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## ***EARNING ONE'S DAILY BREAD: FEMALE OCCUPATIONS IN DUBROVNIK IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY***

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*Abstract:* Data on social status of women and their occupation entered into parish marriage registers have been quantified and analysed with an aim to establish and evaluate the trends in the women's labour market and in the social structures of Dubrovnik in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The results show that at their marriage the majority of women were employed in the traditionally "female" occupations, while during the time period under analysis specific sectors exhibited increasing, that is, falling trends.

*Key words:* women's labour market, Dubrovnik, 19th century, parish marriage registers, female occupations, maidservants, midwives, women teachers

### *Introduction*

The topics of women's occupations and women's labour market in the nineteenth century have been thoroughly explored in European historiography, indicating certain trends and patterns regarding female labour on the global level. Paid labour, especially that carried out beyond the confines of the household, for nineteenth-century women was considered indecent, improper and contrary to the "inherently feminine disposition" and "female nature". Despite all, the women

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did work, and their everyday work life developed between the set ideal of “an angel in the house”, latent suspicion of the society and vital needs. Debate on the “woman question”, i.e., on the issue of women’s labour and engagement in the “public sphere”, shifted the focus away from the genuine problems of women’s work force. Opportunities to attain professional degrees and occupations were markedly restricted to women, they were underpaid, they worked in poor conditions, and social welfare for their children was non-existent. First professional occupations accessible to women were those that required the qualities “inherent and natural” to their sex, such as care, tenderness, service and assistance—and they included midwives and teachers, later medical nurses, carers and typists, who “abandoned piano for typewriter”.<sup>1</sup>

Global economic and social processes reflected in the women’s labour market. In the nineteenth century various modernisation processes had a significant impact on this sphere of everyday life, such as urbanisation, industrialisation, education development and professionalisation of certain occupations. Being on the periphery of global trends and prevailing economic and social doctrines, Dalmatia was underdeveloped in terms of industry. Considering global and local changes, what kind of processes may be discerned in the women’s labour market of Dubrovnik?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On women’s labour in Europe, see: Joan W. Scott, »The Woman Worker«, in: *The History of Women in the West. Volume IV: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992: pp. 399-426; Delphine Gardy, »Time and Women’s Work: Historical Periodisations«, in: *The Gendering of Inequalities: Women, Men and Work*, ed. Jane Jenson, Jacqueline Laufer and Margaret Maruani. New York: Atheneum Press, 2000: pp. 32-48 ([https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00003959/file/Gardey\\_Time\\_and\\_Women\\_Work\\_2000\\_.pdf](https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00003959/file/Gardey_Time_and_Women_Work_2000_.pdf) accessed Feb 2021); Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women’s Work 1700 to the Present*. London - New York: Routledge, 2003; Deborah Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«, in: *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, ed. Deborah Simonton. London-New York: Routledge, 2006: pp. 134-176.

<sup>2</sup> Croatian historiography on women in the nineteenth-century labour market mainly focuses on women’s teacher training in Banska Hrvatska in particular (see for instance: Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, »Otvaranje prvog ženskog liceja u Zagrebu«. *Povijest u nastavi* IV/2 (2006): pp. 148-176; Dinko Župan, *Mentalni korzet. Spolna politika obrazovanja žena u Bansknoj Hrvatskoj (1868-1918)*. Osijek-Slavonski Brod: Bibliotheca Croatica: Slavonica, Sirmienisia et Baranyensia, 2013). A valuable contribution to women’s history in Dalmatia was made by Mirisa Katić, »Ogled o školovanju ženske djece i radu učiteljica na zadarskom području za austrijske uprave«. *Magistra Iadertina* 7/7 (2012): pp. 143-154; Mirisa Katić, »Žene u zadarskom tisku na hrvatskom jeziku u 19. stoljeću«. *Magistra Iadertina* 6/1 (2011): pp. 7-22; Mirisa Katić, *Uloga žena u kulturnom životu Zadra u 19. i u prva dva desetljeća 20. stoljeća*, PhD dissertation. Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru, 2019.

In most cases, the research into women's history is marked by the lack of documentary sources.<sup>3</sup> Apart from women's illiteracy, due to which we cannot speak of a feminine perspective of social processes in the past, especially among the lower social strata, women's work, on account of inconsistency and lack of qualification, has remained virtually invisible to the statistics.<sup>4</sup> In the parish registers, however, women are represented in the reality of the circumstances in which they were recorded, which makes these sources useful for the study of women in the past.

### *Methodological remarks*

Quantitative analysis of women's occupations in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Dubrovnik is based on data derived from marriage registers of the Grad (City) Parish, encompassing the urban space of Dubrovnik enclosed by the city walls.<sup>5</sup> Given that the entries at women's marriage included either occupation or social status, this vital event in women's lives has been taken as "critical point"<sup>6</sup> in this research. Data regarding social status or occupation of the bride and groom in the marriage registers of the City Parish were first reported in 1832, marking thus the initial temporal point of this analysis.<sup>7</sup> Further, the

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<sup>3</sup> Michelle Perrot's syntagm about "invisible women" has become widely accepted. See: Michelle Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*. Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2009: pp. 7-15.

<sup>4</sup> D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> *Matična knjiga vjenčanih župe Grad, 1832.-1857.* (hereafter as: MKV Grad, 1832-1857); *Matična knjiga vjenčanih župe Grad, 1857.-1876.* (hereafter as: MKV Grad, 1857-1876); *Matična knjiga vjenčanih župe Grad, 1876.-1892.* (hereafter as: MKV Grad, 1876-1892); *Matična knjiga vjenčanih župe Grad, 1892.-1906.* (hereafter as: MKV Grad, 1892-1906); *Matična knjiga vjenčanih župe Grad, 1906.-1920.* (hereafter as: MKV Grad, 1906-1920). All the mentioned marriage registers are kept in the Archive of Dubrovnik Diocese (hereafter as: ABD).

<sup>6</sup> "Critical point", i.e. census reference date, is a demographic term. It concerns a determinant of time used in the execution of modern population censuses and is one of its essential features. In Croatia the censuses (since 1953) have surveyed the state of population from midnight between 31 March and 1 April of the given census year. See: Alica Wertheimer-Baletić, *Stanovništvo i razvoj*. Zagreb: Mate, 1999: pp. 46-48. Within the context of this research, the mentioned term is used to mark a vital point in women's lives.

<sup>7</sup> This concerns the so-called "civil records" entered into specially printed forms bound in large-format volumes, according to the instructions of the (Habsburg Monarchy) civil authorities. They differ from the "parish records" kept in registers, in a classical, descriptive form. See: Ante Strgačić and Ivan Fantina, *Inventar fonda matičnih knjiga Državnog arhiva u Zadru*: pp. 3-5. [http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/\\_Pages/PdfFile.aspx?Id=591](http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/_Pages/PdfFile.aspx?Id=591) (accessed Nov 2019).

analysis includes the period until 1913. World War I, which started in 1914, had global and crucial impact on the women's labour market and employment. Comparative analysis which would call for a broader time period even after the beginning of the war would go beyond the topic of this research and would require a separate investigation.

The selected sample, brides reported in the parish marriage registers from 1832 to 1913, are a representative group of female population of Dubrovnik in the nineteenth century. As the women were mainly Catholic, they were recorded in the registers of Catholic parishes.<sup>8</sup> Also, it is assumed that a smaller number of women has remained unreported by the sacrament of marriage in this source, that is, the majority of women entered marriage.<sup>9</sup> The number of marriages ranges from 219 in the 1830s to 338 in the first decade of the twentieth century, while a total of 2,321 marriages was recorded in the time frame under analysis, of which 2,071 occupations or social statuses of the brides have been analysed (Table 1).<sup>10</sup> Defined in this way, the temporally extensive "critical point" has proved to be a relevant indicator in the analysis of women's paid work and the most common female occupations in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Average age of brides at marriage ranged mainly from 28 to 30 (Graph 1).<sup>11</sup> By that age, they had well passed their adulthood threshold, they already had their paid jobs and probably more than ten years of work experience.

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<sup>8</sup> According to the first modern population census from 1857 conducted in the Dubrovnik district, 98.3% of the population was of the Roman Catholic affiliation. Data regarding the inner-city area are not available by the same source due to the then administrative and territorial division, yet from the publication containing the results of the Dalmatian census it is evident that all non-Catholics had residence in the wider area of the urban centres, or in the city. See: Stjepan Krivošić, *Stanovništvo Dubrovnika i demografske promjene u prošlosti*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti JAZU u Dubrovniku, 1990: p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> On nuptiality in Dubrovnik until 1857, see: S. Krivošić, *Stanovništvo Dubrovnika i demografske promjene u prošlosti*: pp. 99-100. Cf: Nenad Vekarić, Irena Benyovsky, Tatjana Buklijaš, Maurizio Levak, Nikša Lučić, Marija Mogorović and Jakša Primorac, *Vrijeme ženidbe i ritam poroda (Dubrovnik i njegova okolica od 17. do 19. stoljeća)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2000: pp. 29-46, 107-110.

<sup>10</sup> MKV Grad, 1832-1913 (ABD). The growing number of marriages corresponded with the population rise. Cf: Mirko Korenčić, *Naselja i stanovništvo Socijalističke Republike Hrvatske (1857-1971)*. Zagreb: Državni zavod za statistiku, 2005. (CD). Also, data on "social status" has not been entered for 250 brides in this period; cases such as these have been omitted from quantitative analysis.

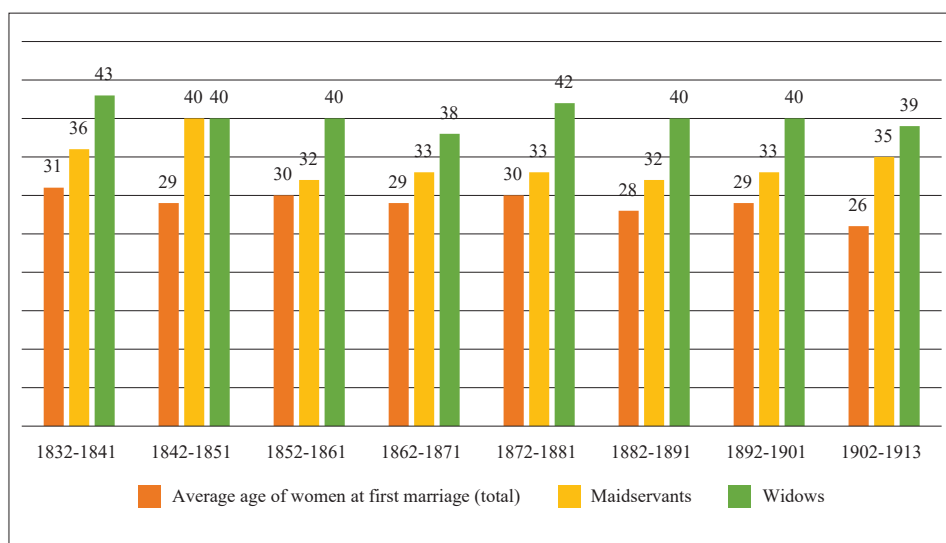
<sup>11</sup> In order to provide a more reliable insight into the bride's age at marriage, in calculating their average age I have omitted widows, who have been analysed separately. Exceptionally, in the first analysed decade the bride's average age at marriage was 31, while in the last (twelve-year) period it was the lowest, 26.

Table 1. Number of marriages in Dubrovnik 1832–1913, by decade

Year period	Decade	Number of marriages
	1832 – 1841	219
	1842 – 1851	217
	1852 – 1861	250
	1862 – 1871	278
	1872 – 1881	315
	1882 – 1891	301
	1892 – 1901	332
	1902 – 1911	338
1912 – 1913		71
Total		2, 321

Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1832–1913

Figure 1. Average age of women at marriage in Dubrovnik 1832–1913



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1832–1913

The bride's social status was entered into the fields designated as *condizione* in Italian or *stališ* in Croatian, particularly if they came from upper rank, or their occupation, which was usually considered an adequate indicator of belonging to the lower social stratum. Information on bride's occupation must have been insignificant from the perspective of the priest who registered the marriage sacrament. Occupational entries lack precision, as well as consistency of any kind, and are often general and laconic.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the grouping of specific occupations and activities has been mainly formed according to the sources and prevailing conditions in the women's labour market in nineteenth-century Dubrovnik.<sup>13</sup> Due to their high number and specific features, maidservants in the city households are analysed as a separate category; similar is the case with those employed in dressmaking and textile crafts as well as teachers, while the women employed in the craft and service sector are analysed as one professional group due to the lack of detailed data on specific occupations within that category, but also due to the common character of the individual, mainly unskilled work outside the household. The goal of analysing data within the mentioned categories is to exhibit the declining or increasing trends of women's engagement in specific occupations and to trace the emergence of new occupations and patterns in the women's labour market of Dubrovnik in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Employed women appear in other archival sources most frequently if they were employed in public institutions, such as hospitals and schools. Business correspondence and other documents in these cases are often one-sided and provide information generated by the employer. Exceptions to this practice are the teachers, who embody a smaller proportion of the overall pool of working women. In that context, this article is based on the sources which to a more or less explicit extent mention specific aspects of women's everyday work life, upon which certain conclusions may be drawn on the women's labour market.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Best epitomised by the frequently recorded occupation of "female worker" (*lavoratrice*).

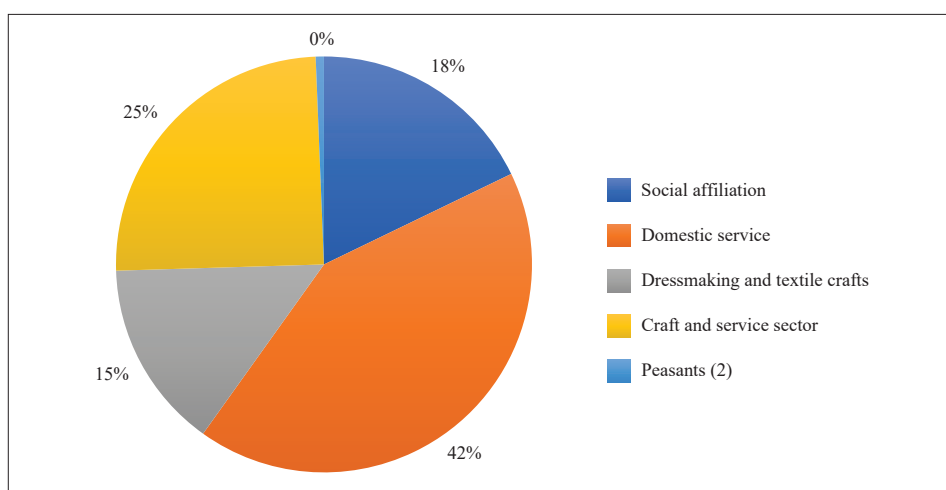
<sup>13</sup> For example, administrative group of female occupations in nineteenth-century Dubrovnik cannot be considered here given that between 1832 and 1913 marriage registers make no single entry of an administrative female worker.

<sup>14</sup> Dubrovnik General Hospital, unclassified material (hereafter as: OBD, unclassified material) (State Archives in Dubrovnik; hereafter as: SAD); Baldo Bogišić Collection in Cavtat, sign. B XVIII (hereafter as: Baldo Bogišić Collection).

*Women from the upper social rank and their “entry” to the labour market*

Women's paid labour during the nineteenth century has been perceived as a necessity for poorer population strata. Daughters of well-off parents were educated in order to become worthy members of their privileged class, spending their lives dedicated to family, while their only work outside the household was of philanthropic nature.<sup>15</sup> When entering their marriage into the parish registers, the priest would note the bride's social status—noble (*nobile*) or citizen (*civile*)—along with additional sporadic entries on the occupation of the bride's father, his status or prominent office.<sup>16</sup> Data analysis indicates that only a smaller number of brides, unburdened by existential issues, could actually live the ideal of the “private sphere” (cf. graphs 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 2. Women's occupations in Dubrovnik 1832–1851

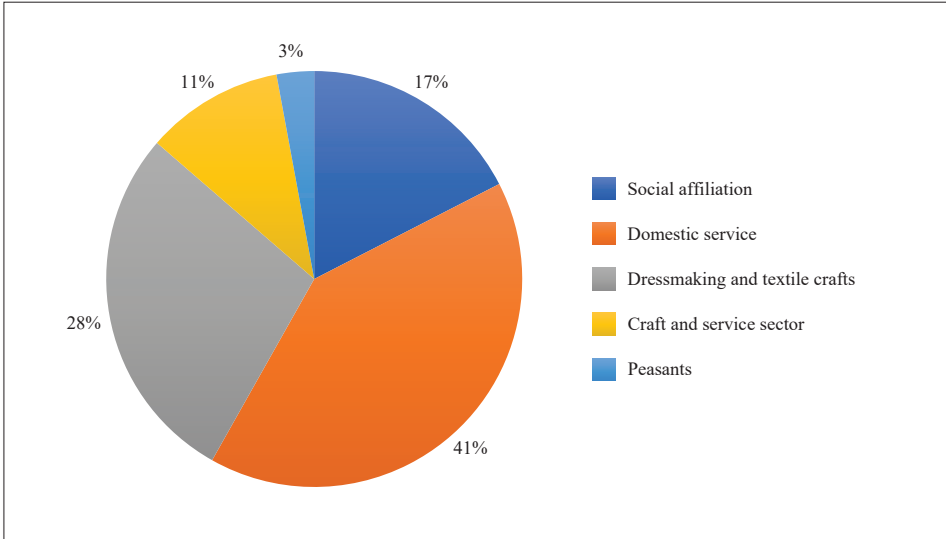


Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1832–1851

<sup>15</sup> Illustrative in this context is the remark made by the Lastovo parish priest in the document certifying to the poverty status of a girl from his parish. She needed this document in order to apply for the state bursary for a midwifery course. The parish priest wrote that the girl was poor and that “*she is forced to earn her daily bread*” (italics by author). Kristina Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama. Primalje i porođaj u Dubrovniku (1815-1918)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2016: pp. 103-104.

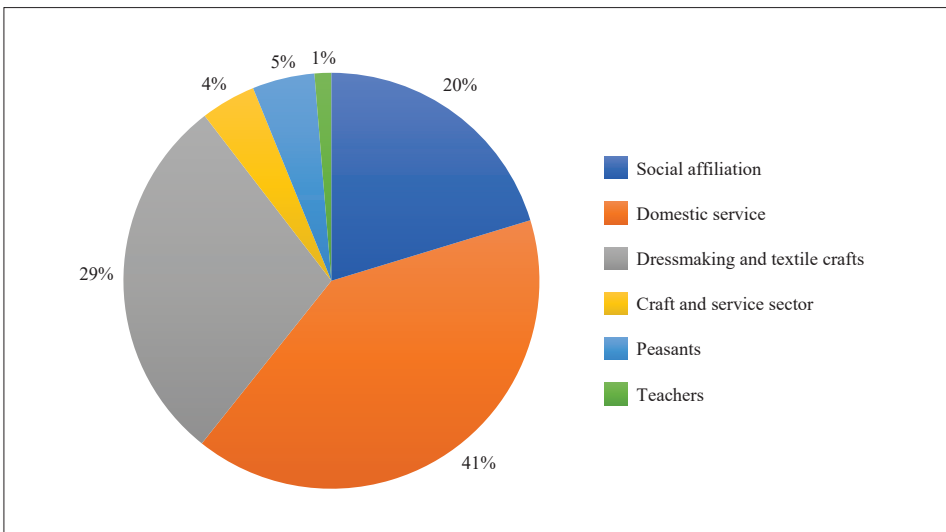
<sup>16</sup> For example, the remarks on father's occupation: daughter of sea captain (*figlia di un capitano marittimo*), daughter of proprietor (*figlia di un possidente*) and daughter of Customs inspector (*figlia di controlore Doganale*).

Figure 3. Women's occupations in Dubrovnik 1852–1871



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1852–1871

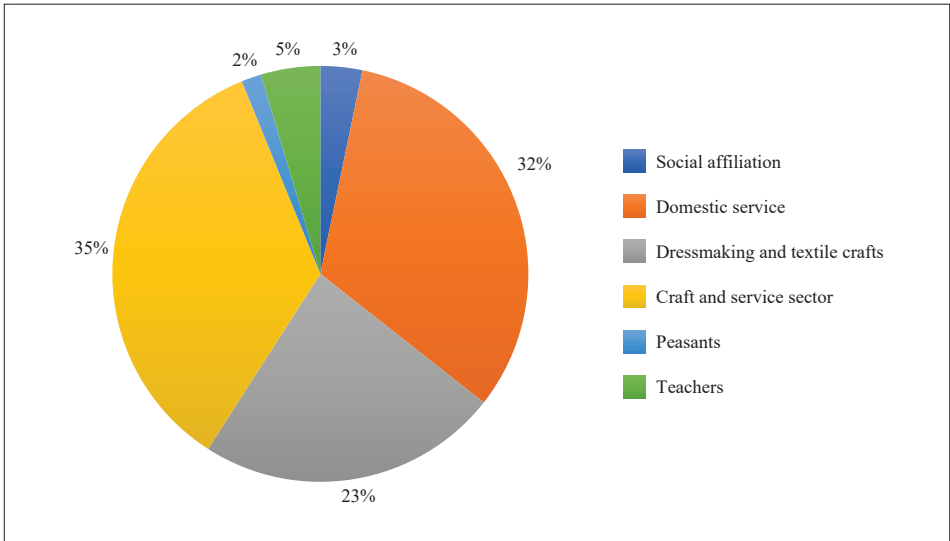
Figure 4. Women's occupations in Dubrovnik 1872–1891



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1872–1891



Figure 5. Women's occupations in Dubrovnik 1892–1913



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1872–1913

The share of brides reported only by affiliation to a specific social rank (in graphs designated as “social affiliation”) until the last decade of the nineteenth century remained between 17% and 20% of the overall number of analysed cases. In the course of the 1890s that number dropped rapidly and drastically to 3%, and the number of brides with data on occupation generally increased. Viewed historically, a rise of women in the labour market has also been recorded elsewhere in Europe of the same period.<sup>17</sup> With time, training opportunities for girls as well as employment in industry increased, but also in the administrative or the white collar sector, postal service and various clerical jobs. Employment conditions in Dubrovnik were different, yet despite the absence of industrialisation and the fact that women could not professionalise in administrative jobs, it seems that in Dubrovnik (as elsewhere in Europe) salaried women's work began to be perceived as a common and a socially acceptable phenomenon.<sup>18</sup>

Several explanations may be provided to the question on the processes underlying these results. It is clear that the practice of entering information into

<sup>17</sup> D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: p. 158.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: p. 158.

parish registers witnessed a change. From the second half of 1894 onwards the registers were filled in Croatian, and it is from that year on that a certain number of *posebnica*—small business entrepreneurs—was reported sporadically.<sup>19</sup> Entries of this kind had also been made earlier, though in Italian and in much lesser number, as *privata*; for example, in 1892, 1893 and in the first half of 1894 not a single *privata* was reported, while in the latter half of 1894 three Croatian entries of *posebnica* were made, in 1895 also three, in 1896 and 1897 nine respectively, and the same trend continued in the following years. Further, it seems plausible that the new practice of keeping parish registers established that year also included a more accurate registration of the factual state regarding social status and engagement in the labour market of the upper social class (until then distinguished only by rank status), which was a consequence of the decay and impoverishment of Dubrovnik nobility. In order to confirm its status in the Habsburg Monarchy, Dalmatian nobility had to comply with a special procedure and pay a high monetary compensation, which many failed to do;<sup>20</sup> some noble families of Dubrovnik simply moved elsewhere, and with time, modernisation processes and the development of civil society dwarfed their economic significance and political power.<sup>21</sup> Given that Dubrovnik nobility was severely depleted and impoverished, one cannot discard the possibility that a portion of women from upper ranks was forced to seek employment in the private sector or to enter marriage with non-nobles. The traditional and very rigid marriage customs of the Dubrovnik nobility required inmarriage, and by that time, the noble male pool had seriously shrunk.<sup>22</sup> As a result of this but also of the declining importance of noble status, brides and grooms from noble families married their counterparts from wealthy citizen families, which in the Republic period was impossible since it implied deprivation

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<sup>19</sup> On the meaning of the word *posebnica*, see: Nataša Bašić, »Osobnik«. *Jezik: časopis za kulturu hrvatskoga književnog jezika* 57/3 (2010): p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> Grga Novak, »Dalmacija na raskršću 1848. god.« *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* 274 (1948): pp. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> Nenad Vekarić, *Vlastela grada Dubrovnika. 1 - Korijeni, struktura i razvoj dubrovačkog plemstva* Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2011: pp. 292-320; Arijana Kolak Bošnjak, »Struktura hrvatskog društva u 19. stoljeću i razvoj građanskog društva«, in: *Temelji moderne Hrvatske. Hrvatske zemlje u "dugom" 19. stoljeću*, ed. Vlasta Švoger and Jasna Turkalj. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2016: pp. 140-142.

<sup>22</sup> Josip Bersa claims the same: "Such a large number of unmarried noble women may be accounted by the declining number of noble families, and it was difficult for a girl to find her equal, as was dictated by the rigid noble marriage rules". (Josip Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1941: p. 134).

of noble title.<sup>23</sup> The entries of these marriages in the parish registers usually contain the bride's noble title, but also her professional status (or occupations), if any. For example, when in December 1894 (a few months after the first parish records in Croatian were introduced), a bride from an old Ragusan noble family married a Czech officer, and under her "name, surname and status" stands an entry "Nike Marquise di Bona, schoolmistress".<sup>24</sup> A similar case has been traced in 1903: Ivo Jakobušić, proprietor, married "Jeje di Ghetaldi, schoolmistress".<sup>25</sup>

However, Josip Bersa writes that "the spinsters' world in the Ragusan noble circles (...) had made a specific stamp on the city life of the time".<sup>26</sup> As survival mechanisms of the impoverished unmarried noble women he lists wool spinning, weaving, dressmaking, knitting of custom-made socks,<sup>27</sup> making and selling of *kotonjata* (quince cheese), and room renting.<sup>28</sup> There is reason to assume that some of them married after all, and that out of the respect for the ever less important noble title or the once distinguished citizen status, they remained recorded in the parish marriage registers as *posebnice* instead of dressmakers, cooks or room renters.

### *Maidservants and dressmakers*

The fact that much of the population was of a modest social and property status might lead to a conclusion that the largest proportion of women had a paid job of some kind. Until the very end of the nineteenth century, the majority of employed women in Dubrovnik were maidservants. Their percentage in the overall number of the recorded employed women until the 1890s was 41% or 42%, while at the turn of the century it dropped to 32% (graphs 2, 3, 4 and 5).

<sup>23</sup> A. Kolak Bošnjak, »Struktura hrvatskog društva u 19. stoljeću i razvoj građanskog društva«: p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> MKV Grad, 1892-1906: 17. The father of Karl Paul the groom was a proprietor from the Czech Kingdom, and his mother a *posebnica*.

<sup>25</sup> This example is a good indicator of the economic changes and intermarriages between classes at the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century. The parents of Ivo Jakobušić, engaged in crafts, were from the surrounds of Dubrovnik (Vlaho Jakobušić, craftsman, and Ane Miletić, craftswoman), while the bride's father, the deceased Gustav di Ghetaldi, was proprietor and high-ranking officer of the court, and her mother, Ivanka Miloslavić from Župa dubrovačka, was a dressmaker (MKV Grad, 1892-1906: 79).

<sup>26</sup> J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: p. 134.

<sup>27</sup> Bersa mentions the name of Deša Sorgo as example, who always received orders through a go-between, never directly, for reason of discretion (J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: p. 133).

<sup>28</sup> J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: pp. 133-136.

From the last decade of the nineteenth century the “craft and service sector” exceeded domestics by 3% (i.e., the overall proportion in that category increased to 35%; graphs 4 and 5).

The shrinking process of the domestic service sector began by the end of the nineteenth century on the global level, but it was not until 1914 that it had taken serious proportions.<sup>29</sup> Due to global modernisation processes, end-of-nineteenth-century European labour market offered women a variety of employment options: in industry, in retail shops, in offices and postal service. Such trends in the labour market most certainly impacted the aspirations of women from the poorest social strata, also evidenced in Zagreb, which followed the modernisation impulse of larger cities.<sup>30</sup> Equally, political changes, activism of the middle and working class, women’s emancipation movements and better education opportunities influenced and raised the awareness of individual independence, in that the classical domestic service became perceived as personal degradation and limitation, additionally characterised by underpayment.<sup>31</sup> Considering that these processes were not at work in Dubrovnik of the time, the reasons behind the declining numbers of domestics should be sought in different social and economic trends. A large proportion of Dubrovnik domestics were recruited among the daughters of the serfs living on the country estates of their noble landlords and city masters, whom they served (for a salary) in their city households.<sup>32</sup> The majority of European states, Croatia included, abolished serfdom in 1848, yet in Dalmatia (serfdom being particularly embedded in the Dubrovnik area) it still remained in effect. The serfs were forced to buy their own freedom, which became more common by the end of the nineteenth century thanks largely to the money earned in emigration.<sup>33</sup> Having bought their freedom, the serfs, now free from bondage, must have also abandoned various detested customs that bound them to their masters, such as domestic service of young girls in the masters’ city households. At the same time, it is possible that due to the declining nobility that constituted the wealthier social stratum, the demand for domestic service decreased. Of the

<sup>29</sup> M. Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*: p. 138; D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: p. 158; D. Gardey, »Time and Women’s Work: Historical Periodisations«: p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Ksenija Vuković i Tamara Šmaguc, »Društveni kontekst izbora zanimanja žena u Hrvatskoj u razdoblju od kraja 19. do početka 21. stoljeća«: *Ekonomska misao i praksa* 1 (2015): p. 301.

<sup>31</sup> D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: p. 160.

<sup>32</sup> J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: p. 18.

<sup>33</sup> Stijepo Obad, »Neke karakteristike stanja i kretanja na dalmatinskom selu od sredine 18. stoljeća do Prvoga svjetskog rata«: *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru* 26/13 (1986-87): p. 260.

options that could have replaced the domestic service sector by the end of the nineteenth century there emerged tourism as an economic activity which certainly employed a considerable number of unskilled female workers.<sup>34</sup>

It may well be assumed that the number of female servants in nineteenth-century Dubrovnik was high and that it constituted a specific social body around which many traditional procedures,<sup>35</sup> customs<sup>36</sup> and narratives weaved.<sup>37</sup> Although their primary function in the households was paid service, domestics were not an ordinary occupation. The girls between the ages of 10 and 12 in city households were recruited from the master's country estate to serve as domestics—a common and lasting phenomenon throughout Europe as well.<sup>38</sup> As domestics, they spent their formative years adapting to city life, hard work and the upbringing expectations of their mistresses. Upbringing was an important dimension of female domestic service throughout European households of the upper classes,<sup>39</sup> which in Dubrovnik is eloquently reflected in the local terminology. Distinguished by poverty, unrefinement and coarse manners of their rural background, upon their first arrival in the city the girls were commonly referred to as “dishevelled” (*čupe*, *čupavice*) or “savages” (*divjake*). After a certain period of service, their appearance changed somewhat, they wore “better dresses and finer attire”, as if they “had been domesticated”. At this advanced stage, the housemaids were called “middle girls” (*djevojke srednje*). Further, having spent a certain period in domestic service (and upbringing), the mistress would begin to prepare her *čupe* maid for adult, married life. The maid would leave her annual salary to the mistress for safekeeping, along with her other belongings, money, or gifts. When the time came, usually

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<sup>34</sup> See: Ivo Perić, *Razvitak turizma u Dubrovniku i okolici od pojave parobrodarstva do 1841. godine*. Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti Istraživačkog centra Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti u Dubrovniku, 1983: pp. 7-128.

<sup>35</sup> Among more important traditions was that known as *sprava* (preparation), by which the girls or *spravljence* (the prepared girl) were officially prepared and provided for marriage (J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: pp. 18-19).

<sup>36</sup> For example, Bersa writes that the custom according to which the domestics in noble households wore a wide white hair ribbon, and in non-noble households a red one, was upheld until 1865 (J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: p. 18).

<sup>37</sup> Many literary characters of Dubrovnik domestics mirror the way in which the society perceived them. See: Slavica Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjernice. Žene u svakodnevnici Dubrovnika (1600-1815)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2003: pp. 95-135.

<sup>38</sup> D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*: pp. 100-101.

<sup>39</sup> Young girls exchanged the tutoring of their parents for that of the masters, who took over the paternal role. Additionally, domestic service was partly considered as preparation for married life (D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*: pp. 99-100).

when the domestic had reached her early twenties, “preparation” (*sprava*) was organised for her—a ritual bestowment of possessions the girl had collected during her service, and which the mistress had kept for her over the years. From that moment on *spravljénica* (“the prepared girl”) could freely dispose of her own property.<sup>40</sup> It was often the case that *spravljénice* continued to serve in the same household until marriage, which, judging by the average age of the domestics at marriage, may have proved additional ten years or so. Domestics entered marriage at an age much higher than women’s average marriage age in Dubrovnik (Graph 1). Their age at first marriage was 32 (recorded in several decades of the overall time period under analysis) to the highest age of 40 (recorded in the decade between 1842 and 1851; see Graph 1). Given that this concerns the poorest social rank with the lowest wages, one may assume that behind this prolonged maidenhood and the late age at marriage was the time (and work) needed to make savings for an appropriate dowry.

With some masters/employers the girls were fortunate to find a warm home and second family, but more frequently their everyday life was harsh, marked by hard and continuous labour, physical and sexual assaults of the male household members and other men with whom they may have come into contact, and was burdened with tensions in the domestic relations.<sup>41</sup> The girls were known to work only for the roof over their head, food and clothes, yet with time the service began to be paid.<sup>42</sup> During the Republic, the girls’ parents would sign an annual salary contract with the masters/employers to the amount of four to seven perpers, which was increased each year by one or two perpers.<sup>43</sup> Bersa’s information that the domestics’ salary amounted to three ducats per year concerns the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> In some

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<sup>40</sup> Participating in this momentous event was the domestic’s usually large family who arrived from the countryside in their solemn traditional costumes, accompanied by the sounds of *lijerica* (traditional string instrument), bearing baskets full of gifts, along with the mistress’s family and her companions. The guests presented *spravljénica* with money and small gifts, the mistress offered coffee, beverages and biscuits to the guests, the family from the village would sing, dance, and congratulate *spravljénica*. The received gifts and money were displayed and counted by “a man especially appointed for this task”, who would give it to *spravljénica*. Having received her property, she would kneel before the mistress and beg for pardon and blessing. The mistress would then bless *spravljénica*, gifts and money with holy water; “That marked the end of ‘sprava’: from then on she is free and she may dispose of her own small property”. See: J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: pp. 18-19, 22.

<sup>41</sup> S. Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjernice*: pp. 95-135; D. Simonton, *A History of European Women’s Work*: pp. 105-106.

<sup>42</sup> S. Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjernice*: pp. 95, 100, 111.

<sup>43</sup> S. Stojan, *Vjerenice i nevjernice*: p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> J. Bersa, *Dubrovačke slike i prilike*: pp. 18-19. Bersa fails to specify whether they were Venetian gold ducats, still current in the first decades of the nineteenth century, or the ducats that Austria minted between 1825 and 1848 for Dalmatia. Official currency until 1918 was that of the Habsburg Monarchy.

European states it was also common for the salary to be paid out to the domestic's father instead to the girl.<sup>45</sup> In Dubrovnik, as earlier mentioned, the girl's money was kept by her mistress until she reached the "sprava" stage.

Through the nineteenth century, the European sector of domestic service developed towards specialisation and labour division, e.g. employment in and outside the household, tasks in and out of the kitchen.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, household jobs were differently evaluated, in that the cook received the best wage.<sup>47</sup> This kind of differentiation of domestic and other servants has also been recorded in the parish registers of Dubrovnik. Until the 1860s, within this sector domestic servants were mainly reported under a general term *serva*, in Croatian as *sluškinje* and *službenice*, and from then on also as cooks (*cuoca*) and chambermaids (*camariera*).

Unskilled female workers engaged as cleaners, chambermaids, maids and similar occupations were also employed in the private sector, such as hotels<sup>48</sup> as well as in various institutions, e.g. the hospital,<sup>49</sup> where they were treated with equal sternness and superiority as in the households. When in 1888 Dubrovnik Hospital moved into its new and spacious building outside the city walls, at Pile, the hospital maids demanded a salary increase.<sup>50</sup> The rigid response of the hospital management board, which implicitly speaks of the differentiation of servants' jobs, read as follows: "Considering that the maidservants employed in the hospital to assist the nurses are not fine chambermaids, but simple scullery maids, according

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<sup>45</sup> D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*: p. 105. Also, it is doubtful as to what extent the women could dispose of their own salary after marriage. It was not until 1907 that the women in France negotiated a legal right to dispose of their own wages, while the year 1938 marked the end of male tutorship (D. Gardey, »Time and Women's Work: Historical Periodisations«: p. 34).

<sup>46</sup> D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*: p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> D. Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*: pp. 104, 109.

<sup>48</sup> A "hotel waitress" was recorded in 1911, originally from Tuzla (MKV Grad, 1906-1920: 37).

<sup>49</sup> For example, *serva dell' Ospitale Civile di Ragusa* was recorded in 1849 (MKV Grad, 1832-1857: 61).

<sup>50</sup> Even if their petition did exist in written form, it has not survived, and therefore we do not know the exact conditions on the basis of which the cleaners demanded higher pay. That same year, on account of the hospital's displacement, the hospital barber also demanded a bonus, due to an increase in work volume in the bigger hospital, according to his own projection. The Board's response is unknown. See: OBD 1888, unclassified material (SAD). In addition, due to the displacement of the hospital outside the city walls (800 meters from the previous location) both hospital doctors demanded, though in vain, travel allowance for the carriage they had to hire in order to cover the distance (!) (Ivo Perić, »Organizacija i djelovanje pokrajinske bolnice u Dubrovniku od izgradnje njene nove zgrade do Prvog svjetskog rata«. *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti istraživačkog centra JAZU u Dubrovniku* 22/23 (1985): p. 193).



to the conditions governing servants' wages in Dubrovnik, the Board holds that a monthly salary of 4 fiorins is sufficient, and for such a salary the hospital will always find the necessary staff".<sup>51</sup>

A variety of jobs in the textile industry, next to domestic service, was the women's most common option for earning a living. The sector described as "dressmaking and textile crafts" employed a large number of seamstresses, weavers and milliners.<sup>52</sup> Until the 1850s their proportion reached 15%, until the 1890s it increased to 29%, only to drop to 23% at the turn of the century (graphs 2, 3, 4 and 5). Textile crafts traditionally belonged to women's tasks in the household, and under the pressure of poverty, became a means of earning one's living.<sup>53</sup> Activities related to textile, particularly for the women from poorer ranks, were considered appropriate and within a decent frame; they reconciled, albeit in theory, women's paid work and the household obligations.<sup>54</sup> Like most female crafts, it did not require any qualification,<sup>55</sup> yet it could have depended on skill, personal engagement in the labour market and market demand. The first industrial revolution introduced great changes into this economic sector, notably in the developed industrial centres of Europe.<sup>56</sup> Textile factories in late nineteenth-century Croatia also employed a significant number of seamstresses,<sup>57</sup> whereas in Dubrovnik textile manufacture was confined to workshops and domestic production. For example, Šime Peričić states that from the 1830s Dubrovnik had a textile workshop with 15 *workers* employed, which produced woollen blankets, while the local workshop producing rough woollen cloth employed 56 *female workers* (italics by author) in the same period. Additionally, operating in Dubrovnik until the middle of the nineteenth century was a workshop which produced silk handkerchiefs, while in the latter half of the century the cloth and silk workshop owned by Klara Žitković is mentioned, along with *Manufature e mode* of Stjepan Bravačić.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Letter of *Zemaljski odbor* (State Board) to the hospital management no. 3455 of 20 August 1888 (OBD 1888, unclassified material).

<sup>52</sup> The entries made in Italian register them as: *cucitrice, sarta, modista, tessitrice, cucitrice capelliera, crestaja*.

<sup>53</sup> D. Gardy, »Time and Women's Work: Historical Periodisations«: p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> J. W. Scott, »The Woman Worker«: p. 406.

<sup>55</sup> M. Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*: p. 144; D. Simonton, »Women workers; working women«: p. 155.

<sup>56</sup> See: M. Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*: pp. 140-146.

<sup>57</sup> K. Vuković i T. Šmaguc, »Društveni kontekst izbora zanimanja žena u Hrvatskoj«: p. 300.

<sup>58</sup> Šime Peričić, *Gospodarska povijest Dalmacije od 18. do 20. stoljeća*. Zadar: Matica hrvatska, 1998: pp. 125, 184.



*Female workers in the craft and service sector*

In the craft and service sector the bulk of the reported occupations concerns an indefinite category of “female worker” (*lavoratrice, operaja*), along with a somewhat smaller number of women who have *industriante* entered as their status, which was probably used to describe the women employed at home, crafts or manufacture. They constitute the lower level of unskilled female workers. This category also embraces, though in lesser number, small shopkeepers, inn and coffeshop keepers, and midwives.<sup>59</sup> The percentage of women employed in the craft and service sector reached 15% in the period between 1832 and 1851, increased to 28% and 29% between 1852 and 1891, only to rise to 35% from the 1890s on and thus exceeded the until then largest group of female workers, that of domestics (graphs 2, 3, 4 and 5).

Of all the women engaged in the craft and service sector midwives were the only professional occupation, thanks mainly to the fact that the local authorities granted them bursaries for the training at the midwifery school in Zadar, founded in 1821. Therefore, midwifery was the first modern, secularised and professional women's occupation in Dalmatia. This fact, however, had little effect on the better social status of midwives in society, or on their modest earnings.<sup>60</sup> Professionalisation of midwifery in Dalmatia mirrored the population policy of the Habsburg Monarchy and the management trends in public health, and by no means corresponds to the women's emancipation tendencies in the developed countries of Western Europe.

In the marriage registers of Dubrovnik parishes the brides were rarely reported as midwives. In the time period under analysis a total of nine has been traced, four of whom were widows, i.e., it was their second marriage.<sup>61</sup> The reason behind this might lie in the specific nature of midwifery as a profession. The authors of midwifery textbooks, obstetricians and surgeons, conceived the manuals on a presumption that the future midwifery trainees ought to have some childbirth experience of their own. In addition, the midwifery school in Zadar preferred to admit married young women to unmarried girls who, away from home and moral control of their local community, could go astray and jeopardise their “good

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<sup>59</sup> The terms commonly used to designate the status of female inn keepers or owners were: *tavernara/tavernaja, caffitiera, bettoliera, locandiera*; for the status of female shop keepers: *rivendicola, bottegaja*; for midwives: *levatrice patentata, levatrice diplomata*.

<sup>60</sup> K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: pp. 125-126.

<sup>61</sup> MKV Grad, 1832-1913.

reputation” and the dignity of their future profession. Married students and widows always outnumbered unmarried girls at the school,<sup>62</sup> which may lead to a conclusion that the majority of brides who later became midwives was reported in the marriage registers by their first occupation.<sup>63</sup>

Professionally, in their everyday work life midwives were subordinated to the district and municipal doctors. Doctors supervised their work, but also work ethic, and in doing so they made certain that the midwives strictly observed the instructions regarding abortion and infanticide. Doctors’ recommendations often played a crucial role in the engagement of certain midwives, their remuneration or in obtaining the retirement documents. Extant in Dubrovnik documentary sources are the recommendations of several doctors issued for certain midwives, and it appears that the latter respected the given hierarchical (professional and other) frames of their status.<sup>64</sup> The attitude of higher ranking bodies towards midwives was somewhat harsher, such as that of the municipal council (which decided on municipal midwives) and the State Board of the Dalmatian Parliament (*Zemaljski odbor Dalmatinskog sabora*), which decided on midwives and other employees in the regional hospitals.

In 1888 the newly-built Dubrovnik Hospital at Pile started work, and from then it also included the foundling and maternity ward, which had previously operated as a separate institution (and building).<sup>65</sup> At the same time, shortly before the relocation to the new building, midwife Ane Đivanović, long-term head of the foundling and lying-in hospital, applied for retirement, and the hospital management considered engaging Kate Barbaros to be a midwife in a new foundling and maternity ward. Instead of employing a midwife on full-time basis, as was formerly the practice, the State Board decided to hire a private midwife

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<sup>62</sup> K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: pp. 101-102, 106.

<sup>63</sup> For example, prior to becoming midwives in the Dubrovnik area, Vice Peričević, Ana Jurišin and Perica Dagonik were recorded in the sources as seamstresses (K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: p. 106).

<sup>64</sup> On the relations between midwives and doctors in Dubrovnik, see: K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: pp. 138-151.

<sup>65</sup> On Dubrovnik foundling hospital, see: Rina Kralj-Brassard, *Djeca milosrđa. Napuštena djeca u Dubrovniku od 17. do 19. stoljeća*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2013; Rina Kralj-Brassard and Kristina Puljizević, »Porod iz nevolje: skrb o trudnicama i roditeljama pri dubrovačkom nahodištu u drugoj polovici 18. stoljeća«. *Analiz Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 51/1 (2013): pp. 359-388; Rina Kralj-Brassard, *Dubrovačko nahodište i njegovi štićenici (1818-1908)*. Zagreb-Dubrovnik: Zavod za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku, 2020.

to attend to the parturients at the hospital. This was to be done without advertising the vacancy, and the midwife was to be paid per child delivery.<sup>66</sup> The interviews with Kate Barbaros lasted slightly over a month, during August and early September 1888. Barbaros tried to negotiate the best terms possible: instead of 10 fiorins offered by the employer, she demanded 12 fiorins per delivery, which was the usual fee for the “middle class”. Further, she demanded accommodation at the hospital, which until then (in the old foundling hospital) was common practice. Having concluded the interview with midwife Barbaros, Roko Mišetić, hospital manager, conveyed his opinion to the Board “that she would remain content even with 10 fiorins per childbirth”, yet confirmed that the midwife, to be able to visit parturients at the hospital, would have to rent a house near the hospital at a higher price.<sup>67</sup> The Board remained firm in its opinion: “We consider that it is by no means necessary for the midwife to reside near the Foundling Hospital; we consider that it does happen that more than one parturient may be at the Foundling Hospital, and that the midwife makes several visits per turn; the State Board deems the petition of Kate Barbaros exaggerated, and if she is not satisfied with 10 /ten/ fiorins per delivery, the Board will seek another, less demanding midwife, to fill the vacancy by public application at the Municipality”.<sup>68</sup> Threatening to advertise the midwife job vacancy and thus draw other Dubrovnik midwives into the “race” must have largely influenced Barbaros to accept the conditions offered by the employer.

Indeed, competition among midwives did exist, and one had to fight for one's place in the labour market. In June 1888, midwife Kate Krečak applied upon her own initiative for a post of midwife at the hospital i.e., “midwife warden” a month prior to the predecessor's retirement. Documentation was returned to her with an explanation that “(...) the Board had no knowledge of a midwife vacancy at that Hospital”<sup>69</sup> although it was common knowledge in Dubrovnik that Ane

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<sup>66</sup> State Board of the Dalmatian Parliament decided not to publish an advertisement for a full-time midwife vacancy, but to “find” a private midwife with whom they would make a contract (Letter of State Board to the hospital management no. 2236 of 28 July 1888, OBD 1888, unclassified material).

<sup>67</sup> Letter of hospital management to State Board no. 134 of 26 August 1888. OBD 1888, unclassified material.

<sup>68</sup> Letter of State Board to the management of the hospital in Dubrovnik no. 3625 of 5 September 1888. OBD 1888, unclassified material.

<sup>69</sup> Letter of State Board to the management of the hospital in Dubrovnik no. 2236 of 6 June 1888. OBD 1888, unclassified material.

Đivanović's retirement procedure was already under way, and that the new lying-in ward at Pile would be needing a midwife.

Qualified midwives had unfair and illegal competition in self-trained women, and cases such as these were reported to the relevant authorities.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, self-trained midwives enjoyed much support in rural communities, traditionally wary of medical staff and qualified midwives who “smelled of camphor” (in fact, it was phenol, i.e., carbolic acid used for disinfection), and that they “ruin the parturients”.<sup>71</sup> Competition was known to be fierce at times even among qualified midwives. Nikola Lalić, professor of midwifery at the midwifery school in Zadar and author of midwifery handbook, addresses midwives as follows: “And if you are fortunate enough to gain some modest and reliable experience, beware of your fellow colleagues (...) in the first case of medical accident each of them will come at you (...) so that at one point you may lose the fruit of the years' labours”.<sup>72</sup> An attempt to regulate the lack of collegiality among the midwives was introduced by the 1898 Official Midwifery Act (fundamental Act which defines the work of midwives). Article 6 reads: “Among themselves the midwives should behave with tolerance and composition, they should not gossip about each other nor offer one's service obtrusively or in any other illegal manner seek another's disqualification”.<sup>73</sup> An implicit illustration of the tense relations among the colleagues is the fact that in the nineteenth century Dubrovnik midwives often had no expert assistance of their colleagues at their own childbirth (despite their fair number in Dubrovnik), and their deliveries were usually assisted by neighbours or husbands.<sup>74</sup>

### *Women teachers*

Women teachers fall into a special category. This occupation was specific given that celibacy was mandatory, and it may rightly be regarded as the first women's intellectual occupation in the nineteenth century considering that higher

<sup>70</sup> K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: p. 196.

<sup>71</sup> Nikola Lalić, *O važnosti primalje*. Zadar: Nagragjena tiskarnica Petra Jankovića, 1903: p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> N. Lalić, *O važnosti primalje*: p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> *Službeni propisi za primalje (babice)*. Beč: Štampom i nakladom c. k. dvorske i državne štamparije, 1898, Article 6.

<sup>74</sup> K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: pp. 121-122, 195.

education was inaccessible to women in the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>75</sup> For the first time the brides were entered as schoolmistresses (*maestra dalla scuola popolare*) in the parish marriage registers of 1877.<sup>76</sup> The proportion of married women teachers increased from 1% in the 1872-1891 period to 5% in the 1892-1913 period (graphs 4, 5 and 7). The reason behind this might be sought in the relaxation of the marriage ban in 1888, but also in the growth of the female teaching pool after the foundation of the regional teaching school for women in Dubrovnik in 1875.<sup>77</sup>

Teaching, along with midwifery, were among the first modern female professions. The training of female teachers in Dubrovnik started in 1860 in the Convent of the Handmaids of Charity (*Ancelle della Carità*), although Dubrovnik had witnessed schoolmistresses even earlier.<sup>78</sup> In 1875 the training of women teachers was secularised by the establishment of *preparandija* (preparation school for teachers) in Dubrovnik for girls from Dalmatia.<sup>79</sup> Also, by the end of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century the opening of elementary schools in Dubrovnik intensified, and with it the growth of female teaching staff.<sup>80</sup>

Although women teachers often complained of small salary and unequal treatment of the governing bodies as compared to their male counterparts (especially in wages),<sup>81</sup> teaching for women was a privilege of the upper middle class.<sup>82</sup> A

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<sup>75</sup> See: James C. Albisetti, »Female Education in German-Speaking Austria, Germany and Switzerland, 1866-1914«, in: *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. David F. Good, Margarete Grandner and Mary Jo Maynes. Providence-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996: pp. 39-57.

<sup>76</sup> M. Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*: pp. 150-152.

<sup>77</sup> M. Katić, »Ogled o školovanju ženske djece i radu učiteljica na zadarskom području za austrijske uprave«: pp. 148-149.

<sup>78</sup> Before the establishment of first public schools, girls could obtain elementary education at private schools which were run by schoolmistresses. The first public school for girls in Dubrovnik was opened in 1837, and two female teachers worked in it (Ivo Perić, »Dubrovačko školstvo od pada Republike do 1918.« *Anali Historijskog odjela Centra za znanstveni rad JAZU u Dubrovniku* 15-16 (1978): p. 362; Ivo Karač, *Osnovno školstvo u Dubrovniku i okolici*. Dubrovnik: Hrvatski pedagoško-književni zbor Zagreb, 2007: p. 79).

<sup>79</sup> As elsewhere in Europe, religious institutions were the first to organise the training of female teachers. It was first secularised in Prussia in 1832, followed by Piedmont in 1858, Belgium and Portugal in 1860, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1869, and France in 1879 (Rebecca Rogers, »Learning to Be Good Girls and Women: Education, Training and Schools«, in: *The Routledge History of Women in Europe since 1700*, ed. Deborah Simonton. London-New York: Routledge, 2006: pp. 114-115).

<sup>80</sup> I. Perić, »Dubrovačko školstvo od pada Republike do 1918.«: pp. 362-364.

<sup>81</sup> M. Katić, »Ogled o školovanju ženske djece i radu učiteljica na zadarskom području za austrijske uprave«: pp. 149-150.

<sup>82</sup> I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, »Otvaranje prvog ženskog liceja u Zagrebu«: pp. 148, 158.

teaching school diploma was the highest education degree that a girl from Dalmatia could attain, and this profession provided a financially secure existence and intellectual environment in which young women were able to achieve a specific, albeit limited, role.<sup>83</sup> For example, the teachers Pavlina Bogdan and Nike Balarin collaborated on the gathering of ethnological material of Konavle, they cooperated with the Board for Folk Life and Customs, and published their research in *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* and in other publications.<sup>84</sup> During her lifetime, teacher Jelka Miš amassed a significant collection of traditional folk costumes, embroidery and lace, and the donation of her collection marked the foundation of the Ethnographic Museum in Dubrovnik.<sup>85</sup> Although their work was often disrespected, ignored and discriminated in terms of gender,<sup>86</sup> it was not entirely restricted, and thus partly depended on personal engagement and commitment.

A constraining and limiting factor of the women's teaching occupation was the ban on marriage, which was in effect across much of Europe in the nineteenth century. Female teachers were often assigned to remote posts, far away from home, and without their own family they experienced their profession as solitary. Generally speaking, teaching was considered a natural, inherently feminine vocation. The contemporaries perceived teachers as motherly figures, and therefore if they decided to marry and have a family of their own, they were forced to resign.<sup>87</sup> However, married women were not admitted to service in other occupations for the middle-class women in Europe either, such as office and postal clerks, as well as shop assistants in large department stores.<sup>88</sup> Equally, the employment of these young clerks ended with their marriage.<sup>89</sup> This practice has its roots in the

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<sup>83</sup> See: M. Katić, *Uloga žena u kulturnom životu Zadra u 19. i u prva dva desetljeća 20. stoljeća*: pp. 170-208.

<sup>84</sup> Klementina Batina, »Ostavimo mužu muški, a ženi ženski posao: Žene zapisivačice u okviru Radićeve Osnove«. *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje* 56 (2012): pp. 154-157, 161.

<sup>85</sup> »Jelka Miš«. *Blog muzeja i galerija Konavala*. <https://blog.migk.hr/2020/10/02/jelka-mis/> (accessed Feb 2020).

<sup>86</sup> See: K. Batina, »Ostavimo mužu muški, a ženi ženski posao: Žene zapisivačice u okviru Radićeve Osnove«: pp. 147-169.

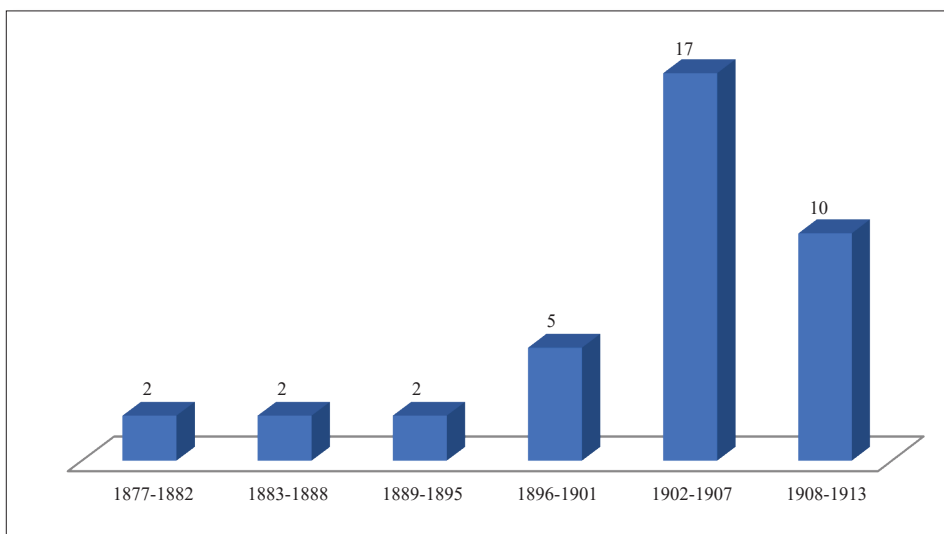
<sup>87</sup> R. Rogers, »Learning to Be Good Girls and Women«: p. 115.

<sup>88</sup> Erna Appelt, »The Gendering of the Service Sector in Late Nineteenth-Century Austria«, in: *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. David F. Good, Margarete Grandner and Mary Jo Maynes. New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996: p. 124; M. Perrot, *Moja povijest žena*: pp. 146-147.

<sup>89</sup> Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman, »Women's Work, Gender Conflict, and Labour Markets in Europe 1500-1900«, in: *Gender and History in Western Europe*, ed. Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent. London: Arnold, 1998: pp. 359-360.

widely accepted public view that women's primary ("natural" and "inherent") duty is to care for the family and household, and that women cannot successfully reconcile the family obligations (or rather their "female nature", that which is "inherent" to them) with work (career).<sup>90</sup>

Figure 6. The number of female teachers recorded in the marriage registers of the Grad parish 1877-1913



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1872–1913

By an Act of 1888, it was regulated that women teachers were allowed to marry only their male counterparts or seek special permission.<sup>91</sup> From the first recorded marriage of a female teacher in the parish registers in the 1877-1913 period, a total of 38 female teachers married in the Grad (City) parish. The number of registered marriages of women teachers increased at the turn of the twentieth century (see Graph 6). The teachers' average age at first marriage in the mentioned period was 25.<sup>92</sup> The teachers most commonly chose clerks for spouses (16 or

<sup>90</sup> J. W. Scot, »The Woman Worker«: pp. 423-426; R. Rogers, »Learning to Be Good Girls and Women«: pp. 107-109.

<sup>91</sup> M. Katić, »Ogled o školovanju ženske djece i radu učiteljica na zadarskom području za austrijske uprave«: p. 149; D. Župan, *Mentalni korzet*: pp. 146-147.

<sup>92</sup> MKV Grad, 1877-1913 (ABD). Data on average age of female teachers at marriage have not been included in Graph 1 due to small sample and different time frame.



42%), followed by an equal number (8) of “proprietors” and teachers (21%), and military or police officers (4 or 10%).<sup>93</sup> With their spouses they constituted a part of the middle and upper citizen social rank. It leaves us to speculate as to how many married teachers, apart from those who married their male colleagues, continued to work even after marriage, although there are certain indicators that such cases may have taken place. For example, teacher Paulina Bijelić, who in her correspondence with Baltazar Bogišić often complained about her status “of a poor Dalmatian teacher”, criticised a younger fellow teacher who got employed at *preparandija*, taking the post she herself had sought. Embittered, Bijelić emphasised her commitment to the teacher’s vocation (“I did not marry only to sacrifice my life for school”), while the younger colleague was married to no other but a well-to-do sea captain sailing “aboard Dubrovnik ships at a 150 fiorin salary”.<sup>94</sup>

On a couple of occasions Bijelić elucidates the circumstances that led to her indignation over the deep-felt injustice. Competition with the mentioned colleague over the vacancy at *preparandija* was mutual and fierce.<sup>95</sup> Bijelić asked Bogišić to recommend her to his friend Niko Nardelli, who at the time held high government offices in Zadar,<sup>96</sup> while her younger colleague, who later got the job, she accused (as stated in the letter to Bogišić) of having given bribery in order to get the teaching post: “The other day, a lady told me, that they said, that the minute the vacancy was advertised she was in Pula with her husband, who happened to be there aboard his steamer, and that she stopped in Zadar where she interfered with those gentlemen, who vote in the regional council, and that for me it was absolutely impossible! Having heard that, both my arms and legs went numb, I was paralysed! Therefore, she is given priority due to her young age, perhaps because they employed her on provisional basis, but she bought the provisional post for 200f. This I tell you, I am saddened and if only I could live a while, I would wire them a letter of thanks”.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Also reported is yet another marriage between a female teacher and shop keeper, as well as that with a goldsmith ( 2% each) (MKV Grad, 1877-1913).

<sup>94</sup> Zorica Šimunović-Petrić, »Život i rad Pavline Bogdan-Bijelić, suradnice odbora za narodni život i običaje«. *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena*. 49 (1983): pp. 666-667. Two years after having written this letter, Pavlina Bijelić eventually married Vlaho Bogdan, secretary of the Tuscan duke Ferdinand IV.

<sup>95</sup> Apparently, the younger colleague criticised the earlier naming of Pavlina Bijelić as *capomaestra* thanks to the protection of “the late Klaić” (Letter of 25 December 1902, Baldo Bogišić Collection).

<sup>96</sup> Letter of 15 December 1902, Baldo Bogišić Collection.

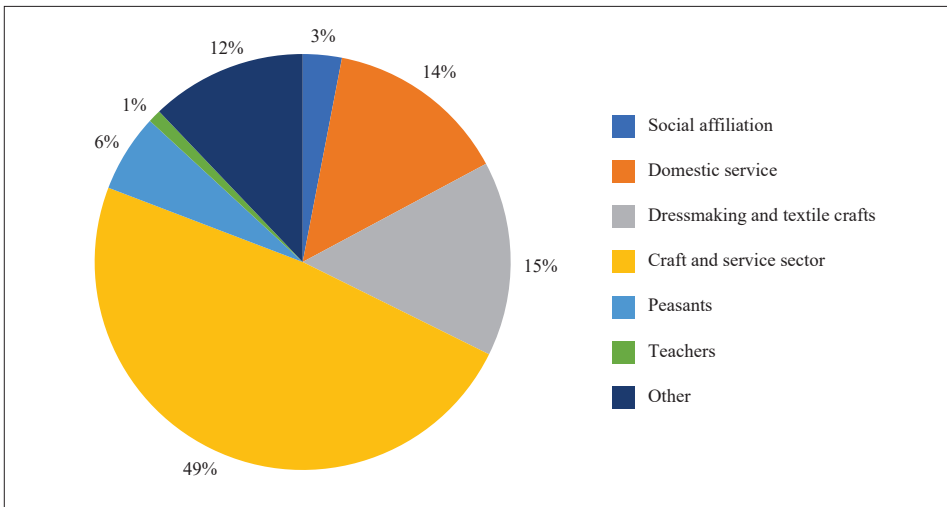
<sup>97</sup> Letter of 25 December 1902, Baldo Bogišić Collection.



*Widows: female occupations at mature age*

Women's life cycles affected their engagement in the labour market. During lifetime, women were often engaged in several different tasks. Young women represented a more mobile and more flexible work force. After marriage, the women often withdrew from work for a short period (due to childbirth and care for infants)<sup>98</sup>, only to later resume work which would leave them enough space to attend to their family and household. For this reason, women's jobs were irregular, seasonal, part-time or labouring; if they were engaged in family business, they remained undetected by the statistics, and often unpaid.<sup>99</sup> Such trends may be observed in the analysis of occupations recorded in the parish marriage registers regarding Dubrovnik widows.<sup>100</sup>

Figure 7. Occupations of widows (at remarriage) in Dubrovnik 1832–1913



Source: HR-ABD-MKV Grad 1872 – 1913

<sup>98</sup> Absence from work due to childbirth in the case of nineteenth-century Dubrovnik midwives was regulated on individual basis, and these leaves usually varied from several days to several months (K. Puljizević, *U ženskim rukama*: p. 120).

<sup>99</sup> D. Simonton, »Women Workers; Working Women«: pp. 134-135.

<sup>100</sup> Omitted from the abovementioned analysis are the widows entered into the marriage registers at least twice, and most likely by different occupations. In order to obtain more accurate proportions of certain occupations (which are related to the “critical point”), the analysis has considered only the first entry, that is, the first employment or social status, while the widows' occupations are analysed separately.

According to parish records, 138 widows remarried, whereby their average age at remarriage ranged between 38 and 43 (Figure 1). Forty-one widows (29.71%) have no entry on status or occupation. Only three widows have their social status entered (two *civile* and one *nobile*). The remaining 94 have either an entry on occupation or information describing their property status (*posidente, vedova pensionata*). Considering that the sample is not numerically representative in order to show the downward or upward trend of some female occupations among widows during the period under analysis, from the results graphically presented (Graph 7) it is still possible to draw certain conclusions. The percentage of women working as domestics is considerably lower (14%), which indicates that this type of employment generally ended with (first) marriage. The young bride left the master's household to enter that of her spouse, where she assumed new duties. Contrary to a lower percentage of domestics at mature age in relation to that percentage of brides at first marriage, the proportion of widows engaged in the craft and service sector is much higher (49%) than with young brides. This might indicate that, even after marriage, the women continued to work as independent workers or as assistants in the husband's craft business, which they often took over after his death.<sup>101</sup> Further, the proportion of 15% of widows was engaged in the textile sector, and 6% in agriculture (Graph 7). A proportion of widows with income (under "other" 12%) concerns wealthy proprietors, and a single case of a widow who enjoyed the pension of her deceased husband.

### Conclusion

The analysis of data on social status and occupation of the brides recorded in the parish marriage registers in Dubrovnik from 1832 to 1913, has confirmed the assumption that the majority of these women worked. Although the mentioned analysis concerns the employment status at marriage, a relatively high marriage age, along with the analysis of the occupations reported for the widows, also imply that women's work was not a short-term preoccupation.

The same data have shown that the proportion of women participating in the labour market, that is, those registered by their occupation, tended to increase

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<sup>101</sup> Occupations reported in Italian in the craft and service sector are: *bottegaja, levatrice approvata, privata, operaja, industriale, lavoratrice, lavandaja, caffetiera, bettoliera*; in Croatian: *radnica, primalja, posebnica, obrtnica, prodavačica*.

towards the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, the number of women reported only by their class status decreased, as a result of the shrinking of the noble rank and its increasing impoverishment. Decline of the nobility in the economic and social spheres has probably given way to a mild change in the mentality, too: work, especially if “appropriate for women” such as that of a schoolteacher, began to be perceived as an acceptable option even for the women of the upper class. However, the majority of working women came from the poorest social stratum. Like elsewhere in Europe, they were maidservants. Equally, an accentuated downward trend of the number of maidservants in Dubrovnik started in the 1880s, whose occurrence corresponds with the global trend, though caused by entirely different reasons. In the end-of-the-nineteenth-century developed countries of Europe the women rather opted for other jobs offered to them as result of the industrial revolution, they could aspire towards professional training, the service sector was developing, and above all, the awareness of individual rights was gaining ground. At the same time, Dubrovnik domestics and their families had just freed from serf bondage which in this area persisted much longer than elsewhere in Dalmatia (and in Europe), and the abolishment of serfdom marked also the end of the indenturing obligation of serf daughters to serve in the masters’ city households. Other poor women in Dubrovnik usually engaged in seamstressing, while a fewer number of women engaged in crafts and small-scale businesses.

The women’s labour market was governed by the common systems of survival, which is an indicator of the importance of paid work for the women’s and family existence. The examples selected from the first two female professions—midwife and teacher—are scanty and fragmented, yet there is no evidence of the violation of professional hierarchy. The women, apparently, avoided conflict with their mainly male superiors, whose recommendations were essential for the women’s employment, wages and retirement. However, although often illiterate and uneducated, the women were bold enough to demand higher wages and better work conditions. By contrast, the relations between female colleagues developed in the air of fierce competition, fuelled by gossip, unfair practice, corruption and bribery.

