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Editors

Short-term Labour and Precarious Work in Northern Europe, c. 1620–1870

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CHAPTER 4

Female Household Servants in the Seventeenth-Century Town of Turku in South-West Finland

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Johan Tobias sergel: Study of a figure. Nationalmuseum, stockholm (*Photo* Cecilia heisser/Nationalmuseum), public domain

This chapter is based on the results of research concentrating on the agency of seventeenth-century female domestic servants in Turku, south-west Finland, between 1639 and 1700. There are hardly any references to female servants in the earlier written histories of Turku during the time.[1] Despite this, there are about 2000 Magistrates' court cases concerning the

[1] Carl von Bonsdorff, *Åbo stads historia under sjuttonde seklet*. Bidrag till Åbo stads historia (Helsingfors: Utgifna på föranstaltande af Bestyrelsen för Åbo stads historiska museum, 1894), passim; Raimo Ranta, *Turun kaupungin historia 1600–1721* (Turku: Turun kaupunki, 1975), passim.

position and life of female domestic servants in the town. Indeed, female servants made up 15 per cent of the whole population of Turku annually. They are thought to have been under the power of their masters and mistresses without any rights to show their own opinion or will. The state and the Lutheran church gave orders regarding the servants' position in the master's family, and these orders rarely mentioned any rights—only duties. However, as I show in this chapter, servants' voices can be heard through these court documents, which describe their life more widely and reveal their own choices and motives. I deal with these specific features in this chapter and reveal how the stories in the Magistrates' court records describe the ideas of female servants and their employers about work, and the status and aspirations of servants.

Studies of Female Servants

Italian diplomat Alessandro Bichi was horrified upon learning about the lives of women in Sweden—and Finland was at the time part of Sweden—in the seventeenth century, and he compared it to slavery.[2] The female servants' everyday life could involve hard labour, but it included other aspects of life too. The women had relationships with their fellow servants, masters, neighbours, and possible spouses. Service was not the kind of relationship with a master as we understand it today; it was bound to one's origin, societal status, and biological sex in the class society.[3]

Women's position in the history of work has been researched increasingly over the past hundred years. For example, Alice Clark in her *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (1919) saw capitalised work as devaluing women's contribution.[4] Can this be seen also among the female domestic servants in seventeenth-century Turku? Female domestic servants have often been seen as a powerless group of people. They are thought to have been under the thumb of their masters and mistresses

[2] Christine Bladh, "Med främlingarnas ögon," in *Rodderskor på Stockholms vatten,* ed. Christine Bladh (Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag, 2008), 148.

[3] Anu Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema 1664–1922," in *Työteliäs ja uskollinen. Naiset piikoina ja palvelijoina keskiajalta nykypäivään,* eds. Marjatta Rahikainen, and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2006), 73.

[4] Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 4–5.

without any rights to show their own opinion or will. In this article, they get their own voice through sources that describe their wider life and show their own choices and motives.[5]

For example, Philippe Ariès, John Hajnal, and Peter Laslett have studied the European marriage pattern, family composition, and status of servants, and their age when getting married. Their studies form a picture of a servant institution where young unmarried people act as servants at a certain stage of their lives.[6] A manifold of research based on their starting points has refined the picture of servants and their life course.

Deborah Simonton reviews women's position in the European context in her research such as *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (2003). Like other eminent historians, she has created a strong base for understanding women's position and opportunities in the past. These studies describe and analyse on a large scale the laws, local manners, and thought patterns created for and demanded from women and their work.[7]

Of the eminent Finnish historians, Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen has concentrated in her research on women's work in eighteenth and nineteenth century Turku. Her results make it clear that their work was often invisible and consisted of several odd jobs, although this work comprised a significant part of their and their family's survival strategy. Vainio-Korhonen has placed the experience of work in the context of other aspects of female experiences. Also of note are Marjatta Rahikainen, Anu Lahtinen, Markku Lamberg, and Anu Pylkkänen, who have concentrated on the life of female domestic servants in the Swedish realm. Riitta Laitinen, for her part, has investigated where women lived in the town.[8]

[5] Börje Harnesk, *Legofolk. Dräng̊ar, pigor och bönder i 1700- och 1800-talens Sverige* (Umeå: Umeå University, 1990), 10.

[6] Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960); John Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System," in *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, eds. Richard Wall, Jean Robin, and Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65–104; Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1971).

[7] Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, passim.

[8] Anu Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton palvelusnainen 1300–1600," in *Työteliäs ja uskollinen. Naiset piikoina ja palvelijoina keskiajalta nykypäivään,* eds. Marjatta Rahikainen, and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2006), passim; Marko Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa 1450–1650," in Rahikainen and Vainio-Korhonen, *Työteliäs ja uskollinen*, passim.; Riitta Laitinen, *Order, Materiality,*

Serving the Sun and the Moon

To understand the female domestic servants' lives and choices, we need to re-examine the laws and statutes and the religious environment that monitored their lives. The household rules (room board, *Hustavlan*) set the boundaries within which the masters, family members, and servants operated. According to them, society was strictly hierarchical and everyone in the household was subordinate to the master.[9] In 1628, the Swedish priest Olaus Erici wrote about family members, comparing the husband to the sun, the wife to the moon, and the children and servants to stars. Even when the sun was away, the servants were supposed to be loyal to him and take good care of his fortunes. The hierarchy of the household was thus very clear, and nobody was allowed to rise against it. The position of servants had been defined in orthodox Lutheran religion since the late sixteenth century. The church and the Crown formed a mutually supportive theocracy, and the household was compared to a kingdom, where the king was the head and the other members were his subjects. The subjects had to be loyal but could expect protection from their authority.[10] The situation was the same in Denmark–Norway.

and Urban Space in the Early Modern Kingdom of Sweden (Amsterdam: University Press, 2017), passim; Marjatta Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä," in Rahikainen and Vainio-Korhonen, *Työteliäs ja uskollinen*, passim; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, *Käsin tehty. Miehelle ammatti, naiselle ansioiden lähde. Käsityötuotannon rakenteet ja strategiat esiteollisessa Turussa Ruotsin ajan lopulla*. (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 1998), passim; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, "Nainen—vanhemman kaupunkihistorian tutkimaton sukupuoli," in *Tanssiva mies, pakinoiva nainen. Sukupuolten historiaa*, ed. Anu Lahtinen (Turku: Turun historiallinen yhdistys ry, 2001), passim; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, *Ruokaa, vaatteita, hoivaa. Naiset ja yrittäjyys paikallisena ja yleisenä ilmiönä 1700-luvulta nykypäivään* (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2002), passim; Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää 1770-luvun Turussa," in Rahikainen and Vainio-Korhonen, *Työteliäs ja uskollinen*, passim.

[9] Kekke Stadin, "Hade de svenska kvinnorna en stormaktstid? Stormaktstidens svenska stat och konstruktionen av. genus," *Scandia. Tidskrift för historisk forskning* 63, no. 2 (1997): 208–213.

[10] Olao Erici, *Speculum Domesticum* (Calmar: Christoph. Günther, 1628), passim; Paul Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk. Vardagsliv I underordning Stockholm 1600–1635* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2020), 12–14; Harnesk, *Legofolk,* 40–42; Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 39; Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 54; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 29; Raffaella Sarti, "Who are Servants? Defining Domestic Service in Western Europe (16th-21st Centuries)," in *Proceedings of the "Servant Project"*, eds. S. Pasleau and I. Schopp, with R. Sarti (Liege, Éditions: de l'Univérsité de Liège, 2005 (but 2006)), 6–7; Veli Pekka Toropainen, "Palkkapiikojen työt ja asema 1600-luvun Turussa."

Table 4.1 Turku Magistrates' court cases concerning female household servants between 1639 and 1698

Reason for a court case	*Cases*	*%*
Wage	199	10.5
Fleeing from service	164	8.7
Illegitimate sex	189	10
Working, acting as witness	1344	70.9
Total	1896	100

Live-in servants were also common elsewhere in Europe, such as in Iceland, Norway, Denmark, England, and Flanders.[11] For example, Tiina Miettinen has stated that female servants were not straightforwardly subordinate but could break norms and gain value (Table 4.1).[12]

Martin Luther's teachings on working hours and the hierarchy of work were clear and explicit concerning both sexes. Work was supposed to be understood as a profession and the work hierarchies were based on the chain of masters, journeymen, and servants. The mistresses of the household were separated from this chain, and they were expected to take care of the household. Daughters were supposed to take a servant's position. Luther's thoughts reflected the new development in the economy and the requirements of the monetary economy and the importance of work.[13] Everyday tasks kept women mostly at home, but they did leave this sphere to work outside the home, selling products and assisting other women in

Genos 94, no. 2 (2023), 92; Carolina Uppenberg, *I husbondens bröd och arbete. Kön, makt och kontrakt i det svenska tjänstefolkssystemet 1730–1860* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2018), 114–115, 262–263.

[11] Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Pre-industrial Household Formation System", 97; Hanne Østhus, "The Servant, the Law and the State: Servant Law in Denmark–Norway, c.1600–1800," in *Labour Laws in Preindustrial Europe: The Coercion and Regulation of Wage Labour, c. 1350–1850*, eds. Jane Whittle and Thijs Lambrecht (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2023), 132–133.

[12] Tiina Miettinen, *Piikojen valtakunta: Nainen, työ ja perhe 1600–1700-luvuilla* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2015); Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema", 79–80.

[13] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 16–17; Anders Florén, *Genus och producentroll: Kvinnoarbete inom svensk bergshantering, exemplet Jäders bruk 1640–1840* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1991),13; Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, and Raisa Maria Toivo, *Noitavaimo ja neitsytäiti. Naisten arki keskiajalta uudelle ajalle* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2009), 37; Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History. New perspectives on the past* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 66.

their tasks. This led them to have relationships outside their own household. At the least, their neighbourhood was part of their extended circle of life.[14] This all fits quite well with the description of a simple family household system in north-west Europe.[15]

In the Swedish realm, towns were subject to mediaeval king Magnus Eriksson's town law, which was decreed around 1350. Service was already regulated in this law. There could be freed slaves among the servants at the beginning of the twelfth century, as serving was the preserve of slaves until the early Middle Ages in Sweden. During the next centuries, supplementary statutes were given about work and vagrancy, although it took centuries before Sweden got its first law for the whole realm in 1734, and it included the towns.[16]

In 1664, the first regulation on servants was given in the Swedish realm. According to this regulation, there was in fact a conscription of service for all those who did not own land or practise a legal profession. Others had to be in the service of a taxpayer. This concerned mostly young unmarried people from 15 to 30 years of age, as in most European countries. They served mostly in odd jobs as servants before marrying. At the same time, there was a labour shortage and rivalry in recruiting workers. A new regulation from 1686 gave orders on the number of servants in a household and their wages. The aim was to guarantee servants at a reasonable cost to all those who needed them, but mostly to the rich landowners.[17] In England, at the same time, the law required a

[14] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 20–22; Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, *Noitavaimo ja neitsytäiti,* 57; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 8, 13.

[15] Jane Whittle, "Introduction. Servants in the economy and society of rural Europe," in *Servants in rural Europe 1400–1900,* ed. Jane Whittle (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 2.

[16] Jaakko Forsman, *Suomen lainsäädännön historia. Sen pääpiirteet*. (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1896), 59, 114; Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 53–54; Christine Prytz, "Life-Cycle Servant and Servant for Life: Work and Prospects in Rural Sweden c. 1670–1730," in Whittle, *Servants in rural Europe*, 97; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 9, 18.

[17] *Kuningalisen Maijestetin ASETOS ja Käsky/ Palckawäest ja Palckolisist [Prändäty Turusa/Pietari Hannuxen Pojalda Acad. Typ. Anno 1664*] (Kansallisarkisto Turku: Kruunusarja), passim; Paul Borenberg, "Pigor i sämre hushåll: Tjänstehjonsstadgan och den informella ekonomins storlek i 1700-talets Stockholm," *1700-tal: Nordic Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20 (2023). Borenberg has found from eighteenth-century Stockholm women who were written to the tax scrolls as female servants but who were not in fact serving, but working in manifold odd jobs; Harnesk, *Legofolk*, 13, 26–27;

servant to belong to his master, just as in Sweden. This concerned lawful orders given by the master.[18]

The pre-modern documents of the seventeenth century in the Swedish realm consist principally of taxation scrolls and court scrolls.[19] When researching, one quickly notices that women's occupations are hard to find in the documents. Only widows and female domestic servants were mentioned by their occupation in the taxation scrolls. The marital status of women was a more important fact to the authorities than their works. Because of this, women are hidden behind their husband's and father's names in the taxation scrolls, which highlights the role of gender and the state. This was the case also in the capital Stockholm according to

Christer Lundh, "Life Cycle Servants in Nineteenth Century Sweden—Norms and Practice," *Lund Papers in Economic History* 84 (2003): 1–14; Miettinen, *Piikojen valtakunta*, 132–133; Michael Mitterauer, "Servants and Youth," *Continuity and Change* 5, no. 1, (1990),11–38; Toivo Nygård, *Suomen palvelusväki 1600-luvulla: palkollisten määrä, työ, palkkaus ja suhteet isäntäväkeen* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1989), 45–50; Prytz, "Life-Cycle Servant", 96; Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema", 76; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 9–13; Göran Rosander, *Herrarbete. Dalfolkets säsongvisa arbetsvandringar i jämförande belysning* (Uppsala: Landsmåls- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala, 1967), 83; Raffaella Sarti, "All masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female': Domestic service and celibacy in Western Europe from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century," *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2008): 417, 421–422; Carolina Uppenberg, "Dimensions of Free and Unfree Labour in the Swedish Servant Acts, 1664–1858," in Whittle and Lambrecht, *Labour Laws in Preindustrial Europe*, 166; Jorma Wilmi, *Isäntäväet ja palvelusväen pito 1600-luvulla ja 1700-luvun alkupuolella: taloudellispohjainen tutkimus Turun ja Porin sekä Pohjanmaan läänien maaseudulta* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1991), 71–73; Whittle, "Introduction", 6.

[18] Tamara L. Hunt, "Servants, Masters and Seditious Libel in Eighteenth-Century England," *Book History* 20, no 1, (2017), 84–85.

[19] Tiina Miettinen, *Ihanteista irrallaan. Hämeen maaseudun nainen osana perhettä ja asiakirjoja 1600-luvun alusta 1800-luvun alkuun* (Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto 2012), 9–11; Vainio-Korhonen, "Nainen—vanhemman kaupunkihistorian", 185–186.

Kekke Stadin.[20] Women were mentioned as unmarried daughters, wives, and widows, while men are mentioned in terms of their profession.[21]

A large proportion of urban households had no servants or paid workers at all. Many households were too poor to hire labour from outside the family. This is also clear from the tax lists. Peter Laslett has noted that such areas with few or no servants can be found regionally and more widely in Japan, southern France, and Russia.[22]

There is a gap of nearly 20 years in the documents concerning Turku at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The few preserved sources tell us nothing of female agency. The Magistrates' court scrolls are preserved from 1623, and they allow us to glimpse at the lives of the residents of Turku. The Magistrates' courts' lower court scrolls start from 1639 and include a lot of information about the lives of women.[23]

Only about 3 per cent of the Swedish (which included the Finnish) population lived in towns at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The population rose during the century, and at its end about 5 per cent of the Finnish population and about 10 per cent of the Swedish population lived in towns.[24] During the seventeenth century, Turku was, along with Gothenburg and Stockholm, one of the largest towns in the Swedish realm. It vied with Gothenburg for second place, as Stockholm was the largest. Turku was also a large town when compared to the towns in northern and central Europe. It was the most important trading town in

[20] Kekke Stadin, "Den gömda och glömda arbetskraften: stadskvinnor i produktionen under 1600- och 1700-talen," *Historisk tidskrift*, no. 3 (1980): 298–319; Anu Pylkkänen, *Puoli vuodetta, lukot ja avaimet. Nainen ja maalaistalous oikeuskäytännön valossa 1660–1710* (Jyväskylä: Lakimiesliiton kustannus, 1990), 140; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 2; Vainio-Korhonen, "Nainen—vanhemman kaupunkihistorian", 186.

[21] Sofia Ling, "Genusarbetsdelning i tidigmoderna städer," in *Levebröd. Vad vet vi om tidigmodern könsarbetsdelning?*, eds. Benny Jacobsson, and Maria Ågren (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2011), 164.

[22] Finnish National Archive (FNA): Collection of lower court records: Turun kämnerinoikeuden tuomiokirjat (TKT) 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim FNA; Peter Laslett, "Characteristics of The Western Family Considered Over Time," *Journal of Family History* 2: Sage Journals: Issue 2 (1977): 103–104.

[23] FNA: TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; FNA: RRT.; FNA: Raastuvanoikeuksien renovoidut tuomiokirjat (RRT).

[24] Riikka Miettinen, and Jonas Lindström, "Survival in a hostile agrarian regime. Landless and semi-landless households in seventeenth-century Sweden and Finland," in *Landless households in rural Europe, 1600–1900,* eds. Christine Fertig et al. (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2022), 198.

Finland, as its exchange of goods comprised 40 per cent of all exchange in Finnish towns.[25] Turku had four quarters or neighbourhoods, of which three were situated on the southern bank of the river Aura, which bisected the town. By the only bridge that crossed the river, the most important roads in Finland headed off in various directions. Vessels sailed from the river to the Baltic Sea and even further.[26]

The population of Turku rose variably due to business cycles. At the beginning of the century, there were about 3500 inhabitants in the town. In the middle of the century the population was about 5000, rising to 7000 at the end of the century. Most towns in the kingdom of Sweden had only a few hundred inhabitants. In 1635, the taxation scrolls mention 554 families or 1721 individuals belonging to the burghers and officials. They formed 60 per cent of the adult population of the town. In 1638, 40 per cent of the whole urban population in Finland lived in Turku.[27]

Female household servants were the largest group of women in Turku who worked in temporary jobs. Their service normally lasted a year and began on St Michael's day in September, and they had a free week between two periods of service. Yearly hired servants normally moved from one household to another, but some of them stayed in the same family's service for two or more years, some even ten years.[28] Taking a new employer could be seen as an attempt to get better wages but also as creating a larger social network.[29]

[25] Mika Kallioinen, *Kauppias, kaupunki, kruunu. Turun porvariyhteisö ja talouden organisaatio varhaiskeskiajalta 1570-luvulle* (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2000), 50; Laitinen, *Order, Materiality, and Urban Space*, 2; Erkki Pihkala, *Suomalaiset maailmantaloudessa keskiajalta EU-Suomeen* (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2001), 50; Marianna Niukkanen et al. "Kaupunkirakentaminen Suomessa keskiajalla," in *Suomen kaupunkirakentamisen historia I*, eds. Henrik Lilius and Pekka Kärki (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2014), 46–47.

[26] Riitta Laitinen, "1600-luvun kaupunkia rakentamassa," *Ennen ja nyt* 6, no. 2, 2006; Liisa Seppänen, "Kadut ja kaupunkisuunnittelu keskiajan Turussa," *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, no. 2 (2015): 129.

[27] Ranta, *Turun kaupungin historia*, 145, 149, 151–152; Väinö Voionmaa, "Turun kansanluokat v. 1635," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 11 (1913): 135–142.

[28] FNA: TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; FNA: RRT.

[29] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 8–9; Maija Ojala-Fulwood, *Perhe ja verstas. Itämeren kaupunkien käsityöläiselämää keskiajalla ja uuden ajan alussa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2021), 15.

Several European researchers have concentrated on women's work quantitatively and sought to explain how work was divided between individuals in certain communities. Did biological sex or other factors influence this division, and how did this sharing affect the individuals and communities? The identity of the individual was shaped by different tasks and this in turn affected his/her activity. Why was the work shared as it was, and what did this mean to the individuals and the community?[30]

Women's work in pre-modern Swedish towns before 1700 has been researched relatively little. That is the case even concerning Stockholm, though there were plenty of women who worked independently. From Stockholm, we know the normative rights to work, and it has been shown that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries work did bring value and power. This was the case in theological theories and in practice for both men and women in their everyday lives, and under this rhetoric, they gained rights and more respect for themselves. If a person could show him/herself as hardworking and skilful regardless of sex, then that person would probably more easily obtain a goal.[31]

A woman's right to work was not disputed in the Swedish realm so far as it was in her family's or master's interests. The Crown did not intervene in women's jobs before the eighteenth century by restricting their rights to practise burgher professions.[32]

The case was very similar in England. In 1632, an unknown writer doubted whether a woman would note when reviewing her opportunity for influence that she was just a half of a person or not a person at all according to the law. As in Sweden, in England, it was acknowledged that there were women who could nevertheless act independently and achieve

[30] Maria Ågren, "Genus och arbete under tidigmodern tid," in *Levebröd. Vad vet vi om tidigmodern könsarbetsdelning?*, eds. Benny Jacobsson and Maria Ågren (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2011), 57–58.

[31] Sofia Ling, "Genusarbetsdelning i tidigmoderna städer," in Jacobsson and Ågren, *Levebröd*, 158–159; Ågren, "Genus och arbete", 5; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 1; See also Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, *Noitavaimo ja neitsytäiti*, 40.

[32] Anu Lahtinen, *Sopeutuvat, neuvottelevat, kapinalliset. Naiset toimijoina Flemingin sukupiirissä 1470–1620* (Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society, 2007), 43; Ling, "Genusarbetsdelning i tidigmoderna städer", 175; Kekke Stadin, *Stånd och genus i stormaktstidens Sverige* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2004), 255; Kekke Stadin, "Stormaktskvinnor" in *Makt & vardag. Hur man styrde, levde och tänkte under svensk stormaktstid*, eds. Stellan Dahlgren et al. (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1998), 181–182.

their goals, although there was no overall improvement in the situation of women.[33]

During the seventeenth century, family businesses rarely had a workforce on a larger scale. Often the whole household assisted the head of the family in his trade. This concerned his wife, children, and other persons, such as female domestic servants living in the household.[34]

The family business was common in the Nordic countries and, for example, in England, where the women of the household acted as partners in their master's business. At the same time, their work was seen through their master's work. Unlike in England, in Sweden wives and even unmarried women such as domestic servants could write bills, enter contracts, sue and be sued in court, collect receivables, and give collateral, although they needed their husband's or guardian's permission for some of these acts. This household collaboration was nearly the only option, as society could not offer any reliable guarantees to the existence of family businesses.[35]

The social dimensions of work have been only recently researched in the history of the Nordic countries. This is partially due to the documents that are difficult to interpret and a lack of statistical material. The standards and ideals of the family economy are well known, but the latest research has concentrated on finding out how the norms were brought into practice. Similar questions have been researched, for example, in England, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Spain from different

[33] Margaret George, *Women in the First Capitalist Society. Experiences in Seventeenth-century England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 37; Laura Gowing, "Language, power and the law: Women's slander litigation in early modern London," in *Women, crime and the courts in early modern England*, eds. Jennifer Kermode, and Garthine Walker (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 26.

[34] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 16–17; Sylvi Möller, *Suomen tapulikaupunkien valtaporvaristo ja sen kaupankäyntimenetelmät 1600-luvun alkupuolella* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1954), 81–85.

[35] Leonore Davidoff, and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 200; David Gaunt, *Familjeliv i Norden* (Malmö: Gidlunds, 1983), 45–46

points of view. In Finland, the court scrolls provide answers to these kinds of questions.[36]

For researchers, it is more important to find stories that are reliable rather than strictly true. With foolish stories, the court the attendees would not have had the trust of the court. It is more fruitful to concentrate on seeing what kind of ideals people had, because the stories of the court attendants aimed to showcase their own virtues and their opponents' vices. The ideals varied more than the tendency of failing to meet these ideals in court. It is still possible to hear the female servants' own voices in the court scrolls.[37] When the women of Turku's need for livelihood is combined with information on their work opportunities as mentioned in the court scrolls, we can evaluate of the pre-industrial town's business structure from a new point of view.[38]

Brewing beer was a regular job for women already in mediaeval England. It was also low status and not especially profitable. Despite this, it was more profitable economically than many other jobs that were open to women. Men took over professional brewing in the seventeenth century, and it became an odd job for women. There was a group of townpeople who could not produce or store their foodstuffs, so they bought at least a part of their food and drink daily from peddlers and tavern keepers.[39]

As shown in Table 4.2, the total number of taxpayers did not rise notably during the second half of the seventeenth century, although the whole population kept to increasing evenly. A famine and the Great Northern War (1700–1721) cut this development in the late 1690s and

[36] Christina Dalhede, "Handelsböcker, kontaktnät, varor och krediter på en tidigmodern Europamarknad. Handelsfamiljer i Lübeck och Göteborg," in *Kommers. Historiska handelsformer i Norden under 1700- och 1800-talen*, eds. Gudrun Andersson, and Klas Nyberg (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2010), 39; Ågren, "Genus och arbete", 56–57.

[37] Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, *Noitavaimo ja neitsytäiti*, 97; Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 115–116.

[38] Ling, "Genusarbetsdelning i tidigmoderna städer", 159; Vainio-Korhonen, "Nainen—vanhemman kaupunkihistorian", 190–191.

[39] Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1982), 221–229; Inger Dübeck, "Property and authority in Danish marital law," in *The Marital economy in Scandinavia and Britain 1400–1900. Women and gender in the early modern world*, eds. Maria Ågren, and Amy Louise Erickson (Padstow: Ashgate, 2004), 136; See also Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo, *Noitavaimo ja neitsytäiti*, 139; Ling, "Genusarbetsdelning i tidigmoderna städer", 164–165.

early 1700s. The destruction and depopulation are clear in 1722 in the first tax scrolls after the Uusikaupunki peace treaty. Women had more opportunities to work odd jobs in Turku compared to men. Additionally, the families of the bourgeoisie had a greater need for female domestic servants than male ones.[40]

According to Peter Laslett, around 20 per cent of the adult population in England was unmarried at the end of the seventeenth century. This figure matches the number of young unmarried men and women who served the whole population in Turku.[41] In England, the number of servants was roughly the same as in Turku, and the figures for Bergen in Norway and Copenhagen in Denmark were also similar to Turku. In the Swedish kingdom as a whole, servants are calculated to have accounted

Table 4.2 The number of all adult taxpayers in Turku, the gender distribution, and the number of female domestic servants in 1656, 1666, 1676, 1686, 1696, 1709, and 1722

Year	*1656*	*1666*	*1676*	*1686*	*1696*	*1709*	*1722*
Taxpayers/person	2733	3195	3000	2960	3172	2730	1359
Men/person	1076	1216	1328	1272	1249	984	540
Men %/taxpayers	39.2	38	44.3	44.3	39.4	36	39.7
Women/person	1657	1979	1672	1688	1923	1746	819
Women %/taxpayers	60.8	62	55.7	55.7	60.6	64	60.3
Female domestic servants/person	387	442	376	430	571	443	186
Female domestic servants %/female population	23.4	22.3	22.5	25.5	29.7	25.4	22.7
Female domestic servants %/taxpayers	14.2	13.8	12.5	14.5	18	16.2	13.7

Source KA 7263, 7299, 7336, 7373, 7404, 7447a, 7465a

[40] FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7263, 233–287, Toistekirja 1656; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7299, 1100–1125, Toistekirja 1666; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7336, 2927–2951, Toistekirja 1676; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä Turun henkikirja 7373, 3139–3207, Toistekirja 1686; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7404, 3963–4041, Toistekirja 1696; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7447a, 4282–4309, Toistekirja 1709; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun Henkikirja 7465a, 3761–3815, Toistekirja 1722; Miettinen and Lindström, "Survival in a hostile", 207.

[41] Peter Laslett, *Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), 204–205.

for 16 per cent of the total population, which is also in line with figures in Turku.[42]

In addition to the family members and household servants, there was a large group of independent women, mostly widows, who lived in the town and did odd jobs. Like in other parts of Europe, at least half of the female population of Turku did some kind of work, which is not mentioned in the tax scrolls.[43]

Before the 1650s it is not possible to define the number of female domestic servants because just the number of people living in a household is mentioned in the tax scrolls. Most of the households included only two generations, as in Stockholm.[44] From 1656, approximately half of the households had a female domestic servant, while the leading elite of the town—merchant families—might have three to five maids.[45] There were significantly fewer male servants than female. The situation was the same in countries such as England, France, and Italy, where up to 80 per cent of all servants were women. In Turku, the ratio was similar.[46]

Towns in the Swedish realm each had a certain market area determined for them. The area of Turku covered large areas of western and southern Finland. This was due to the permission given to the town to export and import goods abroad directly from its harbour. Many of the town's domestic servants were recruited from this area.[47] Several of them were thus 'children of the town', meaning that they were born in Turku, as children of lower burghers, soldiers, and workers.

[42] Hanne Østhus, "Servants in Rural Norway c.1650–1800", in Whittle, *Servants in rural Europe*, 115–116, 124–129.

[43] Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 51. In the capital Stockholm, female servants comprised a fifth of the town's population in 1760; Sarti, "All masters discourage", 425–426; Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 112–115. From 1725 until the end of the century, female servants comprised more than 20% of the whole working population.

[44] Ojala-Fulwood, *Perhe ja verstas*, 114–117.

[45] FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun henkikirja 7404, 3997, Toistekirja 1696; FNA: Läänintilit, Turun ja Porin läänin tilejä, Turun Henkikirja 7465a, 3798–3899, Toistekirja 1722; von Bonsdorff, *Åbo stads historia*, 358.

[46] Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 16–21.

[47] Ranta, *Turun kaupungin historia,* 297–301.

The authorities did not allow anyone to settle in the town without permission as in other parts of the Swedish realm.[48] Only those with a legal status could settle down. One's reasons were researched thoroughly before one could do so.[49] Many female domestic servants arrived in Turku from even further away. Especially civil servants who had moved to the town from Sweden hired servants who spoke Swedish like themselves.[50]

Serving Period and Wages

Short-term employment in this chapter means a period of service lasting a few months to a year. The employment contract was for a maximum period of one year and was renewable even if the servant continued to work for the same employer. This was rare, however, as most servants changed places every autumn, signing on with a new employer.[51]

Everyone in seventeenth-century Sweden had to be either a taxpayer or in service. Servants were in essence paid workers that lived within the home of their employer and received a cash wage and board and lodging. During their service, they became part of the family household and were equal to the children in law, although probably not in practice.[52] Early modern live-in servants are often categorised as a group of young unmarried dependents who were unskilled.[53] Female servants were the most commonly unmarried in the rest of Europe, indicating life-cycle service.[54] In fact, in western and southern Europe, there are few places like southern Italy where service can be considered to have been lifelong.[55] Life-cycle

[48] Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 56–57.

[49] FNA: RRT TKT 14 February 1644, 155v, z:172.

[50] FNA: RRT TKT 26 June 1694, 175–176, z:201.

[51] FNA: TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; FNA: RRT.

[52] Christine Fertig, Richard Paping, and Henry French, "Introduction," in *Landless Households in Rural Europe, 1600–1900*, eds. Christine Fertig, Richard Paping, and Henry French (Boydell & Brewer, 2022), 2; Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 39; Miettinen and Lindström, "Survival in a hostile", 204; Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema", 75–76; Whittle, "Introduction", 1–3.

[53] Prytz, "Life-Cycle Servant", 96, 99.

[54] Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, and Richard Wall, "Introduction: Domestic servants in comparative perspective," *The History of the Family* 10 (2005): 348–352; Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 10.

[55] Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 33.

service seems to be true in most cases in seventeenth-century Turku too, but there are too many exceptions to see this as the only truth.

Farmers' daughters rarely inherited the farm if they had brothers. This meant that nearly all of them had to seek a place to serve. Unlike in many European countries, in Turku, the servant was rarely related to his master or mistress.[56] Court records show that this was the case in only a few cases. The time of employment given in the regulations of service was between St Laurentius' day on 10th August until St Michael's day on 30th September. The legal days to dismiss the servants were between St Olof's day on 29th July and St Laurentius' day on 10th August.[57] During these days, young people from the countryside poured into Turku seeking a service position. A new era began for those who found an annual serving place in a foreign place with few or no existing social networks.[58]

According to Peter Laslett, the number of people in a household in England could vary between urban and rural areas. However, the girl who became a maid in Turku had roughly the same number of people on her home farm as she had at her serving place in Turku. Urban households may have been even slightly smaller in terms of number of persons. In both cases, all household members lived in the same house.[59]

When a girl found a place to serve, she was given engagement money by the would-be master. The sums given depended on each year's situation, which depended on the size of the pool of potential servants. This varied especially for male servants, as wars needed men. After taking the engagement money, girls were promised a wage that varied. During the first half of the century, the annual cash wage was eight thalers, and in the latter half it rose to ten thalers. That was how much one had to pay for a cow.[60] The master also paid her taxes for the year and gave her linen clothes—a shirt, an apron, underwear, and socks—and shoes. The girl was after this a female servant (Sw. *piga*, Fi. *piika*), and she served

[56] Peter Laslett, "Size and Structure of the Household in England Over Three Centuries," *Population Studies* 23, no. 2 (1969): 219; Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 4–6.

[57] Harnesk, *Legofolk*, 29–33, 36–37. In England, vagrancy, high wages, and reluctance to serve were mentioned in the law already in the Middle Ages. This was the case also in most of Europe.

[58] FNA: RRT TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 271.

[59] Laslett, "Size and Structure", 199–200.

[60] FNA: RRT TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim.

both inside and outside the house.[61] In Norway, wages were paid in cash and clothes.[62] As in England, France, and Italy, the female servant was taxed at a lower rate than the male.[63]

The first servant regulation of 1664 did not mention the maximum wage for servants. The shortage of workers therefore kept wages relatively high. The regulation of 1686 talked about wage caps, but they were not realised in all parts of Sweden. As their wages show, male and female servants were seen differently.[64] Carolina Uppenberg found that in Sweden there were considerable opportunities to use the court to demand unpaid wages for both male and female servants, although only a quarter of the cases concerned females.[65] Wage disputes came to court in Turku only a few times a year, even though there were hundreds of female domestic servants serving at the time and clear instructions in the servant regulations gave them a possibility to dispute their rights.[66]

In the countryside, a female domestic servant's period of service was always a whole year, but it had been half a year under mediaeval provincial laws. In Turku, the period could be a whole year, half a year, or only a few months, as in the English countryside. This was due to the needs of burghers for marketing, shipping, and works at their farms. Short periods of service were used, for example, in France during eighteenth century.[67] If the employer and the servant did not get along, the service could be interrupted, but the servant was obliged to acquire another girl

[61] Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 38; Miettinen and Lindström, "Survival in a hostile", 205; Prytz, "Life-Cycle Servant", 99; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 20.

[62] Østhus, "Servants in Rural Norway c.1650–1800", 122.

[63] Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 16–17.

[64] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 19; Harnesk, *Legofolk,* 33.

[65] Whittle, "Introduction", 13–14.

[66] FNA: TKT 24 November 1687, 261–262, z:195, RRT; Hanne Østhus, *Contested authority. Master and servant in Copenhagen and Christiania, 1750–1850* (Florens: European University Institute, 2013), 341–343.

[67] FNA: RRT TKT 28 March 1672, 102–103, z:188; Harnesk, *Legofolk,* 32; D. A. Kent, "Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London," *History Workshop Journal* 28, no. 1, 1989, 120; Jane Whittle, "A Different Pattern of Employment: Servants in Rural England c.1500–1660," in Whittle, *Servants in Rural Europe*, 57–59.

as her replacement.[68] The master had no right to dismiss his servant prematurely.[69]

The Manifold Work of Female Servants

During the seventeenth century, working hours were not separated from free time as clearly as today. Principally their working time was unlimited, but the time of the year and day determined how much work they did.[70] The female domestic servant's work can be seen as having both 'use value', in maintaining the household with childcare and in jobs to help support the family, and 'exchange value', in making products for sale. The designation 'servant' does not reveal the whole truth of the manifold of the work of women serving in households.[71] As in the Italian registers, for example, in Turku, the jobs of female servants were not specified, except in exceptional cases. Their collective name in the tax lists was simply maid.[72]

They worked mainly with their mistresses or at least by their orders. Cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, babysitting, heating the sauna, taking cattle in the morning to the cowherd, and bringing them back home in the evening were everyday tasks. Court cases describe extensively female servants' daily routines and exceptions to them. Though these tasks would not have been seen as proper work by society, they were regardless significant to it by making society work properly.[73]

Masters and mistresses sent their female servants to take care of tasks such as collecting receivables, grinding grain in windmills, and buying

[68] FNA: RRT TKT 20 May 1695, 320–322, z:202.

[69] Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema", 80.

[70] Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 129.

[71] Borenberr, *Tjänstefolk*, 16–17; Ojala-Fulwood, *Perhe ja verstas*, 136–137; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 20–25; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 2; Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 112; Maria Ågren ed., *Making a Living, Making a Difference: Gender and Work in Early Modern European Society* (Oxford University Press, 2016), passim; Whittle, "Introduction", 1–3.

[72] Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 26–29.

[73] FNA: TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim, RRT; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 3.

products. In winter, servants had to shovel the snow from the streets.[74] Burghers were obliged to perform common tasks that the town administration ordered. Those tasks that did not demand male attendance was often given to female domestic servants. These tasks were sometimes too hard to perform for women. Master mason Bogislaus Hornborg complained in July 1684 that an accident had occurred at the building site at the cathedral of Turku. His journeyman and apprentice were lifted in a basket to the tower. Those who held the rope had removed their hands from it and the basket felly injuring both men in it. There were only two men holding the rope. It became clear that the others were female servants who had been sent to perform the task by their masters and mistresses.[75]

Female domestic servants did their tasks mostly with their mistresses. This was natural because the mistress carried the keys to the household and delegated the household work—even the master could not intervene in all her tasks.[76] Female domestic servants were sent to the marketplace to sell products they had made together with their mistresses. They had bread and other food items in their baskets for sale. They also worked as sellers in shops instead of shop boys and were responsible for the cash kept in the shop.[77] As in England, many tasks were carried out outside the household.[78]

Tavern maidens were engaged first as normal domestic servants, but they worked their year out in a tavern owned by their master or mistress. They served customers in taverns and were responsible for the cash and drinks bought at the tavern.[79] Many tavern maidens fell into significant debt to their masters.[80]

[74] FNA: RRT TKT 19 March 1680, 61–63, z:190; FNA: RRT TKT 5 June 1690, 190, z:197; FNA: RRT TKT 2 November 1694, 416–422, z:201; FNA: RRT TKT 31 March 1697, 288–289, z:204.

[75] FNA: RRT TKT 8 July 1684, 189–191, z:193.

[76] Pylkkänen, "Naispalvelijoiden oikeudellinen asema", 82.

[77] FNA: RRT TKT 3 April 1674, 99–100, z:189; Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 20–21, 319.

[78] Jeanne Clegg, "Good to Think With: Domestic Servants, England 1660–1750," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 4 (2015): 54.

[79] FNA: RRT TKT 1 December 1688, 394–395, z:196.

[80] FNA: RRT TKT 19 April 1697, 332–333, z:204; FNA: RRT TKT 9 December 1697, 854–855, z:204.

Female domestic servants also took part in taking care of tenants who lived in the same household as them. Tenants who needed cooking and laundry services were mainly young bachelors, such as students, civil servants, and army officers.[81] When a servant had finished her daily tasks, she was allowed to work for herself. This often meant weaving thin linen.[82]

Coping with the Master and Mistress

The so-called 'room board' gave orders on life based on religion in Sweden. A similar patriarchal system was used in England. Masters had the right to demand work from their servants and they had to be obeyed with childlike obedience. Servants had the right to fatherly protection. This was seen as an ideal model that was shaped by the household's needs.[83] This concerned all the 350–550 female domestic servants (See Table 4.2) that served at the same time every year in Turku. The situation was the same in rural England in the mid-eighteenth century, where the overwhelming majority of domestic servants were female. Obviously, this system did not cause bigger problems, because the servants sued their masters only in about 10–20 court cases and they were sued themselves by masters at a similar scale. These cases mostly concerned wages or broken or missing items. According to these and other court cases that tell positive things about everyday life with their masters, it was relatively peaceful.[84]

Female servants had some personal space in their master's house. The master and mistress often slept in their own bedroom, while the maid slept in the family room, which served as a kitchen, dining area, and workspace during the day. In winter, the maid could sleep in the warm sauna, and in summer in the house's attic. There were no special servants' quarters in seventeenth-century houses. This required trust in the maid's chastity and honesty. This did not prevent the master and the neighbourhood

[81] FNA: RRT TKT 26 July 1686, 96–97, z:194.

[82] FNA: RRT TKT 17 August 1664, 217–218, z:183; FNA: RRT TKT 30 August 1664, 221, z:183.

[83] Borenberg *Tjänstefolk*, 17; Harnesk *Legofolk*, 40–42; Uppenberg, *I husbondens bröd,* 114–115, 262–263.

[84] FNA: RRT TKO 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; Kent, "Ubiquitous but invisible", 2; Whittle, "Introduction", 6.

from keeping a close eye on what the maid was doing, as Tim Meldrum also mentions happened in 1700s England.[85]

Good relationships appear in cases in which masters and mistresses or female servants swore to each other's honesty and respectability. According to Lamberg, not a single master or mistress questioned their female servants' virtues and hard work if the servants' reputation was not already being disputed in court. That is why we know so little of the servants who did not attend court and adjusted their position.[86]

Cooperation between female domestic servants and their mistress could be deep and profound. One of the richest women in Turku, an unmarried merchant's daughter called Elisabet Wolle was suspected of having leprosy, and she stayed for years inside her house. Her normal dealings with other women were therefore hindered and she hired a servant. Wolle wrote a testament in 1646 and promised her servant Karin Larsdaughter a wage of 326 thalers for a period of six years. Wolle stated that Karin had been her supporter during her blindness, illness, and misery. The female domestic servant's normal wage was ten thalers a year, but Karin got 50 a year.[87]

Few mistresses wanted to keep a sexually unrespectable or thieving servant in her house in Turku.[88] Paul Borenberg noted in his doctoral thesis (2020) that in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, this was not the case. According to his results, this was not a reason to act to save the household's reputation. Only if the relationship resulted in a child was the female servant dismissed.[89] In Turku, even a doubt of impropriety was enough to dismiss a female servant and have her thrown out of the house.[90] Also in England, the law was strict concerning female servants' sexual relations.[91]

[85] FNA: TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; FNA: RRT; Tim Meldrum, "Domestic service, privacy and the eighteenth-century metropolitan household," *Urban History* 26, no. 1 (1999): 27–28, 38.

[86] Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 60–61.

[87] FNA: RRT TKT 8 April 1654, 27, z:178.

[88] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 21; Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 59.

[89] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 269–270.

[90] FNA: RRT TKT 4 July 1668, 164–166, z:185; Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 21.

[91] Carolyn Steedman, *Master and Servant. Love and Labour in the English Industrial Age*. Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 176–192.

Unchaste women were a problem in Turku because there was no place for them to be supervised. Therefore, female servants were closely monitored. Already after their first fall, they were thought to end up as sex workers, disrupting the harmony of the city. Unlike in England and Scotland, for example, there is little evidence of their descent into prostitution in the records of Turku. If they did so fall, they were expelled according to the law from town.[92]

The master and mistress were verbally and physically untouchable. Female domestic servants very rarely used physical violence against them.[93] A fight normally needed two parties, and then both the mistress and servant were sentenced. In November 1667, mistress Karin Grelsdaughter complained about her servant Elin Brusiusdaughter. When the mistress had returned from a wedding party, she asked her servant to make a fire and warm up some cabbage for her. Elin wondered why she wanted food just after the party and asked if she had not eaten there. The mistress slapped her, making Elin furious. She bit her mistress on the finger, scratched her face, and pushed her to the floor. She then took a spinning wheel and struck her mistress with it a few times. The mistress had to flee to a neighbour.[94]

Elin broke all the rules. According to the house table of Martin Luther she was supposed to treat her mistress as her mother. Mosaic law was codified as part of Swedish law in 1608, and the fourth commandment ordered her to respect her father and mother. Even words thrown against them could bring her a death sentence, though the Court of Appeal mitigated these sentences in the second half of the century.[95] It was more often the servant who was mishandled.[96] In one such situation, a maid said that she had always served beyond reproach and that the problem

[92] Scott Rogers, "Domestic Servants, Midnight Meetings, and 'The Magdalens Friend and Female Homes' Intelligencer'," *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2011): 39, 443–448.

[93] FNA: RRT TKT 23 March 1640, sp., z:171.

[94] FNA: RRT TKT 8 November 1667, 292–293, z:185.

[95] Seppo Aalto, *Kirkko ja kruunu siveellisyyden vartijoina. Seksuaalirikollisuus, esivalta ja yhteisö Porvoon kihlakunnassa 1621–1700* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1996), 52; Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 14–15; Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 39; Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 66–71.

[96] FNA: RRT TKT 13 September 1642, 59v, z:172.

was with the master's own family. As she said, she was already the fifth female servant serving them during that year.[97]

It was only once or twice that a female domestic servant's death was suspected to have been caused by a master or mistress.[98] According to the law, masters could practise a certain amount of house discipline, but they could not brutalise their servants or cause them permanent physical injuries. This was mentioned already in mediaeval provincial laws.[99]

Fleeing Thieves and Respectable Maidens

Domestic servants were in principle not allowed to leave the walls of the house they served. There are about 150 court cases in seventeenth-century Turku that concern fleeing from service—or in other words, the servant leaving service prematurely without the permission of the master. When a servant carried her chest to another house, the case was clear and viewed as fleeing. Another clear sign of fleeing was when a servant stole her master's or mistresses' goods.[100] This was not a problem only in Turku; it occurred all around the Swedish realm.[101] In Bologna in the 1700s, for example, the theft of a master's property by a servant was seen as a crime of the worst kind.[102] In early 1700s England, there were also complaints about the behaviour of servants, who were seen as doing their jobs badly, demanding more pay, and behaving disrespectfully towards their masters.[103]

For the female domestic servant, her own space was represented by her own chest. It was seen as so important that it had always to be wherever she was, thus in her master's or mistresses' house. The master could prove a maid belonged in his service by showing the chest to the court. It had

[97] FNA: RRT TKT 5 September 1696, 577–578, z:203; FNA: RRT TKT 7 September 1696, 581–582, z:203.

[98] FNA: RRT TKT 1 June 1660, 121–123, z:180.

[99] FNA: RRT TKT 26 July 1686, 96–97, z:194; Harnesk, *Legofolk*, 32.

[100] FNA: RRT TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim; Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 64–66; Rosander, *Herrarbete,* 54.

[101] Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 41.

[102] Sarti, "Who are Servants?", 8.

[103] Hunt, "Servants, Masters and Seditious Libel", 83.

also an economic meaning for her, as she kept her wages and clothes in it.[104]

A female servant that fled from service was sentenced to compensate for the damage she caused to her master, usually by returning the engagement money and paying the promised wage.[105] Sometimes a female servant's family member guaranteed that she would serve her time flawlessly. If she left her service, then the guarantor was obliged to pay damages to the master.[106]

Certain court cases mention the reason for fleeing. This could be the harshness of the master, bad food, or downright hunger, although these were mentioned only a few times during the whole century. A violent master or mistress was something that not all tolerated. Many of the female servants seem to have considered themselves untouchable, and one slap could be enough for them.[107] Violent masters frightened their servants away, and service under their power was seen as impossible.[108]

The stories that servants told in court were not always taken seriously by the court or even by other servants in the same household. The stories told were sometimes coloured by the servants in an attempt to mitigate the deeds they had been accused of. For example, when servant Karin Jöransdaughter complained that she had too little food, another servant Anna in the same household did not share her point of view. Karin did not want to return to service.[109]

Female domestic servants were often accused of theft when they left their service prematurely. Some of these accusations were masters' attempts to be freed from paying the rest of the wages, but sometimes there were real thefts when servants took their master's goods with them when fleeing from service. They saw that it was the only way to guarantee they would receive their wage.[110] Female servants were willing and

[104] Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 127–128.

[105] FNA: RRT TKT 30 October 1639, sp., z:171.

[106] FNA: RRT TKT 31 July 1655, 31v, z:179.

[107] FNA: RRT TKT 31 January 1666, 26, z:184; Lahtinen, "Piika: nuori, naimaton", 41. As a reason for fleeing, hunger was mentioned in other parts of the Swedish realm too.

[108] Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 121.

[109] FNA: RRT TKT 10 January 1689, 6–7, z:197.

[110] FNA: RRT TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim.

able to defend their honour in court if necessary. Honour was the most important for people and losing it could mean losing one's livelihood also. Unrespectable persons were not viewed as reliable.[111] Servants could of course abuse the master's confidence and steal belongings.[112]

This indicates that female servants had their own time outside the household, and it was not disputed, though disrespectable deeds were strictly forbidden. The power of the household reached by this means outside the physical house. As church-going female servants are often mentioned, they spent their leisure time normally in an accepted way.[113] Servants attended dances, but this was considered a waste of time.[114] In any case, servants could meet a partner for life at these dances.[115]

Conclusions

The legal cases presented above show that the life of a female servant in seventeenth-century Turku was not a monotonous drudgery based on salary regulation. The needs and wishes of servants and employers could be observed so long as they did not cause financial or other harm. Work was of course a necessity for servants to gain their livelihood. Does the court scroll material tell us anything about their thoughts? Most of the approximately 20,000 female servants who served in Turku do not appear in the court material, and not all of these include a negative nuance but concern everyday life.

We cannot know how the servants who did not appear in the court records managed to enforce their interests, but we can assume that at least most of them served without problems and received their due compensation. Servants who had only recently arrived in the town were especially at a disadvantage if they did not know anyone in Turku to turn to with their problems. Probably not all of them had the courage to stand up to their employers in problematic situations.

[111] Lamberg, "Piikojen selviytyminen Tukholmassa", 50; Rahikainen, "Kadonneen työn jäljillä", 26–28.

[112] FNA: RRT TKT 6 February 1693, 12v–13, z:200.

[113] FNA: RRT TKT 1642–1698, z:172–z:205, passim.

[114] FNA: RRT TKT 17 January 1661, 9–10, z:181.

[115] Borenberg, *Tjänstefolk*, 232; Vainio-Korhonen, "Kaupunkilaispiikojen elämää", 124–126. Even in eighteenth-century Turku, there are no court cases of female servant's strolling outside the household illegally.

At least the servants who came to pursue their cases in court knew their rights. When the quality of their work was questioned, they knew how to defend it by appealing to public expectations of its quality. They usually presented their own cases themselves, and only in rare cases were they represented by their relatives or a hired lawyer. They knew that it was the Turku Magistrate's duty to defend their rights as well as those of other honourable people.

Not all servants were satisfied with their situation during service. These women often left Turku to travel to the capital Stockholm, for example, to try their luck. Despite the problems mentioned, the servants often stated that they would like to serve properly and honourably in their places. They were actively planning their future and considered travelling to other towns to serve.

Female servants' service in Turku differed in some respects from that in western and southern Europe. For example, in some parts of Europe service was committed for a longer period, and in the Mediterranean, it could even be for life. In Turku and the Swedish Empire, in general, this was exceptional, as service for a few months or a year at most was the rule.

The conclusions of this chapter are mainly in line with the results of previous research on female domestic servants from both Turku and western Europe, and they differ only in the details. This is largely due to the nature of the sources used in the different studies, but also due to some local differences. When several legal cases repeat the same servants' perception of their work and status, their circle of life becomes visible and understandable to us as well.

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