

# Planters and Politics in Peru, 1895–1919<sup>1</sup>

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Elite family networks with overlapping economic and political power have been a basic feature of Latin America.<sup>2</sup> Their influence was characteristically strong during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the export economies expanded and national governments, particularly in the larger nations, advocated order and progress at the expense of participatory democracy. Historically, the influence of the elites has been primarily a regional phenomenon underpinned by ownership of land, mines, or lucrative commercial enterprises. They formed economic, political, and blood alliances to control production of vital products, monopolise local government and, on occasion, initiate bold entrepreneurial initiatives. Examples include the thirty families who dominated henequen production and local government in nineteenth-century Yucatán,<sup>3</sup> the Grupo Monterrey who ran the industrialising economy of northeastern Mexico during the *Porfiriato*,<sup>4</sup> and the Paraíba oligarchy who controlled cotton production, municipal government, and local tax revenues during the Brazilian Old Republic (1889–1930).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, ambitious elites from different regions sometimes formed powerful political alliances to gain control over national governments. For example, oligarchs from São Paulo and Minas Gerais took turns running Brazil

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<sup>2</sup> Diana Balmori, Stuart F. Voss and Miles Wortman (eds.), *Notable Family Networks in Latin America* (Chicago, 1984). Also see the numerous studies cited in their bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Wells, 'Family Elites in a Boom-and-Bust Economy: The Molinas and Peons of Porfirian Yucatán', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 62 (1982), p. 224.

<sup>4</sup> Alex M. Saragoza, *The Monterrey Elite and the Mexican State, 1880 to 1940* (Austin, Texas, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Linda Lewin, 'Some Historical Implications of Kinship Organization for Family-based Politics in the Brazilian Northeast', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (1979), pp. 262–92.

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during the Old Republic,<sup>6</sup> and, according to Peter H. Smith, a 'genuine power elite' representing an 'interlocking of the political and economic domains' controlled Mexico under Díaz.<sup>7</sup> It has also been argued that a 'landed aristocracy' ruled Argentina from 1912 to 1916,<sup>8</sup> and that wealthy elites led by the Larraín Salas clan 'limited government to the elite' in nineteenth-century Chile.<sup>9</sup>

No group is more closely identified with the coastal elite in Peru during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than sugar and cotton planters. Henri Farve has even written that 'the Peruvian oligarchy is, of course, "sugar" and "cotton"'.<sup>10</sup> This linkage between economic interests and class emerged because planters were among the wealthiest members of coastal society, belonged to the most prominent social clubs in Lima (especially the Club Nacional), went to the most prestigious private schools in the capital, and were recognised by Peruvians from all walks of life as elites.<sup>11</sup> What makes planters especially important during this period is the crucial political role they played as deputies, senators, ministers, and presidents. This convergence of class and political power led Jorge Basadre to call the period from 1895 to 1919 the 'Aristocratic Republic'.

Until recently, students of this era had stressed the social and political homogeneity of the coastal elite and their skill at gaining political office and protecting their economic interests. This generalisation was challenged, however, by Rory Miller in articles written in 1982 and 1988. Among other things, he argues that not all members of the elite were planters, serious personal and political differences divided members of the

<sup>6</sup> Joseph L. Love, *São Paulo in the Brazilian Federation, 1889–1937* (Stanford, 1980); John D. Wirth, *Minas Gerais in the Brazilian Federation, 1889–1937* (Stanford, 1977); and Joseph L. Love and Bert J. Barickman, 'Rulers and Owners: A Brazilian Case Study in Comparative Perspective', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 66, no. 4 (1986), pp. 743–65.

<sup>7</sup> *Labyrinths of Power: Political Recruitment in Twentieth Century Mexico* (Princeton, 1979), p. 216.

<sup>8</sup> Peter H. Smith, *Argentina and the Failure of Democracy: Conflict among Political Elites, 1904–1955* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 26–7.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, 'Kinship Politics in the Chilean Independence Movement', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 56, no. 1 (1976), pp. 58–80.

<sup>10</sup> 'El desarrollo y las formas del poder oligárquico en el Perú', in José Matos Mar (ed.), *La oligarquía en el Perú* (Buenos Aires, 1969), p. 83. Other significant works on the Peruvian elite include: François Bourricaud, *Power and Society in Contemporary Peru*, trans. by Paul Stevenson (London, 1970); Manuel Burga and Alberto Flores Galindo, *Apogeo y crisis de la República Aristocrática*, 4th ed. (Lima, 1987); Dennis L. Gilbert, *La oligarquía peruana: historia de tres familias* (Lima, 1982); Rory Miller, 'The Coastal Elite and Peruvian Politics, 1895–1919', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 (May, 1982), pp. 97–120; and Rory Miller, 'La oligarquía costeña y la República Aristocrática en el Perú, 1895–1919', *Revista de Indias*, vol. xlviii, nos. 182–3, pp. 551–66.

<sup>11</sup> Gilbert, 'La oligarquía'.

same political party, relations between the executive branch and congress were frequently inharmonious, highland elites could not always be controlled from Lima, and planters and their interest groups were not always able to protect their industries. He is so unconvinced of the political effectiveness of the coastal elite, especially planters, that he concludes: 'It is important to recognise the possibility of a divorce between wealth and economic influence and political control.' Among other things, he suggests that more research is needed on public administration and electoral politics, and the general discourse of politics at the local and regional levels.<sup>12</sup>

Miller's articles raise several important questions and serve as a corrective to a case that has been overstated. This article explores some of his suggestions by analysing the motivations and effectiveness of planters in the political arena and their relationship with the state. This leads to some general observations about the Aristocratic Republic as well as a detailed discussion of the 1906–7 campaign by Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera for election to Congress. This focus provides an analysis of both national and provincial electoral politics, and a close look at one of the most important political families of the period. My conclusions underscore Miller's observations regarding the intense personal and political divisions that separated prominent planter–politicians, the importance of local issues to planters, the key role of families in political organisation, and the lack of a coherent political agenda among planter–politicians. At the same time, I believe that it would be a mistake to remove planters from the centre stage of politics or to underestimate their political influence. I remain impressed by their ability to get what they wanted from the state, either through legislation, the electoral process, political influence, or personal friendships. I am equally impressed with their ability to stand above the law in suppressing dissent on their estates and in surrounding towns, and in using force and intimidation to control workers. No other group in Peruvian society came close to enjoying the same degree of political clout as the planters.

The great political influence of the planters accurately reflected the nature and organisation of the Peruvian state. Suffrage was limited to literate adult male property owners, and elections were controlled by elite-dominated political parties with the power to alter the results. Planters used the system to gain high political office and then fashioned policies generally favourable to their interests. Moreover, their elite status gave them additional authority in the provinces beyond elected office. There is no denying, however, their capacity for collective self-destruction. The

<sup>12</sup> Miller, 'La oligarquía costeña', p. 562; Miller's argument is more fully developed in 'The Coastal Elite and Peruvian Politics'.

elites' penchant for personal and political bickering led to internal splits that weakened their party and facilitated the rise of a dictatorship in 1919.

*The Aristocratic Republic: myth or reality?*

Throughout the nineteenth century Peru rarely functioned in harmony with its republican constitutions. With rare exceptions, army generals controlled the presidency and ruled without an integrated and efficient administrative apparatus. The newly-created state was divided by regional economic agendas, race, and unstable borders. It had an overwhelmingly illiterate citizenry and no democratic traditions. It had neither a national bourgeoisie nor a working class, but diverse groups of Indian peasants, black slaves, urban artisans, Chinese indentured servants, provincial elites (usually large landowners), heirs of colonial aristocrats, and a small but influential group of *Limeño* merchants.

The latter prospered during the guano boom (1840–80) as middlemen for large British merchant houses, who sold the fertilizer on consignment in Europe, and as financiers and speculators.<sup>13</sup> They were understandably shocked when in 1868 the Balta government, at the urging of finance minister Nicolás de Piérola, granted Dreyfus & Sons of Paris monopoly rights over guano sales in Europe, in return for cancelation of Peru's substantial foreign debt and a guaranteed income.<sup>14</sup> Faced with the loss of considerable income, guano merchants formed the Civilista party, campaigned against the Dreyfus Contract, and managed to gain the presidency in 1872. Thus, Peru's first civilian political party and government was formed by the commercial bourgeoisie in response to a government initiative that threatened its economic interests.

Civilian rule did not last long as President Manuel Pardo was assassinated, and Peru stumbled into the War of the Pacific (1879–83) against Chile, which resulted in military defeat, occupation, and loss of territory. Military governments presided over the subsequent economic and political chaos until 1895, when the two major political parties, the Civilistas and the Demócratas, formed a coalition and gained the presidency. This was certainly an alliance of strange bedfellows as the party of the commercial bourgeoisie was now supporting its former arch-enemy Nicolás de Piérola, the head of the Demócratas, for the presidency. In a classic example of *realpolitik*, the Civilistas recognised that none of their leaders commanded the charismatic appeal of the flamboyant Piérola, who had led armed men through the streets of Lima and bridged the

<sup>13</sup> Alfonso W. Quiroz, *La deuda defraudada: consolidación de 1850 y dominio económico en el Perú* (Lima, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> Jonathan V. Levin, *The Export Economies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); and Heraclio Bonilla, *Guano y burguesía en el Perú* (Lima, 1974).

barracks and civilian traditions in Peruvian politics. As Civilista leader Francisco Rosas explained, 'only a man who can ride a horse could be president of the Republic', and Piérola was the only civilian politician who qualified. For his part, Piérola noted that 'without the Civilistas, it is impossible to govern', and that 'it would be very difficult to distinguish between the differences of the principles of the two parties'.<sup>15</sup> Both sides agreed that political stability and the regeneration of the export economy were high priority items. The Piérola Administration (1895–9) initiated a long period of civilian rule characterised by the rapid development of plantation agriculture and mining, and subsequent domination of the presidency by the Civilistas. Sugar planters figured prominently in these administrations with Eduardo López de Romaña (1899–1903) and José Pardo (1904–8; 1915–19) occupying the presidency,<sup>16</sup> and other planters serving in key cabinet posts, the senate, and chamber of deputies. For example, Antero Aspíllaga Barrera, co-owner of both sugar and cotton plantations, served variously as finance minister, deputy from Chiclayo, senator from Lima, president of the Senate, mayor of Lima, and head of the Civilista party. In addition, Augusto B. Leguía, who managed a sugar cane plantation and married a sugar heiress, served as Civilista president from 1908 to 1912. It is probably safe to say that almost every sugar and cotton planter occupied some political position during these years.<sup>17</sup>

Coinciding with their political ascendancy, sugar and cotton planters enjoyed remarkable prosperity. Both industries benefited from technical improvements, favourable market prices, the acquisition of more stable workforces, and close financial ties with British merchant houses.<sup>18</sup> As a result, the Aspíllagas earned 810,817 pounds sterling from 1911 to 1922 from their sugar and cotton estates. Rafael Larco Herrera, a prominent sugar planter and Civilista politician, netted 555,973 pounds sterling from 1909 to 1922, and the Gildemeisters, politically influential sugar growers, earned 948,641 pounds sterling from 1919 to 1922 alone.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Steve Stein, *Populism in Peru* (Madison, 1980), p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> López de Romaña owned the plantation Chucarapi on the southern coast, and Pardo (the son of Manuel Pardo) inherited Tumán, on the northern coast.

<sup>17</sup> Manuel Burga and Alberto Flores Galindo, *Apogeo y crisis*, pp. 84–95; Michael J. Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture and Social Control in Northern Peru, 1875–1933*, Latin American Monograph No. 62 (Austin, Texas, 1985), ch. ii.

<sup>18</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, chapters ii and iii; W. S. Bell, *An Essay on the Peruvian Cotton Industry, 1825–1920* (Liverpool, 1985); and Michael J. Gonzales, 'The Rise of Cotton Tenant Farming in Peru, 1890–1920', *Agricultural History*, vol. 65, no. 1 (Winter, 1991), pp. 51–71.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Albert, *An Essay on the Peruvian Sugar Industry, 1880–1920 and the Letters of Ronald Gordon, Administrator of the British Sugar Company in Cañete, 1914–1920* (Norwich, 1976), pp. 126a–127a.

This convergence of wealth and high political office makes it difficult to divorce the two, as Miller suggests. Nevertheless, some qualifiers are in order. Certainly, not all presidents during these years were planters, and not all prominent Civilistas were planters. The fortunes of Presidents Manuel Candamo (1903–4) and Guillermo Billinghurst (1912–14) came from commerce and mining, respectively, and Billinghurst was not a Civilista. Other important Civilistas included José Payán, a rich banker, Luis Miró Quesada, owner of the leading daily *El Comercio*, and several middle class lawyers.<sup>20</sup> However, this does not strike me as unusual. It would have been bizarre for planters to have occupied every important political post and to have dominated an entire political party. The point is that they were especially conspicuous as leading Civilistas and officeholders.

Miller accurately points out that the elite-dominated executive branch had a difficult time controlling Congress. Although the president had the power to make all government appointments, in practice these were delegated to ministers. Cabinet members could be censured by Congress and many of them were dismissed after rancorous debates that left deep political and personal scars.<sup>21</sup> This was a structural weakness in the organisation of the government that made it difficult for the executive to function efficiently.

There were additional reasons for the inharmonious relationship between the executive and congress. Although Peru was perhaps the farthest thing from a model republic, one should expect some tension between the two branches of government in a system that was neither a dictatorship nor a monarchy. Conflicts can also be attributed to different social and economic backgrounds. All presidents during this period were from the coast (especially Lima),<sup>22</sup> which was the most urbanised and developed section of the country, while most members of Congress were from the interior. No one has attempted a systematic analysis of occupational and social status of Congressmen, but many Congressmen were landowners and members of the provincial elite. If they were important sheep ranchers, miners, or merchants their economic interests would coincide, in general terms, with those of coastal planters. However, most provincial *hacendados* (*gamonales*) were not as wealthy or export-oriented as planters, and they depended heavily on the exploitation of Indians as labourers and personal servants. Planters were not socially progressive, but they understood modern technology, international

<sup>20</sup> Miller, 'La Oligarquía', pp. 553–4. Interestingly, Payán was a Cuban émigré.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Miller, 'Coastal Elite', p. 114.

<sup>22</sup> A possible exception was López de Romaña who was from Arequipa, located somewhat inland. However, López also owned the largest sugarcane plantation on the southern coast and resided for periods of time in Lima.

finance, and overseas markets. Sugar growers also could not avoid using wage labour, which eventually forced them to deal with a variety of problems in modern labour management. Finally, most planters were more familiar with London and New York than they were with Cuzco and Puno, and they considered provincials socially and culturally inferior.<sup>23</sup> These considerable social, cultural, and economic differences undoubtedly made cooperation between the planter-dominated executive and the *gamonal*-dominated congress more difficult at times, even among politicians from the same party.

As Miller observes, planters sometimes failed to prevent the passage of legislation detrimental to their interests, most notably pro-labour laws and export taxes. During the First World War, the combination of falling real wages for workers and soaring profits for exporters created tremendous pressure for the passage of this type of legislation. A series of strikes shook Lima and north coast sugarcane plantations, and President Pardo was compelled to approve the eight-hour day for industrial workers and an export tax on sugar. Although these laws were hard for planters to accept (including Pardo), they were politically prudent gestures to an emerging proletariat. Moreover, neither law hurt planters that much. On the plantations, the eight-hour day only affected sugar mill workers, who constituted approximately 20% of the workforce, and planters profited enormously during these years and could well afford an export tax. They did not like it, but it was arguably the only concession that they had to make to the public good and it may have inadvertently earned them a modicum of good will. Cotton planters should also be credited with scoring a major political victory by avoiding a tax on their product.<sup>24</sup>

Planters won other concessions from the government during the Aristocratic Republic. For example, in 1898 the Piérola government sanctioned the importation of Japanese contract labourers to alleviate labour shortages on coastal plantations. Over the course of the next thirty years, over 17,000 Japanese entered the country and contributed significantly to increased sugar production on the central and south-central coasts.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in 1915 the Benavides government granted the

<sup>23</sup> On sugar planters and the sugar industry see Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*; and on social and economic conditions in the highlands see Nils P. Jacobsen, 'Land tenure and Society in the Peruvian Altiplano, Azangaro province, 1770-1920' (unpublished PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982); and Michael J. Gonzales, 'Neo-colonialism and Indian Unrest in Southern Peru, 1868-1898', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1987), pp. 1-26.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Blanchard, *The Origins of the Peruvian Labor Movement, 1883-1919* (Pittsburgh, 1982); Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, ch. ix.

<sup>25</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, pp. 118-20; and Toraje Irie, 'History of Japanese Migration to Peru', trans. by William Himel, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 21, nos. i & ii (Aug. and Nov. 1951).

Gildemeisters the right to renovate the port of Malabrigo and to link it by rail with their sugarcane plantation Casa Grande. The use of private docks and railway facilities greatly reduced the cost of importing and exporting materials and, according to outraged merchants in Trujillo, allowed the Gildemeisters to develop a large retail business on their estate. Not coincidentally, the granting of the concession came shortly after the Gildemeisters had made a private loan of 44,000 pounds sterling to the Benavides government.<sup>26</sup>

Given planters' political influence, it has been suggested that they could have sought price supports for their products, or a currency policy that consistently favoured exporters.<sup>27</sup> Exporters probably favoured a weak national currency because they sold most of their products to industrial nations with strong currencies, and would therefore profit more in the exchange. However, Peru remained on the gold standard from 1901 to 1914, when its currency became inconvertible and declined in value. These circumstances initially worked against the interests of exporters, but the decline in the value of Peruvian currency coincided with record commodity prices and production levels. The result was unprecedented profits.

Planters probably did not pursue price supports for their industries because such programmes would have been politically controversial and financially risky. In the first place, commodity subsidies most commonly occurred in European nations, which could afford them, and not in economically unstable Third World countries. A case could perhaps be made for price supports in sugarcane monocultures, where the entire economy depended on this crop, but Peru's export economy was relatively diversified. Moreover, sugar planters did not even pay an export tax until 1917, and cotton growers avoided this tax altogether. It would have been difficult to justify price supports for industries that did not pay taxes, especially during periods of record profits.

Miller accurately observes that planters were primarily concerned with local, family, and business affairs and did not always have a clear agenda for national issues. However, this is hardly surprising. There were few professional politicians in Peru at this time, but many politically ambitious individuals and interest groups who sought to protect a variety of social and economic concerns. There was also an assortment of conservative Catholics and middle-class professionals who had their own agendas and found a political niche inside and outside of the Civilista party. Political

<sup>26</sup> Peter F. Klarén, *Modernization, Dislocation, and Aprismo*, Latin American Monograph no. 32 (Austin, Texas, 1973), pp. 70–83.

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication from Bill Albert, August 1990.



mavericks, however, usually had to create their own power base. For example, Guillermo Billinghurst, former mayor of Lima and wealthy mineowner, used working-class support to pressure a Civilista-dominated Congress into accepting his election to the presidency in 1912.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, even Billinghurst could not last for long. When he continued to court the popular classes after his election, the Civilistas conspired with the army to overthrow him and place General Oscar Benavides in power. After two years, Benavides handed over the presidency to José Pardo, Civilista stalwart and sugar planter.<sup>29</sup>

Planters' participation in national politics did not prevent them from managing their affairs in the provinces. For example, Miller provides many examples of the Aspíllagas' preoccupation with local issues in the Saña Valley: they frequently quarrelled with neighbouring planters over irrigation water, with the nearby town of Saña over land, and with their own workers over higher wages. Miller argues that this demonstrates the planter-politicians' periodic withdrawal from national politics, the informal nature of politics, and intra-class conflict. However true this may be, it also demonstrates planters' concern with protecting their investments and, ultimately, it underscores their political skill. Let us look at Miller's examples. The Peruvian coast is a desert and the only regular source of water for drinking and irrigation is the rivers that flow down from the Andes. As plantations expanded in size in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a corresponding increase in the demand for irrigation water. The big losers in the growing competition for water were the small farmers, Indian communities, and towns, as the new national water code, passed in 1902 during the administration of sugar planter López de Romaña, gave large landowners first priority in irrigating their land.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, many water-starved small farmers and communities sold out to planters, who dramatically increased the size of their estates during this period. For example, Casa Grande grew from 724 hectares in 1850 to 40,848 hectares in 1927, the plantation Roma from 1,449 hectares in 1850 to 19,777 hectares in 1927, and the estate Pomalca from 1,912 hectares in 1896 to 7,267 hectares in 1924.<sup>31</sup> When lawsuits over landownership arose between growers and

<sup>28</sup> The Civilista candidate, incidentally, was Antero Aspíllaga Barrera.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Blanchard, 'A Populist Precursor: Guillermo Billinghurst', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 9 (1977), pp. 251-73. The Civilistas always enjoyed some military support, even during the nineteenth century. Moreover, following the Aristocratic Republic some politically active planters, such as the Aspíllagas, served as key advisors to military dictators in the 1930s and from 1948 to 1956.

<sup>30</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, pp. 43-4; Manuel Pasapera (ed.), *Ley de aguas con sus antecedentes. Código y Reglamento Aguas* (Lima, 1902).

<sup>31</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, pp. 42-52, tables 7-11.

communities, planters usually emerged victorious. For example, the Aspíllagas won a long-standing suit with the neighbouring town of Saña in 1913, and when frustrated townspeople rioted against the court's decision, troops herded them into jails and protected plantation property.<sup>32</sup> On other occasions, the Aspíllagas and other planters benefited enormously from the intervention of troops to crush strikes on their estates,<sup>33</sup> about which more will be said later.

Miller raises an important question regarding the composition of the coastal elite.<sup>34</sup> Dennis Gilbert wrote about the '24 friends' who met every Thursday evening in the Club Nacional to set Peru's political agenda, and the impression is given that these patriarchs dominated national affairs.<sup>35</sup> This is an exaggeration because, as Miller points out, the executive did not always secure its wishes with the legislature and members of the middle class participated in government.<sup>36</sup> Miller also questions the existence of a coastal elite because the so-called oligarchy included families from the colonial aristocracy (such as the Pardos) as well as others of recent immigrant origin (such as the Aspíllagas, Larcos, and Chopiteas.)<sup>37</sup> However, as Gilbert points out, there were several 'blood and gold' marriages during this period that united aristocratic lines with new money. This process strengthened the elite and facilitated its political influence.<sup>38</sup>

Anticipating dependency theory, Jorge Bravo Bresani wrote in 1969: 'In reality, the oligarchy does not exist except through delegation from the outside and through the acceptance of the middle classes.'<sup>39</sup> What Bravo stressed was the importance of foreign capital in mining, plantation agriculture, and other areas of the Peruvian economy, and, by implication, the limitations imposed on Peruvian development by the structure of the world economy. Recent research has shown, however, that Peruvian elites owned most of the sugar and cotton plantations and Peru's slow development was caused both by economic imperialism and a variety of internal causes.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the economy actually grew from 1895 to 1919 as a result of increased investment in technology and transportation as well as favourable market prices for Peru's principal exports. Peruvian elites were never simple tools or economic appendages of foreign capital and they were quite capable of taking independent action. Peruvians

<sup>32</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter ix.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 'La Oligarquía', pp. 553–4.

<sup>35</sup> *Tres familias*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, 'La Oligarquía', pp. 554, 561.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Coastal Elite', pp. 104–7.

<sup>38</sup> Gilbert, pp. 37–40.

<sup>39</sup> 'Mito y realidad de la oligarquía peruana', in Matos Mar (ed.), *La oligarquía*, p. 68.

<sup>40</sup> See Rosemary Thorp and Geoffrey Bertram, *Peru, 1899–1977: Growth and Policy in an Open Economy* (New York, 1978); Albert, *An Essay on the Peruvian Sugar Industry, 1880–1920*; and Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, chs. ii and iii.

invested heavily in commercial agriculture, finance, urban real estate, and other areas.<sup>41</sup> They were generally on good terms with foreign investors, but they developed their own economic agendas. For example, a group of Peruvian investors that included Juan Pardo (the president's brother) and the Aspíllagas won a major legal dispute with the giant US mining conglomerate, the Cerro de Pasco Corporation, that netted them millions of dollars in profit.<sup>42</sup> The elite did not look to foreigners for legitimisation, and the same can be said more emphatically with regard to the middle classes. Their numbers were still small during the Aristocratic Republic and they did not become politically influential until later.

It is not my contention that the Civilistas and planters controlled every facet of political life during the Aristocratic Republic. They simply had more power and influence than any other party or economic group. Moreover, given Peru's vast size, its relatively poor transportation and communication networks, and its underdeveloped bureaucracy,<sup>43</sup> the central government could not control much of what went on in the provinces. In fact, beyond revenue collection, elections, and keeping the peace, most administrations probably paid little attention to the interior. In the far reaches of the highlands and Amazonia, large landowners with hundreds of dependent Indian 'servants' usually controlled local offices and political affairs.<sup>44</sup> The exact nature of their political relationship with the coastal elite has yet to be determined. On the other hand, the position of coastal sugar and cotton planters was unique because they were simultaneously members of the *Limeño* and provincial elites. In the capital, they held high national office and rubbed elbows with the oldest, most aristocratic families, and on their plantations they stood at the pinnacle of regional society.

### *Political influence and social and economic control*

In the provinces, planters tended to have it both ways: they benefited when the state intervened to crush strikes and stifle political dissent, and when the state left them alone to police and punish their own workers.

<sup>41</sup> Thorp and Bertram, pp. 21–145. Alfonso W. Quiroz, 'Financial Leadership and the Formation of Peruvian Elite Groups, 1884–1930', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (May 1988), pp. 49–81. Among those elites who diversified were the Pardos and the Aspíllagas. However, both continued to earn the bulk of their income from exporting sugar.

<sup>42</sup> Dennis L. Gilbert, 'The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Peru', Cornell University Dissertation Series, no. 69 (January, 1977), pp. 44–7.

<sup>43</sup> Joaquín Capelo estimated that there were only 500 bureaucrats in Lima in 1900. In Flores Galindo and Burga, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> In Puno, elites belonged to various political parties, including the Civilista, which had similar platforms favouring economic development and public works. Personal communication from Nils Jacobsen, 28 May 1990.

Planters were accustomed to exercising considerable control over labour. Slavery had not been abolished until 1854, and slaves were subsequently replaced with Chinese indentured servants whose experience resembled that of slaves.<sup>45</sup> When indentured servitude came to an end in 1874, planters recruited Chinese as wage labourers and subjected them to a harsh regime of social control characterised by debt peonage, corporal punishment (including executions), imprisonment in plantation jails, and other heavy-handed controls. The state helped planters in these endeavours by forcing the Chinese to buy identity cards, ignoring labourers' civil rights, and helping to capture runaways.<sup>46</sup>

By the 1880s, Chinese labourers were being replaced on sugarcane plantations by wage labourers from contiguous highland regions, and on cotton plantations by tenants and sharecroppers from local peasant communities. Both of these transformations were linked to the modernisation of plantation agriculture, and they complicated labour management in the decades ahead. Although both sugar and cotton planters relied heavily on non-violent methods of control during this period, they never completely abandoned violence and intimidation.<sup>47</sup> For example, planters continued to maintain jails on their estates and to imprison peons or tenants they judged guilty of crimes or disruptive activities. Prime candidates were captured runaways, who sometimes were also severely beaten.<sup>48</sup> Planters also maintained private police forces to patrol workers' compounds, keep the peace, admonish workers for uncleanness and idleness, and guard the planters' residence.<sup>49</sup> By allowing growers to maintain their own police forces and jails, the state informally surrendered some judicial authority to them.

There was also considerable collusion between planters and local officials in the recruitment and control of labour. Labour contractors, on whom sugar planters depended to supply their estates with peons,

<sup>45</sup> Watt Stewart, *Chinese Bondage in Peru* (Durham, NC, 1951).

<sup>46</sup> Michael J. Gonzales, 'Chinese Plantation Workers and Social Conflict in Peru in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Oct. 1989), pp. 385-424.

<sup>47</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, chapters viii and ix; Gonzales, 'The Rise of Cotton Tenant Farming in Peru, 1890-1920'.

<sup>48</sup> Manuel Torres to Carlos Gutiérrez, 1 July 1907, El Archivo del Fuero Agrario, Lima (hereinafter referred to as AFA); M. Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 25 June 1919, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; Manuel Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 15 Nov. 1918, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; V. Mires to Catalino Coronado, 25 March 1910, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; J. Orrego to Catalino Coronado, Pátapo to Chota, 15 Sept. 1916, AFA; V. Mires to Catalino Coronado, 22 April 1910, Pátapo to Chota, AFA.

<sup>49</sup> 'Principales obligaciones de los guardianes de la Hacienda Cayaltí, 1928', AFA; Joaquín Gutiérrez to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 19 Aug. 1915, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Joaquín Gutiérrez to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 3 March 1916, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Joaquín Gutiérrez, 23 March 1916, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA.

sometimes doubled as local officials. For example, recruiters Daniel Orrego and Catalino Coronado served as governor (district head) of Santa Cruz and sub-prefect of Chota, respectively, during the early twentieth century.<sup>50</sup> Holding office undoubtedly helped contractors avoid prosecution for illegal recruitment tactics, such as exaggerating wages or plying prospective labourers with liquor, of which they were frequently guilty.<sup>51</sup>

Planters also routinely called upon local officials to quell minor disturbances and enforce discipline on estates. For example, in 1915 a riot broke out on the Aspíllagas' sugarcane plantation Cayaltí after plantation police had beaten and jailed a popular merchant. Workers turned on the police, forced them to take refuge in the planters' mansion and embarked on an orgy of looting and drunkenness. Order could only be restored when armed mayordomos joined forces with police from the neighbouring town of Saña to force workers back into their homes.<sup>52</sup> On another occasion, the manager of the Aspíllagas' cotton estate Palto accused a tenant of stealing a yoke and some locks. Instead of filing charges, the manager took the accused to the local police station where he was lashed and forced to spend the night in jail.<sup>53</sup> Local officials also helped sugarcane growers capture indebted peons who had run away. Runaways numbered in the hundreds and cost planters thousands of dollars and valuable labour power. Planters organised posses composed of mayordomos, contractors, and governors and pursued peons deep into the interior. As an added incentive to governors, north-coast sugar planters offered them one *sol* for every runaway they captured. If posses failed, planters still had the option of suing runaways in court.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Contract, Daniel Orrego and Hacienda Pomalca, 26 Jan. 1910, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 8 Feb. 1906, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Manuel Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 21 Sept. 1916, Pátapo to Lima, AFA.

<sup>51</sup> C. D. Scott, 'Peasants, Proletarianisation and the Articulation of Modes of Production: The Case of Sugarcane Cutters in Northern Peru, 1940-1969', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 3 (April 1976), pp. 321-41; Miguel Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 22 Aug. 1918, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; César Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 16 Oct. 1918, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 27 June 1889, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 31 July 1889, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 11 Oct. 1892, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; interview with Galindo Bravo, CAP Pucalá, 26 June 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Antero Aspíllaga Barrera and Baldomero Aspíllaga Barrera, 30 Dec. 1915, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA.

<sup>53</sup> Joaquín Gutiérrez to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 19 Aug. 1915, San José to Lima, AFA; Joaquín Gutiérrez to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 3 March 1916, Pisco to Lima, AFA; Aspíllaga Hermanos to Joaquín Gutiérrez, 23 March 1916, San José to Lima, AFA.

<sup>54</sup> Víctor Aspíllaga Taboada to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 14 Oct. 1908, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; N. Tello to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 29 Nov. 1905, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Víctor Aspíllaga Taboada to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 11 Aug. 1908, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA;

Planters commanded the attention of local officials because of their status, wealth, and political influence. Under Peru's centralised system of government, planter-politicians also had a major voice in naming and dismissing local officials. For example, in 1913 the Prefect of Lambayeque, the most powerful regional official, formally accused the Aspíllagas of stealing land from the town of Saña. When a copy of the report reached Antero Aspíllaga Barrera, in less than a week he arranged to have the prefect dismissed and replaced with someone of his choice.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, according to the new water code of 1902, the largest landowners could also select members of local water districts. Not surprisingly, they tended to choose themselves or their cronies, which gave them direct control over vital water resources. There is even evidence that planters purposely denied water to small farmers to force them into selling out.<sup>56</sup>

The tangible result of planters' political influence at the local level was greater control over workers, neighbouring communities, and water resources. However, planters needed the state most when it came to suppressing strikes on their estates. Sugar workers' strikes occurred for the first time during the Aristocratic Republic and were the result of rapid modernisation, the massive recruitment of wage labour, regimented work routines, high inflation, ideological influences from the urban proletariat, and the contradiction of soaring profits and falling real wages. None of the planters' efforts at social control could stop these historical currents from producing an atmosphere of confrontation.<sup>57</sup> A wave of strikes swept through north coast sugarcane plantations between 1912 and 1917 and, despite some efforts at negotiation, the army was eventually called in to force strikers back to work and prevent the formation of unions.<sup>58</sup>

The strike that erupted in the Chicama Valley in 1912 was the largest in Peruvian history. It began on the Gildemeisters' Casa Grande estate and quickly spread to the neighbouring plantations of Cartavio and Chiquitoy,

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Manuel Coronado to Catalino Coronado, 6 Oct. 1916, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; V. Mires to Catalino Coronado, 18 Feb. 1910, Pátapo to Chota, AFA; V. Mires to Catalino Coronado, 25 Feb. 1910, Pátapo to Lima, AFA.

<sup>55</sup> Antero Aspíllaga Barrera to Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera and Baldomero Aspíllaga Barrera, 23 Oct. 1913, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; Antero Aspíllaga Barrera to Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera and Baldomero Aspíllaga Barrera, 30 Oct. 1913, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA.

<sup>56</sup> Pasapera, *Ley de aguas...*; Peter F. Klaren, *Modernization*, pp. 56–7; Víctor Aspíllaga Tobaoda to Aspíllaga Hermanos, 30 Aug. 1907, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA; *La Reforma* (Trujillo), 22 Aug. 1917. <sup>57</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, ch. ix.

<sup>58</sup> Detailed discussions of these strikes are available in *ibid.*; Albert, *Peruvian Sugar Industry*, pp. 178a–208a; Peter F. Klarén, *Modernization*, pp. 33–49.

and to Laredo in the Moche Valley. When strikers' demands for higher wages, better housing, and other improvements were rejected, they burned cane fields, sacked stores, and broke expensive machinery before the local police, militia, and the army brought a temporary peace to the region. In the end, as many as 150 workers lost their lives.<sup>59</sup>

Five years later a series of strikes rocked several plantations in the Chicama and Lambayeque valleys. Demanding higher wages to offset rising prices, strikers shut down Casa Grande, Cartavio, Chiclín, and Pomalca estates during a period of peak market prices. After a half-hearted effort at negotiation, planters, who despaired at losing record profits, called in the army to force labourers back to work at gunpoint.<sup>60</sup>

These interventions demonstrated planters' influence in Lima and the importance of their industries to the national economy. Although the seeds for a working-class movement on the sugarcane plantations had been planted as early as 1912, state repression played an important role in preventing its fruition for several decades. Subsequent strikes were crushed by the army in 1921 and 1931, and the unionisation of sugar workers was not legalised until the mid-1940s, only to be outlawed again during the Odría dictatorship from 1948 to 1956.<sup>61</sup>

*Getting elected in Peru: Ramón Aspillaga Barrera's campaign for Deputy, 1906–7*

That planters made good use of their political influence is clear, but the methods they used to gain political office, especially elected office, remain unexplored by historians. It is well-known that the Civilista party was the primary vehicle to political power for planters. However, we know little about the electoral process and what combination of factors influenced the results. Ramón Aspillaga Barrera's campaign for deputy from Pisco Province in 1906–7 provides several insights into these historical problems. Aspillaga's election depended heavily on personal and family connections among the area's provincial bourgeoisie. The Civilista party did not provide funds, party workers, or other kinds of support associated with modern political parties. However, party membership and endorsement was crucial to a successful campaign, and there was competition among Civilistas for official party backing.

<sup>59</sup> Albert, *Peruvian Sugar Industry*, p. 106a; *La Reforma*, 8–11 April 1912; 15 April 1912; 18 April 1912; 19 April 1912.

<sup>60</sup> *La Reforma*, 1–2 June 1917; 4 June 1917; *La Industria* (Trujillo), 4 June 1917; Albert, *Peruvian Sugar Industry*, pp. 187a–188a; Ramón Aspillaga Barrera to Antero Aspillaga Barrera, 12 July 1917, AFA; Ramón Aspillaga Barrera to Antero Aspillaga Barrera, 17 July 1917, AFA.

<sup>61</sup> Gonzales, *Plantation Agriculture*, pp. 176–85.

Serious disputes erupted between party leaders over access to office, personal affronts, and political effectiveness. At this juncture, there is little evidence that debates over ideology or programmes (with a few exceptions, such as the export tax on sugar), fuelled these conflicts. Bickering among Civilista elites undoubtedly made them more vulnerable to political leaders with superior organisational skills and the ability to manipulate the popular classes. That such a political leader, Augusto B. Leguía, emerged from among the Civilista hierarchy is fitting, as he could observe the weaknesses of the political elite and the party from the inside. In 1919 Leguía won the presidency and proclaimed the 'New Nation', which promised a great deal to workers, Indians, and the petite bourgeoisie. However, after a period of political consolidation during which many planter-politicians were exiled, Leguía offered little to anyone beyond the *nouveau riche* and foreign business interests.<sup>62</sup>

During the Aristocratic Republic, electoral politics were fencing matches between elites and their supporters. Suffrage was limited to literate adult male property owners, who voted at election tables (*mesas receptoras*) manned by members of a particular party. The results then passed through a maze of electoral committees controlled on the coast during the early twentieth century by the Civilista party. The process was obviously susceptible to considerable fraud and influence peddling. Nevertheless, it was an improvement of sorts over barracks politics which relied on violence and offered even less pretence of a democratic process.<sup>63</sup>

Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera was well-positioned to become deputy from Pisco in 1907. The Aspíllaga family had acquired a cotton plantation (Palto) in the province in 1849<sup>64</sup> and had maintained residences on the estate and in town for over fifty years. Thus, they had numerous relatives, business associates, and employees in the province on whose political support they could count.<sup>65</sup> Ramón also had a legacy to the post because his brother Ismael had been elected Pisco's first deputy in 1901, only to die in office.<sup>66</sup>

Ramón Aspíllaga also stood to benefit from his family's long-time affiliation with the Civilista party. His father, Ramón Aspíllaga Ferrebú, was an early supporter of Manuel Pardo, the founder of the party and

<sup>62</sup> I. G. Bertram, 'Development Problems in an Export Economy: A Study of Domestic Capitalists, Foreign Firms and Government in Peru, 1919-1930', unpublished DPhil thesis, Oxford University, 1974; Cotler, *Clases*, ch. iv.

<sup>63</sup> Jorge Basadre, *Elecciones y centralismo en el Perú* (Lima, 1980).

<sup>64</sup> Gilbert, 'Oligarchy', p. 162.

<sup>65</sup> Aspíllaga family correspondence from the plantation Palto, ca. 1860-1930, AFA.

<sup>66</sup> See below for a brief discussion of Ismael's campaign. Some details about the political history of Pisco are in M. Castillo Negrón, *Monografía de Pisco* (Lima, 1947), pp. 295-6.



Peru's first civilian president.<sup>67</sup> During the 1880s, his older brother, Antero, emerged as a key party leader. He served as finance minister, party president, and president of the Senate on four different occasions.<sup>68</sup> It is not surprising that during the heyday of the party's influence – when election was almost guaranteed – Ramón also sought office.

Little information has survived on the campaign of Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera for deputy in 1901. He had the backing of several local dignitaries, which he considered tantamount to 'popular support',<sup>69</sup> and he solicited the backing of others. For example, he sought the endorsement of Carlos Alvarez Calderón, scion of a local elite family and prominent Civilista, who was not especially close to the Aspíllagas. When Alvarez politely delayed his backing, Ismael asked Manuel Candamo, Civilista candidate for president and head of the party, to intervene on his behalf.<sup>70</sup>

This letter writing campaign was carried out from Lima, while local arrangements were entrusted to close business associates and family members. For example, a key aid was Gerardo Pérez y Pérez, a cousin who owned an import-export firm and managed the Aspíllagas' business affairs in Pisco. Among other things, Pérez organised local political meetings, kept a close eye on municipal officials in Pisco, and gauged the relative strength of the opposition.<sup>71</sup>

The exact nature of the opposition to Ismael Aspíllaga is unclear from the remaining documentation. His opponent, Miranda, was discounted by Pérez who insisted that Aspíllaga enjoyed broad support from both Civilistas and Demócratas. The opposition managed to anger Ismael by questioning the strength of his support in a letter to the influential Lima daily *El Comercio*, but this had no practical impact on the election.<sup>72</sup>

When election day came, the Aspíllagas counted on the backing of their numerous employees, as seen in this letter to the manager of Palto:

As you know, on May 25 the election in Pisco for deputy will begin, and our brother Don Ismael Aspíllaga is a candidate. Renters from Palto and San José should already favour Don Ismael Aspíllaga, and in his name you should

<sup>67</sup> *El Peruano* (Lima), 16 Feb. 1886; Gilbert, 'Oligarchy', p. 163, 168–9.

<sup>68</sup> Gilbert, 'Oligarchy', p. 170–1.

<sup>69</sup> Ismael Aspíllaga to Señor Parroco, Dr D. José G. Escate, 15 Feb. 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>70</sup> Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Carlos Alvarez Calderón, 15 Feb. 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Carlos Alvarez Calderón, 23 Feb. 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>71</sup> Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 23 Feb. 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 1 March 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 2 March 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>72</sup> Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 1 March 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 2 March 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

assemble them and tell them to vote for him. Get instructions from Mr. Pérez regarding details and be advised to comply with these orders.<sup>73</sup>

When the votes were counted, Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera received a majority, and after the results passed through the various Civilista-controlled election boards, he was declared deputy from Pisco.<sup>74</sup>

The campaign of Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera in 1906–7 relied on the same business and family associates. His campaign differed significantly, however, because he faced a serious challenge from within the Civilista party. This forced him to campaign for the backing of both voters and party leaders. The first candidate to enter the race was Armando Macedo y Maza, a Civilista *hacendado* from Humay who had the backing of some local notables and claimed to be the official party candidate.<sup>75</sup> This caught Aspíllaga off guard and forced him to campaign vigorously for votes and within the party for an open election.

Ramón's task was complicated by his family's rocky relationship with President José Pardo and presidential nominee Augusto B. Leguía. The Aspíllagas are usually characterised as conservatives and Pardo as a 'young Turk'.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, no one ever mentions what policies or ideologies divided these people and, although some differences probably existed, they were all politically conservative and economically liberal. The Aspíllaga correspondence suggests that disputes arose primarily over access to office, political power within the party, and the effectiveness of leaders in pursuing policies of mutual benefit. It is abundantly clear that party leaders were easily offended and harboured personal grudges for long periods of time. It is also instructive that Ramón Aspíllaga was able to stand for Civilista deputy from Pisco without the support of either Pardo or Leguía. As Ramón put it, although 'the Pardo government is no friend of ours... President Pardo is not capable of contradicting my candidacy'.<sup>77</sup> Ramón's confidence stemmed from his strong political support in Pisco and his family's power base within the party. Pardo was also nearing the end of his term and his influence may have been ebbing. Ramón made it known to the president that 'Pisco is not a province in the sierra, and that Macedo can do what he wants, but we will continue forward with enthusiasm'. Pardo remained cool toward the Aspíllagas, stating to a friend of Ramón's: 'I don't know why the Aspíllagas are

<sup>73</sup> Aspíllaga Hermanos to Tomás Acevedo, 22 May 1901, Lima to Palto, AFA.

<sup>74</sup> Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera to Señor Presidente de la Junta Escrutadora de la Provincia de Pisco, 17 June 1901, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>75</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to C. Céspedes, 17 Oct. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás Bull, 20 Oct. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 13 March 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>76</sup> Stein, *Populism*, pp. 29, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás Acevedo, 29 Oct. 1906, Lima to Palto, AFA.

estranged from my government and supporting the policies of Leguía.<sup>78</sup> This shows an important split within the party, and contradicts Steve Stein's conclusion that 'Pardo's first presidential term (1904–8) was a time of almost unequalled internal political peace within the governing party.'<sup>79</sup>

The Aspíllagas' supposed alliance with Leguía quickly shattered and posed another threat to Ramón's campaign. The animosity stemmed from a verbal clash in the senate between Senator Antero Aspíllaga Barrera and cabinet minister Leguía. The intensity of the exchange was such that an Aspíllaga supporter, Federico Mendoza, actually struck the minister. As Ramón relayed the incident: 'After Dr. Leguía's insulting language, Don Federico Mendoza, who is incapable of killing a flea, gave him two blows with his cane and, according to everyone, they appear to have been well-placed.'<sup>80</sup>

Although Ramón approved of the caning, he worried that Leguía might oppose his candidacy. Since the Aspíllagas were no longer on speaking terms with the minister, Ramón asked a close friend, Heraclides Pérez, to make an appointment with the powerful minister. Pérez informed Leguía that Aspíllaga enjoyed the backing of 'everyone in Pisco', and accused him of opposing Aspíllaga's candidacy. Leguía rejoined that he was on bad terms with both Armando Macedo and the Aspíllagas, but was especially upset with the latter because they had refused to greet him since the 'famous debate in the senate'. It is instructive that both parties remained bitterly angry over personal affronts, and apparently not over policy issues.<sup>81</sup>

Four months later, the Aspíllagas were still refusing to speak with Leguía, who had made an effort to patch things up. President Pardo finally intervened and, through an emissary, asked Antero to speak with Leguía. However, as Ramón explained, Antero refused:

[A]lthough Minister Leguía has warmly congratulated Antero, we have been distancing ourselves from him because of his insults in parliament. Naturally, *La Prensa* exaggerates and gives its own political interpretation to the incident, but the truth is that Antero's honour does not allow him to accept the congratulations or greetings of Leguía in public because of the great satisfaction Leguía would receive.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 10 Dec. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, Lima to Pisco, 11 Dec. 1906, AFA.

<sup>79</sup> *Populism*, p. 30; Miller also refers to the period from 1903–8 as one of political harmony. 'La Oligarquía', p. 553.

<sup>80</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 9 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>81</sup> Ramón admitted that: 'nosotros le habíamos quitado el saludo'. Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 9 Feb. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>82</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 18 June 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

In general terms, this posture corresponds with the observation of Flores Galindo and Burga that elites were excessively concerned with deference and manners and were easily offended.<sup>83</sup> Within a political context, this certainly weakened party unity, needlessly complicated government, and made the Civilistas vulnerable to Billinghurst in 1912 and to Leguía in 1919.

Although Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera believed that he could win without the support of either Pardo or Leguía, he still worried that the party might declare his Civilista rival, Armando Macedo, the official party candidate. As it was, Macedo had gained some support simply by spreading the rumour of his official candidacy, which had forced Ramón to waste time denying the story.<sup>84</sup> It is unknown to what extent Antero Aspíllaga Barrera intervened on his brother's behalf behind closed doors in Lima. Antero was distracted for a while by the illness of another brother, Baldomero, whom he had accompanied on a cruise to Chile. Upon his return, he wrote several letters to uncommitted voters asking them to support Ramón,<sup>85</sup> and he probably helped win the backing of Javier Prado Ugarteche. Prado, son of former president Mariano Ignacio Prado, was a key member of the Junta Central of the Civilista party. Ramón reminded Prado that Pisco had supported his father's rise to power in 1864, and that the province had backed Civilista candidates since the party's inception. He asked him to help win the support of a local *hacendado* and his manager, with whom Prado was acquainted.<sup>86</sup>

Political machinations in Lima were obviously important to the outcome of the election. If Macedo were declared the official party candidate, it would seriously hurt Aspíllaga because the party controlled the maze of electoral committees that 'analysed' the ballots. Moreover, as Jorge Basadre has noted, there was considerable electoral fraud during this period.<sup>87</sup>

From the beginning, Aspíllaga had fashioned a well-organised campaign that focused on lining up the support of eligible voters, monitoring local politicians and electoral committees, and deflecting negative campaign propaganda. Aspíllaga also presented a platform stressing economic development and public order, themes that were universally palatable to his constituency and consistent with other 'order and progress' governments in Latin America.

<sup>83</sup> *Apogeo y crisis*, pp. 91–100.

<sup>84</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás Acevedo, 29 Dec. 1906, Lima to Palto, AFA.

<sup>85</sup> Antero Aspíllaga Barrera to Enrique Villagarcía, 2 March 1907, Lima to Ica, AFA; Antero Aspíllaga Barrera to Augusto Ríos, 5 March 1907, Lima to Ica, AFA; Antero Aspíllaga Barrera to Augusto Ríos, 6 March 1907, Lima to Ica, AFA.

<sup>86</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Javier Prado Ugarteche, 25 Feb. 1907, Lima to Lima, AFA.

<sup>87</sup> *Elecciones*, p. 57.

From Lima, Aspíllaga wrote a stream of personal letters soliciting campaign contributions from known supporters and asking for the backing of the uncommitted. By September, 1906 he had collected Soles/. 1,452.00 from twenty-three different contributors, who included *hacendados*, merchants, and the local priest.<sup>88</sup> He reminded voters of his family's roots in the province, the popular nature of his candidacy, his strong commitment to the development of agriculture and commerce, and mutual friends and political associates. Aspíllaga even solicited the votes of Macedo's supporters.<sup>89</sup> He clearly sought a broad mandate from property owners, not just a winning margin. This was not simply a question of ego, but a tactic to prevent the party leadership from publicly backing Macedo. Such a declaration would be politically controversial if Ramón could garner written pledges from the vast majority of registered *Civilistas*.

Aspíllaga instructed his campaign organisers to talk with voters, to keep a close eye on local politicians, and to organise rallies in support of his candidacy. These tasks were primarily entrusted to his cousins Gerardo Pérez and Pelegrin Román, who had managed the successful campaign of Ismael Aspíllaga Barrera in 1901. An important objective was to reassure voters that the election had not been predetermined. In Ramón Aspíllaga's words:

You can say to friends that the official candidacy of Mr. Macedo is not certain and that ours is a popular candidacy that follows all the prerequisites of the law and will be respected by the National Committee. In a town like Pisco, on whose beaches General San Martín walked for the first time and for a short while was capital of the Republic, their vote cannot be falsified nor forged.<sup>90</sup>

Ramón had a similar concern with regard to electoral officials. He thoroughly understood electoral laws and procedures and warned authorities not to steal the election. For example, the president of the Junta Directiva Departamental del Partido Civil de Ica was reminded that he had benefited from Antero's political support and that this was an open election. Ramón concluded: 'as soon as possible you should inform the committee of which you are president of the truth, and nothing but the

<sup>88</sup> List of contributors, dated Sept. 1906, Aspíllaga correspondence, Hacienda Palto, AFA.

<sup>89</sup> There are dozens of these letters in the Palto correspondence from June to December of 1906. Examples include: Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to J. Barnechea, 29 Oct. 1906, Lima to Hacienda Zarate, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Daniel Villa, 12 July 1906, Lima to Hacienda Monterola, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Francisco Pasara Cisneros, 20 Nov. 1906, Lima to Hacienda Mencia, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Fermín Tangüis, 26 Nov. 1906, Lima to Hacienda Urrutia, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Jorge Bull, 18 July 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>90</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás Acevedo, 12 Dec. 1906, Lima to Palto, AFA.

truth, regarding the relation between the elections in Pisco and my candidacy'.<sup>91</sup> Ramón was also careful to place supporters on the Junta de Registro Provincial, the committee which authenticated voter roles in Pisco province. This allowed him to ascertain if his supporters had registered, to safeguard against their disqualification, and to scrutinise the eligibility of Macedo's supporters.<sup>92</sup> Aspíllaga also ran a slate of candidates in the municipal elections in Pisco in December, 1906, which emerged victorious by a slim margin.<sup>93</sup>

Early on in the campaign Ramón Aspíllaga authorised a campaign aide to tell 'friends and citizens' in the province that he favoured a series of measures relating to economic development, public order, education, and health:

I authorize you to announce to friends and citizens from Humay, Huancan and the valleys that if I am elected, as agriculturalist and property owner, I promise: to improve the roads and bridges that the Departmental Committee of Ica should have attended to long ago; to carry out a complete cleansing of the towns and valleys to eliminate epidemics; to create rural police stations that will guarantee, along with public authority, life and property which we deserve as agriculturalists, property owners, and taxpayers. I will also try especially hard to see that the new law on primary education has real and effective application in the districts and valleys. Finally, I pledge total support to the projects and laws that contribute to the progress of our agriculture, which is one of the principal sources of wealth of the country.<sup>94</sup>

This declaration was as close as Aspíllaga came to a campaign platform. It reflected general concerns among property owners and offered something to all citizens. Epidemics had ravaged the Peruvian coast for decades, laying waste to villages and Indian communities and threatening towns and plantations. On their sugarcane plantation, Cayaltí, the Aspíllagas had initiated a series of health measures designed to prevent an epidemic from decimating the workforce and bringing production to a halt.<sup>95</sup> Ramón's concern over epidemics in the Pisco area probably emanated from similar concerns over cotton production and profitability. At Cayaltí, the Aspíllagas favoured limited primary education as a means of disciplining lower-class children and preparing them to become obedient and efficient workers. They clearly did not favour public education as a vehicle for facilitating social mobility or integrating Peru's

<sup>91</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Enrique Villagarcía, 4 Feb. 1907, Lima to Ica, AFA.

<sup>92</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to José A. Bringas, 24 Jan. 1907, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 23 Feb. 1907, AFA.

<sup>93</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 15 Dec. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Carlos Céspedes, 16 Dec. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Pelegrín Román, 18 Dec. 1906, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>94</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás S. Acevedo, 21 July 1906, Lima to Palto, AFA.

<sup>95</sup> Gonzáles, *Plantation Agriculture*, pp. 155–9.

diverse ethnic and racial groups into the larger society.<sup>96</sup> Improvements in public transportation and police protection would have benefited everyone. However, planters would profit the most from improved roads and port facilities, and public authority was frequently used by planters to suppress workers.

In general, Ramón's platform was consistent with the themes of 'order and progress' found in modernising regimes in Porfirian Mexico and Old Republican Brazil, which were heavily influenced by positivism and Social Darwinism. For example, both governments promoted railway construction, plantation agriculture, social control (e.g. the *rurales*), and foreign investment, while paying little or no attention to the welfare of blacks, Indians, workers and peasants.<sup>97</sup>

The Aspíllagas certainly believed that white elites should rule, and that poor blacks, Indians, and Chinese should labour.<sup>98</sup> These sentiments were probably shared by Armando Macedo who, like Aspíllaga, was a Civilista *hacendado*. In such a race, voter preference was probably determined primarily by personal and business associations and party endorsement. Campaigning was largely limited to letter writing and private conversations, although Ramón Aspíllaga also believed that public demonstrations in favour of his candidacy would influence undecided voters and discourage the party from endorsing his opponent. He saw rallies as 'public manifestations of our strength and our power'<sup>99</sup> and ordered his campaign aides to organise them in several locations.<sup>100</sup> For the larger rallies in Pisco, the campaign provided transportation, a band, political oratory, and an impressive luncheon:

For this Sunday you should arrange a good lunch comprised of 1,000 to 2,000 well-prepared sausages, some 3,000 bread rolls, cheese, wine, *chicha*, and beer (but not distilled spirits) in abundance. Everything should be in generous proportions and in an appropriate locale to lunch and to walk among the people and along the beach.<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to Aspíllaga's efforts, we know little about Armando Macedo's campaign. He gained the initiative by entering the election first, and he vigorously sought official party endorsement. Macedo also enjoyed the support of influential politicians throughout the campaign, including

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166–7.

<sup>97</sup> Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago, 1981), part i; Love and Barickman, 'Rulers and Owners'; and Thomas H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1980).

<sup>98</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Antero Aspíllaga Barrera, 14 June 1917, Cayaltí to Lima, AFA.

<sup>99</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Tomás S. Acevedo, 29 Dec. 1906, Lima to Palto, AFA.

<sup>100</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 30 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>101</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 9 Feb. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

Carlos Alvarez Calderón who asked Ramón Aspíllaga to withdraw from the race and run for senator from Ica.<sup>102</sup> Macedo was also friends with the subprefect of Pisco, who used strong-arm tactics to break up some of Aspíllaga's campaign rallies before Ramón could have him replaced.<sup>103</sup> Macedo likewise benefited from being president of the Junta Directiva del Partido Civil from Pisco, which allowed him to appoint the electoral committee from the province. Even in Peru, however, such a clear conflict of interest raised eyebrows. Aspíllaga successfully protested against the composition of the electoral committee and then made certain that several of his supporters, including campaign heads Pérez and Román, were placed on the Junta Directiva.<sup>104</sup> Although Aspíllaga had managed to counter each of Macedo's moves, he still lamented: 'After all of this chicanery by Macedo, I don't doubt that there is someone in the government or in the Central Committee of the Civilista party who encourages it in order to upset me or to discourage my friends.'<sup>105</sup>

Macedo's last chance was to be named official party candidate, something that Aspíllaga had fought against from the start. That issue was finally resolved in March, 1907, when party headquarters in Lima declared a 'free election' for deputy from Pisco, which meant that Civilistas were not bound by a party endorsement.<sup>106</sup> President Pardo and future President Leguía had made Ramón Aspíllaga sweat for as long as possible, but they could not deny him the office. Aspíllaga had emerged victorious in the intra-party struggle and could now focus on getting out the vote and monitoring the electoral process.

Macedo was reportedly 'furious' with party leaders and threatened to withdraw from the race. However, Aspíllaga refused to believe it. He wrote letters to key local politicians and electoral officials demanding a fair election, and Antero asked Senators Ríos and Alvarez Calderón from Ica to remain neutral. Ramón also remained intimately engaged in the detailed and politically-charged process of selecting electoral committees at the provincial, departmental, and national levels, and reminded his supporters of important aspects of electoral laws and regulations.<sup>107</sup>

As election day approached, Aspíllaga instructed his campaign workers

<sup>102</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 16 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>103</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 2 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 30 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>104</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 21 Jan. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 9 Feb. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>105</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 9 Feb. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>106</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Pelegrin Román, 9 March 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>107</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 14 March 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 13 March 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 11 May 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 11 May 1907(b), AFA.



to get out the vote. Designated aids (*jefes de decena*) were sent out to bring eligible voters to the election tables (*mesas receptoras*). Those voters who had to travel long distances received 'a day's wage and a gift', which was probably illegal, but within the bounds of traditional political patronage. Aspíllaga even made certain that the election tables had sufficient clerical supplies.<sup>108</sup>

Such attention to detail assured smooth going on election day. One month later, after the ballots had meandered through the maze of Civilista-controlled electoral committees, Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera was declared deputy from Pisco Province.<sup>109</sup> Far from a tribute to participatory democracy, his election was testimony to elite power politics within a divided party and social class.

Once in office, Aspíllaga fulfilled several campaign pledges. For example, he sought support from the central government for improving mail service, port facilities, and irrigation networks, and for establishing a rural police station. He secured results in at least two areas: a government engineer surveyed local river systems with the objective of helping planters with flooding and other problems, and a *Comisario Rural* was established.<sup>110</sup>

Aspíllaga was also concerned with rumours that officials in Pisco and a local priest were engaged in corrupt activities. Through Gerardo Pérez, he relayed his 'repugnance' over stories of embezzlement of public funds and advised municipal officials to do better or face an 'official investigation'.<sup>111</sup> He also spoke with the archbishop regarding the priest, who was quickly transferred to Chincha Alta, a backwater where only peasants would suffer from his improprieties.<sup>112</sup>

The new deputy from Pisco was also deeply involved in party politics in Lima. For example, in 1909 a senate seat became vacant in Ica and many

<sup>108</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 11 May 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 20 May 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>109</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Pelegrin Román, 20 May 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Junta Escrutadora de la Provincia de Pisco, 18 June 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>110</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Maxmiliano E. Bellido, 9 Oct. 1907, Lima to Pisco, AFA; 'Memorandum para el Señor Director General de Correos y Telégrafos', 31 Aug. 1907, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Juan José Miranda, 18 Feb. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Juan José Miranda, 19 Feb. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Vicente del Solar, 4 March 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Alcalde Bellido, 28 Aug. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Alcalde Bellido, 30 Aug. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Julio M. Laca, Subprefect of Pisco, 17 Sept. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Señor Alcalde del H. Consejo Provincial, Pisco, 15 Oct. 1908, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>111</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 22 March 1909, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

<sup>112</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Cipriano M. Agüero, 3 Aug. 1909, Lima to Pisco, AFA.

Civilista leaders, including the Aspíllagas and President Leguía, preferred the Democratic candidate (Oleachea) over the Civilista choice (Alfredo Picasso). On the other hand, former President Pardo, who was still feuding with Leguía, supported Picasso. Antero Aspíllaga was then president of the Junta Central Directiva of the Civilista party and could not publicly support an opposition candidate. Nevertheless, that is exactly what Leguía asked him to do. Ramón Aspíllaga believed that everyone on the electoral committee from Pisco would support Oleachea, except for Armando Macedo, the committee's president. Ramón wrote to Picasso declaring his neutrality in the election and informing him that he had told his friends to do likewise. The Civilistas did not need to befriend Democrats to rule, but in this case Oleachea was a 'personal friend' of Leguía's and had been an 'useful man' in the senate.<sup>113</sup> One is struck by the propensity of the Civilista leadership to disagree, for old grudges to linger, and for divisions to emanate from personal and political considerations rather than from ideology.

### *Conclusion*

Who ruled in Peru? During the Aristocratic Republic the central government was controlled primarily by officials of the Civilista party, and all presidents were persons of wealth and high social standing. Sugar planters played an especially conspicuous role in government as presidents, cabinet ministers, senators, and deputies. They also enjoyed considerable authority at the regional level, which helped them control land, water, and human resources. It would be difficult to identify another economic group that approached planters in political influence.

The discourse of politics at the regional level remains largely unexplored by Peruvianists. During the Aristocratic Republic, access to the Chamber of Deputies depended on the interplay of national party leaders with the provincial bourgeoisie. Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera needed support from some high party officials as well as substantial backing from local elites. On the provincial level, his campaign was organised around a circle of family and business associates, and campaigning primarily consisted of letter writing, private conversations, and rallies. The Civilista party could decisively affect the outcome of the election by endorsing a candidate or by altering vote counts in party-controlled electoral committees at the provincial, departmental, and national levels. In Aspíllaga's case, the party eventually declared an open election and did not change the results of the balloting. However, this required extensive lobbying in Lima and careful

<sup>113</sup> Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 22 March 1909, Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Gerardo Pérez, 22 March 1909(b), Lima to Pisco, AFA; Ramón Aspíllaga Barrera to Alfredo Picasso, 22 May 1909, Lima to Lima, AFA.

monitoring of the appointment of electoral committees and the recording of votes.

Ramón Aspíllaga's political correspondence reveals a badly divided Civilista leadership that harboured personal grudges for long periods of time. Traditionally, scholars have viewed the first Pardo Administration (1904–8) as one of great harmony among party leaders, and have argued that serious splits did not emerge until 1912. However, it is now clear that by 1906 President Pardo and Augusto B. Leguía were at odds, and that the Aspíllagas were feuding with both of them. Such bickering made the Civilistas vulnerable to the popular political maverick Guillermo Billinghurst in 1912, and to the rebel among them, Leguía, in 1919.