
Modernity without Modernisation: The Evolution of Domestic Service in North-West Spain, 1752–1900

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Domestic service, sources and gender

Spain is a country of over 500,000 km². This figure certainly gives a sense of its size but gives no real idea of its heterogeneity, its varying levels of population, migration, urbanisation, industrialisation or class structure, all of which have changed over time and place. Each of these phenomena requires examination in any historical consideration of the fluctuating fortunes of domestic service over the medium and long term. Such vicissitudes were caused, for example, by the gradual transformation of rural and urban job markets, by population shifts between the centre and periphery of Spain from the early nineteenth century, changes and continuities in politics and social structure in the years 1820–23 and since as well as successive modifications in the legislative framework of the labour world. This means that analysis should deal carefully with the exact historical context in which changes in population and the labour force or migratory patterns occurred.

Unfortunately, historians and sociologists rarely do this. At most the various statistics for a given year that record servants as a percentage of the total active population might be set alongside socio-economic events and the most important legal developments of the period. This approach aims to give a coherent, causal explanation of long-term trends in the relationship between domestic servants and the rest of the active population and, for all its shortcomings, has managed to explain some of the changes in the gender of the individuals working in the sector as well as its overall drop in numbers, its ruralisation and loss of productive weight in Europe from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. It has also shown how, from this period, these phenomena occurred at different rates and degrees in each European society.¹ However, researchers also argued that differences existed between the major regions of Europe following a north–south and east–west logic, without realising that this gradual fall-off in the numerical and productive importance of servants occurred in societies that bore little or no resemblance to each other, whether in economic, social or demographic terms. Therefore, they often present this loss of numerical and productive importance as one of the many indicators of the socio-economic processes of modernisation underway in

Table 1. Women and Domestic Service in Spain, 1860–1887

| | 1860 | 1877 | 1887 |
|---|------|------|------|
| A | 11.4 | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| B | 11.8 | 20.3 | 20.6 |
| C | 50.8 | 77.1 | 78.0 |
| D | 49.3 | 21.5 | 21.7 |
| E | 5.3 | 3.4 | 3.6 |

Notes: The active population has been calculated by excluding the inactive population in each census, i.e. retired people, full-time students, people without a profession and women not classified for labour purposes.

A. Percentage of servants in the total Spanish active population. B. Percentage of women in the total active population. C. Percentage of women servants in total domestic service. D. Percentage of women servants in the total female active population. E. Percentage of women servants in the total female population.

Source: Population censuses of 1860, 1877 and 1887. Calculated by the author.

European societies as part of their long trek towards the twentieth century, overlooking the relative nature of this aspect of modernisation. For example, in the case of Spain this phenomenon took on a different form in each of its regional contexts in the period running up to the 1930s. Modernisation has proved incapable of fostering the same socio-economic level and degree of development in the various Spanish regions.

If these factors are not taken into account it would be easy to conclude from the figures shown in Table 1 that the much-vaunted process of feminisation of domestic service and its loss of importance in Spain in the second half of the nineteenth century was associated with a rapid process of socio-productive modernisation. Take the example of the period 1860–1900. Everything would seem to indicate that the percentages were reflecting factors such as the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of Catalunya and the Basque Country or the urban sprawl of the capital, Madrid. In other words, these figures would seem to be echoing the relative modifications occurring in the Spanish job markets or the consequences of internal migration patterns and population mobility in the appearance, definition and consolidation of the new social classes.²

Curiously enough, however, when we focus on the regional level we are forced to draw the same conclusions about those territories in which we know for certain that there was no urbanisation or industrialisation process comparable to the Catalan or Basque ones. Galicia, northwestern Spain, is a case in point. In the period 1787 to 1900 it was characterised by a relatively low urban population and an important rural sector. Even by the early twentieth century it lacked any real industry. Additionally, since 1853, emigration to the Americas was increasingly important here. The Galician example demonstrates two surprising aspects: first, the percentage of servants of both genders out of the total population has always been below the national average (Tables 1 and 2, line A); second, the fall in the number of female servants as a percentage of the female active population took place at breakneck speed from 1860, much faster than elsewhere in Spain (Tables 1 and 2, line D).

In light of the comments made above, therefore, the logical conclusion to draw from these figures would be that there was a full-scale socio-productive modernisation process in Galicia in the second half of the nineteenth century, similar in all respects

Table 2. Women and Domestic Service in Galicia, 1752–1900

| | 1752 | 1787 | 1860 | 1877 | 1887 | 1900 |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| A | 15.5 | 12.2 | 8.2 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 2.6 |
| B | 27.4* | | 12.2 | 38.0 | 43.5 | 43.0 |
| C | 55.0* | 55.0 | 63.4 | 77.3 | 76.0 | 80.8 |
| D | 32.5* | | 42.3 | 8.3 | 5.8 | 4.9 |
| E | 4.9* | 3.4 | 5.0 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 1.9 |

Notes: The percentage of servants in the total active population of Galicia in 1752 was calculated on the basis of the trade declarations made by all the heads of households and co-residents in the households surveyed in the countryside. This percentage was then corrected in the light of the professional declarations and number of servants included in the personal data of the *Ensenada Cadastre* of some of the main Galician towns and cities. The calculation of this same percentage for 1787 refers at source only to the male trades included in the census of Floridablanca, so the total shown was estimated by extrapolating the 1752 figures referring to work declared by women and women servants. Both percentages should therefore be regarded as a guideline rather than a definitive figure.

A. Percentage of servants in the total Galician active population. B. Percentage of women in the total active population. C. Percentage of women servants in total domestic service. D. Percentage of women servants in the total female active population. E. Percentage of women servants in the total female population.

* Figures referring only to rural Galicia as a whole.

Source: *Ensenada Cadastre* of 1752, Floridablanca Census of 1787, Population Censuses of 1860, 1877, 1887 and 1900. Calculated by the author.

to the contemporary situation in Spanish regions and Europe more generally. This was not in fact the case, as the urban population grew by only 3 percentage points between 1787 and 1910 (rising from 7 to 10 per cent of the total Galician population between both dates). Also indicative is the fact of the real failure of the industrialisation process in the period 1830–60 and the escape-valve role of external emigration as a result of the inability of agricultural output to keep up with population growth.³

All this casts doubt on the reliability of the information about domestic service found in the population censuses of 1860, 1877, 1887 and 1900. The normal problems in handling information of this type arise from shifts in the understanding of what constitutes a servant from one census to another. In such an overwhelmingly rural world as Galicia, however, this problem does not really exist, for its towns and cities were small and provincial. This means that the inclusion or exclusion in different years of urban trades such as waiter, shop assistant, laundress, seamstress or dressmaker in domestic service figures would cause no grave distortions in the total figure of persons working in the sector. The problem at this level therefore resides in the sharp fall in the number of female servants as a percentage of the total female active population from 1860, which could hardly be explained in terms of the effects of urbanisation, industrialisation or emigration; furthermore, it coincided with the rapid growth of women workers in the total active population (Table 2, lines B and D). The convergence of both trends suggests that the apparent disappearance of women servants from the Galician labour world was largely as a result of a progressive improvement in the quality of the source, which was naturally expressed in terms of gender, in other words by means of a gradual incorporation of women's work into a labour world made up hitherto only of men.⁴

Without going into a detailed explanation of this fact, which is not my main concern here, everything seems to show that the number of female servants as a percentage of the total female active population is of little use for studying the numerical reduction of Galician domestic service between 1752 and 1900. Much more useful in this case, although less significant in terms of the overall labour situation of women, would seem to be the percentage of women servants out of the total of the female population (Table 2, line E). Although this confirms the reduction already observed, albeit at a different rate, it offers no clues about the underlying reason for this.

To find this out we need to delve into other types of evidence. We can start by looking at the information contained in the municipal lists, at a local, district or regional level. Although this research strategy may obscure the overview, it is nonetheless the only viable way of arriving at a sound explanation of the much vaunted numerical reduction and feminisation of domestic service.⁵ The value of these sources resides in the fact that people are individually named in them, allowing us to deal with servants on an individual basis, without the interference arising from the inclusion in this labour category of trades that lost this consideration many years previously. For our purposes, therefore, servants can be regarded as that group of people of both sexes who lived in a household other than their own or, if they did head their own household, declared to the municipal authorities drawing up the municipal lists that their trade, their normal way of earning their living, was their daily work as servant, nanny, housekeeper or butler.

As regards Spain as a whole, the revelation of this bias in the censuses of the second half of the nineteenth century would oblige us to make a similar statistical readjustment in each and every one of the various regional areas, and also to try to ascertain how and by how much the figures of servants for Spain as a whole were affected by this bias before and after 1900. This is something I will leave for another occasion as in this article I want to address the question of the disappearance of domestic service and its feminisation from other, sounder sources, albeit at the cost of narrowing our horizons to the 30,000 km² of Galicia.

The reduction and feminisation of domestic service

The information contained in the municipal lists of the various Galician towns and cities of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries affords a good vantage point for the questions at issue. These sources also guarantee the representativeness of the results, given the fact, for example, that nearly one-fifth of Galician male servants in 1787 lived in cities and small towns. It is true that these male servants have a particular profile and pose a different set of problems, but it is no less true that, as part of a much wider group, they were affected by the same developments in the labour world as the rest of those in domestic service.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, in Galicia the percentage of the urban population working in domestic service ranged from 8 to 15 per cent of the total workforce. In general terms, this average does not differ too much from other built-up areas in Europe of that time.⁶ More important for our purposes here, however, is the progressive fall in the number of individuals linked with the domestic service as the twentieth century approached. This fall tallies with the other censuses looked at in the previous section (Table 2, line E), and was registered not only in established cities such as Santiago, Ourense or Lugo, but also in those such as A Coruña, whose development

Table 3. Number of inhabitants in some of the main towns and cities of Galicia, 1752–1920

| Town/City | 1752 | 1787 | 1845 | 1860 | 1898 | 1920 |
|-----------|--------|--------------------|--------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Santiago | 16,148 | 15,584 | 18,375 | 19,801 | 21,568 ³ | 27,452 ² |
| La Coruña | — | 13,575 | — | 28,384 ³ | 38,152 ³ | 58,414 |
| Muros | 1,760 | 1,836 ¹ | — | 2,239 ³ | 3,136 | 3,276 |
| Lugo | 3,183 | 4,019 | — | 8,562 ³ | 10,276 | — |
| Ourense | 2,795 | 2,961 | — | 6,616 ³ | 9,354 ⁴ | — |
| Monforte | 2,090 | 1,655 | — | 3,957 ³ | 4,443 | 5,776 |

Notes: 1. 1761 figures. 2. 1924 figures. 3. Figures calculated by using the percentage urban population of the total municipal population censused in 1860. 4. 1889 figures.

Source: *Ensenada Cadastre* of 1752, Cadastre Revisions of 1761, Floridablanca Census of 1787, Municipal lists of 1845, 1860, 1898 and 1920–24. Calculated by the author.

was backed by institutional supports, and even in the small towns and villages inland and on the coast. All of them recorded a fall ranging from 80–90 per cent in the years 1752 to 1924. This means that, in about 1920–24, the individuals working as domestic servants represented only 1.4–2.8 per cent of the total urban population.⁷

This fall in numbers occurred in a context of relative urban demographic growth, but was unattended by any urbanisation process. And the fact is that, in absolute terms, inland cities and small towns in Galicia such as Ourense, Monforte or Lugo tripled their population between both dates. In the west of the region the situation was more variable, largely depending on whether or not they assumed their role of traditional, provincial cities vis-à-vis the surrounding rural world (Tables 3 and 4). Santiago de Compostela and the small seafaring towns of the western coast did not do so, explaining why they managed to multiply their populations by a factor of only 1.7 or 1.8. When the city's drawing power on the surrounding countryside was greater, however, as in the case of the port of A Coruña, population growth might be as much as fourfold.⁸

There are two factors here that help to explain the aforementioned fall in the number of domestic servants. The first is the emergence of new social groups in Galicia throughout the nineteenth century, linked to a series of reforms brought in by the incipient Liberal

Table 4. Population growth of the towns/cities considered in the period 1752–1920 (1752 = 100)

| Town/City | 1752 | 1787 | 1845 | 1860 | 1898 | 1920 |
|-----------|------|------------------|------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Santiago | 100 | 96 | 114 | 123 | 134 ³ | 170 ² |
| La Coruña | — | 100 | — | 209 ³ | 281 ³ | 430 |
| Muros | 100 | 104 ¹ | — | 121 ³ | 178 | 186 |
| Lugo | 100 | 126 | — | 213 ³ | 323 | — |
| Ourense | 100 | 106 | — | 223 ³ | 335 ⁴ | — |
| Monforte | 100 | 79 | — | 189 ³ | 212 | 276 |

Notes: 1. 1761 figures. 2. 1924 figures. 3. Figures calculated by using the percentage urban population of the total municipal population censused in 1860. 4. 1889 figures.

Source: *Ensenada Cadastre* of 1752, Cadastre Revisions of 1761, Floridablanca Census of 1787, Municipal lists of 1845, 1860, 1898 and 1920–24. Calculated by the author.

State. Such is the case of the disentanglements of clerical mortmain property successively carried out from 1836 to 1867, the redemptions of emphyteutical rent carried out in the last third of the century or the modifications in inheritance law, designed to chip away at the other forms of hereditary land entailment such as *vínculos* and *mayorazgos*, and seignorial rights.⁹ This series of measures represented a frontal assault on the traditional sources of income of the *ancien régime*'s ruling classes and on their socio-political powerbase. However, the result in Galicia was not so much to unleash a modernisation of urban social structures but rather to tilt the power balance from the clergy and nobility towards a clutch of professions – tenured officials, merchants, doctors and lawyers – who then struck out on their own historical path in Galicia by imitating the lifestyles of the old ruling elites. This is not to say that they reproduced intact the same patterns of family conduct, maintaining large households full of servants. In fact, as is only too well known, the social reproduction mechanisms were to undergo a thoroughgoing change from this moment on.¹⁰ Witness the case of the city of Lugo. Here, the whittling away of the male and female servants in the socio-demographic panorama (dropping from 12.7 per cent of the total urban population in 1752 to 5.2 per cent by 1898 and to 1.6 per cent by 1915) coincided with a declining capacity of the secular clergy to head and maintain independent households as the nineteenth century wore on: in 1752 they accounted for 11.9 per cent of all households in the city while this percentage had plunged to 1.4 per cent by 1898. The same pattern with some minor variations was repeated in Santiago de Compostela, Ourense, Monforte de Lemos and elsewhere.

The second factor is bound up with the transformations in the internal structure of the female labour markets in the urban sphere. From 1750, for example, the traditional occupations of women underwent a slow but telling process of specialisation. In 1750 these tasks still basically involved the giving of individual attention to the needs of certain household economies. During the nineteenth century, however, these occupations were steadily drawn into ever more complex socio-economic processes, the main virtue of which was to weaken the links bonding these women to the ups and downs of this or that particular household. The services provided by seamstresses, dressmakers, ironers and laundresses, took on an increasingly impersonal air to meet the demand of ever broader and more anonymous urban sectors.

So it was that the female productive systems inherited from the *ancien régime* began to change; a change that picked up pace during the nineteenth century. In the final stages of this process, the professional qualification of these women began to be organised for the benefit of a master and this represented the first step in their conversion into a true salaried labour force.¹¹ Contrary to what might be expected, however, this did not usher in the great manufacturing establishments but rather a proliferation of small workshops as was the case, for instance, in early-twentieth-century A Coruña. The large establishments only cropped up when seamstresses, dressmakers and skilled women workers began to work for a mistress in return for a daily wage, the output of the mistress's workshop in turn being checked and overseen by a tailor.¹² It was this productive logic which represented the birth of labour relationships that in practice marked the beginning of the specialisation of women's occupations on a professional, wage-earning basis.

The expansion and transformation of the woman's working world in the urban context helps us to understand better the modifications brought about in the internal structure of domestic service work. The clearest idea of the sense and orientation of this working

world is given by the municipal lists, which began to record more and more often the profession of married women who were not the heads of their households. The officials in charge of drawing up these municipal lists began to record their employment as female servants alongside the profession of their husbands. Light is also shed on another factor that helps us to understand the fall in the number of domestic servants: the spread of part-time working. In Galicia this development coincided with the general spread of part-time working in southern Europe.¹³ However, in Galicia's case, it turns out to be difficult to keep track of this across time because married women who were employed part time did not always declare it or the source did not always report it.

In line with the fall in numbers of urban domestic servants there was also a feminisation of domestic service, which was general throughout Galicia and was the trend in mainland Spain as a whole (Tables 1 and 2, line C). In both cases, however, this phenomenon was less marked here than in northern Europe. According to some historians, in England in 1851 only 11–25 per cent of domestic servants were men while at around the same time men represented 49.2 per cent of the total in Spain and 36.6 per cent in Galicia.¹⁴ However, it is clear that the situation in northwestern Spain tended to differ somewhat from the situation elsewhere in Spain, as I have noted elsewhere.¹⁵ Furthermore, a consideration of the Galician figures for both town and country over the long term suggests that the patterns just outlined for the period after 1752 were merely the continuation of a long process of feminisation dating to before the eighteenth century, as in much of Europe more generally. This is borne out by the fact that from 1708 to 1752 the percentage of women servants in Galicia's towns and cities parallels the figures shown in other urban contexts in France, Germany or England, although not in Italy: between 67 and 69 per cent in A Coruña and Santiago and 79 per cent in Ourense.¹⁶

One of the main explanations for this gradual and steady process of feminisation in Galicia is, as in certain Italian cities, the role played by a series of strictly local circumstances, such as the proliferation of new urban trades arising from application of the administrative reform of 1833.¹⁷ This reform gave provincial capital status to cities such as A Coruña, Lugo, Ourense or Pontevedra, giving rise to a specialisation of their municipal governments, which in turn helped to spur male employment in the administration. Mention should also be made of the knock-on labour effects of a series of public works undertaken under institutional aegis in the urban Galician world from 1850. These helped not only to extend and remodel the urban spaces, improve thoroughfares, develop communications between towns and cities and connect some of them with the inland *meseta* of Castilla, but also to stimulate an ongoing demand for male labour, which in the end lessened the attraction of the job of servant for men with few resources. An example of these developments is the small town of Monforte de Lemos after 1863. It was in this year that work began on the construction of a road to link it to the capital city of Lugo. Then came work that tried to harness the waters of River Cabe for irrigating fields and work to bring the railway to its ports in 1883. In a very short time, new urban professions cropped up in the midst of a traditional productive structure that gradually began to change. Jobs in construction, railway building, commerce or administration were taken almost exclusively by men, leading to a progressive increase in women's presence in domestic service in the town to fill the void: in 1752 they represented 75 per cent of the total rising to 86 per cent by 1898. The same happened in Ourense after it became the provincial capital in 1833.

The post office was established there in 1845 and the Vigo–Vilacastín road was built between 1860 and 1863. These events spurred an expansion of male employment as well as a feminisation of domestic service: in 1752 women servants represented 79 per cent of domestic servants and by 1889, 92 per cent.

In essence, it was this combination of factors in a world without urbanisation or industrialisation that stimulated the feminisation of Galicia's domestic service. Nor should we forget the intensification of emigration to the Americas after 1853, since this was essentially a male affair too. Nonetheless it should be stressed that any attempt to establish a direct causal relationship between this structural variable of Galician socio-demographic life and the drop in the number of servants turns out to be quite a complicated task (Table 2, lines C and E), which I have considered elsewhere.¹⁸

Ageing and importance of the life cycle in domestic service

The population censuses used in this study record the age of the servants at the time of census. This age reflects the relative ageing of Spanish domestic service in general and Galician in particular, regardless of whether we are speaking of male or female servants. This ageing process seems in both cases to have picked up pace in the transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, as is shown by the rise in the number of servants in the 21 to 40 age range (Table 5). In fact almost half of Spanish female servants are to be found in the 21 to 40 age range and about 40 per cent of the males, with a clear upward trend. In any case, the most striking fact is that the ageing of both male and female servants should be taking place at the same time as the falling off in numbers and the steady feminisation of domestic service. The causes of this phenomenon, as is only logical, should be sought in the particular historical contexts of each and every one of the regions of Spain, for only then will we be able to find specific explanations of each particular case.¹⁹

This ageing process, moreover, is borne out by the results obtained in Galicia at the local level from municipal lists. From this evidence we find that the average age declared by female servants in built-up areas in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was between 26.5 and 28.5. Despite this, the ages recorded increased by an average increase of two or more years after 1900. This increase tallies with the fact that 20 to 24 per cent of these domestic servants declared an age of over 35 at the precise moment

Table 5. Age declared by domestic servants, 1887–1900

| | Female Servants | | | | Male Servants | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Spain 1887 | Spain 1900 | Galicia 1887 | Galicia 1900 | Spain 1887 | Spain 1900 | Galicia 1887 | Galicia 1900 |
| Up to 20 | 37.4 | 30.8 | 28.1 | 22.5 | 26.6 | 24.9 | 41.7 | 36.5 |
| 21 to 40 | 41.0 | 47.0 | 49.5 | 52.6 | 46.8 | 46.9 | 39.8 | 44.5 |
| 41 to 60 | 16.2 | 15.5 | 18.4 | 18.1 | 20.4 | 20.5 | 14.5 | 13.1 |
| Over 60 | 5.4 | 6.7 | 4.0 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 7.7 | 4.0 | 5.9 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Number of cases | 319.596 | 269.205 | 23.290 | 21.656 | 89.953 | 45.607 | 7.165 | 5.144 |

Source: Population censuses of 1887 and 1900. Calculated by the author.

when these lists were drawn up. It is arguable whether this ageing process formed part of a general trend affecting European domestic service as a whole, given the fact that the ages of the young women employed in the trade in Santiago de Compostela, Lugo, A Coruña, Ourense or Monforte do not differ greatly from the situation in cities as far removed from Galicia in population, social structure and production terms as Reims, Freiburg, Salzburg or Zurich.²⁰

Another relevant issue is that, over time, domestic servants in the towns and cities of Galicia tended increasingly to be drawn from the women of the surrounding area. In northwestern Spain, therefore, there was a simultaneous convergence of at least four trends, three of them common to Spain as a whole – namely the fall in numbers of domestic servants, the feminisation of the sector and its ageing – and one particular to Galicia (at least until more studies in Spain prove otherwise): its progressive ruralisation. During the last third of the nineteenth century between 60 and 80 per cent of women working as servants in towns and villages had been born in nearby country parishes; by 1920–24 this figure has risen to between 76 and 86 per cent of the total. More important here than the fact that these percentages accord with the figures being recorded at similar dates in diverse cities of north and northwest Europe, or that they are double the figures of urban sites in the centre of Italy, is this rapid growth in the number of women servants recruited from outside the built-up area since at least 1840.²¹ An example of this trend is to be found in Santiago de Compostela, where in 1845, 47 per cent of all female servants came from rural communities of its surrounding *al-hawz* or satellite villages; by 1860 this figure had risen to 59 per cent and by 1924 to 76 per cent. This obviously relates to a migratory trend from countryside to town and also to the various changes that Galician domestic service has undergone down the centuries. Furthermore, the falling percentage of city-born girls in the total figures is another sign alerting us to the modifications operating at this time on the internal structure of their particular job market.

The withdrawal of city-born girls from domestic service was not exclusive to Galicia: a contemporary trend can be seen in several French and Italian cities.²² In all cases this withdrawal is explained by the fact that urban women found it easier to turn to other trades, perceived as equally feminine, that were being set up on a more professional and specialised basis during the nineteenth century and which offered much better prospects.²³ The resulting loss of domestic servants was therefore made up by women drawn in from the surrounding countryside, most of whom lacked any solid family, social or labour network in the city to help them find their feet in their brand-new profession. It took the newcomers seven or eight years to knit together some sort of supportive network, with no guarantee that they would eventually achieve the objectives they had set themselves when deciding to migrate to Santiago, A Coruña, Ourense, Monforte or Lugo. Some idea of the nature of these objectives is provided by the fact that over 98 per cent of these women were single. Furthermore, they were prepared to move 30 to 60 kilometres from their home villages perhaps because their humble social background gave them little chance of competing successfully in the marriage market in their place of birth, especially as the average marrying age in late nineteenth-century Galicia was late, about 26 to 27 years old.²⁴ In short, their arrival in the city was closely bound up with their difficulties in competing in the marriage markets of their home villages, especially after a succession of farming crises in the 1850s hit the household economies of their respective home areas hard. The new taxation system set up in

1847 was also beginning to bite.²⁵ A particular form of life cycle for female domestic servants developed. These young women usually arrived at the gates of the city ready for work as domestic servants aged only 22 to 23. Their life as servants lasted only four or five years, sufficient time for them to amass the wherewithal to return to their home villages and marry. Under these circumstances and in this specific historical context, it is easy to understand that this particular life cycle should bear little similarity to the cycle in other European countries at the same moment or at other times, except perhaps for its most formal and external aspects.²⁶

Conclusion

As we have seen, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards numbers of domestic servants in Spain steadily declined, while there was an increase in the percentage of women and in the average age of the servants. These three phenomena were paralleled in certain regions of Spain during the same period, although explanations for the origin and significance of these phenomena vary from one region to another as evidenced by the examples of areas as different as Galicia, the Basque country and Catalunya.²⁷ Moreover, a study of the transformations in patterns of domestic service in the specific case of Galicia using non-census sources demonstrates that the well-known phenomena of numerical reduction, feminisation and ageing were accompanied in this case by ruralisation, whereby servants for urban areas were drawn in from the surrounding countryside, more and more so in the late nineteenth century.

Although many of these factors were common to other regions of mainland Spain, the historical explanation of them was rarely the same. One common thread, however, is undoubtedly the chronically weak social and economic situation of this group of women. This, together with the markedly paternalistic and patriarchal nature of the labour relations they had traditionally maintained with the families and masters they served, helps us to understand the emergence in the first decades of the twentieth century of a growing political and moral concern for their situation, which resulted in a series of legislative initiatives to help their situation. These legislative and moral initiatives at first avoided recognising the real conditions these workers endured and their right to enjoy the social protection being brought in by the Spanish state. Things began to change with the advent of the Second Republic and again after the end of the Spanish Civil War, although the underlying concerns expressed about domestic service were substantially different in these periods (as Raffaella Sarti has shown elsewhere in this volume).

Notes

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 5. Dubert, *Del campo a la ciudad*, pp. 281–5.
 6. Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, 'Pour une histoire européenne du service domestique à l'époque preindustrielle', in Fauve-Chamoux and Fialová (eds), *Le Phénomène de la domesticité en Europe*, pp. 57–75, here pp. 60–61.
 7. Dubert, 'Domestic Service', p. 212.
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 9. Aurora Artiaga, *A desamortización en provincia de Pontevedra* (Pontevedra: Diputación Provincial, 1991), pp. 207–17; Ramón Villares, *Desamortización e réxime da propiedade* (Vigo: Ed. A Nosa Terra, 1994), pp. 33–9; Maria J. Bad, *Señorío y propiedad foral de la alta nobleza en Galicia, siglos XVI–XX: La Casa de Alba* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1996), pp. 229–31, 281–90.
 10. For more information on this aspect, see the set of studies contained in Ramón Villares (ed.), *Donos de seu* (Barcelona: Sotelo Blanco, 1988).
 11. Dionisio Pereira (ed.), *Os conquistadores modernos: Movimento obreiro na Galicia e Anteguerra* (Vigo: Ed. A Nosa Terra, 1992), pp. 31–3; Claude Mott and Jean-Pierre Pélissier, 'La Binette, l'aiguille et le plumeau: Les mondes du travail féminin', in Jacques Dupâquier and Denis Kessler (eds), *La Société française au XIXe siècle: Tradition, transition, transformations* (Paris: Fayard, 1992), pp. 237–343, here pp. 249–50, 253–4.
 12. Pereira, *Os conquistadores modernos*, p. 41; Carmona, *El atraso industrial*, pp. 214–22.
 13. Arru, 'Domestic Service in Italy', p. 562.
 14. For a controversial account of these figures of male and female servants in the 1851 census, see Matthew Woollard, 'The Classification of Domestic Servants in England and Wales, 1851–1951', a paper presented at the workshop Domestic Service and the Emergence of a New Conception of Labour in Europe (part of the EU-network programme 'The Socio-Economic Role of Domestic Service as a Factor of European Identity'), Department of History, University of Oslo, 13–16 June, 2002; Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 44–6; Anderson, 'Households, Families and Individuals', pp. 427–8.
 15. Dubert, 'Domestic Service' and *Del campo a la ciudad*.
 16. Gutton, *Domestiques et serviteurs*, pp. 7–8; Anderson, 'Households, Families and Individuals', p. 425; Sogner, 'Domestic Service in Norway', p. 95; Raffaella Sarti, 'Notes on the Feminization of Domestic Service: Bologna as a Case Study (18th–19th Centuries)', in Fauve-Chamoux and Fialová (eds), *Le Phénomène de la domesticité en Europe*, pp. 125–65, here pp. 155–6; Barbagli, *Sotto lo stesso tetto*, pp. 230–31; Arru, 'Domestic Service in Italy', p. 548.
 17. For more information see Sarti, 'Notes on the Feminization of Domestic Service', p. 133. Likewise, Barbara Armani and Daniela Lazzari, 'Padroni e servitori a Lucca, 1871–1881', *Quaderni Storici* 68 (1988), pp. 519–41, here pp. 520, 523.
 18. Isidro Dubert, 'Attraction urbaine et dynamiques migratoires du service domestique en Galice, 1752–1924', *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2001), pp. 155–76, here pp. 155–7.
 19. In the case of the Galician rural domestic service, for example, it is a well-known fact that the poverty of female servants, their difficulty in competing in the marriage markets of their home towns, the poor life and work prospects afforded them by the trade were crucial factors both in their length of stay in the

- service and the aforementioned ageing thereof, see Dubert, 'Attraction urbaine et dynamiques migratoires', pp. 164–8.
20. Michael Mitterauer, 'Servants and Youth', *Continuity and Change* 5 (1990), pp. 11–38, here pp. 15–16; Fauve-Chamoux and Fialová (eds), *Le Phénomène de la domesticité*, pp. 65–7.
 21. Sarti, 'Notes on the Feminization of Domestic Service', p. 160.
 22. Arru, 'Domestic Service in Italy', p. 557; Raffaella Sarti, "'Noi abbiamo visto tante città, abbiamo un'altra cultura": Servizio domestico, migrazioni e identità di genere in Italia: uno sguardo di lungo periodo', *Polis: Ricerche e Studi su Società e Politica in Italia* (2004), pp. 14–47, here pp. 28–9; Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, 'Female Mobility and Urban Population in Preindustrial France, 1500–1900', in Antonio Eiras Roel and Ofelia Rey (eds), *Migraciones internas y medium-distance en Europa, 1500–1900*, vol. 1 (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 1994), pp. 43–73, here pp. 46–50; Fauve-Chamoux, *Pour une histoire de la domesticité*, pp. 65–7. Likewise in the north of Europe, Sogner, 'Domestic Service in Norway', p. 96.
 23. Pereira, *Os conquistadores modernos*, pp. 10–13.
 24. Female servants in small provincial capitals of inland Spain were forced to do likewise in the middle decades of the nineteenth century: David Sven Reher, *Town and Country in Pre-Industrial Spain, Cuenca 1550–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 269–70. For more information on the age at marriage see Robert Rowland, 'Sistemas matrimoniales en la península Ibérica (siglos XVI–XIX): Una perspectiva regional', in Vincente Pérez Moreda and David Sven Reher (eds), *La Demografía Histórica en España* (Madrid: El Arquero, 1988), pp. 72–137.
 25. Rafael Vallejo Pousada, 'Fiscalidad y fraude fiscal en Galicia en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX', *Hacienda Pública Española* 1 (1994), pp. 263–81, here pp. 264–5; Maria Xosé Rodríguez Galdo and Fausto Dopico, *Crisis agrarias y crecimiento económico en Galicia en el siglo XIX* (La Coruña: Ed. do Castro, 1981), pp. 15–32.
 26. Dubert, 'Attraction urbaine et dynamiques migratoires', pp. 164–6.
 27. Camps, *La formación del mercado de trabajo industrial*; Arbaiza, *Familia, trabajo y reproducción social*; Dubert, *Del campo a la ciudad*.