

IN PURSUIT OF ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF WOMEN'S PAID WORK IN CROATIA AND SLAVONIA*

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*Women have always worked.
Their work has been linked to the household and
child bearing, it has not been evaluated or paid.¹*

The aim of the paper is to explore the interaction between regulatory provisions governing the status of women, which were part of Croatia's legal system as it developed in the period of history called the short 19th century (1848-1914). The Austrian General Civil Code, the Hungarian-Croatian Trade Code and Industry Act and the Croatian School Act constitute the backbone of the research. More specifically, the focus is on the provisions that enabled the economic emancipation of women in the context of guaranteed gender equality and access to education. Given the economic circumstances in the period under review, the opportunities as well as the restrictions faced by women in the labour market of the time, our intention is to ascertain whether and if so in what way the Austrian and Hungarian-Croatian acts, accompanied by Croatia's autonomous legislative framework, influenced the process of transformation of the traditional understanding of the status of women in society.

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¹ Michelle Perrot, *Moja povijest žena* (Zagreb: Ibis grafika, 2009), 127.

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1. Introduction

Historically speaking, a greater inclusion of women in economic activities is directly linked to a country's economic growth, social changes and changes in its legal system. Participation in the labour market enables women to be financially independent as a reflection of their real equality in society, enhancement of their self-respect and finally achievement of existential security. It is the established point of view that Croatian women began to be more engaged in the country's economy after the Second World War, as a result of intense industrialisation and an increased need for labour force in socialist Yugoslavia, achieving thereby an accelerated emancipation and enforcing their political rights, among others. In addition to this visible economic contribution rewarded with pay, women continued to be burdened with unpaid work at home.² However, in spite of the indisputable significance of the post-war period for the empowerment of women, the achievements of the previous periods are not to be neglected either – from the beginning of modern civil society in the mid-19th century to the dissolution of the Monarchy (1918) and the interwar period of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, subsequently Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-1941). In both periods, changes in the legal system contributed (directly or indirectly) to creating an environment conducive to the economic empowerment of women and their more significant presence in the labour force as a step forward in achieving their economic independence.

In the first period that is at the same time the object of this paper, this legislative framework is a result of the complex legal system of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia as part of the Habsburg / Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (hereinafter: Monarchy). The first momentous change in terms of modernising the legal system occurred at the time of neo-absolutism when new regulations were introduced in the whole Monarchy or the validity of existing (Austrian) regulations was extended so as to create a strong and unified state and ensure necessary conditions for a robust economic development. It was during this period that the application of the Austrian General Civil Code (1852-1853; hereinafter: GCC) was extended to the area of Croatia-Slavonia.

² For example, cf., Vida Tomšič, *Ženska v razvoju socialistične samoupravne Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1980).

In the subsequent one hundred years, the Code would be the backbone of the Croatian-Slavonian legal order. A Decision enacted by the Croatian-Slavonian Parliament (1861) on retaining (Austrian) regulations introduced in the neo-absolutism period paved the way for modernisation of Croatia's legal system "from without and above" that commenced³, with a far-reaching influence on Croatia's legal doctrine, legal practice and legal culture.⁴ The Croatian-Hungarian Compromise (1868; hereinafter: Compromise) guaranteed Croatia legislative and executive autonomy in internal administration, religion, education and the judiciary. Finances and the economy remained, inter alia, out of Croatia's reach and were defined as shared competences. However, although these affairs were part of shared competences *de jure*, they were *de facto* in Hungarian hands, which had a significant impact on Croatia's economic development in the period after the Compromise. Such a division of competences had an impact on structuring the legislative framework relevant for the topic under discussion. Part of shared Hungarian-Croatian competences was the adoption of regulations concerning crafts and trade, whereas school education was part of Croatia's autonomy. These very regulations, Austrian GCC, Hungarian-Croatian Crafts and Trade Act and Croatian acts on school education enabled women to take step into the public sphere, i.e. women's economic activity characterised by paid work as a basis of their economic independence.

2. Economic Situation in Croatia and Slavonia

Croatia's economic development in the short 19th century focused on eliminating relations of the feudal system, developing capitalist relations by strengthening crafts and trade, building an industrial sector, establishing transport connection between Croatian regions and modernisation of society. This development was conditioned by various external and internal constraints as a legacy of previous centuries, as well as the general economic situation in the Monarchy.

A positive momentum of the Croatian economy during the 1850s and 1860s was a consequence of the economic thrust at the level of the entire

³ For more on this cf. Gross, Mirjana, *Počeci moderne Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Globus/Centar za povijesne znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1984), 14 f.

⁴ Cf. §54 of Naputak za privremeno uređenje županija, slobodnih kotareva, slobodnih kraljevskih gradova, povlaštenih trgovišta i seoskih općina u kraljevinah Hrvatskoj, Slavoniji i Dalmaciji, *Sbornik zakonah i naredbah valjanih za kraljevinu Hrvatsku i Slavoniju* (hereinafter: SZN), volume I, piece X, 1863; cf. Art. 1 Pravosudne ustanove građanskog i kaznenog prava, *Saborski spisi sabora kralj. Dalm., Hrv. i Slav. od godine 1861.*, volume IV.

Monarchy.⁵ However, this was at the same time a result of activities of domestic entrepreneurs who invested the capital, previously acquired mainly in commercial deals, in various industrial undertakings, most prominently the food industry.⁶ An additional financial impulse was visible following the recognition of the equality of Jews (1873) in their significant investments in the Croatian-Slavonian economy.⁷ However, when the dual Monarchy system strengthened, it turned out that much more capital than there was in the country at the time was needed for further development, as well as support and protection of state economic policy. Both of these prerequisites lacked in Croatia.

Croatia's money sector capital did not suffice for more significant investments in diverse branches of the economy. At the same time and considering the organisation of financial affairs following the Compromise, Croatia had "the role of raising capital through taxes".⁸ The funds raised in this way entered the state treasury that was governed by the central government using it to boost Hungarian trade, industry and money economy, whereas only a negligible portion of the revenues returned to Croatia through investments. An additional incentive to Hungary's development in the early 1870s came

⁵ The customs (1851) and economic alliance between Austria and Hungary (1867) based on the Compromise was established at the peak of the period of economic liberalism and at the time when both economies of Austria and Hungary still lagged behind those of Western European states. It was beyond any doubt to the benefit of both sides, and it is doubtful whether they would individually achieve more significant development considering that, taken separately or the Monarchy as a whole, they did not manage to catch up with the development of Western European economies by the end of the Compromise period (1918). L. I. Evans, Economic Aspects of Dualism in Austria-Hungary, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 6, no. 18 (Mar., 1928), 529-545; F. Tremel, Die industrielle Entwicklung in Ungarn 1867-1900, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 45, no. 2 (1958), 242-250; P. Hanák, P., Hungary in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: Preponderancy or Dependency, *Austrian History Yearbook*, vol. III, no. 1, 1969, 260-269; D. F. Good, "Stagnation and "Take off" in Austria 1873-1913," *The Economic History Review* 27, no. 1 (Feb. 1974): 72-87; J. Komlos, *The Habsburg Monarchy as a Customs Union: Economic Development in Austria-Hungary in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1983); M. S. Schulze, "Patterns of Growth and Stagnation in the Late Nineteenth Century Habsburg Economy," *European Review of Economic History* 4, no. 3 (Dec. 2000): 311-340.

⁶ In predominantly agrarian Croatia and Slavonia, the industrial revolution began in the food, not in the textile industry. Miroslava Despot, *Industrija građanske Hrvatske 1860-1873* (Zagreb: Institut za historiju radničkog pokreta, 1970), 13.

⁷ Despot, *Industrija građanske Hrvatske*, 137-173; Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, "Židovi u gospodarstvu sjeverne Hrvatske od 1873. do 1941," in *Dva stoljeća povijesti i kulture Židova u Zagrebu i Hrvatskoj*, ed. B. Polić (Zagreb: Studia Iuadico-Croatica 3, 1998), 127-141.

⁸ Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, *Povijest novca u Hrvatskoj od 1527. do 1941.* (Zagreb: Hrvatska narodna banka, 2013), 119.

from Austrian investments, whereas investments in Croatia were very selective and mainly depended on the interests of Hungarian capital.⁹ As a result of the legislative framework of the time, various economic undertakings were mainly incorporated as small businesses, which were then restructured to become public limited companies during the 1870s.¹⁰ However, although with the adoption of the Trade Act (1875) the legislative framework was substantially liberalised, the Croatian entrepreneurs' financial poverty, i.e. shortage of capital was a reason why the number of various companies, primarily public limited companies, was not greater.¹¹ Moreover, the financial dependence defined by the Compromise made impossible any support to Croatia's economy from the land budget,¹² and equally so the support of the central authorities in Budapest lacked as well. As emphasised, Hungary assisted its own economic development through different tax exemptions or support for new or expansion of already existing economic undertakings¹³ using the funds from the state budget, including taxes collected in Croatia¹⁴ and by means of a number of acts enacted since the 1880s.

⁹ L. Katus, "Economic Growth in Hungary during the Age of Dualism (1867-1918)," *Studia Historica* 62, (1970): 35-127; M. Pammer, "Austrian Private Investments in Hungary, 1850-1913," *European Review of Economic History* 2, no. 2 (1998): 142; I. T. Berend; G. Ránki, *Evropska periferija i industrijalizacija 1780-1914* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1996), 123-124.

¹⁰ The Zagrebačka Plinara (Gas Company) and Paromlin (Steam-Powered Flour Mill) were incorporated in 1862, and then restructured to become public limited companies in 1872 and 1873 respectively, whereas the Stern family's "Povlastjena tvornica koža u Zagrebu" (Privileged Leather Factory in Zagreb) was founded in 1869 and restructured as a public limited company in 1871. The Zagrebačka tvornica obuvala (Shoe Company) was one of the few originally incorporated as a public limited company. Despot, *Industrija građanske Hrvatske*, 152-155; Iskra Iveljić, *Očevi i sinovi – privredna elita Zagreba u drugoj polovici 19. stoljeća* (Zagreb: Leykam international, 2007), 137-140.

¹¹ For example, Croatia's nobility invested the redemption fees from the urbarial land in the shares of foreign public limited companies. When Vienna's stock exchange collapsed, all the money was lost and an opportunity to invest in domestic industrial undertakings was missed. Kolar Dimitrijević, *Povijest novca*, 122.

¹² Funds from the land budget were used to support agriculture and livestock husbandry, but not trade, crafts and transportation. *Spomenica III. sastanka Hrvatsko-slavonskih trgovačko-obrtnih komora o gospodarstvenim odnošajima kraljevine Hrvatske i Slavonije*, Zagreb, 1899, 3.

¹³ R. L. Rudolph, *Banking and Industrialization in Austria-Hungary. The Role of Banks in the Industrialization of the Czech Crownlands, 1873-1914*. (Cambridge, 1976), 182; cf. Iveljić, *Očevi i sinovi*, 136; I. T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003), 141-142.

¹⁴ For more on the state budget cf. Stjepan Radić, *Današnja financijalna znanost* (Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1908), 319, 324, 331 f.

Croatia's central government economic policy was implemented by Ban Khuen Héderváry (1883-1903) during the two decades that were crucial for strengthening new forms of organisation of production.¹⁵ Nevertheless, development was not stopped. In the late 1890s, but more strongly after Khuen Héderváry left the office of Ban, a more noticeable economic development began. Domestic entrepreneurs did not sufficiently invest their profit in industrialisation since, considering an underdeveloped market, this risk continued to be huge. Consequently, funds were invested, as earlier, in crafts and small industrial undertakings as well as trade activities. From larger-scale industrial undertakings, one should single out cement factories, production of tannin, wood products, sugar and textile factories that employed more than 100 workers and were mainly linked to the exploitation of Croatian natural resources or geographical location.

The economic growth achieved in the period under observation was such that Croatian-Slavonian economy could be considered a dynamic economy which, in relation to other countries of Central Europe, developed at a much faster pace, even though this development was actually just catching up with the economies of West European countries. Therefore, Croatia underwent a profound transformation of its economic and social structure at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. With industrial entrepreneurship and investments in transportation, trade and craft, the share of agricultural population shrank, although modestly.

3. Legal Framework for Women's Paid Work

In Croatia as a predominantly agricultural country, women were predominantly engaged in agriculture and were part of a sizeable unskilled labour force. As a rule, they were not paid for their work or were poorly paid, which prevented them from becoming economically independent. However, bearing in mind the economic activities launched and the achieved economic growth, what was the women's economic position like? Did women participate, and to what extent, in the other so-called non-agricultural activities, primarily in the activities of the secondary and tertiary sector, such as crafts, trade, industry or finance as relevant indicators of the progress achieved? To what extent did the existing legal framework contribute to this and did it enable a breakthrough of women from the private into the public sphere which is, inter alia, characterised by paid work as a foundation for economic independence?

¹⁵ Igor Karaman, "Osnovna obilježja razvitka industrijske privrede u sjevernoj Hrvatskoj do Prvog svjetskog rata," *Acta historico-oeconomica Iugoslaviae: časopis za ekonomsku povijest Jugoslavije* 1 (1974): 49.

In addition to GCC as the backbone of the Croatian-Slavonian legal system and trade and crafts legislation that enabled women to participate in key economic activities, the educational system beyond any doubt is very prominent. Its modern development began under Ban Ivan Mažuranić (1873-1880) through the introduction of compulsory primary school education for all children (urban and rural) irrespective of sex. In this way, foundations were laid to decrease illiteracy among girls who could then be included in further forms of education with a possibility of acquiring certain qualifications and finally entering the labour market.

3.1. The General Civil Code as the Backbone of Legal Regulation of the Status of Women

The regulation of the legal status of women in still exceptionally patriarchal Croatian society began to change after the introduction of the Austrian GCC.¹⁶ With its explicit provisions on gender equality, GCC provided for an equal legal status of men and women. However, the guaranteed equality was not consequently implemented. Nevertheless, GCC was considered a fairly progressive piece of legislation in terms of regulating the status of women, married or not. A fact testifying to this is that GCC, unlike some other European civil codes,¹⁷ guaranteed a high degree of economic independence of women considering that it did not restrict their freedom to pursue an independent occupation. In addition, with the GCC coming into force, the former regulations restricting the legal capacity of women and placing them under gender tutelage ceased to be applied.

In this period, labour law relations were part of civil law and governed by GCC. The relationship between worker and employer was defined as a hiring relationship where the worker placed his labour force at the employer's disposal receiving a wage in return (§1151). The rules of GCC in chapter XXVI (§§ 1151-1173) governed all labour law relations not governed by special regulations (*lex specialis*) such as trade or crafts law.

¹⁶ "Cesarski patent od 29. studena 1852. kriepostan za kraljevine Ugarsku, Hrvatsku i Slavoniju, vojvodinu srbsku i tamiški banat, kojim se za ove krunovine uvodi sa više stegah i s potanjim ustanovami obći građanski zakonik od 1. lipnja 1811., i u kriepost stavlja počamši od 1. svibnja 1853," in *Tumač obćemu austrijanskomu građanskom zakoniku – knjiga I*, Adolf Rušnov, and Stjepan Posilović (Zagreb: Tisak i naklada knjižare L. Hartmana (Stj. Kugli), [1910]) 19–26.

¹⁷ Regarding women's rights in the French Civil Code cf.: Ute Gerhard, "Women's Rights in Civil Law in Europe (Nineteenth Century)," *Clio. Femmes. Genre. Histoire* 43, No. 1 (2016): 250–273, 256–260.

3.2. Rules for Servants – Women as Maids

Among special regulations (*lex specialis*), having in mind women's work and its regulation, the Rules for Servants in the Country¹⁸ and Cities¹⁹ of Croatia-Slavonia (*Gesindeordnung*), and the Rules for Servants in the Military Frontier are relevant.²⁰ Although those who worked as maids and house servants were dissatisfied with these regulations on the one hand, and masters (i.e. principals) on the other, they did not change and remained in force until the end of the Monarchy (and after its collapse).

Service in private households was the predominant occupation and livelihood of many women, especially those from rural areas, who had no education or a poor one, and a step forward in their economic independence. Reasons why they went to become maids were different. For young girls, this was an opportunity, especially if they came from deprived families, and the majority of them did, to earn their dowry or start their own small business. However most frequently the reasons were subsistence and through maid service they made money not only for themselves, but for their parents and younger siblings. When elderly women and women from the middle class went to work as maids, this was mainly due to changed circumstances in their lives, for example widowhood or inability to ensure their subsistence.²¹

Rules for servants in cities did not distinguish between male and female house servants, household servants increasingly became a feminised occupation. However, in comparison with the neighbouring countries, the share of (home) servants in the total population was small, just one per cent, considering that Croatia had few cities where the presence of servants was characteristic.²² Rules regulated the master-servant relationship and upon entering the service the servant became a member of the household and under the master's supervision both in the house and outside the house with an obligation to behave morally, virtuously, honestly and decently. Working hours were not regulated, the master could not order a servant to work more and do more difficult chores than he or she could, considering their physical abilities, and the wages were paid out in an agreed amount and manner. If the amount of

¹⁸ "Privremeni služinski red za ladanje u Kraljevini Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji," *Zemaljsko-vladni list za kraljevine Hrvatsku i Slavoniju* (hereinafter: ZVL), II division, piece VII, no. 44 (1853).

¹⁹ "Služinski red za gradove," ZVL, II division, piece III, no. 5 (1857).

²⁰ "Služinski red za gradske občine i služinski red za seoske občine u hrv.-slav. Krajini," *List zemaljske uprave za hrvatsko-slavonsku vojnu krajinu od godine 1881*, piece I (1881).

²¹ Katarina Horvat, *Kućna služinčad u Zagrebu 1880.-1914*. (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2021), 118, 125.

²² *Ibid.*, 39, 50, 51.

wages was not agreed, then wages were paid in the amount that is customary to the place (§§17, 18, 19). The service could be terminated by agreement of both sides, and reasons were specified when one could give or receive notice (§§ 24, 28, 29).

Although there was a broad range of servants' occupations, women who worked as domestic servants in private households performed a number of typical female jobs, such as cooks or room maids. However, the majority of households in Croatia and Slavonia actually had just one servant, a so-called "jack-of-all-trades". In addition to private households, female servants were also employed in inns, cafés, hotels, shops, etc. Within this category of occupation, differences existed as to the knowledge and skills required, which finally had an impact on wages. Servants were generally considered to be a special category of employed and were not included in the group of "workers". The reason being that they were tied to the family they worked in and had a special personal relationship with them.²³ Some households also had cleaning women who worked for them for a wage. However, the difference between them and female servants was that they had working hours and did not live in the same household with their masters.²⁴

3.3. Crafts and Trade Legislation – Craftswomen, Tradeswomen, Female Workers

After 1848, due to changed social and economic conditions, it was paramount to amend the legal framework that would enable the development of a market economy and eliminate barriers to the development of crafts and trade that existed up to that time. Thus, in 1851, an instruction was introduced on how to regulate jobs in trade and crafts declaring freedom of trade and crafts in spite of retaining the organisation of guilds. A minimum amount of capital needed for a certain type of economic activity was prescribed.²⁵ Then, in the neo-absolutism period, a number of Austrian regulations were introduced, including the aforementioned GCC, which, inter alia, guaranteed the principles of freedom of trade and crafts. The Austrian Trade Regulation Act (1859)

²³ Ibid., 98, 100.

²⁴ Ibid., 65.

²⁵ Capital of 5,000 forints was needed to open a factory, 30,000 forints for a wholesale company, and between 1,000 and 5,000 forints for retail. "Privremeni napatuk o uredjenju tèrgovačkih i obèrtničkih poslova u krunovini Hèrvtskoj i Slavonii od 20. travnja 1851.," *ZVL*, piece X, no. 62 (1851); Mirjana Gross; Agneza Szabo, *Prema hrvatskom građanskom društvu* (Zagreb: Globus, 1992), 324.

was drafted according to the same principles.²⁶ The Act introduced freedom of crafts registered with the authorities, whereas the licence (concession) remained in force only for some manufacturing branches, which eliminated the difference between licensable craft and factory production. To practice a craft, no evidence of qualification was required. The principles applicable to men were applied to women as well, although they received lower wages than men.²⁷

Within the framework of the Compromise, crafts and trade were part of shared Hungarian-Croatian competences. Consequently, the Hungarian-Croatian Parliament adopted the Crafts Act (legislative article 1872:VIII), which comprised the basic principles of the 1859 Austrian Act thereby ensuring their consequent practical application by abolishing guilds and liberalising crafts. Although Croatian entrepreneurs, like Hungarian, advocated and fought for the freedom of (trade and) crafts and a modern market economy, they believed that the freedom of opening and practicing crafts as guaranteed by the Act went too far and had to be restricted, inter alia, in a way that only an individual who could prove possessing the necessary qualifications could practice them.²⁸ These requests were ultimately accepted and built into the new Crafts Act (legislative article 1884: XVII)²⁹, which consequently required certificates of qualifications to practice a certain craft.

Following the Crafts Act, the Parliament adopted the Trade Act (legislative article 1875: XXXVII).³⁰ Although the Act was equally valid in the territory of Croatia and Hungary, in reality some differences existed with regard to the Croatian and the Hungarian wording of the Act and subsidiary sources of commercial law. It also turned out that, in the context of its application, the economic development of the countries was not equal.

²⁶ "Kaiserliches Patent, womit eine Gewerbe-Ordnung für den ganzen Umfang des Reiches, mit Ausnahme des venetianischen Verwaltungsgebietes und der Militärgränze, erlassen, und vom 1. Mai 1860 angefangen in Wirksamkeit gesetzt wird," *Reich-Gesetz-Blatt für das Kaiserthum Oesterreich*, No. 227 (1859).

²⁷ Gross, and Szabo, *Prema hrvatskom građanskom društvu*, 325.

²⁸ Rudolf Horvat, *Povijest trgovine, obrta i industrije u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: AGM: Hrvatska gospodarska komora, 1994), 263-265.

²⁹ "Zakonski članak XVII:1884. zajedničkog ugarsko-hrvatskog sabora: Obrtni zakon," *SZN*, piece X, no. 31 (1884).

³⁰ "Zakonski članak XXXVII.:1875. zajedničkog hrvatsko-ugarskog sabora o trgovačkom zakonu," *SZN*, piece XXXIII, no. 79 (1875); "Razpis bana kraljevinah Dalmacije, Hrvatske i Slavonije od 7. prosinca 1875., br. 23493., glede roka, kojim stupa u život zakonski članak XXXVII. zajedničkoga sabora od godine 1875 o trgovačkom zakonu (komad XXXIII., br. 79. sbornika od godine 1875.)," *SZN*, piece XXXVIII, no. 86 (1875); "Zakon od 28. travnja 1878., valjan za hrvatsko-slavonsku vojnu krajinu," *List zem. uprave za hrv.-slav. Vojnu krajinu*, piece V, May 18, 1879.

According to the Crafts and Trade Acts, each adult, regardless of sex, was entitled to independently practice a craft or engage in trade. Therefore, women were no longer considered unskilled labour force in crafts and trade as (family) assistants in a craft and trade. They began to assert themselves as independent craftswomen and tradeswomen, not exclusively in the cases when they took over the business after, for example, the death of their husband. However, looking at the structure of occupations in crafts, independent craftswomen were engaged in traditional female occupations such as sewing (tailor's trade), laundry and ironing, inn-keeping.³¹ Equally so, although there were different profiles in trade, women predominantly traded in foodstuffs and beverages, and prevailed among street and market vegetable and fruit vendors.

In addition to crafts and trade, industry too fell under the shared Croatian-Hungarian competence according to the Compromise. In spite of difficulties in distinguishing craft, manufacture or industrial facilities based on the organisation of production and the number of employees, enterprises that employed more than twenty workers were considered industrial.³² The late 19th and early 20th centuries were characterised by a steady increase in the number of companies and workers. Thus, in 1880, there was only one company employing more than 500 (up to 1000) workers in the territory of Croatia-Slavonia. In 1906, there were five such companies, and two additional companies had more than 1,000 workers.³³ At the same time, more than one half of the total Croatian-Slavonian industrial facilities were located in cities.³⁴ Women worked as unskilled labour force in different industrial sectors. They were also employed, for example, in the mining industry,³⁵ and prevailed in the structure of employees of the Zagreb and Rijeka tobacco factories, as well as the Zagreb match company Pulser & Moses.³⁶ Working conditions were hard, often with health risks,³⁷ wages very low, lower than those of male workers, and often covered just the bare necessities. It is believed that such low wages instigated the first known strike of women workers in the Zagreb match company in 1875.³⁸

³¹ Iveljić, *Očevi i djeca*, 285, 286, 287; Horvat, *Kućna služinčad*, 28, 101.

³² For this criterion and problems of analysis cf. Igor Karaman, *Industrijalizacija građanske Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1991), 188-190.

³³ Karaman, *Industrijalizacija*, 202-203.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

³⁵ Despot, *Industrija*, 139, 143-144.

³⁶ Gross, and Szabo, *Prema hrvatskom modernom građanskom društvu*, 333, 334; Despot, *Industrija*, 157-158.

³⁷ Despot, *Industrija*, 169.

³⁸ <https://www.muzejsusjedstvatresnjevka.org/lokacija/tvornica-sibica-pulsera-i-mose-sa-savska-139>, accessed August 17, 2023.

At the beginning of the new century, and especially in the period just before the outbreak of the First World War, women appeared in the clerical structure of employed citizens in these sectors, primarily in occupations of cashiers and bookkeepers. A similar trend could be noticed in transportation (post, telegraph, telephone, railways) as well as finances (credit institutes, banks, saving banks, credit associations) where women were increasingly employed as clerks or auxiliary workers.

3.4. Women's Education – A Step Forward

Education enabled women to acquire economic and social independence and is considered an important step in acquiring political rights. Socio-economic circumstances in Croatia-Slavonia were not favourable for the development of women's movement, but nevertheless, women's education was one of the rare women issues in which the general public showed an interest. Croatia's educational system underwent significant changes as a result of Ban Mažuranić's reforms implemented in the 1870s when compulsory five-year primary education was introduced for all children, including girls.³⁹ Since attendance in primary school was mandatory, parents could be punished if they failed to send their children to school – by a reprimand of the municipal school board, a fine if the reprimand was not effective and finally, if the fine could not be collected, by imprisonment for one to two days. Bearing in mind widespread prejudice about the education of girls, the number of illiterate girls was slowly decreasing and their education continued to be neglected.⁴⁰ In addition to the fact that school was attended by a small number of girls, most of them, especially girls from deprived rural backgrounds, ended their education at the primary school level.

In the context of the state's more systematic care for women's education, part of reform efforts in the 1870s was opening schools for girls. There, they could continue their education after primary school, acquire certain qualifications or a specific occupation and consequently enter the labour market and attain economic independence. For example, the Sewing and Printing School (1879), subsequently Women's Crafts School (1885) or the Royal Women Professional School (1892) was opened in Zagreb, a crafts and trades school that

³⁹ "Zakon od 14. listopada 1874. ob ustroju pučkih škola i preparandijah za pučko učiteljstvo u kraljevinah Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji," *SZN*, piece XX, no. 49 (1874).

⁴⁰ Dinko Župan, *Mentalni korzet – spolna politika obrazovanja žena u Banskoj Hrvatskoj (1868-1918)* (Osijek – Slavonski Brod: Učiteljski fakultet u Osijeku, Hrvatski institut za povijest – Podružnica za povijest Slavonije, Srijema i Baranje, 2013), 74.

enabled girls from all estates to get education not only in household and crafts skills, but also in trade and bookkeeping.⁴¹ Professional women's schools were opened in other parts of Croatia as well preparing girls for crafts- and trades-women occupations. The fact that the Zagreb school qualified for occupations of cashiers or bookkeepers represented a significant shift from traditional female occupations. These two (clerical) occupations showed a noticeable increase in the number of women pursuing them since the beginning of the 20th century. However, generally speaking, practice unfortunately showed that these schools did not give enough incentive for female entrepreneurship, especially in the case of craftswomen who applied for craft licences mostly based on certificates of qualifications issued by other craftsmen, rather than based on their professional school diplomas.⁴²

Women needed special knowledge for a number of occupations they pursued or to which they were allowed access at some point – especially in educational or health care institutions. Thus, girls could be educated to become teachers in the Monastic Female Teachers School and since 1875 in the Royal Land Female Teachers School. The School closed already in 1884 with the explanation that it was superfluous since a larger number of female teachers than needed had been educated in the previous years.⁴³ Subsequently, girls were allowed to enrol in some male teachers schools as well.⁴⁴ The occupation of teachers provided women with relatively secure and stable employment that was also financially satisfactory since the pay of a female teacher was equal to that of their male colleagues, which was rare in the Monarchy and at the European level alike.⁴⁵ When introducing the bill to Parliament, the Government explained that female teachers performed the same duties as male teachers and needed to be put on an equal footing with male teachers both with respect to salaries and other rights. The Government particularly felt that “it was not appropriate to restrict their freedom with regard to marriage – consequently, they can also start a family...”.⁴⁶ However, the 1888 amendments to the Act virtually made further work after marriage impossible for female teachers

⁴¹ Ibid., 117.

⁴² Ibid., 114, 121.

⁴³ Antun Cuvaj, *Građa za povijest školstva*, vol. VI (Zagreb: Trošak i naklada Kr. hrv.-slav.-dalm. zem. vlade, Odjela za bogošt. i nastavu, 1910), 58; Antun Cuvaj, *Građa za povijest školstva*, vol. VII (Zagreb: Trošak i naklada Kr. hrv.-slav.-dalm. zem. vlade, Odjela za bogošt. i nastavu, 1911) 192–199.

⁴⁴ Župan, *Mentalni korzet*, 166.

⁴⁵ Equal pay for male and female teachers was provided for in Czechia, however not in England or in the USA. Elise Krasnohorska, “Bohemia,” in *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*, ed. Theodore Stanton (New York 1884), 452.

⁴⁶ Cuvaj, *Građa za povijest školstva*, vol. VI, 373.

because marriage was considered voluntary relinquishment of service.⁴⁷ This provision was not amended until 1914 but in such a way that female teachers needed approval by the Land Government to get married, unless they were about to marry a teacher with a permanent post.⁴⁸

In addition to schools for teachers, a school for midwives is another example of a school enabling women to acquire a very specific profession. With the adoption of the Act on Founding Universities (1874),⁴⁹ the envisaged school of medicine was supposed to have a midwifery chair.⁵⁰ High costs of launching a course in medicine postponed it, which had an impact on the education of midwives. Independently of the University and the School of Medicine, the Land Government approved the founding of a Midwifery Institute, however again without success.⁵¹ Founding a school for midwives would finally become part of the organisation of the health care implemented by the government of Ban Mažuranić. A midwifery school, which began to operate in 1877, was founded to educate midwives, primarily those that would work in rural areas.⁵² It was founded under the name Royal Midwifery School as part of the public and general Hospital of the Merciful Sisters in 83 Ilica Street. At the same address, the Land Maternity Clinic was opened as “a training field for students of midwifery”. Failure of past attempts to found a school for midwives was partly due to the inability to recruit students among illiterate

⁴⁷ Amendments to the Act intended to reduce female teachers' pays in relation to male teachers and thus put them on an equal footing with male and female teachers in the Austrian part of the Monarchy. However, this idea was subsequently abandoned. Župan, *Mentalni korzet*, 146.

⁴⁸ The Government's reasoning reads: "... experience thus far suggests that school interests have suffered major damage as a result of the marriage of female teachers, almost without exception, because of their family relations, frequent leaves and interruption of their training for too long period of time." Cuvaj, *Građa za povijest školstva* vol. VII, 582; cf. §152 "Zakon ob uređenju pučke nastave i obrazovanja pučkih učitelja," *SZN*, piece XVII, no. 74 (1888) also §1 of the Act that revises §152 of the Act dated 31 October 1888 on the organisation of teaching in elementary schools and education of teachers in the Kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia, *SZN*, piece III, no. 27 (1914).

⁴⁹ "Zakonski članak ob ustrojstvu sveučilištva Franje Josipa I u Zagrebu," *SZN*, piece III, no. 3 (1874).

⁵⁰ Prior to the foundation of the first schools for midwives, schools of medicine in the Monarchy organised their education. Thus, towards the end of the 18th century two midwives worked in the territory of Croatia. They learnt their profession at the schools of medicine in Vienna and Prague. Ivana Horbec, *Zdravlje naroda – bogatstvo države* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2015), 192-193.

⁵¹ Helena Bunijevac, Vladimir Dugački, and Stella Fatović-Ferenčić, *Sto dvadeset godina Škole za primalje u Zagrebu*, (Zagreb: Gandalf, 1997), 34.

⁵² "Zakon od 29. listopada 1876. ob ustrojenju primaljskog učilišta u Zagrebu," *SZN*, piece XXXV (1876).

girls. Therefore, the Act enabled the education of illiterate village women (“not skilled in reading and writing”), but who could obtain a certificate from their municipal bodies, with the countersignature of the parish priest confirming they were gifted persons. The possibility to apply for a midwifery course in spite of illiteracy was used by the first applicants and among sixty applicants, ten could not read or write.⁵³ Obviously, literacy,⁵⁴ as well as the aptitudes of individual students was a problem that persisted even in 1910, almost 30 years after the opening of the school. It was emphasised that applicants mainly had completed four grades of school, although there were some who attended school only one or two years, however it seemed “... as if they (students, A/N) were sought with candle in the village, and those least gifted and least skilled were sent to us...”.⁵⁵ The foundation of schools was of special significance for rural women who had an advantage for admission since efforts were made to enable at least one person for the profession in each municipality.⁵⁶ The education of rural students was funded by their municipalities, or the state if the financial situation of their municipality was unfavourable. It was also possible to finance one’s own education, however, in such cases applicants had to fulfil all the statutory prescribed requirements including the condition of literacy. Primary enrolees in the course were women from Croatia and Slavonia, and if their numbers were not sufficient, then students from other parts of the Monarchy as well as other states could be admitted, and their education would be paid by the municipalities, the state, or themselves. The number of midwives increased but remained small. In 1892, there were 596 midwives, in 1905 the number was 888 and in 1910, 925 midwives, which was an increase by 329 midwives over a period of 18 years.⁵⁷ In some counties, the situation was extremely harsh and the number of midwives was significantly below the

⁵³ *Liječnički vjesnik*, no. 11 (1877): 182.

⁵⁴ In 1903, the Land Government issued an order whereby a midwifery teacher or assistant had to check the reading and writing skills of every student admitted to the school upon arrival at the course. If it was found that the student could not read or write, which was not specified in her application, the school had to inform the Department for Religious Affairs and forward to them the application for admission. “Naredba kr. zem. vlade, odjela za bogoštovje, od 22. prosinca 1903., br. 17756” in *Sbirka zakona i naredaba tičućih se zdravstva i zdravstvene službe*, ed. Vladimir Katičić (Zagreb: 1906), 237-238.

⁵⁵ Franjo Durst, “O primaljstvu u opće i novogradnji zemaljskog rodilišta i primaljskog učilišta u zemaljskoj bolnici te predložima iznešenim od narodnog zastupnika dra. Radovana pl. Markovića u hrvatskom saboru za rasprave o idemnitetu 16. travnja o.g. obzirom na primaljstvo, zemaljsko rodilište i primaljsko učilište,” *Liječnički vjesnik*, no. 5 (1910): 207.

⁵⁶ *Liječnički vjesnik*, no. 10 (1877): 165.

⁵⁷ *Statistički godišnjak Kraljevina Hrvatske i Slavonije*, II., 1906.-1910. (Zagreb 1917), 221; Fran S. Gundrum, “Zdravstvena služba u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji u godini 1905.,” *Liječnički vjesnik*, no. 6 (1909): 153-154.

already low Croatian average.⁵⁸ Within the health care sector in addition to midwives, women could also work as pharmacy trainees after they were allowed to be educated for the profession in 1901. If they had a Government licence, they were entitled to independently run public pharmacies.⁵⁹

An additional breakthrough was made with the foundation of a Women's Lyceum in Zagreb (1892), as some kind of women's secondary school, upon completion of which girls could enrol in universities. Proper secondary school education was not opened for women before 1917. In 1895, the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb enrolled the first female auditors of classes, and six years later the first full-time female students. In 1918, the possibility was introduced for girls to enrol in the Faculty of Law.

4. Conclusion

The period of the short 19th century in Croatia was a time of development of capitalist relations, industrialisation and modernisation of society. Although Croatia achieved economic progress, at the time the Monarchy disintegrated Croatia remained a predominantly agricultural country in which women were mainly engaged in agriculture and were part of a large mass of unskilled labour force. Women were not paid for their work or, compared to working men, were paid less and at the limit of subsistence minimum.

The changes that enabled their economic visibility were a result of Croatia's complex legal system that began to develop from the middle of the 19th century and was characterised by the intertwining of Austrian, Hungarian-Croatian and Croatian regulations. The Austrian GCC as the backbone of the legal system, and Hungarian-Croatian trade and crafts legislation enabled women to participate in the activities that were key for evaluating economic progress, not limiting their legal personality and the right to labour or independent practice of craft or trade for example. In spite of the fact that women entered the labour market, the opportunities available to them were quite limited. This limitation was, inter alia, conditioned by an almost complete

⁵⁸ For more on the development of a school for midwives and midwifery in general cf. Mirela Krešić, and Monika Rakitičan, "Primaljstvo u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji 1876.-1918.: zakonodavni okvir ustroja primaljske službe," *Historijski zbornik* 68, no. 2 (2015): 277-295.

⁵⁹ "Naredba kr. hrvatsko-slavonsko-dalmatinske zemaljske vlade, odjel za bogoštovje i nastavu, u sporazumku sa kr. zemaljsko-vladinim odjelom za unutarnje poslove u Zagrebu, od 18. listopada 1901. broj 16.074, glede pristupa ženskinja k ljekarničkom zvanju u kraljevinah Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji," in *Priručnik za političku upravnu službu u kraljevinah Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*, ed. Milan Smrekar, vol. 3 (Zagreb, 1902), 1071.

absence of a systematic approach to education, and especially the education of women. With the introduction of compulsory school attendance for all children independently of their sex, the process of slow, yet constant reduction of illiteracy among girls commenced. At the same time, their inclusion in the secondary school system, and towards the end of this period, in the higher education system laid the foundation for them to acquire concrete qualifications and enter the labour market. However, access to education did not necessarily mean or guarantee their more visible presence in the labour market. It was also conditioned by the role of women in society. This role, regrettably, has not changed significantly to this day and women, although more educated and having access to a greater variety of occupations, are still underpaid, and still have to break through the glass ceiling.

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“Kaiserliches Patent, womit eine Gewerbe-Ordnung für den ganzen Umfang des Reiches, mit Ausnahme des venetianischen Verwaltungsgebietes und der Militärgränze, erlassen, und vom 1. Mai 1860 angefangen in Wirksamkeit gesetzt wird.” *Reich-Gesetz-Blatt für das Kaiserthum Oesterreich*, No 227 (1859).

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