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**Work and Toil**  
**The Breadwinner Ideology and Women's Work**  
**in 19th and 20th Century Italy\***

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**Abbreviations:**

Art./artt. = articolo/i (= Article, articles);

Capo/cap. = capo/capitolo (= Chapter);

*C1871 = Popolazione classificata per professioni, culti e infermità principali. Censimento 31 dicembre 1871 (= Population Census of 1871).*

*C1881 = Censimento della popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 31 dicembre 1881 (= Population Census of 1881);*

*C1901 = Censimento della popolazione del Regno al 10 febbraio 1901 (= Population Census of 1901);*

*C1931 = VII Censimento generale della popolazione 21 aprile 1931-IX (= Population Census of 1931);*

*C1936 = VIII Censimento generale della popolazione 21 aprile 1936-XIV (= Population Census of 1936);*

*C1951 = IX Censimento generale della popolazione, 4 novembre 1951 (= Population Census of 1951);*

*C1961 = 10° Censimento generale della popolazione, 15 ottobre 1961 (= Population Census of 1961);*

*C1971 = 11° Censimento generale della popolazione, 24 ottobre 1971 (= Population Census of 1971);*

*C1981 = 12° Censimento generale della popolazione, 25 ottobre 1981 (= Population Census of 1981); C1991 = 13° Censimento generale della popolazione and delle abitazioni, 20 ottobre 1991 (= Population Census of 1991);*

D.l. = Decreto legge;

DGS = Direzione Generale della/di Statistica (= Central Office of Statistics);

D.p.r. = Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica (= Decree of the President of the Republic);

ISTAT = Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (National Institute for Statistics);

L. = Legge (= Law);

Lib. = Libro (= Book);

MAIC = Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria and Commercio (= Ministry for Agriculture, Industry and Trade);

R.d. = Regio decreto (= Royal decree);

SRI = Statistica del Regno d'Italia (= Statistics of the Italian Reign);

Tit. = Titolo (= Title);

T.u. = Testo unico (= Collection of laws).

## 1. Introduction

If any Subject should wish [...] to be promoted *ex integro* to the Order of Nobles [...] the Supplicant will prove that neither he nor his father has practiced a manual Craft or debased his own name or used his trademark in Craft for at least thirty years [...]. And if this person [...] once having been admitted to the Order of Nobles should personally exercise a Craft, prejudicial to the Nobility, either in his own Dwelling or with his Trademark, or employing himself in a Ministry or Office, unbecoming to the dignity of an honest living, or to a Noble in the customs of the Country, he will immediately be struck off the Order of Nobles<sup>1</sup>.

This quotation is an extract from a measure taken in 1726 by the authorities in the Italian city of Bologna. It is not possible to analyse in detail what was exactly meant when they spoke of activities prejudicial to the nobility or to examine the different concepts of work which exist in modern times, in particular among the *élites*. I have begun my paper with this quotation because it allows me to recall that, to varying degrees, the different European nobilities of the *Ancien régime* made it an essential element (although not sufficient) to live from private income or at least not practise “mechanical craft” if one had to be considered among their ranks. Moreover, to rise to the group of nobles who would afford to live without working, meant acceding to rights which other ranks were denied. “The aristocracy, the literati, and the men in power have traditionally had contempt for those who must work. The good life was the life of leisure”, one author wrote<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, it is the struggle against the nobility and its values which represents one of the elements which have contributed to placing a higher value on work, to underlining its characteristic as an individual’s positive contribution to the welfare of the society to which he belongs. For example, “work is sacred and is a source of Italy’s wealth”, said the revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, upholder of a united, independent and republican Italy, in 1860<sup>3</sup>.

One of the aspects of the process of giving higher value to work which often accompanies the attack on the nobility and the rising of the bourgeoisie is its transformation from ugly labour to a source of rights<sup>4</sup>. In this paper, I will attempt to assess how this transformation has become entangled with the changing concepts of male and female roles in Italy.

I will therefore try first of all to indicate some major stages in the transformation of labour into a source of human rights in Italian history.

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<sup>1</sup> *Instruzione, e metodo Da tenersi in avvenire da quei Soggetti, e da quelle Famiglie, che desiderassero essere, o reintegrate, o promosse ex integro all'Ordine Nobile, e così, come tali, rendersi capaci de' Magistrati di questa Città di Bologna, e ciò inesivamente [sic] alla legge, fatta dal Senato, e stabilita davanti l'Eminentissimo Legato Li 29. Dicembre 1726*, Bologna, Sassi, 1728, p. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> Applebaum 1992, p. XIII. See also Jacob 1994, p. 9, who emphasises the change of attitude toward work, which “de ‘maudit’ [...] est devenu ‘souverain’”; Joyce 1987, p. 2, who reminds us of the “transformation of words investing work from connotations of pain and degradation to words denoting dignity and the transformation of nature and man’s being”; Méda 1994, who writes about the French “glorification” of work (p. 113-118). It is not possible here to pinpoint the European chronology of this change, nor to analyse the differences between the views of the upper classes and the views of the workers. However, it should be stressed that, first, even in early modern age the ideologies of the *élites* were not always homogeneous and that, second, workers did not necessarily “share the contempt with which they were held by the powerful and the literate” (Applebaum 1992, p. XIII). In particular, guilds, brotherhoods, and other associations of working people gave their members rights and possibly a sense of self-respect and self-worth; see e.g. Sarti 1999.

<sup>3</sup> G. Mazzini, *I doveri dell'uomo*, Torino, Morgari [Associazione Mazziniana Italiana], without date (but 1860<sup>1</sup>), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3.

I will then attempt to describe the change in the way of considering women's activities in the epoch during which the process of evaluating work developed. And in order to understand such transformations, I will first of all analyse how these were classified in population Censuses, showing how the collection and classification of data were conditioned by the "breadwinner ideology". Yet, it must be stressed that the Italian language does not have a word exactly corresponding to the English word "breadwinner", a term interestingly entering English language at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1821)<sup>5</sup>. Surely, in nineteenth and twentieth century Italy, one could easily find people expressing the idea that adult men – husbands and fathers – were or should be the supporters of their families, as we shall see. Nevertheless, there is no term which summarises this concept. In fact, the common definition of "capofamiglia"<sup>6</sup> (litt. head of the family) emphasises more the authority of the head of the family than his economic role.

Moreover, the Italian term exactly corresponding to the English word "housewife", i.e. "casalinga", is a very recent one: according to a major recent Italian dictionary, it was introduced into the Italian language at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1905). But in the Italian population censuses it was adopted only in 1961. Before that date, Italian population censuses used a short phrase instead of a single word to define housewives, i.e. "[persone] attendenti alle cure domestiche" (persons caring their domestic affairs). Moreover, in the first Italian population censuses, not only women, but also men, though very few, were included in this category. One should not overlook that the Italian language has a further term to designate housewives, that is the word "massaia". Originally, this ancient word, already in use in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, meant "wife of the *massaio*" (the *massaio* was a particular kind of peasant). In 20<sup>th</sup> century, Fascism used this word in the name of the Fascist association of agricultural women ("Massaie rurali"). Anyway, the variety of terms which could be used to define housewives, and the fact that men until 1911 could also be "officially" included among the so-called "persons caring their domestic affairs" seem to indicate that the figure of the housewife has surprisingly not been well defined for a long period. Thus the Italian situation seems to have peculiarities which could be interestingly analysed in a broad comparative perspective in order to give a wider articulation to the breadwinner interpretative framework. Indeed, among many other aspects, these different vocabularies and definitions invite to expand the scope of the analysis to account for the national and cultural differences (and analogies) in the social construction of male and female identities. Thus, though my paper does not have a comparative approach, it tries to provide data that might allow a comparison<sup>7</sup>.

Going back to the framework of the paper, after describing the change in the way of considering women's work, I shall analyse how many and which rights were granted to women by the different activities in which they could be engaged.

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<sup>5</sup> "Breadwinner [...] 1. One who supports himself and those dependent upon him by his earnings 1821 2. The tool or art or craft with which any one earns his living 1818", *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary On Historical principles*, Oxford, 1965 (1933<sup>1</sup>). See also the Webster Dictionary, [Http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary](http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary) (WWWebster Dictionary copyright © 1999 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated; WWWebster Thesaurus copyright © 1999 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated): "breadwinner [...] Date: 1818 1: a means (as a tool or craft) of livelihood 2: a member of a family whose wages supply its livelihood".

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, even if "capofamiglia" is not gender-specific, this term recalls the concept of *paterfamilias*, which originated in Roman law but played a long-term role in Italian laws. On women "capofamiglia" see Palazzi 1997.

<sup>7</sup> In this sense see Bourke 1994; Janssens (ed.) 1997; Núñez 1998; Lindsay 1999. On the Italian terms see Cortelazzo-Zolli 1979-1988; *ad voces*; Palazzi-Folena 1992 (1991<sup>1</sup>), *ad voces*; Battaglia 1961-, *ad voces* and population's censuses (C1881-C1991).

Fundamentally, my aim is to verify whether men and women have drawn the same advantages from the transformation of work into a source of rights. Hence, in this paper I will pay more attention to the cultural and legal than to the economic level<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, in order to delve further into this question, I will focus on domestic service. Domestic service represents an interesting vantage-point for a variety of reasons. This occupation was conceived as being unproductive by Adam Smith and many others economists<sup>9</sup>; it was regarded as incompatible with franchise and full citizenship by French and Italian revolutionaries between eighteenth and nineteenth century<sup>10</sup>; in the period under analysis it was characterised by a strong feminisation and was broadly common among women<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. *Work and rights: a first glance*

I will therefore try to determine the major stages in the transformation of labour into a source of rights. It is possible to date back to 1882 the beginning of this trend in Italy. That year signals the new Code of Commerce on one hand and the extension of suffrage on the other.

In particular, the new electoral law lowered voting requirements in such a way that the vote was given to “all those who paid tax as they were working as employees”. Thanks to the reform, those having a right to a vote rose in number from slightly over 600,000 to over two million, equal to 6.9% of the population<sup>12</sup>. In short, work began “to be considered as a criterion for being included among those whose full rights were recognised”<sup>13</sup>.

Later on, this trend was to establish itself slowly, despite much controversy and certainly not in a regular manner. However, it was to find its maximum expression in article 1 of the Italian Constitution (which came into force on 1st January 1948). According to this article, “Italy is a democratic republic founded on work”. In short, according to constitutional law, work is the foundation on which lies the whole state apparatus<sup>14</sup>.

Yet, it may be asked, do all forms of traditional work achieve this metamorphosis into work which is also a source of rights? And, furthermore, do men and women draw the same advantages from such transformation? To answer this question, we shall first of all try to understand which of the different female and male activities have been considered as “true” work. The categories adopted in population Censuses constitute a good starting point to examine this issue.

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<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, I have developed a more economic-historical approach, see in part. Sarti 1994 and 1997. On the scholarly controversy: “Women, work and citizenship” see *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 52 (1997) and no.53 (1998), with references (in part. Tilly 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776, p. \*; Folbre 1991, p. 469-470; Addis 1997, in part. p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Rosanvallon 1994 (or. ed. 1992), p. 109-153; Sarti 1995 and 2000.

<sup>11</sup> On feminisation of domestic service see Sarti 1997a and Sarti 1997b, with wider references. See also below, section 8.

<sup>12</sup> R.d. 21/9/1882, no. 999; t.u. 22/1/1882, no. 593; Romanelli 1995 (1988<sup>1</sup>), p. 201; Pombeni 1995, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Rodotà 1995, p. 319; Romanelli 1995 (1988<sup>1</sup>), p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> Rodotà 1995, p. 352; Barile 1984, p. 103-104.

### 3. Population Censuses

With respect to the issues to be analysed, an excerpt from the *General Report* relating to the 1881 Census is particularly meaningful, as it illustrates the “serious difficulties” raised by the “classification of women by trade, especially in rural areas”.

According to the report, in many cases,

the mother or daughter of an innkeeper, a tailor, a hat maker or a cobbler helps her husband or father in carrying out his trade, serving the guests at the inn, sewing seams on clothes or shoes and hems on hats etc., while at the same time attending to domestic tasks; the same can be said for the haberdashers and shopkeepers etc. engaged in retail trade. Besides taking care of the vegetable garden and domestic chores, the woman often takes up spinning linen, hemp, cotton and wool etc. in her own home. In these cases, a doubt may arise as to whether she should be classified as a housewife, that is, according to the occupation which by necessity takes up the greater part of her day, or as a gardener or spinner<sup>15</sup>.

The difficulty recounted by the Census reporters derived from the fact that the professional categories of the Censuses were mainly modelled on the figure of the worker with a single, well-defined job<sup>16</sup>. It may be said that this was the perfect model of the breadwinner. However, alongside a small proportion of men, there was an infinite number of women who toiled at many activities, partly those of a housewife and partly others, who could not be clearly classified<sup>17</sup>.

The way in which the categories were formed already revealed the image of the worker that was held by those who drew up the categories themselves. Although women were often elusive figures who could not be easily placed, solving the problem of their classification in one way or another led to highly different results, as illustrated by comparing the criteria adopted in 1881 and 1901<sup>18</sup>.

In 1881, the doubt relating to the classification of women carrying out multiple activities was resolved by including them among women workers<sup>19</sup>. In 1901 the solution was a different one. It is interesting to specify the criteria adopted for that Census, firstly because they clearly illustrate the existing convictions relating to the “correct” placing of men and women and their changes in the course of time; secondly, because they represent an excellent demonstration of how such convictions can influence the representation of the socio-economic reality that emerges from Census reports<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881. Relazione generale e confronti internazionali*, Roma, Tipografia Eredi Botta, 1885, p. LXVIII-LXIX. On the classification of female work in Italian population Censuses see the important article by Patriarca 1998. It is honest to stress, that the first Italian version of these pages was ere written before reading the important Patriarca's article.

<sup>16</sup> In the Census of 1901 a distinction was introduced between accessory activities and major activities. But this distinction soon proved to be scarcely useful, cfr. ISTAT, *C1936*, vol. IV – *Professioni*, Parte I, *Relazione*, p. 2, nota 1. The Census of 1931 introduced the category of “coadiuvante” (= help), still in use in the Census of 1991 (*ibid.*, p. 5; ISTAT, *C1991, Popolazione e abitazioni*, Fascicolo Nazionale, *Italia*, p. 43). Most people classified as “coadiuvante” were women, see Salvatici 2000.

<sup>17</sup> On the features of women's work see Pelaja 1990; Groppi (ed.) 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Because of budget problems, in 1891 the planned census was not carried on.

<sup>19</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881. Relazione generale cit.*, p. LXVII; MAIC, DGS, *C1901*, vol. V, *Relazione cit.*, p. CVII.

<sup>20</sup> “Statistical reports exemplify the process by which visions of reality, models of social structure, were elaborated and revisited”, writes Joan Scott (1988, p. 115). On the role of “ideology” in the construction of statistical reports see also Higgs 1985; Gribaudi, Blum 1990; Folbre 1991; Van den Eeckhout Patricia, Scholliers.

In 1901, as is explained in the *General Report* covering the Census, individuals were classified “according to the profession practised, instead of according to their condition”. What did this mean? For example, it meant that a person who had declared being a pensioner and a scribe had been classified as a scribe, as the state of a pensioner was considered to be a condition, and that of a scribe a profession. So far, the decision was not innovative at all: the preceding Census in 1881 had followed the same pattern. Therefore, following this method of classification, property-owning priests had been classified among priests and not among land-owners; lawyer capitalists were classified among lawyers and not among capitalists, and so on<sup>21</sup>.

“On the other hand”, added the reporters, “if a woman had declared that she was in charge of domestic tasks and was also engaged in secondary activities such as spinning or weaving linen or hemp or wool or doing some sewing for herself or others, it was her housekeeping charge that was considered as her main occupation”. “The profession of spinner or weaver”, they explained, “appears only in the classification as an accessory profession”<sup>22</sup>. In the same way, the women “who besides attending to their families [...] were temporary servants” had been classified not as workers but in the category of “persons maintained by the family”. The occupations that they carried out had been put “in the classification of accessory professions”<sup>23</sup>.

As has been said, in 1881 the women practising “multiple activities” had been considered as workers. In 1901 the choice was fundamentally the opposite, especially if we consider that the data related to accessory professions were not even analytically sorted in the Census<sup>24</sup>. In the course of time, there was a growing tendency to classify men and women according to different criteria. In situations in which it was theoretically possible to have a type of classification by condition as well as by profession, in the case of males it was always decided to classify by profession, whereas with females an ambiguous distinction was introduced, hitherto unknown, between accessory activities and major activities (in the case of men, this distinction was acknowledged only when the individual had two professions). Therefore the number of women classified according to their condition increased greatly. For women, being classified according their condition meant practically always being considered as housewives. In short, for men it was enough to practice any type of activity in order to be classified among the active population. Yet for women, carrying out activities beside domestic work, it was no longer sufficient to avoid being classified as housewives, who were classified among the “economically passive population”<sup>25</sup>. And it may be stressed that it was no longer enough even if the work carried out part-time was paid.

In the light of these changes in the way of considering female work, it comes as no surprise that between 1881 and 1901—according to the Census data—the percentage of housewives among all females of age nine and over, jumped from 33 to 50.2%<sup>26</sup> (Fig.

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<sup>21</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881, Relazione generale cit.*, p. LXVII.

<sup>22</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. V., *Relazione sul metodo cit.*, p. LXXVIII.

<sup>23</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. V., *Relazione sul metodo cit.*, p. CVII.

<sup>24</sup> According to the published data, only a limited number of persons declared to have a secondary occupation (461,142 individuals, 268,955 of which were men, and 192,187 women). Possibly only one occupation was registered at the very moment of collecting the data in the first place, see MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. V., *Relazione sul metodo cit.*, p. CXII. See also footnote 17.

<sup>25</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. V., *Relazione sul metodo cit.*, p. LXXIV.

<sup>26</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881*, vol. III. *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni*, Roma, Tipografia Bodoniana, 1884, Tav. III, *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni (esclusi i bambini fino a otto anni compiuti)*, p.

1). The Census reporters themselves were aware of the fact that this depended especially on the different criteria adopted in the two Censuses, and not on profound changes in the activities exercised by women. Illustrating the characteristics of the category “persons maintained by the family”, they in fact wrote:

This class concerns those persons who take care of domestic tasks (mostly women), students and scholars and invalids or those unemployed for a long time. In 1882, there were 4,658,086 individuals and in 1901 there were 8,355,733. The increase depended on the fact that in 1882 many women taking care of domestic tasks were classified as persons without a profession; those who besides attending to their family carried out sewing or domestic spinning or weaving, or were temporary servants, were counted as day or domestic seamstresses, spinners and weavers; whereas in 1901 these occupations were put in the classification of accessory professions<sup>27</sup>.

“These deeply serious differences [...] cannot represent a change which has taken place in occupations among the female population, but depend on different criteria followed in the classification”. It had moreover been observed even twenty years before, comparing the data for the 1881 Census with those for 1871<sup>28</sup>. Having formulated the professional categories of the Censuses starting from the figure of the worker with a single activity had in fact created a whole series of difficulties in classifying female activities. And having then found solutions to these difficulties which were different each time, meant that the Census results provided images of the Italian socio-economic reality and the economic role of women which fundamentally did not agree (Figures B, 1, 2)<sup>29</sup>. Certainly, various indicators seemed to suggest that in those years the number of women engaged in paid extra-domestic work was really diminishing, although not so dramatically as one could think by looking at the Census data<sup>30</sup>. But it was certainly not easy to understand whether and to what extent this was a “real” phenomenon, rather than the effect of changes in the ways of classifying women’s activities. Figures 3 and 4 show data worked out by Ornello Vitali for correcting the Census data<sup>31</sup>.

Yet, the change in the categories employed was also fundamentally a real phenomenon. It was most probable that this could depend not only on different personal attitudes held among those responsible for the criteria adopted in the various Censuses, but also on wider changes in the way of conceiving male and female roles. In fact, whereas in the period now being examined, the profession had clearly been established as a hinge on which, at least in the view of those in charge of Census reports, the male identity was constructed in the socio-economic field, in the case of women the situation appeared much more uncertain and fluid. In particular, the first two Italian population

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688-689; MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. III, *Popolazione presente classificata per professioni o condizioni*, Roma, Tipografia Nazionale di G. Bertero e C., 1904, p. 31. On this issue see Vitali 1968 and 1970; Pescarolo 1996.

<sup>27</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. V., *Relazione cit.*, p. CVII. Similar trends can be found elsewhere. For example, in the 1870 U.S. Census “Women who took in boarders and lodgers, helped with the family farm or business, or contracted industrial homework from factories were not counted among the gainfully occupied, even though they were earning money”. Moreover, in the 1900 U.S. Census “wives and daughters without a paying job were officially designated ‘dependents’”, see Folbre 1991, p. 476-478.

<sup>28</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881*, *Relazione generale cit.*, p. LXIX.

<sup>29</sup> On the consequences of the use of different professional categories see Gribaudo, Blum 1990 and Blum, Gribaudo 1993, discussed by Guerreau 1993.

<sup>30</sup> Soldani 1996; Pescarolo 1996.

<sup>31</sup> See Vitali 1968 and 1970 for the methodology applied to correct the Census data.

censuses showed a deep variability and incertitude in classifying housewives. In the tables of 1861 Census there were no specific data about housewives: only reading the comments one could learn that the so-called “*donne di casa*” (housewives) were included among the people without a profession and were 2.916.491. Even ten years later the tables showed no data about housewives. But in this case, the text did not provide any further information nor explanation. However, in the *General Report* of the 1881 Census it was explained that in previous Census of 1871 only 393039 women were classified as “persons caring their domestic affairs”, whereas some 4 millions of women were classified as people without a profession<sup>32</sup>. Only starting from the Census of 1881 a category of “people caring their domestic affairs” was regularly included among the categories employed in the tables referring to the activities of the Italian population. We have already seen that the criteria following which women were classified in this category changed over time. Here must be stressed that from 1881 up to 1911 also some men were classified in this category, showing that it was not well defined yet (men were the 0.03% in 1881; 1.9% in 1901; 1.5% in 1911)<sup>33</sup>. However, the different solutions adopted showed quite a precise trend: on the one hand, women were less and less frequently classified in the category of workers or in the category of persons without a profession. They were increasingly classified as housewives. On the other hand, after a period of incertitude, the category of “people caring their domestic affairs” were definitively established as a category including only women. The most typical female figure was increasingly defined as a housewife, whereas the most typical male figure was increasingly the worker<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 1).

Thus, in the same period which saw the legislative recognition of the “ennobling” process of work, and thus its official approval, women began to be expelled from the professionally active population, due partly to “real” changes and partly to the way in which reality was classified and represented. They were therefore expelled from the labour market.

Censuses following that of 1901 were also to highlight the domestic work of women<sup>35</sup>, as it was denounced even in 1936 Census. In fact in 1936 Census officials were instructed to verify carefully what activities were really performed by women living in the countryside before accepting to classify them as housewives. These instructions were probably reflecting the autarchic policy launched by Fascism: Italy should be able to feed its population without depending on import, and data should demonstrate the high number of people working in agriculture. After a very long period during which the percentage of housewives among women was increasing, whereas the number of active women was falling, 1936 data showed an actual reduction of housewives. Probably this change was due not only to the fact that some women were substituting men fighting as soldiers in the African war, but also to this different criterion of classification<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881, Relazione generale cit.*, p. LXIX.

<sup>33</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881-C1901-C1911*.

<sup>34</sup> It should be stressed that the picture of women's work emerging from census data was influenced also by the fact that those who answered the questions about women's occupations were often not women themselves, but their husbands and fathers.

<sup>35</sup> For example Vitali 1968 and 1970; Salvatici 1999.

<sup>36</sup> ISTAT, *C1936, Istruzioni per gli ufficiali di censimento*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1936, p. 23; Vitali 1968, p. 91-92, 94, 100.



Yet, also corrected data show for a very long period a declining percentage of active women. According to data elaborated by Francesca Bettio, the activity rate for women underwent a decrease in the first seventy years of the twentieth century, falling from 37.05% in 1901 to 18.36% in 1971 (there was a little reverse of the trend only between 1931 and 1936)<sup>37</sup>.

Anyway, in my opinion one should not regard the original data of the censuses as false, the data corrected by Vitali or Bettio as true. In fact, even the corrections imply a precise ideology. For example, they continue to classify housewives as inactive population. They “simply” aim at establishing the exact number of housewives. But if we consider that practically all women do some kind of housework, we can easily understand how difficult it is to establish a clear boundary between housewives and working women. Any criterion to distinguish working women from housewives is “ideological”. Moreover, because staying at home without working outside was considered a privilege, some women preferred to declare themselves as housewives even if they were performing some extra-domestic activity. In this sense, the classification of female work shows how “real” ideology can be. To think of ideology as opposed to reality would be, in my opinion, misleading.

#### 4. *What production?*

As regards the themes which interest us here, it is not important to just verify where the distinction was from time to time constructed between work and domestic work. What is also important, or perhaps *even more* important is the fact that housewives were considered as “staff dependent on others” or as “persons maintained by the family” and the “economically passive population”. In fact, it is in the very light of this character of passivity attributed to domestic work that the classification of an increasing number of women among housewives takes on particular importance: in an epoch in which work is increasingly considered as an individual’s active contribution to the nation’s wealth, so much so that the fact one is working tends to become a requirement in order to enjoy a whole series of rights, an increasing number of women are considered as “economically passive”, even if they toil from dawn to dusk and even if they carry out part-time activities.

In fact, as time passes, domestic work appears to become increasingly debased so as to become a non-productive activity, that is, an activity which does not contribute directly to the wealth of a nation and is therefore not a source of any right.

An important role in such debasement is played by the distinction between productive and unproductive labour worked out by the classical political economy. In fact, services were conceived as unproductive activities. During the nineteenth century, the distinction between market and non-market labour gradually replaced the dichotomy between productive and unproductive work. Obviously, this change did not yield any better evaluation of the economic role of the housework<sup>38</sup>. Significantly, categories

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<sup>37</sup> Bettio 1988, tab. 3.1, p. 51 (yet it must be noted that Bettio measures the activity rate on the total female population, p. 50). “The presence of sex-typing weakens the link between trends in wages and employment, and Italy may well provide an example. Over the postwar period until the 1970s, female participation declined while real wages grew most rapidly; in contrast, the rise in wages slowed down in the 1970s and in the 1980s, when participation sharply increased”, writes Bettio (p. 48).

<sup>38</sup> Folbre 1991; Addis 1997. On the moral value attributed to housework see for example Davidoff, Hall 1988.

which combine the productive/unproductive dichotomy and the paid/unpaid distinction are still used in population censuses and other statistical reports today.

However, an important role in this debasement is also played by the widespread conviction that domestic work is a “natural” task, belonging to the world of biological reproduction rather than that of economic production. Although between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the interpretation of the family as an economic unit was for some time victoriously in competition with the interpretation of the family as a natural community, it is this latter conception that gains ground in later years. Family tasks of men and women then appear to be more than ever the result of an original vocation. It is therefore thought that they must not be modified<sup>39</sup>. Female dependence itself, which was put forward as a major reason for excluding women from political participation, was largely regarded as natural<sup>40</sup>.

In this light, domestic work of wives, mothers and daughters, because of their “naturalness”, did not seem to be governable by means of a contract. And thus it appeared not able to be reduced to “true” work, increasingly characterised as a service rendered in exchange for money<sup>41</sup>. It is no coincidence that according to several thinkers, family work represented a “non-legal” figure<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, according to article 29 of the Italian Constitution which is still in force, “the Republic acknowledges the rights of the family as a *natural* society founded on matrimony”. And even in the last Census (1991), the housewives, defined as “those who are concerned mainly with the care of their own family and home”, were classified among the non-active population<sup>43</sup>, despite the revaluation of caring work that many are trying to activate<sup>44</sup>.

So, the fact that women’s priority task should be represented by the domestic environment and reproductive activities was a conviction which in influential sectors of Italian society seemed to gain strength more or less in the same way as the process of evaluating “true” work. However, being the result of complex dynamics, the establishing of such a conviction also represented an answer to demands which originate in the changes in female participation in the working world. “True” work—if and when it was carried out by women—in fact appeared to many to be a powerful threat to upsetting the equilibrium between the sexes, in the family and society. In more than one case, this attitude led to the downgrading of extra-domestic work carried out by women with respect to domestic activities intended as their main task<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Bonacchi, Groppi (eds.), 1993; Rosanvallon 1994 (or. ed. 1992), p. 109-153; Sarti 1995.

<sup>40</sup> Sarti 2000, with references.

<sup>41</sup> Sarti 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Papaleoni 1990, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> ISTAT, *C1991, Popolazione e abitazioni*, Fascicolo Nazionale, *Italia*, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> With respect to Italy see for Demetrio, Donini, Mapelli, Natoli, Piazza, Segre 1999. As early as 1878, the officers of the U.S. Association for the Advancement of Women addressed a letter to the Congress. “We pray your honorable body to make provision for the more careful and just enumeration of women as laborers and producers”, they wrote, complaining that female domestic work was “not even incidentally named as in any wise affecting the cause of increase or decrease of population or wealth”, cit. in Folbre 1991, p. 463. More recently, in a justly famous book published in 1970, the economist Ester Boserup reminded the underestimation of the national income of developing countries which derived from the fact that female domestic work was excluded from the calculations (Boserup 1882, or. ed 1970, pp. 153. On current discussion about the economic classification of caring work see Folbre 1997 and Addis 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Folbre 1991.

## 5. Women's rights

However, this does not mean that work represents a path of access to rights only for men. Certainly, on the occasion of the electoral reform of 1882, “the female sex remains an insuperable obstacle”<sup>46</sup>. And the same thing happened on the occasion of the reform of 1912, which in practice introduced universal suffrage for men. But at the moment in which the vote for women seemed to draw near, that is, after the First World War, this was to be presented also as a reward for the huge working effort made by women during the conflict. The plan for introducing universal suffrage did not succeed (Italian women were enfranchised in 1945<sup>47</sup>). Yet, a law on juridical capacity was approved, abolishing the need for the husband's authorisation and admitting women to professions and public employment, although with important exceptions and a subsequent highly restrictive application (the law of 17th July 1919)<sup>48</sup>.

The law of 1919 initiated women's long, tormented journey towards equality in work, finally sanctioned only in 1977, and in fact still not totally realised today<sup>49</sup>. Since the beginning of the century, women's presence in the world of work had been governed by other regulations on so-called “protection”. Within certain limits, this concerned recognition of rights, although mainly were formulated as prohibitions: the prohibition of women working underground, the prohibition of night work in the case of minors of both sexes (then extended to all women); the fixing of twelve hours a day as a maximum work load and the introduction of one rest day per week; the introduction of maternity leave; and the institution of a maternity Fund. Such measures tried to defend working women's maternal and family function: these, as much due to the ideology from which they originated, as to the negative effects on women's occupation which they could have because of the increase in costs to the employer, ended up by strengthening, at various levels, the centrality of women's maternal and family duties which had been invoked so often in order to justify their exclusion from the public sphere and from the enjoyment of political rights<sup>50</sup>.

It is significant that this legislation—just as that Fascist legislation which developed it in order to ensure achieving the regime's demographic objectives by means of a better protection of maternity—was not applied to agricultural work, nor to that at people's homes, nor to that for family businesses, nor to domestic work in the women's homes. What the legislator intended to repress was therefore not so much the fatigue which could have disastrous effects on pregnancy, childbirth and the infant, but rather work, which in some way came into competition with women's domestic role, work which created a split concerning duties carried out at home and in the family. If such was the intention of the legislator, there was no need to make any provision for those who worked in the domestic sphere, however hard and long the activities carried out.

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<sup>46</sup> Rodotà 1995, p. 319.

<sup>47</sup> D. legislativo luogotenenziale no. 23, 1/2/1945 (and d. no. 74, 10/3/ 1946 on eligibility of women), see Ungari 1974 (1970<sup>1</sup>); Galoppini 1980; Rossi-Doria 1996; Selvaggio (ed.), 1997.

<sup>48</sup> Ungari 1974 (1970<sup>1</sup>); Saraceno 1992 (1990<sup>1</sup>); Romanelli 1995; Bigaran 1987 and 1992, p. 69-70; Galoppini 1980, p. 62-76 and 70-91; Ballestrero 1996, p. 458-460. On women's work during World War I, see Curli 1998. On work as a way to obtain rights, see Rodotà 1995, p. 320.

<sup>49</sup> Galoppini 1980; Bianco 1997.

<sup>50</sup> L. 7/7/1907, no. 416; l. 10/11/1907, no. 816; l.19/6/1902, no. 242; l. 17/6/1910, no. 520. Maternity Fund was partly paid by working women themselves, see recently Buttafuoco 1997.

But we must not look only at the negative aspect of such legislation. In fact, it sanctioned the recognition by the state of the importance—for the nation—of maternity and therefore of women, although chaining them more closely to their presumed “natural” role<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, it began a profound transformation in relations between state and family, and between the public and private sphere. Yet even this legislation ended up by confirming a precise reality: it was extra-domestic work which provided some rights (also concerning the domestic roles of women)<sup>52</sup>.

## 6. *Domestic service: an interesting vantage point*

Domestic service was an occupation which implied that women working as servants were paid for carrying out the “natural” unpaid duties of wives and mothers<sup>53</sup>. As we saw, classical economists considered both paid and unpaid housework as unproductive labour. Moreover, in France, from the French Revolution until 1848, domestic service was deemed as an occupation which hindered from being independent and autonomous individuals<sup>54</sup>. Servants were therefore excluded from political citizenship. From this point of view, male domestics find themselves in a condition similar to the women. Moreover, even after having been enfranchised (1848), domestic servants suffered limitations in their rights. Indeed, until 1930 they were not eligible in town councils and could not participate in juries<sup>55</sup>. In Germany until 1918 the social condition of a large part of domestics was determined by the so-called *Gesindeordnungen* (Servant Law), which defined the servant/master relationship not only as *Arbeitsverhältnis* (work relations) but also as *Herrschaftsverhältnis* (mastership)<sup>56</sup>. In England “servants were one of the last groups to gain citizenship either in the form of the franchise or citizen’s rights in the form of insurance”<sup>57</sup>.

Therefore concentrating our attention on domestic service, which was a widely feminised occupation, will afford us a better understanding of the contradictions and characteristics of the way in which female participation in the labour market has been evaluated.

## 7. *The case of domestic service: Italian legislation*

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<sup>51</sup> Galoppini 1980; Soldani 1992 and 1996; Pescarolo 1996; Ballestrero 1996; Buttafuoco 1997. On the social construction of the working woman, see Scott 1991.

<sup>52</sup> State’s employees were particularly protected, although not too well paid, see Soldani 1992, p. 295-298.

<sup>53</sup> Interestingly in 1861 and 1871 Censuses of England and Wales included housewives and women “not otherwise described” in the class 2, that is “Domestic Class” along with paid domestic workers, see Higgs 1985 and Folbre 1991, p. 471.

<sup>54</sup> In France, all revolutionary constitutions except that of 1793, which was never applied, excluded domestics from citizenship, see Rosanvallon 1994 (or. ed. 1992) and Sarti 2000.

<sup>55</sup> O. Fourcade, *De la condition civile des domestiques*, Paris, A. Rousseau, 1898; R. Dubois, *De la condition juridique des domestiques*, Lille, H. Morel, 1907; R. Sauty, *De la condition juridique des domestiques*, Paris, Jouve & C.<sup>ie</sup>, 1911; A. Saitta, *Costituenti e Costituzioni della Francia rivoluzionaria e liberale*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1975; S. Maza, *Servants and Masters*, op. cit, p. 312; Rosanvallon 1994 (or. ed. 1992), p. 125-153, 426-428; Sarti 2000.

<sup>56</sup> Pierenkemper 1988, p. 176; Ottmüller 1978, p. 27-27; Koselleck 1981, p. 109-124; Walser 1986, p. 32-37; Wierling 1987, p. 85-88; Kaltwasser 1988; p. 13-29; Dürr 1997.

<sup>57</sup> Davidoff 1974, p. 417.

As in French revolutionary constitutions, in Italy all the so-called “Jacobin” constitutions except the Bolognese one of 1796 (never applied) barred servants from the enjoyment of political rights. Yet, the exclusion of servants was not reaffirmed in the Italian law after the national unification<sup>58</sup>. Did therefore servants have the same rights as other people, and as other workers in particular?

Initially, the lawmaker in Italy did not regulate domestic service as a particular institution. The articles of the Civil Code (1865-66) covering this matter, on the model of the Napoleon Code, merely stated that one of the “three major types of letting of labour and industry” was “that for which persons oblige others to carry out their services” (art. 1627) and that performing work could only be “for a limited period or for a determined undertaking” (1628)<sup>59</sup>. The only worry of the lawmaker was therefore that of eliminating the possible residues of personal subordination. Compared to the French model, the lawmaker in Italy turned out to be more careful in placing worker and employers: in fact, it did not adopt the article of the Napoleon Code<sup>60</sup> according to which “le maître est cru sur son affirmation, pour la quotité des gages; pour le paiement du salaire de l’année échue; et pour les à-comptes donnés pour l’année courante” (“the master is believed for his affirmation concerning the share of wages, for the payment of the year expired and for the advances given for the current year”)<sup>61</sup>.

However, this does not mean that the new Italian State always treated the domestic as an independent and responsible worker. In fact, article 1153 established that each person was responsible not only for damage that he had caused personally, but also for those caused by persons “which he has to answer for”. The employers were thus responsible “for damage caused by their domestics [...] in carrying out their duties for which they [had been] destined”. This regulation (still in force today<sup>62</sup>) certainly protected the employee. However, it thus compared domestics to minors<sup>63</sup>.

In line with the principle that he was responsible for damage caused by domestics, the employer could use means of correction or discipline towards them. Recourse to such means that had caused “damage or danger to health” of the person subjected would have constituted a specific crime<sup>64</sup>. Furthermore, if the employer had reduced the domestic to slavery or similar condition by “abusing his moral superiority” or in any other way, he would have committed a crime against individual liberty, punished very severely<sup>65</sup>.

However, other anomalies derived from the conviction that domestics should be supervised. The 1889 law on public safety, in the article relating to the employment card, in fact obliged the employer to make a declaration not just on the duration and nature of the service exercised by the servant, but also on his or her conduct<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Sarti 2000.

<sup>59</sup> D’Amario 1921, p. 521; *Codice Civile del Regno d’Italia col confronto cit.*, p. 1093-1094.

<sup>60</sup> This art. was cancelled in 1868, see Castaldo 1977, p. 227.

<sup>61</sup> *Code Civil des Français*, Paris, Firmin Didot, an XII. – 1804, livre III, titre VIII, chapitre III, section première, p. 334.

<sup>62</sup> Art. 2049 of the Civil Code.

<sup>63</sup> D’Amario 1921, p. 528-529.

<sup>64</sup> *Codice Penale*, in *Codici e leggi complementari*, edited by E. Protto and L. Trompeo, Roma, 1913, lib. II, tit. IX, capo VI, art. 390, p. 69.

<sup>65</sup> *Codice penale cit.*, lib. II, tit. II, capo III, art. 145, p. 31; D’Amario 1921, p. 531.

<sup>66</sup> L. 30/6/1889, no. 6144, s. III; T.U. di pubblica sicurezza 18/6/1931, no. 771, art. 130.

Traditionally, suspicions concerning servants had often been expressed also in regulations which give severe punishments for domestic theft<sup>67</sup>. That tradition was confirmed by the addition of the Piedmont Penal Code of 1859, extended subsequently to the rest of Italy; this Code classified domestic theft among the types of aggravated larceny. However, in 1889, the new Penal Code (the so-called Zanardelli Code) classified as aggravated larceny also theft committed by the employer against the servant<sup>68</sup>.

Like article 1627 of the Civil Code, such articles of the Zanardelli Code tried to legally take servants away from consolidated traditions of inferiority compared to their employers. From this point of view, it is important that the law should, with a specific regulation, guarantee the right of servants to the wage agreed upon<sup>69</sup>. However, the law did not lack in contradictions, as has partly been seen. The very choice of limiting the regulation of domestic work to few rules, moreover subjecting it to general norms, ended up by making recourse to traditions inevitable. And these traditions were largely based on an asymmetry between worker and employer which was not just profound but also different from that which characterised other work relations, firstly those between entrepreneurs and labourers.

For example, according to authoritative jurists, servants, being accepted into the family community, were expected to “follow its running and habits” and not to reveal its secrets<sup>70</sup>, to change residence at the “pleasure of their master”<sup>71</sup>, to bear true *affectio* towards their employer; to carry out their own duties with the “diligence of a good head of family”; to bear their employers respect which had the same content and the same foundation as the *obsequium* of German and feudal law, although this was “deprived of the state of personal subjection which was inherent”<sup>72</sup>. In this sense, servants would have to keep good conduct, even beyond the domain of their work, in such a way as not to “upset the prestige of the family business”: and such an obligation should have been “just as strict” as the social condition of the employer was “pre-eminent”. In 1933, the illegitimate pregnancy of a servant could thus be listed among the just causes of terminating an employment contract in that it could harm “the esteem, honour and decorum of the employer and his family”, whereas “it being a case of a factory worker” it was thought that it “could not take on the gravity of a reason for dismissal”<sup>73</sup>.

Until the late eighteenth century, the paternity of a child born of a servant living with the family was attributed to the head of the family, unless it was possible to demonstrate the contrary<sup>74</sup>. Although it is difficult to indicate the extent, sexual exploitation of servants still continued<sup>75</sup>. It is therefore no surprise that the honour of a servant, especially if employed by an unmarried man living alone, was to be judged in

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<sup>67</sup> Manzini, 1902-1905; Lion 1900.

<sup>68</sup> *Codice penale*, in *Codici e leggi complementari cit.*, lib. II, tit. X, capo I, artt. 402-404, p. 71-72 and Lion 1900, p. 696; Codice “Rocco”, artt. 61 no. 11, 519, 521, 531. See De Litala 1933, p. 38.

<sup>69</sup> *Codice civile...* edited by T. Bruno *cit.*, lib. III, tit. XXIII, capo I, par. I, art. 1956, p. 471; lib. III, tit. XXVIII, sez. III, artt. 2139 and 2142, p. 526-528; Codice Civile 1942, artt. 2751 and 2955, see De Litala 1958<sup>2</sup>, p. 62-63.

<sup>70</sup> D’Amario 1921, p. 524.

<sup>71</sup> De Litala 1933, p. 67.

<sup>72</sup> D’Amario 1921, p. 524.

<sup>73</sup> De Litala 1933, p. 67 and 77.

<sup>74</sup> Fairchilds 1984, p. 168 and p. 188.

<sup>75</sup> C. Giusti Pesci, *Proposta per la classe delle domestiche presentata alla assemblea della Federazione Emiliana delle Donne Italiane il 3 Marzo 1913*, Bologna, s.i.t., p. 5.

danger. However, it was believed that the wife could be a servant only if rendering her service were “compatible with the duties that she had towards her husband, and especially with the obligation that she had to accompany him to any place where he wished to fix his own residence”. Any opposition to continuing service therefore made it possible to decide on the “nullity of the contract as homage to the authority of the husband who is head of the family, and for the good of the family”<sup>76</sup>. In short, the husband had the right to “ask, *jure proprio*, as head of the family, for the termination of the wife’s work contract, if this contract should prove harmful to the fundamental duties of the husbanded woman, that is, faithfulness, cohabitation and assistance to her husband; because in that sense the work contract would be illegal [...] and therefore nullified”<sup>77</sup>.

In brief, as the duties of servants to their employers largely coincided with those of the wife to her husband, work as a servant could find itself on a collision course with the family role of women still more than “modern” jobs which so worried the ruling classes. This partly depended on the difficulty of distinguishing clearly—in the life of servants (as in those of housewives)—between working time and leisure, working spaces and domestic spaces, or between the “public” and “private” sphere<sup>78</sup>. In short, it depended on archaisms, on “feudal” elements which characterised domestic service. In fact, Riccardo Bachi was able to sustain that the domestic sphere was affected by a “regressive evolution”: the domestic sphere was affected by the “the echoes and reflections of all the changes” giddily taking place in society. Yet it remained “backward”: “the spirit [...] of the passed phase, tormented by vigorous and sometimes tempestuous winds of the new economic life, seem to take refuge behind the domestic walls, as if in a last venerable fortress”<sup>79</sup>.

Another opinion was held by those jurists who—with an ingenuous nostalgia for past times<sup>80</sup>—reported the “levelling” of domestic service to the pattern of industrial work: in their view, the latter had ended up by eliminating the assistance which had once been guaranteed by the employer towards his servant; in this new situation, “for cases of serious illness, inability to work for prolonged periods, and especially for old age” the domestic servant risked being left to his own lot. This made it necessary for the state to intervene. But the request for a legislative intervention also sprang from the need to regulate that specificity of domestic service the classification of which as a job category did not allow it to be subjected to discipline<sup>81</sup>.

Nevertheless, both female and male servants were for a long time excluded from a great part of the laws relating to work regulation or the workers’ protection which had been introduced in Italy: in fact, they were not included in those on the work of minors and women and safeguard of maternity<sup>82</sup>; on the limitation of working hours to a

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<sup>76</sup> Bruno 1900, p. 652 and Pacifici-Mazzoni, *Codice civile italiano commentato, Trattato delle locazioni*, Firenze, 18722, p. 417-418, *cit. ibidem*.

<sup>77</sup> De Litala 1933, p. 34; Addeo 1920, p. 75.

<sup>78</sup> Sarti 1995.

<sup>79</sup> Bachi 1900, p. 15-16.

<sup>80</sup> On assistance to servants in early modern age see Sarti 1999.

<sup>81</sup> Addeo 1920 and Brugi 1905 were the first who plead for a specific intervention by the State, see De Litala 1933, p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> L. 11/2/1886, no. 3657; l. 19/6/1902, no. 242; l. 7/7/1907, no. 416 and t.u. 10/11/1907, no. 816; l. 17/7/1910, no. 520; r.d. 13/3/1923, no. 748 and l. 17/4/1925, no. 437; r.d.l. no. 1825 del 1924; l. 26/4/1934, no. 653 and l. 5/8/1934, no. 1347.

maximum of eight per day and forty-eight, then forty, per week<sup>83</sup>; on collective wage agreements<sup>84</sup>; on the subjection of jurisdiction, in the case of dispute, to work tribunals established by the authorities<sup>85</sup>; on protection in case of involuntary unemployment and so on<sup>86</sup>; the only provisions from which men and women servants benefited in the first forty years of the twentieth century were those of 1923 on obligatory insurance against invalidity and old age, extended, in 1927, to tuberculosis<sup>87</sup>.

In other words, paid domestic work was still abandoned almost “completely to the judgement of individuals”. This depended on the prevailing opinion according to which “a working relationship normally taking place within the sphere of domestic walls, and which must be pervaded by the employer’s sense of benevolence to persons in his service, is better regulated between private individuals”<sup>88</sup>. There must certainly have a great fear in turning to legal procedure if Rodolfo Nenci in 1938, proposing that domestic servants should be unionised, felt it important to tell the *matres familias* that this would not result in “any interference or limitation of freedom in domestic or family affairs” or create “difficulties or problems”<sup>89</sup>.

The contents of the proposals gradually put forward to regulate this matter on one hand and, on the other, the difficulties and delays met with in guaranteeing by law even the minimum protection constitute a further confirmation of the extent to which domestic work continued to be dominated by traditions of subordination. For example, in 1933, Luigi De Litala summed up under twelve points the matters in which specific provisions should be made for service staff: “division into categories, according to the capacity easily ascertainable by an office responsible”; “fixing of minimum salaries by category”; “the establishment of an employment office for every city exceeding a certain number of inhabitants”; “the right to holidays”; “enforced rest periods”; “supplementary benefit for work carried out beyond midnight”; “extension of insurance against accidents; “extension of regulations issued for maternity of women workers, by the Decree of 13th May 1929 referring to security of one’s position”; “concession of a long-service allowance”; “obligation of a caution to cover damage; “obligation of trade union contributions”; “jurisdiction of the work tribunals to decide on disputes between employers and domestics”<sup>90</sup>.

The idea that domestic work should possess peculiarities which needed specific regulations was accepted by the authors of the Civil Code in 1942<sup>91</sup>. But the articles which regulated it, as the law which in 1958 was to intervene to discipline this matter,

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<sup>83</sup> R.d.l. 15/3/1923, no. 692, art. 1, comma 2 and l. 17/4/1925, no. 473; r. d. l. 29/5/1937, no. 1768, art. 3, lettera ‘a’ and l. 13/1/1938, no. 203.

<sup>84</sup> Regolamento sindacale 1/7/1926, no. 1130, art. 52.

<sup>85</sup> D. 26/2/1928, no. 471, art. 1.

<sup>86</sup> R.d.l. 4/10/1935, no. 1827, art. 40,4.

<sup>87</sup> Art. 1, comma no. 2, d. 30/12/1923, no. 3184; d. 27/10/1927, no. 2055 and r.d.l. 4/10/1935, no. 1827, art. 37; l. 6/4/1936, no. 1155.

<sup>88</sup> De Litala 1933, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Nenci 1938.

<sup>90</sup> De Litala 1933, p. 8.

<sup>91</sup> *I codici commentati con la giurisprudenza – Il codice civile*, edited by M. Abate, P. Dubolino, G. Maiani, Piacenza, 1980, libro V (*Del lavoro*), tit. IV (*Del lavoro subordinato in particolari rapporti*), capo II (*Del lavoro domestico*), artt. 2240-2246, p. 933-935.



starting off with the recognition of the specificity of domestic workers, did not extend to them many rights which were granted to other categories<sup>92</sup>.

In 1938, in his *Saggi ed esperienze di diritto fascista e corporativo* (Essays and experiences of fascist and corporate law), Rodolfo Nenci declared that he was sure that the minister of corporations would promote “the abolition of the prohibition which prevented collective agreements in the sector of domestic work: this prohibition was “now in opposition to the principles of right of defence recognised to the workers” and determined “an unjust consideration of moral and material inferiority of domestic servants, the remains of an out-of-date ideology and mentality”<sup>93</sup>. However, Fascist Italy did not accept this proposal, although, in the intentions of Nenci, far from wanting to realise those principles of trade union freedom today associated with collective agreements, it should become part of a Fascist programme of authoritarian control of society realised also thanks to capillary control of the world of work<sup>94</sup>. Democratic and Republican Italy behaved for a long time exactly in the same way: only in 1969 did the Constitutional court declare as illegitimate the article of the Civil Code which excluded collective agreements from the sector of domestic work. The first national contract finally saw the light in 1974<sup>95</sup>.

Another request put forward by Nenci and others had been the introduction of employment exchanges. Also in this case, Republican Italy did not turn out to be any better than Fascist Italy. In fact, the law of 1958 did not make it obligatory for employers to hire domestic staff from the official unemployed list, flaunting the constitutional principle on the basis of which employment is a public function<sup>96</sup>.

The law prohibiting the dismissal of a pregnant female worker dates back to 1929. Still today, the prohibition of dismissal during pregnancy and until the child has reached the age of one year is not valid in the case of domestic servants. The constitutional court has on several occasions confirmed the legitimacy of the regulation, despite the fact that Italy has undersigned international agreements extending prohibition of dismissal to all pregnant female workers. Only collective agreements have partially obviated legislative limits<sup>97</sup>.

Moreover, those engaged in domestic work constitute one of the few categories in which the termination of employment is governed only by the Civil Code. In fact, they have been excluded from the sphere of application of the norms which were introduced later in order to govern this matter. This means that the employer may dismiss staff without having to put his decision in writing and, in the case of justified dismissal, even without fore-warning<sup>98</sup>.

Collective bargaining has recently established that home helps living in with their employers cannot work more than ten hours a day, and those living out cannot exceed eight hours, adding up to a weekly total of fifty-five for the former and forty-

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<sup>92</sup> L. 2/4/1958, no. 339. See De Litala 19582; Balzarini 1958; Persiani 1964; Bianchi D’Urso 1990; Talini, Masi 1995.

<sup>93</sup> Nenci 1938, p. 20.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>95</sup> Sentenza della Corte costituzionale, 9/4/1969, no. 68, see Bianchi D’Urso 1990, p. 5; Talini, Masi 1995, p. 7-10.

<sup>96</sup> Art. 2, l. 339/1958; art. 11, comma 3, punti 5 and 6, l. 29/4/1949, no. 264; d.l. 494/1994; Bianchi D’Urso 1990, p. 3; Talini, Masi 1995, p. 27.

<sup>97</sup> D. 13/5/1929, no. 850; l. 30/12/1971, no. 1204; sentenze della corte costituzionale 13/2/1974, no. 27 and 15/1/1976, no. 9, 15/3/1994, no. 86; art. 19 of the collective contract, see Talini, Masi 1995, p. 46-47.

<sup>98</sup> L. 604/1966 and 11/5/1990, no. 108, cfr. Talini, Masi 1995, p. 46-48.

eight for the latter. Yet the legislation in force merely regulates not the maximum working hours, as happens for other categories, but the minimum rest periods, fixed at eight consecutive hours per night and a “convenient” rest period during the day. Not without certain contradictions, it also established that in some cases, night service should be followed by a “suitable compensatory” rest period during the day<sup>99</sup>.

Although after the reform of the Civil Code, domestic workers began to see their work regulated by the law and to have a right to rest periods, as well as holidays, sick benefit, the thirteenth-month salary and so on<sup>100</sup>, they are still today under heavy discrimination compared with other employees. The rights which they presently enjoy are moreover the result of a tardy extension and in some cases partial extension of rights won some time ago by other workers. And this is still truer for workers employed for less than four hours a day, outcast among outcasts, excluded even from the few guarantees that other domestic workers were winning<sup>101</sup>.

This picture, which is already discouraging in itself, is rendered even more gloomy by the widespread evasion existing in this sector. In the second half of the Seventies, it was estimated that there were at least 200,000 illegal workers<sup>102</sup>. Almost 40% of domestic servants interviewed in a recent survey did not know of the existence of a national work contract or even denied its existence. Out of these, more than 60% declared that they did not enjoy long-service bonuses; almost 50% declared that they did not benefit from the right that, in cases of illness, guarantees job security and the receiving of half wages for a period varying from eight to fifteen days; more than one third said they had not been paid if a holiday fell on a weekday<sup>103</sup>. Paid holidays, the thirteenth-month salary, severance pay and weekly rest-periods foreseen for those living in, were more widespread: of those interviewed, between 70 and 80% took advantage of these benefits. However, over 40% did not have their national pension contributions paid; moreover, this evasion was often requested by the workers themselves “in exchange” for a better wage. In short, still today few rights are given to domestic workers, both because of limits to current legislation and the difficulty in having it enforced.

Therefore, we may conclude that domestic service, while in principle included among “true” works in the statistical reports, was (and is) often not really considered as such. Undoubtedly, this is chiefly due to its resemblance to housewifery. Indeed, even people employed as home helps sometimes did/do not perceive this activity as a real job, and so they sometimes did/do not present themselves as workers but as mere housewives. In a survey carried out some twenty-five years ago, one quarter of domestics interviewed declared that they saw themselves as housewives, not as workers<sup>104</sup>. In short, women themselves, at least in certain cases, showed that they had adopted a view of domestic work as not being real work, even if it was paid and took place outside their own home.

Also because of this, today paid housework is often performed without payment of social insurance contributions. But, as we said, the rights which home-helps presently

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<sup>99</sup> Art. 8, l. 339/1958.

<sup>100</sup> Respectively art. 2243 of the Civil Code; l. 18/1/1952, no. 35; l. 27/12/1953, no. 940.

<sup>101</sup> The law 339/1958 did not concern domestics employed for less than 4 hours a day. With the d.p.r. 1403/1971 guarantees were extended to all home-helps.

<sup>102</sup> Turrini 1977, p. 60.

<sup>103</sup> Alemani, Fasoli (eds.), 1994, p. 89-101.

<sup>104</sup> Turrini 1977, p. 37-39 and p. 119.

enjoy in Italy are the result of a late and only partial extension of rights won some time ago by other workers. Consequently, if we assume that the rights to which a work gives access are one of the elements which characterise it as a “true” labour, we may conclude that also under this respect domestic service is an activity that is not completely recognised as “real” work.

#### 8. *Domestic service: a woman's occupation*

Once having verified that domestic service historically represents a sector which is not readily considered as “true” work, it is worth trying to clarify what it means, in quantitative terms, on the one hand to sustain that, in the course of time, this become an almost exclusively female occupation; and on the other to affirm that it engaged an important proportion of women who were officially employed. In other words: out of all persons employed in domestic service, what percentage were women? And out of the total of employed women, how many worked as domestics?

In the light of what has been said in the first sections of this paper, it should be clear that the data available must be read with due caution, that is, with the total awareness that the system of category division has led to underestimation of women's work. Moreover, we must add the effects of the way in which home helps themselves perceived their activity, especially home helps not living in with their employers. As we said, people employed as home helps sometimes did not present themselves as workers but merely as housewives.

Having reminded this, let us take a look at the data. Table 1 shows the number of men and women who, according to national population Censuses, constitute domestic staff or documented service in Italy in different years. On the bases of such data, there was an increase in the number of male servants in this category between 1861 and 1881, while until 1951 there was a sharp increase in women. The most notable “jump” was that which took place between 1881 and 1901: women's presence in this sector rose from 62.8% to 83.2%. This increase in the relative importance of women is partly due to the fact that, in contrast to what had been established when the criteria for data collection had been selected, in 1881 many servants in husbandry—mostly men—were erroneously included among domestics, while in 1901, many female hotel workers were classified as domestics, which was another error. Besides this, an important role was played by the change in classification criteria of women's work which we have seen above<sup>105</sup>.

However, the difference did not depend only on the material errors in classification or the changes in the criteria adopted<sup>106</sup>. The composition of categories in different years is in fact very different. It may therefore appear appropriate to limit the analysis to what in many Censuses appears as the group of domestic workers in the strictest sense, within the sphere of a vaster group of services staff (Table 2). If we opt for this possibility, the increasing presence of women appears even more linear. In fact,

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<sup>105</sup> Maic, DGS, *C1901*, vol. V, *Relazione sul metodo cit.*, p. XCV and p. XCVII.

<sup>106</sup> In 1881 the sixth category, “Impiegati privati e personale di servizio”, includes: “intendenti ed esattori privati; scritture e copisti; governanti e damigelle di compagnia; nutrici; cuochi, credenzieri e dispensieri; servitori domestici, portinai e fantesche; guardaboschi privati; guardie campestri private; camerieri e cuochi di bastimenti; camerieri di trattoria, birreria e caffè; ciceroni e guide; bigliardieri e biscazzieri”. In 1901, the 21th class, “Persone addette al servizio domestico”, includes only “Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatterii, portieri e altre persone addette a servizi domestici”. See also tables 1-3.

it appears to progress, almost without interruption, for eighty years (1871-1951)<sup>107</sup>. However, even these stricter categories are not homogeneous. An attempt can be made to create comparable categories, but this is only partly possible. On one hand, because of the methods with which the data are grouped and presented, one cannot always manage to re-elaborate the Census classifications. On the other, the fact that some groups of workers from a certain moment on are no longer included among domestics may be read as the sign of a change in their role and/or the way of conceiving domestic service (Tab. 3 represents an attempt to mitigate the need to have comparable categories and to take account of such changes).

From this point of view, I find that the way in which workers such as butlers, private secretaries and so on were classified in various Censuses is particularly significant. In 1871, “private employees, stewards and butlers” were included in the sixth category under “domestic staff”<sup>108</sup>. In 1881, the category in which they were classified, that is, the seventh, was called “private employees and service staff”: so in that Census, “private stewards and tax collectors”, “scribes and copyists” were still classified under the same category as domestic staff, but were separated from them at the same time<sup>109</sup>. However, in the 1901 Census, private employees and service staff were listed under clearly separate categories: the former “rose” to the “Professions and liberal arts” group<sup>110</sup>. In short, the feminisation of domestic personnel depended not only on other reasons but also on the fact that men, who had represented the top ranks in the hierarchy of domestic service, ceased to be considered as domestics, both in Census reports as well in the collective view<sup>111</sup>.

This naturally resulted not only in the increase of the relative weight of female domestics in the total of those in this sector, but also led to crediting an image of domestic service as a “humble” and low-qualified occupation.

A growing percentage of the active female population appeared to be employed in that very occupation. In fact, as shown by Fig. 8, according with Census data the percentage of servants among women workers increased uninterruptedly from the

<sup>107</sup> According to these data, only in 1911 the trend towards feminisation reverses.

<sup>108</sup> SRI, *C1871*, vol. III, Roma, Regia Tipografia, 1876, p. 310-312, “Categoria 6a. Gruppo unico. - Personale di servizio”. In the 1861 Census it is not explained which workers were included in the category “domesticità”.

<sup>109</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1881*, vol. III. *cit.*, p. 682-683, tav. III, *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni*, “Categoria VII. Impiegati privati e personale di servizio”.

<sup>110</sup> MAIC. DGS, *C1901*, vol. III, *cit.*, p. 28-29. In this Census “Impiegati a servizio di privati - Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali” are not classified together with domestics, see “Categoria D). - Persone addette a servizi domestici e di piazza. Classe XXI. - Persone addette al servizio domestico”, sottogruppo unico, “Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatterri, portieri e altre persone addette a servizi domestici”. They are included in the “Categoria E). - Professioni ed arti liberali”, “Classe XXIV. - Amministrazioni private”. Obviously, it is misleading to exclude instantaneously these workers from the domestic staff. Their “emancipation” from the menial condition is a slow, long-term process.

<sup>111</sup> For private employees, this was a definitive change. Instead, butlers and stewards in 1931 went back to the domestics. In subsequent Censuses they were always included among domestics. The destiny of doorkeepers was similar to that of private employees. Between 1861 and 1921 they were constantly included among domestics. Since 1931 they have been classified in a distinct group, although always in the class of service personnel, see ISTAT, *C1931*, vol. I, *Relazione preliminare*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1933, p. 347; *C1936*, vol. IV, *Professioni*, parte II, *Tavole, B) Industria, commercio, ecc. - condizioni non professionali*, 1., *Regno*, Roma, Tipografia Failli, 1939, Tav. V, *Professioni individuali della popolazione presente di 10 anni e più: addetti secondo la posizione nella professione, per gruppi di età e sesso cit.*, p. 420; *C1951*, vol. IV, *Professioni*, Roma, Stabilimento Tipografico Fausto Failli, 1957, p. 801 and foll.; *C1961*, vol. VI, *Professioni*, Roma, Soc. A.B.E.T.E., p. 1197; *C1971*, vol. VI, *Professioni e attività economiche*, tomo 2, *Professioni*, Roma, A.B.E.T.E., 1977, p. 529; *C 1981*, vol. II, *Dati sulle caratteristiche strutturali della popolazione e delle abitazioni*, Tomo 3, *Italia*, parte II, Istat, Roma, Abete Grafica, 1985, p. 467 and foll.

Unification of Italy to 1901 and then remained steady for ten years. Yet between 1911 and 1921, the percentage fell slightly. There was thus a trend inversion in the period during which very many women substituted men called to the Front during the war, without inevitably returning “home” as soon as the conflict was over<sup>112</sup>. Between 1921 and 1931-1936 the number of servants increased notably. Moreover, it was the Fascist regime on one hand which in those very years emphasised the female role as wives and mothers, put into effect a series of expulsive measures which banned women from a wide range of professions, and moreover introduced “protective” laws which bound women’s identity more closely to the maternal and family role<sup>113</sup>. After the Second world war the number of domestics out of the total number of working women appears to fall steadily: their number seems therefore to decrease in the period in which women achieve suffrage and, slowly, equal rights in the working world. After limited interventions carried out during the twenty years of Fascism, during this period the law intervened more systematically in regulating paid domestic work.

Furthermore, it was precisely during these years, and particularly starting with the 1961 Census that there was a slight masculinisation in this sector, after years during which women’s presence had steadily marched on. Especially between 1911 and 1936, according to censuses feminisation had increased at a dizzy rate: women rose from 80.8% to 95% of domestics (table 3). Among people classified as servants, the percentage of women had in short jumped forward in the years in which men had achieved suffrage and had taken part *en masse* in the war; the Fascist dictatorship had been established and consolidated, with its engagement to foster men’s employment in favour of women’s in the sectors of “real” work; other jobs, particularly those in industry and offices, had become a source of guarantees, while domestic work had been excluded from almost all protective laws. Yet slight remasculinisation began shortly after the state started to timidly control employment, thanks to the Civil Code of 1942, a type of control which speeded up in the Fifties, with the introduction of sickness benefit, the thirteenth month salary, the Act of 1958 and other measures which have been mentioned above.

But how can this masculinisation be explained? Did women who were conquering new rights abandon the sector in greater numbers than men, who were generally dependent on wealthier families and consequently, perhaps, held relatively more protected positions? Did the fact that domestic work became slightly more protected attract more men? Or what other reason was there? And what conclusions can be made? That the more women are deprived generally of their rights, that is, they are “servants”, the higher the number of women servants is both among employed women and among people engaged in domestic service? It is difficult to give a definite answer. Answering the question would require a deep analysis of the Italian economic development. However, in Italy the history of women’s participation in the labour market seems indicate that a growing percentage of employed women were engaged as domestics: therefore as “standby housewives”, to give them an effective definition. They were in short active in a sector which was and is hardly recognised as real work, and which in any case provided and provides few rights and guarantees. A weak sector, domestic service was and is almost totally the domain of women. However, men’s relative weight in this sector began to grow slightly in the Fifties, that is, when it began

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<sup>112</sup> Curli 1998.

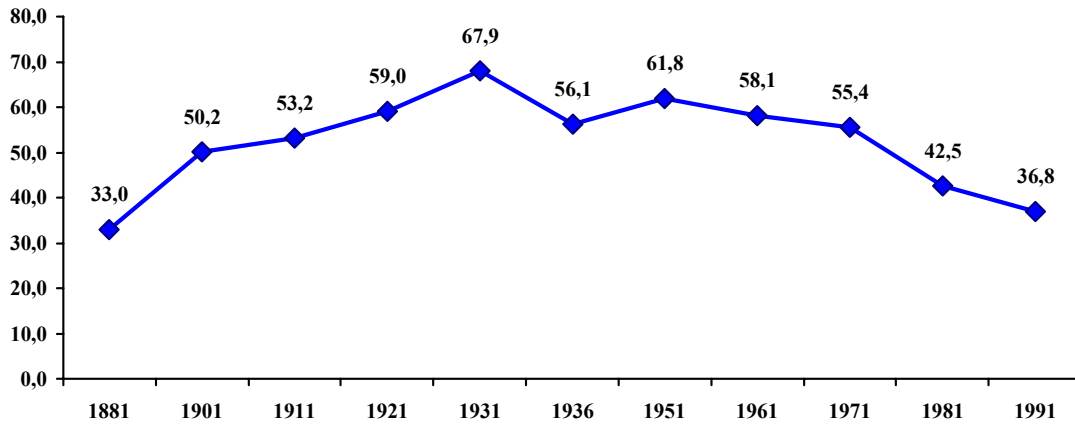
<sup>113</sup> Galoppini 1980; Ballestrero 1996, De Grazia 1993 (or. ed. 1992), who analyses controversial effects of Fascism on female condition.

to offer further guarantees. Moreover, for a long period, practically speaking until the explosion of the feminist movement, while work became a source of rights, an increasing percentage of women were housewives or were classified as housewives, and considered economically inactive (Fig. 7).

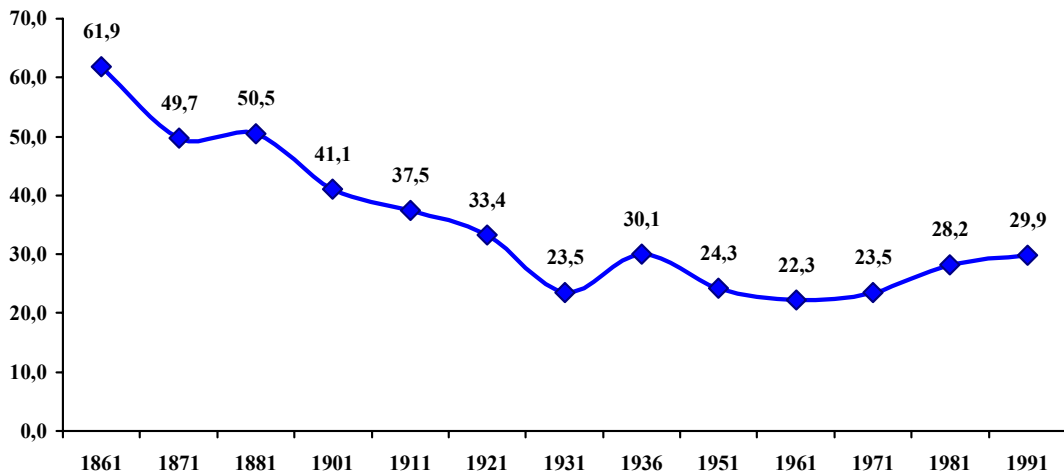
## 9. Conclusion

In the light of all this, we may return to our initial matter, which posed the following question: have men and women drawn the same advantages from the transformation of ancient toil into “ennobling” work, a source of rights? Although of necessity synthetic and rather schematic, this paper enables us to give a definitely negative response to our question. Not all forms of toil underwent this “ennobling” process. Typical female activities were simply considered as “unproductive” and were not thought of as real work. Moreover, the idea of the “natural” role of women and the fear of upsetting the balance between the sexes led to the downgrading of extra-domestic work carried out by women. On the one hand concrete measures were taken to “protect” women and their “natural” maternal and familiar role and even, during Fascism, to reduce their participation in the labour market. On the other hand, the emphasis on this role led to an increasingly stronger representation of women as housewives, even by way of overlooking their actual extra-domestic paid work. Not only Census officials, but also working women appear sometimes to have shared this opinion. Consequently, for both “real” and “ideological” reasons, the number of active women showed for a long time a decrease. Besides, an increasing proportion of active women were servants. And, as said, domestic service was an occupation which never gained an unquestioned label of “real” work, and which did not grant a large range of rights.

**Fig. 1**  
**Housewives among the Italian women in the age groups**  
**on which in each Census was calculated the active population**  
**(1881-1991)**

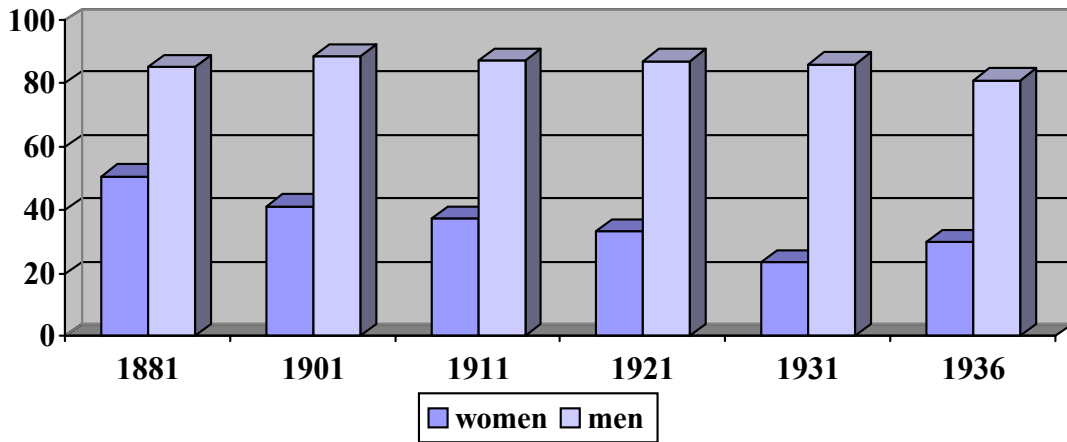


**Fig. 2**  
**Active women among the women in the age groups on which in each Census**  
**was calculated the active population**  
**(Italy, 1861-1991)**



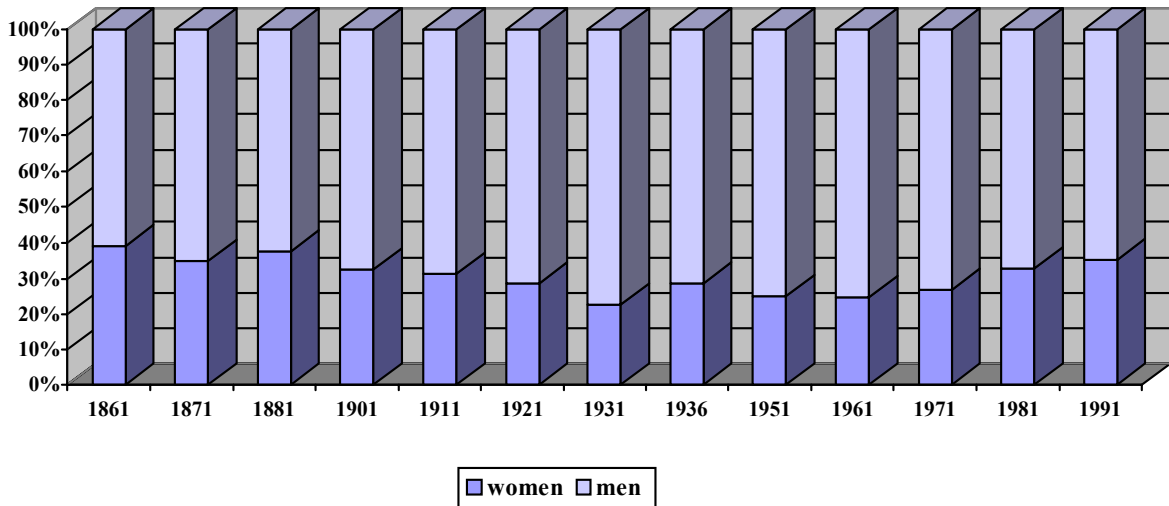
Sources (Figs. 1 and 2): Italian Population Censuses 1861-1991. Original data.

**Fig. 3**  
**Activity rates for women and men (Italy 1881-1936)**



Source: Italian Censuses 1881-1936 (original Census data, see Vitali 1968, p. 95 and p. 97).

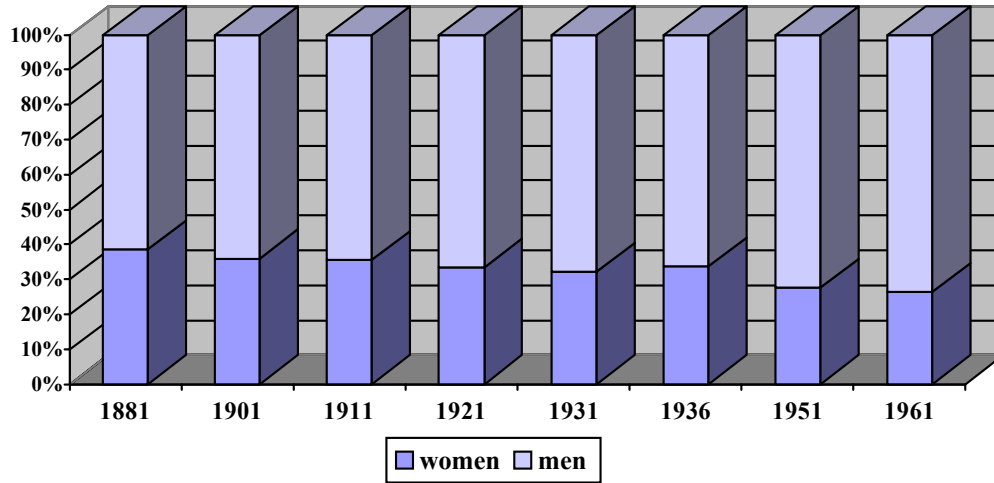
**Fig. 4**  
**Percentage of women in the Italian active population (1861-1991)**



Source: Italian Censuses 1861-1991 (original Census data).

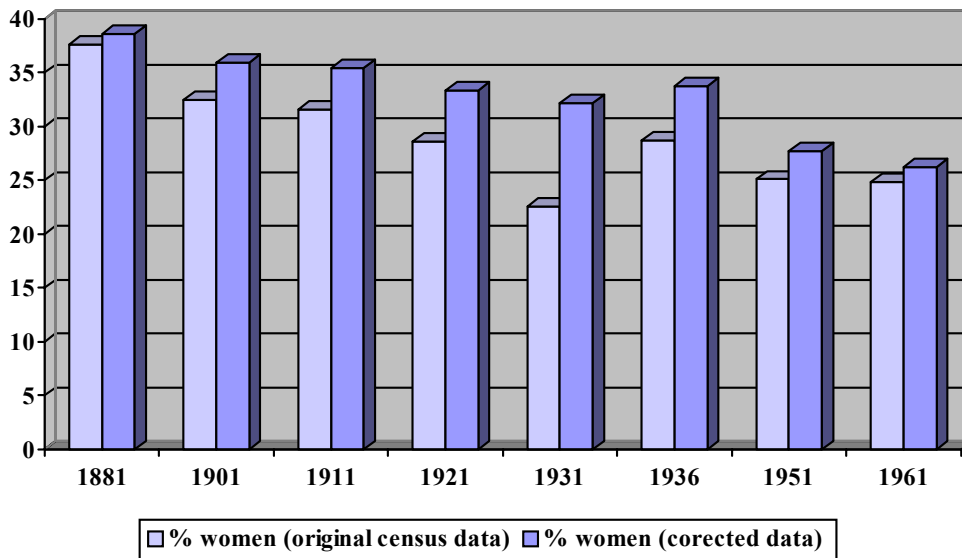


**Fig. 5**  
**Percentage of women in the active Italian population, 1881-1961**  
**(corrected data)**



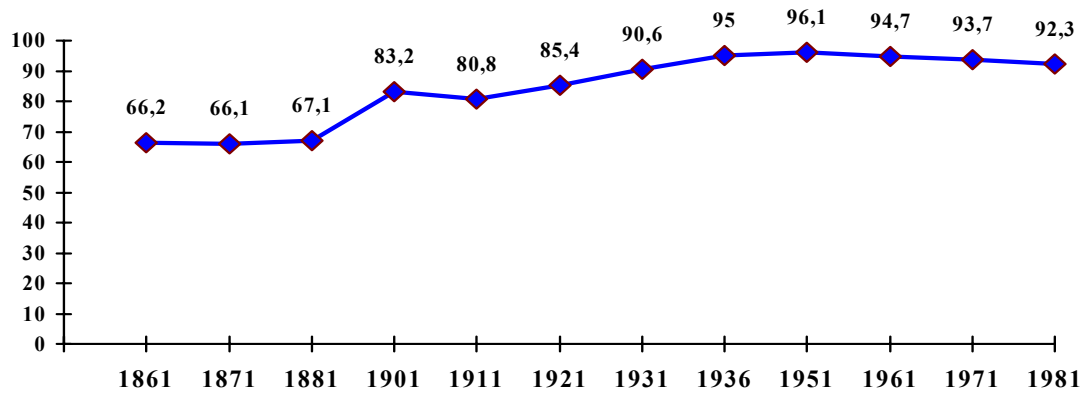
Source: Vitali 1970, table 3, p. 365-375.

**Fig. 6**  
**Percentage of women in the Italian active population, 1881-1961**



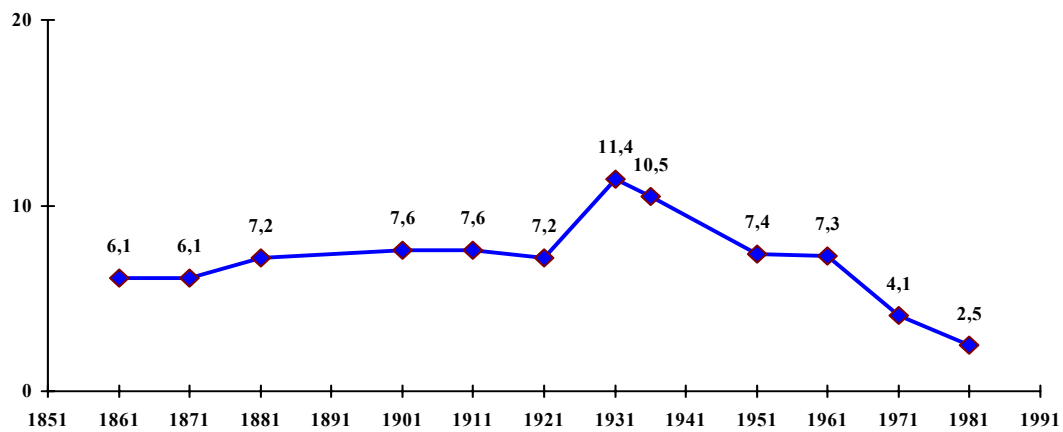
Source, Vitali 1970.

**Fig. 7**  
**Women among servants in Italy**  
**(1861-1981)**



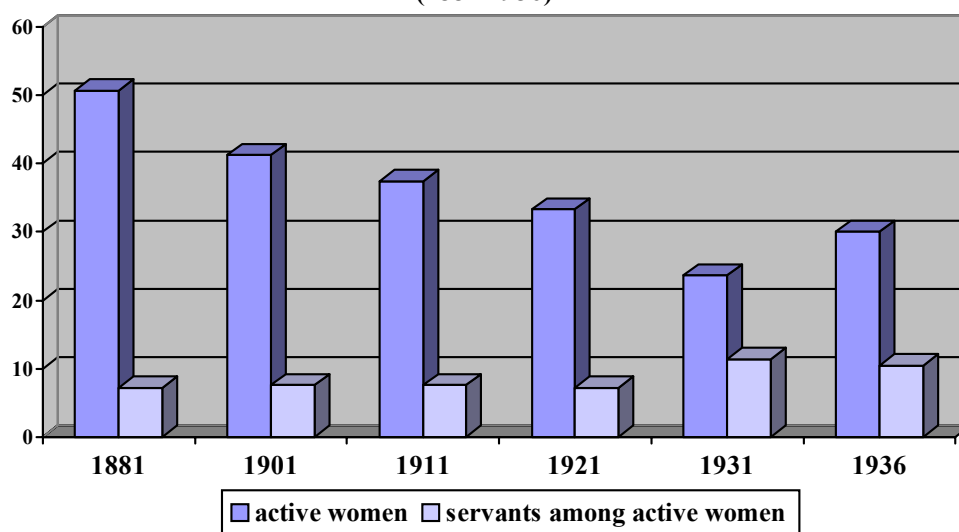
Source: Italian Population Censuses (see below, table 3).

**Fig. 8**  
**Servants among Italian active women**  
**(1861-1981)**



Source: Italian Population Censuses (for employed data about servants see below, table 3).

**Fig. 9**  
**Activity rates for women and percentage of servants among active women**  
**(1881-1936)**



Source: Italian Censuses 1881-1936 (original Census data, see Vitali 1968, p. 95 and p. 9, for the active population; for data about servants see table 3).

**Table 1: Female and male servants (“large” definition<sup>1</sup>), Italy 1861-1981**

Year	Definition	% Women	% Men	Tot. %	Number
1861	Domesticità	66,2	33,8	100,0	473574
1871	Personale di servizio	64,4	35,6	100,0	473831
1881	Impiegati privati e personale di servizio	62,8	37,2	100,0	713405
1901	Persone addette al servizio domestico	83,2	16,8	100,0	482080
1911	Domestici	80,8	19,2	100,0	483009
1921	Addetti ai servizi domestici	85,4	14,6	100,0	445631
1931	Addetti ai servizi domestici	87,8	12,2	100,0	534973
1936	Personale di servizio	95,0	5,0	100,0	582991 <sup>2</sup>
1951	Arti e mestieri inerenti ai servizi domestici	96,1	3,9	100,0	377316
1961	Professioni inerenti ai servizi domestici	94,7	5,3	100,0	374021
1971	Domestici	93,7	6,3	100,0	219690
1981	Domestici	92,3	7,7	100,0	182881

Sources: see table 3.

<sup>1</sup> See section 8.<sup>2</sup> Includes only people employed in the class of economic activity “Economia domestica”.**Table 2: Female and male servants (“restricted” definition<sup>1</sup>), Italy 1861 1981**

Year	Definition	% Women	% Men	Tot. %	Number
1861	Domesticità	66,2	33,8	100,0	473574
1871	Servi, domestici, portinaj, guardinai ecc.	68,7	31,3	100,0	395393
1881	Servitori domestici, portinaj e fantesche	75,0	25,0 <sup>1</sup>	100,0	522293
1901	Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatterri, portieri e altre persone addette ai servizi domestici	83,2	16,8	100,0	482080
1911	Domestici	80,8	19,2	100,0	483009
1921	Domestici, cuochi, portieri balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti ed istitutrici	85,4	14,6	100,0	445631
1931	Domestici, cuochi, balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti ed istitutrici, autisti ecc.	90,6	9,4	100,0	493245
1936	Domestici	95,6	4,4	100,0	563273
1951	Domestici	96,1	3,9	100,0	376352
1961	Professioni inerenti ai servizi domestici	94,7	5,3	100,0	374021
1971	Domestici	93,7	6,3	100,0	219690
1981	Domestici	92,3	7,7	100,0	182881

Sources: see table 3.

<sup>1</sup> See section 8.

**Table 3: Female and male servants (categories constructed by the A. <sup>1</sup>), Italy 1861 1981**

Year	Definition	% Women	% Men	Tot. %	Number
1861	Domesticità <sup>2</sup>	66,2	33,8	100,0	473574
1871	Camerieri senza speciale qualificazione Governanti Servi, domestici, portinaj, guardinai ecc. Nutrici e balie	68,8	31,2	100,0	441402
	<i>Total including also "Impiegati privati, intendenti e maggiordomi"</i>	66,1	33,9	100,0	460411
1881	Governanti e damigelle di compagnia Nutrici Cuochi, credenzieri e dispensieri Servitori domestici, portinaj e fantesche Totale	72,7	27,3	100,0	564815
	<i>Total including also "Impiegati ed esattori privati; Scritturali e copisti"</i>	67,1	32,9	100,0	613933
1901	Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatterri, portieri e altre persone addette ai servizi domestici <sup>2</sup>	83,2	16,8	100,0	482080
	<i>Total including also "Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali"</i>	75,0	25,0	100,0	536362 <sup>3</sup>
1911	Domestici <sup>2</sup>	80,8	19,2	100,0	483009
	<i>Total including also "Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali, ecc."</i>	73,7	26,3	100,0	534129 <sup>3</sup>
1921	Domestici, cuochi, portieri, balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti ed istitutrici <sup>2</sup>	85,4	14,6	100,0	445631
1931	Domestici, cuochi, balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti ed istitutrici, autisti ecc. <sup>2</sup>	90,6	9,4	100,0	493245
	<i>Total homogeneous at the total of 1921, including also "Portieri; Personale di servizio o di fatica dipendente professionisti ed artisti (esclusi gli autisti)"</i>	87,7	12,3	100,0	535527
1936	Ascensoristi, grooms Cuochi Dame di compagnia Domestici Guardarobieri, dispensieri, ecc. Nutrici e balie Maggiordomi, cerimonieri, maestri di casa Sguatterri e basso personale di cucina	95,0	5,0	100,0	582991 <sup>4</sup>
	<i>Total including also "Autisti; Portieri di case di abitazione"</i>	88,0	12,0	100,0	647508 <sup>4</sup>
1951	Maggiordomi e simili Domestici Nutrici e balie Altri	96,1	3,9	100,0	377316
	<i>Total including also "Portieri d'abitazione"</i>	94,0	6,0	100,0	411306
1961	Professioni inerenti ai servizi domestici <sup>2</sup>	94,7	5,3	100,0	374021
	<i>Total including also "Portieri di abitazioni"</i>	90,7	9,3	100,0	424045
1971	Domestici <sup>2</sup>	93,7	6,3	100,0	219690
	<i>Total including also "Portieri di abitazione"</i>	83,2	16,8	100,0	281938
1981	Domestici <sup>2</sup>	92,3	7,7	100,0	182881
	<i>Total including also "Portieri di abitazione"</i>	81,7	18,3	100,0	235379

<sup>1</sup> See section 8.<sup>2</sup> This group can not be disaggregated.<sup>3</sup> In 1901 and in 1911 this category is not part of the class of domestics. I have reported this figure only to allow a comparison with the previous years.<sup>4</sup> It includes only the employees in the class "Economia domestica".**Sources:**

**1861:** *Statistica d'Italia. Popolazione, Parte I. Censimento Generale (31 dicembre 1861.)*, Firenze, Tipografia di G. Barbèra, 1867, p. 79 e p. 102-103, category "Domesticità".

**1871:** *Statistica del Regno d'Italia, Popolazione classificata per professioni. Culti e infermità principali. Censimento 31 dicembre 1871*, vol. III, Roma, Regia Tipografia, 1876, p. 310-312, *Popolazione per professioni*, "Categoria 6a. Gruppo unico. - Personale di servizio". The category includes: "Impiegati privati, intendenti, e maggiordomi"; "Corrieri e pedoni"; "Camerieri di caffè e servizio di bigliardi"; "Camerieri senza speciale qualificazione"; "Governanti"; "Servi domestici, portinaj, guardiani, ecc."; "Nutrici e balie".

**1881:** Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio. Direzione Generale della Statistica, *Censimento della popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 31 dicembre 1881*, vol. III. *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni*, Roma, Tipografia Bodoniana, 1884, p. 682-683, tav. III, *Popolazione classificata per professioni o condizioni (esclusi i bambini fino a otto anni compiuti)*, "Categoria VII. - Impiegati privati e personale di servizio". La categoria risulta così composta: "Intendenti ed esattori privati"; "Scritturali e copisti"; "Governanti e damigelle di compagnia"; "Nutrici"; "Cuochi, credenzieri e dispensieri"; "Servitori, domestici, portinai e fantesche"; "Guardaboschi privati"; "Guardie campestri private"; "Camerieri e cuochi di bastimenti"; "Camerieri di trattoria, birreria e caffè"; "Ciceroni e guide"; "Bigliardieri e biscazzieri".

**1901:** Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio. Direzione Generale della Statistica, *Censimento della Popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 10 febbraio 1901*, vol. III, *Popolazione presente classificata per professioni o condizioni*, Roma, Tipografia Nazionale di G. Bertero e C., 1904, p. 28-29, "Categoria D). - Persone addette a servizi domestici e di piazza. Classe XXI. - Persone addette al servizio domestico": la classe XXI contiene un unico sottogruppo: "Governanti, camerieri, cameriere, nutrici, servitori, cuochi, sguatter, portieri e altre persone addette a servizi domestici"; "Categoria E) - Professioni e arti liberali. Classe XXIV. Amministrazioni private: 2. Impiegati a servizio di privati. - Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali".

**1911:** Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio. Direzione della Statistica e del Lavoro. Ufficio del Censimento, *Censimento della Popolazione del Regno d'Italia al 10 giugno 1911*, vol. IV, *Popolazione presente, di età superiore a dieci anni, classificata per sesso e per professione o condizione (Tav. VI)*, Roma, Tipografia Nazionale di G. Bertero e C., 1915, p. 24, sezione 258, 10-31, "Domestici"; sezione 256, 10-22, "Impiegati al servizio di privati": "Intendenti, maestri di casa, segretari, contabili, esattori, scritturali, ecc."

**1921:** Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Istituto Centrale di Statistica, *Risultati sommari del censimento della popolazione eseguito il 1° dicembre 1921*, vol. XIX, *Regno d'Italia*, Roma, Stabilimento Poligrafico per l'Amministrazione dello Stato, 1927, p. 11, *Popolazione di età superiore a 10 anni classificata secondo il sesso e per grandi categorie professionali*, "Addetti ai servizi domestici"; *ibid.*, vol. XIX., *Relazione generale*, Roma, Stabilimento Poligrafico per l'Amministrazione dello Stato, 1928, p. 188\*-189\*, Tav. XXII, *Popolazione presente di età superiore a 10 anni classificata secondo il sesso e la professione [...]*, classe 42: "Addetti ai servizi domestici", sottoclasse 179: "Domestici, cuochi, portieri, balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti e istitutrici" (class 42 has only one "sottoclasse").

**1931:** Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d'Italia, *VII Censimento generale della popolazione*, Tav. XI, *Popolazione in età di 10 anni e più secondo la professione o condizione e il sesso*, classe 50, "Addetti ai servizi domestici", sottoclasse 324 - 36, "Domestici, cuochi, balie, damigelle di compagnia, governanti ed istitutrici, autisti, ecc."; sottoclasse 325 - T31, "Portieri, ecc." e classe 43, "Amministrazioni private", sottoclasse 268 - D76, "Personale di servizio o di fatica dipendente da professionisti ed artisti (esclusi gli autisti)".

**1936:** Istituto Centrale di Statistica del Regno d'Italia, *VIII Censimento generale della popolazione 21 aprile 1936-XIV*, vol. IV, *Professioni*, parte II, *Tavole. B) Industria, commercio, ecc. - condizioni non professionali*, 1. *Regno*, Roma, Tipografia Failli, 1939, Tav. X, *Professioni individuali della popolazione presente di 10 anni e più secondo la posizione nella professione e le classi di attività economica nelle quali tali professioni sono esercitate*, p. 742-743, "Personale di servizio", così composto (comprendendo solo gli impiegati nella classe "Economia domestica"): n. 336, "Ascensoristi, grooms, ecc."; n. 338, "Cuochi"; n. 339, "Dame di compagnia"; n. 340, "Domestici"; n. 341, "Guardarobieri, dispensieri, ecc."; n. 342, "Maggiordomi, cerimonieri, maestri di casa"; n. 343, "Nutrici e balie"; n. 344, "Sguatter e basso personale di cucina"; p. 731-734, "Professioni dei trasporti e comunicazioni": n. 267, "Autisti" (solo quelli impiegati nella classe "Economia domestica"); p. 735-736, "Personale di custodia": n. 299, "Portieri di case di abitazione" (all employed in the class "Economia domestica").

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