

# WOMEN AND THE SEA

## The feminine work in the maritime industries of Galicia. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Women of the maritime communities took part historically in a big number of works: the collected of sargasso, the shellfish gathering, the manufacture and repair of the nets, unloading fish in the ports, his transfer to the fish salting and canning factories, the auction of fish and seafood in the warehouses of the main fishing village's wharves, the sale of fish by the coastal and inner towns. Furthermore, they unloaded coal and cod in the northern ports of Spain. In any cases, few, drove vessels (crafts, small boats) by Galicia's estuaries.

Thousands of women worked in the fish processing industries, participating in the process of regional industrialisation, entering the labour market, as they were the majority of the workforce in the salting and canning factories. They were recruited by the companies from villages and towns along the coast. They were productive, flexible, low-wage workers,

which suited the needs of the industry very well, helping to make it more competitive in the international market during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

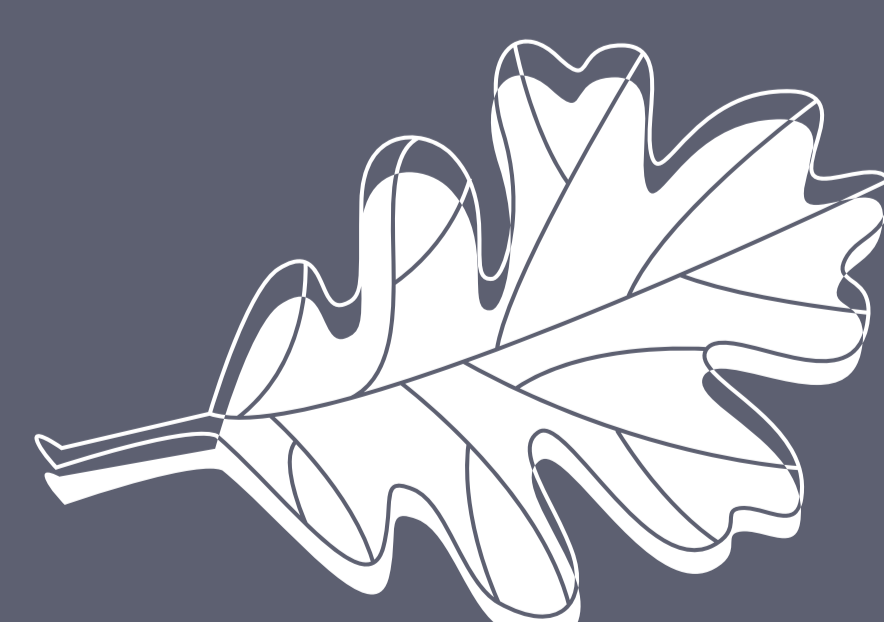
The workers of the salting and canning had worse agreements and inferior wages than men, being the salary gap wider in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (fifty percent) and reducing it a third at the end of the past century. Also they occupied the lowest positions of the job ladder, suffering occupational segregation by gender in the labour market.

This exhibition wants to be a tribute to their work. They, women of the sea, contributed to the economic modernisation of the region while at the same time bringing home the bread like their male counterparts, forming families closely linked to the world of the sea.



Organised by:  
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# 1

## “PORTADEIRAS” AND “REGATEIRAS”

Loading and unloading fish was a common female job in the ports of northern Spain in general, and Galicia in particular. Even so, some women were also *stevedores*, like men, handling the movement of coal, luggage and other products. They also sold fish at the docks, markets and warehouses. Carrying the product in baskets on their heads, they distributed the fish to the towns and villages of the coastal regions and inland areas.

Stevedoring in the port was not always a man's business. The gender segregation in this subsector (1900: 98.5% male labour force in Spain and 96.1% in Galicia) did not correspond to which was operating in Galician and Cantabrian ports at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of loaders and unloaders of different goods was already important: coal, luggage, fish and cans:

“Lower class women were engaged in rough work such as carrying water to the houses and loading and unloading coal, firewood, etc. In these distressing jobs the average wage they earn is often no more than 0.75 pennies”. *Reformas Sociales. Volumen V. Información oral y escrita practicada en virtud de la Real Orden de 5 de diciembre de 1883. Ferrol. Memoria de la Comisión.*

The unloading of coal by women was carried out in different ports in Northern Spain (A Coruña, Santander, Bilbao) until the 1920s. In A Coruña, women in charge of loading and unloading coal staged several strikes during the First World War and early 1920s due to rising subsistence prices and also to obtain a pay increase. They struggled to ensure that their families' purchasing power did not diminish due to the high inflation of basic goods during the conflict years. In the 1920s, the introduction of combustion engines would eventually reduce the transport of coal and women were progressively withdrawn from loading and unloading duties, beginning their disappearance after the First World War and ending in the

1930s. Nevertheless, women remained in fish unloading in almost all ports, especially where there were salting and canning factories.

Another common task was the sale of fish and shellfish. The “*regateiras*” (bidders) carried fresh sardines in baskets on their heads to supply the inland villages of the region. Some of them, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even became owners of small boats or made a living as octopus “traffickers”, goods that they traded with the fishermen on the beach or in the town quays, and then cleaned and dried them on land, always working as a team, led by a more experienced woman. Finally, the product, now ready, was transported and sold in the neighbouring villages.

Not only did the “*regateiras*” participate in the market by buying and selling, but also some of them also bid. There were even entire families of bidders of up to four or five generations. They began this occupation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued it until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking over and passing the work from mothers to daughters and nieces.

Since it was the shipowners themselves who chose the bidder, women had to be very good saleswomen, mathematically clever, honest and at the same time with a lot of character to sustain this enterprise in a man's world. The role of these women who were firmly established in the public domain of the maritime communities is thus reaffirmed.

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**Chart 1. Associations of loaders and unloaders of A Coruña and Ferrol ports, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Source: Arquivo Histórico do Reino de Galicia (Historical Archive of the Kingdom of Galicia) ARG/1.3.2.10.2.11.2.2 (Caixa 32237-6)

<b>“El Progreso Femenino” (A Coruña)</b>		<b>“La Unión Femenina” (Ferrol)</b>	
President	Manuel Saavedra	President	Amparo Fojo
Vice President	Manuel Veiguela	Vice President	Josefa Ribera
Secretary	Eduardo Blanco	Secretary	Juana Casteleiro
Vice Secretary	José Rega	Accountant	Felisa Castro
Accountant	Francisco Parga	Spokesperson	Josefa Chas Dolores Fontenla Victoriana Campo
Treasurer	Franciso Solís		
Spokesperson	Elvira Vázquez		
	Vicenta Arca		

In Galicia, in 1907, the women’s association “Libertad del Trabajo” (“Free Labour”) as founded in the port of A Coruña, continued from 1918 by the association “Progreso Femenino” (“Feminine Progress”). In 1909, the “Unión de Mujeres” (“Women’s Union”) was created in Ferrol, under the auspices of the UGT (General Workers Union). These and other associations included hundreds of women between the ages of

15 and 60. In their statutes they established rules for the organisation of the work of the crews and the improvement of working conditions: 8-hour working days, suppression of night work (La Voz de Galicia, 21/11/1910). Another of their demands was the increase and equalisation of wages, as men’s wages were more than double theirs (5 and 16 *reales* at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).



**“Portadeiras” (loaders) of Massó enterprise around year 1910.** Source: Museo Massó.

Women carried the fish from the dock to the factory and also back from the factory to the company’s boats, loading the boxes containing the finished

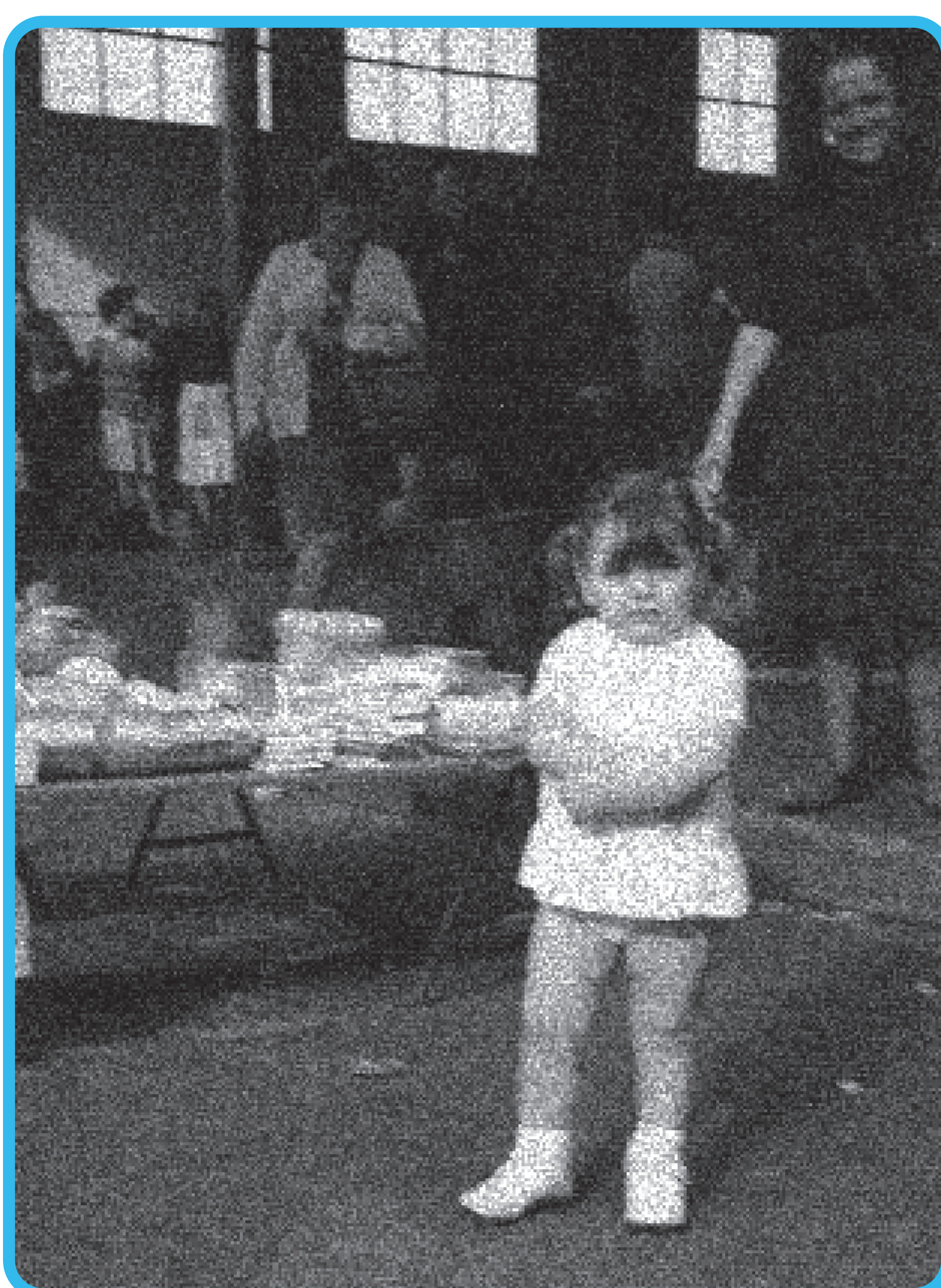
product, packaged and ready for distribution either on the domestic market or, mostly, on the international market.



**Octopus seller at the Bueu's fish market, 1980.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

The octopus traders exchanged the products with the fishermen on the beach or on the town quays, then cleaned and dried them on dry land and finally

sold them on the market. The finished product was also transported and sold in neighbouring municipalities.



**María "A xuliana" with her granddaughter at the market in Bueu, 1970.** Source: Museo Massó.

It was common for the trade of "regateira" (bidder, bargainer) to be passed down from generation to generation. This happened to the woman who ran the Bueu fish market in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She descended from the family of 'regateiras' known as 'Julianas'. It was not common as it was usually men who occupied this position.

*"My grandmother Concepción and my aunt María were the only women who auctioned fish in Bueu. My great-grandmother Juliana was also a fish seller. My grandmother worked in the fish market from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until she was 69 years old. I remember my grandfather coming to her office here in the market —next to the fish market— to help her with the accounting books. When the boats came in, the owners or skippers would decide who would be the person to auction their lots. Although there were two men doing this job, my grandmother was in great demand because she was very good at her job, handling a lot of catch sales. My aunt kept and expanded the number of boats in her care. I also kept my aunt Maria's clientele and took them to the congregation."*

Source: Interview with the bidder of the Bueu's fish market, 1998.



# 2

## LIVING OFF THE BEACH: SHELLFISH GATHERERS

Women worked at shellfish gathering on the beaches of Galicia. During a large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was a seasonal activity complementary to family economies. After its professionalisation in the 1980s and 1990s, it stimulated women's activity in fishing institutions, achieving higher and regular incomes.

The fishery products subsector was largely developed by women. It was a seasonal activity that helped to sustain family fishing economies. Buried or half-buried in the sand, the resources of the seashore —cockles, clams, oysters, etc.— were traditionally extracted by female hands using few and rudimentary tools.

In this subsector, there was a segregation of labour by sex, because while men shellfished afloat, women were responsible for shellfishing on foot, especially in the Galician Rías Baixas.

Women shellfish gatherers had to fight and develop different strategies in the political field to achieve the "professional" consolidation of shellfish production and trade. In the 1980s, the obtaining of the "shellfish gatherer's licence" was regulated, the first autonomous regulation in terms of professionalisation (Decree 116/87 and Order of 15<sup>th</sup> July 1987). At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "shellfish on foot" was consolidated in the hands of women, who managed to have a voice and vote in the very masculinised Fishermen's Guilds (Plan Déz, 1997). In the 1990s, meetings of shellfish associations together with training courses offered by the regional government helped shellfish gatherers

to learn to organise and self-regulate, to establish fees and calibres, to produce more and better in order to adapt to the market.

In addition, they managed to ensure that their income, if supplementary to the family economy, meant a continuous contribution equal to or higher than men, depending on their profession. Their working conditions have also improved: limited working hours, stable income, clothing and tools.

*"We are self-employed, we have social security, like the seafarer who also has social security. It took us a lot of work to get it, we are like growers.... I am delighted to work and not have to depend on my husband's pension, I have always had my independence."* Source: Interview with shellfish farmer (Cambados, 2023).

Shellfish is therefore a pillar of the Galician economy, society and culture. Shellfish gathering has ceased to be an activity that supports the family economy and has become an increasingly valued livelihood. Today it is a recognised profession, which allows many women to be the main providers of family income. Moreover, their work is decisive in the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the region.

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**Shellfish Gatherers in Arcade, 1950.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.



**Sale of oysters in Arcade, 1950.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

*"Mostly women came with their daughters and sisters and sold in the street and took home what they earned. The campaigns opened at the beginning of October. Women would gather clams and oysters and sell them to people like my mother, an intermediary, who was the one who made the money. When my mother went off to make a living, she used to tell me: when she/he comes back... take her/his seafood (I still seem to be looking at her). If so-and-so comes,*

*you pay this amount of money, if another comes you pay this other amount...".*

Source: Interview with the shellfish gatherer. Esmeralda Broullón (2010): "Culturas marítimas y relaciones de poder. La trayectoria del marisqueo a pie en las Rías Bajas gallegas". *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos*, LVIIN.º 123, enero-diciembre: 375-399.



**Shellfish gatherers on the Island of Arousa.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

Women stopped being shellfish gatherers and became cultivators. They ceased to be precarious workers with very irregular incomes, complementary to those of men, to become a regulated and recognised profession that nowadays provides them with an income that allows them to make a decent living. Galicia is a paradigmatic example in Europe of the strength and tenacity of women shellfish farmers to make a place for themselves in this fishing subsector.



**Shellfish gatherer in Cambados, October 2023.** Photograph by Sabela Brand.

*"It was difficult to locate and distinguish the holes that the bivalves made in the sand, especially when it rained. And then there were the seeds, which were particularly delicate. You had to go and look for them, put them in bags, unfold them, remove the dead ones, wait for them to reach the optimum size and then sow them. And before all that, you had to make sure that the soil was in the best conditions: oxygenate the substrate, continuously clean the area of algae and protect it from predatory species... And then wait several years for them to grow and reach the permitted size. A lot of work was done with a long-term view."*

Source: Red Española de Mujeres en el Sector Pesquero. Un mar de historias (Spanish Network of Women in the Fishing Sector. A "sea" (a lot) of Stories) (2002:15).



**Percebeira (goose barnacle gatherer), Baiona.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

The "percebeiras" worked on the rocks of the sea facing strong waves and slippery terrain to obtain barnacles. With skill and knowledge, they used special tools to obtain the superior quality product. These women also protect the sea and its resources, carrying out essential work to preserve the ecosystems and ensure the sustainability of production. They are loaders of tradition handed down from generation to generation. Their work contributes to keeping alive one of the ways of life linked to the sea and coastal communities.



**Oyster seller in the Vigo market, 1960.** Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

The sale of oysters is combined with the display of social distinction of the middle classes in Vigo who had the purchasing power to enjoy seafood. In Vigo, the sale of oysters was centralised in Pescadería Street, where shellfish sellers and fishermen from Arcade settled. In the same way as today, they sold fish and seafood, including the oysters, which were enjoyed standing up or on any street corner. As a result of the problem of space in the market, a tourist attraction was born in this street, and a close relationship was established between the oyster sellers and restaurants in the area.



# 3

## “REDEIRAS”

The knotters and builders of fishing gear worked as a team in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, repairing and assembling nets, either independently or for the fish salting and canning companies.

Women on the Galician coast also worked on the docks and beaches as knotters, repairing fishing gear. Both the salting and canning companies owned boats and hired women to make and repair the nets. The informal contract could be carried out by the “redeiras” (netters) themselves—who formed their own team—or by the factory’s knotters.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this work was subcontracted out to homework and shared with other women in weaving meetings:

*“The work was carried out in the evenings from 8 to 12 o’clock and to do so, the weavers, spinners, seamstresses gathered in a common space”. Díaz de Rábago, J. *Industria de la Pesca en Galicia*, Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País, Santiago de Compostela, 1885, pp.79-81.*

The salting warehouses bought the thread, not the pieces of netting. So the “redeiras” were not only responsible for repairing but also for assembling the nets.

*“From Catalonia the pieces come undyed and untanned. In Vigo they are made in the factory*

*of Rivas, but I have seen that in many salting establishments they only buy the thread, and once the fishing season is over, women who work in them are responsible for making the nets and putting them into use”. Paz Graells, M. *Exploración científica del Departamento marítimo de Ferrol*, 1870, Madrid, pp. 435-436.*

This meant a certain stability of employment for the “redeiras” who remained employed almost all year round, which implied a greater contribution on their part to their family income.

Traditionally, they did their work in the port or on the beaches. Nowadays, most ports have boats where they can carry out their professional work. Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this profession has been included in the “Marítimo Pesqueiras” with its corresponding certificate of professionalism, “activity of manufacture and maintenance of fishing gear”. Currently, there are 8 associations that group 375 “redeiras” in Galicia, most of them in the Galician Federation of Artisan “Redeiras” “O Peirao”.

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**“Redeiras” of Portonovo, late 1950s.** Source: Ollares de Portonovo Photographic Association.

Some master “redeiras” (netters) had their own business, hiring other craftswomen, housewives and sailors’ daughters, who were paid for the work they

did. Only after checking the quality of the product did they deliver it to the shipowner/manufacturer who ordered the job.



**“Redeiras” at the dock, 1980.**

Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

Their services were often in great demand, particularly during the fishing season, when it became urgent and necessary to repair the nets as quickly as possible in order to be able to return to work immediately. Hence, many masters “redeiras” had a certain authority over the skippers, who gladly accepted their suggestions. Mending and making nets —a traditional trade

that continues to this day— requires a great deal of expertise, acquired after a long period of informal apprenticeship of five or six years, sometimes beginning in childhood, within the family. However, only a few of the girls who took this path became masters.



**"Redeiras" da Guarda, 1960.**

Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

*"My mother was a modiste and a widow. I had to work because we needed money. My mother taught me at the age of 9: first to thread the needle, then to knit, then a "three", a little hole, then patches and everything. At the age of 10 I went to serve. My mother sent me to a house where there were nets so that I could finish learning from the lady who was a good modiste. I looked after the children and when they had nets to tie, we tied them up. There I learnt to repair all kinds of devices: trails, rapets, fishing nets (there are none left now)... Then I started to tie outside, to earn money at Ramiro's knotter on*

*Beluso beach. There I already knew everything, it was already set up. I learnt from the age of 10 to 16. At that time I was already earning a salary of 10 "reales" a day. Then I went to Massó, where I became a professional and permanent setter after two years. I worked 45 years as a knotter, became a teacher and was in charge of between 20 and 30 knotters, and sometimes 40. There were 7 boats and if the nets broke, more women had to be hired."*

Source: Interview with Teresa, "A neta", Bueu, 1998.



Source: A memoria do Mar (The Memory of the Sea). Fundación do Sector Público Autonómico. Museo do Mar de Galicia.

# 4

## “SALGADEIRAS”

The role of women in the labour market on the Galician coast has changed as a result of the establishment of the salted fish industry, as they will become part of the fish salting workforce. Women, who constituted the second segment of the labour market, earned just over half of what men did.

The beginnings of this industrial activity in Galicia date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fishing families traditionally produced salted sardines in the cellars of their houses, where women would behead and gut the sardines while men salted and pressed them, and then the muleteer would take them to the interior of the peninsula, although they were also sold in Portugal and the Cantabrian Sea.

Part of the development of this industry was linked to the arrival of Catalan promoters from 1750 onwards, settling definitively on the Galician coast in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>.

“At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Vila-Xoan there were 14 Catalans involved in sardine fishing and salting, with 112 women and 28 men during the harvesting season and those engaged in weaving the rest of the year.”

Lucas Labrada, *Descripción económica del Reyno de Galicia*, Ferrol, 1804.

The salting companies were often family-owned and integrated two complementary activities to fish processing, fishing and barrel making.

*“There is a great deal of movement to be seen in the smallest harbours in the fishing season. All the inhabitants who live in this industry are in action: some load the fish, others take it to the warehouses, where women and girls clean them, gut them, beheading their heads and arranging them to pass them to the tanks and salt them... Here the hammer of the cooper who prepares the pots sounds; there the blows of the blacksmith who fixes the straps for the pipes. Everything is movement, everything is joy”.* Boletín Mercantil e Industrial de Galicia, nº 103, 1/7/1848 Importancia de las pesquerías y medios de fomentarlas.

In a region with hardly any industry, such as Galicia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the activity of salting increased the employment opportunities for women of the coast, who earned a seasonal salary for six months of the year.

<sup>1</sup> Promoters were those entrepreneurs who promoted or encouraged the development of fishing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, salting and curing different species. AHM, Manuscript, “Extracto de ideas relativas al fomento de la pesca de las provincias marítimas”. (Francisco Saavedra y Sangronis, 1788). Source: Historical Archive of the USC.

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**Model of a salting factory.** Source: Museo do Pobo Galego.

A medium-sized salting factory had a frontage of about 20 metres and a depth of 40 metres, including a large inner courtyard. At one end of the courtyard were the deposits of excess fat, an important subproduct for sale, and at the corners were the salting warehouses. At the back of the factory, annexed to the building, was the carpentry workshop, where the barrels, machinery and the knotter for treating the nets were made.

The spaces used for processing were divided into several areas: "chanca", "claro" and "morto": the "chanca" was located on one side of the courtyard—on the left of the photograph—and grouped together the tanks placed in line and covered with wooden lids, used for salting the sardines. In the "morto" one were the barrels and tanks for pressing and extracting the fat from the fish—on the right of the photograph—The inner courtyard, known as the "claro", separated the "chanca" and the "muerto"—central space in the photograph—.



**Interior of Atilio Gaggiero's factory.** Source: Museo Massó.

In the salting factories there was a sexual division of labour: women carried out almost all the production tasks, while men made the barrels and controlled the brine and the pressing of the sardines. When the sardines arrived at the factory, men would put them in the presses to make brine. Then the "envarilladoras" (stevedores) sorted the sardines according to size,

stringing them onto small wooden or metal rods. Once filled, the rods were placed on a wooden frame to be washed in piles with a mixture of fresh water and sea water. After this, the drained sardines were placed in barrels, with the head facing outwards to show a good presentation of the product.

Chart 2. Average wage by occupation and sex in the sardine salting industry (ptas. correntes)

Source: Muñoz-Abeledo (2003: 39)

Ocupations	1868	1885
<b>MALE</b>		
Toneleiros	2 ptas.	2-2,5 ptas.
Salgador	2 ptas.	2-2,5 ptas.
Prensador/Estibador	2 ptas.	2-2,5 ptas.
<b>FEMALE</b>		
Estibadoras		1-1,25 ptas.
Resto de obreiras	0,5-1 ptas.	0,5-1 ptas.
<b>GENDER PAY GAP</b>	<b>25-50 %</b>	<b>25-50%</b>

Remuneration took into account the productivity of the workers:

*"Each stevedore kept the sardine sticks she put in her helmet to finally count the thousands she had put in, multiplying the sum of the sticks by 25, because each stick carried 25 sardines"* Paz Graells (1870:470).

Women's pay was at most half that of the men who worked in the salting industry, being very similar to or lower than that of the sailors, who were usually charged by their own husbands or fathers.

*"For 14 days' wages, she had her daughter at 10 cts per day...". "On 30 November, for 13 days that his wife worked, she was paid 52 pennys"*. Pay book of the sailors and servants of the salting warehouse of Joan Verges, harvest of 1868.

*"They form the main population of the factories. Their wages in the Ría de Arousa are the lowest in the country for day labourers of this sex, 50 cents a day"* Díaz de Rábago (1885:76).



# 5

## “CONSERVEIRAS”

Thousands of women worked in the fish canning industry from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Galicia. Employers hired women, the majority workforce in the sector, because they were productive, flexible, docile and cheap workers; in other words, they adapted very well to the needs of the industry, helping to make it more competitive in the international market.

Despite representing the majority of the workforce in the canning industry, women suffered occupational and wage segregation: temporary contracts, occupations at the bottom of the labour ladder and lower wages than men.

These workers had implicit and verbal labour contracts during the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were called daily by the companies during the sardine processing season. They entered the factories early, first accompanying their mothers, then they were recruited by the companies through their families (mothers, aunts, etc.). Women were recruited in the villages or neighbourhoods near the factories, who knew if they had to go to work that day by the bells or sirens of the factories.

The “conserveiras” (canneries) contributed with their income to overcome the subsistence levels of coastal family economies. As in salting,

women’s wages in the canning industry were about half those of men. The wage gap narrowed in the 1960s, bringing men’s and women’s basic salaries closer together through collective bargaining agreements signed in the 1970s. Even so, the different bonuses that composed staff pay slips would mark the difference in pay between men and women (more productivity, punctuality, distance, hard work, etc.).

With the industrialisation of seafood products, women’s participation in the labour market increased until old age. Even married, women with children did not give it up completely, but continued to work in the factories, even if only on a casual basis. The income of the “conserveiras” was crucial to improving the living standards of seafaring families. Their work also contributed to the economic and industrial growth of Galicia throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**Interior of the Massó Hermanos SA canning plant in Bueu, 1924.** Source: Museo Massó.

At the factory, men and women had different physical mobility: while men were not tied to a specific place (they moved trolleys, fish, boxes, attended machines or supervised workers), many of the women remained

tied to the cleaning, fish cutting, grating or packing tables, therefore, with fewer possibilities of rest than their colleagues.



**Interior of the Alfageme factory, 1950.** Museo da Conserva, Funpromar.

The manufacturing plant consisted of a central building for the reception and handling of the fish. In it, the cleaning and packaging tables of the different fishing boats were located. The upper floor took the form of a gallery, surrounding the factory all around its perimeter, where the packaged product was stored and the offices were located. The distribution of the space was adjusted to the speed with which such a perishable product as fish had to be processed,

which made it essential to control the pace of work, adapting the factory space to this control, whether global, exercised by the foreman, or specific, carried out at each stage of the process by those responsible for the section. In the buildings, the minimum compartmentalisation and versatility of the space was imposed in order to adapt it to the production of different types of fish.



**Gutting of fish at the Massó Cangas factory, 1960.** Fondo: Museo da Conserva, Funpromar.

The women worked cleaning and gutting the sardines using the channels designed by the Massó company, which speeded up this phase of the production process. They were 25-30 metres long: one was used to receive the fish and the other was used to wash and gut the sardines, increasing the productivity of the work.

Women were concentrated in the fish processing plants (cleaning, grating, canning, packaging...). Although during Franco's regime there was a more formalised structure of labour contracts that were permanent-discontinuous for women, this did not lead to equal opportunities or equal pay for equal work. The employment ladder limited women's contracts to certain occupations at the entry level, while positions in the primary segment were reserved for men.

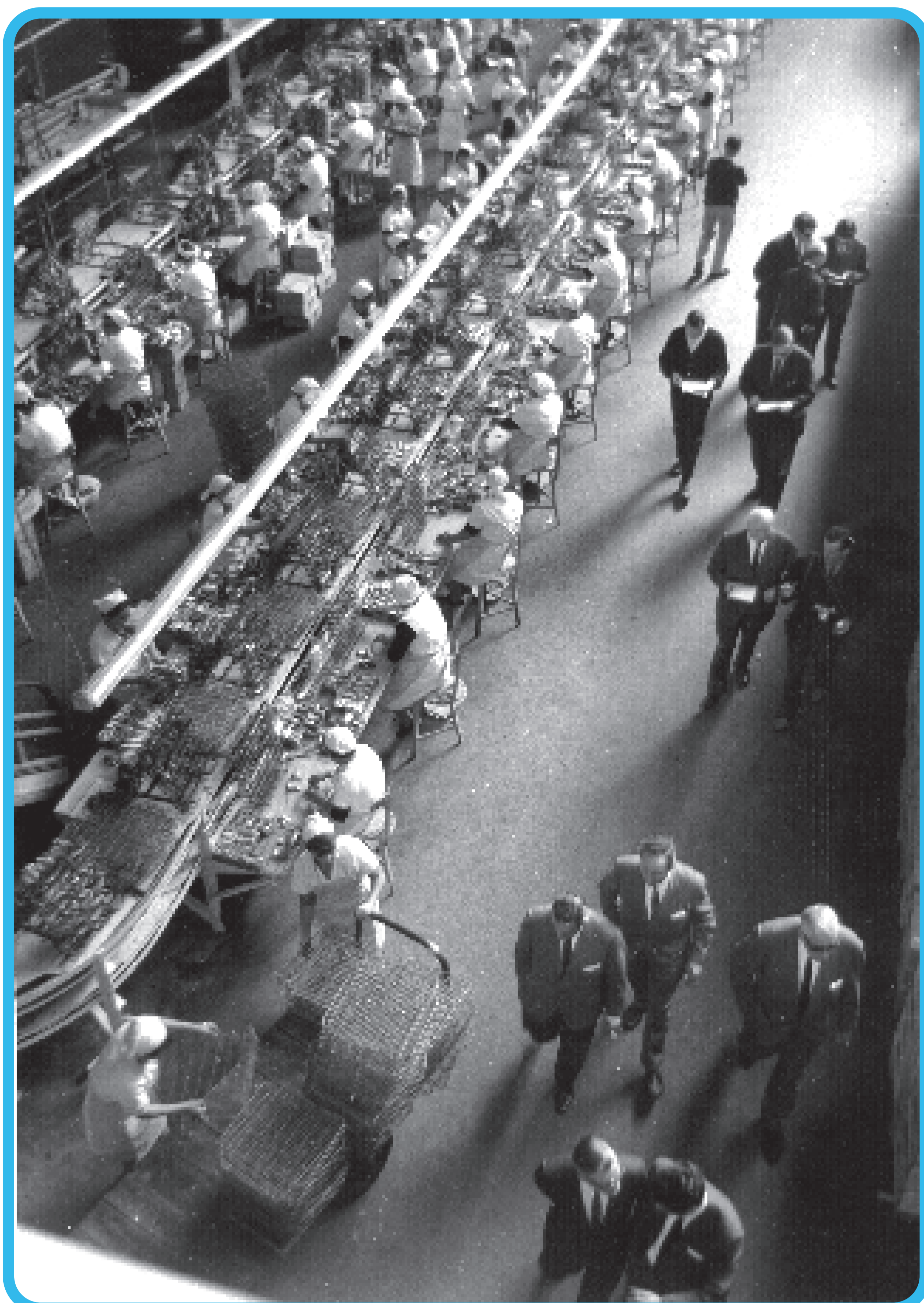


**Sardine canning in the Massó factory, Cangas.** Museo da Conserva, Funpromar.

Once the sardines left the roasting ovens they went to the packaging tables where the following happened: first, the automatic greasing of the inside of the cans by spraying oil; second, the automatic filling of a

certain amount of brine; third, the manual canning of the fish, as seen in the photograph. In the packaging, a careful arrangement of the product was controlled, carried out by expert female labor.





**Interior of the Massó factory, Cangas, 1960.** Source: Museo da Conserva, Funpromar.

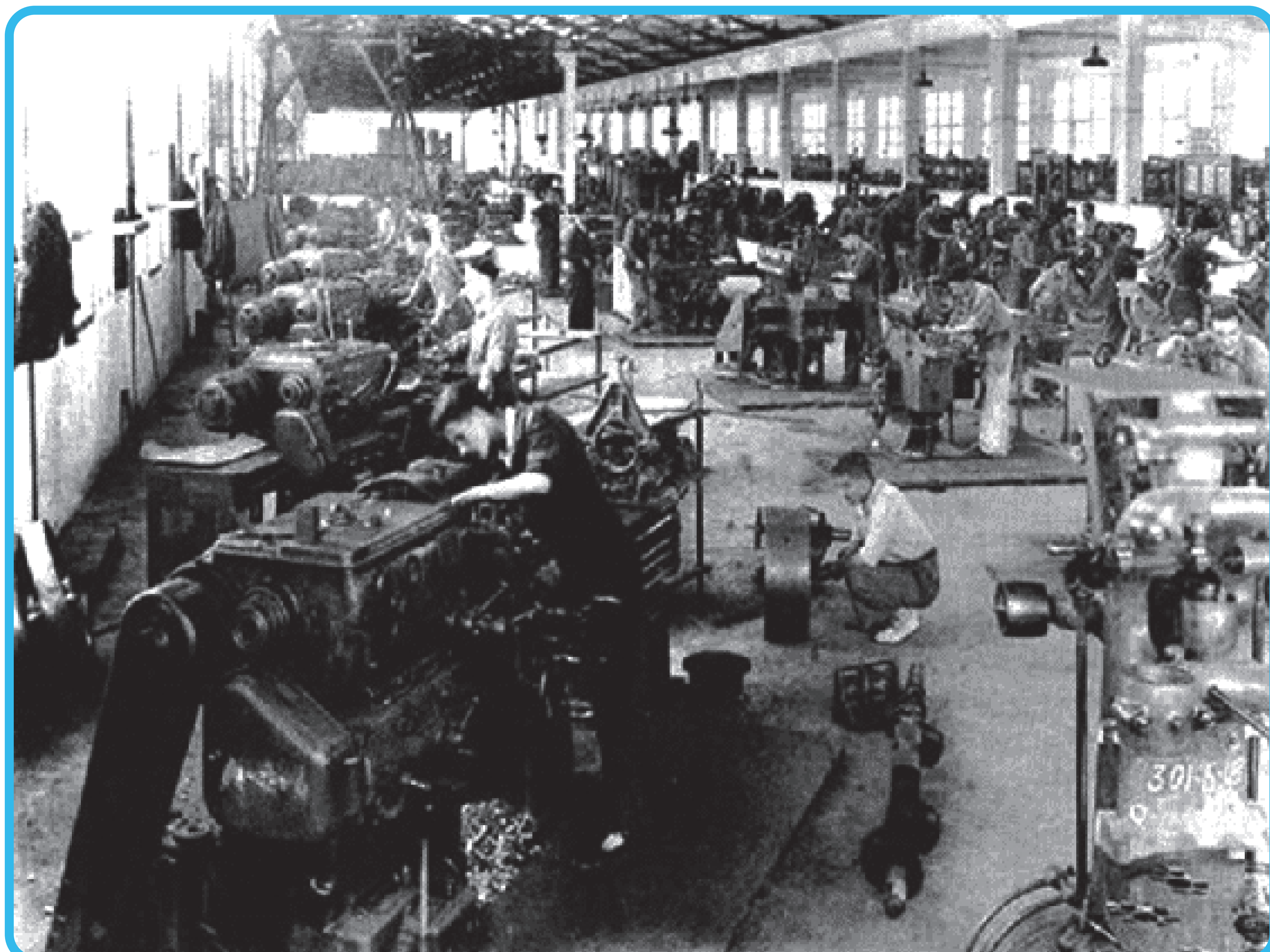
In the canning industry, the increase in production costs from the sixties made it essential to introduce new organizational methods that save time, energy and materials. The employer, "Unión de Fabricantes de Conservas" contributed to spreading the Scientific Organization of Work (OCT) in Galicia through the creation of the Galician Productivity Center in 1957 in Vigo, implemented under the Bedaux system, which brought with it the negative reaction of the workers, expressed through the monthly informative parts and the minutes of the company juries addressed to the Fishing Union.



**Section of the packaging workshop in the Massó Hermanos cannery, 1924.** Source: Museo Massó.

An auxiliary activity of the canning industry was the construction of containers. At the beginning of the sector, in the 1880s, the so-called "brick workshops" had a male workforce. The welders were the officers of these workshops and had different functions: assembling the gasometer, preserving the used devices and welding the different parts of the can. (La Perfección Regulation of 1883, Art. 18, 19 and 22. Historical Archive of the Massó Hermanos Company, S.A.)

The technical innovations that took place in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century —the Curbera family introduced and marketed in Vigo the American Bliss presses in 1900 and the Massó family the Norwegian welding machines in 1902— caused changes in the composition of the personnel of the workshops and packaging factories. Some of the welders were replaced by women who die-cut and stamped the tin sheet and made the bodies and bottoms.



**Machinery repair workshop of the company Massó Hermanos, S.A. in Cangas, 1960.** Source: Museo Massó.

Men carried out administrative tasks, management, supervision of the work of women and other specialized tasks (control of processes, repair of machinery,

purchase of raw materials, etc.) and maintained a fixed contractual relationship with the companies.



**Die-cut in the brick workshop of the Massó Hermanos company, 1924.** Source: Museo Massó.

*"I worked in the brick manufacturing workshop. First giving women covers to wear. Then on the tin foil die-cutting machines. I learned by watching and then doing. As a girl, I did less than the women, then I was hurrying more and more and then, my godmother, she was one of the ones who did the*

*most! She earned more than the factory workers but less than the men. In the workshop I earned 3 cents/day."*

Source: Interview with R. Álvarez, Bueu, 1998.



Nursery of the Massó factory, Cangas, 1960. Source: Museo da Conserva, Funpromar.

The industrial paternalism of the Franco regime was applied to large companies that offered nursery and canteen services to their workers. Massó had the first

one in Galicia in such a way that mothers could better reconcile their work in the factory with breastfeeding and caring for their babies.

### Catalogs and advertising material of the canning industry

Source: Anfac.



1.º de Febrero de 1954

TARIFA DE PRECIOS SALVO VARIACION Y SIN COMPROMISO

Descripción	Peso	Precio
<b>"MIAU"</b>		
CALIDAD SELETA		
Sardinas seleccionadas en aceite...	250 grs. 1/2	300
...	250	290
CALIDAD SUPERIOR		
Sardinas en aceite...	185 grs. chub.	325
...	200	310
...	400	600
...	800	1.100
<b>"LA PROVIDENCIA"</b>		
Sardinas en aceite...	185 grs. chub.	480
...	200	460
...	400	710
...	800	1.180
<b>ANCHOAS EN ACEITE "MIAU"</b>		
Filetes seleccionados en aceite...	300 grs. con extracto	580
...	400	520
...	1.000	1.300
<b>SERVICIO DE PAQUETES</b>		
Paquetes de 50 lonas de...	100 gramos	1.10
...	500	5.50
...	1.000	10.80
...	1.500	15.80



# WOMEN AND THE SEA

The feminine work in the maritime  
industries of Galicia. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## ORGANISED

Cátedra Juana de Vega - Dpto. de Historia

## CURATION AND TEXTS

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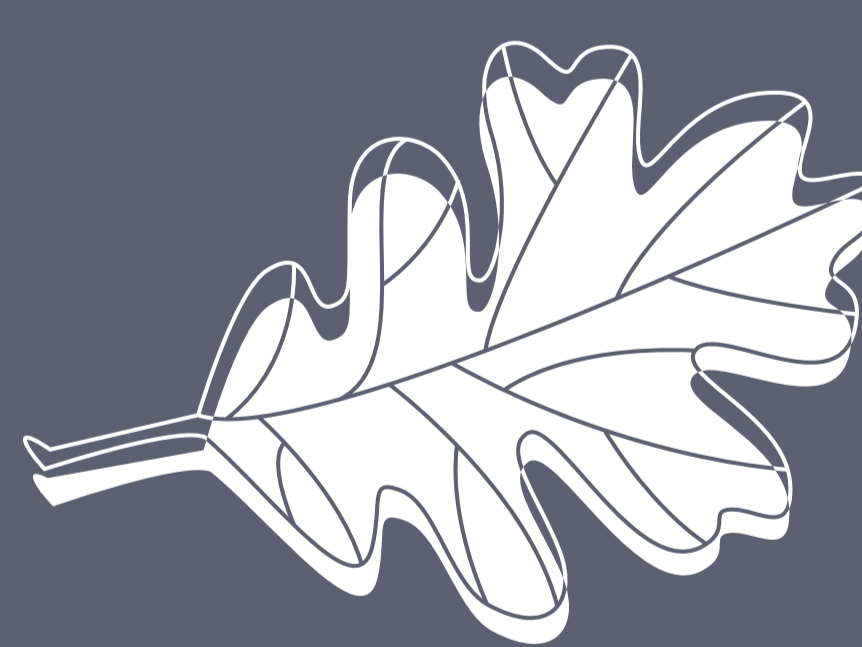
## GRAPHIC ARCHIVE

Museo Massó, Bueu  
Museo do Mar de Galicia, Vigo  
Canning Museum, Funpromar, Vigo  
Museo do Pobo Galego, Santiago de Compostela  
Asociación fotográfica Ollares, Portonovo

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

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