief activities.[9] The confraternities operated together with a host of other private, guild, communal and ecclesiastical initiatives to give some help to hospitals and *hospicio*.

While many occupational fraternities in Europe continued to call themselves confraternities, the term guild gained acceptance in the fourteenth century in order to separate the vocational groups from the spiritual ones. The distinction passed to the Spanish American kingdoms. Craftsmen and artisans in a community tended to identify with particular brotherhoods which imposed economic regulation on their members, and these groups were known as guilds. The confraternity of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* in Bogotá included among its members the guild of metalworkers, craftsmen in gold and silver. These artisans also supported the confraternity of *Nuestra Señora del Topo*, to which they contributed an altar adorned with the finest work of their craft. The same supporting relationship existed between the tailors' guild and the confraternity of *Nuestra Señora de la Gracia*.[10] In other parts of the Empire it was also common to find *cofradías* conformed by guilds. In the second half of the eighteenth century there were eight guild-confraternities in Peru: the confraternity *Gloriosa Santa Ana* of Indian silversmiths; *San Crispin* of

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[9] G. W. Graff, '*Cofradías* in the New Kingdom of Granada: Lay Fraternities in a Spanish-American Frontier Society, 1600 - 1755', (Wisconsin Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1973), p. 2.
[10] Idem., p. 50.

shoemakers; *San Eloy*, Spanish silversmiths; *Santa Rosa* of hat-makers; *San Lorenzo* of blacksmiths; *San Agatón* of saddle makers; *Nuestra Señora de la Paz de Pulperos*.[11]

Confraternities continued their activities throughout the nineteenth century and into the second decade of the twentieth century. Between 1850 and 1910, half a dozen new fellowships were organized in Pamplona alone.[12] In Cali until the middle of the nineteenth century there are registers of the confraternities in which each accounted for funds coming mainly from donations. By the end of the nineteenth century there were seven confraternities registered in Cali: *Nuestra Señora de Dolores*, *San Nicolás*, *Buena Muerte*, *Señora Mague*, *Santísimo Sacramento*, *Animas Benditas* and *San Roque*.[13] In Medellín there were six confraternities: *Los Dolores*, *Santísimo Sacramento*, *Las Mercedes*, *San José*, *Espiritu Santo* and *Jesús, María y José*.[14]

The first guild-societies were created by artisans at the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century there was a boom of new guild-societies.[15] Among their aims was mutual aid in illness or death, and they also had educational purposes.[16] However, the associations created in the mid-nineteenth century were more involved and compromised with political and electoral activities. Both the Conservative and the Liberal political parties promoted

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[11] O. Celestino and A. Meyer, *Las cofradías en el Perú: región central*. (Frankfurt, 1981), p. 142.
[12] G. M. Graff, op. cit., p. 283.
[13] *Archivo Histórico Municipal de Cali*, vol. 109, 1850.
[14] G. M. Arango, 'Cofradías, las asociaciones católicas y sus formas de sociabilidad-Antioquia, siglo XIX', *Revista de Extensión Cultural*, no. 34-35, (1995), pp. 94-104.
[15] H. Triana y Antorversa, 'El aspecto religioso en los gremios de artesanos neogranadinos', *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, vol. ix, no. 3, (1966), pp. 269-281.
[16] See F. Gutiérrez Sanín, *Curso y discurso del movimiento plebeyo, 1849/ 1854*, (Bogotá, 1995).

the creation of societies in their search for political support and leaders.[17] Some authors underline two phases: between 1846 and 1848 civic education was the dominant concern in the artisan guilds; and between 1848 and 1854 political agitation against free-trade reforms.[18]

The mutual aid societies that were created by artisans in 1870s, sought political independence and autonomy. The groups of artisans and workers at that time remained heterogeneous. Among the artisans there were some who would own their own workshops in which they would also be employers, masters who without doubt enjoyed superior economic conditions. There were others who just had their labour work to offer, and their remuneration would depend on how they were qualified. The differences in wages they could obtain varied according to their skill: an apprentice carpenter or bricklayer or armourer might earn between 0.15 to 0.30 pesos per day; a smith, or a more qualified artisan in carpentry, bricklaying or printing could earn between 0.50 to 0.80 pesos per day; wages between 0.80 to 2.00 pesos per day went to the artisans with more specialisations and skills; there were a few that could earn as much as 4.00 pesos per day.[19]

The artisans who had higher incomes seem to have been the leaders of these societies. They had a certain level of education; at least they were literate, and could read about other sorts of organizations of the mutual aid type, and they could write the standing

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[17] See J. Jaramillo Uribe, 'Las sociedades democráticas de artesanos y la coyuntura política colombiana de 1848', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, no. 8, (1976), pp. 5-18 and G. Colmenares, *Partidos políticos y clases sociales*, (Bogotá, 1984).
[18] See C. Escobar, *La revolución liberal y la protesta del artesanado*, (Bogotá, 1990).
[19] M. Aguilera, op. cit., p. 98.

rules and reports and the bulletins. In the first report of the society of *Socorros Mutuos*, they give figures about mutual aid societies around the world, mainly the friendly societies of England and the mutual aid societies of France, which were the basic model for mutual aid societies in Colombia.[20] They knew also about such societies in Italy, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Germany, as well as in the United States and Puerto Rico, although they admitted that they did not have much knowledge about them, particularly of the last two. However they knew in detail the English and French examples. They wrote that in England there were 10,501 friendly societies in 1864, and that since 1795 the English parliament had granted them some privileges and declared them to be of 'public utility' in 1848. In France there were 1,900 societies with 400,000 members in 1845; they stress that some ran savings banks and they point out that the French government in 1850 gave them legal recognition. They knew how mutual aid societies worked, and how important and useful they could be. They expected that mutual aid societies would be successful in Colombia and the first members trusted that many societies would eventually be founded in the different cities of the country.

In England mutual aid societies or benefit clubs were indeed widespread. According to Martin Gorky's study, the most optimistic reading of the figures would suggest that, however transitory and fragile they may have been, the clubs offered some form of sickness and life cover to about one-third of all households, though the unknown extent of co-resident memberships means the true number was probably less. The goal may have been individual and family security 'self-help' as it was later called. But the

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[20] M. Angulo Heredia, *Informe que presenta el Secretario de la Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos el 6 de Febrero de 1873*, (Bogotá, 1873).

means -contributory insurance organized collectively- was now embedded in England's public life.[21] In France by 1852 there were 2,500 mutual aid societies, mainly in urban areas, with 271,000 members, and in 1870 there were estimated to be 5,700 societies with 800,000 members.[22] The Colombian artisans also knew about other Latin American countries where mutual aid societies existed: they had information about Puerto Rico. However, they had less information about Latin America than about Europe.

If we look for research about mutual aid societies in Latin America we do not find much. Evidence from Brazil shows the foundation of mutual aid societies around 1870. According to Michael L. Conniff, during the 1870s and 1880s some dozens were formed in Rio. A general pattern was to adopt the name of some great spiritual patron, such as did the *Sociedade de Socorros Mutuos Luis Camões* , which claimed 6,700 members shortly after being formed. The prospective member was contacted by a recruiting committee and offered funeral, medical, disability, and legal insurance, with a further appeal to his sense of fraternity and solidarity.[23] By the 1910s Conniff estimates that there were 123 mutual aid societies and that 62% had more than 400 members. There were also some societies in Mexico. Reynaldo Sordo finds evidence for 15 between 1867 and 1900, with an average of 150 members. However he says that they disappeared in the early twentieth century and we find this strange, when in the majority of Latin American countries it was a time of expansion for mutual aid

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[21] M. Gorky, 'The growth and distribution of English friendly societies in the early nineteenth century', *Economic History Review*, vol. li, no. 3, (1998) pp. 489-511.
[22] M. Dreyfus, *La mutualité: une historie maintenant accesible*, (Paris, 1988), p. 20.
[23] M. L. Connif, 'Voluntary associations in Rio, 1870-1945', *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 1, (1975), pp. 64-81.

societies.[24] In Peru between 1830 and 1875 Carlos Forment counts 42 mutual aid societies.[25] In Chile between 1850 and 1880 there were, according to Baldomero Estrada, 12 mutual aid societies.[26]

The great ideal of the artisans of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* was to create a kind of mutual aid society in which the proprietors and the workers were together: "El pobre y el rico formando una familia cuyos intereses son solidarios".[27] The general inspiration was that the workers needed work and some help, and the owner needed the work of his employees, and it was better that they combined for their mutual benefit. They thought that the creation of mutual aid societies was the way to social harmony, which allowed society in general to progress and poverty to diminish. By the mid-1880s, David Sowell recalls that the mutual aid societies had a multi-class character, although they were generally identified as artisans' organizations.[28]

In this chapter we attempt to enquire more into the social features of the mutual aid societies in Colombia, and we shall examine the mutual aid societies as a survival strategy for the poor, although we recognise that mutual aid associations have an important role in sociability as well.[29] The sources we have used to describe the mutual aid societies are mainly the statements that the members of the societies had to

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[24] R. Sordo Cedeño, 'Las Sociedades de Socorro Mutuos, 1867-1880', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 33, (1983), pp. 72-96.
[25] C. Forment, 'The formation of civil society in Peru: democracy or carcelary ?', Paper from the Conference on Democracy and Citizenship in Latin America, (Bogotá, 1995).
[26] B. Estrada, 'La sociedad de socorro mutuo Italia. Santiago 1880-1900: expresión de sociabilidad y adaptación de una comunidad migrante', in *Formas de sociabilidad en Chile 1840-1940*, (Santiago, 1992), pp. 105-124.
[27] M. Angulo Heredia, op. cit., p. 13.
[28] D. Sowell, op. cit., p. 245.
[29] See M. Agulhon, 'La sociabilidad como categoría histórica', in *Formas de sociabilidad en Chile, 1840 - 1940*, (Santiago, 1992), pp. 1-10.

present to the government, specifically to the Government Ministry, to receive permission to be founded. These announcements had to be presented first to the main authority of the department to which the mutual aid society belonged, and also had to have the approval of the religious authority of the region. These sources have some limitations. We can find out about ideals, organization, what people had to do to join, characteristics of members, their obligations, how many members participated. However, we learn little about how they developed or how long they existed. In a very few cases we find some reports, that illustrate more in detail how the mutual aid societies actually worked.

The First Mutual Aid Societies

The first mutual aid society in Colombia, according to David Sowell and Mario Aguilera, was created by 83 artisans, mainly shoemakers, in 1872, the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* in Bogotá.[30] However according to Antino Muñoz A. and Edilberto Romero A., the Society of *Caridad* was founded on 6 June 1864 by 39 artisans..[31] Nevertheless the standing rules of this Society were published only in 1894, and the *personería jurídica* was obtained on 27 June 1889.[32] In the standing rules, there were 51 members; 25 of them appear registered in the *Directorio General de Bogotá* of 1888, as follows: 6 shoemakers, 5 bricklayers, 3 stonemasons, 2 house-painters, 2 brass-founders, 1 clerk, 1 cabinetmaker, 1 printer, 1 bale-maker, 1 butcher, 1 harness-maker and 1 armourer.[33] They were without doubt artisans, but to be registered in the

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[30] D. Sowell, op. cit. p. 245 and M. Aguilera, op. cit. p. 109.
[31] A. Muñoz A., *Apuntes sobre un Centenario*, (Bogotá, 1966), p. 7 and E. Romero A. *Proceso Histórico del Mutualismo en Colombia*. (Bogotá, 1984), p. 42.
[32] *Estatutos de la Sociedad de Caridad*, (Bogotá, 1894) and A. Muñoz A., op. cit., p. 7.
[33] *Directorio General de Bogotá*, [J. Pombo and C. Obregón - propietarios], (Bogotá, 1888).

Directory implied that they had a property and some of them even had two. They may had been owners of workshops.

The affiliates saw the society as an element of community, protection and tranquillity. Most of the mutual aid societies were poor, though some of them had some facilities, such as a room for meetings or burial niches in the cemetery; these were bought through the generosity of associates or from some extra income, from raffles, balls and bazaars where all members collaborated enthusiastically.

The standing rules of the first two societies are very similar. They employ the name of God and they dedicate both societies to God as creator and legislator of the universe, and as supreme source of all good. The words and the style recall the language of the masons in Colombia in the first half of the nineteenth century. We know that the masons then had links with the artisans and poor workers, mainly in Bogotá; we do not know if these links continued longer. They also shared the motto 'all for all'. The Society of *Socorros Mutuos* even warns that this motto only belongs to this Society. Moreover, they shared the oath that the new member had to swear when he was admitted to the society. It was as follows:

> 'Juro por Dios (prometo por mi honor) hacer todo esfuerzo que este a mi alcance por el bien de todos y cada uno de mis compañeros; protegerlos en las enfermedades y en la prisión; proporcionarles trabajo con preferencia a cualquier otro en igualdad de circunstancias; defender su reputación en todo caso, y no perjudicar a ningún miembro de su familia. Asimismo prometo observar y sostener las disposiciones de estos Estatutos y cumplir fiel y exactamente con los deberes de mi cargo'.[34]

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[34] *Estatutos de la Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1890) and *Estatutos de la Sociedad de Caridad*, (Bogotá, 1894).

Afterward the affiliates were sworn. They had to buy the society's statutes, and a shield which they had to wear on the left side of the chest in meetings and ceremonies. The societies had different shields. The shield of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* was oval. with two branches, one of laurel and the other of olive, tied up with a tricolour band; below that was the motto. The shield of the Society of *Caridad* was two hands shaking, with the motto below.

The general aims of both societies were very similar. The three main values of the society of *Caridad* were work as union, honesty in behaviour and fraternity in the help among members. The members of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* were united by the link of work, and they swore honesty and integrity in their activities and fraternity among their members in all circumstances, especially in misfortune. For both societies there were no distinctions of nationality, political opinions, profession or social conditions among the members. Even more, it was forbidden to raise any matters that were not linked to the aims of the societies and which would cause religious or political confrontation. However, in the Society of *Caridad* all the members had to be Catholic. They nevertheless did not think that this was difficult, because they were guided by the purposes of universality and fraternity. The Society of *Caridad* had its patron saint; San Francisco de Paula, and his day was 1 July. On that day every year the Society had a celebration, and each member had to contribute 1 peso for the ceremony. This ceremony coincided with the celebration of the day of foundation of the Society, so the beginning of July was always a special time for the Society of *Caridad*. For this occasion the Society chose a special speaker from its members who had the obligation to give a speech emphasising the fraternity principle.

The procedure to become a member of both societies was also very similar. Any man not older than 45 years, and any man who did not have a contagious illness could become a member. The person who wanted to belong to the society had to register his name, age, marital status, profession and address. After the society's assembly met and took a vote of the current members, the new member was accepted to be part of the society. He had to swear the oath of the society, to give his complete name with his age, his marital status, his profession and his address, and had to buy the standing rules and the shield of the society, to pay the entrance fee and the weekly or monthly dues. A man could belong to only one mutual aid society, and in order to prevent misunderstandings the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* published the names of all its members in a local newspaper.[35] The Society of *Caridad* recommended that the Society should not have more than 500 members, and the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* prescribed no more than 200 affiliates.

The obligations among the associates of the Society of *Caridad* were reciprocal and their assistance came from a common cash-box. The agreement was based on the principles of Christian charity and they stressed that they were not based on the canon of *beneficencia*. By that they meant that the Society was established to help the members and not to help outsiders. The duties of members were to treat each other like brothers in all circumstances, and differences in politics or social condition could not be any limitation on fraternity. They had to accept any task that the Society assigned them. They had to protect their brotherhood. They had to take turns to visit any member who was ill, and they had to go to the funerals of the affiliates. The

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[35] *El Telegrama*, Bogotá, 13 July 1889.

members of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* called each other brothers and they considered that their links were stronger than family links. The duties of their affiliates were the same in the Society of *Caridad*. The only difference was that the associates had to pay a subscription to the newspaper when the Society published it.

The members of both societies received protection. In both societies the associates would receive daily cash help when they were ill, monthly payments for pensions and compensation on death or in exile. In the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* when a member died, the Society would pay for the elementary education of one son, if it had enough income. In 1891 the *Seguro de Familia* was created as a branch of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos*, and in 1917 the Society of *Caridad* was reformed in order to create family insurance.[36] Both societies tried to extend protection for the families of members. They created another fund; each affiliate had to give a deposit for each member of his family that they wished to include, and each of these persons who became part of this fund would receive the same benefits as the associates of the societies.

Reasons for expulsion from both societies were not paying the fees on time, not helping members in need, slandering an associate, damaging any affiliate or any member of their families, bringing into disrepute any colleague in order to get his work, habitual drinking, brawling or gambling; or betraying information that could injure the Society.

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[36] D. Sowell, op. cit., p. 278 and *Estatutos de la Sociedad de Caridad de Bogotá*, (Bogotá, 1917).

Both societies also had the same structure. They had an assembly, which was elected by the members. The assembly had a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a treasurer and a *fiscal*; these were employed by the society. The assembly was to meet weekly on Sundays. Members of the assembly had to keep secret the information discussed in the meetings. There were also two permanent commissions: aid and health, each with three members, for helping any member in need.

They also had a monthly meeting of all members. For this meeting all members had to go washed and well-dressed according to their economic possibilities, and they could not leave the meeting before the end. The monthly meeting of the Society of *Caridad* featured a speaker from the Society, who had the obligation to emphasize the importance of fraternity. This Society also had a library which was established by the collaboration of all members, and kept records of its meetings, with the aim of writing its history some day. In 1917 the society included a standing rule to read some part of a chosen book for fifty minutes in the weekly and monthly meetings. These readings generally were related with how to be a good and honest worker. They had a solemn meeting when they changed their officers, usually with an outstanding figure giving a speech, and the new president also had to give a speech in which he proclaimed his aims and talked about the moral values of the workers.

The only thing that caused the Society to interrupt its activities was political disorder in the country. The War of the Thousand Days at the end of the nineteenth century had strong repercussions in the life of the Society, as was reported. The Society *Socorros Mutuos* likewise lost its office and furniture, and its archives, and suffered financial losses during the war. Not until 1905 did it formally reorganize; within two years it

had started a savings bank for its members, and it resumed its position as the largest organization of its kind in the capital.[37] The lives of these societies are long, as is shown by the celebration of the centenary of the Society of *Caridad*. They acquired assets: by 1897 the Society of *Caridad* had its mausoleum in the cemetery of Bogotá and it had bought a house in 1899.

These mutual aid societies tried to create social provision by themselves, without making any demands on the state. They had their own strategy for protection against any unforeseen events that might lead to poverty and misfortune, their own way of avoiding descent into abject poverty. Furthermore, the members found in these societies a sense of belonging, a family, a sense of sharing and helping, a set of values to learn and follow, a commitment, and an occasion for meeting their companions. In other words, the mutual aid societies were additionally a very important focus of sociability for their members.

It seems that the Society of *Caridad* did not participate in much activity outside the Society itself. However, in 1910 the members decided to participate in the centenary of Independence with the donation of an obelisk to be erected in the centenary park in Bogotá in honour of all the martyrs. They showed pride in their participation in the centenary of 1910: to be allowed to participate in this celebration was a special honour for the artisans in general and expressly for the Society.[38] The Society also made a special celebration of its fiftieth anniversary in 1914. It was a literary evening in the most important theatre of Bogotá, the *Teatro Municipal*. The programme included

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[37] D. Sowell, op. cit., p. 295.
[38] A. Muñoz A., op. cit., p. 9 and 32.

music, poetry recitals and speeches given by one honorary member of the Society and by a representative of all the mutual aid societies.[39]

The Society of *Socorros Mutuos* had more political activities. When the Society was founded, it declared its autonomy; it did not have any political party link and did not want to assume any political role. By the mid-1880s it was identified with the Conservative party and the Conservative members undoubtedly worked for Nuñez's presidential candidacy. The Society *Socorros Mutuos*, and the Society *Filantrópica* which was founded in 1881 by the artisan leader José Leocadio Camacho, were the two most important mutual aid societies founded before the end of the nineteenth century. The Society *Filantrópica* also desired autonomy, and aimed to be politically independent. It was nevertheless accused of participating in the rising of 1893 and it was suppressed by the government in January of that year.[40]

Other kinds of participation, apart from the inevitable political involvement and commemorations, can be seen by the societies. In 1882 after the meeting for changing the president, 136 members went to give alms to the female lunatic asylum of Bogotá.[41] Some leaders tried to benefit the poor through programmes of housing.[42]

The Society of *Socorros Mutuos* since its beginning intended to promote mutual aid societies throughout the country. Indeed, other societies did copy the main Society of Bogotá. In 1888 a Society of *Socorros Mutuos* was established in Cali, and in 1890

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[39] *El Obrero Colombiano*, Bogotá, 4 July 1914.
[40] M. Aguilera, op. cit., p. 184.
[41] *Diario de Cundinamarca*, Bogotá, 9 August 1882.
[42] D. Sowell, op. cit., p. 270.

another appeared in Honda. The case of Honda suggests that there were other examples elsewhere in the country, because its regulations were approved by the *Junta General de la Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Bogotá*, and they were a complete copy of the Bogotá model.[43] Moreover Melitón Angulo Gaitán, in his report of 1873 of the Society of *Socorros Mutuos* de Bogotá, was enthusiastic about the possibility of founding many branches. Although we do not have evidence of more societies with the name *Socorros Mutuos*, other mutual aid societies were being founded at that time, as is shown in Table 12.

In some of these societies new principles were included in the standing rules. In the *Asociación de Artistas*, for example, there are some to strengthen it, although we do not have much information. The members wanted to create a centre in which all the guilds of Bogotá could come together. In this sense the word 'artist' meant artisans of all sorts, and included musicians of both popular and religious music. Though we do not known how far the Society went in its practices, we draw attention to its goals. It proposed technical education, which they also called scientific, and literary and artistic improvement. It hoped to establish schools, to arrange talks and to form a library of 'obras de interés general y especiales, que puedan poner a los socios al tanto de los mejores adelantos en su arte'.[44] This library was to subscribe to scientific and artistic journals that would contain the latest discoveries and advances. This technical and scientific education, and other secular aims like recreation, were not incompatible with adhesion to the Catholic religion and church. The members also promised moral instruction, in which Catholic values were the nucleus: 'conservar, arraigar y propagar

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[43] Biblioteca Nacional, Miscelánea 317.3 and 332.1.
[44] *Reglamento de la Asociación de Artistas*, (Bogotá, 1891), p 9.

las más racionales, más sanas y católicas doctrinas, formando así artistas honrados y solidamente virtuosos'.[45] The Society had as its patrons the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. They likewise hoped for ecclesiastical orientation through a group of 'notables caballeros' who were to guide the steps of the Society. Another important objective of this Society was a savings bank, separate from the resources held for mutual aid. Saving became one the most important and permanent concerns together with education, for the mutual aid societies founded after 1910. Education had been an issue that appeared and disappeared from time to time. In the mid-nineteenth century it was a significant concern, but it had more or less vanished by the time of the foundation of the first mutual aid societies. After 1910, mutual aid, saving and education were the lasting central business of all mutual aid societies.

In this process of the establishment of mutual aid societies there are some doubtful cases. In 1892 The *Sociedad Colombiana de Mutua Protección* in Bogotá was promoted by a certain Carlos Quijano.[46] The proposal was widely discussed in the newspapers.[47] The articles pointed out the privileges that the founder was asking for the Society without any clear justification, like exemption from taxation and the right to a free hall as office and meeting place. They expressed surprise that a mutual aid society was proposed by a single person, who had the ambitious idea of promoting such societies throughout the country. It is not clear what happened in the case of Carlos Quijano. The *Sindicato Popular de Cali* asked for *personería jurídica* in 1925.

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[45] Idem, p. 5.
[46] C. Quijano Esguerra, *Sociedad Colombiana de Mutua Protección*, (Bogotá, 1892).
[47] *El Correo Nacional*, Bogotá, 23 and 25 August 1892.

The Ministry immediately denied the request because the Society was thought to be speculating in building houses for workers.[48]

After 1910

The creation of the first mutual aid societies came at the end of the nineteenth century but a boom in their foundation occurred in the 1920s. One of the reasons for the flourishing of mutual aid societies in Europe was that they did not depend on state intervention.[49] In Colombia the desire to be independent from the traditional political parties went along with scarce state social provision.

The new mutual aid societies brought new issues and new goals, though some of them had their inspiration in the first mutual aid societies, as well as having links with them. The *Centro de Cooperación y Auxilio* of Bogotá, a society of butchers, met in 1929 in the premises of the Society of *Caridad*, where it wrote its standing orders and subsequently held its meetings.[50] Moreover they worked in similar ways. The *Unión General de Carreros* and the *Unión General de Braceros* of Barranquilla presented the same standing orders at almost the same date, 1920, to obtain their *personería jurídica*, and they shared the same motto as the two first mutual aid societies: 'all for all'.[51] This confirms that the first mutual aid societies still had vitality and importance, and that there was a model and a general idea about what mutual aid societies should be.

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[48] AGN, Fondo República, Minsterio de Gobierno, t. 12, fo. 349-356.
[49] See P. Mandler, 'Poverty and Charity in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis: An Introduction'. In P. Mandler (ed.), *The Uses of Charity. The Poor Relief in the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis*, (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 1-37.
[50] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 17, fo. 107-115.
[51] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t 7, fo. 166-168 and 189-192.

A majority of these new mutual aid societies were still in the largest cities: Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla and Cali. Even as late as 1960 approximately 80% of mutual aid societies were in Bogotá and Medellín.[52] Mutual aid societies naturally developed more rapidly where there were some artisan concentrations and at least some industry. Artisans and workers were better able to afford the cost of the mutual aid societies: the members of the mutual aid societies were not the poorest people in Colombia. The majority of the affiliates of these societies were artisans who enjoyed a certain income or workers who had at least a job, and if we take into account the workers who formed the trade unions, they were in even better economic conditions. These were the workers in the iron foundries in Antioquia and Cundinamarca, those engaged in the construction of railways and roads, or those employed in the river and sea ports and the banana and sugar plantations.

A few mutual aid societies were not in the principal cities or even in small towns. The Society *Mutuo Auxilio Pro-Suan* and the *Centro Unionista Pro-Buenaventura* were founded in 1930. Suan was a small town which had 1601 inhabitants in 1918, near to the port of Barranquilla on the Atlantic coast, one of the most dynamic Colombian cities in the nineteenth century, from where it could have received some influence. Buenaventura was a bigger city, with 8827 inhabitants in 1918; it was the only port on the Pacific coast at that time, but it had a notoriously precarious infrastructure development. People from the locality organized the Society with diverse aims, and in this local association the members were drawn from a variety of occupations. They

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[52] E. Romero A., op. cit., p. 42-47.

sought protection in illness and death, to promote saving, to teach basic literacy and to combat alcoholism. They aimed to have a school, a library, a clinic, a meeting place and a newspaper.[53]

The majority of these new mutual aid societies still brought together members who shared traditional artisan activities -tailors, carpenters, bricklayers, butchers, printers or labourers-, although they accepted new activities, all kinds of employees -public, industrial and commercial-, drivers, teachers, graphic designers and others more strange, like theatre workers, or surprisingly, like priests. They clearly enjoyed wide support.

The new mutual aid societies remained essentially male organizations, though females might receive benefits when a relative died. In some mutual aid associations the idea of introducing women to participation did arise, as did the idea of creating separate societies for women only. The first to propose in the standing rules to admit women as members was the *Sociedad Altruista of Cali*, in 1915.[54] In some societies of employees women were included, but by promoting and creating a separate society only for women.[55]

All of the new mutual aid societies came together to give mutual support, as did the first mutual aid societies, but new societies focused with more definition on insurance for members when illness arose, and for the family when the death of any member

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[53] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 18, fo. 336-355 and 468-474.
[54] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 5, fol 134-135.
[55] See Sindicato Católico de Empleados of Medellín in 1921.

occurred. In some cases they tried to create funds for pensions. They intended to create a system of social security. Additionally they sought to mitigate the misfortune of epidemics. In many societies there was special provision when epidemics arose. In these special cases all the funds of the society would be used to help the members and their families in all necessities. Epidemics cast a strong shadow over the poor: they were crises that could demolish very fast and easily the vulnerable economies of poor people. The funds that helped in illness and death were separate from any other funds held by the societies. Some of the societies tried to create sanatoriums with one or two medical doctors to attend to their members, as well as to make agreements with pharmacies to obtain discounts on the price of medicines. The mutual fund would also help members or their families in cases when a member might suffer exile or jail for reasons that did not imply bad behaviour, like drunkenness or gambling.

In order to gather the funds for mutual help, the new societies worked in the same way as the first ones. All member had to pay a fee for affiliation and a monthly fee to have the right to receive help. The entrance fee was between 1 and 3 pesos and the average monthly fee was 1 peso. There was a minimum and upper age for belonging to the societies, between 14 and 45, to avoid the greater risk of illness or death. The few societies that admitted women avoided paying for what they called 'women's illness': pregnancy. Sometimes the income of a society was reinforced by donations, legacies or activities organized to collect money, like bazaars or raffles.

The mutual aid societies worked on principles of reciprocity. Donors and recipients in these societies were all part of the same organization. They often knew each other well personally. The mutual aid societies could blur the classification and division of the deserving and undeserving, although there were some features that all members had to have, and some duties that all members had to obey in order to belong to, and to remain in, the society.

In addition to this self-help, they exhibit other kinds of solidarity, based more on sociability. There was a commission conformed by two or three members in all the societies, which had the obligation of visiting the affiliates when they got sick, and of finding a doctor if they needed one, helping to buy medicines, or helping the members to the hospital, if that was the case, and of giving out the cash that was allowed by the society in the case of illness. This commission was also charged with visiting any member who was in jail and of giving support to the family. When a member died, apart from the economic help for the funeral, the commission was responsible for its organization; and all members had the obligation of assisting at the funeral. They had to wear the shield of the society on the left side of the chest or a white band on the left arm, if the society did not have a shield. Finally the members had the obligation of assisting in all the bazaars, banquets and raffles that the societies organized.

The mutual aid societies also spread a whole range of moral values. In the first ones the predominant moral values were fraternity, integrity, honesty, industry, and political and religious tolerance. The new ones maintained these values and added other new ones.

All of the new mutual aid societies also founded savings banks, separate funds which were deposited in a bank or solid commercial house.[56] Although all the mutual aid societies actually founded small savings banks, members did not have the obligation of depositing their money. However, the idea of promoting saving was strong, and they made an effort to get all members to participate. If the savings bank made any extra profit, the profit would be used for the benefit of all members. Saving became without doubt one of the principal values of the mutual aid societies, together with mutual support, and it became common for all the mutual aid societies, and even for some trade unions founded later.

During the time of the creation of all these mutual aid societies in which saving was one of the prior concerns, various societies were founded exclusively as savings banks. When these societies made an application for *personería jurídica*, the Government Ministry denied their applications and recommended creating limited companies. This was the case with the *Caja de Ahorros de la Policía del Departamento del Valle del Cauca* in 1920, the *Sociedad Mutuaria de Obreros de Medellín* in 1921, and the *Sociedad de Cundinamarca* in Bogotá in 1930.[57] The *Sociedad Mutua de Ahorros de Cali* in 1925 wanted to be allowed to make profits as well.[58]

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[56] Savings banks in Colombia were not common at that time, even in the commercial sense. The first savings bank functioned between 1846 and 1865; no new savings banks appeared in Colombia for a number of years. All such banks were ostensibly intended for less affluent social groups, with the specific aim of curbing 'unnecessary' personal expenses, such as liquor purchases, and spurring saving as a barrier against misfortune. Most of the banks opened shortly after pay-day each week so that the workers might make a deposit before they could 'waste' their money on unproductive consumption. See D. Sowell, 'La Caja de Ahorros de Bogotá, 1846-1865: Artisans, Credit, Development, and Savings in Early National Colombia'. *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 73, no. 4, (1993), pp. 616-717.
[57] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 7, 10 and 18.
[58] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 12, fo. 410-417.

They affiliated to promote education at different levels, from basic literacy to professional courses, through libraries and lecture halls, elementary schools, technical and night schools, and lectures. For all of them there was the idea that the best way to improvement was through the basics of learning and through knowing more about their own particular activity. One of the predominant goals was to improve their skills. Within this education the idea of work was very influential and powerful. Work was the best way of improving one's condition, and work the best way of avoiding the vicious life. In some societies the idea of having a meeting hall was also to have a place to spend free time in a 'safe' environment.

Education became a permanent goal and one of the most significant aims of these new mutual aid societies. Though education had been important in the first artisans' societies of the mid-nineteenth century, for the first mutual aid societies it was not a high priority, but it was for the mutual aid societies of the early twentieth century. They thought that they might improve both the whole of society and the individual through moral education, and also improve material conditions via technical education.

Most of the new societies proclaimed religious tolerance, and underlined that they did not have any religious stipulations; to be Catholic was not a condition for belonging to a mutual aid society. Some societies were, however, clearly Catholic and for some, religious affiliation was fundamental. These cases are apparent from their standing orders. There were three societies for employees that were clearly Catholic: the *Sindicato Católico de Empleados of Medellín* of 1921, the *Asociación de Empleados*

del Comercio of Barranquilla of 1922, and the *Asociación de Empleados de Antioquia* of 1927.[59] Members had to be Catholics. The *Sindicato Católico de Empleados* of Medellín was organized by *Acción Católica*, and the meeting for the election of the persons who were to apply for *personería jurídica* in 1919 was held in the house of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The head of *Acción Católica* and a delegate of the Archbishop participated in the assembly of the society, without the right to vote. There was also a Catholic society of teachers called the *Mutualidad y Caja de Ahorro de Instrucción Pública del Atlántico* founded in 1921.[60] It is important to underline the presence of the Catholic church not only as a promoter of these societies but as a direct participant and supervisor of doctrine. Priests were prominent in social leadership; they were seen as bearers of spiritual and cultural authority; they were articulate, they could write documents properly and they could present such documents to the civil authorities. Their presence conferred legitimacy on the community.

There were other religious mutual aid societies organized by priests. In 1917 the priest Ignacio Antonio Posada asked for *personería jurídica* for the *Sindicato Nacional de Obreras de la Aguja* in Bogotá.[61] He tried to join together the dressmakers under the protection of the *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*. He aspired to provide education, to establish a savings bank and to create a shop where the dressmakers could sell their

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[59] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 9 fo. 19-23 and fo. 272-279 and t. 15.
[60] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 8, fo. 183-189.
In the case of the teachers different kinds of mutual support were promoted, some by the State. In 1930 in the Department of Caldas an official ordinance created a fund for mutual assistance for teachers. *Memoria del Ministro de Educación Nacional al Congreso Nacional*, (Bogotá, 1934), t. i, p. 161.
[61] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 4, fo. 290-292.

clothing.[62] The *Sociedad Pontificia del Barrio Egipto* in Bogotá was organized by the parish priest linked with *Acción Social* in 1929.[63] In this case the obligations and duties of the members were stronger. They had to be Catholics and of good repute, they had to receive communion every Sunday, to participate in processions and to assist at the annual spiritual retreat. However the aim of this last society was limited, merely to help in illness and death, compared with the majority of the mutual aid societies of that time, and with the activities of *Acción Social*.

In these cases the Catholic Church was more than a spiritual and cultural support, it was the director of these societies, societies that were supposed to be autonomous in their creation. The societies were more an extension of the ecclesiastical hierarchy's authority, although they kept to the goals of mutual aid. Of course Catholic beliefs showed in their aims and their practices. What it is important is to stress that a significant sector of the trade unions in Colombia was also promoted and guided by the Catholic Church.

Other religious organizations apart from the Catholics created mutual aid societies, with certain difficulties. In 1926 it was proposed to create a *Centro Israelita de Beneficencia* in Cali. The main goal of this society was to help and protect its members, and to buy a piece of land for a Jewish cemetery. The society also proposed to assist in any national disaster. To be a member of this society, a person, male or female, had to be Jewish and to follow Jewish religious rituals. In 1929 they decided

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[62] This society does not seem to have had links with the *Sociedad de la Aguja* in Cali, organized by the pioneer socialist Ignacio Torres Giraldo.
[63] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 17, fo. 93-100.

to present their standing orders to the Government Ministry through the regional authorities in order to obtain *personería jurídica*. The proposal met with some objections from the Ministry. The main issue was that this society might try to seduce people to follow another religion different from the national religion, the Catholic, and so, be a threat to national unity. The Ministry concluded that this society was against the Catholic religion, the religion of all Colombians, and denied *personería jurídica*. The members of the society immediately sent a reply in which they argued that it had the primary aim of helping its members by relief and charity, and also helping to others in some emergencies. They asked: 'Puede haber algo mas sublime que esto de socorrer a los vecinos por el dolor y la miseria ?'.[64] They added that they did not intend to proselytize for followers, and they recognized the duty to respect the Catholic religion and the other cults that existed in Colombia. The Ministry granted *personería jurídica* to the *Centro Israelita de Beneficencia de Cali* in March 1930.

Following this there were created a *Centro Israelita* in Bogotá and a *Sociedad Benéfica Israelita de Barranquilla* in 1929, and an *Unión Israelita de Beneficencia de Medellín* in 1930.[65] The *Centro Israelita* in Bogotá apart from the main aim of assistance also tried to encourage the education of its members through talks and readings, and through the creation of a library. The societies in Barranquilla and Medellín were similar to the first society in Cali. They tried to provide mutual aid and to found a Jewish cemetery in each city. The society of Medellín added a clause which declared that if the society became smaller than ten members, its possessions,

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[64] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 18, fo. 372.
[65] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 17, fo. 358-361 and 51-59 and t. 18, fo. 135-142 respectively.

including the cemetery, would belong to the other Jewish societies in the country; if there were none, the property would go to the Federation of Orthodox Rabbies in New York. The Jews in Colombia had strong links among them, and there was permanent communication between the Colombians and some international communities, mostly the Americans.

The case of the Jewish mutual aid societies may appear odd, as Colombian Jews are now, though not a large community, a prosperous one. However, when they arrived in Colombia they were mostly poor and not well regarded by the Catholic hierarchy. They needed mutual aid societies not only for material support, but also to safeguard their beliefs and culture.

It seems that the majority of the new mutual aid societies did not have any religious character. Some of them shifted emphasis to follow other definitely more secular concepts and had a more political colour, particularly socialist. The *Asociación de Alarifes del Valle del Cauca* in 1924 and the *Sindicato de albañiles y similares* in 1930 changed their days of celebration to 1 May, and the members of the *Sociedad Fraternidad de Carpinteros* in 1930 called themselves not brothers but comrades.[66]

Other cases were more exotic, like the *Ejercito de Gladiadores o Escuela del Carácter del Hombre* of Barranquilla, created in 1929.[67] Although this society had similar goals and practices to the other mutual aid societies that were created at that

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[66] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 12, fo. 111-125 and t. 18, fo. 104-123.
[67] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 17, fo. 231-238.

time, it makes one reconsider 'cultural models' in mutual aid societies. This society had particular aims that made it different from the rest. Its members were called gladiators, its sections were named squadrons and its authorities were a consul, a proconsul, and a major-general or gladiator delegate; the consul was elected for life. Its goals were the formation of moral character through education, as well as physical fitness and strength. Its strange ideas were in part of Roman and Greek inspiration. It was neither Christian nor Catholic nor socialist, and in its standing orders there were no references to God or to Christian charity.

These new societies seem to be more political, autonomous and independent than the first ones: most of them reiterated in their standing orders that they did not make any political conditions and all of them called for political tolerance. The shadow of the political confrontations of the civil wars was still present. It is visible in most of the standing orders of the societies, the majority of which contain articles about conduct in civil wars. The shadow of political confrontation can also be seen in the conduct of the authorities when asked to grant *personería jurídica*. When the society *Liga del Trabajo* of Cali asked for *personería jurídica* in 1921, the Minister of Government Ignacio Rengifo warned that this society might have links with the socialists and that the members -liberal artisans- could provoke disorder; they might be dangerous.[68] *Personería jurídica* was however finally granted. Political independence and autonomy were less clear when some mutual aid societies joined socialist parties or the new trade unions. All mutual aid societies needed to provide witnesses who would

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[68] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 8, fo. 260-281. By coincidence one of the members of the *Liga del Trabajo* was called Ramón Mercado, the name of one of the most important leaders of the *Sociedades Democráticas* in mid-nineteenth century Cali. They may have been related.

guarantee that they did not represent any danger. The *Sociedad de Freneros del Ferrocarril del Pacífico* in Cali needed such a guarantee from the management of the company in order to obtain *personería jurídica* in 1922.[69] Of course, where a majority of the members of a mutual aid society belonged to a single occupation there was an obvious possibility that the society would become involved in industrial disputes.

Autonomy and independence seem also to be related to the social conditions of the members. These new societies did not aspire to have members with large incomes to help in their support, as some of the first mutual aid societies had. In most cases affiliates shared an activity or profession.

Apart from the mutual aid societies of the principal cities there were a few societies with special characteristics. One can note a small detail: the papers required by the authorities in order to obtain *personería jurídica* were in some cases hand-written, in contrast to the rest that were typed. In one case where the requirements were lengthy, they were written out by two persons; however, the writing is very clear and well done.

The Society of *El Carácter* was created in Ipiales 1913.[70] Its motto was 'liberty, brotherhood and work'. Apart from the typical savings bank that members wanted to found, it also had other special aims. It aspired to edify its members, to improve their characters, through instruction. Members would be better able to practise their citizens' rights and be useful to society and to the country. In its weekly meetings they

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[69] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 18, fo. 187-198.
[70] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 5, fo. 97-108.

intended to read for ten minutes extracts from the books of Samuel Smiles; they suggested beginning with *Character* and *Duty*.[71] They also wished to hold discussions about literature, history, geography, and to study the biographies of famous citizens of Colombia, as well as to emphasize moral values, such as duty, saving and work. They hoped to teach how to draw up commercial documents and make formal requests to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. One way towards improvement was seen as through literary exercises, poetry and essays, or declaiming. This society had implicit ideas about citizenship, as is shown in the desire to teach the correct form for making any civil request.

It is perhaps surprising how in the small town of Ipiales in the south-west of Colombia they had the books of the English writer Smiles, and how they could entertain broader aims than most of the mutual aid societies in the larger cities, and how they could include in their aims a heightening of the consciousness of citizenship.

In 1915 the society *Obreros del Progeso* was founded in Barbacoas, and ten years later in Dagua the *Asociación Industrial de la Raza Negra* was created.[72] The second copied the standing orders of the first, and added new aims. Again it can be confirmed that standing orders had some circulation and there were models available to be imitated. They shared the main goal of mutual aid societies, help in illness and death,

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[71] Samuel Smiles has been related to the construction of Victorian values during the industrialization process in England. He thought that work was not good per se: work was good because it improved the state of the individual, the community and the nation.
The best known book of Smiles was *Self-help*, 1859, which was translated into many languages, *Character* was published in 1871 and *Duty* in 1880. These books were quickly translated into Spanish. In Colombia they were translated by Diego Mendoza in the 1880s. There is an article about Smiles on saving in the *Escritos Varios* of Salvador Camacho Roldán in 1893.
[72] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 5 fo. 275-282 and t. 12, fo. 569-589 respectively. Dagua had 6,846 inhabitants in 1918.

and both added the intention to create departments of charity and promotion. This branch of the society had several further ideals. The main one was education; they wanted to establish an elementary school to teach reading and writing to their members principally, and the society was to pay the rent of the school-house and the teachers.[73] They also desired to open a library, to begin a newspaper and to have a weekly lecture, for the members of the society and for the people of the community, stressing that these educational activities did not have and did not want to have any political aim. They also tried to create a health centre, to retain one or two medical doctors paid by the society for the attention of the members, and to make an agreement with a pharmacy in order to get cheaper medicines.

The society of Dagua apart from these concerns had others: to create a loan agency and a savings bank for the members. The motto was 'peace, culture, progress and fraternity'. This society had two special features. The first one was that the members came together for ethnic reasons, not for guild ones; it was being black, not being artisans or workers, that was the motive for the foundation of the society.[74] Secondly, the society allowed women to be members. With these cases from more isolated places we can see that there were some aims of sociability that were carried further than in the main cities.

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[73] According to the census of 1918 there were only 597 persons who went to school in Dagua.

[74] According to the census of 1918 there were 1,118 Negroes in Dagua.

In these two cases, Barbacoas and Dagua, as in Ipiales, it is again unusual how two small towns in the south-west of Colombia, with precarious development and a certain isolation, could pose goals more modern than other mutual aid societies elsewhere.

The *Unión Obrera de Colombia* was founded in 1910, with the goal of bringing together all the mutual aid societies and trade unions that existed in Colombia. It brought together 13 associations and 13,500 affiliates.[75] They wanted to teach reading and writing to the workers, to try to abolish alcoholism and to control the prices of basic goods. In one of the first meetings, according to one of the founders, the typesetter Alberto Navarro, its aims were stated first and foremost as being to unify workers for their common well-being and the protection of their trades, and to help their families.[76] The *Union* had become a political party, the Workers' Party, by 1911. In the May election it joined the Liberals and the Republicans and gained a seat in the Chamber of Representatives, with the candidate Ricardo Restrepo Callejas. But the alliances did not last. By October they had split. In 1916, approximately 800 workers issued a manifesto announcing the re-foundation of the Workers' Party and in 1919 the Socialist Party was founded. These parties were directly concerned with social and economic conditions, and the strike was included among the weapons to be used in the struggle to improve working class conditions. According to Miguel Urrutia, the Socialist Party was joined by the mutual aid societies of barbers and tailors, and afterwards by societies of printers, lithographers, cabinet-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, mechanics and the trade union of workers in commerce.[77] Here again the

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[75] E. Romero A., op. cit., p. 41.
[76] D. Sowell, op. cit., p. 301.
[77] M. Urrutia, op. cit., p. 72-73.

desire to be non-partisan vanished, although this time the mutual aid societies joined a new political party, independent from the traditional parties. They were inevitably thereby involved again in political concerns.

By the 1920s there was certainly some transformation in the mutual aid societies. Some of them took up the fight for better conditions for workers or to improve the prices of their products, or to alter customs duties.[78] The *Sociedad de Sastres de Colombia* of Bogotá in 1930 wanted to create a commercial co-operative to control and to develop tailoring.[79] They demanded from the government protection for national production, and desired to create a tailoring centre where they could develop different activities related to their professional formation: a library and an academy, a savings bank and a family mutual aid office. Moreover they were worried about women's conditions, and wished to organize a female branch of the society to protect them. Similarly, the *Unión de Artes Gráficas y Papelería*, created in 1922, aimed to improve the graphic arts through teaching and exhibitions, as well as to be alert for changes in customs duties.[80]

There were other kinds of professional societies that were founded more to promote a profession than to defend a guild, as well as to provide mutual support for members and to create savings banks. Examples are the *Sociedad de Farmacéuticos* of Cali, founded in 1924, the 1929 *Unión Famacéutica* and the *Sociedad Médico-Quirúrgica del Atlántico* of Barranquilla, the *Sociedad Colombiana de Agronomía y Veterinaria*

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[78] M. Archila, op. cit., p. 191-194.
[79] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 18, fo. 408-425.
[80] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 10, fo. 12-13.

and *Federación Odontológica*, both of Bogotá.[81] All of them wanted to improve their particular profession for the benefit of Colombian society. They aspired to spread new scientific practices throughout the country. The majority of the new mutual aid societies did not have civic, philanthropic or voluntary activities such as some of the first ones had had. There was a slow shift of mutual aid activities concentrating on those that related only to themselves, without general links with the rest of society. These professional societies were the exception within the new mutual aid societies.

By 1930s some mutual aid societies had been completely transformed into trade unions. As the mutual aid societies became closer to trade unions, they became more distanced from mutual aid. For example, the *Confederación Obrera Sindical del Atlántico* which obtained *personería jurídica* in 1929, had more of the nature of a trade union.[82] In its meeting in 1927 several mutual aid societies participated, such as bricklayers, labourers, plumbers, navigators and drivers. The aim was economic, to defend of the rights of the workers. They declared that they did not have any religious or political aims, and they defined themselves as pacifist. They aspired to promote savings, elementary education, libraries and lectures. The idea was that a number of trade unions and artisan or labourers' organizations might join together in the *Confederation*. It seems that the trade unions with political links were more open to society in general than the mutual aid societies, which were becoming more enclosed, looking only to their own welfare concerns. The visibility of the mutual aid societies tended to be eclipsed by the large national trade unions. It is on occasions difficult to make a distinction between trade unions and mutual aid societies, because they shared

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[81] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 12 and 17.
[82] AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 17, fo. 313-321.

aims and sometimes worked together. However it is possible to see that the trade unions were always involved in political struggle, and the mutual aid societies kept more to their own concerns.

The mutual aid societies however survived and persisted. According to Antino Muñoz A., President of the society of *Caridad* in 1964, there were more than 70 mutual aid societies in Colombia at that date, whilst according to Edilberto Romero there were 89 in 1960 and as many as 320 in 1984.[83] This large figure consisted of mutual aid societies as defined by law; they were at the same time largely invisible in the public media.

It seems to be the nature of the mutual aid societies that they provided a strategy of relief to their members, but made little impact on as a whole society. Mutual aid societies were more like contributory insurance pools or savings institutions than charities, they wanted to keep their members honest and decent and to prevent any of them 'going under'. The mutual aid associations nevertheless did have the capacity to generate 'social capital': self-help, trust and solidarity. Solidarity of class and neighbourhoods can be set against evidence of exclusion and division. They fostered trust and reciprocity among members, dependent upon the honesty of each to safeguard the common benefit fund, and their participatory aspects may have stimulated members to become involved in political parties. They introduced more complex cultural models and certain ideas and forms of democratic participation.

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[83] A. Muñoz A., op. cit., p. 62 and E. Romero A., op. cit., p. 42.

Table 12

Mutual Aid Societies in Colombia

Date	Mutual Aid Societies	Place
1864	*Sociedad de Caridad*	Bogotá
1872	*Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos*	Bogotá
1873	*Sociedad de Tipógrafos*	Bogotá (a)
1881	*Sociedad Filantrópica*	Bogotá (a, b)
1887	*Asociación de Carpinteros y Ebanistas*	Bogotá (b)
1887	*Sociedad de Cajista de Tipografía*	Bogotá (b)
1889	*Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos*	Manizales (c)
1891	*Asociación de Artistas*	Bogotá
1892	*Sociedad de Auxilio Mutuo*	Bucaramanga (c)
1895	*Sociedad Cooperativa Fraternal*	Ocaña (c)
1898	*Sociedad de Zapateros*	Bogotá (a)
1898	*Club Industrial Colombiano*	Bogotá (a)
1899	*Sociedad de Sastres*	Bogotá
1899	*Sociedad de Mutuo Auxilio*	Barranquilla (c)
1906	*Sociedad de Mutuo Auxilio y Beneficencia*	Giratoda (c)
1909	*Sociedad de Artesanos*	Sonsón (c)
1910	*Sociedad de Artesanos*	Manizales (c)
1910	*Unión Nacional de Industriales y Obreros*	Bogotá (a)
1910	*Sociedad de Artesanos*	Cúcuta (d)
1910	*Sociedad de Artesanos*	Cartagena (d)
1913	*Sociedad El Carácter*	Ipiales
1915	*Sociedad de Obreros del Progreso*	Barbacoas
1915	*Sociedad Altruísta*	Cali
1916	*Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos del Círculo de Obreros*	Bogotá
1917	*Unión Caritativa del Clero*	Medellín

1917	*Sindicato de Obreros de la Aguja*	Bogotá
1917	*Unión de Barberos*	Bogotá
1919	*Unión de Sastres*	Bogotá
1920	*Unión de Braceros*	Barranquilla
1920	*Unión General de Carreros*	Barranquilla
1921	*Liga del Trabajo*	Cali
1921	*Sindicato Católico de Empleados*	Medellín
1921	*Asociación Mutualista de los Maestros de Instrucción Pública del Atlántico*	Barranquilla
1922	*Sociedad de Freneros del Ferrocarril del Pacífico*	Cali
1922	*Unión de Artes Gráficas y Papelería*	Bogotá
1924	*Asociación de Alarifes*	Cali
1924	*Sociedad de Farmacéutas*	Cali
1925	*Unión del Clero*	Bogotá
1925	*Asociación Industrial de la Raza Negra*	Dagua
1926	*Sociedad Protectora del Obrero*	Bogotá
1926	*Unión y Libertad*	Barranquilla
1927	*Unión, Auxilio y Trabajo*	Barranquilla
1927	*Unión Tipográfica*	Barranquilla
1927	*Asociación de Empleados*	Medellín
1929	*Sociedad de Maquinistas Teatrales y anexos*	Bogotá
1929	*Sindicato Ferroviario*	Barranquilla
1929	*Ejército de Gladiadores*	Barranquilla
1929	*Asociación de Linotipistas*	Barranquilla
1929	*Sociedad Colombiana de Agronomía y Veterinaria*	Bogotá
1929	*Unión Farmacéutica*	Barranquilla
1929	*Federación Odontológica Colombiana*	Bogotá
1929	*Centro de Cooperación y Auxilio*	Bogotá
1929	*Sociedad Pontificia*	Bogotá
1929	*Confederación Obrera Sindical del Atlántico*	Barranquilla
1930	*Sociedad de Sastres de Colombia*	Bogotá

1930	*Centro Unionista*	Buenaventura
1930	*Sociedad de Empleados del Comercio*	Cali
1930	*Sociedad de Mutuo Auxilio*	Suan
1930	*Sociedad de Automovilistas*	Cali
1930	*Sociedad Fraternidad de Carpinteros*	Barranquilla
1930	*Sindicato de Albañiles*	Bogotá

Note: All sources are from AGN, Fondo República, Ministerio de Gobierno, unless is marked. The date corresponds to the year of *personería juridíca* was obtained, some times this date is later the date of the foundation of the society. Only in the two first mutual aid societies -*Sociedad de Caridad* and *Sociedad Socorro Mutuos*- the dates are the day of foundation.

(a) D. Sowell, 'The Early Latin American Labour Movement: Artisans and Politics in Bogotá, Colombia, 1832-1919', (Florida Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1986).

(b) M. Aguilera, *Insurgencia urbana en Bogotá. Motín, conspiración y guerra civil. 1893- 1895*, (Bogotá, 1997).

(c) M. Urrutia, *The Development of Colombian Labour Movement*, (New Haven, 1969).

(d) I. Torres Giraldo, Los Inconformes, (Bogotá, 1973), vol. 3.

VI. PUBLIC *BENEFICENCIA* AND PRIVATE CHARITY

The Colombian historiography for the period of the *Regeneración* has accepted that the state delegated social responsibility to the Catholic Church.[1] This conclusion is partly based on the Concordat with the Church, and it has stressed the arrival of Catholic religious orders and their role in education. It has also emphasised how Colombia went against the secularization process that most Latin American countries were engaged in at the end of nineteenth century.[2] However the picture of poor relief in Colombia seems to be more varied and more complex than this historiography suggests. Poor relief in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was a complex network of institutional and outdoor relief, in which the state participated actively in various ways, along with private societies, religious orders and private citizens. The more diverse and puzzling picture of poor relief in Colombia can be compared with the development of social assistance in most other countries in Latin America.[3] By looking at where the funds came from for poor relief, why these funds were given and how they were distributed between state institutions and private societies, we can establish more clearly the role of the Colombian state in *beneficencia* and public assistance.

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[1] See J. O. Melo, 'La República Conservadora. 1880-1930', in *Colombia Hoy*, (Bogotá, 1978), pp 52-101., J. O. Melo, 'La Constitución de 1886', in *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1989), vol. i, pp. 43-64., M. A. Urrego, 'La Regeneración. 1878-1898', in *Gran Enciclopedia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1991), vol. 2, pp. 421-452., J. M. Taborda, 'La Hegemonía Conservadora', in *Gran Enciclopedia de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1991), vol. 2, pp. 483-508, and F. González, *Poderes enfrentados. Iglesia y Estado en Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1997).

[2] See J. Lynch, 'The Catholic Church in Latin America, 1830-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin American*, t. iv, (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 527-595.

[3] See Introduction in C. Abel and C. M. Lewis (ed.), *Welfare, poverty and development in Latin America*, (London, 1993). For European comparisons see A. Shubert, ' "Charity Properly Understood": Changing Ideas about Poor Relief in Liberal Spain', *Comparative Study of Society and History*, v. 33,

The origins of funds for poor relief came from two sources, from the state and from the private sector. Although it is difficult to draw an entirely clear line between public and private in relation to poor relief, it is possible to show how the state and the private sector provided and distributed funds for poor relief in Colombia. In the reports of the establishments and the societies there is a fairly clear distinction between funds which came from the state and those which came from individuals. We will explore how much public and private giving each represented, how these contributions were distributed, where public *beneficencia* and private charity came from, and why the state and individuals gave to poor relief.

The main sources for this chapter are the reports of poor relief institutions and societies, the antecedents of the laws which provided subsidies for poor relief institutions, and the wills of people who left bequests to the institutions or societies concerned.

Public *Beneficencia*

The state contribution was largely concentrated in institutional poor relief, particularly in public establishments. However, some of the state contribution went to outdoor poor relief, and some to private societies. The state had predominantly two ways of providing funds for poor relief: through the assignation of subsidies by municipal, departmental and national governments to various establishments, and through the imposition of different taxes for the benefit of poor relief institutions. There was a

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n. 1, (1991); R. Gibson, *A Social History of French Catholicism.1789-1914*, (London, 1989); J. Barry and C. Jones (ed.), *Medicine and Charity before the Welfare State*, (London, 1991).

third way the state could help, though not as significant as the other two: this was to exempt from tax articles that were imported by the institutions; examples are textile machinery, sewing machines, material, thread, books, notebooks, paper.[4]

Subsidy was the most important way of funding poor relief institutions for the municipal, departmental and national governments. Such aid was not constant. When the first poor relief establishments, mostly hospitals, were founded, the state subsidy came basically from municipal funds. Each municipality decided the amount to give to its establishments, state and private. The municipalities mostly helped the local hospital: when these were important and dynamic institutions, they would give funds. The municipality of Medellín gave funds to the hospital of San Juan de Dios, to the Association of the Sacred Heart and to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.[5] The municipality of Cali gave subsidies to the hospital of San Juan de Dios and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.[6] The municipality of Pasto gave funds to the orphanage of San Jose.[7]

After 1870 some of the state poor relief institutions in some regions started to receive support from the regional governments, and by 1920 the provision of departmental funds was more frequent and stable. In 1923 the department of Cundinamarca gave 16% of its expenses to *Beneficencia*, Antioquia gave 3.5% and Valle 2.4%.[8] And in

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[4] See AGN, Ministerio de Hacienda, t. 448-453, 1903-1904.
[5] See P. Castro, 'Beneficencia en Medellín, 1800 -1930', (Antioquia Univ.-Medellín, 1994).
[6] B. Castro, 'Caridad y Beneficencia en Cali, 1848-1898', *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico*, (Bogotá, 1990), v. xxvii, pp 67-80.
[7] A. Santander, *Biografía de Aldana y Corografía de Pasto*, (Pasto, 1895).
[8] *Anuario Estadístico de la República de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1926), vol. xv, p. 191-198.

1928 proportions were similar: Cundinamarca 17%, Antioquia 3% and Valle 2.7%.[9] The department of Cundinamarca had been the leader in these activities since the foundation of the *Junta General de Beneficencia*, and it was the department which spent on average most funds for this purpose.

The department of Cundinamarca distributed its expenses mainly among the hospitals. Between 1890 and 1896 the Assembly of Cundinamarca distributed such funds every two years. In 1890 the Assembly apportioned 30,000 pesos equally among the twelve hospitals, and the hospital of Chocontá received 2,000 pesos extra for building.[10] In 1892 the Assembly decreased the amount to 24,000 pesos. Two new hospitals appeared in the list that had not received any subsidy before, the hospital of Guasca which got 1,500 pesos and that of Pacho which received 1,000.[11] In 1894 the subsidies were reduced by the Assembly; one hospital got 1,000 pesos, eight hospitals received 800, three hospitals got 300 pesos and one got 200 pesos.[12] In 1896 the hospital of La Mesa got 2,000 pesos, followed by the hospital of Ubaté 1,000 and the hospitals of Zipaquirá, Pacho, Guatavita, Guasca, Sopó and Chocontá 500 pesos each.[13]

In 1933 we find a similar distribution. The Departmental Assembly of Cundinamarca decided to assign different amounts mainly for helping to build hospitals. The hospital in Facatativá got 5,000 pesos, Fusagasugá 2,000 pesos, Guaduas and La Palma 1,000

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[9] *Anuario General de Estadística*, (Bogotá, 1928), vol. xxvii, p. 261.
[10] *Gaceta de Cundinamarca*, no. 341, (1890). The twelve hospitals were in Chocontá, La Mesa, Zipaquira, Sopó, Guatavita, Facatativá, Villeta, Ubaté, Guaduas, Nemocón, Cáqueza and Girardot.
[11] *Gaceta de Cundinamarca*, no. 485, (1892). The hospitals of Ubaté and La Mesa received the largest sum, 4,000 pesos each, followed by the hospital of Chocontá, 3,000 pesos, Guatavita received 2,500, Villeta, Cáqueza, Guaduas and Facatativá each got 2,000 pesos.
[12] *Gaceta de Cundinamarca*, no. 637, (1894).
[13] *Gaceta de Cundinamarca*, no. 767, (1896).

pesos and Fómeque and La Vega 500 pesos; funds were also given for fifteen more hospitals.[14] Two years later, in 1935, some of the hospitals that received help in 1933 again got money. Those who benefited most were the hospitals of La Palma, Chocontá and Zipaquirá, with 5,000 pesos each.[15]

The only state establishments apart from hospitals that got help were the orphanage in Bogotá, with 1,000 pesos in 1894 and 1896, the Asylum of Beggars in Bogotá with 2,500 pesos in 1894, and 500 pesos monthly to build more wards in 1930, the leper village of Agua de Dios which received 10,000 pesos to build new accommodation, and the *Gota de Leche* programme which was assigned 1,200 pesos in 1920. The Departmental Assembly distributed funds to some private establishments: the most favoured were the hospitals La Misericordia and San Jose in Bogotá, which received funds in 1898, 1912 and 1925. The Red Cross, the Dormitory *Sagrada Familia* and the Asylum *San Antonio* also received some aid in 1925 and 1927; the largest subsidy was for the *Acción Social*, which got 15,000 pesos for five years from 1933.[16]

The reasons for these variations are not apparent. We do not know what were was the criteria for assignation of these departmental funds.

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[14] Ordenanza no. 38, 22 May 1933. The hospitals of Anolaima, Nocaima, Chocontá and San Juan de Ríoseco got 2,000 pesos ; La Mesa 1,500; Cáqueza 1,000, Bituima, Junín, Sesquilé and Guasca 500. The hospital of Zipaquirá received 3,600 pesos and Fusagasugá, Ubaté and Facatativá 3,000 annually. The hospital of Girardot obtained 100 pesos monthly for maintenance and 5,000 pesos for building the womens' section.

[15] Ordenanza no. 27, 16 July 1935. The hospitals which did not appear to have benefited two years before were Viotá, Gachetá, Machetá, Guatavita and Quipile.

[16] See *Compilación de Leyes y Ordenanzas de la Benficencia y Asistencia Social de Cundinamarca, 1869-1942*, (Bogotá, 1942).

National funds for *Beneficencia* were registered from 1890, and become more constant after 1910. However, in the national budget *Asistencia Pública* appears together with the *Departamento de Higiene* as an item only in the 1930s. The funds that the state assigned to *Asistencia Pública* were always small in comparison to other expenses. *Asistencia Pública* and *Departamento de Higiene* received 4% of the total national budget between 1931 and 1936.[17] In the 1920s the national budget had not included *Asistencia Pública*; it was merely part of *Instrucción Pública*. *Instrucción Pública* received 3% of total national expenses. It was one of the three sectors which received least, together with International Relations and the *Contraloria*.[18] *Beneficencia* was obviously not a priority in the national budget, at least, until the 1930s; it was more a municipal and departmental activity. *Instrucción Pública* always received more from the national budget than *Asistencia Pública*.[19]

The discussions about how to distribute and assign subsidies from the national government were sometimes published. One significant argument was the criteria of equal distribution for all regions. By 1936 this criteria of equal regional distribution of national funds for public assistance was established according to the population that each region had registered in the last Census.[20] Following this rule, the national subsidies were distributed to all hospitals throughout the country, and to some other institutions. The distribution however was not exactly equitable. In 1925 the National Congress assigned 330,670 pesos to *Beneficencia*, and 42.7% of this sum was given to

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[17] J. A. Bejarano, 'El despegue cafetero, 1900-1928', In J. A. Ocampo (ed.), *Historia Económica de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1987), pp. 173-207.
[18] *Anuario Estadístico de la República de Colombia*, (Bogotá, 1926), vol. xv, p. 202.
[19] *Historia de las Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1928), t. v, p. 657-677.
[20] Law 108, 8 May 1936.

poor relief institutions in Bogotá. Bogotá and Cundinamarca got almost half of the total of national subsidies, 48.5%. The next region was Antioquia, which received 7.5% of the total, follow by Atlántico, Bolivar and Valle which received 5.5% each.[21]

In most of the regions subsidies were mainly assigned to the hospitals, except in Bogotá where the funds were also for other *beneficencia* establishments; the establishments of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* received 65% of the total assigned to Bogotá, and the rest was for private poor relief institutions.

In 1927 the distribution of subsidies was similar to that of 1925, 483,490 pesos. Bogotá gained 56% of the total of national funds and Bogotá together with Cundinamarca got 62%. The remarkable increase in the funds for Bogotá was represented by funds for the hospitals San Juan de Dios, La Misericordia and San José, together with the *Círculo de Obreros*.[22] The increase of the general funding for charity and *beneficencia* went mainly to Bogotá. The region next in line was again Antioquia, with 6.3% of the total, followed by Tolima with 3.7%, the Bolivar, Boyacá and Valle with 3.4% each.[23] The reason for the notable increase in the funds for the departments of Cundinamarca and Tolima was the grant of 12,000 pesos that Congress gave to the hospitals of Girardot and Honda.[24]

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[21] Law 76, 17 November 1925.
[22] The hospital San Juan Dios got 66,000 pesos, the hospital San José 48,000 pesos, the hospital La Misericordia 42,000 pesos and the *Círculo de Obreros* 20,000 pesos.
[23] Law 52, 9 November 1927.
[24] To see the relation between distribution of funds and population, Cundinamarca, Antioquia, Boyacá and Bolivar were the departments with the biggest populations, in that order. However Santander and Caldas had bigger population than Tolima. There was no information about Valle.
Anuario General de Estadísticas (Bogotá,1928) p. 227.

Some part of subsidies for *Instrucción Pública* might perhaps be considered as destined for poor relief. In 1913 it assigned 7,000 pesos for educational material for primary schools.[25] In 1927 the arts and crafts schools in Cundinamarca, Cúcuta, Atlántico, Manizalez and Bucaramanga got 7,000 pesos each, and in Bogotá the primary schools and night schools for workers also received some aid. There were grants for students as well. However, it is difficult to determine whether these grants benefited the poor. Perhaps the grants to the schools of the Salesian community were destined for poor children.

There seems to have been agreement about the unequal distribution of the national subsidies when these funds went to state establishments, like the hospitals, because we do not find any discussions or complaints about the unequal distribution. When the national subsidy was for private institutions, agreement was not so easy. The majority of the national subsidy went to private poor relief institutions in Bogotá.

The national subsidy for private societies followed a different process. A project had to be presented, in which the institution or society explained its reasons for seeking funds, and then a commission of senators visited the institution to confirm its needs. In 1926, when the hospital La Misericordia asked for an increase in its state subsidy of 2,500 pesos a month, it gave explanations. The hospital was a charity for sick children who had no parents or did not have the money for medical treatment. The hospital had space for 170 children and several wards for different illnesses, a laboratory and a pharmacy. The establishment was orderly and hygienic. In the project, the hospital

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[25] Law 118, 10 December 1913.

was identified as a national establishment because it received children from many regions of Colombia. It already received funds from the departmental assembly and had been granted land for the enlargement of its building. An observation that some senators made related to the juridical status of the establishment. It belonged to a natural person, and the senators believed that this kind of establishment should belong to a society; subsidy should not be given to a natural person. The senators suggested that the hospital might change its juridical status to receive national funds.

Some senators also suggested that the San Jose hospital should receive the same sum as La Misericordia. Other senators then required information about the San Jose hospital, how many patients it had, how many were pensioners and how many were indigents, how much the hospital charged, what funds it received from the national government or from *beneficencia*, if the medicine it sold paid customs... Congress decided to give 2,500 pesos monthly to La Misericordia and 2,000 monthly to San José.[26]

In 1926 there was a request for 2,000 pesos from the *Liga de Damas Católicas* to buy a house for the purposes of the charity. Poor women and girls were taught to read and write, to shorthand, sewing, together with moral and religious instruction, supported by a good library. The institution also provided dowries for girls who wanted to get married or to follow the religious life. The ladies also visited poor families to give help and education. There were no objections. The institution had not received any

[26] Law 10, 23 September 1926.

state funds before. The senators agreed that it was important that the state promote charity and encourage foundations like this one.[27]

The reaction was different when 20,000 pesos a year for four years was requested by the *Círculo de Obreros de Bogotá* in 1926.[28] The money was for building two primary schools, a hospital, houses and an aqueduct in the neighbourhood of *Villa Javier*. The *Círculo* was defined as a social institution with activities in the neighbourhood of *Villa Javier*, in the south of Bogotá. The barrio was defined as a place of economic and moral redemption for the workers who lived there. The *Círculo* also ran a savings bank, according to some senators one of the safest and most stable in the country.

There were some votes in Congress against this project. The apparent reason was that it only favoured some workers, not all the workers of Bogotá. Some senators then pointed out that there were no institutions in Bogotá which benefited all the workers. Some suggested allowing funds for a central office for all workers, called the *Casa del Pueblo*. This proposal caused further discussion in Congress. There were two main observations: one stressed the divisions among the workers and the trade unions in Colombia at the time, which made it very difficult to decide who should be in control of a central office. Another line of comment stressed that some trade unions were opposed to the government. In the end, both proposals were accepted by Congress, to give some funds to the *Círculo* and to support a workers' central office.[29]

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[27] Law 62, 18 November 1926.
[28] The *Círculo* was granted 4,000 pesos annually in 1913, but it is not clear for how many years. Law 104, 28 November 1913.
[29] Law 18, 2 October 1926.

In 1927 the *Oratorio Festivo del Venerable Don Bosco*, run by the Salesians also asked for a subsidy of 50,000 pesos to finish a building. The institution ran many activities: free schools, night schools, places of entertainment, charity canteens, clothes distribution centres and dormitories. In Congress 10,000 pesos were granted for the *Dormitorio de la Sagrada Familia*, the refuge for poor girls and servants. Together with the *Oratorio Festivo* and the *Dormitorio de la Sagrada Familia*, other private institutions received funds from the Congress.[30] In Bogotá eleven more private institutions, apart from the *Liga de Damas Católicas* and the *Círculo de Obreros*, received 38,400 pesos. A few poor relief institutions outside Bogotá received some funds; the *Gota de Leche* in Popayán got 3,000 pesos, the Maternity House in Cucutá 1,800 pesos, and in Bucaramanga the Maternity House received 3,600 pesos and the *sala-cuna* 4,400 pesos.

The requests for national subsidies for private poor relief institutions or societies and their approval show how the funds were managed in Congress, and suggest some ideas about the managing of the funds by the departmental assemblies and the municipal councils. First, funds for *Beneficencia* and later for *Asistencia Pública* were limited. Secondly, the distribution of funds was certainly unequal, both among institutions and among the regions. Thirdly, there were no clear criteria for the distribution of funds. The sympathy or the friendship of the senators, members of the assemblies and councils was clearly important in order to get a subsidy. There were senators who were related to some poor relief institutions and who helped to get

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[30] Law 83, 17 November 1927. The other institutions that received funds were *Taller de María Auxiliadora*, the Orphanage for girls run by the Dominican Sisters, the St. Vincent Paul Society, the House for the elderly run by the St. Vincent Paul Society, a house for old poor women, the society of *La Aguja*, the hospital Los Alisos, the Red Cross of Colombia and its *sala-cuna*.

approval of funds. Senator Antonio Jose Uribe was connected with the St. Vincent de Paul Society; Senators Marcelino Uribe and Antonio Samper were linked to the *Círculo de Obreros* of Bogotá. The competition for national subsidies led the institutions and societies to get involved to some extent in politics, particularly after 1910, something that they had previously avoided. Probably the distribution of departmental funds was also influenced to some degree by political motives. Within the municipal councils the argument was more about the amount, because in the majority of cases there was only one institution, the local hospital.[31]

The lack of criteria for the distribution of the funds for *Beneficencia* and *Asistencia Pública* could be linked to misunderstandings about basic concepts. In 1921 there was a broad discussion about the difference between *Beneficencia* and *Asistencia Pública* focussed on the role and the responsibility of the state. However, in 1925 when the Congress discussed the approval of a subsidy, some senators stressed the importance of Christian duty: 'Si el Estado no concurre a estimular y fomentar las iniciativas de la caridad pública y del espíritu cristiano, habrá dejado incompleta su misión'.[32]

Although we find a certain ambiguity in the state about the idea of poor relief, moving between the idea of charity and the idea of *Asistencia Pública*, we also find that the national government was convinced that it regularly had to help poor relief institutions

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[31] The distribution of state funds in outdoor poor relief invited more political involvement than the distribution of funds to institutional poor relief. One reason was possibly that in outdoor poor relief the relationship between the person who gives the aid and the poor who receive it is direct, and in institutional poor relief the relationship is more between the donor and the directors of the establishment; the donors do not have much contact with the poor who are going to benefit. The direct relationship that is established in outdoor relief might be used for electoral purposes.

[32] *Historia de las Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1934), p. 435.

and societies, a conviction by 1910 shared by the departmental and municipal governments, but still without a clear and unified criteria for how to do it.

The other important way that the state allocated funds to poor relief institutions was through specific taxes. Before 1870 there had been contributions decreed by some municipalities at specific times, generally in periods of crisis or epidemic. From 1870 taxes for *Beneficencia* were determined by regional bodies: the federal states and their successor departments after 1886. The taxes for *Beneficencia* or *Asistencia Pública* were not a national concern until 1930.

After the creation of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* the assembly of Cundinamarca established in 1871 an annual direct contribution of two pesos per thousand on capital. In 1878 it levied an annual direct and personal contribution on capital larger than 2,000 pesos. The greatest difficulty that the assembly had to face was naturally tax collection. In 1873 the assembly had created other taxes for *Beneficencia*, a graduated monthly levy on places which sold spirits. This tax was devoted 2/3 to *Instrucción Pública* and 1/3 to *Beneficencia*. The third of *Beneficencia* was subdivided into 2/3 for hospitals and 1/3 for the Asylum of Beggars of Bogotá.

By 1882 the assembly decided to change the tax strategy. A percentage of the notarial tax was to go to *Beneficencia*, and in 1911 all this tax was assigned to the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. Each municipality would receive the amount it could collect in its area. For the municipalities outside Bogotá the tax was not enough to sustain a hospital, and they needed help from the departmental assembly or from Congress. The Junta General in 1919 observed that in some municipalities the money was not well

managed and in several cases the *Gobernación* had to close hospitals because of bad management.[33] In 1919 the departmental assembly decided to restrict funds to the better managers: Girardot, Zipaquirá, Facatativá, La Mesa, Guaduas, Fusagasugá, Tocaima, Pacho and Ubaté. Bogotá expected to receive more because its institutions cared for the poor from all the municipalities of Cundinamarca and from other regions of the country.

These fluctuating taxes were not enough for the needs of poor relief. In 1918 the financial situation of the Junta General reached crisis point, and it called unsuccessfully for voluntary contributions in Bogotá in order to raise the necessary funds.[34]

The idea of setting up a lottery then appeared in the reports of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* and the local newspapers as a possible source of stable income.[35] However, the lottery was questioned on moral grounds: there were worries that it would promote vice. The Junta General had to defend it. It was finally established in Cundinamarca in 1921, after much discussion. In 1923, the department of Antioquia also established a similar lottery and in 1931 the department of Valle.[36]

In 1921 the *Beneficencia* in Cundinamarca had an income which consisted of the notorial tax and 25% of the tax on spirits, tobacco and the slaughter of animals and the

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[33] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1919).
[34] Idem.
[35] See *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, May 1923.
[36] Law 64, 1923 and *Qué es la Benficencia del Valle*, (Cali, 1974), p. 3.

profit on the lottery. In 1923 the notarial tax represented 8.8% of the income of the department; the taxes on spirits, tobacco and the slaughter of animals 52.2%, and the lottery 5.6%. These assignations gave a clear and more constant income to the *Junta General de Beneficencia*.

There were also taxes for specific institutions. The leper village of Agua de Dios, which depended on the *Junta General of Beneficencia*, had an independent tax income. In 1871 the assembly had assigned the mortuary tax for it and in 1904 it added the stamp tax on foreign and national cigarettes, on foreign spirits and national spirits not produced in the department, on perfumes and on playing cards. In 1888 the municipal council of Bogotá established a contribution for the Asylum of Beggars; however its collection met with many difficulties, even though special tax collectors were named for this specific tax.[37] The *Fondo de Pobres* tax was established for the Asylum of Beggars in Bogotá between 1920 and 1923, a tax on performances in the city's theatres. This tax represented 35% of the income of the Asylum during these years.

The distribution of the national, departmental and municipal subsidies and the imposition of taxes had a varied impact on each establishment in Bogotá, and represented varied percentages of their annual income. For the hospital of San Juan de Dios its major income came from the national and departmental subsidies, and the income from the taxes. The *Hospicio* in 1913 drew most of its income from national funds, followed by taxes on foreign commodities and the notarial tax, but from 1918

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[37] *El Orden*, Bogotá, 15 June 1889 and *El Telegrama*, Bogotá, 11 July 1889.

the major source was taxes. The Lunatic Asylum's primary income was from the notarial tax; in 1913 the Asylum of Beggars drew most from the national subsidy, but in 1918 it was the notarial tax registration and in 1921 the *Fondo de Pobres*; for the Orphanage for Boys the major income in 1917 was departmental funds, in 1918 the notarial tax; and for the Orphanage for Girls the only state income came from departmental funds.

The picture of the income of the establishments under the *Junta General de Beneficencia of Cundinamarca* shows that after 1918 when tax income grew and was more clearly assigned to *Beneficencia*, it became the principal income for most of the poor relief establishments. In other words, the establishments of the Junta depended more and more on state funds rather than on private charity.

It is important to stress the importance of taxes in this field in Colombia because the Colombian state had been characterized as one with a fragile fiscal system in the nineteenth century.[38] Nonetheless it took the decision to implement a tax system for *Beneficencia*, even at the departmental level, which leads one to believe that it was a state with a clear social policy. Certainly it was making an effort to organize assistance rationally.

The Colombian state by 1930 was slowly codifying and transforming social assistance. One part of this process was through the new idea of *Asistencia Pública*

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[38] See M. Deas, 'Los problemas fiscales en Colombia durante el siglo XIX' in M. Deas, *Del Poder y la Gramática y otros ensayos sobre Historia,Política y Literatura Colombianas*, (Bogotá, 1993), pp. 61-120.

and another was through channelling more and more constant funds to the public establishments. The funds from the state were concentrated mostly in building and sustaining an infrastructure of institutional poor relief, mainly hospitals, throughout the country. This effort in building the hospital infrastructure was related to improving hygienic conditions, principally in the urban centres. Some state funds went to private hospitals in Bogotá and to some private societies, particularly the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and after 1920 to private poor relief institutions linked mainly to the Jesuits. However, the funds for institutions and outdoor poor relief were mainly concentrated in the largest cities and in the richest departments. It was not yet an extensive social assistance programme and it was far from constituting a comprehensive welfare policy. It was only the first steps in shifting poor relief to social assistance. It is also important to emphasise that the beginning of this transformation in social assistance was made under the Conservative governments prior to 1930.

Private Charity

We can identify at least four principal forms of private charity. The first was the voluntary work that many people did in the poor relief institutions or societies. The best known poor relief activities were the domiciliary visiting, organizing different activities to collect funds and to distribute them, directing and managing private societies, and giving free medical care. Men and women participated in many activities related to poor relief, but particularly for ladies at that time the possibility of doing this kind of work was a significant aspect in their lives. Participating in poor relief activities allowed ladies to join bodies outside the household and to be useful in public activities. Members of the social elite were not alone. Charity also involved people from other social groups, for example professional men like doctors, teachers

or the group of women called the 'Marias' in the *Círculo de Obreros* of Bogotá.[39] Voluntary work attracted all sorts of people because it was seen as charity, a duty for a good Christian.

A second form of private charity was the organization of special occasions for collecting funds for poor relief institutions and societies. The leader in this kind of activity was the St. Vincent de Paul Society. For the Society in Bogotá, in its first twenty years the most important source of income was the money collected in the annual bazaar: it represented 80% of its earnings until the 1880s. The bazaars were widely promoted in the newspapers days before their celebration. They were organized by society women who collected objects to sell and raffle on the bazaar day, even though the Society was formed by men. The sum raised by the bazaar was published in the newspapers.

From 1884 the Society looked to other strategies to collect money: concerts, Spanish light opera, raffles, bullfights and horse races. These were also announced in the newspapers and all were invited to participate. In the photographs of the annual bazaars we can see that various social groups did participate; but in the photographs of the annual concerts, the *Conciertos de Gala*, we can see that these were special social events where the local elite met for a distinguished act of charity.[40] In Bogotá the President normally attended.[41] To assist in these charity events became a social

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[39] See R. Londoño and G. Restrepo, *Diez historias de vida. "Las Marías"*, (Bogotá, 1995).
[40] See for example *El Gráfico*, Bogotá, 20 October 1914 and 24 July 1915.
[41] See for example *Revista Ilustrada*, Bogotá, 18 June 1898.

obligation; it was presumably one the best ways of showing generosity and a charitable spirit.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was not the only society which used these strategies to collect money. During the time the *Congregación de la Caridad* ran the hospital of San Juan de Dios in Bogotá, the society organized bazaars to collect funds, though not regularly; it only did so when it faced a crisis in resources.[42] For the benefit of the Asylum of Beggars a bullfight was organized in 1892, and for the leper village of Agua de Dios a Spanish light opera was performed in 1897.[43]

After 1900 the St. Vincent de Paul Society gave up its annual bazaar and concert, but other institutions continued to organize such events. The literary society, the *Gruta Simbólica*, organized a performance in 1903; they collect 15,000 pesos which they distributed among five institutions.[44] The Orphanage for Boys organized a festival in 1919, the *Gota de Leche* in 1920 arranged a dramatic performance in the municipal theatre and the hospital of San Jose likewise organized a dramatic performance in 1925.[45]

Sometimes these events could be a motive for rivalry and conflict. In 1902, after the *Concierto de Gala* of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, there were complaints because

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[42] For 1858 see *Informe del Hospital de Caridad,* (Bogotá, 1858) and *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 20 July 1858 and, for 1891 see *El Correo Nacional*, Bogotá, 4 April and 12 May 1891.
[43] *El Correo Nacional*, Bogotá, 22 August 1892 and *El Rayo X*, Bogotá, 29 September 1897.
[44] *El Fondo Agrario*, Bogotá, 2 May 1903.
[45] *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 4 January 1919, *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 28 April 1920 and *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, 7 July 1925.

the profit was not shared between the charity kitchen and the *Junta de Socorro* of the Society: all the profit went to the *Junta de Socorro*.[46]

For establishments like asylums, orphanages and homes for the elderly there were annual commemorations, generally related to a special saint. These celebrations were paid for by benefactors who gave money for food and drink for all the people in the establishments. It was a great party for all. First communion was also a motive for commemoration. Commonly the better-off children arranged a special celebration, with a feast for the poor children who were making their first communion at the same time. These celebrations were sometimes reported with photographs in the local newspapers and the charitable aspect was emphasized. In the photographs people are wearing their best clothes, everything is very ordered and tidy, tables, food, drinks and the people themselves. These commemorations were presented as special occasions when everyone could share and be together in harmony.

One classic festivity was the celebration of Christmas. This fiesta was an important occasion for giving to the poor, especially to children. The *Club Noel* was created in Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Cartagena and Barranquilla at the beginning of the twentieth century. Originally its principal aim was to give presents to poor children at Christmas. This institution then were transformed into an important health centre for poor children (see chapter three).

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[46] *Constitución*, Bogotá, 5 and 8 October 1902.

A third method of private charity was donations. Donations came in objects and in cash. Although giving could be a spontaneous decision, donations were solicited. Local newspapers published announcements that certain institutions needed help, the names of the people who gave donations, and what donations or sum of money they had given. This system was particularly widespread after 1910 when the activities of the bazaars, concerts, and bullfights were found to be less profitable.[47] Institutions and societies had to promote themselves to prospective donors by means of annual general meetings, annual reports and newspaper accounts of their activities. Common features were the itemising of expenditure and income by the treasurer, the lists of donors with sums given, which usually distinguished annual subscribers from the life trustees and givers of legacies or substantial donations.

The donations from banks and commercial agencies seem to be spontaneous and generous. However, in the archive of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá there are several letters which confirm that the Society annually or biannually sent them its reports to ask for donations. Some responded. The *Banco de Bogotá* gave 10,000 pesos in 1911, the *Banco de Colombia* 30,000 and the insurance company *Colombiana de Seguros* 10,000 in 1914, *Félix Sálazar e Hijos* gave 5,000 pesos, the *Banco Central* 30,000 pesos and the *Banco Hipotecario* 12,000 pesos in 1915, the *Banco de Colombia* sent a cheque of 400 pesos in August 1916 and 500 pesos in February 1917, the *Banco Hipotecario* 100 pesos in 1916. Others gave goods, like the twelve *cargas* of maize that Jose Antonio Umaña left with *Montoya, Patiño & Cia.* for the Society in 1916.[48]

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[47] See *El Catolicismo*, Bogotá, decade 1910 and 1920.
[48] See Archive San Vincent Paul Society of Bogotá, uncatalogued.

The banks had been important donors since their foundation. In 1890 the *Banco de Bogotá* gave 1,500 hundred pesos to three institutions in Bogotá,[49] the *Banco Industrial* of Manizales in 1897 gave 1,600 pesos to charitable establishments in Cali,[50] and in 1905 the *Banco de Colombia* distributed 180,000 pesos between twenty poor relief institutions, private and state in Bogotá.[51] In Medellín the *Banco de Antioquia*, *Banco de Medellín* and *Banco Popular* had been permanent donors to the St. Vincent de Paul Society since 1886.[52]

The range of donations was broad. The St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1907 registered the donors of its first fifty years. The General Office of the Society had received 168,245 pesos. The most generous benefactor was Patricio Plata, who had donated 48,000 pesos, Luis and Francisco Vargas had each given 20,000 pesos, José Manuel Restrepo 12,000 pesos and Ignacio Muñoz 10,000 pesos. There were thirty five donors listed. Apart from the General Office, the Mendicant Section also listed 303 permanent donors. The biggest were the *Banco de Colombia* which gave 15,000 pesos, and the *Banco de Exportaciones* with 40,000 pesos. These large donations were not given frequently, just once in two or three years. The other donations were listed according to the amount, from over 1,000 to 50 pesos, and also according to frequency -annual, biannual or monthly. Each special programme of the Society had particular benefactors independent from the General Office and the Mendicant Section. The

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[49] *La Nación*, Bogotá, 26 February 1890.
[50] *El Ferrocarril*, Cali, 26 March 1897.
[51] *Actualidades*, Bogotá, 4 December 1905.
[52] *Sociedad de San Vicente dePaul de Medellín. Primer Decenario de su Fundación. Reseña Histórica*, (Medellín, 1892).

society also received valuables like jewellery which it usually raffled to raise funds, as well as sewing machines, printing presses, material, food and old clothes for distribution. Such donations were numerous and it is impossible to give a detailed account of them.[53]

The way that donations appear in the first fifty years of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá is similar to those given to the establishments of the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. In 1969, when the *Junta General de Beneficencia* celebrated the hundred years of its foundation, the committee made a list of the persons who had given significant donations or bequests. There were fifty-six names on the list.[54] In 1884 the most important donors to the establishments of the Junta General were Biviana Vargas de Rueda, Soledad Valenzuela de Schloss, Carmen Vargas, Sixta Perez, Isabel Putman, Francisco Vargas, José Manuel Restrepo, Manuel Umaña and Joaquín Esguerra.[55] Each individual establishment used to highlight its donors when the donation was important enough. The female Lunatic Asylum reported a donation of 3,100 pesos from Gabriela M. de Samper in 1918, and from María Dolores Fernández Madrid 4,200 pesos between 1920 and 1921.[56] These two contributions were certainly significant.

The banks and commercial firms were important contributors to the state poor relief institutions as well. Each year the prominent ones gave sums to charitable institutions,

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[53] See A. J. Uribe, *Sociedad Central de San Vincente de Paul de Bogotá. Celebración de Quincuagésimo Aniversario, 1857-1907. Memoria Histórica*, (Bogotá, 1908).
[54] *La Benficencia de Cundinamarca. 1869-1969*, (Bogotá, 1969).
[55] *Diario de Cundinamarca*, Bogotá, 5 November 1884.
[56] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1919-1921-1922).

and usually this was published in the newspapers. The *Banco de Colombia* at that time gave money to various establishments: it donated on average 200 pesos per year to the *Hospicio*, the Orphanages for Boys and Girls and the Lunatic Asylum. The *Banco de Bogotá* gave 100 pesos per year and the *Banco Central* 60 pesos per year. The Lunatic Asylum and the Orphanages also received 60 pesos per year from the *Banco Hipotecario*. The *Hospicio* and the Orphanages for Boys and Girls received 250 pesos annually from the flour industry.

There were also special donations, as when Lino Casas, a leader of the mutual aid Society of *Caridad*, donated 800 pesos in 1920 for building a ward in the Asylum for female beggars. The ward was named after him.[57] Members of the Junta also provided some donations. The trustee of the Hospital of San Juan de Dios, Vicente A. Vargas, the trustee of the *Hospicio*, Juan M. Herrera, and the doctor of the *Hospicio*, Francisco Bayón, were registered among the most important donors to the Junta in 1884.[58] Eugenio Umaña Santamaría, who was the steward of the Beggars' Asylum, gave money for the construction of the new building.[59] There were of course small donations as well, but these were less reported. The *Hospicio* received ten pesos in 1920 from Helena Rubiano and Mercedes Gómez, and the Lunatic Asylum was given fifteen pesos by Jose María Montoya in 1917.

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[57] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1921) and *El Obrero Colombiano*, Bogotá, February 1915.
[58] *Diario de Cundinamarca*, Bogotá, 4 November 1884.
[59] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1919).

Material donations were important. The Orphanage for Boys received books, notebooks, pens, pencils and educational material from Jose María Samper and Sr. O'Leary in 1874. *Medina Hermanos* gave medicines to the hospital of San Juan de Dios in 1884.[60] The *Hospicio* received gifts of beds, and the Italian community and the *Club Noel* gave clothes for the children in 1918. The Lunatic Asylum obtained from the *Casa Comercial de Andrés Pombo y Hermanos* 500 beds and wardrobes for clothes, a donation worth some 3,000 pesos. The Orphanage for Boys was given sheets for fifty children by the firms of *Camacho Roldán*, *Cementos Samper* and *Energía Eléctrica* in 1920. The Singer company donated sewing machines to the female Beggars' Asylum in 1921. Eighteen pharmacies of Bogotá gave various items for the *Gota de Leche* each month.[61] There were also anonymous and secret donations, which included a large wardrobe for clothes that a lady gave to the female Lunatic Asylum.[62]

The fourth form of private charity was the bequest. The bequests were commonly of rural and urban properties and of money. For the older establishments like the hospital of San Juan de Dios and the *Hospicio* of Bogotá, the income that they received from these bequests was substantial, as they had accumulated more properties. In 1875 an estimate of the value of the properties that the Junta General possessed was put at the considerable amount of 812,596 pesos. The hospital owned 60% of these properties of the Junta, and the *Hospicio* 30%.[63]

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[60] *Diario de Cundinamarca*, Bogotá, 4 November 1884.
[61] *El Catolisismo*, Bogotá, 11 June 1919.
[62] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1922).
[63] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia dirije a la Gobernación del Estado de Cundinamarca*, (Bogotá, 1875).

As with donations, the bequests had an extensive range. The Asylum of Beggars received an important bequest from Santiago Brush in 1874, and the Junta decided to place an inscription in the Asylum with his name.[64] The *Hospicio* in 1919 received three significant bequests, from Clímaco Iriarte 20,000 pesos, from Paula Quiroga 4,600 pesos and from Eugenio Umaña 1,500 pesos. In 1922 the President of the Junta reported that in 1921 the Junta had done particularly well: Zoraida Cadavid de Sierra, who had already given donations to the Orphanage for Girls, bequeathed to the Hospital and the *Hospicio* a percentage of her inheritance; Eugenio Sánchez Zerda left properties to the Hospital, Leoncio Barreto properties to the *Hospicio* and the Hospital, Nepomuceno Castillo willed properties to the Hospital and the Asylum of Beggars, and Joaquín Camacho Roldán gave 8,000 pesos to the Hospital. These bequests came after the Junta General had publicized its straitened circumstances in 1918. There were also more modest but still substantial bequests: Rudencio Maria Castillo left a gold watch and 50,000 pesos and Juan Ortiz a small house in Bogotá to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Clauses were sometimes demanding. One good example was the bequest Ramón Pedreros left in 1889 for the Orphanage for Boys of the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. One member of the Junta, Daniel Merizalde, worked for thirty years to fulfil its requirements. When he resigned in 1912, the Junta had to look for another trusted person merely to manage this bequest. The conditions that Ramón Pedreros left in his will were several: first, the properties had to be used to earn enough money

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[64] Idem.

to build an orphanage; the Junta had to rent the properties and deposit the proceeds in a safe bank. When the Junta had accumulated enough money to build, it was obligated to do so. The Junta then had to buy machinery for teaching the boys different skills. If the Junta did not abide by all the clauses, the bequest was to pass to an American charity institution under the American legislation.[65] The bequest provided a significant income to the Orphanage, but the clauses were certainly demanding.

Another example of a precise and demanding bequest was the will of Lorenzo Cuellar, made in 1889 before he made a trip to Europe. The will was made public in 1920, and his desire was that his properties should be employed to build an orphanage for children in Bogotá, to be called the *Instituto Cristiano de San Pablo*.[66] He left the plan of the orphanage in the hands of an architect, together with the plan and all the details of the chapel which had to built on one side of the orphanage. An inscription with his name had to be in the chapel. The orphanage was to shelter orphans between seven and fourteen years old. They were to have free teaching in reading, writing, religion, mathematics, grammar, geography and history, together with preparation in arts and crafts for each sex. He left a named junta of people he trusted; if the junta could not be organized, the St. Vincent de Paul Society would bear all the responsibilities of the orphanage. When the will was read most of the members of the junta that Lorenzo Cuellar named were present, but not all could support the enterprise. Only two of them had enough time. They asked for support from the Archbishop of Bogotá to fulfil Lorenzo Cuellar's wishes.

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[65] *Informe que el Presidente de la Junta General de Beneficencia presenta a la Asamblea del Departamento*, (Bogotá, 1921).
[66] AGN, Sección República, Ministerio de Gobierno, t. 7, fol. 199-214.

In 1912 the homeopath Luis G. Paez left the St. Vincent de Paul Society fifteen rural and urban properties.[67] It was not possible for the Society to fulfill all the clauses in his will. He wanted the Society to found a homeopathic centre and a magazine to propagate homeopathy. The junta of the Society declined.[68]

Sometimes there were conflicts between societies or institutions about bequests. It was common that a will might favour more than one institution, and occasionally the clauses were not clear. In 1914 General Juan Valderrama left properties to the St. Vincent de Paul Society and 5,000 pesos to the leper village managed by the Salesian order. The Salesians asked the Society not for the money that was assigned to them in the will but for a piece of land, at a 'charity' price.[69]

There were other bequests with more particular characteristics. The eminent philologist Rufino José Cuervo left some urban properties to the *Hospicio* in Bogotá and the copyright of two of his books, the *Estudios Filológicos* and the *Apuntaciones Críticas a la Lengua Bogotana* to the *Junta General de Beneficencia*. In 1934 the Junta authorized the publication of the two books in co-operation with the *Academia Colombiana de la Lengua* and the *Gobernación*; the Junta did not have the money to publish, but asked for the profits.[70]

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[67] Archive of St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá uncataloged.
[68] Archive of St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá uncataloged.
[69] Archive of St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá uncataloged.
[70] Ordenanza no. 9, 19 April 1934.

As we can see, the range of private charity was extensive, large and small, but it also was an activity which involved a broad stratum of society. There were banks, commercial agencies, pharmacies, individuals with large properties and small, the rich and the modestly well-off; politicians, traders, managers, writers, society ladies, but also common people. Those who participated in private charity were diverse.

To be part of the group of donors was, without doubt, an honour. The names of the people who gave funds became known in different ways. They were published in the local newspapers or magazines, they sometimes figured in inscriptions or in reports and on certificates; photographs of benefactors were hung in special rooms, some rooms would bear the names of donors, busts would be placed in some prominent site in the establishment. They received without doubt social recognition.

Although social recognition, being known as a charitable person, was a reason to give to the poor, it was not the only incentive. When we look at the wills from this period we find a more complex picture. One of the reasons to be charitable was still eternal salvation. Together with small sums of money for poor relief went sums for the mass, for eternal salvation, together with sums buying intercession for souls in purgatory. The proportion of the amount of money was more or less equal for the money for poor relief and that for salvation; sometimes more was left for eternal salvation. In Medellín half of the wills between 1870 and 1930 left donations for the poor and for poor relief institutions together with donations for requiem mass, and the other half was left for churches, and for masses for intercession for their own souls and the souls of relatives in purgatory. Among the half that shared bequests between eternal salvation and help for the poor, 34% left donations for '*pobres vergonzantes*' in

specific localities rather than for institutions; and 23% of the wills left bequests only to institutions.[71] As more poor relief institutions were founded people left less to '*pobres vergonzantes*' and more to the institutions. That was the case in Medellín, where from 1890 the tendency to give to institutions slowly increased. Surprisingly, the donations were not necessarily to poor relief institutions related to the religious orders; the people left bequests mainly to local hospitals.

The general picture suggests that the idea of charity was still linked to the most traditional Christian beliefs. The idea of giving had perhaps more the purpose of the giver's own salvation rather than relief of the poor. The Christian concept of charity had always contained an element of self-interest, though charity was not merely one of the virtues which contributed toward the salvation of the soul, it was also an obligation. Charity indeed began at home. However this is not to deny that people who made donations might think that it was important to help the poor, even though the idea of helping was still strongly linked to the Christian idea of eternal salvation. But the new idea of charity that was linked to an explicit concept of the importance and necessity of helping the poor to achieve a more harmonious society was only in the minds of a few people. This new idea of charity probably spread with more clarity as new poor relief establishments were founded and more poor relief activities were carried out in an organized way. About 1910 could be a turning point for this gradual shift.

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[71] This refers to 233 wills in the Archivo Histórico de Antioquia, Fondo Notarial, Notaria Primera, from fol. 7014, 3 July 1870 to fol. 485, 31 October 1930.

Among the people who in their wills left donations to poor relief institutions or societies, the majority were without children. In other words, they were people without direct heirs.[72] This particular situation in life made it easier for them to decide to bequeath their wealth in this way. When the fortune was large, it was common for them to divide the legacy in half, one half for relatives, sisters or brothers, nieces or nephews, and the other half for one or several poor relief institutions. Among these single people were the archbishops of the different cities; some priests were also generous in their legacies to state and private poor relief institutions. These went to the institutions they had worked for, or with which they had links.

We find in more or less equal proportion men and women benefactors. There is no tendency that shows that men or women were more inclined to give to poor relief institutions. The donations, wills and bequests show rather that the decision to give or leave goods to institutions or societies was more linked to couples or to families. It is clear that the Vargas and Samper families in Bogotá were donors to the establishments of the *Junta General de Benficencia*, but the Vargas family also gave to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Uribe, Restrepo Sáenz and Sanz de Santamaría families were important donors to the *Círculo de Obreros*.[73] Other more modest examples also illustrate this tendency: the sisters Teresa y Manuela Uribe Navarro in Medellín both decided at the same time to leave half their wealth to the orphanage *Jesús, Maria and*

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[72] An article in a newspaper about the Umaña family suggests cynically that certain religious orders were aware of which people did not have direct heirs and induced them to leave bequests to poor relief institutions or societies. *El Tiempo*, Bogotá, 19 December 1954.

[73] R. Londoño and A. Saldarriaga, *La Ciudad de Dios en Bogotá. Barrio Villa Javier*, (Bogotá, 1994), p. 57.

Jose,[74] and the two sisters Carlota and María Teresa López, both single, left a quarter of their properties to the St. Vincent hospital; they too made the decision at the same time.[75]

Families gave to particular institutions when they had relatives or people close to them involved in the institution. The Samper family gave more to the establishments of the Junta when Francisco Samper was its president. In the same sense friendship could be a factor in making the decision about which institution one should give to. Reliance on certain figures who managed poor relief institutions or societies was another factor that could influence decisions. In Medellín many wills left bequests to the orphanage managed by Marcia Escobar; in most of them the name of the institution did not appear but Marcia Escobar did. That suggests that the people trusted this person overall.

As we saw in the chapter relating to institutional poor relief, local people were involved in and committed to the foundation of the first establishments. Local people provided ideas, initiatives and donations at the moment of foundation, and they also were involved in the processes of enlarging and improving the establishments. Identity with a locality was another factor that influenced people to give to institutions; most of the wills show people more linked to the place where they lived rather than to their place of birth. To give some examples: Tadeo F. Macharaviaga was born in Tocaima, but left most of his bequest to the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Bogotá, as did Juana

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[74] Archivo Histórico de Antioquia, Fondo Notarial, Notaria Primera, fol. 6979 and 6981, 22 and 23 November 1915.
[75] Archivo Histórico de Antioquia, Fondo Notarial, Notaria Primera, fol. 6249 and 6251, 18 November 1922.

Guevara, born in Bojaca.[76] Filomena Tovar, born in Guasca, left her bequest to the hospital of La Misericordia in Bogotá.[77] Lorenzo Cuellar, born in Pitalito, decided to leave all his property in Bogotá to build and found an orphanage, and his proprieties and cattle in Pitalito to his relatives.

Giving and leaving bequests were accompanied by social relationships and organizational involvement. Private charity was part of an individual's relationship to, and identification with, a particular social group and a particular poor relief activity. Private charity permitted donors to direct their funds to institutions and causes with which they identified and which they felt expressed their priorities.

There were no marked periods for donations or bequests in these years. In the wills of Bogotá and Medellín for seventy years 10% of the population per year left something to poor relief institutions. We do not find any relation between economic crises and donations; the motives for giving seem set apart from the cycles of economic history. Moreover, in times of civil war there were more calls to help the needy and sometimes there was more collaboration, as in the help that hospitals gave to the injured despite political differences. The only time that we notice that donations and bequests for poor relief institutions decreased was in the civil war of One Thousand Days. Donations resumed the same dynamic in 1905 that they had before the civil war. After 1910 the sums of money and the bequests became larger, but there was no change in the frequency with which people gave donations or left bequests.

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[76] AGN, Fondo Notarial. Notaría Segunda, fol. 680-737, 1911 and Notaría Primera, fol. 586-608, 1916.
[77] AGN, Fondo Notarial. Notaría Primera, fol. 116-281, 1916.

For both the state institutions and private societies private charity was very useful. For the state institutions it represented a lower proportion of income than it did for private societies. For most of the establishments of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* the percentage of the income that could be categorized as private represented less than 10%; the hospital of San Juan de Dios was an exception because it possessed many properties that it had inherited since the colonial period and these properties gave it a significant rent. For the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Bogotá 70% of its income came from donations and bequests, and in Medellín the figure was 50%.[78] However, it is not clear that people gave less to state institutions than to private societies. The income of

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[78] In 1917 the Society in Bogotá received income of 11,444.93 gold pesos, of which 70% originated from donations, bequests and the sale of property previously acquired by donation or bequest, 17% was aid from the national government and 0.4% came from collections amongst active members. By 1919 the proportion of aid from the national government had dropped to 1.9% of the Society's total income, which amounted to 24,636.54 gold pesos, whilst 98% was income received from donations, bequests and the sale of property. The following year the proportion of national aid rose again to 18% of the total income of 14,717.18 gold pesos, the other sources accounting for 81%. The following year the proportion of aid from the national government went down to 3.8% of the Society's total income of 15,548.30 gold pesos, while 83% came from the other sources mentioned. In 1923 national aid increased to 13% of the Society's total income of 16,398.36 gold pesos, but what was exceptional for that year was a loan of 6,790 gold pesos which the Society had to take out to cover its operating costs, since its income from donations and bequests represented only 20% of the total and it received no revenue from property sales that year. In 1925 the Society received aid from the national government amounting to 16% of its total income of 23,412.54 gold pesos, 63% of which came from donations, bequests and property sales, and it had to take out loans of 4,890 gold pesos to cover the remaining 20% of total income.
In 1916 the Society in Medellín had an income of 11,210 gold pesos, of which 50%, or some 5,565 gold pesos, was made up of state aid: from the Municipal Council for the special Soup project and for vouchers; from the departmental government again for the voucher programme, and from the national government for the service of providing food for prisoners. 42% came from donations, 5% from collections among active members and 3% from the landowners' guild, which had agreed to donate a percentage from sales of cattle. For some years, such as 1918 and 1919, there are records only of receipts from state bodies. In 1918 the Society received 8,531.55 gold pesos from the Municipal Council and the departmental government, and in 1919, 10,6699.85 gold pesos, but we do not know what proportions these amounts represented of the Society's total income for those years. In 1924, it received municipal and departmental aid amounting to 3,000 gold pesos, which represented 28% of the total revenue of 10,725.95 gold pesos, the rest being made up of donations and bequests. The balance-sheet for 1925 shows 32% of income as coming from municipal and departmental aid, and 47% from donations and bequests. In 1926, 22% of income was made up of municipal and departmental aid, 54% came from bequests and donations and 11% from donations by active members. In 1930 there was evident concern at the Society's drop in revenue, with donations down to 1,021 gold pesos, and bequests to 3,200 gold pesos, while the only aid received was from the municipalities to the tune of 710 gold pesos. On the whole it can be said that the Medellín Society had an income structure that was similar to that of the Society in Bogotá, although it did receive more state aid, especially from the municipality, and the contributions from its active members appear to have been higher.

the establishments of the *Junta General de Beneficencia* was considerably higher, at least, than the income of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The Junta probably received more donations and bequests than the St. Vincent de Paul Society. It is difficult to estimate because we do not have complete income data from the most important private poor relief societies. Nevertheless it seems that state or private status did not affect receipt of donations or bequests. Fiscal motivation was not completely formalized until 1936 when funds donated for social assistance became tax-free.[79]

Although it is not easy to say which establishments, institutions or societies were most favoured, we first see a tendency to hospitals, and after 1910 any establishment which helped children and women. Obviously the hospitals were chosen at first because in many places they were for a long time the only poor relief institution.

Poor relief in Colombia at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was supported by both public and private funds. Public funds had been present since the foundation of the first poor relief establishments in the colonial period. By 1870 the state had made an initial effort to find the best way to guarantee a stable income for the state poor relief establishments and, by 1920 it had found for the first time a way of providing a more or less stable income for poor relief establishments through different strategies: taxes, municipal, departmental and national subsidies, and a lottery. Private funds also formed a considerable part of the income of the establishments and societies since they had been founded in colonial times. Private giving had been linked with the Christian idea of charity. Charity still

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[79] *Diario Oficial*, Bogotá, 23 April 1936. Ley 63 of 1936 '*por la cual se organiza los impuestos sobre la masa global hereditaria, asignaciones y donaciones*'.

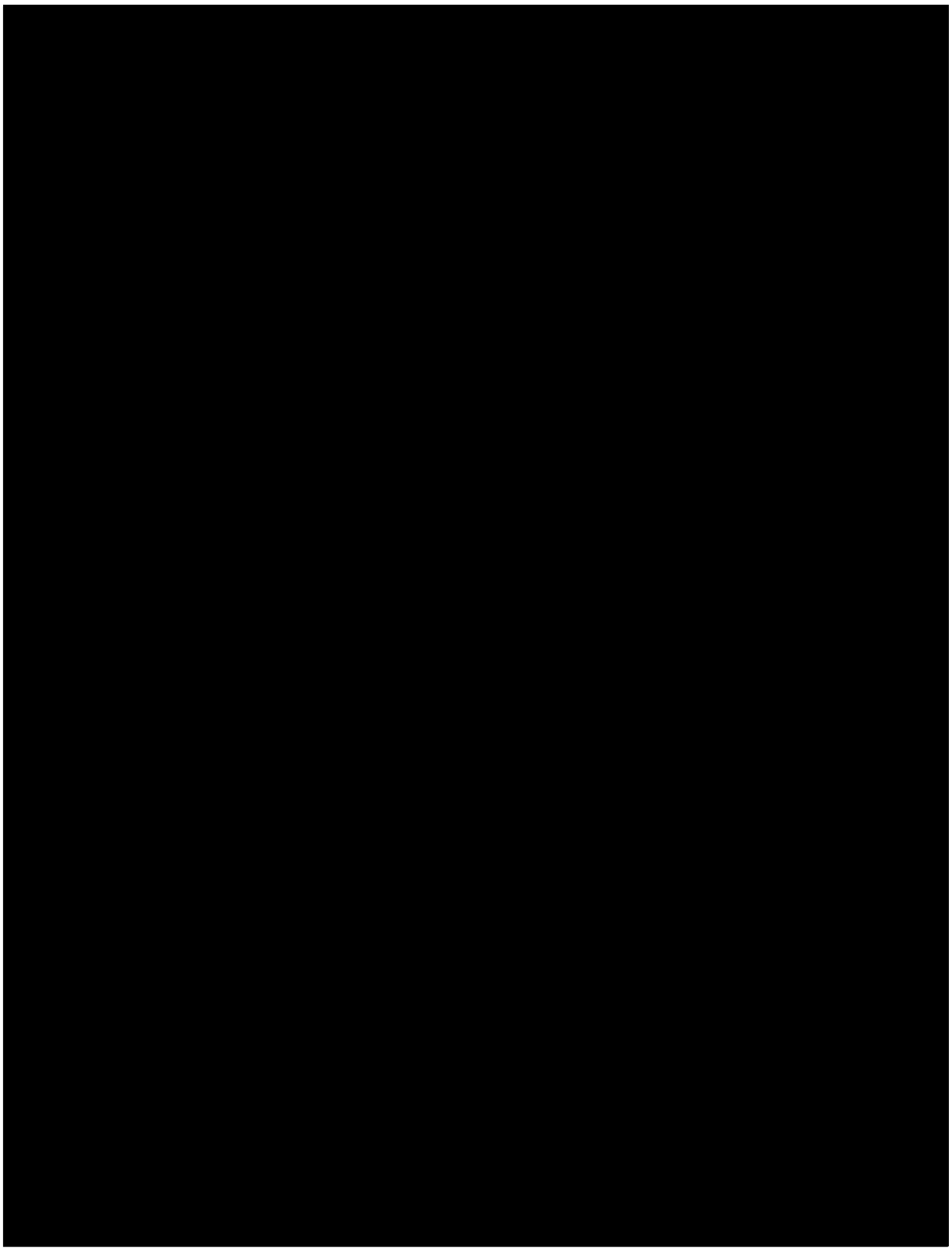
maintained the idea of salvation through giving to the poor. An important change was the increasing participation and involvement of a larger amount of people in charity and voluntary activities after 1910, giving these activities an important role in society and opening the way to their professionalization.

Public *beneficencia* and private charity were equally indispensable; both played an essential role in poor relief until 1930. The tendency was nevertheless for the state poor relief establishments to become more dependent on state funds and less on private charity. The private poor relief establishments and societies which had links with the religious orders were going to depend on both funds, state and private; the secular private poor relief institutions were to have to depend more on private funds. Public *beneficencia* and private charity were going to continue to be important in poor relief.

Table 13

Distribution Regional of the National Subsidy for *Beneficencia*

(pesos)



Sources: *Historia de las Leyes*, (Bogotá, 1934), pp. 437-445 and 790-801.

Table 14

The Notarial Tax for the

Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca



Source: *Informe que rinde la Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones de 1922.* (Bogotá, 1922).

Table 15

Income of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca's* establishments

Establishments	**1913**	**1917**	**1918**	**1919**	**1920**	**1921**
Hospital de San Juan Dios	62,697	55,833	91,569	95,326	152850	82076
Hospicio	40,283	51,119	46,848	64,493	62,018	44,294
Lunatic Asylum	53,340	53,707	50,714	82,129	102,043	102,264
Asylum of Beggars	38,188	35,080	38,025	90,786	112,642	70,220
Orphanage for Boys		14,537	9,775	17,149	18,317	11,259
Orphanage for Girls				6,915	15,382	12,951
TOTAL	194,508	210,276	236,931	356,798	463,252	323,064

Sources: Reports from the *Junta General de Beneficencia of Cundinamarca*.

Table 16

Percentages of state and private income of the *Junta General de Beneficencia de Cundinamarca's* establishments

Establishments	1913	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
Hospital de San Juan	E 65%	E 51%	E 50%	E 42%	E 48%	
	P 18%	P 35%	P 32%	P 50%	P 43%	
Hospicio	E 79%			E 21%	E 65%	E 72%
	P 6%			P 76%	P 7%	P 1%
Lunatic Asylum	E 91%	E 82%	E 59%	E 62%	E 73%	E 41%
	P 4%	P 2%	P 9%	P 1%	P 2%	P 4%
Asylum of Beggars	E 80%	E 90%	E 67%	E 54%	E 59%	E 67%
	P 15%	P 9%	P 16%	P 7%	P 6%	P 7%
Orphanage for Boys		E 94%	E 96%	E 71%	E 86%	E 38%
		P 6%	P 4%	P 3%	P 2%	P 5%
Orphanage for Girls				E 96%	E 78%	E 74%
				P 2%	P 3%	P 5%

Sources: Reports of the *Junta General de Beneficencia of Cundinamarca*.
Note: The state income was mainly taxes and subsidies, and private income was the rent from properties that the establishments inherited, bequests and donations. These two were not always the 100% of the income of the establishments because there was a small amount of income that could not be classified as state or as private funds.

CONCLUSIONS

Late nineteenth century Colombia was a country of precarious development, looking to consolidate an export economy, to improve its communications and material urban infrastructure. The reality was a country of scarcity and poverty. The presence of the poor was more evident in urban areas where they were more visible, and their situation more alarming. The poor made up at least 60% of the total population of the main cities.

The poor was a heterogeneous group, and its main characteristic was vulnerability. To have work or not to have it was the main distinction. This circumstance not only gave them the possibility of having just enough income to survive, but also it was the key for determining what kind of relief they would receive.

During the second half of the nineteenth and particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century a process of differentiation of the poor was elaborated, a process which sought to fix the division between the deserving and undeserving poor. By the 1920s the division had more or less established that the undeserving poor were those who could work, but who did not want to work. They would receive punishment. The deserving were those who could work but who for unexpected reasons, such as illness or death, needed help, and those who were incapable of working because of their age and who did not have any support: children without parents or relatives, old people without any livelihood, widows with many children. They would receive relief.

The poor relief that was established at that time was a moral commitment. This was based on five main pillars: work, family, saving, education and hygiene. These guided poor relief in Colombia.

There were two main strategies of poor relief: institutional and outdoor. Institutional poor relief began in a minor way in the colonial period as a state policy, mainly through hospitals to give aid to the sick and beggars supported by religious orders. After 1870 institutional poor relief started to become more complex. The establishments became more specialized in their care, dividing the poor by sex, age and illness, and more professionalized in their provision of health, protection and education. At the beginning the majority of these establishments were promoted by the local authorities with support from local leaders, and most of them were managed by religious orders, particularly female. Gradually the state establishments also received support from the departmental and national governments. From the 1910s the initiative for founding these establishments came from private citizens and grew in significance and in particular, the participation of women was notable. To give protection to poor children became one of the most important concerns of institutional poor relief. By the 1920s a network of poor relief institutions had been established in Colombia.

Outdoor relief began to be developed in the second half of the nineteenth century through lay initiative, without a state presence. For fifty years the St. Vincent de Paul Society was the leader in this activity throughout the country. Its main feature was the domiciliary visit, but it also carried out other poor relief activities. From the 1910s

other societies developed outdoor poor relief activities, concentrating mainly on building workers' houses, promoting savings banks and education, but without carrying out domiciliary visiting. The Jesuits had become the new leaders in these new activities of outdoor poor relief by the 1920s. This gradually came to be more linked with political activity. This was not a previous feature of outdoor poor relief; on the contrary the societies that carried out these activities stressed that they had no links with parties and political participation. Outdoor relief tended to focus on the poor who had work, the section of the poor who enjoyed better living conditions.

The existence of national and international networks of poor relief institutions and societies suggests that there was a world of charitable and philanthropic ideas. It did not follow from this, however, that what occurred in Colombia was the simple replication of practices, nor that it is easy to follow the flow of influences. The borrowing from others of particular forms of poor relief provision was never wholesale: the *Gota de Leche* programme shows, that what was borrowed could be shaped to fit a particular national or denominational context. It is important to be alert to what was not borrowed as well as to what was.

Apart from poor relief there were other strategies that helped the poor. Some strategies were more for survival than for relief. Most of these survival strategies were informal, and were not registered. However, others were more formal and were registered, such as the mutual aid societies. The first mutual aid societies in Colombia were founded in the 1870s, but by the 1920s the number had increased significantly and spread throughout the country. They were mainly formed by the poor who enjoyed better economic conditions: artisans and skilled workers. They mainly gave support to their

members, but they had the capacity to generate 'social capital'. They appeared because of the lack of support from the state rather than because they wanted to be autonomous at any cost. They also stressed their independence from political parties. Nevertheless some of them were politically active; some of them were even transformed into, or joined, trade unions.

In the development of poor relief state aid, mainly through funding and sketchy taxes, and private charity through donations, bequests and voluntary work were equally important. State help tended to increase and to be more centralized, particularly after 1910s. The tendency of national funding for poor relief organizations to grow changed the relationship between poor relief institutions and the state. Poor relief organizations had to be more concerned with political interests.

Private charity came from diverse sources and appeared to grow. A close previous relation between the donors and the poor relief organizations was important in determining giving. Charity could be routine, giving to those nearby in immediate need. It could also be preventive, an investment which gave opportunities to those who might otherwise become dependent on poor relief. By the 1910s there was some investment by organized societies in schools, orphanages and hospitals designed to prevent people from sinking into long-term poverty.

To sum up, the concern about poverty in the country and about the conditions of the poor became important issues in Colombian society in general. Moreover the state developed a social policy that was going to be part of any subsequent government agenda. The elite and the new professional elements had become involved in the

different activities of poor relief. By the 1920s a network of poor relief institutions and societies in Colombia had been established that was going to be the basis of a social assistance policy. Even though some of these social policies owed more to Christian and fraternal values than to democratic ones, it was the start of a developing social policy and strategy for helping the most needy. Poor relief and charity were increasingly viewed as forms of 'social work', which began to emerge as a distinct discipline and occupation during this period. Unemployment and housing were recognized as specific problems of urban society, illness was transformed from a matter of individual morality to a problem of hygiene, directly related to living and working conditions; vagrancy together with criminality, which had long been viewed in religious terms, were increasingly reconceptualized in scientific and criminological terms.

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