

The end of the expansion cycle of saltpeter in Chile: the inflection of 1919 as a structural crisis

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Resumen

This article presents support for the view that the saltpetre crisis of 1919-1922 marked the end of the expansion cycle of nitrate in Chile. It also reports on the previously unknown social impact of this crisis. Even though recurrent crises and their respective peaks were a characteristic of this economy, the turning point reached in 1919-1922 had unprecedented consequences due to the definitive loss of the German market and the consolidation of synthetic nitrate. For the first time, this crisis made Chileans aware of the structural problems in its economy and the need to change the saltpetre policy established in the previous century. This paper challenges the traditional Chilean national historiography, which hadn't considered this event as the end of the saltpetre industry, protracting its demise until the Great Depression of 1929.

Palabras clave

Palabras clave de autor: [Saltpeter crisis](#); [Expansion cycle](#); [Market of fertilizers](#)

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