



Chile Through the Age of Progress

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Overarching theme: Chilean Exceptionalism

- “While chronic instability seems to characterize its neighbors, Chile has endured few internal upheavals while abstaining from foreign adventures.”



Historical Theme of Isolation

- “From the first . . . the colonizers’ enjoyment of this scenery was bought at the price of isolation from the rest of the world. At no time was this truer than during the two and a half centuries that followed [Pedro de] Valdivia’s successful invasion, the period when the deep foundations of modern Chilean culture and nationality were laid.” (3)



Economic Activity: Mining

- “Initially, ‘work’ chiefly meant panning gold from the rivers. Respectable amounts of gold were panned (and later mined) in sixteenth-century Chile, but the exhaustion of many deposits (and the loss of others after 1599) forced the settlers to fall back on agriculture and (especially) ranching as their mainstay.” (8)

Social Structure

- “Here, in this remote corner of the caste-conscious Spanish empire, there grew up a relatively homogenous population in which only one vague ethnic division was of importance: the division between the predominantly mestizo . . . majority and the more definitively European upper class consisting of “Creoles’ . . . and peninsulares.” (9)



Colonial Theme: Imperial Isolation

- **“Creoles sent donations to help the Spanish war effort . . . But the great world of Europe, with its tramping legions, its navies, its Bonapartes and Pitts, seemed reassuringly distant. And so it was.” (33)**

Independence Era

- The [Chilean] patriots' main hopes . . . Lay on the far side of the Andes, where the powerful governor of Cuyo, General Jose de San Martin, had long been planning to use a liberated Chile as the base for a seaborne assault on the Viceroyalty of Peru – the key to the expulsion of Spain from South America. The arrival in Mendoza of numerous Chilean refugees in 1814 gave San Martin some valuable new allies: [Bernardo] O'Higgins in particular became his close friend.” (39)

The allure of Confederation

- “O’Higgins once expressed the hope that Chile, Peru, and Argentina might some day form a ‘great confederation similar to that of the United States.’ Such an arrangement was never even remotely likely. Chileans adopted the outward badges of separate national identity with alacrity.” (43)



Window on the Pacific

- “With the abrupt decline of the previously significant trans-Andean trade, the sea was more than ever Chile’s highway to the outside world, and the highway now led in all directions . As a result, the maritime nations of the North Atlantic, starting with Great Britain, gained an importance in Chilean trade they have never since lost. The value of Chile’s externation trade roughly doubled between 1810 and the 1830s.” (46)

- “France was beginning to exert her cultural sway, not least through imported reading matter. Some of the new buildings in Valparaíso (whose population rose to around 20,000 by 1830) reflected foreign architectural styles. Upper-class women adopted a few European fashions, while among both women and men tea began to replace the more traditional mate as a popular drink. Foreigners also played a part in the limited educational and cultural improvements of the time, some of them banding together in 1828 to form a philharmonic society in Santiago. . .” (49)

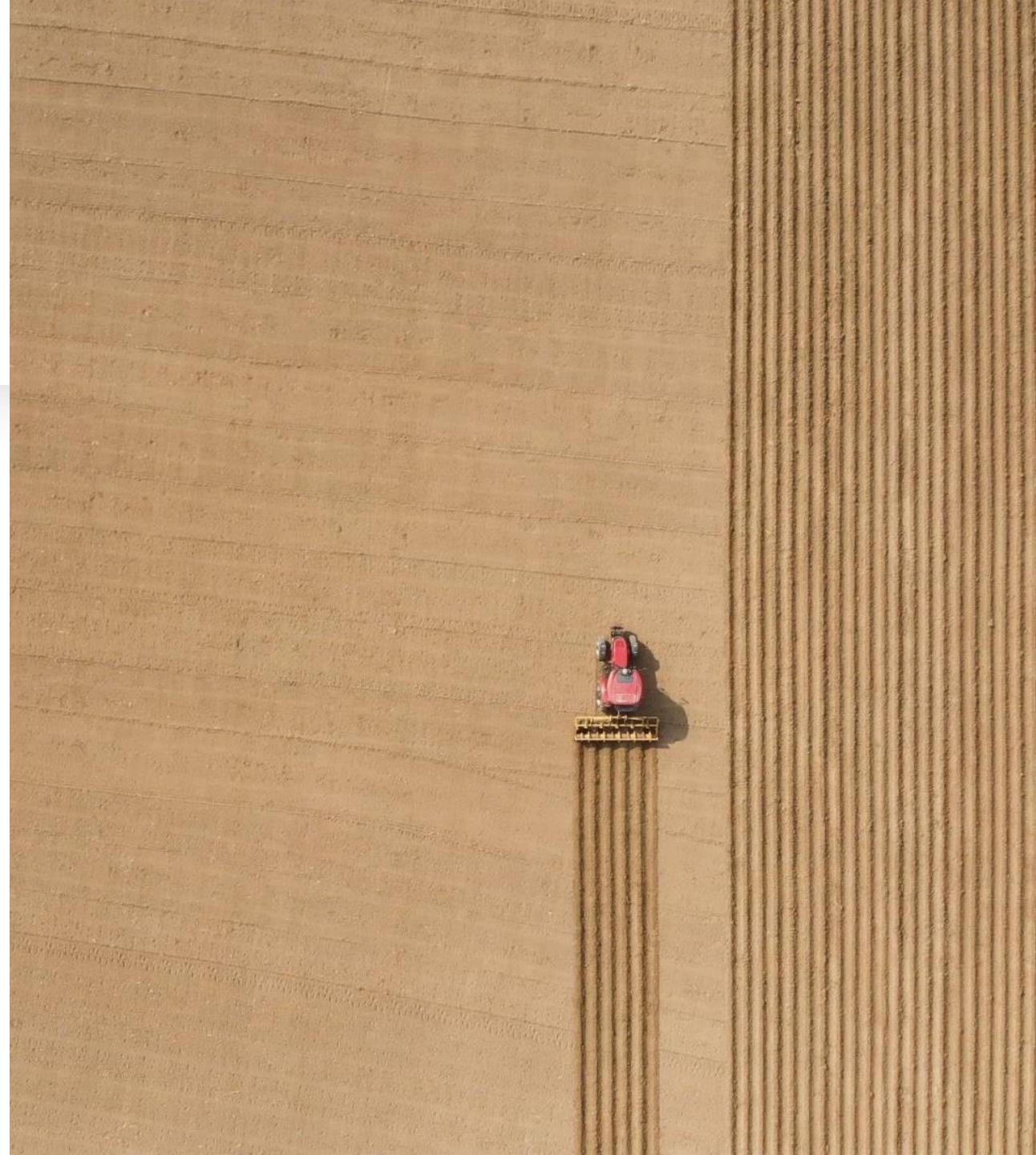
Foreign Cultures Prominent from Beginning

POLITICAL STABILITY

- “The Conservative coalition that took power in 1830 was the first of three successive political combinations that governed Chile over the next six decades. Its twenty-seven-year lease on power helped lay the foundations of a tradition of political stability unique in 19th century Spanish America – where mutinous armies, caudillo dictatorships, palace revolutions, and civil wars were constant and common place. Thanks to this tradition, as Tulio Halperin has observed, Chile came to enjoy ‘unrivalled political prestige among the Spanish American republics.’ (55)

Connections to Pacific

- “In the 1830s quantities of Chilean wheat were sent (mostly on British ships) to New South Wales – a rehearsal for the much more substantial export of the 1850s. Two or three hundred Chilean peones crossed to Australia as indentured laborers – this, too, was a tiny foretaste of a more notable migration over a century later: by the 1970s the Chilean community in Australia numbered tens of thousands.”
(67)



Liberal Era

- “While consolidating itself as a nation-state, Chile enjoyed both substantial commercial expansion and the eventual development of a tradition of tolerant upper-class politics. Exports of copper, silver, and wheat enriched the upper class and enabled the republic to grow and to initiate modernization, though with its traditional social structure changing only slowly. Chile came to be regarded abroad as the “model republic” of South America . . .” (75)



Liberal Era: Age of Progress

- “Steamships appeared in the ports, railroads inched across the northern desert and the Central Valley, telegraph wires linked the towns, banks and joint-stock companies were founded, and cities were improved. Educated Chileans saw this as a time for progress.” (77)

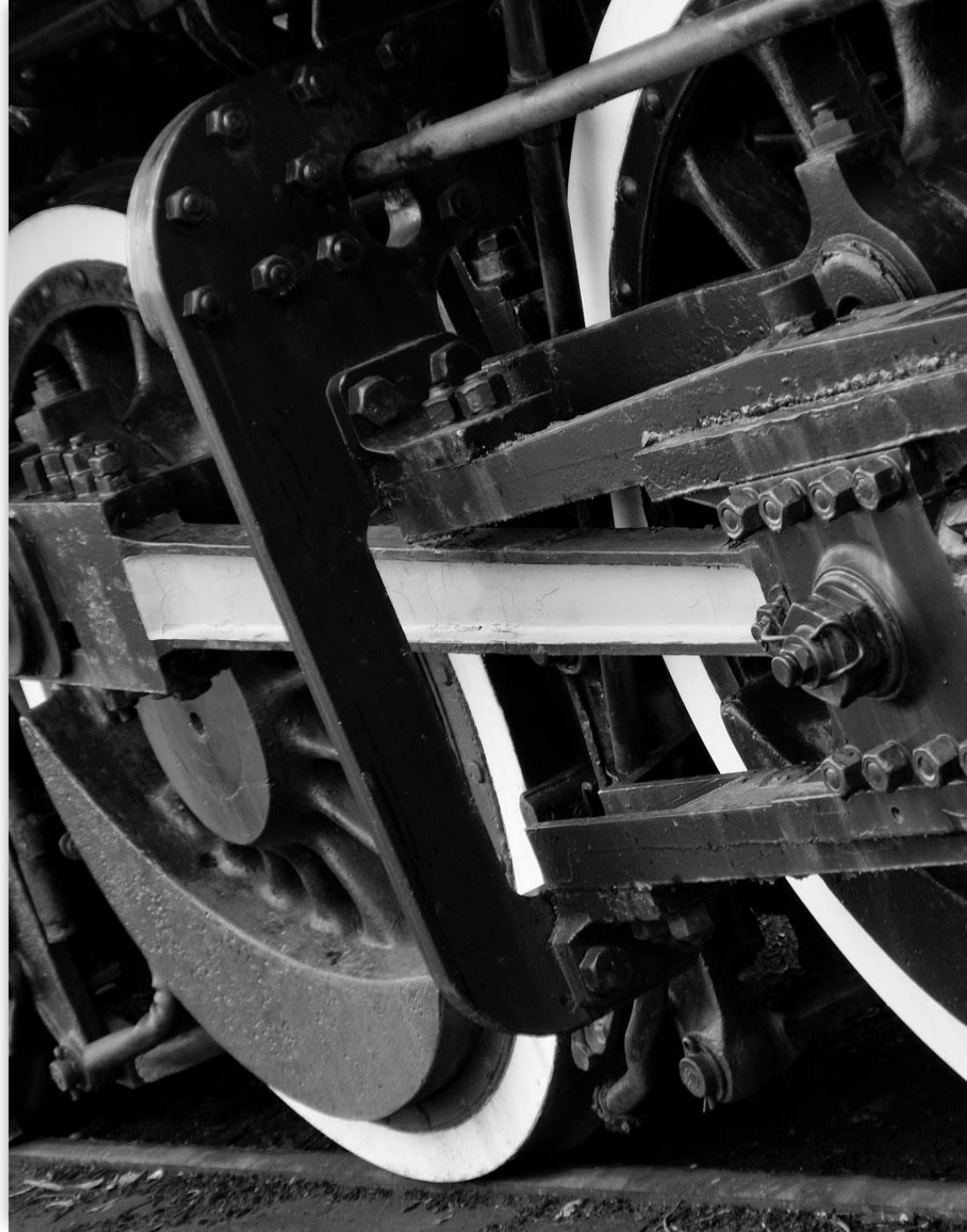
Pacific Connections during Liberal Era

- “But as luck would have it, a second gold-rush came to the rescue of Chilean hacendados, with the discovers at Bendigo and Ballarat, Victoria, in 1851. Australian farms fell idle as men made off to the diggings. Once again, ships laden with wheat and flour made their peak . . . In 1855; thereafter they swiftly fell off.” (87)

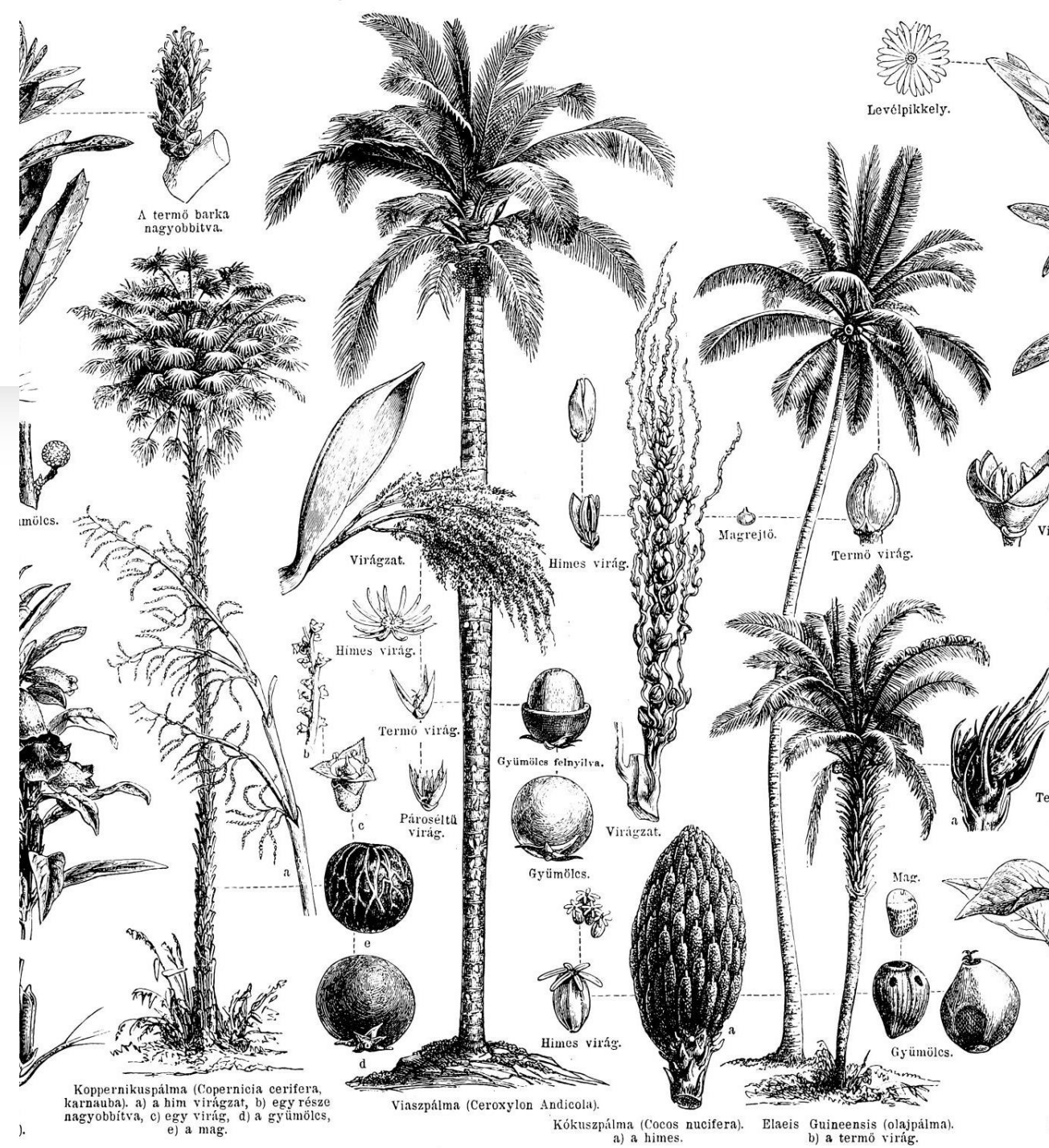


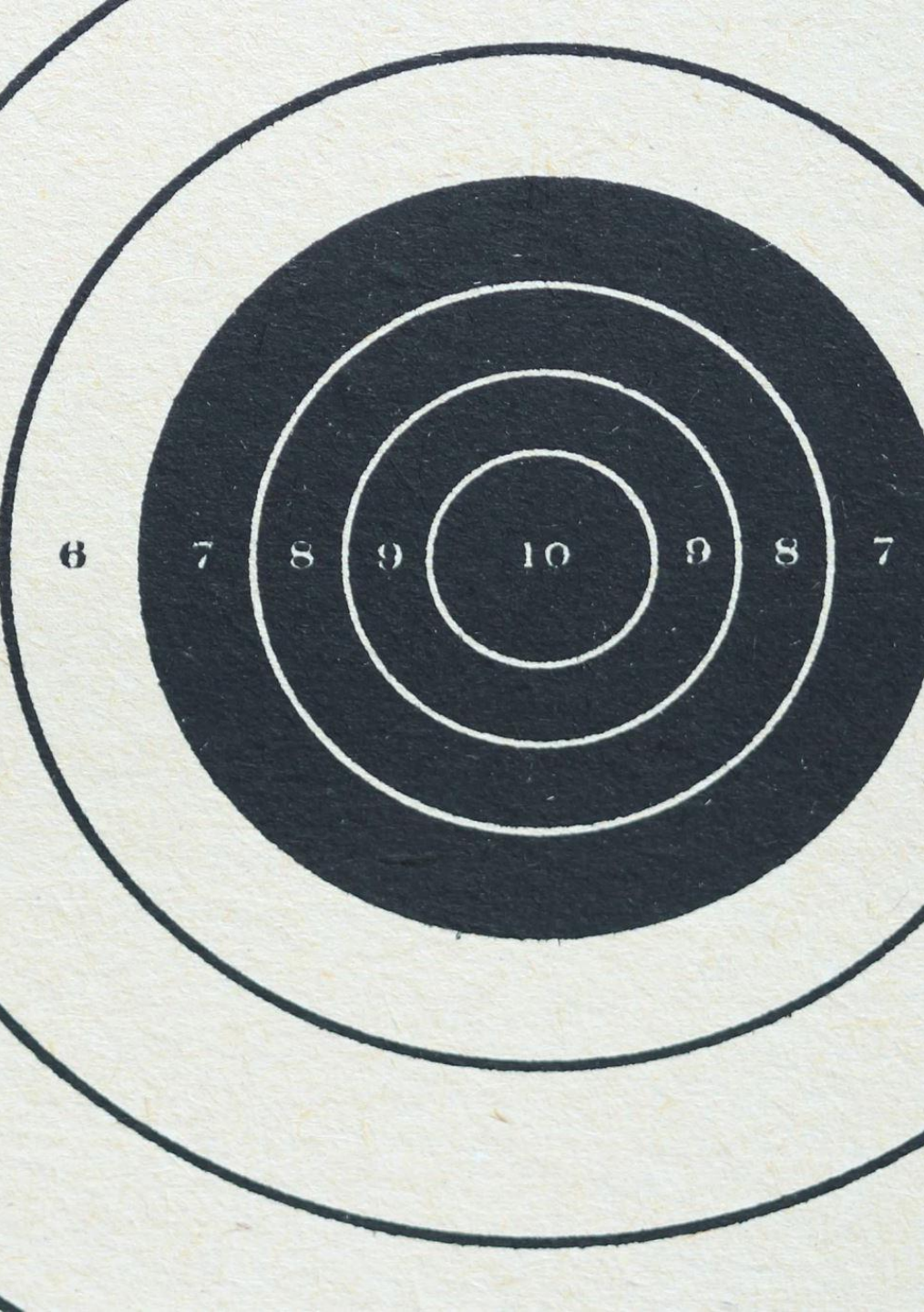
A Minor Immigrant Society

- “The influence of foreigners was out of all proportion to their numbers. Americans installed the new flourmills; Americans and British worked on railroad building and later on often drove the locomotives; immigrants set up many of the industrial enterprises of the 1860s and 1870s. Europeans also found work as artisans, mechanics, and tradesmen, not least in the more upmarket trades.” (100)



- 1873: Peru and Bolivia sign secret treaty to protect each other in war against Chile.
- 1879: Peru affirms its commitment to Bolivia.
- Chile declares war on both nations.
- “Chileans now faced two enemies whose combined armed forces outnumbered them two to one. Equipped with outmoded weapons, . . . Lacking medical and supply corps, the Army now called upon to fight a war far from the country’s heartland, and without decent lines of communication. For Chile to triumph, control of the sea was essential; only this would enable the Army to attack the enemy on its home ground.”
(139)





Turn of the Century: Politics and Society

- “Underlying the politics of the next three decades [1880-1910] was a cycle of renewed export-led growth on the strength of the trade in nitrates, accompanied by inevitable social diversification, the main symptoms of which were an emergent (if still small) middle class and a militant labor movement.”
(157)

Economic Diversification; Pacific Connections

- “The country developed a pastoral economy, particularly in the South, the main area of sheep-raising. Sheep-raising also developed on a notable scale in the far south, in Magallenes, whose real economic history began after the War of the Pacific. Farmers also created dairy businesses which provided milk and its byproducts to the expanding urban market.” (168)



Labor in Desert

- “Working on the nitrate pampa was both arduous and dangerous: often carrying sacks weighing more than 140kg (over 300 lbs.), miners constantly had to thread their way between explosions, falling debris, and moving carts or railways.” (174)

Santiago in Age of Progress

- “The criminals seemed as unstoppable as disease, often forcing the rich to hire bodyguards. Despite its carious threats, both natural and man made, urban life had far more attractions than life in the countryside: operas, plays and parties for the better-off, more modest consolations for the poor.” (188)

