

**ORGANISATION OF THE ROMAN
CLOTHING AND TEXTILE
INDUSTRY: SKILL, OCCUPATION,
AND THE GENDER-SEGMENTED
WORKFORCE**

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Abstract

The Roman textile and clothing industry was organised into a public and a private sector, however, the division was not on a contract basis. Instead, 'private' denoted the manufacture of cloth and articles of clothing undertaken domestically, usually by women, and 'public' denoted that done commercially by (usually) male waged craftsmen and labourers in workshops or 'factories'. The industry therefore provides an ancient example of the gendered division of labour. This pattern of organisation has a major effect on the issue of control in the industry, particularly at the micro-organisational level of the workplace. This paper draws on ancient evidence to demonstrate that the pattern of industrial relations in the Roman clothing and textile industry exhibits a number of characteristics common to the modern industry.

ORGANISATION OF THE ROMAN CLOTHING AND TEXTILE INDUSTRY : SKILL, OCCUPATION, AND THE GENDER-SEGMENTED WORKFORCE

INTRODUCTION

Skill is technical competencies overlain by social and ideological constructions.¹ Jobs allocated to women - those requiring deftness and suppleness of hand, for example sewing, spinning, weaving - have been regarded as requiring less skill than those jobs that require strength. Similarly, work that is done in the home, domestic cleaning, sewing, cooking, and childcare has been regarded as requiring little skill, and as not being commercially valuable. This has given rise to the construct of complementary skills for men and women.² The consequence of regarding certain jobs as 'women's work' and others as 'men's work' has been an undervaluing of women's skills and work and ongoing reinforcement of allocation on the basis of sex. In the industrial age, this segregation rule became the basis of new forms of constraint and rationalised discriminatory practices on the part of employers¹ because it promoted skill differentiation and therefore different training and development for women and men which in turn may be used to justify different wage levels and different degrees of control over work. However, the early forms of this constraint and the division of work into that of women and that of men can be traced to the ancient world.

This paper explores the gendered division of labour in the Roman clothing and textile industry (100BC-AD300) in terms of a division between the domestic sphere and the public sphere. The 'crafts' used as primary illustrations of this division are spinning and weaving. The paper also investigates a further division in the industry in terms of the manufacture and the retailing of the items produced. This is then linked to the skill differences between occupations and in turn to the possible protection of skilled based trades through apprenticeships and worker organisations - *collegia* - akin to craft unions.

The evidence that is used as the basis of the argument is drawn from epigraphical sources and other inscriptions, literature, legal documents and texts, and archaeological evidence. The focus is on the Italian peninsula, primarily on Rome and Pompeii, but with some comparisons with evidence and practices in Egypt (also part of the Roman empire). Latin terms that are used to designate occupations are defined. As with any inter-disciplinary research, the findings may be interpreted as polemical, however, the intention of the paper is to analyse the system of industrial relations operating in the Roman clothing and textile industry, while providing examples of industrial practice that illustrate the applicability modern labour process and work and gender theories.

SKILL AND OCCUPATION

The list of occupations in this industry is numerous and diverse and includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled work: *fullones* (fullers), *lanificae/quasillariae*³ (spinners), *lanarii* (makers of woollen cloth), *tonstrix* (shearer of nap on woollen cloth), *lintearii* (linen weavers)/*textores* (weavers), *infectores* (dyers) and *purpurarii* (dyers and sellers of purple cloth/dealers in purple dye), *centonarii* (makers of patchwork clothes), *vestiarii* (clothiers), *auri vestrix* (emroiderer or maker of clothes in gold), *plumarii* (embroiderer

¹V. Beechey 'Rethinking the definition of work: gender and work' in J. Jenson, E. Hagen & C. Reddy (eds) *Feminization of the Labour Force: Paradoxes and Promises*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1988, p 49.

²C. O'Donnell & P. Hall Introduction in C. O'Donnell & P. Hall (eds) *Getting Equal: Labour Market Regulation and Women's Work*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, p. 8.

³This term was listed by W.O. Moeller 'Male Weavers at Pompeii', *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 10, 1969 p. 566.

with feathers), *segmentarii* (makers of ribbon, strips, and borders), *pelliones* (furriers), *lanarius coactilarius* (felter), *caligarius* (boot maker), *crepidarius* (slipper maker), *fabri soliarum baxiarum* (makers of woven slippers), *solatarii* (makers of women's shoes), *sericarii* (sellers of silk), *paenularius* (cloak-maker/seller), and *sarcinartices* (menders or seamstress),⁴ with additional specialists being listed by Plautus as *patagiarii* (fringe makers), *indusiarum* (tunic makers), *manulearii* (makers of muffs/long sleeves), *strophiarum* (lingerie makers), *limbularum* (belt makers), and *sutores diabathrarum* (sandalmakers/makers of low Greek shoes) (*Aulularia* 505-522).

The degree of skill exhibited by each of the occupations in the list is difficult to ascertain because evidence is mainly pictorial,⁵ literary and epigraphical rather than archaeological,⁶ which means that manufactured cloth articles have not generally survived for scrutiny and task breakdown is dependent upon the limited descriptions found in the *Digest* of laws and in literary sources such as Plutarch's play *Aulularia* and upon a few excavated sites at Pompeii from which the evidence is open to different interpretations,⁷ rather than in studying the range of trade tools and the article itself. Despite this comparative lack of detailed evidence, there appears to be a mix of skill levels present and a high degree of specialisation resulting in extremely narrow task divisions in the list of occupations for the clothing and textile industry. A *sarcinatrix* (mender of clothes) who is actually a slave (Gaius, *Digest* XV.1.27) and the *centonarius* (maker of patchwork clothes) would probably have possessed a lower level of skill than would the *fullones* (fullers) whose *collegium*⁸ was comparatively large and powerful and covered skilled and perhaps semi-skilled workers.⁹

Taylorism or *mutatis mutandis* is clearly apparent in the number of occupations within the industry, particularly those relating to the manufacture of shoes, including *caligarius* (boot maker), *crepidarius* (slipper maker), *fabri soliarum baxiarum* (makers of woven slippers), and *solatarii* (makers of women's shoes), as well as those who were responsible for providing the materials from which to produce the shoes, including *coriarii* (tannery workers) (*CIL* VI.9280, 9281) and the wholesale dealers in soles or hides who were organised into the *corpus coriariorum magnariorum et solariorum* (*CIL* VI.1117, 1118).¹⁰ However, despite the narrow breakdown of tasks, the degree of control possessed by the workers over their production may have varied considerably, depending upon the type of workshop in which they worked and on their position within the workshop. For example, in a small cobbler's workshop, the owner and his worker, whether a slave or an employee, may well have worked together as a team to produce the shoes.

Paulus in the *Sententiae* provides an example of the relationship between master and slave in the

⁴Compiled by S.M. Treggiari 'Urban Labour in Rome: *Mercenarii* and *Tabernarii*' in P. Garnsey (ed.) *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980, pp. 61-64, using *CIL* VI, with additions gathered from the *Digest* by M. Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes in Roman Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975 reprint of Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938, pp. 31-39.

⁵Usually from Pompeii, such as the sign from outside the fulling works of M. Vecilius Verecundus and the Pompeian fresco of the dyeing works (Mus.Naz.Arch., Naples).

⁶Archaeological evidence of tanneries, fulling works, and dyeing works exists and provides some insight into the tools and techniques used in these trade areas.

⁷For example, W. Moeller *The Wool Trade in Ancient Pompeii*, Leiden: Brill, 1976; W.M. Jongman *The Economy and Society of Pompeii*, Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1988, Chapter 4.

⁸The role of a *collegium* in Roman industrial relations can be equated with that of a trade union in a contemporary industrial relations system in a developed country. See M. Jerrard 'Collegia: The First Trade Unions?' Working Paper 21/97, Department of Management, Monash University, April 1997; and M. Jerrard 'The *Collegium Fullonum*, *Collegium Centonarum*, and CATU: Ancient *Collegia* and Modern Trade Unions - a comparison of the roles of industrial organisations in their respective societies' in Harbridge, R., Gadd, C. & Crawford, A. (eds) *Current Research in Industrial Relations: Proceedings of the 12th AIRAANZ Conference*, Wellington, NZ, 3-5 February 1998, pp.185-192.

⁹W.M. Jongman *The Industry and Society of Pompeii*, Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, p. 168.

¹⁰H.J. Loane *Industry and Commerce of the City of Rome (50BC-200AD)*, New York: Arno Press, 1979 reprint of Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938, p. 79.

shoemaking trade where a *sutor* who was a *verna* was willed to a foster child with the intention that the slave should operate a small shop to support his master (*Digest* III.6.37).¹¹ There were also freeborn *sutores* and the *Digest* (IX.2.5.3) records a case where a shoemaker - himself either a freedman or freeborn man (*Digest* IX.2.5.3; XIX.2.13.4) - took on a freeborn apprentice who proved extremely unsatisfactory and was injured by his angry master. The importance of apprenticeships to the shoemaking trade from an industrial relations perspective is that they elevate the trade to a skilled level which separates it from many other trades in the industry, particularly those that may be considered 'handicrafts' in the modern sense such as spinning and weaving, and from those responsible for mending or for making patchwork garments or for some of the extremely narrow occupations such as the *plumarii* (embroiderer with feathers) and the *segmentarii* (makers of ribbon, strips, and borders). However, there are also numerous apprenticeship contracts covering the weaving craft¹² which indicate that it must have had a skill level that necessitated training by an experienced craftsman and that it was a skill which was in fact commercially valuable when possessed by both slaves and freeborn, men and women (*Wisconsin Papyri* 16.4; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 724).

The apprenticeship system has been traditionally used to protect some superior skill by ensuring that all new workers possess the same level of skill by undergoing a specified period of training and it is common for all those possessing that skill to form an industrial organisation of some type. The fact that workers within the same trade or occupational area join a *collegium* therefore points to the trade being skilled because all members may possess a special skill and may want to restrict entry of new members into their skilled trade through controlling the apprenticeship system, that is equivalent to a craft union. Alternatively, they may work in the same trade or occupational area but possess different levels of skill,¹³ that is equivalent to an industry union. While there is no direct evidence indicating that the shoemakers' *collegium* sought to control apprenticeships and therefore entry into the trade itself, the inscription of the *collegium perpetuum fabrum soliarum baxiarum* (*CIL* VI.9404) recording three centuries of members who were makers of women's light slippers from papyrus or plant fabric¹⁴ would indicate that since these tradespeople made their product themselves, it is likely that they required a relatively high degree of skill and would have sought to protect it.

There are, however, possible exceptions regarding this *collegia* hypothesis, including the *corpus coriariorum magnariorum et solariorum* (*CIL* VI.1117; 1118) whose members were wholesale dealers in soles or else in skins prepared by tanners.¹⁵ The meeting place of this *collegium* was in the trans-Tiberine district near the tanners' vats¹⁶ which may indicate that they were merely dealers rather than manufacturers of soles and that while business acumen may have been high, technical trade skills were probably not so. Also there may be some doubt about the skill levels of the members of the *collegia* of the *fullones*, despite the fact that *fullones* had apprentices (*Digest* XIV.3.5.7-10).¹⁷ For example, in Pompeii, it is possible that less technically skilled workers in occupations associated with fulling - those such as Dionysius, a freedman of L. Popidius Secundus (*CIL* IV.1041, 1045, 2966, 2674) who operated an *officina lanificaria* but

¹¹M. Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1975 reprint of Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938, p. 33.

¹²J.A. Crook *Law and Life of Rome* 2nd ed., London: Thames & Hudson, 1984, p. 200.

¹³H.A. Turner 'The Morphology of Trade Unionism' in W.E.J. McCarthy (ed.) *Trade Unions*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 89; also H.A. Turner *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1962, pp. 233-351.

¹⁴Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 79.

¹⁵Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 79; footnote 68 (Lafaye, "Coriarius", *D.-S.*, 1507).

¹⁶Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 79 referring to J.P. Waltzing *Etude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les romains*, Louvain: C. Peeters, 1895-1900, Vol. II, p. 370 and Vol. IV, p. 13.

¹⁷Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 37.

designated himself as *fullo*¹⁸ - were not actually *fullones* but were still members of the *collegium*.¹⁹ This is a situation where an industrial organisation that begins with a narrow 'craft' based coverage of workers has spread to include associated workers so that the original 'craft' identity is lost.²⁰

'WORKING WOMEN'

The fact that women, both slaves and freedwomen, were commonly engaged in the textile industry also has significance for the discussion of skill and control. Women, perhaps with the exception of the Pompeian *fullones'* patroness Eumachia, were not represented in 'technical' and commercial trades such as fulling and shoemaking, unless as retailers like the wife of M. Vecilius Verecundus, shown sitting at the counter while a male customer chooses a pair of slippers from a wide array of merchandise. Instead women, usually slaves under the supervision of their mistress, were relegated to the domestic sphere and engaged in spinning, weaving, and mending - tasks traditionally regarded as feminine work, non-technical, and also commercially undervalued by labour theorists,²¹ but which played a significant role in the provision of clothing for the Roman household and eventually led to the later development of cottage industries in Europe and Britain.²²

There are also examples of women being engaged in the 'public' sphere of the textile industry, as evidenced in documents such as the AD second century apprenticeship agreement from Oxyrhynchus in which Platonius apprentices his female slave Thermuthion "to learn the weaver's trade for four years" under specified conditions (*Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 1647, Tr. M.R.L.). It would appear from the length of the apprenticeship, that the owner hoped to utilise the slave's skills for commercial return and not just domestic weaving as Platonius is willing to forgo the slave's services for such a length of time. Since apprenticeships provide the means by which a trade or craft skill is passed onto other workers, the practice of weaving apprenticeships for women contradicts the notion that weaving, because it has traditionally been done by women, must have a comparatively low commercial level of skill.²³ This introduces the concept of the division of work into domestic (private) and public, with the latter carrying commercial value and therefore technical skill that requires formal learning.

With regard to commercial spinning and weaving, Moeller (1969) cites a graffito from the *textrina* of Eudoxus which "contains a list of feminine names and next to the names, the record of work accomplished in *pe[n]sa*"²⁴ which he believes is a clear indication of the division of labour based on gender. A comment from the satirist Juvenal (*Saturae* VIII.42-43) that "... she wasn't some weaving woman, who worked for hire beneath the windy Embankment" certainly indicates that there were professional women weavers who were located in one area of Rome and who contracted out their services for payment which support Moeller's claims that there were professional female weavers working in Pompeii, despite the lack of epigraphical evidence for the existence of a *collegium* of *textores*.

¹⁸Jongman *The Industry and Society of Pompeii* p. 168.

¹⁹Jongman *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* p. 168; Moeller *The Wool Trade* p. 75.

²⁰Turner 'The Morphology of Trade Unionism' p. 92.

²¹Beechey 'Rethinking the Definition of Work: Gender and Work', p. 47 & p. 51; V. Beechey 'The Sexual Division of Labour and the Labour Process: A Critical Assessment of Braverman' in S. Wood (ed.) *The Degradation of Work?*, London: Hutchinson, 1980.

²² P. Watkins *An Analysis of the History of Work* (Canberra: The Curriculum Development Centre, 1987) p. 2; H. Medick 'The Proto-Industrial Family Economy: The Structural Function of the Household and Family During the Transition from Peasant Society to Industrial Capitalism', *Social History*, (1976), 1, 3.

²³V. Beechey 'Rethinking the Definition of Work: Gender and Work', p. 47 & p. 51; V. Beechey 'The Sexual Division of Labour and the Labour Process: A Critical Assessment of Braverman'.

²⁴Moeller 'The Male Weavers at Pompeii' p. 566.

Moeller states that the women did the spinning and were almost certainly fulltime workers since the male weavers were definitely fulltime workers.²⁵ He goes on to state that this evidence, when combined with that from two other *textrinae*, suggests that the conditions for small factories were met: there was full-time employment, specialisation of tasks (based on gender), and probably production on a scale greater than domestically required.²⁶ Of course, there is still doubt as to the accuracy of Moeller's claims that textile factories existed but were operated as part of the household. Evidence from other trades within the textile industry does, however, support the idea that small manufacturing operations were carried out from the household: the fuller's workshop that was installed in a private house at Pompeii²⁷ and Platonius's apprenticeship for his slave also supports the idea of commercial spinning and weaving being carried out from the household (*Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 1647, Tr. M.R.L.). Morel (1993) also believes that there were factories in a number of industries, including ceramics, metallurgy, and textiles, and that there "were some workshops in which workers' tasks were not only anonymous but oppressive and broken down into limited, repetitive tasks".²⁸ The production of olive oil in Cyprus was a further example of the factory process with standardisation of product and narrow task division. These industries all "employed a large number of unspecialised workers" and assembly-line techniques ... using division of labour and standardisation to satisfy criteria based on the lowest possible skill requirements and production costs"²⁹ which demonstrated the operation of Taylorism in the strictest sense.

COMMERCIALISM VERSUS CRAFT - THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RETAIL AND MANUFACTURE

Evidence for the connection between retailing and manufacturing in the textile industry can be found in *collegia* inscriptions which show that the terms *vestiarii* (Ulpian *Digest* XIV.3.5.4), *centonarii* (*CIL* VI.7861, 7862, 9254, 33837), and *purpurarii*³⁰ (*CIL* VI.33861, 37820; XIV.2433) covered both retailers and manufacturers which means that the *collegium* spread from 'craft' origins to more of an 'industrial' form not based upon skill level;³¹ for example, C. Lutius Abdeus specifically designated himself an *infector*, while there were twenty other *collegium* members who were simply 'dealers in purple'.³² Further evidence indicating the mixture of activities carried out by the *purpurarii* is found in the inscriptions relating to the *gens Veturia* (*NS*.1922,144; *CIL* XIV.2433; *CIL* VI.37820) and the other inscriptions from Rome relating to the dyeing trade (*CIL* VI.9843-48; 33861; etc.); however, it is interesting that there are only five *purpurarii* in Pompeii with street addresses which means that these tradespeople may not commonly have been small shopholding artisans³³ but have worked out of larger premises or 'factories' in groups. The significance of

²⁵Moeller 'The Male Weavers at Pompeii' p. 566

²⁶Moeller 'The Male Weavers at Pompeii' p. 566

²⁷VI, 14.21-22 reproduced in J. Ward-Perkins & A. Claridge *Pompeii AD79* 2nd ed. Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors Council Ltd, 1980, p. 45.

²⁸J-P. Morel 'The Craftsmen' in A. Giardina (ed.) *The Romans*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993, p. 217.

²⁹Morel 'The Craftsman' p. 217.

³⁰Given the relative lack of inscriptions for *tinctorum* and *infectorum* in Rome, particularly when compared with Pompeii, it is highly probable that these artisans chose to designate themselves as *purpurarii* because of the associated elegance and social standing which the colour carried. See Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 76.

³¹Turner 'The Morphology of Trade Unionism' p. 92

³²Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 75

³³S.R. Joshel *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman and London: Oklahoma University Press, 1992) p. 107 footnote 31.

the variety of occupations and trades in these *collegia* is that there was a mixture of technically skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers represented, which differentiates these organisations from that of the *solatarii* (CIL VI.1117; 1118) which was an organisation based on the 'craft' or trade skills needed for the occupation of its members.

The *sutor* was unique in that he was the only artisan listed in the *Digest* who produced articles that were ready to wear³⁴ and shoemaking illustrated the overlap of manufacture and retail because there were a number of *sutores* (representing the specialised areas within shoemaking) purchasing leather from the *coriarii* and then making and selling shoes from small booths, probably scattered throughout the city in which they were located. For example, in Rome, shoemakers' shops are known from all sections of the city: the Argiletium (Martial *Epigrammata* 2.17.1-3³⁵) and the Vicus Sandalarius (Varro *de Lingua Latina* 6.14³⁶) which may have shown some concentration of shops, *post Castores* (Pliny *Epistulae* 10.122), *de Subura* (CIL VI.9284), *a Porta Fontinali* (CIL VI.7544), *a Spe Vetere* (CIL XV.5929), and *ab luco Semeles* (CIL VI.9897),³⁷ which indicates that manufacture on a small scale proliferated in the trade and that manufacturing and selling were undertaken on the same premises. The specialist shoemakers (CIL VI.9284, 7544, 9897) probably worked from larger premises and made shoes to measure.³⁸

The *centonarii* apparently operated from either large workshops or else a chain of smaller workshops because the nature of the trade meant that the collection of cast-off clothing must have been on a large scale in order to make the manufacture of *centones* financially viable and the evidence relating to the *centonarii* indicates that they did operate on a larger scale than the *vestiarii* and the *purpurarii*. The makers of patchwork garments known from inscriptions in Rome were members of a guild obviously based on 'occupation' which continued in existence from the late Republic (CIL VI.7861) until the fourth century AD.

Given that only the names of the highest guild officials were recorded and that, with one exception (CIL VI.7862 L. Tuccius Mario), the chief guild officers were freedmen of Lucius Octavius, it would appear that Lucius had originally maintained an extensive operation employing a large number of slaves and freedmen.

Since an inscription naming M. Octavius M.lib. Marcio and M. Octavius M.lib. Attalus as *centonarii* operating a shop (CIL VI.33837) was found near the funeral monument of the Octavii,³⁹ it is probable that these freedmen were working as *institores* for their former owner. This indicates that ex-slaves in the textile industry often continued in the trade in which they had been trained by their owners and also maintained the connection with their former owner, whether through patronage and *obsequium*, or through an employment relationship. Other epigraphical evidence relating to the material prosperity of L. Sextilius Seleucus (CIL VI.9254) also supports the hypothesis that *centones* were manufactured on a large scale since Seleucus donated 10 000 denarii to his fellow *collegium* members, with the interest on this amount being used for a banquet to celebrate the birthday of Augustus, thus indicating that there may have been several hundred members of the association.⁴⁰

The significance of the size of the *centonarii* workshops for Roman industrial relations is that the workers' control would have been reduced considerably, particularly if the majority were slaves. The breakdown of

³⁴Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 33.

³⁵Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 78.

³⁶Loane *Industry and Commerce* footnotes 65 and 66, p. 78.

³⁷Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 78.

³⁸Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 78.

³⁹Loane *Industry and Commerce* footnote 54, p. 75 using BC XVI [1888], 398.

⁴⁰Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 75, makes this same deduction and supports it with the example of the makers of citrus wood tables inlaid with ivory who were each given five denarii as a *sportula* on the emperor, Hadrian's, birthday and three denarii on the birthday of their patron (CIL VI.33885).

tasks in this trade area would have included clothing collectors, 'cutters', stitchers, foremen, and perhaps an agent acting for the owner. The jobs in this trade area are, by modern standards, unskilled or semi-skilled but since there is no evidence relating to training of *centonarii*, it is not possible to state definitely the task divisions nor the degree of skill held by each worker. Since skill level is a factor influencing workers' control because greater skill levels usually provide the worker with greater control over work activities, it is unlikely that the *centonarii* had any great degree of control if there were no apprenticeships and little formal training.

PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE - SPINNING AND WEAVING

With regard to spinning, there was a lack of formal training or of apprenticeships and the fact that the majority of the work was done 'privately' by women in the household meant that this work has not been considered to be a 'craft'⁴¹ or trade. Of course, there is the possible exception of the female spinners Moeller mentions at Pompeii,⁴² but since spinning was still considered as belonging to the domestic sphere, these workers have remained outside the bounds of many studies of work-related issues. However, there is evidence of patterns of work and supervisory practices available from inscriptions and the *Digest*⁴³ which can be used to assess the degree of control held by those involved in spinning and the relationship between spinning and other sections of the textile industry. Further, it is also possible to develop an argument that not all spinning was done in the domestic sphere.

The amount of spinning to be done by each woman was decided upon and apportioned by the *lanipendiae*⁴⁴ who, according to Pomponius, also had supervision over the spinning, as well as the weaving and perhaps the making of the garment⁴⁵ (*Digest* XXIV.1.31). The *lanipenda* could be freeborn (*Digest* XXIV.1.31[?]), a slave (*CIL* VI.9496), or freedman (*CIL* VI.498) and could be either female (*CIL* VI.9496-9498) or male, hence the *landipendus* of *CIL* VI.3976 and 8870. If the cloth was sent to *vestiarii* (private tailors) to be made into clothing,⁴⁶ the *lanipenda* would probably have been responsible for organising this and placing the order, although the tailor would have been responsible for organising and undertaking the work on his premises. Similarly, the *lanipenda* would have been responsible for organising delivery of newly dyed wool from the *infectoria* prior to the spinning. The actual spinners were *lanificae* and those referred to in the *Digest* (33.7.12.5) were all slave women kept to clothe the slaves of the *familia rustica*.⁴⁷ Petronius (*Satyricon* 132) and Tibullus (*Carmina* IV.10.3) make it clear that the slaves least skilled and most poorly regarded were assigned to spin⁴⁸ which means that it was not a task which gave the workers a great degree of control over their simple work activity. Also, spinning provides an example of the contradictory attitude towards work which existed in Roman society because spinning ("wool working") (*ILS* 8394) was a talent highly regarded in the Roman matron (*ILS* 8403; 8394), Minerva was called a *lanifica* by the poet Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6.6.23), and the education of Augustus's daughters "included even spinning and weaving" (Suetonius *Augustus* 64). Clearly, spinning done for payment or as a task of slavery was regarded in a

⁴¹For example, Jongman *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* p. 162.

⁴²Moeller 'The Male Weavers at Pompeii' p. 566.

⁴³Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 31.

⁴⁴Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 31.

⁴⁵Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 31.

⁴⁶Loane *Industry and Commerce* p. 69.

⁴⁷Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 32.

⁴⁸Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 32.

different light to that undertaken as part of the Roman matron's duties.

While spinning was carried out in large households, it is doubtful that the wife of a craftsman or shopkeeper, such as the wife of M. Vecilius Verecundus, would have had time to spin as well as helping her husband in his business. This means that spinning would have been contracted out to other households or else undertaken in larger premises or shop holdings as part of the overall production of cloth.⁴⁹ In support of this are the two inscriptions from Pompeii of *lanarii* possessing street addresses for their shop holdings.⁵⁰ However, since there are no inscriptions recording spinning as an occupation and there is no epigraphical evidence showing *collegia* of spinners for the period under discussion (100BC-AD300),⁵¹ there is little evidence to support the hypothesis of spinners working from shop holdings. There are only Moeller's Pompeian examples of household 'factories'⁵² and practicalities of the time constraints placed on Roman women by the fact that work was undertaken during daylight hours⁵³ since lamps were not overly satisfactory⁵⁴ and that this would have left working women little time to spin or to even supervise a slave *lanifica*.

The necessary clothing or actual textiles, as opposed to spun thread, would have been ordered from a small shop operated by *vestiarii* or by *lanarii* or from the spinning and weaving mills which, according to Mosse' (1969), continued to employ a largely female workforce until the late Empire and were referred to as *gynaecae* in the legal texts.⁵⁵ If large mills were established, it seems that the majority of the labour was drawn from slaves, probably female, otherwise it is highly likely that there would have been inscriptions designating the deceased as a *lanifica* or perhaps epigraphical evidence relating to *collegia* of *lanificae*⁵⁶ for the period in question since other *collegia* had considerable numbers of freedmen amongst their members.⁵⁷ If the mills did exist, the fact that the majority of wool-workers were women may also have explained the absence of such a *collegium*, since traditionally, women have tended not to organise collectively in industrial situations.⁵⁸

⁴⁹Moeller *The Wool Trade* p. 78 locates nine spinners at House VII.iv.5,7 in Pompeii. He concludes that the premises was a small factory employing between sixteen and eighteen people; however, his evidence for this is based solely upon *CIL* IV 1570, 1571 and is open to debate. See Jongman *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* p. 164, for example.

⁵⁰Joshel *Work, Identity, and Legal Status* p. 107 footnote 31.

⁵¹Jongman *The Economy and Society of Pompeii* p. 163; C. Mosse' *The Ancient World at Work*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1969, p. 107 mentions the workers in the spinning mills of the late Empire as belonging to the *collegia necessaria* but this is later than the period currently being discussed.

⁵²Moeller 'The Male Weavers at Pompeii' p. 566.

⁵³J.-A. Shelton *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, comment p. 128 re No. 145, also footnotes 7 and 10.

⁵⁴Shelton *As the Romans Did* p. 109 footnote 30.

⁵⁵Mosse *The Ancient World at Work* p. 107.

⁵⁶Mosse *The Ancient World at Work* p. 107 refers to the *collegia necessaria* in the rescript of Constantine. These compulsory guilds covered "workers in the arsenals and mints and those from the weaving and spinning mills and from the dyeing establishments" and were an attempt by the State to control the movements and activities of the members of the trades they covered. However, these *collegia* are outside of the period under discussion.

⁵⁷S. Treggiari *Roman Freedmen During the Late Republic*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 51, p. 105, p. 164, p. 169.

⁵⁸Moeller 'The Male Weavers of Pompeii' p. 566. Of course there have been notable exceptions in industrial history, usually in the clothing, textile, and footwear industry. For a discussion of women in trade unions at the turn of the nineteenth century, see B. Drake *Women in Trade Unions*, London: Virago, 1984 edition. Also see B. Ellem *In Women's Hands? A History of Clothing Trades Unionism in Australia*, Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1989.

If spinning is considered as largely domestic labour carried out in the household rather than a genuine commercial activity, there was no centralisation of production and consequently work patterns would have been irregular and disjointed, especially between households and small shop holdings. Since practice or experience could be substituted for skill, and spinning was a single activity, the degree of control held by domestic workers over their work organisation would have been small. By contrast, it is probable that *lanificiae* and also *textores* in both workshops and the domestic sphere would have possessed a much higher degree of autonomy with regard to direction or supervision because once they had obtained the materials or the order from the *lanipendia* or customer via the foreman or proprietor, each was to a large extent responsible for organising their production and the time taken for completion since their upkeep or wages would be dependent upon finishing the allocated portion of work and upon the proprietor being paid for the contracted item respectively. Probably in workshops the proprietor or foreman dictated the amount of work to be done and the frequency and then left the workers to complete the job themselves with minimal direction.⁵⁹

There is no *collegium* of *textores* recorded in the epigraphical evidence for the period;⁶⁰ however, Maxey (1938) speculates that the weaver in *CIL* VI.9290 may have held the positions of triumvir, quaestor, and tribune in a burial association, rather than in Roman politics⁶¹ because of the relatively low social standing of these weavers which would make it virtually impossible for a member of this trade to enter Roman political life. Her argument is based on the references to weavers in the *Digest* mentioning them in conjunction with the *fullones* (XIV.4.1.1) and the *sarcinatrices* (XV.1.27) and which correspond with the references in literature - Suetonius *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* 23; Juvenal *Saturae* IX.30; and Martial *Epigrammata* IV.19 - which classify them as being of the *ordo vulgaris* and classed with *sutores* and *fullones* (Martial *Epigrammata* XII.59). This hypothesis would also fit with that put forward by Moeller that the male weavers in Pompeii must have been organised because they used *programmata* to support political candidates, as did other organised trades.⁶² The *textores* who appeared in the *Digest* were all slaves and were mentioned among those who had more than one task to perform⁶³; for example serving as cooks and litter bearers as well as weavers (*Digest* XXXIII.7.12.5). While this may mean that the skill of weaving was not recognised as being technical, it is still difficult to align this argument with the evidence of apprenticeship contracts covering weaving that come from Egypt and which indicate that the skill was both technical and commercially valued. Probably the cases covered in the *Digest* have a domestic focus while those covered in apprenticeship contracts are of a commercial nature which further shows the breakdown of this craft into a commercial (public) sphere and a domestic (private) sphere.

CONCLUSION

The Roman clothing and textile industry is significant from the industrial relations perspective for a number of reasons, with the first being that it provides examples of the division of labour on the basis of gender.

⁵⁹L.D. Smith 'Industrial Organisation in the Kidderminster Carpet Trade 1780-1850', *Textile History* (1984) 15, 1, p. 81. This high degree of worker autonomy seems to be common factor in the pre-industrial textile industry and may also have applied in Roman times since inscriptions indicate Roman businesses were often commercially successful. This may have been the result of using this extremely successful technique of meeting production demands through offering flexibility of hours to the workers.

⁶⁰Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 33; also cites Waltzing *Etude* as not mentioning an association of weavers.

⁶¹Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 33.

⁶²Moeller 'Male Weavers at Pompeii', p. 563.

⁶³Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 32.

⁶⁴Maxey *Occupations of the Lower Classes* p. 32.

This then contributes to the long tradition whereby skills seen as 'feminine', in this case spinning and to a lesser extent weaving, are undervalued commercially and are not recognised as a technical 'skill' in the same way that male skills are recognised. This gender segmentation of the workforce is further reinforced by the fact that activities like spinning and weaving were often relegated to the domestic sphere of the household where women predominated while other jobs were done on commercial premises by men. The fact that for the period under discussion there is a lack of any evidence of the existence of *collegia* of *textores* or of *lanificae* also indicates that spinning and (perhaps) weaving were organised in a manner that prevented or discouraged collective action amongst workers, namely in a decentralised manner from a number of households and perhaps small workshops which used female slaves as workers. This also reinforces the notion that spinning and weaving were feminine tasks, especially given that the male weavers at Pompeii did not belong to a *collegium*, possibly because their work was 'feminine' and therefore of low status.

In summary, the industry study demonstrates that industrial relations, while a system in itself, is also part of the wider society in which it operates. As such, there is a reflection of the class structure, class relationships, and societal mobility that underpins the Roman empire. Finally, the study demonstrates how investigation of the ancient world can inform modern research, particularly with regard to the history and development of the gender division in labour and skill construction that are so much a part of modern labour studies.

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