

# Presentation

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The northern region of Chile has been a fundamental economic space for the development of productive activities in the country, configuring a take off in the economic growth of our republican life. In the long term, there is convincing evidence of foreign investment, management models, financial services, introduction of technology, improvement of infrastructure, implementation of means of transportation, scientific studies of mineralogy, business elites, increase of fiscal resources and insertion in global capitalism.

Metallic and non-metallic mining has also shaped a broad social and cultural space, where migrants, peasants, indigenous communities, military, bureaucracy, businessmen, workers, legislators, travelers, scientists, artists, educators and marginalized people have been linked to work, festivities, war, commerce, trade unionism, brothels, the pampilla, the pulpería, the maestranza, the port, the transversal valley or the mine mouth.

As a territory of great extractive wealth, the capital-labor relationship has been a complex process, with numerous tensions and conflicts, even amplified from a transnational perspective, such as the wars against the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation or the Pacific War. It was there that the first proletarian social movements were forged, the questioning of child labor and exploitation were proclaimed, workers' newspapers were founded, party consciousness was fostered, readings of workers' internationalism were circulated and workers' leaders with an outstanding disposition were erected, who left a profound legacy in their parties and in parliament.

The dossier that we present in the current issue of Economic Profiles, gives an account of these diverse realities. The authors work with a documentary base of valuable archives, repositories of statistics and images that support renewed views on the Chilean north. The first article, authored by Sergio González, winner of the

National History Prize, works on how the Tarapacá region, as the saltpeter industry began to succeed in the international fertilizer market in the late 1860s, slowly became a territory of extra-regional interest. Both public and private agents arrived in the territory. Among these foreign entrepreneurs was the Montero Hnos. company, who planned to exploit a different model of saltpeter industry. This industrial location model would generate the first organized provincial resistance, preventing its implementation. In the following article, Milton Godoy analyzes the impact of World War I on the port of Taltal. In the context of a capitalist and integrated world market, the European powers increased their attempts to secure their supply routes and prevent them from reaching their adversaries. This confrontation had a negative impact on the economy of the saltpeter region given the high need for nitrate supplies during the conflict and called into question Chile's neutrality in this conflict. A relevant issue in the nitrate world was child labor. In this respect, Carolina Valenzuela reconstructs the condition of childhood in the saltpeter pampa of the mining district of Taltal 1900-1920, which resulted in a precarious protection of their needs and rights, establishing an experience of childhood far from modern parameters, with an accentuated normalization of child labor. The manganese industry, an article by Damir Galaz-Mandakovic, allows us to broaden the perspectives of mining research. As the author argues, manganese represented a milestone of opportunity for the development of strategic mining, but it was also characterized by its weak condition, zigzagging productivity and precarious modes of production. The weight of mining in the national economy, particularly as leverage to generate investment, labor and public finances, was part of the discussions of the first decade of the civil-military dictatorship, an issue that Ximena Ortiz addresses in her article, in view of the change of legislation and neoliberal modernization. Finally, Benjamín Tapia, in his research note, seeks to give an account of preliminary approximations of the state of mining workers and their production in the Cogotí valley, towards the end of the 19th century. Jorge Pinto, National History

Prize winner, closes the issue with a review of the book *Minería y mundo festivo en el Norte Chico, Chile, 1840-1900*, by Milton Godoy Orellana, highlighting in detail the merits of the research. In addition, Jorge Pinto reaffirms the value and significance of the north for the identity, economic and political configuration of Chile, an issue that this dossier highlights in an outstanding way.

Finally, I would like to thank the guest editor, Dr. Milton Godoy Orellana, who actively collaborated with us so that this dossier could be published with high academic standards.