This volume traces the origins of clientelism, defined as "the trade of votes and other types of partisan support in exchange for public decisions with divisible benefits" (p. 4), in eight European countries: England, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, from the late eighteenth to the late twentieth century. It has two main goals: to identify the incentives that make clientelism feasible or unacceptable, and to challenge the view recently advanced by Robert Putnam (Making Democracy Work, 1993) that polities can be nicely divided between clientelist polities (i.e., those in which particular interests are promoted) and civic polities (i.e., those in which particular interests are expressed as part of the general interest).

The authors start from the assumption that clientelism is not a structural feature that results from certain cultural traits or political development deficiencies, but rather a strategy for the acquisition and maintenance of power (for the patrons) and for the protection of interests (for the clients). They develop an economic approach that views patron-client relations as voluntary exchange relations that depend on the relative powers of the parties and the contextual circumstances affecting demand and supply. They take as their point of departure the thesis introduced by Martin Shefter (Political Parties and the State, 1994), according to which the entrenchment of clientelism is determined by the relative timing of bureaucratization and democratization.

The authors argue that while Shefter's supply-based thesis helps to explain why some countries such as Sweden avoided clientelism and others used it (e.g., Italy, Greece, and Spain), it does not explain adequately developments in other countries in which for a substantive period of time parties flirted with clientelism (e.g., England, France, and the Netherlands). Hence, they focus on two sets of circumstances that influence the choice to use clientelistic strategies. On the "supply side" they examine the institutional circumstances that may induce party leaders to use clientelism as a strategy to attract voters: an independent bureaucracy, the ideals and objectives of politicians, and the dominant ideas and expectations about the sources of legitimate power. On the "demand side" they analyze the circumstances that make citizens accept or reject clientelism: their level of empowerment, cognitive capabilities, and organizational capacity.

In order to account for different outcomes (among all the countries examined, only Sweden rejected clientelism altogether), the authors stress the need to examine the autonomous choices of individual and collective actors. By comparing the strategies of political leaders of different countries at different historical junctures, they demonstrate that even under identical institutional circumstances, political leaders can make different choices that affect the contextual circumstances and, hence, the adoption and consolidation of clientelism. In Italy, supply created and strengthened clientelism, while in France, supply weakened it. The main conclusion of the book is that, the "urgency of the situation" at the time of mass political mobilization largely determined the strategy of the ruling political elites to adopt or reject clientelism. However, the authors argue that clientelism is a dynamic phenomenon that can be affected by changes in the supply and demand sides. Indeed, once a system is in place, its costs and benefits mediated by social and economic transformations may contribute to modify it (e.g., in Iceland).

Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation makes several important contributions to the literature. First, by treating clientelism as another form of interest representation, the authors succeed in rescuing the concept of clientelism and making it into an acceptable term for the political science discourse. In addition, this volume shatters structural explanations of clientelism based on cultural or developmentalist explanations and introduces an open-ended view of clientelism as a strategy, while rejecting its inevitability and pathological nature. While political scientists have generally regarded clientelism as a function of social fragmentation and cultural backwardness, and the result of organizational and cultural weaknesses of the state administration, this volume shows that particularistic distribution of material benefits to voters is not exclusive of less advanced contexts and that even so-called civic-polities promote particularistic interests at the expense of the general interest. This approach helps to account for the adaptation of clientelism to different countries and political systems, regardless of culture and the level of political development. Moreover, by examining the experiences with clientelism of northern European countries, such as Iceland, this volume debunks the myth according to which clientelism is a phenomenon typical of certain geographical areas, that is, the Latin countries.

Furthermore, the authors disallow a deterministic approach and stress the need to explain why certain modes of interest representation become possible. Although they acknowledge that the strategic choices of politicians and voters are constrained by the institutional and structural context in which they operate, they demonstrate that these actors are capable of choices and can change contextual circumstances. They emphasize the contextual circumstances in which actors chose their strategies and use demand and supply side contextual circumstances to account for outcomes. This is a powerful approach to explain differences and avoid institutional or cultural determinism.

At the same time, the authors challenge the pathological nature of clientelism that results from the advancement of particular interests and the selective access to collective goods, and examine its costs and benefits. While they recognize that clientelism may generate economic and political externalities that may accumulate over time with devastating effects and degenerate into outright corruption (i.e., Italy), they also stress the benefits of this system, which can be useful as a party-building strategy, particularly for new parties, and can help aggregate interests at different levels.

Mobilization of the Left (2000) or Tom Noterman's Money, Markets and the State (2000). However, critical questions relating to both the history and future of social democracy remain. For example, while Moschonas does an excellent job of documenting social democracy's change, there is no way of knowing how these changes compare to the changes that have occurred in other parties and movements: If we examined the electorates, organizations, and programs of Christian Democratic parties over the past decades, would they show comparable levels of change? If so, then what we are perhaps facing is a general transformation of European polities, rather than a specifically social democratic phenomenon. Similarly, we need to know more about why social democracy has changed in the ways it has. Is the movement's transformation the necessary result of a reshaping of society and economy over the past decades, or the consequence of conscious choices on the part of leaders and activists? Finally, are the changes that have occurred permanent or cyclical? After 1945 extreme Left and extreme Right parties were forced to accommodate to social democracy's agenda; now the situation seems to be the reverse, with social democracy battered by the forces of the new Left and the new Right. Will there be a shift back to social democratic hegemony or are we really in a new political era?

Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective, Edited by Simona Piattoni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 256p. $60.00 cloth, $22.00 paper.

— Sebastián Royo, Suffolk University
Finally, in a context of increasing globalization and European integration (marked by the absence of ideological mobilization, emphasis of particularistic interests, and the decline in social cleavages and collective identities) that is rendering national institutions relatively powerless and shaking citizens’ faith in their governments and the traditional political actors, the authors stress that clientelism may function as a counterbalance to unyielding and blocked institutional channels, and constitute a valuable source of social integration.

Many readers may be surprised by the treatment of clientelism as a system of interest representation. The literature on interest representation has argued that the higher the level at which particular interests are aggregated, the more likely it is that compromise will be attained. Other scholars, however (i.e., Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, 1971), have contended that collective action problems are more likely to be solved when there are selective benefits attached to membership in a group, or when the group is small. Hence, clientelism can be considered a rational system of interest representation. The book, however, is not rooted in this literature. To strengthen that argument, the volume would have benefited from a more inclusive and theoretically oriented approach that integrated more extensively the vast literature on interest representation.

Nonetheless, this is an outstanding contribution to the literature on clientelism and paves the way for future scholars to build on this superb contribution in order to study clientelism as another form of interest representation, and to extend this analysis to other areas (e.g., Latin America) with a similar cultural heritage and social structure, in which countries share similar historical processes of state building and political mobilization. It will prove to be a lasting addition to the field.


— Mike Enskat, University of Heidelberg

The reader of this book wonders whether Shinder Purewal chose the title with a view to appropriately reflect his analytical approach, or appropriately reflect his analytical approach, or more fundamentally reflect a mainstream paradigm in the social sciences of the 1980s and 1990s. Purewal has chosen the concept of “Sikh ethnonationalism” in the title of the book only to reject what the reviewer feels are its most basic assumptions and, instead, privileged a rather traditional Marxian political-economy approach that relies heavily on class as the fundamental analytical and explanatory category. From this perspective, ethnicity is merely a resource for the dominant class to mobilize the masses for its own narrow economic and political interest. Therefore, “The Political Economy of Punjab” is much more fitting for the author’s main argument.

The highly developed field of Punjab (or Sikh) studies is very familiar with socioeconomic interpretations of the separatist movement that peaked during the 1980s and reached a symbolic height with the partial destruction of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by the Indian security forces and the subsequent assassination of the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her own Sikh bodyguards in 1984. A vast body of literature, much of it produced by the large and intellectually active Punjabi diaspora, elaborates upon the intrinsic relationship between the changes in patterns of agricultural production as a consequence of the Green Revolution and the resulting distortions in the traditional power equilibrium—a process that resulted in one of the most severe challenges to the authority of the multiethnic postcolonial Indian state.

Purewal draws the reader’s attention to the shortcomings of those established socioeconomic explanations for the political crises in Punjab. First, they tend to concentrate on the contradictions in the economic interest of upper-caste Sikh farmers, mainly from the Jat community, and the urban petty bourgeoisie of Punjab, which was mainly made up of Hindu traders. He argues that the Green Revolution and the industrialization of agricultural production vertically divided each of these two groups by producing new classes of landless agricultural laborers (mainly Sikhs) and small and poor urban traders (mainly Hindus), thereby substantially strengthening class cleavages in the socioeconomic structure of Punjab society. In consequence, “the economic conflict was between capitalist farmers and the petty urban bourgeoisie, not between Jat Sikhs and Hindu Khatri traders” (trading caste) (p. 14).

In the context of this interpretation, Purewal reasons that this new antagonism between these two dominant groups lies at the heart of the “Punjab problem,” and that despite temporary coalitions formed by those competing interest groups against any challenge from below, it was—to use his terminology—the Kulaks who were most successful in using an effective mix of political, religious, economic, and historical resources to defend their political power position and to extract a maximum of material resources from the state through various forms of subsidies.

The book offers a comprehensive narrative of Punjab from the emergence of Sikhism in the sixteenth century to today’s complexities of India’s coalition politics both at the center and in the federal state of Punjab. Throughout the study, Purewal successfully maintains his analytical perspective. He does so with a high degree of efficiency: 170 pages of main text that include an impressive number of relevant footnotes and an introductory chapter that outlines the analytical framework. While the book provides a well-structured and highly focused analysis, a bit more space could have been devoted to contemporary developments and to the conclusion. Although Purewal puts forward as an explanation for the waning Punjab subnationalism (the momentary?) triumph of the Kulak over the local (and national) bourgeoisie, as well as the forceful repression of separatist groups by the central government in the late 1980s, the dynamics behind these processes often remain the reader’s guess-work. As the author, according to the Preface, would like to see his work as a case study in the larger field of ethnonationalism, it would also have been important to learn whether he assign some general validity to his case-specific findings.

The effective combination of economic, political, historical, and cultural analysis makes the study an interesting read and a notable intervention in the well-developed discourse among regional specialists and, at the same time, an illustrative but case-specific introduction to the democratic dynamics of Indian politics and to the abilities of the dominant political actors to make use of all political resources available, be it history, religion, or, ultimately, ethnic identity. Somewhat ironically, this strength of the study also reflects a certain problematic aspect of the central argument. The manipulative power of the economically and culturally dominant groups, which is at the heart of Purewal’s explanatory factors, deprive the subaltern classes of any political agency of their own. An important strand of discourse on pre- and postcolonial Indian politics has, thus, largely been ignored. The political and electoral institutionalization of political interest of India’s lower classes and its significance for the power game in Punjab politics play a very marginal role in the author’s analysis.

This deficiency brings to light a more fundamental problem in Purewal’s approach. There is no systematic attempt to understand how the introduction of a democratic polity in the twentieth century impacted on the socioeconomic fundamentals of Punjab. However, he does not aim at a neoinstitutional explanation and, as mentioned, successfully develops a Marxist interpretation instead.