

Aldea Moret: A mining village in Cáceres specialised in phosphate mining, 1865-1925

Aldea Moret: un núcleo obrero cacereño ligado a la minería del fosfato, 1865-1925

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ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

At the end of the eighteenth century, phosphate was discovered in Logrosán in the province of Cáceres. This, together with subsequent discoveries in other parts of the province, such as those in Calerizo close to the capital, and the emergence of superphosphate of lime as a chemical fertilizer in the nineteenth century, turned Extremadura, and therefore Spain, into one of the leading suppliers of this mineral in the European market throughout most of the second half of the nineteenth century. Within this context, this article studies the relationship between the creation of the mining village of Aldea Moret, its development and the establishment of two large companies, namely the Sociedad General de Fosfatos de Cáceres in the nineteenth century and the Sociedad General de Industria y Comercio at the beginning of the twentieth century.

This article presents an original analysis of the living conditions in the mining village and of the role played by the high number of women and girls working at the surface of the mines. We have reconstructed the evolution of the mining village from before its creation until the mid-1920s using archival sources, such as the municipal registers of Cáceres and other documents stored in the Historical Archive in Madrid and the National Archives in London, together with statistical, newspaper and bibliographical information. Several findings are worth highlighting. First, Aldea Moret became a centre that attracted labour from the province of Cáceres and other provinces at certain moments during the period analysed. Second, and in relation to the characteristics of phosphate mining, female labour played a relevant role at the surface of the mines compared with other female workers of the principal Spanish mining basins. Finally, the study analyses the families and their composition and also the level of literacy and schooling of the men and women of the village.

The study presents some limitations due to the lack of sources related to the afore-mentioned companies and specifically, information regarding the wages and living conditions of their male and female workers.

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