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**«THE ROLE OF WOMAN IN THE ECONOMY OF PATRAS:  
THE TEXTILE SECTOR»**

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## **CONTENTS**

2. THE ROLE OF WOMAN IN THE ECONOMY OF PATRAS: THE TEXTILE SECTOR.....	3
2.1. Introduction .....	3
2.2. Patras Economic Development.....	3
2.3. Attendance of women in Patras in the labour.....	5
2.4. The textile industry in Patras during the 20 <sup>th</sup> century .....	7
2.5. The most important units of the sector in Patras .....	9
2.6. Social life of woman in Patras.....	12
2.7. Attendance of woman in the political life .....	16
2.8. Attendance of woman of Patras in the Carnival .....	17
2.9. Conclusions .....	18
2.10. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	20

## **2. THE ROLE OF WOMAN IN THE ECONOMY OF PATRAS: THE TEXTILE SECTOR**

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### **2.1. Introduction**

The contribution of woman in the economic, and consequently the general, growth of a society is undeniable. In every era, in all cultures and in the entire spectrum of the humanity standard of living development, the attendance of woman in the productive process presents influences that increased the rates of growth under a geometrical progress. And this is reasonable, since the labour is considered as the one of the four factors of production, according to the economic theory, and one of the two factors of production, according to Marx.

The labor includes all the natural and intellectual services, that are provided by a person for the production of goods and services in the primary, the secondary and the tertiary sector. The present study concerns with the role of woman in the economy of Achaia, and concretely the city of Patras, through her attendance in the labor in the primary, the secondary and the tertiary sector. With regard to the primary sector, the study will be carried out in the production of grape, for the secondary sector the sector of textile will be examined and for the tertiary sector the services of health, concretely the nurses will be studied.

### **2.2. Patras Economic Development**

Patras foundation is dated back to the prehistoric times, with the mythological version to report that Evmilos had cultivated wheat in the rich

extents of grounds of Aroi (ancient city) (that is fertile), of Antheia (that is bloomed) and Mesatida (that was situated in the middle).

Patras bloomed for first time during the Ysteroelladiki (aftergreecian) or Mycenae period (1580 - 1100 b.C.). During the Byzantine years, Patras is progressively flourishing, but continues to constitute an important harbor and a powerful industrial centre. At the 9th century the city was booming, according to clues: the widow Daniilis from Patras had accumulated immense wealth in landed property, in the industry of carpets and textile. The first Ottoman domination (1460-1687) was a period of seediness but from 1715 and later revival of trade is observed resulting in Patras thriving economically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, based on the agriculture and the trade.

In the dues of 19th century, the role of Patras as the main export harbor for the rural products of Peloponnesus, as centre of organizing production of grape and as centre of providing stocking, banking and insurance services rendered the city as the second bigger urban centre of Greece, following Athens. In the beginning of 20th century Patras was developed fast.

The economic activity of Patras was great. In the primary sector it excelled in the production and trade of grape, in the secondary sector it excelled in the sector of textile and in the tertiary sector it excelled in the sector of nursing services. However, the secondary sector, and concretely the sector of textile, is the one in which a lot of women have been occupied.

The craft-based activity also continued in the beginning of 20th century. A lot of clothing manufactures are transformed into industries and the sector of textile blossoms importantly.

Today, the rates of growth in Patras remain augmentative. However, the phenomenon of deindustrialization that affected the region in the past few years is appreciably obvious in the all expressions of social life.

### **2.3. Attendance of women in Patras in the labour**

Discoveries of the archaeological hoe, exhibits of museums, collections of old and modern objects, reports in author's work testify the active attendance of woman of Patras in the labour market. The beginning took place in the ancient city, with the testimonies of Pausanias, in "Achaics", for the women of Patras, who, in their effort of survival, were weaving reticular feminine headbands, "kekryfaloy's" (kekryfaloplokoi) and were spinning various goods of gown using flax as the material [2]. These textiles appear to be so precious, that Plinius reports that their value per weight counterbalanced with the value of gold [3].

Later, the women of Patras were focused on the development of weaving. In particular, with the arrival of immigrants from the Asia Minor, who brought a lot of arts with the weaving, an appreciable manufacture was developed in Patras[4]. At this time the weaving was blooming. Thus, the women of Patras were occupied with the production of silk, linens and purple textiles.

During the Middle Ages, and with the arrival of immigrants from the Asia Minor in Patras, who brought in their suitcases a lot of arts including weaving, Patras is flourishing. At the 9th century Patras receives an important position and develops appreciable manufacture and weaving: silks are produced, linens and purple textiles and carpets. This treatment of silk becomes intensive. The bigger part of hills and plain round the city is cultivated with mulberries that are used as food for silkworms [5].

The women in Patras of 20th century began to work after the Second World War. Most of them were initially working in the fields. That time the entire family was participating in the agricultural production, while with difficulty women would be occupied as workers in foreigner fields. Their activities would be limited in familial rural extents. On the other hand, the mentality of those times was in such direction, that women were ashamed to get in the job market and the production.

The age of women workers was from 18 years and above. Rarely a family would allow the young girl to work in an employer before reaching 18 years old, even if the family was not affluent.

However, with the passage of refugees in the Greek territories, the perception for woman employment changed. The refugees will bring in their suitcases a different way of life, which in combination with the local tradition, will usher in a new era of products and services for the Achaic reality. New textiles will be developed, with flashy colours and drawings, influenced by the eastern culture. On the other hand, the employment of women refugees in the job market will prompt women of Patras to get out from their houses and to seek for work in local manufactures.

Signs of feminine entrepreneurship do not emerge at the passed century. Women were occupied as workers in factories and manufactures and those that were not occupied remained in the house.

Today, women of Patras are activated in all the sectors of productive activity, with frequent attendance in the sector of services.

## 2.4. The textile industry in Patras during the 20<sup>th</sup> century

During the passed century, the economy of Patras was blooming via the textile, and woman played the most important role in this activity. The main textile industries in Patras were the following:

Spinning mills and Weave mills [6]:	Spinning- Shirts- Shocks production [6]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ P. Foteinos, Saravali (1846)</li> <li>◆ S. Kuritsopoulos (1883)</li> <li>◆ P. Kritikos, Areias &amp; kanari (1862)</li> <li>◆ G. Kogkos (1857)</li> <li>◆ G. Trianti Sons (1847)</li> <li>◆ G. Papatheodorou (1873)</li> <li>◆ An. Anastasopoulos, Kalavriton (1890) and afterwards St. Dionysiou (1925)</li> <li>◆ Patras Trade-industrial Company (1919) (Ch. Katsampas, S.Stratos, T. Emmanouil)</li> <li>◆ Anonymous Peiraiki Company of Enterprises</li> <li>◆ Peiraiki Patraiki SA (1932), end of Korinthou and Maizonos</li> <li>◆ A. Fokas (1866)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ V. Maragopoulos, end of Korinthou and Maizonos</li> <li>◆ V. Iliopoulos (1902), Vilelman</li> <li>◆ V. Dimitropoulos &amp; Sia, G.Olympiou</li> <li>◆ N. Vetsos (SA "The Taxiarches"), Lontou</li> <li>◆ K. Drosopoulos</li> <li>◆ Ch. Spiliopoulos , G. Roufou</li> <li>◆ T. Emmanouil, Trion Navarxon</li> <li>◆ "Kaltsoviomichaniki Union", Norman</li> <li>◆ I. Savvopoulos, Pantokratoros</li> <li>◆ L. Papaioannou, Oth. Amalias</li> <li>◆ E. Papantonopoulos</li> <li>◆ Anagnostopouloi brothers</li> <li>◆ E. Ladopoulos, St. Andreou</li> <li>◆ Ch. Petropoulos, K. vakropoulos, Ermou</li> <li>◆ P. Panagiotopoulos, Prosfugika quarter</li> <li>◆ K. kartsounis, St. Triadas ("The spider")</li> <li>◆ Th. Kottaris, St. Sophia</li> <li>◆ S. Gouvelis, Boukaouri</li> </ul>

The industries of textile in Patras were unbreakably connected with woman workforce. Women were those that worked in spinning mills but also spinning mills were the space where women of Patras worked for their first time. The presence of males in such manufactures was minor and the role of man was limited in administrative activities and hard work. Managerial places did not exist for women. The higher level that a woman could reach was the role of the workwoman with more rights.

The working conditions in the manufactures of textile were good in general. Social insurance did not exist for the workers and the workers in Patras up to

1936, but the employers guaranteed the good conditions in the working places.

Since 1970 the textile industry in Patras is flourishing. More and more industries are activated in the sector and the workforce, with the entry of woman in the job market, is increased. Patras produces textiles of all types. The most known are "alatzas", or differently "oxfor" and "sapphire", material from which they made dressing gowns for the nurses, dresses, shirts etc. Another textile is "chases", which was used for the creation of sheets and underwear. "Faskia" (swaddle) constitutes another kind of textile, which was used, as its name implies, for swaddling the babies.

The first signs of decline in the textile industry in Patras emerge in 1980. Vaulting horse was the change of facts in the European Union. Greece, as state-member that wants to be actively involved in European facts, obligatorily follows the new rhythms. The day labors get increased, the social insurance becomes obligatory, the operation costs of the enterprise are increased. Next comes the increase of the total enterprises cost of the sector, that lead many of them not to bear the competition and to close. Many of them are indeed forced to travel in another country, in which they would find more favorable conditions, and cheap working hands, like Bulgaria. An additional reason that forced the textile enterprises to close was the pollution of environment that were causing via the filths that were emitting, which forced them to close definitely. On the other hand, while the western countries present signs of reconstruction, Greece remains engaged in internal problems which force the Greek region to remain behind the developments and industrial elements of Patras become alienated.

Export activity on textile products did not exist in Patras. The reason was the lack of big quantity of products. In particular, the local production was not enough to cover the local needs, a fact that forced the shops of textile trading



and clothes to import products from other countries and mainly England, France and less from Czech Republic.

### **2.5. The most important units of the sector in Patras**

The bigger units that were activated in the textile sector were "Peiraiki Patraiki" and the spin industry "Kritikos Xh. G. S.A.".

"Peiraiki Patraiki" was founded by Christoforos Katsampas and Stamoulis Stratou and was activating in all the processes that take place so that the cotton is changed to final textile. It occupied more than 3000 workers, from which half roughly were men and half women.

In the decade 1965 - 1975 Peiraiki Patraiki presents feverish activity. About 1500 workers are occupied there and frequent is the phenomenon of a pair working in the factory, but this happened only for the working personnel. The clerical personnel was composed mainly from women and men in lower extent. On the total of the workers in the factory, the majority of women worked in the spin, apart from the technicians of the department that worked on repairs, as well as in the accounts department where rarely men worked. On the contrary, in the dyeworks and the printing process only men worked. Associations of workers or signs of syndicalism do not exist. Also, the cohesion and the solidarity between the workers are remarkable.

The educative level of workers differed. The administrative personnel owned certificate of studies of secondary education and knowledge obtained by a local accountant faculty. The chemists, electricians, civil engineers, that were only men, possessed a certificate of third degree education. Of course, they also traveled abroad for getting additional specialization, and their expenses were covered by the enterprise. Women possessing a certificate of third degree education did not appear in that period.

The wages were satisfactory and “production benefits” for all were available. Discrimination in the wage of man and woman existed from the legislation. The workers are occupied 8 hours daily and anyone wishing to work overtime enjoys a strong wage that reaches the 75% of the stab wage for each hour.

The interest of the employers for the personnel of the factory is remarkable. The testimony of Mrs. Margarita Argyrou is indicative: “A woman worker is unable to cover the remedy expenses for her young son, who suffers from a serious problem in his heart and Peiraiki Patraiki undertakes the overall expenses for the child and his mother to travel abroad. Finally the child has been cured”.

The way women were activating in their spare time differs among the workers. For women workers the factory functioned as a core that socialized the individuals and created friendly relationships. Into the factory, the women workers were often singing, laughing and always they were cheerful. They had developed friendships and their most frequent amusement was their aggregations in houses, known as “veggeres”. Many times they developed closer relations by baptizing their co-workers’ children. On the other hand, the women working in the administration of the factory had not developed intense social activity among them. In particular, in their free time they activated independently and most weekends they traveled to Athens for going to the theatre and the cinema. In general, as long as the educative level increased, the bonds between the workers were decreased, a fact proving the different needs and interests the educated workers presented in relation to the less educated women.

Mrs. Chara presents an other dimension of the situation in Peiraiki Patraiki. Mrs. Chara belongs to the last ones that worked in the factory, before its closure. She worked there from 1974 to the closure of the factory. In the department she was occupied, where only the spinner was produced, about 100 individuals were working. Mrs. Chara did not know the total of the individuals in the factory due to the existence of many departments. The age of workers in her department was from 20 years to 65 years. Mrs. Chara does not know any worker who was activating in politics. She only remembers a lot of women workers working perpetually and her only recollection that has remained indelible is the picture of the human resources manager, who is literally found above the head of the workers, checking out their outputs. In this point, the differentiation that existed among the sentiment of the woman worker and the woman administrative employee for the company and the conditions that prevailed in it easily becomes perceptible. The woman worker is presented more afraid while the woman administrative employee is presented to face the situation in a more positive way, a fact that also springs from the behavior that possibly the employers presented towards the administrative and working personnel.

The company "Kritikos Ch.G. S.A." constitutes a turning-point for the Greek textile industry. Her commercial activity began in 1859 and in the beginning of the century it reached the maximum of its production. In its premises 170 women and 110 men worked and until 1998 it produced the 4% of threads in Greece.

In general the work in the factories and the manufactures of the sector was carried out in a peaceful way. Nevertheless, the movements of revolts of men and women workers were not absent. The fact that in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of 1935, when a woman worker flew in the soldiers a stone and the head sergeant opened fire with result a worker, Stayros Nisidis 17 years old, refugee to lose his life [7] is characteristic. The fact becomes extended and the workers rise in

revolt, which led to the arrest of 50 workers, from which the 7 were women [7].

## **2.6. Social life of woman in Patras**

The woman of Patras in that time was very careful with her appearance. According to the historian N. E. Politis, "the emancipation and the development of women of Patras were not rapid, however it became with slow but regularly steps" and it intensely began through Patras Carnival with its disguises but also through the fashion that was commanded by each époque. The woman in Patras followed the fashion trends and took care of her appearance. Big part of women in Patras wore impressive dresses, which many times touched the exaggeration. In particular, in the end of 19th century in the costume of women in Patras existed intensely the woman's hat, which was considered as a necessary supplement for each dress or evening toilet. It was judged as very essential by the fashion of this époque and for the completion of woman picture, so that it was almost unthinkable for the woman of Patras to appear in the street, in the church, or in the theatre without her hat [8].

The influences from Europe do not influence only Athens but also Patras and thus we discover that particularly from the 19th century and afterwards the women of Patras did not fall short in nothing from Athenians. "Perhaps in deed they outbraved them in certain points." [9]. The intense social association because of the harbor, the immigration of Greeks and foreign nationalities in Patras, the social associations of the woman of Patras with other Greeks and ladies of foreign nationalities, gave them an "air " of culture, something undefined, that made them differentiate" [10].

The economic prosperity changed the physiognomy of woman of Patras. It differentiated her social life and her behaviors and created a newly established urban class. An idiomorphic cosmopolitanism is developed [11].

In cosmopolitan Patras but also in the around villages, the improvement of life level is obvious: "Their houses they transformed them into small palaces from the side of luxury and hard furnishing. Furniture that Mr. Syggros did not dream of for his palace", is written in "Acropolis" (13/02/1894). This growth helped the city to live its most enchanting period, the known "Belle Epoque" from 1900 to the First World War.

The social life of woman worker of Patras in the beginning of the previous century does not have a lot of things to demonstrate. The woman lived into the house, activating in the housekeeping and in the raising of children. The only exit from the house took place when she was going to a neighboring house for a "coffee" with the neighbor. In the cases where the woman worked, this happened in the fields or the factories and the manufactures and nowhere else.

In the passed century the first efforts for the education of women of Patras, who were not educated or did it clandestinely since then, took place. In that period many women of Patras were studying in the Commercial Faculty of Patras. The final objective was a better position in the enterprising world of Patras. In particular, according to the testimony of Mr. V. Manthopoulos, who was studying in the Commercial Faculty in 1939, the number of women that studied in the Faculty was similar with the number of men (roughly 7 women to 10 men in proportion).

After the Second World War, the conditions in the social life of woman of Patras changed. Patras, constituting the gate of Greece to the West, was the first city to know the culture of West. The women, influenced by the western mentality, began to come out from their houses and to activate themselves in social proceedings of the city. Many times they were also organizing common concentrations, which were based on their contact with each other via their

working place. Later, after 1960, they began to organize associations. With the creation of associations certain aspects of her social life were unfolded.

In the period of the blooming of textile industry in Patras, the woman worker submerges the life of Patras. The announcements in the local newspapers concern in their bigger percentage with the demand for workers to be employed in factories and manufactures (see photo 1 [12], 2 [12]).



Photo 1



Photo 2

Particularly, a lot of manufactures were looking for young girls, in the age of 14-16 years, with the view to educate them in the job (see photo 3 [12])



Photo 3

The figure of woman worker is presented in all the expressions of daily activity. Characteristic is the Photo 4 [13], in which a woman's cloth cosmetic

is advertised and the woman worker is used as means of advertisement, who works 9-5 and her face remains beautiful during the eight hours of her work.



Photo 4

On the other hand, the advertisement was used as a propaganda for the woman worker, who had already her own income which gave her purchasing force. In many advertisements women in daily activities are presented, with the view to constitute a model for the woman-worker (see photo 5 [14], 6 [15], 7 [16]).



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

Through her work the woman enjoyed an income, which infused her force. Force for purchasing, so as to be able to buy first need products for the house and her family, force to be able to help her husband with the house expenses, but mainly force of independence, so that to be able to buy products for her

personal needs. In this way, via the woman- worker income from the households was transmitted to the local retail, mainly, trade enterprises. However, woman was using her income according to her free time.

With the passage of time, the free time of woman got increased, which resulted in her ability to be occupied in more activities, for the conduct of which she used money. In particular, Patras, followed the trends of West and Athens and in 1936 the first cinema was created, in which the women of Patras were going, always accompanied by their husband, father or brother. In that period the women began to go out in the cafes, always accompanied by a man.

### **2.7. Attendance of woman in the political life**

The attendance of women in the political life of the city was retarded. Generally in Greece, in 1887 for first time the sign "Vote for woman" is heard, which in 1921 the Prime Minister Gounaris, which was born and grew in Patras, worked there as a lawyer and excelled as a politician, promised to make reality, without result. In 1930, after hard struggles of women, the right to vote is given to the Greek woman, under conditions: 1. only for the municipal elections, 2. only in order to elect and no to be elected, 3. only for the literate women, 4. only for those who were over 30 years. However, in 1930 only the 30% of women in Greece, over 30 years, were literate. In 1934 the women were called to vote for first time in the municipal elections, where finally only 240 women in Greece participate. The reasons of this abstention are many: the difficulties for the registration of women in the electoral lists, the big number of illiterate women, but mainly the social perceptions. The result was not to get registered more that 14.000 women in the first elections. Certain years later, the equality of woman is recognized formally and substantially from the maximum body of the first popular authority in Greece (PEEA), resulting in the equation of civil rights of the two sexes.



According to the newspaper "Rizospastis", after the Second World War, on 23 April 1944, the first elections in the Free Greece take place and the first women deputies are elected in the Parliament, from which the one, Evgenia Mavroskoti, from Western Greece and concretely from Etoloakarnania, schoolteacher in profession. In July 1944 in the elections for the Self-government and the Popular Justice other women are elected, too.

According to the newspaper "Ta Nea", the first Greek Deputy was Helen Skoura, who was elected in 1953. In 1952 the consolidation of woman right not only to elect, but also to be elected had been preceded. The newspaper reports evidently that diffuse was the impression that women voters preferred to vote woman and the men voters preferred man, while many were the men that considered excessive the concession of being elected to the women. The newspaper also reports that the women, mainly those that lived in cities (Athens, Thessalonica, Patras), who did not belong to the left party and were more conservative voted Skoura with fanaticism. On the contrary, the women that belonged to the left party voted a man candidate.

Skoura announced: "I will try to act anything possible so as to appear worthy the confidence of my voters, which I thank hotly. I know that as the first and unique woman in the Parliament I bear big responsibilities and a lot of duties. They are many these that we should process in favour of the Greek women, especially in the sector of social care", from which emerge clean the responsibility and the moral debt that Skoura felt towards the women that voted him is clearly emerging.

### **2.8. Attendance of woman of Patras in the Carnival**

The attendance of woman of Patras in the Carnival was important. Women of Patras were always participating in the activities of the Carnival, but were always accompanied by a man. The costumes they were wearing constituted product that had been prepared by the personal couturier, for wealthy

women, and product of old clothing that existed in the house, for poorest women. The material by which the costumes were made was satin, which came in Patras from other cities of Greece and was cheap enough because of its quality.

In the events that took place in the framework of the Carnival mainly rich women of Patras participated, however great was the number of women workers that participated. "Bourboulia" constitute a characteristic event that was carried out in the afternoon, 5-8, so that women workers could participate after their work. Mr. V. Manthopoulos remembers that once in "Bourboulia" the hands of a girl he danced with smelled onion, proving her position as a servant.

## **2.9. Conclusions**

The twentieth century declined leaving an enormous mosaic of positive and negative components. Two world wars, financial crashes, civilian wars. On the other hand, the penicillin, new forms of energy, spatial travels, spread of information technology. The role of human in this development is of fundamental importance. The role of woman is uncontradictable.

In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century the radical change towards her person began to emerge. She acquired concrete figure, she became independent of her spouse, she participated actively in all the aspects of human life. In particular in Greece, the woman acquired a new role, which her predecessors had not ever imagined.

In Patras the development of woman befell relatively fast. The position of the city as the gate to West, the Italian culture, with which Patras bordered via Ionian Seas, the harbour, the small distance from Patras to Athens, the capital of the country, helped towards this direction. The situations contributed, too. The coming of the refugees, the new facts of the European Union, the economic blossoming of the country, its transformation into an industrial city.

All the above could not leave the woman of Patras uninfluenced. She actively participated in all the expressions of the new reality and was included in the social group as autonomous and independent entity. Through a long course into time she created and was created. She decisively contributed to the progress of the city, to the improvement of the standard of living, to the betterment of quality life.

The attendance of woman in the employment and the job market ensured a more representative attendance of the social group in all sectors. Simultaneously, the promotion of two sexes equal access in the job market induced a fairer distribution of wealth and resources, contributing to the reduction of poverty. Finally, the social cohesion that befell lent economic, political and cultural interest to the city of Patras.

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