

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government
in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

EDITORS

MALCOLM DEAS CLIFFORD T. SMITH

JOHN STREET

28

CORONELISMO:

THE MUNICIPALITY AND REPRESENTATIVE

GOVERNMENT IN BRAZIL

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE SERIES

- 1 Simon Collier. *Ideas and Politics of Chilean Independence, 1808–1833*
- 2 Michael P. Costeloe. *Church Wealth in Mexico: A study of the 'Juzgado de Capellanías' in the Archbishopric of Mexico, 1800–1856*
- 3 Peter Calvert. *The Mexican Revolution, 1910–1914: The Diplomacy of Anglo-American Conflict*
- 4 Richard Graham. *Britain and the Onset of Modernization in Brazil, 1850–1914*
- 5 Herbert S. Klein. *Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, 1880–1952*
- 6 Leslie Bethell. *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807–1869*
- 7 David Barkin and Timothy King. *Regional Economic Development: The River Basin Approach in Mexico*
- 8 Celso Furtado. *Economic Development of Latin America: A Survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution*
- 9 William Paul McGreevey. *An Economic History of Colombia, 1845–1930*
- 10 D.A. Brading. *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763–1810*
- 11 Jan Bazant. *Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856–1875*
- 12 Brian R. Hamnett. *Politics and Trade in Southern Mexico, 1750–1821*
- 13 J. Valerie Fifer. *Bolivia: Land, Location, and Politics since 1825*
- 14 Peter Gerhard. *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain*
- 15 P.J. Bakewell. *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico, Zacatecas, 1564–1700*
- 16 Kenneth R. Maxwell. *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal, 1750–1808*
- 17 Verena Martínez-Alier. *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A Study of Racial Attitudes and Sexual Values in a Slave Society*
- 18 Tulio Halperin-Donghi. *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period*
- 19 David Rock. *Politics in Argentina, 1890–1930: the Rise and Fall of Radicalism*
- 20 Mario Gongora. *Studies in the Colonial History of Spanish America*
- 21 Arnold J. Bauer. *Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930*
- 22 James Lockhart and Enrique Otte. *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies: The Sixteenth Century*
- 23 Leslie B. Rout. *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1562 to the Present Day*
- 24 Jean A. Meyer. *The Cristero Rebellion: The Mexican People between Church and State, 1926–1929*
- 25 Stefan De Vylder. *Allende's Chile: The Political Economy of the Rise and Fall of the Unidad Popular*
- 26 Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge with the collaboration of Colin Harding. *Land and Labour in Latin America: Essays on the Development of Agrarian Capitalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*
- 27 Guillermo Lora. *A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, 1848–1971* edited and abridged by Laurence Whitehead and translated by Christine Whitehead

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government
in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Coronelismo: the municipality and representative government in Brazil

VICTOR NUNES LEAL

Translated by June Henfrey

with an introduction by Alberto Venancio Filho

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

London New York Melbourne

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government
in Brazil
Victor Nunes Leal
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521102315

Coronelismo, enxada e voto. O município e o regime representativo no Brasil
first published by Revista Forense, Rio de Janeiro, 1949. © Victor Nunes Leal.

English translation © Cambridge University Press 1977

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1977
This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Leal, Victor Nunes.

Coronelismo.

(Cambridge Latin American studies; 28)

Translation of *Coronelismo, enxada e voto*.

Bibliography: p.

1. Municipal government – Brazil. 2. Elections – Brazil.

I. Title. II. Series.

JS2405.L413 320.9'81 76-46044

ISBN 978-0-521-21488-9 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-10231-5 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

Editor's note	page X
Introduction by Alberto Venancio Filho	XI
A note on the term <i>coronelismo</i>	XV
1 Notes on the structure and functioning of <i>coronelismo</i>	1
I Introductory remarks, 1	
II Land ownership as a factor in local political leadership, 2	
III Concentration of rural agricultural property, 4	
IV Some aspects of class composition in rural society, 7	
V Electoral expenses. Local improvements, 12	
VI Favours and persecution. Lack of organisation in local public services, 14	
VII System of compromise with the state government. Coercion of the rural electorate, 15	
VIII Local government autonomy and <i>coronelismo</i> , 20	
IX Fragmentation of the social hegemony of the landowning class, 22	
2 Powers of the municipalities	25
I Quantitative concept, 25	
II Apogee of the colonial legislatures, 26	
III Reaction of the Crown. Strengthening of royal power after the transfer of the Court, 29	
IV The law of 1828, 32	
V The Additional Act and the move towards greater de-centralisation, 34	
VI Municipal powers under the regime of 1891, 35	
VII The phase of the provisional government of 1930, 38	
VIII The Constitution of 1934 and the departments for municipal affairs, 41	
IX The decline of the municipality under the regime of 1937, 43	
X The Constitution of 1946: technical assistance to the municipalities and supervision of their finances, 45	
XI Intervention of the State in the economy; its effect on municipal powers, 47	

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)viii *Contents*

- | | | |
|------|---|-----|
| XII | Municipal authority and federal authority, 49 | |
| 3 | The elective principle in municipal administration | 52 |
| I | The elective principle in the municipal chambers of the colonial period, 52 | |
| II | In the Empire and in the Republic, 54 | |
| III | Creation of the municipal executive in Brazil, 57 | |
| IV | Elected and nominated prefects under the regime of 1891, 59 | |
| V | Discussion of the problem in the Constituent Assembly of 1933–4, 61 | |
| VI | Solution adopted by the Constitution of 1946, 63 | |
| VII | The judiciary and municipal elections under the Republic, 63 | |
| VIII | Importance of the municipal executive and of the form of his investiture, 66 | |
| 4 | Municipal revenue | 71 |
| I | Municipal finances in the colonial period, 71 | |
| II | The scantiness of municipal and provincial funds under the Empire, 72 | |
| III | Tax differentiation of the Constituent Assembly of 1890, 76 | |
| IV | Municipal revenue under the regime of 1891, 78 | |
| V | The draft of the Constitution of 1933, 80 | |
| VI | The proposal of the São Paulo delegation, 81 | |
| VII | The proposals of Juarez Távora and Fernandes Távora, 82 | |
| VIII | The proposal of Prado Kelly, 84 | |
| IX | The solution adopted by the Constitution of 1934, 86 | |
| X | Changes introduced by the regime of 1937; the startling poverty of Brazilian municipalities, 87 | |
| XI | The increase of municipal funds in the Constitution of 1946, 88 | |
| XII | An attempt to explain our current ‘pro-municipal feeling’, 91 | |
| XIII | Political reflection of the financial dependence of the municipalities, 99 | |
| 5 | Organisation of the police and the judiciary | 100 |
| I | Up to the Constitution of 1824, 100 | |
| II | During the Empire, 103 | |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)ix *Contents*

III	Police organisation under the Republic, 107	
IV	Legal organisation under the regime of 1891, 108	
V	Under the Constitutions of 1934, 1937 and 1946, 109	
VI	The jury, 111	
VII	Private power, the Ordinances and the National Guard, 113	
6	Electoral legislation	118
I	Electoral instructions of 1821, 1822, 1824 and 1842. The law of the Constituencies. The second law of the Constituencies. The law of the third. The Saraiva Law. Broad judgement on the elections of the Empire, 118	
II	The Alvim Regulation. The law of 1892. The Rosa e Silva Law. The Bueno de Paiva Law. Broad judgement on the elections of the First Republic, 121	
III	The electoral codes of 1932 and 1935, 125	
IV	The Agamemnon Law and the Constitution of 1946, 127	
V	The fallibility of Brazilian elections and <i>coronelismo</i> , 129	
7	Conclusion	135
	Evaluation of <i>coronelismo</i> ; its consequences. Signs of a crisis in the system. Perspectives, 135	
	Notes	143
	Bibliography	230

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - *Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil*

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Editor's note

Since its first appearance in Brazil in 1949, Victor Nunes Leal's *Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto*, here entitled *Coronelismo: The municipality and representative government in Brazil*, has come to be recognised as a classic analysis of the system that emerges from 'the superimposition of structural forms evolved through the representative process on an inadequate social and economic structure'.

The text is here published without any substantial change or addition, according to the author's wish. His insights and approach remain as suggestive as when they first appeared; as Barbosa Lima Sobrinho pointed out in the preface to the second Brazilian edition, the work is not only the analysis of a structure, but the record of that structure and of the arguments about it at a certain time, a record important in itself.

Its place in the development of political analysis in Brazil is set out in Alberto Venancio Filho's introduction: 'a divide in the history of political science in Brazil . . . the first landmark of the study of politics in our universities'. The work is everywhere recognised as an essential text for the student of that country.

It is also an essential text for the student of *caciquismo* in the hispanic and mediterranean world. Dr Nunes Leal's material is the history of Brazil, the laws of Brazil and the Brazil of 1949, but his model investigation provides guidance and stimulus to all those interested in that area where conventional political science and the study of the local community by sociologist or anthropologist so often fail: the nexus between superior government and locality, the boundaries of private and public power and their interdependence, the imperfections and constraints of democracy at its not-very-fertile root, whether in Brazil or elsewhere.

M.D.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Introduction

It is a happy initiative to produce an English version of Victor Nunes Leal's book. It appeared in 1948 as a thesis presented in the competition for the chair in politics in the National Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Brazil, under the title of *The Municipality and the Representative Regime in Brazil – A Contribution to the Study of Coronelismo*, and was made known to the public under the title of *Coronelismo, Enxada e Voto*. In Brazil, the edition rapidly went out of print, and today it is a bibliographical rarity avidly sought after in the second-hand bookshops. Perhaps its publication in English will also make it easier for Brazilian students to get to know this fundamental work on the political institutions of their country, one that marks a divide in the history of political science in Brazil, being the first landmark in the study of politics in our universities.

These remarks are not lightly made, but correspond to the strictest truth. Before that date, studies in political science in Brazil were carried out by the self-taught amateur. Some had genius, as did Tavares Bastos, Alberto Torres and Oliveira Viana, but all suffered nonetheless from a lack of systematic culture in this field and from little contact in the university with foreign literature and the foreign masters. And coming as nearly all of them did from the faculties of law, their works ran parallel to those in public law, such as Pedro Lessa's *O Poder Judiciário*, or Anibal Freire's *O Poder Executivo na República Brasileira*.

The decade of the thirties saw the first university beginnings in the social sciences in Brazil, and the first signs of political science. The law faculties, timid, casual, wedded to the old Coimbra tradition, were in no condition to maintain their hegemony in these new fields, and they unconsciously let them pass, the study of politics included, to other departments of higher learning. In São Paulo, under the inspiration of Julia Mesquita Filho and of Fernando de Azevedo, Armando Sales de Oliveira created the Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters, *Filosofia, Ciências e Letras* in the University. In the *Distrito Federal* Anísio Teixeira called Afranio Peixoto to the Rectorship of the University, and he placed two great lawyers in charge, respectively, of the schools of Philosophy and Letters and of Law and Economics, the much-regretted Professor Edgardo de Castro Rebello and Professor Hermes Lima. The poverty in which we found ourselves in the social sciences was so great that the directors of these new universities had the prudence and honesty to seek a way out by contracting teachers abroad, the only serious way of laying the foundations

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xii *Introduction*

for this novel teaching in Brazil. Professors of the calibre of Henri Hauser, Emile Brehier and Eugene Albertini came to the University of the Federal District, and they left an indelible impression, some of them even staying on after the extinction of the University and the incorporation of these original two schools into the National Faculty of Philosophy.

Professor André Gros was contracted to teach politics at the University of the Federal District, and some time afterwards it was his post that came to be occupied by the author of this monograph of 1948. Of modest origins, born in a small community in the state of Minas Gerais, Victor Nunes Leal made his university studies in the National Faculty of Law, engaged in journalism, and began his career as a lawyer in the offices of Pedro Batista Martins. He formed part of the editorial staff of the *Revista Forense*, under the aegis of Carlos Medeiros, of whom he was later to write with emotion and respect. He at length joined the group of young intellectuals with which Gustavo Campanema surrounded himself while he was Minister of Education and Health.

With the gradual return of the foreign professors to their homelands there arose occasions for competitions, the traditional *concurso* for filling a post, and it was precisely for the *concurso* for the chair of politics that Victor Nunes Leal prepared the thesis that is here published for English and American readers. It is a model monograph, which shows the most acute vision of the problems of municipal organisation in Brazil, and the fullest mastery of the historical sources. These are sifted and analysed by a privileged intelligence, which brings together with rare precision the points of view of the political scientist and the lawyer. That carelessness of the law faculties in the thirties, by which they were cut off from political science, appears to have something to do with the precarious subsequent evolution of the study of politics, and to account in part for the deficiencies of the works that were produced, until recently, even by the most important centres such as the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of São Paulo. The present study is one of the honourable exceptions.

After his brilliant contribution to the *concurso*, the author continued to write studies on politics, which were published by the Institute of Public Law and Political Science of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, and in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Políticos*. But university life in Brazil, with its struggle between 'the authentic and the false, between science and mystification, between indifference and politics, between merit and faction', did not manage to hold the talents of this academic. His law business prospered and expanded. He was called to new tasks as *Procurador Geral de Justiça* of the Federal District, where he threw himself into various schemes of reorganisation. From there he went to be head of staff to President

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xiii *Introduction*

Juscelino Kubitschek, and finally to membership of the High Court, the *Supremo Tribunal Federal*.

Here too his passage left its mark, both in the rationalisation of the Court's work, where he showed his great organising ability once again, and in his strictly judicial activities, where he gave proof of his great legal culture, his rapid grasp of every sort of problem and ability to match social reality with juridical norms. His achievement there puts him on a level with the great figures of the Supreme Court, such as Amaro Cavalcanti, Pedro Lessa, Castro Nunes, Anibal Freire and Philadelpho Azevedo. His likeness to the last named is more than just a legal one, for the two share a physical similarity: low of stature, the discreet smile, affability and ease of manner, dynamism and enthusiasm. Both great organisers, and very open to the young, their careers followed a similar course: both came from the university, one from philosophy and the other from political science, and both had been *Procurador Geral*.

The day after his mistaken removal from the High Court, Victor Nunes Leal reopened his law office with all the enthusiasm of the most recently graduated lawyer, and collected around him in Brasilia a brilliant group of young lawyers, a real community of lawyers, linked with his other offices in Rio and São Paulo by every modern means of communication, computer included.

Today, ten years later, with the publication of his old thesis in English, he does not wish to add a line to a work that is already twenty-nine years old. In part this is the instinct of a man who does not return to the past, but who still looks to the future.

The author's attitude has a further significance, because in truth there is little to add to this monograph. It is still valid in its penetrating analysis of one of the most important phenomena of Brazilian political life, which those twenty-nine years have done little to alter. This 'simple contribution' is the basic work for the study of municipal organisation in Brazil, and the most substantial individual contribution made in Brazil to the field of political science. It can only be compared to the collection of the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Politicos* and its monograph supplements, which owe so much to the guidance of Orlando Magalhães Carvalho. Those other writers 'better equipped' for these studies never appeared, and now when there is so much presumptuous talk of a 'Brazilian political model', in which the district vote is seen as the panacea for all national political life, a reading of Victor Nunes Leal's book offers us a dose of modesty and humility in our attempt to understand a little about four centuries of Brazilian political life. The scientific treatment he gives to the singularities of the Brazilian case enable it to be compared with other ideal types of

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government
in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv *Introduction*

Latin American society, and indeed of many societies elsewhere in the Third World, and this justifies the publication of the work in English, so it can be known through the *lingua franca* of the international academic community.

England has given Brazil acute analysts of her political and social reality, writers like Armitage, Southey and, among the living, Charles Boxer. Today Brazil is returning some of that interest in the English publication of this monograph of Victor Nunes Leal.

Alberto Venancio Filho

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A note on the term coronelismo

It seems best to retain the Brazilian term *coronelismo* as there is no exact or even approximate English equivalent. By the same token, the form *coronel* (pl. *coronéis*) in the political, not the military, sense will be preferred.

The eminent historian and philologist, Professor Basílio de Magalhães was kind enough to write for this work, at our request, the following note on the origin of the term *coronelismo*: ‘The term *coronelismo* has, for some time, existed in our language with a specific meaning. Consequently, it is listed as a “Brazilianism” in dictionaries which appear on the other side of the Atlantic. Its relatively remote origin in this transposed sense, must unquestionably derive from the colonels, authentic or otherwise, of the now extinct National Guard. What emerged was that, apart from those who had actually held this rank, the style of address, *coronel*, began to be used by the rural population with respect to any and every political leader, any and every person of influence. Even today, in the interior of our country, the man of authority who has passed through an establishment of higher education (for these the style *doutor* (doctor), which strictly speaking should be applied only to physicians, is reserved) will inevitably, in the speech of the people, be accorded the title of *coronel*. Moreover, at the end of the eighteenth century there was the strange occurrence when one of the most distinguished figures in our political and literary history became better known by the military title which he accepted, than by his original academic qualifications, even though it was through the latter that he became judge in the district of Rio-das-Mortes: Dr Inácio José de Alvarenga Peixoto became simply: Colonel Alvarenga.

‘The National Guard came into being on 18 August 1831, with Father Diogo Antônio Feijó as its spiritual leader. By law, it came under the authority of the Minister of Justice (this office was then held by the immortal *Paulista* [Diogo Antônio Feijó, a native of the state of São Paulo]. At the same time those bodies of militia and special forces (like, for example, the more recent municipal guards) which came under the authority of the Ministry of War, were abolished. In his work, *Efemérides* (p. 465, 2nd ed. of the Instituto Historico), the Baron of Rio-Branco has this to say about the National Guard: “The Brazilian National Guard which was created by the Liberals in 1831, performed valuable service in the interest of public order, and was of great assistance to the regular army in our foreign wars, 1851–2 and 1864–70.” Since this last date it has become purely decorative.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-10231-5 - Coronelismo: The Municipality and Representative Government in Brazil

Victor Nunes Leal

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xvi *A note on coronelismo*

For nearly a century, a body of the National Guard existed in each of our municipalities. The rank of *coronel* was generally accorded to the political boss of the community. He and other officers, once they were established in their various ranks, immediately set about obtaining the patents, paying the emoluments and dues, so that the ranks became legally effective. One advantage, in legal terms, was important: officers of the National Guard, if arrested and subjected to criminal proceedings, or if convicted, could not be detained in ordinary cells, but had to be held in custody in the so-called “open room” of the public gaol of the locality to which they belonged. Every officer possessed the uniform and the insignia of the rank to which he had been assigned. In this military dress they took part in wars and also in religious and secular ceremonies in their home towns or districts.

It was usually the wealthiest landowners or the richest members of the commercial and industrial community, who exercised, in each municipality, the high command of the National Guard, and at the same time the patriarchal – all but dictatorial – political control invested in them by the provincial government. This state of affairs existed under the Republic as well as under the monarchy until Feijó’s creation was abolished. But the system was so engrained in the mentality of the rural population that even today the style of *coronel* is still accorded to those who hold in their hands the political staff of office, or the leaders of the parties which have greatest influence in the community, that is to say the despots of village conventicles. To the same group belong those whom Orlando M. Carvalho, on page 26 of his interesting study *Política do Município (Ensaio histórico)* (Rio, 1946), describes as “traditional *coronéis*”, that is, “the Duke of Carinhanha, *Coronel* Franklin de Pilão-Arcado and *Coronel* Janjão de Sento-Sé”.

Rich men haughtily displaying their wealth, squandering their money in licit and illicit pleasures – such were the *coronéis*, whose behaviour provided the occasion whereby this elevated military rank assumed a special meaning, implying, in socio-psychological terms, “the person who foots the bill”. And so the term *coronelismo* became part of the social and political activity in the rural municipalities.’