The Politics of Clientelism in Colombia

Democracy and the State

John D. Martz

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To a remarkable pair of grandparents,
with love and the warmest of memories:
John D. and Carolyn Martz
Harry L. and Ada Sipe

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Preface: A Personal Commentary

A young North American exchange student first set foot in Colombia during the penultimate year of the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship. If a somewhat quixotic memory is not playing tricks on me, it was the eve of Bastille Day, no less. Consequently, even the least quantitatively oriented scholar will calculate that I have been observing and studying Colombian politics and society for four decades. Notwithstanding any possible protestations that I was uncommonly precocious when I first arrived in Colombia, my contemporaries today recognize me as a veteran of Latin American social studies who is literally as well as figuratively a graybeard. At the same time, the passing of years may well enhance one's intellectual experience while nourishing that historical perspective that the social sciences sometimes denigrate or forget in their search for empirical truths. In my own case, the early years led to a thesis on the Rojas dictatorship and then to the 1962 publication of *Colombia: A Contemporary Political Survey* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962). The latter concentrated attention on the deterioration of elitist democracy and coalition government from the 1930s forward, punctuated by the rise of rural violence, the traumatizing *bogotazo* in 1948, and the breakdown of coalition governmental traditions that led to civilian authoritarianism under Laureano Gómez at the start of the 1950s. This culminated in military rule and the vicissitudes of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla as he sought to build his own personalistic regime. His ultimate failure was chronicled, along with the introduction of the Frente Nacional—the National Front system designed for biparty control of a renewed democracy, one in which traditional elites would reestablish their customary domination of Colombian life and society. The book was later translated and published in Bogotá by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (1969), and the original was republished by Greenwood Press in 1975. In the meantime, my own intellectual and regional research interests were relatively undisciplined. Thus, my publications

touched on a rather broad variety of topics. That is irrelevant here, except to note that I maintained a keen interest and curiosity about the National Front, and hence the course of political events in Colombia. Occasional essays, reviews, and varied short pieces were forthcoming. With the gradual move away from the National Front, initially in constitutional terms but only more recently as a shift in political dynamics, my research activities responded in kind. This has led during the past dozen years or so to more concentrated attention on both single-country and comparative studies focusing on Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Visits to all three have been frequent, including extended stays in Colombia for teaching as well as research in both 1986 and 1992, along with the most recent in the summer of 1995.

Those published works of mine that are most relevant to this book are cited where appropriate—selectively, not exhaustively. At the same time, I have been pursuing truly comparative work, and envisage extended work on the political parties of the three Grancolombian nations in the near future. Before any of this, however, came the realization that, as a Colombian student put it to me one evening after a seminar, "it is time to go back and update your earlier book." I shrugged off the idea casually, but the thought lingered. The fact that anyone even remembered a book written so many years earlier was striking. Furthermore, in reexamining the book carefully and rethinking my early research career along with commitments and interests over more recent and current agendas for investigation, other ideas also began to take hold. It soon became obvious that the appropriate effort should be much more than "updating." For that matter, how does one merely update some thirty years of politics? Absurd.

I leave to the Introduction a discussion of those theoretical and conceptual questions that have informed the book, as well as thematic political concerns that stand out during the decades of Colombian political experience which are the subject of the analytic narrative. They draw on the rich literature of political clientelism—so much a part of the Colombian tradition—as well as the more uncertain if currently thriving contemporary literature on democratization. In so doing, I acknowledge an extraordinary intellectual debt to a large and still growing contingent of Colombian and foreign social scientists. When I was first trying to untangle and understand the complexities of Colombian social and political life, the number of scholars similarly engaged was small. What a pleasure it is to survey the situation today.

Social science research in Colombia is not only alive and well, but represents some of the finest work anywhere in the western hemisphere. International cooperation and collaboration has also been extensive, thus rewarding a growing number of North Americans and Europeans. In Colombia and abroad, new contingents of talented graduate students are responding to quality education, and the results bode very well indeed for the future. It would otherwise be impossible to undertake a project as broad in scope as this book. For better or worse, I ultimately designed and structured a work that, if feasible by a foreigner, necessarily relies heavily on the investigations of many other scholars. The amount of literature that I have attempted to traverse is extensive and intensive, to understate the reality grossly. Others will have to judge the extent to which my undertaking has justified the effort.

Even granting the inevitably personal element that must accompany any modest effort to acknowledge one's intellectual and institutional debts, there are dangers of omission. With apologies in advance for those who I may be slighting, however, I cannot fail to extend special appreciation for some of those who were most generous of their time, energy, resources, and—most important of all—their ideas. Many have been affiliated with one or another of the institutional bases from which I have taught and conducted research. In 1986 these included the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, and also the Escuela Superior de Administración Pública. Lectures and conferences were conducted at the Universidad de Cartagena, the Universidad Tecnología del Magdalena in Santa Marta, the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla, and the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín. Six years later my affiliation was exclusively with the Facultad de Estudios Interdisciplinarios at the Javeriana, along with several weeks at the Universidad Antónoma de Bucaramanga.

Both of these visits were made possible through the Fulbright program, whose personnel were unfailingly cooperative. In 1986 Dr. Francisco Gnecco was a warmly hospitable executive director; six years later I found the same cordiality from Dr. Agustín Lombana. Program coordinator Consuelo Valdivieso Camacho has shepherded Fulbrighters through Colombia with exceptional facility and efficiency for many years. Other members of the Fulbright staff, although shifting over time, have earned my gratitude in countless ways.

Beyond Fulbright, personal indebtedness extends further than can be acknowledged adequately. Javier Sanín, S.J., has been in charge of the

program at the Javeriana while providing untiring support and friendship. Gabriel Murillo headed the political science faculty at Los Andes, where he and his colleagues have been collaborative, as many other foreign scholars can testify. Rodrigo Losada Lora has been a friend and colleague for many years, as is also true of Francisco Leal Buitrago. Vicente Torrijos Rivera at Javeriana also merits acknowledgment here. My intellectual debt to many other Colombian scholars and investigators is profound, as is true for North American *colombianistas*. Here too the list of names is prohibitively lengthy, although a particular word of appreciation is due Harvey F. Kline for both personal and professional favors.

My gratitude, then, goes to these and a host of friends, colleagues, and scholars. Would that they could have minimized the errors of omission or commission that follow—but these remain my responsibility exclusively.

John D. Martz
September 1995

Introduction: The Plan of the Book

There are certain themes—which some might prefer to designate as "characteristics," "historical trends," or simply treat as a conjuncture of important events and influences—that have dominated the reality of politics and society in twentieth-century Colombia. They have also provided the bases for the thinking and analyses of scholars and practitioners alike, leading to discussions and debates reflecting a variety of analytic perspectives and political experiences. While leaving serious consideration to the body of the book, a cursory summary would include: domination of politics and society by traditional elites in control of the historic Liberal and Conservative parties; solidification of a classically powerful clientelistic heritage; extensive rural violence from mid-century, both predating and surviving the breakdown of rule and an interregnum under military government; reestablishment of elitist control under an unprecedented constitutional system dividing power equally between the two major parties, while excluding all other participants; a gradual loosening of legal provisions while attempting to withstand growing participatory pressures; an inexorable process of modernization and urbanization; political maneuvering designed to redefine and restructure the state without altering fundamentally the exclusionary character of democracy; and prolonged domestic violence predicated on guerrilla activism as well as a flourishing drug industry.

To put this into even more terse if lucid shorthand, consider the resultant preoccupations as I undertook the project: traditional elitist rule; clientelism; democracy; the state; social and political controls; modernization and change. These required extended reconsideration of Colombian politics and of the literature extant—many times greater than that when I had written the 1962 book. They also demanded a probing of the theoretical literature on such topics as clientelism, democracy—both exclusionary and inclusionary—and the like. All of this led to organizational and conceptual priorities that have shaped the presentation from

beginning to end. At the risk of merely reciting the table of contents, let me nonetheless alert the reader to the path that I have laid down.

My thinking about a conceptualization of Colombian politics is set forth in the three chapters of Part I. Particular attention is devoted to clientelism, to that rich and powerfully suggestive general theorizing that others before me have presented as fundamental to an understanding of Colombian politics. The first chapter reexamines this literature and the role of the state. It also permits me to differentiate stages of clientelistic evolution, from traditional forms of feudalism and patrimonialism to modern forms that might be termed *corporate* or *bureaucratic* clientelism. These are applied in chapter 2 to the historical experience in Colombia. The subsequent breakdown of civilian government, a four-year interval of military rule, and a return to constitutionality are examined in the third chapter, as well as exceptional if ingenious institutional tinkering on the part of the political elites to restore a system in which clientelist mechanisms would be renewed.

Moving at this juncture more fully into the Colombian experience, Part II—"The Reimposition of Traditional Controls"—brings us into the period of the Frente Nacional and covers the years from 1958 to 1982. Consistent with my 1962 book and, more significantly, as a means of tracing the evolution of events and of political forces in detail, I have chosen to pursue a chronological approach, devoting individual chapters to the succession of four-year administrations. The Frente Nacional was originally intended as a sixteen-year experiment but, before having run its course, further reforms as well as practical political considerations further sustained its life. Rather than engage in debate at this point, let it merely be observed that I see the alleged *desmonte* or reshaping of the Frente system as having remained effectively functional through both the López Michelsen and Turbay governments.

There are certainly those who might insist that it was prolonged even beyond 1982. However, I will argue that a process of restructuring, in both institutional and behavioral terms, emerged with irresistible force during the Betancur government. As such, Part III pursues what are viewed as important redefinitions of clientelism and of the role of the state in its examination of the three administrations from 1982 through 1994.

In moving progressively through the nine successive governments from 1958 to 1994, comparability of analysis and of organization was deemed important. Thus, allowing for some adjustments in chapters 11 and 12,

the basic structure of presentation is unchanged. Chapters are divided into "Policies of Governance" and "Politics of the National Front" (or after). The former opens with "The National Environment," which permits an overview of population, demographic shifts, and the unimpeded trend toward urbanization and its consequences, which have tested successive administrations and produced a gradual evolution of clientelistic practices. This is followed by "Policies of the Administration," wherein systemic and regime responses and initiatives are cited and evaluation. Closing the first half of these chapters brings us to "Social and Political Controls," with particular emphasis to the ongoing struggle with guerrilla and with drug-related violence, accompanied by unrest and upheaval.

The second half of these chapters is preeminently political in the strictest sense of the term. "The Party Competition" deals with the incoming president and his team; with interparty relations; and generally carries through the midterm congressional elections (and local elections as appropriate in recent years). More is added to earlier discussions of presidential style, policy orientations, and the general course of political relationships. "Candidate Selection" continues the narrative, as does the subsequent section on "Campaign and Elections." As the chapters come to a close, it is within the framework suggested heuristically by the titles of each part of the book, as well as chapter titles. Having eventually traversed the chapters of Part III, in which the impact of continuing modernization registers ever more powerfully and leads toward redefinitions of modern clientelism and the modern state, we then turn finally to the concluding chapter.

This opens with a broad consideration of the Constitution of 1991, which continues to develop and to be progressively incorporated into the prevailing state system as successor to the document that had endured more than a century. The individual who undertook responsibility for the reshaping of the Colombian state in 1994, President Ernesto Samper Pizano, was subsequently plunged into a Watergate-style morass of rumor and scandal that was threatening his administration as these words are written in September of 1995. Whatever the outcome, the corporate character of contemporary clientelism remains writ large in Colombia. This permits a further assessment of those themes already alluded to: a reform of democracy and its public manifestations, and the continuing challenges to the system of both drug-related and guerrilla-inspired violence. In coming full circle from both the original conceptual concerns

and the cycle of political events covering virtually a half-century or more, we will hopefully have answered a few questions while raising many more for criticism, commentary, and future study. That is as it should be.

I

Conceptualizing Colombian Politics

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The Individual, the State, and Clientelism

At the core of all theorizing about the character of Latin American politics are fundamental issues concerning the individual, his place in society, and the role of the state in overseeing the conduct of public affairs. Those who would delineate a heuristic framework for the politics of the region are directly engaged in theorizing about central and universal concepts. The vitality of recent intellectual currents constitutes a recognition of the pervasive impact of ideas. As Johnson wrote, political theory for Latin America constitutes "a body of prescriptive beliefs about how the body politic and the government *ought* to function, what should be the optimal preferred set of relationships between man and the State, and what values and goals ought to be organically central to the system."[1] Certainly the individual is linked symbiotically to the state, which in turn exerts an inexorably powerful influence on the members of the polity.

The state bears the responsibility for the realization of civic needs, providing goods and services to each citizen. To do so requires the exercise and maintenance of social and political control. Certainly in Latin America the role of political and social governance is crucial, and the state has historically played an influential role. It stands as the prime regulator, coordinator, and pacesetter of the entire national system, the apex of the Latin American pyramid from which patronage, wealth, power, and programs flow. As a consequence, the nature and extent of controls are dependent upon the regime and its impact on policy. Until recently, scholarship on Latin America has been inhibited by the absence of well-developed theory linking regime and governmental process to policy formulation and performance.

While this condition has been gradually changing, it nonetheless remains incumbent upon us to bear in mind individual values, especially as these are linked to the clientelist impulse.

It will be our contention that the theoretical formulations about Latin American politics in recent years, notwithstanding many unquestionably valuable insights, have so concentrated upon the role of the state as to blur and perhaps minimize the significance of the individual. Whatever the semantic distinctions between "state" and "regime"—about which there is still little real consensus—it is clear that the individual is most often treated as the dependent variable. Presumably, if there may be significance of regime type in terms of policy outputs, this ought not be viewed as unaffected by social customs, morays, and the attitudes of the individual. Thus, the latter becomes one of our central concerns throughout the pages to follow, with power and political leadership developed and elaborated within the parameters of clientelism.

In treating of patron-client (P-C) relations, we are at one with Eisenstadt and Roniger when they state that from a topic of relatively marginal concern, its study "has become a central one, closely connected to basic theoretical problems and controversies in all the social sciences." There has been a change from limited dyadic interpersonal relations to a broad array of more institutionalized social relations and organizations. This is also directly germane to our Colombian study, given "the growing recognition that the phenomena subsumed under the umbrella of patron-client or clientelistic relations…may constitute, as they seemingly do in many Mediterranean, Latin America, and Southeast Asian societies, a central aspect of the institutional patterns of these societies."[2] Clientelism, in short, lies at the very core of our inquiry.

The Universality of Clientelism

We would insist that clientelism and its relationships have been manifest in Latin America from colonial times to the very present. Indeed, the concept is universal in character and, as J. F. Medard has written, is indispensable in understanding politics both inside and outside the Third World. In his words, "It is necessary to admit that modern political societies are penetrated by phenomena of this order [e.g., clientelism] to various degrees and in different forms."[3] Consequently, our analysis throughout is one in which clientelism plays a central role, and serves as a basic element in the effort of each and every political system to exercise and maintain social and political order.

Not all observers agree on the presence of clientelism in those nations regarded as most fully developed. At the least, however, there is close to

a consensus about the existence of the phenomenon as a state evolves and progresses from its early primitive condition. Gamer, who is generally critical of clientelistic politics, traces patron-client relationships through a developmental process, arguing that they exist to some extent in all societies. He declares that "developed nations still contain some patron-clientism but have moved beyond it; *the developing nations are ruled by patron-clientism and cannot move beyond it*."[4] Other scholars also view clientelism as existing not only in the traditionalistic rural setting in which it was most customarily identified in earlier years, but in more advanced developmental stages.

Robert Clark, for one, describes P-C systems as

> important features of urban politics in Third World countries.... In large cities throughout the Third World, such as Lima or Caracas, the festering slums and impoverished neighborhoods have produced squatters' associations…under the jurisdiction or control of local patrons who defend the interests of their clients and receive deference and respect (as well as more material rewards) from them in return.[5]

Clearly, developing nations today have moved beyond the stage in which clientelism existed solely in the countryside and the village. Over time, clientelistic systems have become crucial as links between national, urban-based modernizing elites and the masses in both urban and rural settings. Under present conditions most systems exist at both the levels of the rural village and of urban neighborhoods.

True to fundamental P-C relationships, there will be large numbers of individuals of low status, interacting with the powerful patron who defends their interests in return for deference or material rewards. The rural patron has increasingly become a member of the higher clientelistic system as well. He stands as an intermediary dependent on a patron who operates at the national level. This enables urban elites to mobilize low status clients for such acts as mass demonstrations of political loyalty to the regime. In one fashion or another, patron-client relationships and the mechanisms by which they operate are present at diverse stages of the long modernizing process. To repeat, at the core of our analysis is the contention that political clientelism is found in societies that have existed alternatively under feudal, patrimonial, or modernizing bureaucratic conditions.

While basic definitions of clientelism are not always universally accepted, there is substantial acceptance of the way in which John Duncan Powell has depicted the classic *traditional* P-C relationship:

> First, the patron-client tie develops between two parties *unequal* in status, wealth, and influence.… Second, the formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on *reciprocity* in the exchange of goods and services.… Third, the development and maintenance of a patron-client relationship rests heavily on *face-to-face* contact between the two parties.[6]

A more recent definitional treatment by Scott Mainwaring is similar in citing four major features of P-C relations: (1) their unequal character; (2) uneven reciprocity; (3) their noninstitutionalized nature; and (4) their face-to-face character.[7] He derived these characteristics from Weingrod, Scott, Graziano, and Archer, accepting the first three points while qualifying the fourth. Other sources essentially confirm the overall qualities of clientelism as defined by these scholars, especially in terms of traditional clientelism, as further elaborated later.

All of this strongly suggests that patron-clientelism at its most basic level "involves sets of patrons and clients cooperating with one another to retain maximum benefit for themselves from all assets which any of them handle *by personally exchanging these assets among themselves*."[8] An articulate French scholar effectively sums up these elements with the observation that the clientelistic relationship "is one of personal dependence…which links two persons who control unequal resources, the patron and the client, for a reciprocal exchange of favors."[9]

Qualities of dependence, unequal status, reciprocity, and personalization are consequently fundamental to the patron-client relationship. They remain relevant factors even as the process of modernization progressively transforms societies and political systems. More broadly, *clientelism* is viewed as an enduring mechanism of internal control in society. If it is true that each and every political regime is pressed to offer identifiable goods and services in meeting citizen needs, then it must also find mechanisms to assure the maintenance of social and political control. This suggests that the unfailing presence of clientelism, identifiable in all times and settings, underlines the fundamental character of the concept for an understanding of Latin American social and political life. Although the forms of clientelism change over time, they constitute decisive factors in analysis of the nature of society, the state, and the political order. Such is the basis for the elitist exercise of power.

Consequently, another of our central themes becomes the omnipresence of clientelism as manifested in the long historical evolution from its traditional forms (feudalism and patrimonialism) to modernizing bureaucratic

forms (labelled "corporate" by some scholars). The forms of clientelism, altered and reshaped over time, in recent years have been transformed into modern organizational form. We will sketch important ways in which the classical patron-client relationship, despite its relative transformation, has in no sense been diminished as a relevant political force. Indeed, the bureaucratization of clientelism serves as further evidence of the vitality of the concept as a central factor for political analysis.

A dissection of writings on clientelism and patron-client linkages will provide the background from which to look more closely at the Latin American experience. This in turn will be directed toward Colombia in the subsequent analysis. It will be argued that the clientelism that emerged in traditional form has been modified through a process of evolutionary response to the phenomena of modernization. The functioning of clientelism was embodied in the traditionally rural and peasantry-based forms of patron-client relationships during both feudal and patrimonial eras. With the advent of urbanization, technology, and rampant statism in more recent years, the clientelistic phenomena has been reshaped as a means of extending political and social controls under conditions of bureaucratic centralism.

To repeat, P-C relationships have been found in Latin America from colonial times down to the present. Systems imbued respectively with feudal, patrimonial, or bureaucratic characteristics have shared the basic necessity of providing services, responding to the needs of the populace, and to securing and maintaining social and political control. As the progression toward the modernizing bureaucratic state has unfolded, there has similarly been a shifting in many of the clientelistic relationships. Yet in one form or another, political clientelism has remained central to the functioning of the polity. And this in turn has continued to be writ large by the persistence of traditional attitudes toward the state and its role in society and everyday life.

John Sloan, in the course of discussions over regime types and policy performance, has put it well in reminding us that Latin Americans have never been attracted to a state that merely plays "the role of referee among the competing interests of society and…provides law and order and a minimum level of public services."[10] In fact, the modern state has come to be seen as the ultimate *patron*. The ideal arrangement is presumably one in which the state is the dominant institution in society. Given a mounting drive for modernization and development, the functions requi-

site for governance have expanded, in some cases exponentially. The advent of the bureaucratic state has brought genuine centralization of the system; pronounced statism; urbanization; the weakening of regional and local allegiances; industrialization; infrastructural improvements in such areas as transportation and communications; and economic diversification.

All of this necessitated the elaboration of new mechanisms for an exercise of authority, for a processing of demands without forfeiting social and political authority. Corporate forms of clientelism have taken shape, and on their effectiveness rests the fate of those who would govern. Equally significant is the impact on the populace, for to speak of the state, and of the *patron,* is also to treat with the citizenry—the individuals who are systemic clients. This underlines the innate conceptual relevance of clientelism historically. Governance has been effectuated through a broad array of society-wide linkages. The establishment and defense, or collapse and renewal of the ability to exercise social and political control, has been dependent upon the mechanisms of clientelism.

These took root and were nourished under the conditions of feudalism and then patrimonialism, only to move more recently toward bureaucratic centralism. The concept of clientelism is therefore basic to our theoretical formulations. The next two chapters will discuss the clientelist tradition in Colombia during the premodern era. This will lead to the more extended discussions in Part II, where the contemporary experience of Colombia's National Front (Frente Nacional) provides the framework for bureaucratic rather than traditional clientelist controls. This is further affected by the array of both institutional and noninstitutional changes that have been unfolding since the formal conclusion of the National Front. Most immediate, however, is a closer consideration of the literature on clientelism, after which this may be employed to inform our study of the Colombian experience.

The Traditional Concept of Clientelism

The Genesis

Originally the preserve of social anthropologists, notions of clientelage and patronage have gradually reached into allied disciplines while producing profound implications for Latin American studies. The seminal work serving as a point of departure for investigation of P-C relation-

ships was the 1950 study of *compadrazgo* by Mintz and Wolf.[11] This helped to stimulate further study—derived predominantly from the Mediterranean and Latin America—which led to increasing dissection of the patron-client relationship. Foster's series of articles in the early 1960s, drawn from his research in Tzintzuntzan, Mexico, developed and elaborated social relations between pairs—the dyadic contractual linkage.[12] Along with Mintz and Wolf, he saw that vertical *compadrazgo* symbolized patron-client contracts between parties of unequal status.[13]

A broader concept of clientelism was gradually developed to designate a particular kind of interpersonal relationship. It stressed a reciprocal need of individuals engaged in a dyadic exchange of resources and services. Its preoccupation was the analysis of how persons with mutual interests but unequal authority conduct relationships in order to achieve their objectives. Such linkages between so-called patrons and clients deal variously in patronage, influence, goods, allegiances and benefits; while the literature applies these and other terms of reference, the concentration on the character of the relationships is virtually universal. For political scientists, it is the existence of "patronage," in terms of politics as well as society, which has come to attract a degree of attention during the last two to three decades. Moreover, clientelism constitutes "a concept that generally interests political scientists because the patron everywhere occupies a preeminent place and plays the role of the principal intermediary between the center and the periphery. He is an important actor in most political processes."[14]

This has been most notable in discussions of political clientelism in the Third World. Clientelism can no longer be regarded as the exclusive preserve of anthropologists and, to a lesser degree, sociologists.[15] Rather, it has emerged in the literature as a form of personalized reciprocal relationship that constitutes a generic element of all political systems, most particularly those in the process of development and modernization. Political clientelism per se provides an analytic alternative to the group and class analyses so heavily employed by the discipline. While there is no denying the contributions of Bentleyan group theory, for example, let alone either Marxist or non-Marxist class analysis, not all political behavior can so be illuminated. Particularly for the polities of the Third World, as well as the less developed European states, it can be argued that the horizontal, class-based model of conflict has its limitations.

The clientelistic model, especially as applied to Latin America, has often been described as distinctive from either group or class analysis. Given the vertical polyclass linkages of clientelism, it can be argued that considerations of class are irrelevant. Clientelist ties are viewed as curbing or discouraging class mobilization, thus rendering class analysis largely irrelevant. On closer examination, however, this total dismissal of class as a determining variable appears unwise; there may well be grounds for a reconciliation of clientelistic and class-based characteristics. Certainly the manipulation of class and clientelistic interests may coincide, while the mechanisms of control and coercion may readily exist in either model. As Flinn has contended, class consciousness and class formation may very well be found in a society typified by strong clientelist relations.[16]

Clientelism, then, does not constitute a totally separate and unique model. It does possess features and characteristics, however, which may well be ignored or minimized in other models. For a time there was a tendency among scholars to argue that clientelism was an artifact of the past, or at the very most, an anachronistic reminder of times better gone and forgotten. However, it is now more prevalent to acknowledge the renewed interest in clientelistic analysis as a means of enriching the study of politics, especially in societies undergoing socioeconomic change under the influence of modernizing forces. It also restores the relevance of cultural factors that are too often forgotten in the construction of other models. The result may well be a more sensitized understanding of younger societies undergoing unprecedentedly abrupt transitions, thereby bridging in some part the intellectual and theoretical gap between the more and less advanced nations.

Scott, for one, has written that in typical nonindustrial circumstances, political groupings cut across class lines vertically. Consequently, a patron-client model of association bears a particular relevance to political action. Drawing on his studies of Southeast Asian bureaucracies and political parties at the local level, he contends that an emphasis on primordial sentiments—ethnicity, language, and religion—brings the analyst closer to the "real" categories of those being studied.[17] Other comparativists have concurred on the relevance of devoting attention, even if preliminary and tentative, to this approach. Political clientelism is therefore among the few genuinely cross-cultural concepts available for the comparative study of systems in transition. Cutting across both

"traditional" and "modern" referents, it possesses a heuristic value that recommends serious efforts to employ it as a tool.

Feudal Clientelism

Some observations on historical experience and on further definitional matters is in order here. Recall our previous concern about differentiating between two stages of traditional clientelism—first feudal, and then patrimonial. The former can be traced back at least to the rise of feudalism in Western Europe and Japan. P-C ties at this early point displayed such classic characteristics as dyadic reciprocity, in which authority and the exercise of power are unequal. These linkages became basic to the system of land tenure and agricultural production. They developed most notably in rural areas marked by a concentration of wealth, power, education, and control of the land in the hands of a small elite. In the feudal polity, the basic method of governance centered on the lord and his dealings with the vassal. Feudal dependency created a formalized and legally sanctioned hierarchical relationship. The system became effective when it was institutionalized, and contributed to the solidification of legitimacy and the wielding of political power. As clientelage gradually evolved from feudalism in the direction of true patrimonialism, specialized administrative officials were named by the ruler as a type of intermediary between patrimonial ruler and the vassal. Although the relationships thus became somewhat more complex, they did not alter the basic character of clientelism.

In time, the Mediterranean and Latin American regions became notable laboratories for the nurturing of clientelism under conditions of patrimonialism. The Spanish and Portuguese colonizers of the New World recognized the utility of the system in terms of an indentured and subservient labor force. On large plantations and landed properties, the costs of production were minimized. Catholicism, in preaching the helplessness of mankind and the need for benefactors, provided otherworldly justification for the acceptance of traditional values and practices. This also seemingly excused, or at least explained, the practice of repression when employed by the patron. The coercive nature of the patron-client linkage was omnipresent, with the latter entrapped in a vicious circle of obedience, subservience, and impoverishment.

This is not to suggest that the patron-client relationship was necessarily an automatic expression of evil by the former or certain harsh oppres-

sion for the latter. The client under conditions of patrimonialism could secure such arrangements as kinship systems and extended family and clan organizations. Moreover, the inequality of the relationship with the patron did not deny the presence of a form of reciprocity, the maintenance of which was crucial for both individuals. Yet on the economic level, peasants living in rural societies possessed only their own labor, not land. Such clients also lacked the opportunity to employ better tools or equipment, while intellectually ill-equipped or unprepared to understand or even know the law. Often unaware of rights and obligations, the client grew accustomed to endure arbitrary injustices. Therefore, his only recourse was to seek out the patron as a means of coping with problems.

For the vast majority of peasants and rural dwellers, life took place under conditions of scarcity, where the major source of productive wealth was the land owned and controlled by others. The environment was rife with violence, disease, and death; injustice could be met at any juncture, often without prior warning. Coercive elements were inevitable, thereby aggravating the evident power asymmetry between superior and subordinate, between patron and client. The former would normally enjoy a relative monopoly of agricultural resources, with clientelism the mechanism of internal control. In political terms the clientelistic structure went beyond the unequal distribution of resources within society to include levers of systemic control. Governance and rule as well as commercial domination emerged from clientelism, while as subjects the clients could terminate the relationship only with difficulty, unlike the patron. In the words of a student of Peruvian politics,

> The clientelistic structure is a political structure because all types of material and non-material resources needed and desired by the members of a society are acquired and distributed, and conflicts over distribution resolved through the dynamics of the structure. The clientelistic structure includes both the government and commercial sectors of the society, and therefore is the basic political structure of the society.[18]

In much of Latin America this would become the reality to flow naturally out of evolving patrimonial clientelism. In its purest and most basic form, clientelism embraced a true dyadic relationship, definitionally composed of only two individuals. On this micro level, there was a voluntary agreement between them to exchange favors and, in time of need, to assist one another. The dyadic alliance revolved about the terms on which

favors are given and received. The two members of the alliance were customarily of unequal status or power.

As Wolfe put it, when instrumental friendship "reaches a maximum point of imbalance so that one partner is clearly superior to the other in his capacity to grant goods and services, we approach the critical point where friendships give way to the patron-client tie."[19] The result, in the felicitous description of Pitt-Rivers, is a "lopsided friendship."[20] Patrons and clients have different resources at their respective disposal, and the asymmetrical character of the linkage is a virtual certainty. Should the status of the two persons become equalized, both the asymmetry and the affective nature of the relationship are altered. At the rural level, then, despite a degree of reciprocity, feudal clientelism is commonly marked by a relationship in which a single patron defends the interests of large numbers of persons of lower status.

Brokerage and Patrimonial Clientelism

For colonial Latin America, the original dyadic relationship involved an economically and politically dependent client, and a patron. The latter, identified by the Spanish *patron* and the Portuguese *patrão,* explicitly designated an individual with status and authority. It was for the patron to dole out favors or indulgences selectively as a reward for loyalty, allegiance, and services from the dependent client. The two parties to the contract (whether or not a formal pact, its strength would be mutually recognized and accepted) would exchange goods and services on an increasingly nonequivalent basic. The offerings of the patron included protection against both legal and illegal exactions of authority, while some degree of economic recompense was also probable. The client, in turn, would offer both material and intangible assets. The first most commonly constituted labor and physical service, while the latter—by no means less important—would embrace loyalty and respect, along with supportive tasks that could well include directly political action.

The theoretical definition is perhaps nowhere better expressed than in Scott's words, drawn from his observations of Southeast Asian models of association:

> *The patron-client relationship—an exchange relationship between roles—may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron)*

> *uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates, by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.*[21]

Thus, the bonds that tie the system together are vertical and, although in theory the patron and client demonstrate equitably a special concern for one another's welfare, the inequality of status and power is a given. Furthermore, the patron customarily enjoys alliances with a large number of clients, although the reverse is rarely the case. At the same time, face-to-face contact between the two persons will accompany the actions and exchanges of the "lop-sided friendship."

This helps to introduce a leadership-followership system that is less group-centered than it is dominated by the patron. It also may lead to the emergence of a more complex arrangement, one in which there are in effect several tiers of followers. The clients of a patron may in turn have their own personal clients, and the emerging system becomes increasingly composed of chains of vertical dyads linking the highest leaders to those at the bottom of the pyramid through a series of subleaders. This multitiered structure, seen as a historical process, moves political clientelism to a higher level of development, one in which intermediaries become critical to the linkages. As developed in Boissevain's classic discussion of brokerage in Sicily, these persons act as systemic middlemen or, simply, as what he termed *social brokers*. Given an increasingly complicated system, it becomes the task of the broker to bridge gaps in communication.[22]

The gradual passage from historical feudalism not only creates new social demands and pressures, then, but requires an extension of clientelism beyond the original lord-vassal pattern. A growing societal complexity, further propelled by a greater variety in the "goods" basic to the P-C relationship, leads to systemic necessities that are to be embodied by brokers. This in turn complicates what had originally been a simple and direct role for the feudal patron. As Boissevain saw it, postfeudal society was characterized by competition for scarce resources. Competition inevitably emerged between rival entrepreneurs. While it was still possible to exert direct control over what he termed *first order resources* (land, jobs, and low-level personalistic favors), the *second order resources* consisted of strategic contacts with individuals who either controlled directly or enjoyed access to those with authority to control the distribution of resources. Persons dispensing first order resources were patrons, while

those managing second order resources were brokers. The fundamental brokerage role became that of placing people in touch with one another, bridging gaps in communication. For Boissevain, then, the broker was a "professional manipulator of people and information who brings about communication for profit. He thus occupies a strategic place in a network of social relations viewed as a communications network."[23] In time, with the further evolution of political forms and structures, brokerage functions provide means for bureaucratic directives to reach even the most remote peripheries of the state. There is a gradual shift away from kinship and family linkages to those performed by brokers in communication with patrons operating at the national level. Thus, the initial dyadic context of clientelism, having passed from the feudal to the patrimonial stage as a natural and uncomplicated adjustment, confronts greater pressures and demands with the growing complexity of society and the approach of the modernizing bureaucratic stage. At this point, the question is raised about the possibility of corporate clientelism. That is, must the clientelist model be restricted to relationships between individuals, or can groups and corporate entities act as patrons or clients?

We recall that with both of the traditional stages—the feudal and the patrimonial—clientelism was characterized by an inequality of participants; the reciprocal nature of exchanges; and the proximity of face-to-face actions. Society was agrarian, with the population dispersed across broad extensions of land and territory. Economic survival was based on local and regional, rather than centralized resources. Political authority was most often exercised meaningfully at the local rather than national level. Social mobility was scant, forms of mobilization primitive or nonexistent, educational levels depressed, and communications infrastructures extremely limited. As modernizing changes began to emerge, the structures and dynamics of patrimonial society and politics were questioned and challenged. Furthermore, although the term *patrimonial* could be used for traditional, historical political systems, its implications were becoming more far-reaching.

S. N. Eisenstadt was among those who argued along these lines, further insisting that patrimonialism might be applied not so much to a particular level of development, but rather to a way of coping with major problems of political life. It was on this basis that he sought to differentiate neopatrimonial from traditional patrimonial regimes. He saw them as sharing such common characteristics as "the basic modes of coping

with political problems; the relations between center and periphery; the major types of policies developed by their rulers; and the general format of political struggle and process."[24] And while some of his terminology differs from ours, he anticipated the subsequent contention that questions of legitimacy and efficacy of rule would display similarities between the more traditional and the contemporary contexts.

Certainly social and political controls could no longer be assumed to operate as in the past. And so it was that clientelism, so crucial for generations, seemed for some to have sunk into uninterrupted decline, perhaps to become an anachronism with the progressive unfolding of the twentieth century. Yet others still viewed it as providing a malleable and very real tool for the maintenance and defense of the political system, accompanied by its myriad socioeconomic interests. At the very least, one needed to ask if clientelism was becoming an artifact of the past or whether, alternatively, it might be transformed into new shapes and forms of continuing relevance to the political system.

The Bureaucratization of Clientelism

The Impact of Societal Change

As societies have gradually progressed from those simpler times that nurtured the old traditionalistic structures of feudal and patrimonial clientelism, the process of emergent modernization has led in turn to a progressive transformation of political clientelism. A powerful demographic shift from predominantly rural to urbanized societies; a recasting of the economy; the strengthening of the state; a centralization of political power and authority; these and a host of related socioeconomic factors came together to influence the course of politics, and the very character of systemic clientelism. This was noted earlier with the gradual shift from the original dyadic relationships of feudalism to the spread of brokerage networks and the patrimonial condition. While traditional landowners and local patrons were essentially community-oriented, in time the very community had to be linked more effectively to leaders at the national level. This stimulated patrons to become brokers, as socioeconomic and political forces were required to operate in progressively more centralized fashion.

The patterning of patron-client relationships therefore rose toward a higher organizational level, where the loyalties of the latter were tied

increasingly to predominantly material incentives. An increasingly complex form of political clientelism thus sought to meet the needs and demands of modernizing and urbanizing social and political life. This produced what Carl H. Lande termed *corporate clientelism,* which he described as a historical stage in the transition from personal clientelism to modern, supra-local politics. Thus, "It can be said…that the clientelist model can operate at any level ranging from the relationships between individual persons through that between sub-national groups to that between nation states."[25]

Gamer's analysis, if more simple, specified the existence of what he termed *minor* and *major networks*.[26] The former operates at the lowest level, serving the needs of the rural peasantry. Its patron, however, simultaneously acts as a broker through membership in a patron-client system on a higher plane. There, the role of intermediary becomes dependent upon a national patron belonging to the modernizing urban elite. The consequent function of the "major" network then serves as the primary source for the exercise of political authority and influence. The role of the state is enlarged. Gamer therefore concurs in the view that clientelistic relationships exist on different levels and operate in varied ways. A more telling statement comes from the sociologist Helio Jaguaribe in the Brazilian case:

> The essence of this system consisted in a bargain whereby patronage was accorded in return for the promise of support. The state served to foster and protect the existing regime, and at the same time provided the necessary number of sinecures to ensure the political support which the ruling class…needed in order to preserve its economic and political control of the country.[27]

When clientelistic activity extends beyond personalistic patrimonialism, it becomes largely dependent on the activities of interest groups and political parties. Where the rural social component remains sizeable, clientelism may turn organizationally to some form of collective peasant activity. Basic interpersonal clientelistic patterns become transformed into peasant organizations, with the capacity to link local, regional, and national interests. Such networks, consistent with the elitist characteristics derived from the patron, are themselves organized from above in purposive fashion and are intended as permanent institutionalized structures. Where they first take shape as peasant movements or federations, these in turn become linked to national political parties. The result is an urban-based form of

clientelism, corporatist in fashion, which attempts to meet the demands of the emergent national system and its increasingly bureaucratized processes.

This nationalizing of local, peasant-based clientelist organization was sharply etched in Powell's study of the Italian and Venezuelan cases, where patterns of behavior were maintained through the development of modernizing organizational forms. Too often, he contended, there may be "insufficient appreciation of the fact that such behavior may survive, quite functionally, very late into the developmental process."[28] In practice, however, a more elaborate patron-broker-client network develops, one that helps the national electoral process to penetrate to the very peasant village itself. National or regional political leaders recruit local leaders from among patrons and brokers. These latter in turn recruit subleaders or political workers who themselves assemble a larger following from among friends, family, and clan.

Patron-client ties thereby exist within the context of a national structure in which, however, state activity remains limited and authority is significantly localized. A separation still divides villages from one another, from the region, and especially the state. Heavy reliance is placed upon traditional networks, even where they embrace a host of brokers and intermediaries. As the countryside is gradually drawn from traditional toward mass society over time, the rural areas become more fully integrated into the larger system, even if the process is incomplete. This transitional process was well illustrated in Venezuela's recent past. While its peasant leagues operated on the basis of traditional patron-client practices—unequal status, reciprocity, deference and loyalty, and face-to-face communications—at the same time they became oriented to national party politics via mass mobilization and electoral participation.[29]

Under conditions generally found in transitions toward the modern bureaucratized state, there is an enlarged social and economic role for the state, one requiring additional clientelist mechanisms. And whatever the degree of integration achieved, both the bureaucracy and the political parties are located at or very near the center of state functions. As developmental processes of modernization drive a nation toward a more urbanized existence, it is inevitable that state activities grow in concentration and intensity. The previous separation of town, region, and nation is altered as dividing lines are blurred and in some cases erased. Granted the broad bureaucratization of the state, patron-client linkages become collectivized more than personalized.

As Weingrod sees it, *"party-directed patronage…is associated with the expanding scope and general proliferation of state activities, and also with the growing integration of village, city, and state."*[30] The conditions of rural society become largely displaced, both in environmental setting and in the context of the former dyadic personal relationships. There is also some shift in the character of rewards and benefits for the clients and, once again, organizational rather than individual patrons become ever more powerful. While the evolutionary process moves further toward a concentration on urban dwellers and their politics, clientelistic mechanisms retain their basic importance. Influence, material rewards, and benefits—often conveyed simply by the word "patronage"—come into play as manifestations of so-called corporate clientelism in the modernizing, urbanizing setting.

In the broadest and most generic political sense, the term has been commonly employed by students of politics within the context of traditional big city politics in the United States. Thus, "patronage" has been virtually synonymous with the distribution of public jobs and the dispensation of special favors in exchange for political loyalty and electoral support. It has also been treated in many cases as a form of systemic corruption that taints the body politic. But the notion should not be this simplistic. The writings of political scientists have placed particular stress on the urban electoral process in dealing with patronage. For V. O. Key, this meant "the response of government to the demands of an interest group—the party machinery—that desires a particular policy in the distribution of public jobs."[31] To Frank Sorauf, patronage was an incentive system, a form of "political currency" with which to purchase political activity and responses. An active organization is to be maintained as a means of attracting and retaining loyalists in general and voters in particular. The conditions of rural society have been largely displaced, both in environmental setting and in the context of the former dyadic personal relationships.

To recapitulate, the early experience of feudal and of patrimonial clientelism is characterized by attitudes and actions structured about a personalized P-C relationship. The dyadic leadership-followership system is dynamic and susceptible to swift change. The personality, the charisma, and the general position of superiority enables the patron to exercise his own preferences. The reciprocity between patron and client is asymmetrical; the first seeks prestige and power, the latter largesse and protection. In view of the stark dependence on face-to-face commu-

nications at this stage of clientelism, agreements are necessarily private and informal. Political dimensions may well be modest, and there is little contact between those who are high and low in the hierarchy. What is described as political clientelism constitutes an affective, highly personalized relationship in which the participants engage in mutually beneficial transactions from positions of vastly unequal resources.

As already described, sociopolitical urbanization and the transition toward an industrializing, city-based society requires the growth of the state; this in turn provokes the necessary evolution of more complex and modernizing political clientelism. "Corporate clientelism," as Lande put it, moves beyond traditional dyadic clientelism and brokerage networks. With the enlargement of the state and its assumption of greater authority and responsibility for social controls and the distribution of wealth comes the ever more pervasive role of the bureaucracy. Public office proffers greater social mobility and enhanced personal status for the individual. At the collective level, the political parties provide the organizational sources for both economic and political rewards that may be bestowed through the brokers upon the ultimate clients. They offer a means to mobilize broad popular support and to meet the demands coming from society. If these latter demand major social change, the bureaucratizing response may well be resistant. It is often conservative in nature, and there is an inclination to maintain social and political controls—to manage conflict with a minimum of violence. The concomitant tendency favors policies and actions emphasizing short-run gains rather than long-range transformations, and the forces favoring the status quo remain powerful. This is generally consistent with the inherent systemic conservatism of P-C relationships, which labors to reinforce those already enjoying positions of strength.

Emergence of the modernizing bureaucratic state consequently requires new forms of P-C relationships. Old traditional forms will no longer suffice. To repeat, with this bureaucratization comes a nationalizing of the economic system; the process of industrial growth; a dilution of regionalism and localism by expanded networks for communication and transportation; the very urbanization of the population; and the impact of technological change and innovation. These and related circumstances render weak and insignificant the old clientelistic forms whereby social and political controls could be maintained. Whether or not national leaders have the capacity to develop and incorporate new forms and interpre-

tations of political clientelism therefore becomes a basic question, answers to which may help determine the future contours of a modernizing political system. The effectiveness of a modernizing form of clientelism in exercising social and political control thus becomes an empirical question. Our central task here is to pursue this analysis with the case of Colombia. Before turning to these specifics, however, a broader discussion of the Latin American experience may well be in order.

Political Clientelism in Latin America

The Iberian Heritage and Traditional Clientelism

The implantation of patterns derived from the Iberian Peninsula of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries began to shape traditional Latin American clientelism from the moment of discovery and conquest. Aristocratic forms introduced from Spain and Portugal swiftly produced a rigid two-class system. Colonial rule brought with it a landowning aristocracy claiming descent from the conquistadores and often from the Iberian landed gentry. The lower class was composed of peasants and servants. As racial intermingling took place, much of the region saw the emergence of the mestizo. While regarded less unfavorably than pure-blooded Indians, the mestizo only rarely found it possible to enter the self-protective aristocracy in the colonies. In fact, with the passing of generations the latter tended to place particular pride upon its claims of *abolengo*—inheritance of racial and class purity from ancestors in the distant colonial past.

At least three sets of controlling attitudes or values took hold—all of them consistent with Iberian patterns.[32] One revolved about personalism, viewed as the unique character of every individual. The inner soul, the essence of the person was crucial to all human interrelationships. Consequently, friendship and family ties were of inestimable importance. To accomplish a task, one relied upon those closest to him. This in turn encouraged a second basic trait, that of strong kinship. Extended relationships of kin and clan were honored, based on marriage as well as direct blood ties. The practice of *compadrazgo* or co-godparenthood rested upon these ties, with a wide circle of relatives involved. Respect for the authority of the eldest in the family was included, thus lending a patriarchal quality to this set of values.