

SPAIN: QALAT CHÁBIR. A.C.

Historical research as an instrument for the visibility of the nursing profession. A new Hospital in Seville (Spain) named after a midwife: Rosalía Robles Cerdán (1872-1941).

- Antonio Claret García Martínez
(PhD in History. Professor at the University of Huelva).

- Manuel Jesús García Martínez
(Nurse and Midwife, PhD in Social Anthropology.
Professor at the University of Seville).



Presentation.

Historical research is one of the great instruments we have to make visible the lives and works of great figures in history. Therefore, the nursing profession must develop strategies to make the most of its possibilities for the benefit of the profession.

Qalat Chábir. Cultural Association for the Study of the Humanities has been developing activities and publications on the history of Spanish nursing and its international projection, especially in the Hispanic world, since 1994. Among its projects is the recovery and enhancement of the lives and works of important nursing professionals and midwives.

Thus, Manuel Jesús García Martínez and Antonio Claret García Martínez, founders of Qalat Chábir. A.C., have been developing a line of research around an exceptional woman: Rosalía Robles Cerdán, a midwife born in San Fernando (Cádiz) in 1872 and settled in Seville since 1916. Last year, in 2023, the Junta de Andalucía, at the proposal of these researchers, decided to name a maternal and child hospital in Seville after this midwife, which signifies a great recognition for this woman and the profession for which she fought so hard.

Celebration Events for the 150th Anniversary of the Birth of Rosalía Robles Cerdán.

On April 9, 2022, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the birth of a great woman, Rosalía Robles Cerdán, midwife. Rosalía Robles carried out an enormous task in the defense and promotion of the midwifery profession, the pursuit of improving the quality of life of mothers and their children, and undertook a determined struggle for women's rights. Her concern for professional associationism led her to found the "Professional Midwives Association of Seville" (Colegio Oficial de Matronas de Sevilla y su Provincia) in 1930 and in 1929 the publication "La Matrona Hispalense," the official organ of the Association.

To be useful to the members of the Association, we highlight some of the activities already carried out and others in the process of celebration. To commemorate this event, various activities have been developed, among which we highlight the following:

- A series of conferences in Chiclana de la Frontera (Cádiz), where Rosalía Robles worked for more than 10 years as a midwife (between 1904 and 1915). In February 2023.
- A conference at the Professional Nursing Association of Seville (Colegio de Enfermería de Sevilla) in May 2022.
- A traveling exhibition. Its first venue was in Chiclana de la Frontera in April 2022. It then had a new venue in Seville in November 2022 and another in Seville, with panels displayed on the streets of the city in June 2023.
- A conference at the Ateneo de Sevilla on November 18, 2024.
- Development of a website dedicated to the life and work of Rosalía Robles Cerdán (in preparation).
- Publication of a biography about Rosalía Robles Cerdán.
- Publication of news in the press, radio, and television about the anniversary.

Ideology of Rosalía Robles Cerdán (1872-1941).

Rosalía Robles Cerdán developed four major tasks throughout her life around the world of midwives and women, which can be reflected in the following scheme:

1. Fight for the midwifery profession.
2. Concern for the health and quality of life of mothers and children.
3. Advocacy for women's rights and equality.
4. Rosalía Robles: a great promoter.

1. Fight for the midwifery profession.

Her powerful personality led her to commit to the midwives of her time, promoting active associationism that would lead her to found the "Professional Nursing Association of Midwives" of Seville and its Province" in 1930 and also the specialized publication "La Matrona Hispalense" (a year earlier), an authentic platform for her ideology for the development of midwives' training, advice for mothers and their children, and health promotion.

Thus, the "Official Midwives Association of Seville and its Province" was officially established on June 15, 1930, as recorded in the minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held for this purpose, with Mrs. Rosalía Robles Cerdán appointed as president and Mrs. Luisa Cervera Colmena as vice president. This institution took over from another existing one, the "Association of Midwives of Seville and its Province", of which Mrs. Rosalía Robles was already president. The latter, in turn, is the heir to the Society of Midwives La Muger y la Higiene, a pioneer in Spain, whose regulations were approved by the Governor of Seville on September 17, 1906, with Mrs. Adelaida Romero Paradas as president.

Ideology of the Official Midwives Association of Seville and its Province.

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important objectives of the Association of Midwives were:

- A determined commitment to the Union of the Collective (National Federation...).
- Fight against professional intrusion.
- Raising the professional and cultural level of midwives.
- Defense of women's rights: "fair and equal pay to that of men for the same work."
- Defense of a specific professional framework for midwives.
- Other advocacy areas: Mandatory registration. Provision of positions to better serve women with fewer resources. Social image of the profession.
- Fight to improve the quality of life of poor mothers and their children.

In the words of Rosalía Robles:

"[...] Fight against social prejudices, against vested interests, against anything that may oppose our claim, until we officially assert our rights, and we will end up placed at the level that we should occupy socially by justice; but all this can only be achieved by the community, the Midwifery Union...". (Editorial of *La Matrona Hispalense*, no. 1. April 1929).

2. Concern for the Health and Quality of Life of Mothers and Children.

A staunch defender of the rights of mothers and children, she promoted an tireless task of promoting principles and values in the 1920s, which she conveyed to the mothers she attended as a midwife-puericulturist, as well as to the group of professional midwives she worked with. She also widely promoted all of this at the national level through active participation in national midwifery congresses organized in those years in Madrid and Barcelona. As the Director of Personnel for the Municipal Institute of Maternity and Childcare in Seville, she focused on promoting proper nutrition and hygiene for children through the education of mothers.

Another achievement of the midwives in the 1920s, for which she also fought, was the approval by the Government of the Decree that established Mandatory Maternity Insurance, a long-desired aspiration of Doña Rosalía and her midwives for the benefit of working women and their newborn children.

3. Advocacy for Women's Rights and Equality.

Thirdly, Rosalía Robles Cerdán actively fought for women's rights. In this advocacy line, Rosalía Robles published an article on feminism in issue 6 of *La Matrona Hispalense*, titled "Where is True Feminism?" by Elvira García y García, denouncing the difficulties faced by working women in obtaining decent paid work and women's rights. In this context, she promoted a series of demands for which she fought throughout her life:

- Fight for a decent salary for midwives and women in general ("equal pay for equal work").
- Improve working conditions for women.
- Elevate women's education.
- Transfer her advocacy for midwives to the general sphere of women.

All of this allowed her to have direct contact with midwives across Spain and a deep understanding of the profession's reality and women's situation, exchanging ideas with international cultural figures, such as the Peruvian educator Elvira García García, whom she invited to write in her publication.

4. Rosalía Robles: A Great Promoter.

"Ideas and principles must circulate." Fourthly, Rosalía Robles organized specialized courses for her midwives, gave lectures for women, and promoted meetings with mothers to educate them about the care provided to their children. She was aware of the need for "dissemination," both at the scientific and popular levels, because she operated in both spheres: with renowned specialists and illiterate mothers. She knew that dissemination campaigns played a crucial role in the entire process of improving the care provided to mothers and their children. Therefore, she saw the foundation of the magazine "La Matrona Hispalense" in 1929 as essential, from where she would promote professional associationism and the training of Seville's midwives.

Conclusions.

The above lines serve to vindicate the figure of Midwife Rosalía Robles Cerdán as a faithful exponent of the working woman, of humble origins, who, through her efforts, was able to make her way in life and transmit to other women values that are inalienable but must be fought for to achieve and maintain. She did so throughout her life. All of this finds its best expression in the foundation of the "Official Midwives Association of Seville and its Province" in 1930 and the specialized magazine "La Matrona Hispalense" in 1929. Through these foundations, she was able to more decisively and effectively develop her life ideology and professional proposal.

Rosalía Robles Cerdán died on November 14, 1941, in Seville, and her remains rest in the Municipal Cemetery of San Fernando in the city of Seville. Her memory dignifies us all, and her example should endure through her work.