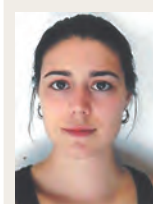


The Gallifa factories: a cross between a factory and an industrial colony

It is true that industrialisation, its development and influence – a process that began between 1830 and 1840 – is one of the most discussed chapters in Catalan economic history. It is no less true that often the works that offer a “Catalan” perspective on this topic are based on the predominant and leading role of Barcelona and its immediate surroundings. However, the map of the main industrial concentrations in Catalonia of the 19th and 20th centuries (Izard, 1968: 42) shows the existence of other centres which, in the mid-19th century, suggest an industrial reach beyond the Barcelona area (Nadal, 1975: 198). These are areas which, apart from the Maresme, Baix Llobregat, Garraf and Barcelonès areas, are not located on the Catalan coast, but in the so-called “interior” or “hinterland” of Catalonia. They include counties such as Anoia, Vallès Occidental, Bages, Alt Penedès and Osona. In recent years, several studies and initiatives have been published with the aim of highlight-

ing this industrialisation that began in a wider Catalonia. The corollary of factories and industrial colonies that extends across various parts of Catalonia's interior remains a very significant image in the region's landscape and a heritage which, in many cases, is still in the process of disappearing.

This article is a direct result of research that proposes the recovery and analysis of the tangible and intangible heritage of the so-called “Gallifa factories” located in the Ter basin, specifically in the town of Les Masies de Voltregà (Osona). They were a cotton yarn factories which, following the trail of rural industry, were established upstream and remained in operation for almost a hundred years, from the end of the 19th century up until the last decade of the 20th century. The study is not limited to creating an inventory of the entire heritage that can be drawn from these factories, rather it aims to give this heritage a wider dimension and to delve deeper into the historical reality it holds. In any case, it represents a micro-



Marina Cirera Gaja

MUSEU DEL TER

A History graduate and external collaborator of the Museu del Ter in research and dissemination tasks

since 2014. Author of the unpublished work *Una història a la intempèrie: la fàbrica i colònia de Gallifa*, coordinated by Pere Casas.

Keywords: Ter basin, industrial colony, Gallifa factories, oral history, intangible heritage

Paraules clau: conca del Ter, colònia industrial, fàbriques de Gallifa, memòria oral, patrimoni immaterial

Palabras clave: cuenca del Ter, colonia industrial, fábricas de Gallifa, memoria oral, patrimonio inmaterial

The article is about the Gallifa factories located in Les Masies de Voltregà and the model of factory and industrial colony they assume, as well as their role in the industrialisation process of the Voltreganès area (Catalonia). The article explains the links these factories had with the area's textile past, their relationship with the area's resources, the morphology of the industrial colony they make up and how they have affected the new ways of life and the socio-economic transformations of the area in which they are located.

L'article gira entorn del model de fàbrica i colònia que presenten les fàbriques de Gallifa de les Masies de Voltregà, així com del seu paper en el procés d'industrialització de l'àrea del Voltreganès. Per això es plantegen els vincles d'aquestes fàbriques amb el passat tèxtil del territori, la seva relació amb els recursos de l'entorn, la morfologia de colònia que desenvolupen i la seva incidència en les noves formes de vida i en les transformacions socioeconòmiques de l'àrea en la qual s'inscriuen.

El artículo gira alrededor del modelo de fábrica y colonia que presentan las fábricas de Gallifa de Les Masies de Voltregà así como de su participación en el proceso de industrialización del área del Voltreganès. En este sentido, se plantean los vínculos de estas fábricas con el pasado textil del territorio, su relación con los recursos del entorno, la morfología de colonia que desarrollan y su incidencia en las nuevas formas de vida y en las transformaciones socioeconómicas del área en la cual se inscriben.

view of the national and continental phenomenon of industrialisation. The reduction of the study scope, focusing on the specific case of a textile factory, allows for a more in-depth look at everything that is developed around it, the dynamics that develop and the impact all this has on peoples' way of life. The purpose of this approach is to highlight what similarities and differences exist between this specific case and the more generic and "Catalan" statements regarding industrialisation, thus seeking to offer a more dynamic view of this period of our history.

When we talk about rural industrialisation – particularly understood in terms of the exploitation of the Ter and Llobregat rivers – the paradigmatic model for industrial colonies – developed, planned and autonomous – is often placed at the centre of the whole explanation. This ignores the presence of factories which, despite being located in the same river basins, adopted the *factory system* or urban factory model. It also eludes to the existence of industrial experiences that present other forms of development and organisation of the industrial colony model. Besides being a few cotton yarn factories, the Gallifa factories gave rise to various residential spaces for their employees. In a way, this brings the case of these factories closer to the category of industrial colony. However, the final form that they acquired, the organisation system they developed, as well as the reasons that impelled this development show a rather specific case of factory construction. Gallifa is very far from examples such as the industrial colonies of Güell (Baix Llobregat), Ametlla de Merola (Berguedà) or Borgonyà (Osona), but in the long run this allows us to question whether Gallifa is an exception or whether it is consistent with other cases of the river Ter in Osona. Without trying to establish new models, the case of Gallifa highlights the existence of other manufacturing arrangements that dif-

fer from the most accepted models. After all, trying to understand what type of factory-colony we are talking about means addressing the ways in which human activities on the land have adapted and developed and what ways of living derive from this process. This is why it is necessary to raise issues such as resources, industrial origin and socio-economic structures that are developed around these factories in question.

Heritage, sources and methodology

On 22 April 2014, the partial demolition of the Gallifa factories began due to the bad state the architectural complex had been in for a long time. The intervention affected the factories that had been the two most important manufacturing sites and which housed virtually the whole production process. These two buildings were given the name *la Nova* – located in the north of the complex – and *la Vella1* – in the south –, and the Gallifa factories were always made up of two factories which were independent but had a particular form of coexistence and operation. The demolition also partially affected the space that for many years had been occupied by the small weaving work-

shop known as *Can Rovira* and much earlier as *Can Borra*. However, the two storage warehouses, the gatehouse and the housing of a manager and of a locksmith are still standing today – albeit in a somewhat advanced state of deterioration. Apart from all these spaces, the Gallifa factories also had a block which housed the director of the *la Vella* factory and a house in the style of the usual master's home, although it was never occupied by this person, rather by the director of the *la Nova* factory. All of them were buildings next to the factories and, consequently, erected right on the banks of the Ter, two kilometres from the town of Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà. The only architectural element that is still in good condition and still performs its original function is the three blocks of housing that were built for the workers in these factories during the 1950s: the so-called Sant Salvador Group.

It is obvious, therefore, that when we talk about the Gallifa factories, we are faced with a case where much of the architectural heritage is on the verge of disappearing. Disappearing at a similar rate is the so-called intangible heritage, which in this case is essentially the direct testimonies of the life of these factories: former workers as well as



Current appearance of a part of the Gallifa factories (2014).

MARINA CIRERA. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

people with other significant links to Gallifa. Living memory is a unique source of information about ways of life and everyday life that is often left out of documentary records. In addition, in many cases it is through these same testimonies that another kind of heritage is found: photographic material and movable property.

The research on the Gallifa factories, entitled *Una història a la intempèrie: la fàbrica i colònia de Gallifa2*, began in the same year as its partial demolition, 2014, as a result of the “9th Conference of grants for cultural research or diffusion projects of the Ramon Muntaner Institute”. The project contains a significant element of creating an inventory of heritage, essentially focused on three types: architectural assets, made up of the fourteen manufacturing buildings and the three blocks of housing of the Sant Salvador Group; graphic material, consisting of eighty-eight photographs; and intangible assets, consisting of the oral memory emanating from the recorded testimonies of sixteen informants³. In this sense, the sample of testimonies tries to maintain a correspondence with the reality of the factory during the mid-20th century and thereafter. As such, the research has sought to ensure the number of former workers interviewed is in proportion to the number of workers in each of the three factories, the quantitative and qualitative weight of women as a majority labour force during those decades has been sought and, at the same time, maximum diversity has been sought in the profiles of those interviewed in order to obtain a broad perspective. On the other hand, historical-documentary research has also played an important part in the research on these factories. This line of work combines the information from several local and regional historical archives as well as administrative records, since any private archives or collections regarding the Gallifa

factories remain untraceable and/or have been lost. In this sense, the documentation provided by the Mercantile Registry and the Property Registry is essential, as are different documents obtained with statistical information that are stored by local archives in particular. After finishing the research phase, the project was closed with a traveling exhibition opened in February 2016, which has been exhibited in spaces such as the town hall of Les Masies de Voltregà and the Museu del Ter.

Textile origins

The foundation of the Gallifa factories is first referred to in 1890, when the old factory, known as *la Vella*, and the *Can Borra / Can Rovira* weaving workshop came into operation. It was not until twenty years later, in 1910, that the new factory, *la Nova*, would be commissioned. Both dates are rather late in relation to when industry was established on the Plain of Vic. In the general and economic books on Catalan industrialisation, rural or inland industry is first referred to from 1860, when the contribution of these areas began to have a greater impact on wider Catalonia, although it always played

a supporting role. However, the in-depth study of the case of the Osona region and in particular the Plain of Vic shows that as early as 1831 there was an important industrial concentration in the region (Albareda, 1981: 54). Manlleu, the industrial capital of El Ter, had seen important industrial initiatives already emerge in 1840 (Bayón, 2008: 35), and by 1850, between the five municipalities of Vic, Manlleu, Roda de Ter, Torelló and Sant Vicenç de Torelló there were eighteen weaving factories in operation.

The name of Les Masies de Voltregà does not appear in this series of chronological and statistical findings, although like the other towns mentioned, the Ter river also ran through it. It was not until 1872 that the factory of Fortià Moreta and B. Darhis, which would later be known as *Can Riva*, was erected. This is considered one of the first factories of the Voltreganès area⁴, after the factory of La Farga was set up a couple of decades earlier. There is a certain delay in the start-up of industrial activity in the Voltreganès area compared to other municipalities of Osona, or in any case a slower industrialisation process, which has led it to be defined

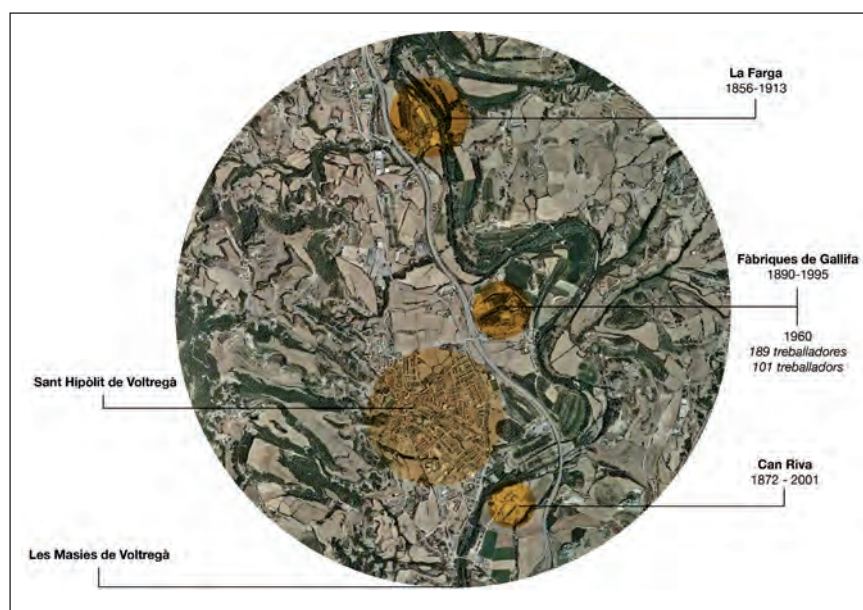


fig. 1: Ubicació de les filatures del Voltreganès.

as an example of late industrialisation within the context of the area (Albreda, 1981: 109). All in all, it shows that the appearance of the Gallifa factories in the last decade of the 19th century is not related to any economic matter but rather to structural questions related to the local idiosyncrasy.

Before continuing, it is essential to mention that the Voltreganès area is a territory made up of three municipalities. On the one hand is Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà which, with an area of 0.97 km², essentially urban and with a high population density, is completely enclosed and limited by Les Masies de Voltregà. The latter is a municipality of 22.4 km² and in the period in question it had an agricultural profile with a dispersed urban structure. It is through Les Masies de Voltregà that the Ter river passes and, consequently, it became the town where the factories of industrialisation were built. Finally, Santa Cecília de Voltregà, with an area of 8.6 km², lies to the south of the Voltreganès area and even today it is the municipality with the lowest population and with an essentially agricultural profile. The current collection of towns that make up the Voltreganès area date back to the late 18th century and grew precisely because of the significant importance which textile manufacturing had for many years in Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà. Since the 17th century, this town had been growing its drapery and wool activities, becoming the main cloth manufacturing centre in Osona thanks to its exports. It had the largest volume of local production of this product and in 1780 it accounted for 25% of the looms on the Plain of Vic (Pladevall, 1978: 582, inside Serrallonga, 1986: 76). This economic activity was orchestrated through the trade union organisation, which used the ancient secular structures of many brotherhoods, and was controlled by the Voltregà cooperative. The boom situation for the craftsmen-wool workers began to

decline after 1780, causing economic and demographic decline in the area defined by the Brotherhood of Wool Workers and Weavers of Sant Hipòlit (Serrallonga, 2000: 176). The wool crisis accentuated the conflicts that had been waged between the guildmen and agricultural owners over the distribution of communal lands. This would result in territorial segregation in 1796, in which the area of Sant Hipòlit was allocated to the wool workers and Les Masies to the farmers.

While it is true that in the initial years of the 19th century the wool crisis – which had begun twenty years earlier – led to a deteriorating of textile manufacturing in the Voltreganès area, the question remains regarding why, despite its old textile tradition, the area was late in adopting the industrialisation model. In order to understand this discontinuity and the disconnection between the *proto-industrial* phase and the industrial one, the theories of Torras and Ribé and Torras and Elias are very important (Torras, 1981; 1994). According to these scholars, the transition between the two phases in the case of rural industry depended essentially on the figure of the wool worker⁵ and the development of their trade. The introduction of cotton in rural areas allowed for a greater intensification of work based on the reduction of wholesale production costs. This led to the separation of spinning and weaving, a greater division of labour and a production intended more for sale than for consumption. It was the wool workers that showed a greater capacity to organise the new large-scale production and the rotation of labour distributed among the farms. The wool workers' progress compared to other trades would not be due to "their contribution of fixed capital, but their capacity to coordinate and manage a rather complex process" (Torras, 1981: 15). This wool worker activity allowed for the accumulation of com-

mercial capital and at the same time the establishment of an extensive production network that would be essential for the industrial development of these economies. The introduction of cotton in Sant Hipòlit did not occur until the 19th century. It seems that the delay in the new fibre becoming established was due to the strong trade union structures that had been consolidated during the previous decades. The unions' tight structure had prevented further development of independent wool workers, which would have laid the foundations and structures necessary for the arrival of modern industry (Albreda, 1981: 58). The delay in the arrival of industrialisation in the Voltreganès area and, consequently, the appearance of the Gallifa factories would be due to a lack of initiative, which could be explained by an underlying structural cause, since it was a territory with plentiful resources.

Besides all these issues, the industrial model could not be developed by itself through an internal process of maturity of the previous *pre-industrial* production model. Exogenous causes were necessary that would bring about the changes in the production and the economic organisation. In this sense, it has been established that the decisive element for the implementation of the industrial model in rural economies was the growing demand for printed fabrics known as *indianas* in Barcelona which, together with the lack of yarns from Malta, led to manufacturers seeking higher levels of production with lower investment in small towns. This explanation has often led to the defence of the thesis of Jordi Maluquer de Motas on the importance of capital from Barcelona in rural industry initiatives, leading such initiatives to remain under a productive and economic hierarchy led by large companies from Barcelona. These companies would act as true capitalists, while the indigenous industrial bourgeoisie would serve as

a group of “technicians”. This meant “lower economic risks which, together with the lower wages, were attractive enough for capital to be moved into the region’s interior, not to mention the availability of hydraulic energy and the low cost of rents” (Albareda, 1981: 58).

If this thesis is taken into account to explain the origin of the initiative and the capital that gave rise to the Gallifa factories, it would seem that we should look to Barcelona for their origin. In a way, accepting this paradigm unreservedly would mean understanding rural industrialisation and the banks of the Ter as a projection of initiatives that radiated from the Plain of Barcelona and ignoring the existence of indigenous industrial models (Ferrer, 1986: 62-70). Opposing this idea based on the predominance of Barcelona, the history of the Gallifa factories reveals that its promoters and capitalists were home-grown, many of which came from lineages linked to the old drapery of Sant Hipòlit. In this regard, the old factory, *la Vella*, founded under the company name of “Gallifa-Rierola”, was the result of an association between Pau Gallifa Espadamala—heir to one of the most influential houses of the Voltreganès area, the Gallifa house, which owned the land where the factories were

established and which gave them their name—and Josep Rierola Albó—born in the nearby town of Gurb and with strong links to the textile industry. It goes without saying that the company’s partners changed as the 20th century progressed, leading to a change in the company name: “Rierola, Pugcerin-arell i Cia” (1904) and “Roca Albó” (1917). Along with this company, the small fabric workshop of *Can Rovira*, or *Can Borra*, was set up inside the same factory complex. The Rovira family had been former wool workers of the Voltregà cooperative and had a long tradition in textiles. The construction of the workshop in Gallifa led to it being incorporated into machining work. The company responsible for the *la Nova* factory (1910) was “Font, Vigué i Pascual”, formed with capital essentially from the Osona area, its partners having a highly varied profile: from agricultural owners to men already familiar with commerce and the textile industry. This company also changed its owners and in 1913 it was renamed “Baqué, Vigué i Espauella”. The list of all these names that appear as owners of the companies located in Gallifa shows how, in spite of the stronghold of the textile activity, it was reinstated through home-grown initiative. The availability of capital

accumulated by them, along with a certain capacity to convert commercial capital into industrial capital (Vilar, 1986), is undoubtedly what enabled these new entrepreneurs to embark on initiatives of this kind. What is necessary to consider is that the origin of accumulated capital may well not be found in the old manufacturing activities but rather in agricultural activities or modern business initiatives.

In 1920, all these companies which until then had occupied the Gallifa factories closed, with the exception of *Can Rovira*, bringing an end to this phase in their lifespan. In this year, the company “Hilaturas Voltregà, S.A.”, founded with an initial share capital of 3,230,000 pesetas, set up in the *la Vella* factory and three years later “Hilaturas Marquet, S.A.”, which also began with the same initial share capital figure, did so in the *la Nova* factory. The two companies were formed by capitalist businessmen from Barcelona and among them, of particular note was the Marsal family, which had had an industrial colony in Cabrera d’Anoia since 1854. Although Marquet and Voltregà were always different companies, at several times some of the partners were shareholders of both companies. This meant that there was always a close connection between the two factories. It is in this second phase of the Gallifa factories, already in the 20th century, that there is really a predominance of capital from Barcelona. In fact, both companies established their economic headquarters in the Catalan capital so that in the factories of Les Masies only manufacturing work was carried out, while the management and marketing tasks were carried out from the offices in Barcelona. As it progressed, industrialisation took on different forms, but in any case Gallifa allows us to support the idea that the development of rural industry was not a unilateral expansion led by Barcelona but rather a process of



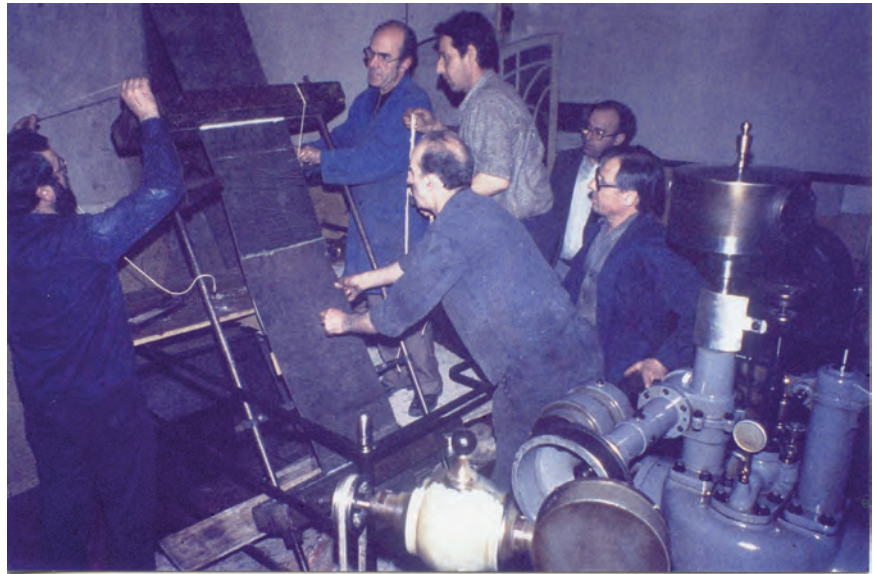
Postcard of the Gallifa factories (early 20th century).

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

interaction between different contexts and models.

The settlement: a question of resources

It is virtually indisputable that the establishment of textile industries in the Catalan interior was absolutely related to the river basins of the Ter and the Llobregat and their tributaries. This means that when we refer to these river basins, we do so within the category of *riverside factories*, since in the vast majority of cases they were built on the shores of the rivers and they used the hydraulic system. Catalan industry was initially projected as an urban phenomenon based on the energy supply of the steam engine and therefore of coal. The scarcity of coal resources from the Catalan subsoil generated a huge “energy bill” due to the imports of minerals – mainly English – which the Catalan factories were obliged to carry out. This situation made use of the energy alternative provided by hydraulic exploitation of Catalan rivers – which was low-cost and widely available in Catalonia. However, the main rivers exploited were rivers with irregular flows that were often affected by periods of freezing or drought. In view of this, virtually all the river factories incorporated a steam engine in order to have complementary energy when faced with insufficient energy from the river, meaning that the desired energy saving could not be achieved in its entirety (Clua, 2001: 30). These circumstances have led people to suggest that in the case of textile colonies, the energy issue was not the real reason for their projection (Terrades, 1994). The real objective pursued by the colonies was social control, isolation, loyalty of the workers towards the owner and the factory, the suppression of class demands and, as a result, the reduction of labour costs more than energy costs. Thus, according to this approach, colonies were not the result of industrial restructuring and relocation, but rather



Gallifa mechanics fixing the turbine belt (1970s).

JOSEP MARIA MUSACH. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

they represented social restructuring of the industry.

Gallifa had river factories that were erected just by the banks of the Ter in Les Masies de Voltregà and, therefore, about two kilometres away from the town of Sant Hipòlit. In relation to the aforementioned issues, these factories in Voltregà are a rather specific case and, unlike most, the Gallifa factories never incorporated the use of a steam engine. The explanation is undoubtedly in the fact that they had a 10m-high waterfall at their disposal, which offered great potential⁶. With this, the energy that the two turbines could generate – that of *la Nova* and of *la Vella* – to mobilise all the machinery through the system of paddocks was highly optimal, which is why they had a capacity of 300 HP each. This privileged location no doubt explains the fact that at the same site two different companies dedicated to cotton spinning were erected, along with the *Can Rovira* weaving workshop. In addition, this concentration also represented a way to make a profit from infrastructure such as access roads, the canal or the land, thus constituting an early form of industrial estate. Oral

memory interviews have indicated, however, that despite the power of the Gallifa turbines, it was not immune to the variations of the river flow, which kept the factory on hold when water was scarce.

In all, these factories could be considered a clear case of hydraulic exploitation and cost optimisation. Establishing the energy factor as the sole cause for the Gallifa factories' location would be to ignore all the other elements that allow the production process to work. In spite of the mechanisation that took place with industrialisation, manpower remained an essential element with significant costs. In this regard, the fact that *mountain* salaries were lower than those established in the large urban centres of the coast and the Plain of Barcelona, where the workers' movement had already begun to effectively apply pressure for wage increases, is a significant factor. Thus, river factories benefited from savings both in terms of energy and also labour, because in the interior the workforce was docile and was still far off entering into social-labour conflicts.

Apart from the possibility to exercise greater control over the work-



Worker in the pocket section of the *Ja Nova* factory (mid-20th century).

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

force, the availability of labour was indispensable when deciding upon location. Although both Sant Hipòlit and Les Masies were small towns – in comparison to Manlleu, Torelló or Roda de Ter – in 1901 together they had a total of 3,427 inhabitants. Although not a high population figure, there was a good predisposition to convert this into a workforce for the factory. On the one hand, we must keep in mind that Sant Hipòlit did not have any agricultural activity due to its limited

size and high degree of urbanisation. It was, therefore, a population with few economic alternatives, besides manufacturing activities, which were debilitated since the wool crisis of the late 18th century. On the other hand, at the time when the Gallifa factories entered into operation, the only other industry in the area was the aforementioned factory of Fortià Moreta and B. Darhis and, in 1890, that of *Ca l'Escola*, very close to the Voltreganès area although they belonged to the municipality of Manlleu.

Having energy and labour resources was not enough for industrial location. It was necessary to have a communication and marketing network that enabled the transit of raw materials and processed products. The centre of the Plain of Vic was a confluence point of six major historical routes and therefore a large communications centre with a good commercial network within the Catalan interior (Font, 2014: 946). Although Les Masies de Voltregà was unable to have the railway network that connected Sant Joan de les Abadesses to Barcelona pass through its vicinity, it did have a road connection and was quite close to the train station in Manlleu. All this meant that the Gallifa factories remained very close to the main commercial centre that was Barcelona.

A model halfway between an industrial estate and an urban factory

When explaining the industrialisation of the river basins of the Catalan interior, the experience of industrial colonies is often taken as a paradigm. The fact that they are a phenomenon with a significant presence in these areas leads them to often be given a leading role that eclipses all other river factories which remains in an urban location and were based on the so-called *factory system*. Between 1850 and 1880 on the rivers of Catalonia, a first phase of development of the phenomenon of colonies took place, in which a process of this model's maturing would be assumed (Dorel-Ferré, 1992: 56). In the case of the Ter, in 1853 the colony of La Colomina had already been founded and in 1857 that of Can Remisa, and it was a little later that much more developed colonies with a certain degree of urban and architectural planning were established. This is the case, for example, of Còdol-Dret (1871) or the colony of Salou (1864) – in Roda de Ter –, although the one that would become a truly extensive

and autonomous colony would be Borgonyà (1895).

What is interesting to ponder is why the Gallifa factories, which were not located in the urban centres of the Voltreganès area, were not planned following the colony model at a time – in 1890 – when this model had already entered its maturity phase. In this sense, the Gallifa factories only adopted some of the actions typical of river colonies: the construction of housing for the two directors, a house for a locksmith, another for a manager and the writer, in addition to the gatehouse. These were measures that sought to resolve the difficulties posed by this location, slightly set away from the population centre. As was common in many cases, providing housing attached to the factory to these positions was a way of ensuring fast action could be taken in the event of an accident or an emergency, but it was also a way of exercising a certain control and presence. One of the elements that facilitated the development of industrial colonies was the different legislative provisions established by the new liberal state. There were a number of laws that were published, until on 3 June 1868 the definitive

provision was established. The most important part of this law was the establishment of fiscal exemptions in contributions provided by agricultural industries located in a rural town and which requested colony status. In Catalonia, only thirty-five colonies were able to benefit from these advantages and specifically in the Osona region only the colonies of Vila-Seca de Torelló, La Mambla d'Orís, Salou and Còdol Dret de Les Masies de Roda managed to do so (Serra, 2010: 243). None of the companies that were located in the Gallifa industrial complex achieved this kind of exemption, meaning the benefits that could be provided by the construction of a colony in relation to the costs were lower.

A second action linked to housing was carried out in 1953, when the factories were under the control of the companies “Hilaturas Voltregà, S.A.” and “Hilaturas Marquet, S.A.”. In line with the economic environment in Catalonia, the 1950s were a period of good performance for these factories. As in most of the Catalan industrial

centres, this situation encouraged the arrival of a large group of families from Andalusia and Murcia. The so-called “Castilians” resolved one of the problems which the Gallifa factories, along with the other industries of the Voltreganès area, had to face in the mid-20th century: the lack of labour force. At the same time, rural families continued to abandon the old occupations of the countryside to enter fully into urban life and undertake industrial activities. The profile of these families was perfectly suited to the demands of the factories’ bosses: they represented cheap, unqualified and docile labour. However, what turned out to be a solution to the demand for workers raised the problem of housing.

It was therefore necessary to offer this new workforce a place to live, and in this regard “Hilaturas Voltregà, S.A.” initiated the construction in 1949 of the three blocks of flats with a total of eighteen homes that would make up the so-called “Sant Salvador Group”. The peculiarity of the case is that the development was not erected on land adjoining the factories but was built in the middle of the town of Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà. It was clear that the isolation of its workers was not an objective, probably because this would have



Central block of the Sant Salvador Group as it stands today (2014). JAVI FUNES. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

meant organising different services such as a food shop, schooling and a tavern and it therefore would have been a long-term project with uncertain prospects for providing benefits. Therefore, the factories' relationship with the housing was entirely pragmatic, taking care of functional matters of immediate importance. However, while it is true that the San Salvador Group was unable to isolate its inhabitants-workers from the rest of the population and from possible social conflicts, it is true that it achieved a certain loyalty between the workers and the factory. As the interviewees that had lived in these apartment blocks have explained, the price of rent – 75 pesetas per month during the 1950s and 1960s – was lower than in the rest of the market. The fact that the factories offered a certain number of newly-arrived families not only a place of work but also a house to live in with cheaper rent was a request and, at the same time, a mechanism for fostering loyalty between factory and workers. The fact that their home depended on their link with the factory was a disincentive when it came to considering going to work in another factory.

Without trying to fall into benevolent interpretations, constructions such as the Sant Salvador Group were an important platform for improving the living conditions of a portion of this immigrant population. In this regard, the testimonies of some of those who arrived in the thirties and forties coincided by commenting on the unhealthy and precarious state in which they had lived in the early years of their residence in Sant Hipòlit. The town's lateness to incorporate urban planning was undoubtedly the factor that had caused many families – in many cases consisting of six or seven members – to live in 20 m² spaces. This was explained by one of the old residents: “*The Group was a major step forward for us because when we arrived there were no houses, not even any free rooms, in Sant Hipòlit. Everything was occupied and in the garages people had pigs*”. It goes without saying that despite the improvements offered by this housing development, many large families lived there and therefore the occupation density remained clear. In a way, this aspect was one of the elements that led to the stigmatisation of the so-called “Castilians” and, in fact, this group of homes became a small ghetto.

However, it is clear that the case of Gallifa is a form of colony that hardly conforms to the paradigmatic models or those of the majority of the colonies of the Llobregat river basin. This is an underdeveloped case in which only a small group of houses was provided very late and without offering the amount of resources and services offered by the *colony model*. Furthermore, these homes had a segregated distribution which at the same time constituted a clear form of workforce hierarchy: the houses for those who held positions in the factory were located next to the factory complex as early as the end of the 19th century, while the workers' flats were planned very late and were located in the centre of Sant Hipòlit. Gallifa became a model of factory that was halfway between the urban factory and the industrial colony factory and which was characterised by precariousness, a lack of development and urban planning, the dispersion of the housing spaces, the lack of services and the low level of investment in long-term projects. According to the classification of industrial colonies established in 1991 by the geographer Jordi Clua, the Gallifa factories would fall under the category of “Industrial colony of



Group of residents of the Sant Salvador Group in the backyard of the block of flats (1950s).

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

basic morphology”, characterised by the inclusion of the manufacturing space together with a small workers’ colony destined exclusively to housing (Clua, 1991: 222). However, it should be considered that one of the reasons that explains the limited development of the Gallifa colony is the fact that the town of Sant Hipòlit itself served as a colony. Despite this town’s small size, it had an adequate level of services to provide for its needs and at the same time it remained at a certain distance from the nearest industrial towns, such as Manlleu or Torelló. Furthermore, despite the fact that the Gallifa factories were located two kilometres away from the town centre, there was a certain proximity between these two points and therefore there was a good availability to take advantage of the town’s urban services and network.

Although it is true that all these elements make Gallifa a model of factory far removed from what is usually understood by industrial colony, it is not so far removed from other neighbouring factories. The factory of *Can Riva* in Les Masies de Voltregà, despite being more developed than Gallifa, was also a precarious exam-

ple of a colony, with widely dispersed constructions (Casas, 2005: 14). *Ca l’Escola*, a factory located already in the municipality of Manlleu, had given rise to a small amount of housing, also without services. Even the Russiñol colony of Manlleu, one of the most emblematic of the Osona region, may have been concentrated in the same space but it had a small number of houses. In this case, services like a food shop, school and church were provided, and therefore it reached a certain level of development. However, it remained a small, precarious colony with little capacity to create any sense of isolation due to its proximity to Manlleu. Without trying to establish categorical links, it is true that there are a number of cases on the banks of the river Ter in the Osona region that oscillate between an urban factory and a colony. These are cases that often constitute intermediate models, due to the provisions of the local area and the socio-economic structures of the surrounding area; small, underdeveloped factory-colonies, in many cases with a disseminated composition and with a limited capacity to exercising effective social control over their workforce through isolation.

Gallifa as an agent for socio-economic changes

Despite the good availability of manpower that the Voltreganès area provided, the number of workers available for the industries were not as high as those found in the large urban concentrations of Catalonia. Consequently, Gallifa was considered a medium-sized factory and therefore its importance in the industrialisation of the Ter and of Catalonia was limited. However, it did represent a major transformation for Voltreganès society. In 1922, *la Vella* factory alone had a total of 219 workers and from the second half of the 20th century the two factories together – *la Nova* and *La Vella* – accounted for approximately 300 workers. Progress in the mechanisation of spinning, had undoubtedly been the main cause of the decline in the workforce. When, from 1990, as a result of the structural crisis of the Catalan textile industry the Gallifa factories declared a suspension of payments, 118 jobs were eliminated, and in 1995, when these factories finally ceased textile operations, there were only 45 active workers.

The impact of industrialisation in the Voltreganès area was no less significant, and according to the 1936 census, Sant Hipòlit had a total of 576 workers out of a total population of 1,895 inhabitants⁷. This represented 30% of the population and in 1955 the percentage was 40%, which already indicated a change in the economic and social structures. Within this general data of the municipality, Gallifa accounted for 25% of the population working in the textile industry of Sant Hipòlit and Les Masies de Voltregà. Clearly these factories were one of the main workforce focal points and in this regard they were not far behind the other important textile factory in the area, *Can Riva*.

There is no doubt that women also played a very important role in the operation and development of the



Group of Gallifa workers outside the factory. (1950s and 1960s).

DIEGO GARCÍA. PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE MUSEU DEL TER

Gallifa factories, representing a large group in the figures of the active population for the first time. Women accounted for 18.7% of the workforce of the textile industry in the Voltreganès area. However, if we break this figure down we can see that while in 1936 Sant Hipòlit had a total of 352 women in the labour force, the town of Les Masies had 250. The reason for the difference most likely lay in the urban profile of Sant Hipòlit, which offered its inhabitants few options for making a living besides working in the factories, whereas Les Masies still conserved its rural activity which delayed the appearance of working families. Although in the beginning there was a balance between male and female workers, who were clearly segregated inside the factory, at the beginning of the 20th century the situation was reversed in favour of female workers as they began to take up tasks which until then had fallen to men. In 1981, of the total workforce of the Gallifa factories, 65.5% were women.

In all, the factories of the Voltreganès area's industrialisation led to changes in the lifestyle and consumption patterns, in the distribution of the population in the area, in the composition and organisation of families and in social relations. But surely the most obvious change is that this phenomenon led to the configuration of a society with a dual economy centred on agrarian and industrial activities. Thus, a large part of the population of the Voltreganès area went from being subjugated to the limitations of the countryside to being conditioned by the new rules of industrialisation and Fordism. However, the documentary sources do not provide exact data on the Gallifa factories' influence in the process of building this new economy in the Voltreganès area. As such, the contributions of oral memory have been very useful since they have provided a small sample of how, even in the second half of the 20th century,

many rural families abandoned their activity in the fields to take up the modern life brought about by industrialisation. In addition, this type of source has highlighted that this diversity of economic activity that sustained the area's population also translated into particular cases, as there were many factory workers who complemented their working day at the factory with work in the field or in construction.

There would need to be background studies in order to show how this change took place and what effects it had on socio-economic structures in the Voltreganès area and the true role that the Gallifa factories played in it. However, the testimonials used in this research have provided their views on all these changes in the forms of production and ways of life. It is especially among the old workers where we see a more optimistic view of joining the factory, despite being the most disadvantaged and least recognised form of work. In most cases, the factory is seen as a place of intensive work but at the same time as a space where personal and affectionate relationships were established among colleagues. Apart from that, what is highlighted in the interviews is how the factory was valued as a line of work that freed them from working in the fields, which was considered harder and not recognised in the case of women. Furthermore, for many, the factory also provided job security which, despite precarious wages and conditions, ensured families were able to provide for their needs and subsistence.

Conclusions

In closing, we will present some of the conclusions that this article seeks to highlight about the study of the Gallifa factories. First of all, the late establishment of these factories, along with the others in the area, shows a certain break between the old textile tradition of Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà, based on a system

understood as *proto-industrial*, and the later industrialisation. The textile activity in this area remained lethargic as a result of the difficulties of dismantling the rigid trade union structures and the impediment this represented for the development of a key figure such as the wool workers. Nevertheless, Gallifa was founded thanks to a home-grown initiative that was undoubtedly fostered by exogenous questions, that is, by the influence and industrial development of the neighbouring towns and by the accumulation of capital from agricultural activities and from the already industrialised textile activity carried out in other towns.

Another important element of this case is that the location of the Gallifa factories is subject to the quantity of resources available to it, whether energy resources – due to the exceptional waterfall they would use – or the workforce – thanks to the good availability provided by the Voltreganès area. In addition, Gallifa pursued a clear optimisation of resources and investment, since it avoided the need to incorporate a steam engine – despite the Ter's irregular flow – and opted for a concentration of the factories of different companies, thus giving rise to an incipient form of industrial estate.

The organisation and distribution of Gallifa's housing constructions – both the annex buildings and the housing estate of the Sant Salvador Group – is also one of the most important elements. The dispersion, the lack of effective isolation and the non-existence of internally provided services made this a model that fell somewhere in between the urban factory and the colony. In a certain way, the town of Sant Hipòlit itself served the functions of a colony, since it became the main centre for the workers. Gallifa had characteristics similar to other neighbouring factories of the Ter, which are also characterised

by their precarious, small and, in many cases, scattered nature, underdeveloped and with a lack of urban and socio-economic planning.

Finally, it is worth noting the possible role that the Gallifa factories may have played in the economic transition of the Voltreganès area towards a dual economy based essentially on agricultural and industrial activities. Gallifa, along with two other factories, became one of the main employers of the local

population. These factories helped to build the new economic structure and this led to radical changes in the labour and production systems, in people's way of life and relationships, and in the composition and organisation of the population. In this way, a working society was formed in the midst of a rural environment that co-existed with agricultural activity and which remained this way until well into the post-Ford era. ■

BIBLIOGRAPHY

■ **Albareda, J.** (1981) *La industrialització a la Plana de Vic (1770-1875)*. Vic: Patronat d'Estudis Ausonencs.

■ **Anglada, E.** (2008) *Noms propis del Voltreganès*. Vic: Eumo Editorial.

■ **Bayón, E.** (2008) "Els orígens de la industrialització al Ter mitjà", *L'Avenç*, 331: 32-36.

■ **Casas, P.** (2005) "Can Riva, la fàbrica de la Gleva". IPEC research project. Unpublished work.

■ **Clua, J.** (1991) "Morfologia urbana de les Colònies Industrials a Catalunya". *Actes del Congrés Català de Geografia: Societat Catalana de Geografia*, vol. III: 221-230. Clua, J. (2001) *Processos hidràulics i aplicació de la legislació pel foment de la població rural a les colònies industrials*. Sant Cugat del Vallès: Amelia Romero editora ("Els llibres de la Frontera" collection).

■ **Dorel-Ferré, G.** (1992) *Les colònies industrials a Catalunya*. Barcelona: Publications of the Abbey of Montserrat.

■ **Ferrer, LL.** (1986) *Els orígens de la industrialització a Catalunya Central*. Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, DL.

■ **Font, J.** (2014) "La xarxa de camins i les comunicacions a Osona al segle XVIII i la vertebració territorial de la comarca", *Ausa*, 174: 945-970.

■ **Izard, M.** (1969) "La Revolución Industrial en España (1832-1861)". Doctoral thesis published by the University of the Andes.

■ **Nadal, J.** (1975) *El fracaso de la revolución industrial en España, 1814-1913*. Barcelona: Ariel.

■ **Serra, R.** (2010) "Les colònies industrials de Catalunya". *Catalan Historical Review*, 4: 241-255.

■ **Serrallonga, J. et al.** (1986) *Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà dins la historia*. Vic: Eumo Editorial.

■ **Serrallonga, J.** (2000) "Prohoms, propietaris i artesans de camí a la industrialització. La crisi del gremi de Paraires de Voltregà (Osona), 1760-1796". *Manuscrits*, 18: 163-184.

■ **Terrades, I.** (1994) *La qüestió de les colònies industrials: l'exemple de l'Ametlla de Merola*. Manresa: Centre d'Estudis del Bages.

■ **Torras, J.** (1981) "Estructura de la indústria pre-capitalista. La draperia", *Recerques*, 11: 7-28.

■ **Torras, J.** (2007) "Transformacions agràries i indústria rural. Qüestions obertes", *Estudis d'Història agrària*, 20: 155-163.

■ **Vilar, P.** (1986) *Catalunya dins l'Espanya moderna*. Vol. III. Barcelona: Editorial Curial

NOTES

1 "la Nova" and "la Vella" are the common names which the population of the Voltreganès area referred to each of the Gallifa factories. They were recorded by Anglada, E. (2008).

2 *Una història a la intempèrie: la fàbrica i colònia de Gallifa*. Unreleased work that can be consulted in the [Ethnological Heritage Archive](#) of the Documentation Centre of the DGCPAAC.

3 Recordings of verbal sources that can be consulted in the [Ethnological Heritage Archive](#) of the Documentation Centre of the DGCPAAC.

4 This term refers to the territory made up of the three municipalities of Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà, Les Masies de Voltregà and Santa Cecília de Voltregà.

5 Skilled artisan figure dedicated to the purchase and preparation of wool to later be transformed into cloth. These figures largely participated in the transformation tasks, in most cases by directing them.

6 The great height between the factory and the river was one of the reasons why Gallifa was not affected by the flood of 1940.

7 All the figures and percentages are the result of the draining recorded in the 1936, 1955 and 1981 censuses of Les Masies de Voltregà and Sant Hipòlit de Voltregà.