



Migration and gender in artisan families of Barcelona, 1770-1817

Migración y género en las familias artesanas de Barcelona, 1770-1817

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ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

Barcelona experienced rapid population and economic growth in the 18th century. As a result of this, the number of immigrants reached 100,000 in 1787, however little is known about this process due to the lack of sources. Previous studies have shown that a high proportion of craft apprentices came from outside the city, mainly from other regions of Catalonia, but they have not examined the reasons for their mobility, the situation of migrants in their places of origin or their literacy and numeracy. In addition, such studies have not raised these same questions about girls who migrated and married artisans.

The aim of this study is two-fold: to identify the patterns of artisan migration that came to form part of the Barcelona craft's sectors between 1770 and 1817 according to trade and gender, and to analyse certain socioeconomic characteristics of the immigrants, such as geographical and socio-professional origins, age of spouses, literacy, and economic capacity.

For this, we use private documentation, such as marriage contracts, and adopt a recent socioeconomic methodology that emphasizes the individual. Our database consists of 553 documents signed before notaries by individuals from the silk, metal, and leather sectors. These documents were located through a systematic study of the protocols of fifteen notaries. We focus on a particular segment of immigrant artisans with sufficient assets to justify the use of these agreements. As a result, the source does not provide information on individuals with less resources. However, this source provides relevant information in that it records personal information that cannot be found in other documents. Also, we have information on dowries –which indicates the levels of wealth and the economic contribution of women to the marriage– and the person providing them, which informs us about the conditions in which trade and capital was transferred.

The findings show the variety of reasons that led these young men and women to migrate, the strategies they applied, and their life trajectories. Most boys were sons of peasants from districts near the city who migrated to learn a trade. Girls migrated to work or marry with a large dowry, and often came from more distant regions than boys; their contributions in terms of money, and sometimes of their trade, were essential in the marital economy. The study also reveals the disadvantages of most immigrants compared to those born in Barcelona, but also that some aspirants of masters came from well-established families. The level of literacy among the migrant artisans was high (especially in the silk sector) and even among some women. We believe that this rural-city and interurban mobility of young men and women, sometimes with capacity and money, contributed to the accumulation of human capital that laid the foundation for the future industrialization of the city.

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