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# Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia

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The analysis presented here is an effort to elaborate the patron-client model of association, developed largely by anthropologists, and to demonstrate its applicability to political action in Southeast Asia. Inasmuch as patron-client structures are not unique to Southeast Asia but are much in evidence particularly in Latin America, in Africa and in the less developed portions of Europe, the analysis may possibly have more general value for an understanding of politics in less developed nations.

Western political scientists trying to come to grips with political experience in the Third World have by and large relied on either (or both) of two models of association and conflict. One model is the horizontal, class model of conflict represented most notably by Marxist thought. It has had some value in explaining conflict within the more modern sector of colonial nations and in analyzing special cases in which rural social change has been so cataclysmic as to grind out a dispossessed, revolutionary agrarian mass. By and large, however, its overall value is dubious in the typical nonindustrial situation where most political groupings cut vertically across class lines and where even nominally class-based organizations like trade unions operate within parochial boundaries of ethnicity or religion or are simply personal vehicles. In a wider sense, too, the fact that class categories are not prominent in either oral or written political discourse in the Third World damages their *a priori* explanatory value.

The second model, and one which comes much closer to matching the "real" categories subjectively used by the people being studied, emphasizes primordial sentiments (such as ethnicity, language, and religion), rather than horizontal class ties. Being more reflective of self-identification, the primordial model naturally helps to explain the tension and conflict that increasingly occurred as these isolated, ascriptive groups came into contact and competed for power. Like the class model, however—although less well developed theoretically—the primordial model is largely a conflict model and is of great value in analyzing hostilities between more or less corporate and ascriptive cultural groupings.<sup>1</sup> Important as such

conflict has been, it hardly begins to exhaust the political patterns of Southeast Asia and Africa, let alone Latin America. If we are to account, say, for intra-ethnic politics or for patterns of cooperation and coalition building among primordial groups, then the primordial model cannot provide us with much analytical leverage.

The need to develop a conceptual structure that would help explain political activity that does not depend solely on horizontal or primordial sentiments is readily apparent in Southeast Asia.<sup>2</sup> In the Philippines, for example, class analysis can help us understand the recurrent agrarian movements in Central Luzon (e.g., Sakdalistas and Huks) among desperate tenants and plantation laborers; but it is of little help in explaining how Magsaysay succeeded in weaning many rebels away from the Huks, or, more important, in analyzing the normal patterns of political competition between Philippine parties. In Thailand, primordial demands may help us discern the basis of dissident movements in North and Northeast Thailand, but neither primordialism nor class analysis explains the intricate pattern of the personal factions and coalitions that are at the center of oligarchic Thai

Revolution," in Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States* [New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963]; and Max Gluckman (*Custom and Conflict in Africa* [Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1963]).

<sup>2</sup> A number of political studies of Southeast Asia have dealt with factionalism or patron-client ties. The most outstanding is Carl Landé's *Leaders, Factions, and Parties: the Structure of Philippine Politics*, Monograph No. 6 (New Haven: Yale University—Southeast Asia Studies, 1964). For the Thai political system, Fred W. Riggs' *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966) and David A. Wilson's *Politics in Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962) pursue a similar line of analysis; and for Burma, see Lucian W. Pye, *Politics, Personality, and Nation-Building: Burma's Search for Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). Some notable attempts to do comparable studies outside Southeast Asia are: Colin Leys, *Politicians and Policies: An Essay on Politics in Acholi Uganda 1962–1965* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1967); Myron Weiner, *Party-Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Paul R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965); Frederick G. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change: Orissa in 1959* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

<sup>1</sup> Two influential anthropologists who employ this mode of analysis are: Clifford Geertz ("The Integra-

politics. The almost perpetual conflicts between the central Burman state and its separatist hill peoples and minorities are indeed primordial, communal issues, but communalism is of no use in accounting for the intra-Burman struggles between factions within the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) or, later, within the military regime. Ethnicity and class do carry us far in explaining racial hostilities and intra-Chinese conflict in Malaya, but they are less helpful when it comes to intra-Malay politics or to interracial cooperation at the top of the Alliance party.<sup>3</sup>

As these examples indicate, when we leave the realm of class conflict or communalism, we are likely to find ourselves in the realm of informal power groups, leadership-centered cliques and factions, and a whole panoply of more or less instrumental ties that characterize much of the political process in Southeast Asia. The structure and dynamics of such seemingly *ad hoc* groupings can, I believe, be best understood from the perspective of patron-client relations. The basic pattern is an informal cluster consisting of a power figure who is in a position to give security, inducements, or both, and his personal followers who, in return for such benefits, contribute their loyalty and personal assistance to the patron's designs. Such vertical patterns of patron-client linkages represent an important structural principle of Southeast Asian politics.

Until recently the use of patron-client analysis has been the province of anthropologists, who found it particularly useful in penetrating behind the often misleading formal arrangements in small local communities where interpersonal power relations were salient. Terms which are related to patron-client structures in the anthropological literature—including "clientelism," "dyadic contract," "personal network," "action-set"—reflect an attempt on the part of anthropologists to come to grips with the mosaic of nonprimordial divisions. Informal though such networks are, they are built, they are maintained, and they interact in ways that will permit generalization.

Although patron-client analysis provides a solid basis for comprehending the structure and dynamics of nonprimordial cleavages at the local level, its value is not limited to village studies. Nominally modern institutions such as bureaucracies and political parties in Southeast

<sup>3</sup> Class as well as ethnicity is relevant to Malay-Chinese conflict, since the different economic structure of each community places them in conflict. Many a rural Malay experiences the Chinese not only as pork-eating infidels but as middlemen, money lenders, shopkeepers, etc.—as the cutting edge of the capitalist penetration of the countryside.

Asia are often thoroughly penetrated by informal patron-client networks that undermine the formal structure of authority. If we are to grasp why a bureaucrat's authority is likely to depend more on his personal following and extrabureaucratic connections than on his formal post, or why political parties seem more like *ad hoc* assemblages of notables together with their entourages than arenas in which established interests are aggregated, we must rely heavily on patron-client analysis. The dynamics of personal alliance networks are as crucial in the day-to-day realities of national institutions as in local politics; the main difference is simply that such networks are more elaborately disguised by formal facades in modern institutions.

In what follows, I attempt to clarify what patron-client ties are, how they affect political life, and how they may be applied to the dynamics of Southeast Asian politics. After 1) defining the nature of the patron-client link and distinguishing it from other social ties, the paper 2) discriminates among different varieties of patron-client bonds and thereby establishes some important dimensions of variation, and 3) examines both the survival of and the transformations in patron-client links in Southeast Asia since colonialism and the impact of major social changes (such as the growth of markets, the expanded role of the state, and so forth) on the content of these ties.

### I. The Nature of Patron-Client Ties

**The Basis and Operation of Personal Exchange.** While the actual use of the terms "patron" and "client" is largely confined to the Mediterranean and Latin American areas, comparable relationships can be found in most cultures and are most strikingly present in preindustrial nations. *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.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There is an extensive anthropological literature dealing with patron-client bonds which I have relied on in constructing this definition. Some of the most useful sources are: George M. Foster, "The Dyadic Contract in Tzintzuntzan: Patron-Client Relationship," *American Anthropologist*, 65 (1963), 1280-1294; Eric Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations," in Michael Banton, ed., *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, Association of Applied Social Anthropology Monograph #4 (Lon-

In the reciprocity demanded by the relationship each partner provides a service that is valued by the other. Although the balance of benefits may heavily favor the patron, some reciprocity is involved, and it is this quality which, as Powell notes, distinguishes patron-client dyads from relationships of pure coercion or formal authority that also may link individuals of different status.<sup>5</sup> A patron may have some coercive power and he may also hold an official position of authority. But if the force or authority at his command are alone sufficient to ensure the compliance of another, he has no need of patron-client ties which require some reciprocity. Typically, then, the patron operates in a context in which community norms and sanctions and the need for clients require at least a minimum of bargaining and reciprocity; the power imbalance is not so great as to permit a pure command relationship.

Three additional distinguishing features of patron-client links, implied by the definition, merit brief elaboration: their basis in inequality, their face-to-face character, and their diffuse flexibility. All three factors are most apparent in the ties between a high-status landlord and each of his tenants or sharecroppers in a traditional agrarian economy—a relationship that serves, in a sense, as the prototype of patron-client ties.<sup>6</sup>

First, there is an *imbalance in exchange between the two partners which expresses and reflects the disparity in their relative wealth, power, and status*. A client, in this sense, is someone who has entered an unequal exchange relation in which he is unable to reciprocate fully. A debt of obligation binds him to the patron.<sup>7</sup> How does this imbalance in reciprocity

arise? It is based, as Peter Blau has shown in his work, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*,<sup>8</sup> on the fact that the patron often is in a position to supply unilaterally goods and services which the potential client and his family need for their survival and well being. A locally dominant landlord, for example, is frequently the major source of protection, of security, of employment, of access to arable land or to education, and of food in bad times. Such services could hardly be more vital, and hence the demand for them tends to be highly inelastic; that is, an increase in their effective cost will not diminish demand proportionately. Being a monopolist, or at least an oligopolist, for critical needs, the patron is in an ideal position to demand compliance from those who wish to share in these scarce commodities.

Faced with someone who can supply or deprive him of basic wants, the potential client in theory has just four alternatives to becoming the patron's subject.<sup>9</sup> First he may reciprocate with a service that the patron needs badly enough to restore the balance of exchange. In special cases of religious, medical, or martial skills such reciprocation may be possible, but the resources of the client, given his position in the stratification, are normally inadequate to re-establish an equilibrium. A potential client may also try to secure the needed services elsewhere. If the need for clients is especially great, and if there is stiff competition among patron-suppliers, the cost of patron-controlled services will be less.<sup>10</sup> In most agrarian settings, substantial local autonomy tends to favor the growth of local power monopolies by officials or landed gentry. A third possibility is that clients may coerce the patron into providing services. Although the eventuality that his clients might turn on him may prompt a patron to meet at least the minimum normative standards of exchange,<sup>11</sup> the patron's local power and the ab-

don: Tavistock Publications, 1966), pp. 1-22; J. Campbell, *Honour, Family, and Patronage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); John Duncan Powell, "Peasant Society . . .," p. 412, Carl Landé, *Leaders, Factors and Parties . . .*, Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 10 (July, 1968), pp. 1142-1158.

<sup>5</sup> Powell, "Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics," *American Political Science Review*, 64 (June, 1970), 412.

<sup>6</sup> Another comparable model, of course, is the lord-vassal link of high feudalism, except in this relationship the mutual rights and obligations were of an almost formal, contractual nature. Most patron-client ties we will discuss involve tacit, even diffuse standards of reciprocity. Cf. Ruston Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

<sup>7</sup> In most communities this sense of obligation is a strong moral force, backed by informal community sanctions that help bind the client to the patron. A good account of how such feelings of debt reinforce social bonds in the Philippines is Frank Lynch's description of *utang na loob* in *Four Readings in Philip-*

*pine Values*, Institute of Philippine Culture Papers, No. 2 (Quezon City: Aleneo de Manila Press, 1964).

<sup>8</sup> Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: Wiley, 1964), pp. 21-22. Blau's discussion of unbalanced exchange and the disparities in power and deference such imbalance fosters is directly relevant to the basis of patron-client relationships.

<sup>9</sup> These general alternatives are deduced by Blau (p. 118) and are intended to be exhaustive.

<sup>10</sup> Later, we will examine certain conditions under which this may actually occur.

<sup>11</sup> There is little doubt that this last resort usually acts as a brake on oppression. The proximate causes for many peasant uprisings in medieval Europe during hard times often involved revocation of small rights granted serfs by their lords—e.g., gleaning rights, use of the commons for pasture, hunting and fishing privileges, reduction of dues in bad crop years—rights which offered a margin of security. Such re-

sence of autonomous organization among his clients make this unlikely. Finally, clients can theoretically do without a patron's services altogether. This alternative is remote, given the patron's control over vital services such as protection, land, and employment.

Affiliating with a patron is neither a purely coerced decision nor is it the result of unrestricted choice. Exactly where a particular patron-client dyad falls on the continuum depends on the four factors mentioned. If the client has highly valued services to reciprocate with, if he can choose among competing patrons, if force is available to him, or if he can manage without the patron's help—then the balance will be more nearly equal. But if, as is generally the case, the client has few coercive or exchange resources to bring to bear against a monopolist-patron whose services he desperately needs, the dyad is more nearly a coercive one.<sup>12</sup>

The degree of compliance a client gives his patron is a direct function of the degree of imbalance in the exchange relationship—of how dependent the client is on his patron's services. An imbalance thus creates a sense of debt or obligation on the client's part *so long as it meets his basic subsistence needs* and represents, for the patron, a “store of value”—social credit that . . . (the patron) can draw on to obtain advantages at a later time.”<sup>13</sup> The patron's domination of needed services, enabling him to build up savings of deference and compliance which enhance his status, and represents a capacity for mobilizing a group of supporters when he cares to. The larger a patron's clientele and the more dependent on him they are, the greater his latent capacity to organize

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volts, even though they generally failed, served as an object lesson to neighboring patrons. Cf. Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany* (New York: International Publishers, 1966); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Harper, 1961); and E. B. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (New York: Norton, 1959).

<sup>12</sup> Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, pp. 119–120, makes this point somewhat differently: “The degree of dependence of individuals on a person who supplies valued services is a function of the difference between their value and that of the second best alternative open to them.” The patron may, of course, be dependent himself on having a large number of clients, but his dependence upon any one client is much less than the dependence of any one client upon him. In this sense the total dependence of patron and client are similar, but almost all the client's dependence is focused on one individual, whereas the patron's dependence is thinly spread (like that of an insurance company—Blau, p. 137) across many clients. Cf. Godfrey and Monica Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change; Based on Observations in Central Africa* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1945), pp. 28, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Blau, p. 269.

group action. In the typical agrarian patron-client setting this capacity to mobilize a following is crucial in the competition among patrons for regional preeminence. As Blau describes the general situation,

The high-status members furnish instrumental assistance to the low-status ones in exchange for their respect and compliance, which help the high-status members in their competition for a dominant position in the group.<sup>14</sup>

A second distinguishing feature of the patron-client dyad is the *face-to-face*, personal quality of the relationship. The continuing pattern of reciprocity that establishes and solidifies a patron-client bond often creates trust and affection between the partners. When a client needs a small loan or someone to intercede for him with the authorities, he knows he can rely on his patron; the patron knows, in turn, that “his men” will assist him in his designs when he needs them.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the mutual expectations of the partners are backed by community values and ritual.

In most contexts the affection and obligation invested in this tie between nonrelatives is expressed by the use of terms of address between partners that are normally reserved for close kin. The tradition of choosing godparents in Catholic nations is often used by a family to create a fictive kinship tie with a patron—the godfather thereby becoming like a brother to the parents.<sup>16</sup> Whether the model of obligation established is father-son, uncle-nephew, or elder-younger brother, the intention is similar: to establish as firm a bond of affection and loyalty as that between close relatives. Thus while a patron and client are very definitely alive to the instrumental benefits of their association, it is not simply a neutral link of mutual advantage. On the contrary, it is often a durable bond of genuine mutual devotion that can survive severe testing.

The face-to-face quality of the patron-client dyad, as well as the size of the patron's resource base, limits the number of direct active ties a single patron can have.<sup>17</sup> Even with vast

<sup>14</sup> Blau, p. 127.

<sup>15</sup> The classic analysis of the functions of gift-giving (prestation) in creating alliances, demonstrating superiority, and renewing obligations, is Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1954).

<sup>16</sup> See Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf, “An Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood (Compadrazgo),” *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 6 (Winter, 1948) pp. 425–437.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Landé, “Networks and Groups in Southeast Asia: Some Observations on the Group Theory of Politics,” Unpublished manuscript (March, 1970), p. 6.

resources, the personal contact and friendship built into the link make it highly unlikely that an active clientele could exceed, say, one hundred persons. The total following of a given patron may be much larger than this, but normally all except 20–30 clients would be linked to the patron through intermediaries. Since we are dealing with positive emotional ties (the ratio of "calculation" to affection may of course vary), a leader and his immediate entourage will be comparatively small.

The third distinctive quality of patron-client ties, one that reflects the affection involved, is that they are *diffuse, "whole-person" relationships rather than explicit, impersonal-contract bonds*. A landlord may, for example, have a client who is connected to him by tenancy, friendship, past exchanges of services, the past tie of the client's father to his father, and ritual coparenthood. Such a strong "multiplex" relation, as Adrian Mayer terms it,<sup>18</sup> covers a wide range of potential exchanges. The patron may very well ask the client's help in preparing a wedding, in winning an election campaign, or in finding out what his local rivals are up to; the client may approach the patron for help in paying his son's tuition, in filling out government forms, or in getting food or medicine when he falls on bad times. The link, then, is a very flexible one in which the needs and resources of the partners, and hence the nature of the exchange, may vary widely over time. Unlike explicit contractual relations, the very diffuseness of the patron-client linkage contributes to its survival even during rapid social change—it tends to persist so long as the two partners have something to offer one another.<sup>19</sup> Just as two brothers may assist each other in a host of ways, patron-client partners have a relationship that may also be invoked for almost any purpose; the chief differences are the

<sup>18</sup> Adrian C. Mayer, "The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies," in Michael Banton, ed., *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, pp. 97–122. Mayer would call a short-term, contractual interaction that was limited in scope a *simplex tie*.

<sup>19</sup> In another sense the patron-client dyad is fragile. Since it is a diffuse, noncontractual bond, each partner is continually on guard against the possibility that the other will make excessive demands on him, thus exploiting the friendship. A patron may, for example, prefer to hire an outsider for an important job because he can then contractually insist that the work be of top quality. With a client, it would be a delicate matter to criticize the work. As in friendship, "the diffuseness of the [patron-client] obligation places a corresponding demand for self-restraint on the parties if the relationship is to be maintained." William A. Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey, 1968), p. 167.

greater calculation of benefits and the inequality that typifies patron-client exchange.

**The Distinctiveness of the Patron.** The role of patron ought to be distinguished from such role designations as "broker," "middleman," or "boss" with which it is sometimes confounded. Acting as a "broker" or "middleman"—terms which I shall use interchangeably—means serving as an intermediary to arrange an exchange or transfer between two parties who are not in direct contact. The role of middleman, then, involves a three party exchange in which the middleman functions as an agent and does not himself control the thing transferred. A patron, by contrast, is part of a two-person exchange and operates with resources he himself owns or directly controls.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the terms "middleman" and "broker" do not specify the relative status of the actor to others in the transaction, while a patron is by definition of superior rank to his client.

Important as this distinction is, it is easily lost sight of for two reasons. First, it is not always a simple task to determine if someone personally controls the resources he uses to advance himself. What of the case in which a civil servant distributed the subordinate posts in his jurisdiction to create an entourage? Here it would seem that he was acting as a patron, inasmuch as the jobs he gave out were meant as *personal gifts* from the store of scarce values he controlled and were intended to create a feeling of personal debt and obligation among recipients. The social assessment of the nature of the gift is thus crucial. If we were to find, on the other hand, that the civil servant was viewed as someone who had acted as an agent of job-seekers and put them in touch with a politician who controlled the jobs, then he would be acting as a broker. It is only natural that many an ambitious public official will seek to misrepresent acts of brokerage or simple adherence to the rules as personal acts of patronage, thereby building his following.<sup>21</sup> To the extent that he

<sup>20</sup> A *broker* does, in a real sense *have a resource: namely, connections*. That is, the broker's power—his capacity to help people—is predicated on his ties with third parties.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Congressmen spend a good portion of their time trying to seize personal credit for decisions which benefit their constituents whether or not they had anything to do with the decision—as broker or patron. For similar reasons, cabinet ministers in Malaysia and elsewhere have travelled about the country with government checks in hand, making grants to mosques, temples, and charitable groups in a way that will dramatize the largesse as an act of personal patronage. Every government decision that benefits someone represents an opportunity for someone to use that act to enlarge the circle of those personally obligated to him.

succeeds in representing his act as a personal act of generosity, he will call forth that sense of personal obligation that will bind his subordinates to him as clients.<sup>22</sup>

A second potential source of confusion in this distinction is that the terms designate roles and not persons, and thus it is quite possible for a single individual to act both as a broker and a patron. Such a role combination is not only possible, but is empirically quite common. When a local landowning patron, for example, becomes the head of his village's political party he is likely to become the middleman between many villagers and the resources controlled by higher party officials. In this case he may have clients for whom he also serves as broker. The diffuse claims of the patron-client tie actually make it normal for the patron to act as a broker for his clients when they must deal with powerful third parties—much as the patron saint in folk Catholicism who directly helps his devotees while also acting as their broker with the Lord.<sup>23</sup> If on the other hand, the political party simply gives the local patron direct control of its programs and grants in the area, it thereby enhances his resources for becoming a patron on a larger scale and eliminates the need for brokerage.

Patrons ought finally to be differentiated from other partly related terms for leadership such as "boss," "caudillo," or "cacique." "Boss" is a designation at once vague and richly connotative. Although a boss may often function as a patron, the term itself implies (a) that he is the most powerful man in the arena and (b) that his power rests more on the inducements and sanctions at his disposal than on affection or status. As distinct from a patron who may or may not be the supreme local leader and whose leadership rests at least partly on rank and affection, the boss is a secular leader *par excellence* who depends almost entirely on palpable inducements and threats to move people. As we shall show later, a settled agrarian environment with a recognized status hierarchy is a typical setting for leadership by patrons, while a more mobile, egalitarian environment is a typical setting for the rise of bosses. The final two terms, "caudillo" and "cacique" are most commonly used in Latin America to designate the regional—often rural—bosses. Again the implication is that coercion is a main pillar of power, and in the case of the *caudillo*, a personal following is

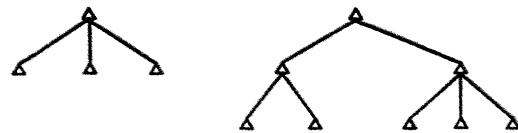
<sup>22</sup> And it naturally follows that in underdeveloped countries, where the patrimonial view of office is especially strong, a public post could be a client-creating resource.

<sup>23</sup> Foster, "The Dyadic Contract in Tzintzuntzan," pp. 1280-1294.

common.<sup>24</sup> A "cacique" or "caudillo" may act as patron to a number of clients but he typically relies too heavily on force and lacks the traditional legitimacy to function mainly as a patron. At best, a *cacique* or *caudillo* may, like a boss, be a marginal special case of a patron, providing that a portion of his following is beneath him socially and bound to him in part by affective ties. Over time, however, a metamorphosis may occur. Just as the successful brewery owner of late 18th century England might well anticipate a peerage for his son, the *cacique* who today imposes his rule by force may do well enough to set his son up as a landowner, whose high status and legitimacy strengthens his role as patron.

**Patron and Clients as Distinctive Groupings.** To this point, the discussion has centered on the nature of the single link between patron and client. If we are to broaden the analysis to include the larger structures that are related by the joining of many such links, a few new terms must be introduced. First, when we speak of a patron's immediate following—those clients who are directly tied to him—we will refer to a patron-client *cluster*. A second term, enlarging on the cluster but still focusing on one person and his vertical links is the patron-client *pyramid*. This is simply a vertical extension downward of the cluster in which linkages are introduced beyond the first-order.<sup>25</sup> Below are typical representations of such links.

Patron-Client Cluster      Patron-Client Pyramid



Although vertical ties are our main concern, we will occasionally want to analyze *horizontal dyadic ties*, say, between two patrons of comparable standing who have made an alliance. Such alliances often form the basis of *factional systems* in local politics. Finally, patron-client

<sup>24</sup> For good descriptions of both types of leadership, see Eric R. Wolf and E. C. Hansen, "Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 9, 2 (January, 1967), 168-179 and Paul Friedrich, "The Legitimacy of a Cacique," in Marc J. Swartz, ed., *Local Level Politics: Social and Cultural Perspectives* (Chicago: Aldine 1968), pp. 243-269.

<sup>25</sup> The terms "cluster," "network," and "first" and "second" orders are adapted from a somewhat similar usage by J. A. Barnes, "Networks and Political Processes," in Swartz, ed., pp. 107-130.

*networks* are not ego-focused but refer to the overall pattern of patron-client linkages (plus horizontal patron alliances) joining the actors in a given area or community.

Patron-client clusters are one of a number of ways in which people who are not close kin come to be associated. Most alternative forms of association involve organizing around categorical ties, both traditional—such as ethnicity, religion, or caste—and modern—such as occupation or class—which produce groups that are fundamentally different in structure and dynamics. The special character of patron-client clusters stems, I believe, from the fact that, unlike categorically-based organizations, such clusters a) have a basis of membership that is specific to each link,<sup>26</sup> and b) are based on individual ties to a leader rather than on shared characteristics or horizontal ties among followers.

Some other important distinctions between categorical and patron-client groupings follow from these particular principles of organization. Here I rely heavily on Carl Landé's more elaborate comparisons between dyadic followings and categorical groups.<sup>27</sup>

1. *Members' Goals:* Clients have particularistic goals which depend on their personal ties to the leader, whereas categorical group members have common goals that derive from shared characteristics which distinguish them from members of other such groups.
2. *Autonomy of Leadership:* A patron has wide autonomy in making alliances and policy decisions as long as he provides for the basic material welfare of his clients, whereas the leader of a categorical group must generally respect the *collective* interest of the group he leads.
3. *Stability of Group:* A patron-client cluster, being based on particularistic vertical links, is highly dependent on its leader's skills and tends to flourish or disintegrate depending on the resources of the leader and the satisfaction of individual client demands. A categorical group, by contrast, is rooted more firmly in horizontally shared qualities and is thus less dependent for its survival on the quality of its leadership and more durable in its pursuit of broader, collective (often policy) interests.

<sup>26</sup> Mayer, "The Significance of Quasi-Groups . . ." p. 109.

<sup>27</sup> Landé, "Networks and Groups . . ." (unpublished manuscript), pp. 6-12.

4. *Composition of Group:* Patron-client clusters, because of the way they are created, are likely to be more heterogeneous in class composition than categorical groups which are based on some distinctive quality which members share. By definition, patron-client pyramids join people of different status rankings while categorical groups *may or may not* be homogeneous in status.
5. *Corporateness of Group:* In a real sense a patron-client cluster is not a group at all but rather an "action-set" that exists because of the vertical links to a common leader—links which the leader may activate in whole or in part.<sup>28</sup> Followers are commonly not linked directly to one another and may, in fact, be unknown to each other. An organized categorical group, by contrast, is likely to have horizontal links that join members together so that it is possible to talk of a group existence independent of the leader.

Although this listing is not exhaustive, it does illustrate the special character of patron-client networks. Bearing in mind the generic qualities of these ties, we now turn to the range of variation within the genus.

## II. Variation in Patron-Client Ties

One could potentially make almost limitless distinctions among patron-client relationships. The dimensions of variation considered here are selected because they seem particularly relevant to our analytical goal of assessing the central changes in such ties within Southeast Asia. Similar distinctions should be germane to the analysis of other preindustrial nations as well.

**The Resource Base of Patronage.** A potential patron assembles clients on the basis of his ability to assist them. For his investment of assets, the patron expects a return in human resources—in the form of the strength of obligation and the number of clients obligated to him. The resource base or nature of the assets a patron has at his disposal can vary widely. One useful basis for distinguishing among resources is the directness with which they are controlled. Patrons may, in this sense, rely on a) their own knowledge and skills, b) direct control of personal real property, or c) indirect control of the property or authority of others (often the public). The resources of *skill and knowledge* are most recognizable in the roles of lawyer,

<sup>28</sup> Mayer, p. 110.

doctor, *literatus*, local military chief, teacher—religious or secular. Those equipped with these skills control scarce resources than can enhance the social status, health, or material well being of another. Inasmuch as such resources rest on knowledge, they are less perishable than more material sources—although the *time* of the expert is limited—and can be used again and again without being diminished. Such resources are relatively, but not entirely, secure. In the case of lawyers and literati, for example, the exchange price of their services depends respectively on the continued existence of a court system and the veneration of a particular literary tradition, both of which are subject to change. The value of a local military chief's protection is similarly vulnerable to devaluation once the nation state has established local law and order.

Reliance on *direct control of real property* is a second common means of building a clientele. Traditionally, the typical patron controlled scarce land. Those he permitted to farm it as sharecroppers or tenants became permanently obligated to him for providing the means of their subsistence. Any businessman is in a similar position; as the owner of a tobacco factory, a rice mill, or a small store he is able to obligate many of those of lower status whom he employs, to whom he extends credit, or with whom he does business. This kind of resource, in general, is more perishable than personal skills. A landlord has only so many arable acres, a businessman only so many jobs, a shopkeeper so much ready cash, and each must carefully invest those resources to bring the maximum return. Like any real property, moreover, private real property is subject to seizure or restrictions on its use.

A third resource base available to the potential patron is what might be called *indirect, office-based property*. Here we refer to patrons who build a clientele on the strength of their freedom to dispense rewards placed in their trust by some third party (parties). A village headman who uses his authority over the distribution of communal land to the poor or the distribution of *corvée* labor and taxation burdens in order to extend his *personal* clientele would be a typical example of traditional office-based patronage. One can classify similarly office-holders in colonial or contemporary settings whose discretionary powers over employment, promotion, assistance, welfare, licensing, permits, and other scarce values can serve as the basis of a network of personally obligated followers. Politicians and administrators who exploit their office in this way to reward clients while violating the formal norms of public conduct are, of course, acting corruptly. Finally,

we should add private-sector office-holders in the private sector such as plantation managers, purchasing agents, and hiring bosses, who may also use their discretionary authority to nurture a clientele.

Indirect, office-based property is least secure in many respects, as its availability depends on continuity in a position that is ultimately given or withdrawn by third parties. A landlord will usually retain his local base whereas an office-holder is likely to be swept out by a new victor at the polls or simply by a power struggle within the ruling group. In spite of the risks involved, these posts are attractive because the resources connected with many of them are far greater than those which an individual can amass directly.

The categories of resources just discussed are not mutually exclusive. It is common, for example, for a patron to have a client who is obligated to him by being a tenant on his land and also by having secured an agricultural loan through his patron's chairmanship of the ruling party's local branch. The resources that cement a dyadic tie may thus be multiple—it is often a question of deciding which is the predominant resource. Much the same analysis can be made of a patron-client cluster or network, since a patron may have clients who are bound to him by quite different resources, and it is often important to determine what the main resource is that holds the cluster together.

**Resource Base of Clientage.** As the other member of a reciprocating pair, the client is called upon to provide assistance and services when the patron requires them. The variation in the nature of such assistance is another means of distinguishing one patron-client dyad from another. Here one might want to differentiate: (1) *labor services and economic support*, as provided by a rent-paying tenant or employee, (2) *military or fighting duties*, such as those performed by members of a bandit group for their chief, and (3) *political services* such as canvassing or otherwise acting as an agent of a politician. Within the "political service" category one may wish to separate electoral services from nonelectoral political help. I should add here that the term "clients" can refer to those who are in the middle of a patron-client pyramid—being a client to someone higher up and a patron to those below. In this case, a superior patron will be interested in his client's potential services, but those services will include the size, skills, assets, and status of the client's own subordinate following.

Just as a patron-client dyad can be distinguished by the main resource base of clientage

so can a patron-client cluster be categorized by the modal pattern of client services for the cluster or pyramid as a whole.

**Balance of Affective and Instrumental Ties.** By definition, instrumental ties play a major role in the patron-client dyad. It is nonetheless possible to classify such dyads by the extent to which affective bonds are also involved in the relationship. At one end of this continuum one might place patron-client bonds which, in addition to their instrumental character, are reinforced by affective links growing, say, from the patron and the client having been schoolmates, coming from the same village, being distant relatives, or simply from mutual love. Comparable affective rewards may also spring from the exchange of deference on the one hand and *noblesse oblige* on the other in a settled agrarian status network—rewards that have value beyond the material exchanges they often involve.<sup>29</sup> At the other end of the spectrum lies a dyadic tie much closer to an almost neutral exchange of goods and services. The more purely coercive the relationship is and the less traditional legitimacy it has, the more likely that affective bonds will be minimal.

This distinction has obvious analytical value. If we were to look at a patron's entire following, we would be able to classify each vertical bond according to the ratio of affective to instrumental rewards involved. (one could, of course, do the same for horizontal alliances. Using this criterion we could identify a set of followers among whom the ratio of affective to instrumental ties was relatively high, reflecting perhaps distant kinship, old village or neighborhood ties, or comparable bonds. The loyalty of this set of followers would be less dependent upon a continued flow of material benefits, simply because their loyalty is partly based on non-material exchanges. As we move beyond this partly affective following to a patron's other supporters, the weight of instrumental, usually material, ties becomes relatively more important. The nature of a man's following—the balance of affective to instrumental ties obligating his clients to him—can tell us something about its stability under different conditions. When a patron increases his material resource base, it is his instrumental following that will tend to

<sup>29</sup> There is no contradiction, I believe, in holding that a patron-client link originates in a power relationship and also holding that genuine affective ties reinforce that link. Affective ties often help legitimate a relationship that is rooted in inequality. For an argument that, in contrast, begins with the assumption that some cultures engender a psychological need for dependence, see Dominique O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (New York: Praeger, 1964).

grow rapidly, and when he is in decline, that same following will shrink rapidly, as clients look for a more promising leader. The degree of dependence on material incentives within a following is, in principle, a quality one could measure by establishing how much more than their present material rewards a rival patron would have to offer to detach a given number of another's clients.

The affective-instrumental distinction just made leads to a similar, but not identical, distinction between the *core* and *periphery* of a man's following. These categories actually are distributed along a continuum; at the *periphery* of a man's following are those clients who are relatively easy to detach while at the *core* are followers who are more firmly bound to him. The *periphery* is composed of clients bound largely by instrumental rewards, while the *core* is composed of clients linked by strong affective ties, as well as clients who are attracted to a patron by such strong instrumental ties that they seem unbreakable.<sup>30</sup> This amounts, in effect, to a distinction between a man's virtually irreducible following and his more or less fluctuating, "fair-weather" following. Patrons can then be differentiated by the size of their core-following relative to their peripheral-following. A landlord or a businessman will generally have a sizable core group composed both of his friends, kin, etc., and of his tenants or employees. This nucleus is his initial following; his clientele may grow larger, but it is unlikely to contract further than this durable core. A politician or bureaucrat, on the other hand, unless he is privately wealthy, is likely to have a comparatively smaller core group composed mostly of those with whom he has strong affective ties and, hence, a relatively large proportion of "fair-weather" clients. The blows of fortune such a politician or administrator suffers are more likely to be instantly and fully reflected in a reduction of the size of his clientele, which is largely a calculating one. Politicians, and bureaucrats, because they have smaller core followings and because they can, through their office, often tap vast resources, are apt to have meteoric qualities as patrons; the landholder, by contrast, is likely to cast a steadier, if dimmer, light.

**Balance of Voluntarism and Coercion.** There are obvious and important differences in the degree of coercion involved in a patron-client bond. At one end are the clients with virtually no choice but to follow the patron who directly

<sup>30</sup> F. G. Bailey uses the terms "core" and "support" in much the same fashion: see his "Parapolitical Systems," in Swartz, ed., *Local-Level Politics*, pp. 281-294.

controls their means of subsistence. Here one might place a tenant whose landlord provides his physical security, his land, his implements and seed, in a society where land is scarce and insecurity rife. Nearer the middle of this continuum would perhaps be the bonds between independent smallholders who depend on a landlord for the milling and marketing of their crops, for small loans, and for assistance with the police and administration. Such bonds are still based on inequality, but the client, because he has some bargaining power, is not simply putty in his patron's hands. Finally, let us assume that an electoral system has given clients a new resource and has spurred competition among patrons for followings that can swing the election to them. In this case the inequality in bargaining power is further reduced, and the client emerges as more nearly an independent political actor whose demands will receive a full hearing from his patron.

In general, the oppression of the client is greater when the patron's services are vital, when he exercises a monopoly over their distribution, and when he has little need for clients himself. The freedom of the client is enhanced most when there are many patrons whose services are not vital and who compete with one another to assemble a large clientele—say for electoral purposes.

The greater the coercive power of the patron vis-à-vis his client, the fewer rewards he must supply to retain him. A patron in a strong position is more likely to employ *sanctions*—threats to punish the client or to withdraw benefits he currently enjoys—whereas a relatively weaker patron is more likely to offer inducements—promises to reward a client with benefits he does not now enjoy.<sup>31</sup> In each instance, superior control over resources is used to gain the compliance of followers, but the use of sanctions indicates a higher order of power than the use of inducements.

Assessment of the coercive balance and of the ratio of sanctions to inducements can be made not only for a dyad but also for a patron-client cluster or pyramid. The cluster of a local baron with a private army may be held intact by a mix of deference and sanctions, while a campaigning politician may build a cluster simply with favors if he has no coercive power or traditional legitimacy. Each cluster or pyramid has its special vulnerability. The coercive cluster will be jeopardized by a breach of the patron's local power monopoly, and a cluster

based on inducements will be in danger if its leader's income or access to public funds is cut off.

**Durability Over Time.** Patron-client dyads may be rather ephemeral, or they may persist for long periods.<sup>32</sup> In a traditional setting they are likely to last until one of the partners has died. Knowing how durable such ties are can also tell us something about the structure of competition over time. Where dyads are persistent they tend to produce persistent factional structures with some continuity in personnel over time, at least stable clusters or pyramids that may recombine in a variety of ways but are constructed from the same components. Where dyads are fragile, personal alignments may undergo an almost total reordering within a decade.

Since patron-client clusters are based ultimately on power relations, they will endure best in a stable setting that preserves existing power positions. A particular patron will thus retain his clients as long as he continues to dominate the supply of services they need. A patron is also likely to keep his followers if the scope of reciprocity that binds them is greater. That is, the more of the client's vital needs a patron can meet (i.e., if he can supply not only land and security but also influence with the administration, help in arranging mortgages or schooling, and so forth), the greater the tendency for the tie to be invoked frequently and to endure over long periods. Compared with patrons who can provide only legal services, only financial help, or only educational advantages, the *multiplex* bond between patron and client is a solid linkage that serves many needs; since it is more of a whole-person tie, it will be called into action often.

**Homogeneity of Following.** A patron may have a heterogeneous set of followers drawn from all walks of life, or he may have a following composed, say, of only his poor sharecroppers or only clerical subordinates in his office.<sup>33</sup> The proportion of a man's supporters who share social characteristics and the salience of those social characteristics to them constitute a measure of how homogeneous a following is. Since a patron, by definition, occupies a higher social station than his clients, the greater the homogeneity in a following, the greater the latent

<sup>31</sup> Here I follow the distinctions made in Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, pp. 115–118. Other power theorists have made the same distinction.

<sup>32</sup> Both J. A. Barnes, "Networks and Political Process," in Swartz, pp. 107–130, and Powell, *Peasant Society* . . . , p. 413, discuss this variable.

<sup>33</sup> This variable thus relates not to a dyad but to the following in a cluster or pyramid.

shared interests among followers that might threaten the relationship. When a landed patron whose clients are his tenants, for example, sells off what had been common pasture land, all his tenants are equally affected. Their shared situation and the common experiences it provides create a potential for horizontal ties, whereas a heterogeneous clientele lacks this potential.

**Field Variables.** Occasionally, we will want to describe and contrast configurations of patron-client clusters within a political arena rather than dealing with a single cluster or dyad. Four particularly useful distinctions in this respect are a) the degree of monopoly over local resources by a single patron, b) the degree of monopoly over links to other structures by a single patron, c) the *density* of patron-client linkages in the population,<sup>34</sup> and d) the extent of differentiation between different pyramids and clusters. The first two variables are self-explanatory and measure the degree of dominance exercised by a patron over local and supralocal resources. "Density" refers to the proportion of a given population that is a part of the patron-client network. In some situations, for example, a large part of the lower classes may not actually have any vertical links of clientage to a patron. To gauge accurately the explanatory power of patron-client politics in a political field requires that we know for how much of the population such ties are effective. Finally, the degree of differentiation among clusters is a means of discerning whether one cluster looks pretty much like the next one or whether many clusters are socioeconomically distinct. In the classical feudal situation, the pyramidal structure of one lord's small domain was similar to that of his neighbor—the social structure of the landscape resembled a repetitive wallpaper pattern—and competition was thus between almost identical units. In other circumstances, pyramids may be differentiated by predominant occupation, by institutional affiliation, and so forth, so that the seeds of a distinctive and perhaps durable *interest* have been sown.

### III. Survival and Development of Patron-Client Ties in Southeast Asia

#### A. Conditions for Survival

As units of political structure, patron-client clusters not only typify both local and national politics in Southeast Asia, they are also as char-

acteristic of the area's contemporary politics as of its traditional politics. In one sense, the "style" of the patron-client link, regardless of its context, is distinctively traditional. It is particularistic where (following Parsons) modern links are universal; it is diffuse and informal where modern ties are specific or contractual; and it produces vertically-integrated groups with shifting interests rather than horizontally-integrated groups with durable interests. Despite their traditional style, however, patron-client clusters both serve as mechanisms for bringing together individuals who are not kinsmen and as the building-blocks for elaborate networks of vertical integration. They cannot, therefore, be merely dismissed as vestigial remains of archaic structures but must be analyzed as a type of social bond that may be dominant in some contexts and marginal in others.

In my view, most of traditional and contemporary Southeast Asia has met three necessary conditions for the continued vitality of patron-client structures: (1) *the persistence of marked inequalities in the control of wealth, status, and power which have been accepted (until recently) as more or less legitimate*; (2) *the relative absence of firm, impersonal guarantees of physical security, status and position, or wealth*, and (3) *the inability of the kinship unit to serve as an effective vehicle for personal security or advancement*.

The first condition is more or less self-evident. A client affiliates with a patron by virtue of the patron's superior access to important goods and services. This inequality is an expression of a stratification system which serves as the basis for vertical exchange. Classically in Southeast Asia, the patron has depended more on the local organization of force and access to office as the sinews of his leadership than upon hereditary status or land ownership. Inequalities were thus marked, but elite circulation tended to be comparatively high. With the penetration of colonial government and commercialization of the economy, land ownership made its appearance (especially in the Philippines and Vietnam) as a major basis of patronage. At the same time access to colonial office replaced to some extent victory in the previously more fluid local power contests as the criterion for local patronage. Although land ownership and bureaucratic office have remained two significant bases of patronage in postcolonial Southeast Asia, they have been joined—and sometimes eclipsed as patronage resources—by office in political parties or military rank.

If inequities in access to vital goods were alone sufficient to promote the expansion of pa-

<sup>34</sup> My use of the term is adapted from Barnes, p. 117.

tron-client ties, such structures would predominate almost everywhere. A second, and more significant, condition of patron-client politics is the absence of institutional guarantees for an individual's security, status, or wealth. Where consensus has produced an institutionalized means of indirect exchange—one that is legally based, uniformly enforced, and effective—impersonal contractual arrangements tend to usurp the place of personal reciprocity. A patron-client dyad, by contrast, is a *personal* security mechanism and is resorted to most often when personal security is frequently in jeopardy and when impersonal social controls are unreliable. In this context, direct personal ties based on reciprocity substitute for law, shared values, and strong institutions. As Eric Wolf has noted, "The clearest gain from such a (patron-client) relation . . . is in situations where public law cannot guarantee adequate protection against breaches of non-kin contracts."<sup>35</sup>

It is important to recognize the unenviable situation of the typical client in less developed nations. Since he lives in an environment of scarcity, competition for wealth and power is seen as a zero-sum contest in which his losses are another's gain and vice-versa.<sup>36</sup> His very survival is constantly threatened by the caprice of nature and by social forces beyond his control. In such an environment, where subsistence needs are paramount and physical security uncertain, a modicum of protection and insurance can often be gained only by depending on a superior who undertakes personally to provide for his own clients. Operating with such a slim margin, the client prefers to minimize his losses—at the cost of his independence—rather than to maximize his gains by taking risks he cannot afford. When one's physical security and means of livelihood are problematic, and when recourse to law is unavailable or unreliable, the social value of a personal defender is maximized.

The growth of strong, institutional orders that reduce the need for personal alliances was a rare occurrence—the Roman and Chinese imperial orders being the most notable exceptions—until the 19th and 20th centuries, when modern nation-states developed the technical means to impose their will throughout their territory. Before that, however, the existence of a fair degree of local autonomy was inevitable,

<sup>35</sup> Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations . . .," p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> In this connection, see my *Political Ideology in Malaysia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), chapter 6; and for zero-sum conceptions among peasants, see George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist*, 65 (April, 1963), 293–315.

given the limited power available to most traditional kingdoms. The greater that autonomy, or what might be called the *localization* of power, the more decisive patron-client linkages were likely to be. In settings as diverse as much of Latin America, feudal Europe, and precolonial Southeast Asia, the localization of power was pervasive and gave rise to networks of patron-client bonds. From time to time in Southeast Asia a centralizing kingdom managed to extend its power over wide areas, but seldom for very long or with a uniform system of authority. A typical Southeast Asian kingdom's authority weakened steadily with increasing distance from the capital city. Beyond the immediate environs of the court, the ruler was normally reduced to choosing which of a number of competing petty chiefs with local power bases he would prefer to back.<sup>37</sup> Such chiefs retained their own personal following; their relationship to the ruler was one of bargaining as well as deference; and they might back a rival claimant to the throne or simply defy demands of the court when they were dissatisfied with their patron's behavior. Thus, the political structure of traditional Southeast Asia favored the growth of patron-client links, inasmuch as it was necessary for peasants to accommodate themselves to the continuing reality of autonomous personal authority at almost all levels.

The localization of power is in many senses as striking a characteristic of contemporary as of traditional Southeast Asia. As Huntington aptly expressed it, "The most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government."<sup>38</sup> Many of the outlying areas of Southeast Asian nations, particularly the upland regions of slash-and-burn agriculturalists, are only intermittently subject to central government control and continue to operate with much autonomy. By far the most important manifestation of the localization of power, however, has occurred within the very bureaucratic and political institutions that are associated with a central state. The modern institutional framework is a relatively recent import in Southeast Asia; it finds minimal support from indigenous social values and receives only sporadic legal enforcement. With the exception of North Vietnam and Singapore, where a portion of the intelligentsia with modernizing ide-

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Edmund R. Leach, "The Frontiers of Burma," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3 (October, 1960), 49–68.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 3.

ologies and popular backing have taken power, these new institutions do not command wide loyalty and must therefore fight for survival in a hostile environment. The net effect of this fragile institutional order is to promote the growth of personal spheres of influence within ministries, administrative agencies, and parties. Sometimes the vertical links are strong (e.g., Thailand) and sometimes a high degree of decentralization or "sub-infeudation" occurs (as in parliamentary Burma from 1955 to 1958). In either case, what replaces the institution are elaborate networks of personal patron-client ties that carry on more or less traditional factional struggles rather than operate as agents of a hierachial organization. Patron-client politics are thus as much a characteristic of faction-ridden central institutions as of the geographical periphery in these nations.

The third condition under which patron-client bonds remain prominent relates directly to the capacity of such ties to foster cooperation among nonkin. As a mechanism for protection or for advancement, patron-client dyads will flourish when kinship bonds alone become inadequate for these purposes.

Although kinship bonds are seldom completely adequate as structures of protection and advancement even in the simplest societies, they may perform these functions well enough to minimize the need for nonkin structures. Such is the case among small isolated bands of hunters and gatherers, among self-sufficient, corporate lineages and within corporate villages.<sup>39</sup> None of these conditions, however, is particularly applicable to Southeast Asian societies. The highland areas are inhabited by poorly integrated minorities but only rarely are these minorities so isolated as to lack economic and political ties with the larger society. Corporate lineages, outside traditional Vietnam, are uncommon in low-land Southeast Asia where bilateral kinship systems lead to overlapping kindreds rather than mutually exclusive lineages. Finally, corporate village structures (except in Java and perhaps Vietnam's Red River delta) are not typical of Southeast Asia. The scope for nonkin ties in general, and patron-client links in particular, has thus been quite wide throughout the region.

Even when government did not impinge

<sup>39</sup> Corporate villages are included here since they generally stress shared kinship links to a common ancestor. Part of the corporate character of the Javanese village was perhaps further reinforced as a consequence of the collective exactions required by Dutch colonial policy. "Sanctioned reciprocity" is probably a better term for village structures in Java and Tokin than "corporate."

much on their activities, villagers in traditional Southeast Asia still had need of extrakin and extravillage contacts. They needed to secure marriage partners, to assure themselves protection and contacts for the limited but vital trade carried on between villages, and finally to establish an outside alliance in case a village quarrel forced them to seek land and employment elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> If vertical dyadic ties were of some value in the traditional context, they assumed a more decisive role in the colonial and postcolonial periods. First, the commercialization of the economy and the growth of markets enhanced the value of cooperative arrangements among nonkin. Both corporate kin groups and corporate village structures had depended on a certain level of economic autarchy for their vitality—an autarchy which colonial economic policy quickly eroded. These corporate structures (where they existed) tended "to lose their monopoly over resources and personnel in situations where land and labor became free commodities."<sup>41</sup> As the communal land controlled by the village dwindled, as outsiders came increasingly to own land in the village, and as villagers increasingly worked for nonkin, the value of patron-client links increased for all concerned.

In traditional Southeast Asia, as in feudal Europe, then, the inability of kindreds to provide adequate protection and security fostered the growth of patron-client structures. The limited effectiveness of kindreds as units of cooperation and security was further reduced by the new structures and uncertainties of the colonial economy. Within this new economy, the goals of wealth, protection, power, and status could not be realized without outside links to nonkin (and often nonvillagers), and the establishment of these links, for the most part, followed the patron-client model.

The relative decline in the protective capacity of kindreds (which, given the absence of strong, predictable new institutions would widen the scope of patron-client ties) accelerated the political transformation of the colonial and postcolonial period as well. Both administration and electoral politics created new political units that did not generally coincide with the kindred or with the traditional village. As

<sup>40</sup> Richard Downs, "A Kelantanese Village of Mala," in Julian H. Steward, ed., *Contemporary Change in Traditional Societies*, Vol. II: *Asian Rural Societies* (Champaign-Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1967), p. 147.

<sup>41</sup> Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations . . .," p. 5. For a brilliant account of the same process in England, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

Gallin has shown for electoral politics in Taiwan, the political vitality of the corporate lineage is sapped by changes in the governing unit which no longer permit a single lineage to dominate. The lineage thus loses much of the material basis of its previous solidarity, and new dyadic ties become the means by which winning coalitions are built in the new unit.<sup>42</sup> Political consolidation, like economic consolidation, beyond minimal kin and village units can thus enlarge the potential role of such non-kin structures as patron-client clusters.

Considering all three criteria, Southeast Asian states, like most traditional nations, satisfy most conditions for the survival of patron-client structures as a common means of cooperation. First, the disparities in power and status that form the basis of this kind of exchange have, if anything, become more marked since the colonial period. Second, nonkin structures of cooperation have always been important in the complex societies of Southeast Asia and have become more significant because of the new economic and political dependencies introduced by colonialism and nationhood. Finally, with the possible exceptions of Singapore and North Vietnam, the nations of Southeast Asia have not developed strong modern institutions which would begin to undermine purely personal alliance systems with impersonal guarantees and loyalties.

At this point in the argument, it is essential to show how patron-client structures, as one form of vertical cleavage, coexist with communalism, another form of vertical cleavage, in Southeast Asia. If loyalty to an ethnic or religious group is particularly strong it will mean that the only possible partners in most patron-client dyads will be other members of the same community. Since the community is a categorical group which excludes some possible dyadic partnerships, it represents a different form of cleavage from patron-client links. Vertical dyadic bonds can, nonetheless, coexist with communal cleavage in at least three ways: 1) as intercommunal patron-client ties above corporate communities; 2) as intercommunal patron-client ties above factionalized communities, and, 3) as intracommunal patron-client structures. First, when communal groups do deal corporately with the outside—as quite a few small, highland tribes do in Southeast Asia—we may get patron-client ties that join their leaders, as clients, to regional or national leaders. If two distinct corporate communities were

linked through their leaders who were clients of an outside leader, the structure could look like that in Figure A.

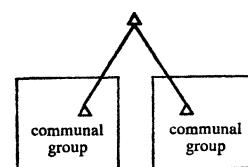


Figure A

More often in Southeast Asia, however, the second situation prevails in which a number of *patrons with separate followings within the same communal group* compete for the most advantageous links to the outside. A simple representation of this pattern is presented in Figure B, in which two patrons are linked as

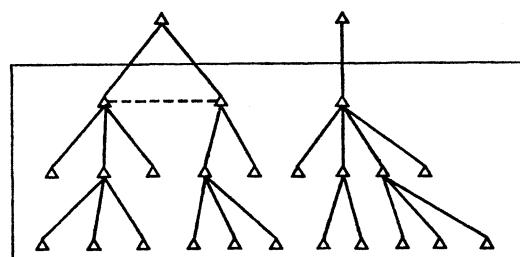


Figure B

clients to an outside patron and thereby have established a working alliance against a third patron in the same communal group who is linked to a different outside leader. Here, the communal group is rent by factionalism and has multiple ties to the outside world.<sup>43</sup> The vertical links outside the communal group, however, are likely to be somewhat weaker or more tentative than links within the community. This is so because all competing subordinate patrons and their clientele fall within a communal unit which shares a potentially strong interest; if the communal group as a whole were threatened, the shared parochial links would serve as the basis for a unity that might supersede any exterior patron-client links. The situation described in Figure B is only likely to arise, then, if there are no salient

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Gallin, "Political Factionalism and Its Impact on Chinese Village School Organization in Taiwan," in Swartz, ed., pp. 377-400.

<sup>43</sup> A combination of situations one and two would occur when the tacit rules within a communal group allowed patron-client conflict but forbade the losing or weaker patrons within the communal group from maintaining ties to outside leaders.

collective threats to the communal group as a whole.

The mixture of communalism and patron-client structures portrayed in Figures A and B focuses on the extracommunal patron-client links that achieve a measure, however weak, of intercommunal integration. A third mixture of communal and dyadic association focuses instead on intracommunal politics alone. This would be represented by just the boxed portion of Figure B, which indicates that, even if communal conflict is widespread, it may well be that the *intracommunal* politics of each contending group is best described by the patron-client model.

The salience of communal feeling, especially in Malaysia, Burma, and Laos, but also in Indonesia and Vietnam makes such mixtures of communalism and patron-client politics common. Except at the apex of the political structure where a leader may have leaders of smaller communal groups as his clients, most patrons have followings that are almost exclusively drawn from their own community. Intercommunal integration tends to take place near the apex of the political structure with the base of each communal pyramid remaining largely separate. The links that represent this integration tend, moreover, to be fragile and to disintegrate in the face of a communitywide threat. Both communalism and patron-client links share the political stage, but patron-client structures are most prominent in periods of peace and stability. In addition, the process of politics *within* each communal group—in effect holding communal affiliation constant—is usually best analyzed along patron-client lines. In nations such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Cambodia, which are comparatively homogeneous culturally, there are few communal barriers to the proliferation of patron-client linkages. Thus, the patron-client model can be applied to those nations in its "pure" form since communal affiliation is not important in creating discontinuous patron-client networks.

### B. The Transformation of Traditional Patron-Client Ties

**1. The General Trend.** The typical patron in traditional Southeast Asia was a petty local leader. Unlike the representative of a corporate kin group or a corporate village structure (rare outside Vietnam and Java, respectively), the local patron owed his local leadership to his personal skills, his wealth, and occasionally to his connections with regional leaders—all of which enhanced his capacity to build a personal following. The fortunes of such petty leaders

waxed or waned depending on the continuing availability of resources and spoils which served to knit together a following. Perhaps the most striking feature of local patron leadership in Southeast Asia was its fluidity and instability, which contributed to a relatively high rate of local elite circulation. In contrast to India, where hereditary office-holding and landholding provided somewhat greater continuity, the typical local leader in Southeast Asia had put together many of the necessary resources of wealth, force, connections, and status on his own and could probably only promise his son a slight advantage in the next round. Two important reasons for this oscillation in local power are a) the weakness of the central state, which lacked either the force or durability to sustain and guarantee the continuation of local power elites, and b) the relative ease with which clients in a slash-and-burn economy could, if dissatisfied simply move to another area, thus undermining their ex-patron's basis of power.<sup>44</sup>

Patron-client systems have survived—even flourished—in both colonial and postindependence Southeast Asia. There have been important changes, however. New resources for patronage, such as party connections, development programs, nationalized enterprises, and bureaucratic power have been created. Patron-client structures are now more closely linked to the national level with jobs, cash, and petty favors flowing down the network, and votes or support flowing upward. In the midst of this change, old style patrons still thrive. Highland leaders, for example, still operate in a personal capacity as patron/brokers for their people with lowland leaders. Landowners in the Philippines and elsewhere have used their traditional control of land and the tenants who farm it to win positions of local or regional party leadership. Whatever the particular form they take, patron-client networks still function as the main basis of alliance systems among nonkin throughout Southeast Asia.

The nature of patron-client bonds within Southeast Asia has varied sharply from one period to the next and from one location to another. Different resources have risen or plummeted in value as a basis of patronage depending upon the nature of the political system:

(See table on next page.)

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Edmund R. Leach, *The Political Systems of Highland Burma* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), and J. M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology #17 (London: University of London/Athlone Press, 1958).

## Secular Trends in the Nature of Patron-Client Ties in Southeast Asia

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Contemporary</i>
1. Duration of bond	more persistent	less persistent
2. Scope of exchange	multiplex	[increasingly] simplex
3. Resource base	local, personal	external links, office-based
4. Affective/instrumental balance	higher ratio of affective to instrumental ties	lower ratio of affective to instrumental ties
5. Local resource control	more local monopoly	less local monopoly
6. Differentiation between clusters	less differentiation	more differentiation
7. Density of coverage	greater density	less density

The capacity to mobilize an armed following was particularly valuable in the precolonial era; access to colonial office was a surer basis of patronage than armed force in the colonial period; and the ability to win electoral contests often became the central resource with the advent of independence. Not only have resource bases proved mercurial over time, but the nature of patron-client ties in the indirectly ruled highland areas has remained substantially different from lowland patterns. Amidst this variety and change, it is nevertheless possible to discern a number of secular trends in the character of patron-client bonds. Such trends are far more pronounced in some areas than others, but they do represent directions of change that are important for our analysis.

(1) In comparison with more bureaucratic empires, patron-client bonds in precolonial Southeast Asia were not, as I have pointed out, markedly persistent. With the quickening of social change brought about by the commercialization of the economy and the penetration of the colonial state into local affairs, however, a patron's resource base became even more vulnerable to the actions of outside forces over which he had little or no control. It was an ingenious patron indeed who could survive the creation of the colonial state, the export boom, the depression of the 1930s, the Japanese occupation, and independence with his resources and clientele intact. The major exception to this trend was the colonial period in indirectly ruled areas where colonial military and financial backing of traditional rulers, if anything, brought a stability—or stagnation—to political systems that had been more chaotic. Elsewhere, patron-client links tended to become more fragile and less persistent.

(2) With the differentiation of the economy and its effects on the social structure, the scope of exchange between patron and client tended to narrow somewhat. Where traditional patrons could generally serve as all purpose protectors, the newer patron's effectiveness tended to be more specialized in areas such as political influ-

ence, modern sector employment, or administrative influence. Although patron-client ties remained flexible and personal, the more limited capacities of the patron tended to make relationships less comprehensive and hence less stable.<sup>45</sup>

(3) The traditional patron for the most part operated with personally controlled local resources. One effect of the colonial period—and independence as well—was to increase radically the importance of external resources for local patronage. A following based on purely local office or landholding was seldom sufficient to sustain a patron in a new environment where schools, agricultural services, regional banks, and public employment represented competing sources of patronage. The growing role of outside resources, in most cases, thus led to competition among patrons, each of whom recruited followings with the particular resources at his command.<sup>46</sup> In addition, since those who controlled the new resources were generally office-holders subject to transfers or political changes at the center, the new patrons were less secure than older patrons and probably more inclined to maximize their gains over the short run.

(4) Because the new patron-client ties were weaker and less comprehensive, and because the new patrons were often from outside the local community, the instrumental nature of the exchange became more prominent. A relationship that had always involved some calculations of advantage lost some of its traditional legitimacy and grew more profane. Patron-client exchanges became more monetized, calculations more explicit, and concern centered

<sup>45</sup> Again, indirectly ruled areas were often exceptions in that local rulers tended to take on new powers under the colonial regime and thus became more comprehensive patrons than in the past.

<sup>46</sup> For Malaysia, M. G. Swift, *Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu* (London: University of London, 1965), pp. 158–60 captures this shift in local power. A general treatment of such changes is contained in Ralph W. Nicholas, "Factions: A Comparative Analysis," in M. Banton, general ed., *Political Systems and the Distribution of Power*, Association of Applied Social Anthropology Monograph #2 (London: Tavistock Publications, 1965), pp. 21–61.

more on the rate of return from the relationship rather than on its durability. This trend meant that newer patron-client clusters were likely to have a comparatively large "fair-weather" periphery, a comparatively small core-following, and a less "constant" patron as well.

(5) The breakdown of local patron monopolies follows logically from most of the changes we have already discussed. Where one local landowner or traditional leader had once dominated he now faced competitors who might be local administrators of state welfare in loan programs, teachers in new secular schools, a local trader or businessman, or the resident manager of a foreign-owned plantation. Factional strife which reflects this competition was most common in villages where socioeconomic change and government penetration had been far-reaching, and less common in more traditional areas.<sup>47</sup>

(6) As differentiation occurred within the local societies, they gave rise to patron-client clusters that were distinct. A bureaucrat might have a following primarily within his agency, a businessman among his laborers, and a landowner among his tenants. This process of differentiation among clusters provided the potential basis for durable group interests inasmuch as many clusters now had an institutional distinctiveness.

(7) While the changes we have examined may have assisted the vertical integration of patron-client pyramids, they tended to reduce the universality of coverage. That is, more and more people in the new market towns and cities, on plantations, and on small plots they rented from absentee landlords were no longer attached—or were very weakly attached—to patrons. These new elements of the population varied greatly in their interests and their levels of organization, but, in any event, they fell outside the older patron-client network.

<sup>47</sup> In his study of politics in an Indonesian town, Clifford Geertz has shown that the more traditional hamlets were more likely to be united under a particular leader than were hamlets which had changed more; *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), Chapter 6. This finding is corroborated by Feith's study of the 1955 Indonesian elections; Herbert Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*, Interim Report Series, Modern Indonesia Project (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1961), pp. 28-30. A comparative study of two Burmese villages also supports this conclusion: cf. Manning Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity* (New York: Wiley, 1965). In this context, directly ruled lowland areas tended to develop factional competition among different patrons, while less directly ruled areas (especially highland areas) more frequently retained some unity behind a single patron who remained their broker with the outside world.

While some long run trends in patron-client ties seem clear, it is difficult to say anything about the balance between voluntarism and coercion over time. On the one hand, changes in the economy have made clients less autonomous and more dependent on patrons for protection against a fall in world prices, for cash advances before the harvest, and so forth. Also contributing to a decline in the client's bargaining position is the imported legal system of property guarantees which allow a wealthy man, if he so chooses, to resist pressures for redistribution that operated in a traditional setting. On the other hand, the breakdown of local patronly monopolies and the exchange resources that electoral systems often place in the hands of clients work in the opposite direction. Given these contradictory tendencies, one can draw the tentative conclusion that patron coerciveness has declined only where extra-local resources and competitive elections are common and has elsewhere either increased or remained the same.

In general, patron-client ties have tended to become more instrumental, less comprehensive, and hence less resilient. They still represent diffuse personal bonds of affection when compared to the impersonal, contractual ties of the marketplace, but the direction of change is eroding their more traditional characteristics. Even this supple traditional protective mechanism has had to pay a certain price to survive in the midst of a nation-state with a commercialized economy. The durability and legitimacy of the patron-client tie was best served when all of a client's dependencies were focused on a single patron. But, as Godfrey and Monica Wilson have shown, this situation is less and less likely since the process of modernization tends to create multiple dependencies—each of less intensity—rather than concentrating dependence on one person.<sup>48</sup> The slowly weakening comprehensiveness of the link is, ultimately, what undermines its sanctity and legitimacy for the client.

**2. The Dynamics of the Transformation.** The engine behind the shift in patron-client ties was largely provided by the penetration of the local arena by an intrusive national economy and national political system. This penetration wrought two major changes that transformed patron-client links: a) during the colonial period, especially, it impaired the effectiveness of local redistributive pressures and b) partic-

<sup>48</sup> G. and M. Wilson, *The Analysis of Social Change*, pp. 28, 40.

ularly after independence it "nationalized" access to patronly resources, thus creating new bases of patronage and devaluating old ones.

Traditional peasant societies, operating in an economy of great scarcity in which one family's gain is another's loss, have generally developed a variety of social control mechanisms that guarantee a measure of security to each family and temper the centrifugal forces generated by the struggle for subsistence.<sup>49</sup> These mechanisms commonly involve forcing anyone who has accumulated considerable wealth to redistribute a portion of it. A wealthy man is pressed to assume expensive ceremonial offices, to make large religious contributions, to give loans and donations, and so forth. He trades his wealth for prestige, and, by so providing for at least the minimum well-being of others, he becomes a legitimate patron with a personal entourage of those obligated to him.

The central fact about these redistributive mechanisms, however, is that they operate by virtue of a local power situation. That is, the wealthy man in a peasant village can seldom rely on outside force or law to protect him; instead, his wealth and position are ultimately validated by the legitimacy he acquires in the local community. Unless a wealthy individual can persuade most of the community that his wealth is no threat to them or can win enough personal allies to sustain his position, he is in danger. Colonialism, however, broke the relative autonomy of the local arena and hence weakened many of the community's redistributive pressures. Supported in effect by the power of the colonial regime to enforce its notion of law, the patron could increasingly ignore local levelling pressures. If he lost much of the social approval he previously enjoyed, he had gained an outside ally with the power to guarantee his local position. The colonial power situation thus offered the *older* patron new leverage in the local arena—leverage which was further strengthened by the growing complexity of colonial society. As Blau has explained,

Social approval has a less pervasive significance as a restraining force in complex societies than in simpler ones, because the multiplicity of groups

<sup>49</sup> For a description of such mechanisms see Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67, 2 (April, 1965), pp. 293–315; Swift, *Malay Peasant Society* . . . , and Mary B. Hollnsteiner, "Social Control and Filipino Personality," *Symposium on the Filipino Personality* (Makati: Psychological Association of the Philippines, 1965), p. 24.

and the possible mobility between them in complex societies allows deviants of nearly all sorts to escape from the impact of community disapproval by finding a sub-group of likeminded persons. . .<sup>50</sup>

Absentee landlords, the new urban wealthy, and minority communities (who were relatively impervious to local social approval so long as they had colonial backing) were new elements in colonial society which could escape patronly obligations. The colonial system thus tended to allow existing patrons greater latitude for exploitation while producing a class of wealthy nonpatrons.

If the intrusion of external power could strengthen the hand of an existing patron, it could also create a resource base for the rise of new patrons. The activities of the colonial regime included the hiring, firing, and promotion of public employees, the dispensing of contracts, and the granting of licenses and permits, all of which could be used to create a personal following. With independence, not only did local leaders take over responsibility for all these decisions, but the scope of government activity and regulation was generally expanded into new areas such as community development. The survival or demise of a local patron often depended, as Geertz has shown, on how successful he was in tapping these new bases of power.<sup>51</sup>

Except for the rare local patrons—especially in indirectly ruled areas—who were able to monopolize these external resources, the new situation produced more competition and mobility among patrons. Many potential clients quickly discovered that their needs were best served by a patron who had access to the institutions which controlled the use of these external resources. In any local context this shift could be measured by the rise of new patrons who were wholly or partly based in these new structures. Studying the incorporation of Sardinia into the Italian nation-state in the 20th century, Alex Weingrod has documented the growing importance of such externally based patrons.<sup>52</sup> The proportion of outsiders asked to be godparents, for example, increased dramatically from 1920 to 1960, and patrons with links to the ruling party and the state bureaucracy had increased their followings at the expense of traditional

<sup>50</sup> Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, p. 114.

<sup>51</sup> Geertz shows how local leaders often managed to become agents of the local sugar mills—buying crops, renting land, and recruiting labor and thereby enlarging their power in the community. *The Social History* . . . , p. 57.

<sup>52</sup> Alex Weingrod, "Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties," pp. 388, 397.

landholders. A similar process has occurred in Southeast Asia as the integration of villages into a national economy and political system tended to produce a number of more specialized local patrons who often became factional leaders.

Most of the transformations in patron-client bonds that we have been discussing apply with greatest force to the directly ruled, lowland areas of Southeast Asia where the colonial impact was both swift and far-reaching, and where colonial officials more thoroughly replaced indigenous leaders. In the indirectly ruled areas—such as highland Burma, the Federated States of Malaya, most of Indonesia's Outer Islands, Cambodia, Laos (and perhaps Thailand belongs here as a limiting case of indirect colonial influence)—these generalizations must be qualified. To ease the financial and administrative burden of colonial rule in these areas, the colonizers generally kept local rulers in place and used them as agents. Since these were by and large peripheral areas of marginal commercial interest, the pace of economic change tended to be slower as well.

The effects of this policy on patrons, in contrast to the directly ruled regions, were twofold. First, local patron/leaders tended to be strengthened by colonial backing and the new powers given to them. What had probably been a fairly unstable and minimal chieftaincy now became a local regime stabilized and extended by the colonial power. Secondly, the sanction of colonial authority permitted many such leaders to broaden the resource base of their authority.<sup>53</sup> It is true of course that a local patron's new source of strength entailed some threat to his legitimacy, but since the colonial regime demanded little beyond the maintenance of law and order in those areas, it was seldom crippling. On the other hand, the appointed patron now had the means to eclipse his rival patrons. He not only had his traditional authority and the discretionary administrative powers given him by the colonial regime, but he could use his power to purchase land, control local trade, and act as the commissioned agent of private firms. Frequently, then, the local ruler gained a new lease on political life as the dominant local figure owing to his wealth, his administrative power, and a measure of tradi-

<sup>53</sup> Similar assessments of the effects of indirect rule can be found in M. G. Swift, pp. 148-149; Harry J. Benda and John Bastin, *A History of Modern Southeast Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 75-122. The best accounts of the pattern, however, come from India. Cf. Bailey, *Politics and Social Change*, Chapter 4, and Paul R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), Chapter 4.

tional legitimacy. Given the slower pace of economic change and state penetration in these regions, the local leader had to contend less with new competitors who flourished amidst such changes. The strength many patrons achieved under indirect rule is nowhere more apparent than in postcolonial elections in which they often could deliver most of their region's vote.

### 3. Electoral Politics and Patron-Client Ties.

Most Southeast Asian states have had functioning electoral systems at one time since their independence. Although only the Philippines retains a parliamentary system, the electoral studies that do exist can tell us much about the effects of party competition on patron-client bonds and, beyond that, highlight some of the unstable features of patron-client democracies.

The dynamics of electoral competition transformed patron-client relations in at least four important ways: (1) it improved the client's bargaining position with a patron by adding to his resources; (2) it promoted the vertical integration of patron-client structures from the hamlet level to the central government; (3) it led to the creation of new patron-client pyramids and the politicization of old ones; and (4) it contributed to the survival of opposition patron-client pyramids at the local level.

First, with popular elections the client gained a new political resource, since the mere giving or withholding of his vote affected the fortunes of aspirants for office. Nor were voters slow to realize that this resource could be turned to good account. Even someone with no other services of value to offer a patron found that the votes of his immediate family were often sufficient to secure the continuous assistance of a local politician. This pattern could be found throughout Southeast Asia in electoral situations but is most striking in the Philippines, where most patron-client ties are centered around landholding and elections. The Filipino politician, as Wurfel points out, does favors *individually* rather than collectively because he wishes to create a personal obligation of clientship.<sup>54</sup> The voter, for his part, asks that his patron/politician favor him because of a personal obligation to reciprocate.

In one sense, popular elections can be seen as a reestablishment of the redistributive mechanisms of the traditional setting. Once again a patron's position becomes somewhat more dependent on the social approval of his community—a social approval that is now

<sup>54</sup> David Wurfel, "The Philippines," in *Comparative Studies in Political Finance: A Symposium, Journal of Politics*, 25 (November, 1963), 757-773.

backed by the power to defeat him or his candidate at the polls. Unable to depend on outright coercion, and faced with competitors, the electoral patron knows he must (unless his local economic power is decisive) generally offer his clients better terms than his rivals if he hopes to maintain his local power.

Second, nationwide elections make it necessary for a national party to establish a network of links extending down to the local level. For the most part a party does this by taking advantage of existing patron-client clusters and incorporating them into its structure. The competitive struggle of Indonesian parties to forge such links in Java during the 1950s is apparent in the accounts Feith and Geertz give of electoral campaigns.<sup>55</sup> They agree that effective campaigning in the village took the form of activating and politicizing preexisting personal links rather than mass meetings or policy stands. The campaign was, as Feith says

. . . a race for a foothold in these villages . . . a foothold involving allegiance of as many as possible of their influential people. Here the first step was to secure the support of those whose authority was accepted by the village prominents. Thus the parties struggled with one another for influence with the bupatis, the wedanas, and the tjamat . . . with the local military commanders and the heads of local offices of Religion, Information, and Mass Education, kijaijis, ulamas, heads of clans, old guerrilla leaders. . . .<sup>56</sup>

As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, a party succeeded best at the polls by securing the adhesion of the important local patrons, who would deliver their clients as a matter of course. Working on voters individually or by class affiliation made little sense when most of the electorate was divided into patron-client clusters. The affiliation of patrons was often gained by making them candidates, by promising them jobs or other patronage, or even by cash payments. It is clear, however, that, in comparison with those parties who had to create new links to village leaders, parties such as the Nahdatul Ulama which could rely on bonds that antedated the election, were in a stronger position. Nash's account of the 1960 election in upper Burma reveals a similar pattern of patron mobilization. When a local patron was approached to join U Nu's faction of the AFPFL on the promise of later patronage, he was able to get thirty-nine others—his relatives and those who owed him money or for whom he had done fa-

vors, i.e., his clients—to join as well.<sup>57</sup>

The nature of the new exchange relationship that gives vitality to this patron-client pyramid is similar in most electoral systems. The local patrons and their clients provide votes at election time, hopefully carrying the village, while the party undertakes to help its local adherents (through their patron) with jobs, help in dealing with the bureaucracy, providing public works, and so forth. Since the winning party can generally offer more support to local allies than the opposition can, local patrons are likely to display a "bandwagon effect," switching allegiance to a probable winner. In addition, the party's need for a powerful local base is likely to lead to a certain localization of power. In return for delivering local votes for its list, the party is likely to give its local patron a wide discretion in administrative and development decisions affecting the locality. Thus many local patrons are able to entrench themselves further as dominant figures.

A third consequence of elections for the patron-client structure is to promote the expansion of patron-client ties and the politicization of existing bonds. Knowing that an electoral victory is important, a local patron with a modest following will probably try to obligate more clients to him in order to strengthen his electoral position. Patrons who have previously been politically inactive would "immediately convert their private power such as control over sharecroppers, debtors kinsmen, neighbors, etc., into public political power in the form of votes."<sup>58</sup> Given these tendencies, the patron-client structures in a given community are most evident immediately before an election, especially a hotly contested one, when the contestants attempt to activate any links that might advance their cause.

A final point about the impact of elections on patron-client structures is that they tend to heighten factionalism and unless one cohesive party completely dominates, to promote the survival of local opposition factions. In most traditional settings, patron rivalry was largely limited to the local arena so as not to invite external intervention. An electoral system, by contrast, creates rival national or regional parties which need allies at the local level. A weak faction that might previously have been forced to compose its differences with a dominant faction, can now appeal for external support. Many of these external allies are able to provide their local adherents with patronage, cash,

<sup>55</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*; Geertz, *The Social History of an Indonesian Town*.

<sup>56</sup> Feith, p. 79.

<sup>57</sup> Manning Nash, "Party Building in Upper Burma," *Asian Survey*, 3 (April, 1963), pp. 196-202.

<sup>58</sup> Nicholas, "Factions . . . , p. 45.

or other favors so as to maintain a local foothold. The net effect of electoral competition is thus to exacerbate many of the latent factional differences among patron-client clusters and occasionally to buttress weak patrons whose position would otherwise have disintegrated.

The effects we have attributed to elections can be compared to the situation in Thailand, where elections have only rarely been any more than a device to legitimate self-selected rulers. There the local client's vote is not important enough to materially improve his bargaining position with a patron, and the vertical integration of patron-client clusters had not gone very far beyond the central institutions of the bureaucracy and armed forces. In Thai villages unlike the electoral settings of Java in the 1950s, or the Philippines, many patron-client clusters are of purely local significance and are not highly politicized. Local factional conflict, as a result, is much less striking in Thailand than where competitive elections have helped to subsidize it.

To this point we have focused on the general influence of elections on patron-client structures. Depending on the region and the party in question, however, there has been a noteworthy variation in the connection between party and patron-client structures. The essential distinction is one between a party that has created its own network of patron-client linkages from the center and a party that relies on preexisting patron-client bonds and merely incorporates them into its organization. This corresponds to René Lemarchand's distinction between types of party machines in Africa.

In situations where micro-level clientelistic structures provide the essential linkages between the party machine and the masses . . . the machine is superimposed upon, and in some ways tributary of, the clientelistic subsystem. A distinction must therefore be drawn between the more orthodox types of machine . . . in which patronage becomes the essential source of cohesion, and what one might call the neo-traditional machine, in which exchange processes between the center and periphery are mediated by, and contingent upon, the operation of traditional forms of clientelism.<sup>50</sup>

As Lemarchand adds, the "orthodox" machine is more dependent on material inducements since its linkages are of more recent origin and hence more instrumental. "Neo-traditional" machines, by contrast, can rely somewhat more heavily on established patterns of deference, though they must bargain with nearly autono-

<sup>50</sup> René Lemarchand, "Political Clientelism and Ethnicity: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (March, 1972).

mous local patrons. This distinction has validity in Southeast Asia as well, both in accounting for the different styles of politics in the indirectly ruled, more traditional areas as compared to the directly ruled, heavily commercialized areas and also in explaining the structural differences between the more traditionalist as compared to more modern parties. In the indirectly ruled areas, political parties confronted fairly stable constellations of local patron power which would have been difficult to destroy. It was simpler to come to terms with local leaders rather than to try to circumvent them, even though this accommodation tended to divide the party into a coalition of political fiefdoms. In directly ruled areas where competition among patrons and heavily instrumental ties were more common, a party had a greater opportunity to create new linkages but at perhaps greater expense in favors and patronage. Throughout Southeast Asia all parties had to adapt themselves to these differences in social structure in different regions of the country: the PNI of Indonesia operated differently in Central Java than in the Outer Islands; U Nu's AFPFL faction could not win the support of the hill tribes in the same way they won the vote of the lowland Burmese, and the Nationalists in the Philippines campaigned differently in central Luzon than in Mindanao.

There were also systematic differences between the neo-traditionalist and modernist parties within a given area. In Java, for example, the Nahdatul Ulama incorporated more traditional patron-client ties than did the PNI, which could rely more on its access to material rewards and local administration. On the East Coast of Malaya, the Islamic PMIP appealed most to the more traditional peasantry while the ruling UMNO concentrated on the town population and those dependent on federal funds. One would also guess that the Ba Swe faction of the AFPFL had a more instrumental base in towns and the modern sector, while U Nu's faction was more frequently based on existing patron-client links in the countryside. Simply knowing the kind of patron-client bonds a party had created or incorporated could reveal a great deal about the party's cohesiveness, the nature of its local base, and the extent of its reliance on material inducements.

**4. The Inflationary Character of "Patron-Client Democracy."** The introduction of competitive elections in Southeast Asia increased the pressures on regimes for the downward distribution of tangible benefits. In return for votes flowing up the vertical chain of patron-client struc-

tures, each patron depended upon the downward distribution of patronage in the form of administrative favors, land grants, public employment, and so on, in order to keep his own pyramid of followers intact. Elections, by themselves, had shifted the balance of exchange so that it favored the client somewhat more than before. The consequence of this shift in exchange terms was a greater flow of material benefits toward the base of the patron-client network.

The strength of the downward distributive pressures generated by electoral procedures in Southeast Asia depended primarily on four variables which are stated below in contrasting terms.

(See table at bottom of page.)

Each of the above variables related to the strength of incentives impelling a party to maximize its clientele and the degree to which that clientele will depend on concrete material incentives rather than ties of affection or deference. The first and obvious requirement for distributive pressures is that elections be important in the selection of an elite. Secondly, a shaky regime or party will be in a less advantageous position to resist client demands than a strong one, since an election is an all or nothing affair and uncertainty over the outcome will raise costs; when the race is close, the party in its recruitment efforts knows that the marginal value of the extra dollar, patronage job, or development grant is all the greater. That is one reason why distributive pressures were greater in 1955 in Indonesia when an election fraught with uncertainty would determine which parties would form a coalition, than in Malaysia in 1964 when the question was not whether the Alliance would win but whether or not it would take two thirds of the seats. The importance of social change (item three) is based on the observation that patron-client ties in less traditional areas typically require the patron to deliver more in the way of instrumental, material rewards. The maintenance of a loyal patron-client network in a traditional area where def-

erence is strong, will, I assume, cost a party somewhat less in material rewards and favors than will a network of the same size in a built-up area where traditional patron-client bonds have eroded. Finally, a neo-traditionalist party such as UMNO in Malaysia can, in part, rely upon the traditional legitimacy of many of its leaders while a party of "new men" such as the PNI in Indonesia or the AFPFL in Burma has to rely more often on highly instrumental ties. Thus a weak party led by "new men" and relying on votes from among an uprooted population is likely to develop a patchwork patron-client structure that is very expensive to maintain. It is indicative of just how much financial backing such structures require that only a ruling party with access to the public till can generally afford the construction costs.<sup>60</sup>

The distributive pressures experienced by such regimes manifest themselves in familiar ways. Government budgets, and of course deficits, swell quickly with expenditures on education, growing public employment, community development projects, agricultural loans, and so forth. Particularly since votes in Southeast Asia are to be found in the countryside, one would expect that regimes with strong electoral pressures would spend more in the grass-roots rural areas than would regimes without such pressures. Given such pressures, local expenditure is also arranged as much as possible so that benefits can be distributed individually since that arrangement is more appropriate to patron-client exchange patterns. Even with pork-barrel programs a local party leader will claim personal responsibility for the gift and personally help distribute whatever employment or subcontracting it includes. The capacity of the regime to keep its network intact and win

<sup>60</sup> Adrian C. Mayer seems to have this distinction in mind, in his study of an Indian town comparing the "hard" campaign of the Jan Sangh, which relied on durable social ties and tried to prevent defections, and the local Congress Party, which ran a "soft" campaign of short-term links by promising favors and benefits to intermediaries. See Mayer, "The Significance of Quasi-Groups in the Study of Complex Societies," p. 106.

### Distributive Pressures of Elections

#### A. Strongest when

1. Elections determine powerholders
2. Regime is weak, unstable regime
3. Socioeconomic change is extensive (direct rule, lowland areas)
4. Party is modernist, secular.

#### B. Weakest when

1. Elections have marginal significance
2. Regime is strong, stable regime
3. Socioeconomic change is less extensive (indirect rule, highland areas)
4. Party is traditionalist, religious

Examples of Strong Distributive Pressure (A): Indonesia (until 1955), Burma (until 1959 at least), the Philippines.

Examples of Weaker Distributive Pressures (B): Thailand, and perhaps Malaysia (until 1967).

elections depends on its capacity to provide rewards for the lower tiers of its structure at a constant or even expanding rate.

A regime that is dependent on its particularistic distributive capacity is also unlikely to solve its financial dilemmas either by structural reform or by tapping new sources of revenue. Most conceivable structural reforms, such as land redistribution, would strike at the resource base of many patrons and are thus unacceptable to parties whose *policy* interests coincide with the desires of its dominant patrons. Such regimes also have a most difficult time raising revenue from internal taxation. A rise in direct taxation would threaten their base of support; and, in fact, they are notorious for the under-collection of revenues due them, since favors to their clients often take the form of either leaving them off local tax rolls or ignoring debts they owe the government. The Burmese peasants connected to U Nu's faction of the AFPFL, for example, were almost universally in default on agricultural loans they had received as party supporters. They assumed the loan was a gift for clientship and knew that a government dependent on their votes could scarcely press matters.

If this analysis is correct, regimes under intense distributive pressures will characteristically resort to budget deficits, especially in election years, to finance their networks of adherents. Their reliance on heavily instrumental and highly monetized patron-client ties will also make it difficult for them to avoid running down their foreign exchange reserves to maintain their strength at the polls. The division of expenditures within the budgets of such regimes should also reveal a heavy emphasis on distributive expenses at the local level. Empirical studies of budget distribution, budget deficits, and foreign exchange expenditures over time in parliamentary Burma, Indonesia, and

the Philippines, when compared with similar statistics for nonparliamentary periods in these same countries, or say, with statistics from Thailand and Malaysia should confirm this prediction.<sup>61</sup>

Democratic regimes which must cater to the strong distributive pressures generated by their electoral clientele are thus particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of world prices for primary products on which their budgets depend. As long as the economy expanded and world prices were buoyant, they could afford the costs in public jobs, pork-barrel projects and loan programs to solidify and expand their huge patron-client network. But a stagnating economy or declining world prices threatened the entire structure they had pieced together, since it relied so heavily on material inducements and relatively little on affective ties. In this context it may be that the collapse of Korean war-boom prices for primary exports was the crucial blow to democracy in Indonesia and Burma. The Philippines may narrowly have escaped a similar fate by virtue of their longer and more legitimate democratic tradition, as well as by their not having suffered as proportionately large a loss in foreign exchange. Malaysia was less vulnerable, since she had just become independent and her strong government faced only moderate distributive pressures, while the Thai military elite was even less reliant on its distributive performance. The political stability or instability of parliamentary forms in these nations in the late 1950s was thus strongly affected by the strength of distributive pressures fostered by these political systems in the mid 1950s.

<sup>61</sup> Many of these data are not in a form that permits easy comparisons. Although budget deficit and foreign exchange figures seem to fit this pattern, statistical confirmation will have to await further research.