Personalist Politics, Clientelism and Citizenship: Local Elections in El Alto, Bolivia

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The article investigates the citizenship practices of urban Aymara in a neighbourhood of El Alto, Bolivia, through an examination of the municipal elections of December 1999. Using ethnographic methods, I focus on the instrumental and affective sides of clientelism, a central feature of Bolivian elections. I argue that clientelism is a part of citizenship practice, a means of engaging with the state in the person of the politician. A majority of the Bolivian population are marginalised from the oligarchic mestizo system of government, as represented by the traditional political parties. However, at local level, and especially during election campaigns, there is more permeability, and this article sees clientelism as a set of strategies through which citizens attempt to make politics, and politicians, more representative and responsive.

Introduction

In the December 1999 local elections in El Alto the stakes were high. The municipality had been run by the same political party for the previous decade: Conciencia de Patria, or Condepa. However, the Condepa administrations (comprising nine different Mayors over the 10 years) were notoriously fractious, corrupt and inefficient, and the party had been fragmenting since the death of its founder in 1997. By 1999, the situation looked ripe for an upset. Sure enough the Movimiento Izquierdista Revolucionario (Leftist Revolutionary Movement or MIR) put an end to Condepa's reign in their final stronghold, El Alto. The MIR candidate, Jose Luis Paredes, also called Pepelucho, gained around 45 per cent of the overall vote and his party won an unprecedented seven of the eleven council places being contested.

El Alto is the poorest and most indigenous city in Bolivia. It began in the early mid twentieth century as a district of La Paz and grew through migration from the Aymaraand Quechua-speaking countryside and mining centres, becoming a city in its own right in 1985. Estimates of the proportion of migrant Alteños who make up the population of the city vary between 48 and 80 per cent (Albo´, 1998; Antezana, 1993). The three main migratory waves occurred after the 1953 Agrarian Reform, during the construction boom of the 1970s, and after the neoliberal reforms of 1985, when many

miners and factory workers were 'relocalised', that is fired. Between 1976 and 1992, the population of El Alto grew at a rate of 9.23 per cent annually, and by 2001 its population was 649,958. According to the 2001 census, 48.1 per cent of Alteño households live in moderate poverty and 17.2 per cent in extreme poverty.[1] A survey conducted in 1992 found that in 66 of 81 districts surveyed, over 50 per cent of the inhabitants knew Aymara (Albo´, 1998).

The MIR's campaign culminating in November–December 1999 is a recent example of a trend of local-level populism in Bolivia that began in the mid-late 1980s with Condepa's success in the polls in La Paz and El Alto (Archondo, 1991; Blanco Cazas and Sandoval, 1993; Mayorga, 1991). Like other Latin American populist movements, Condepa and MIR appeal to voters for both instrumental and affective reasons. For most populist movements of the twentieth century, economic redistribution was organised along clientelistic lines and the neopopulists of recent years continue to rely heavily on distribution of patronage (Auyero, 2000; Stein, 1980). In this article, I analyse the attempts of clients to use this distribution of patronage for their own ends. Drawing on examples from Rosas Pampa, a zone (local term for neighbourhood)

in the south of El Alto,[2] I shall argue that clients actively shape and take advantage of opportunities which arise during election time to bring the political process closer to home, thus gaining benefit and substantiating their citizenship in practice, albeit temporarily. This contradicts much earlier literature on clientelism (and populism), which represents clients as passive, unsophisticated, acritical and uninformed, in other words as subjects of control.[3] Gay (1998) argues that this misrepresentation stems from the top-down perspective taken in this literature. More recent work is beginning to redress the balance, for example by focusing on the political strategies of clients (Gay, 1998), their differentiated understandings of networks and processes (Auyero, 2001) and relationships between neighbourhood organisations and clientelist politics (Burgwal, 1995). In Rosas Pampa, many are acutely aware that there is much at stake, for if residents miscalculate their zone could be forgotten by the municipal government for the next 5 years. Alternatively, the zone may enjoy the real benefits of having voted for the winning party. In addition, family livelihoods depend on making correct calculations about party allegiance since future employment may be linked to party membership.

As Javier Auyero (2001) argues in his excellent study of clientelist networks in Buenos Aires, the dominant view of clients as simply exchanging votes for goods or jobs is an over-simplification which fails to convey the wide range of meanings and representations associated with clientelist practice.

After discussing the instrumental and pragmatic aspects of clientelist politics in El Alto, I shall examine the more affective sides of electoral politics. An important strategy for gaining benefit is the development of a direct, personal relationship with the patron and this carries implications for the way we think about citizenship and representative democracy.

By illustrating the pragmatic and affective aspects of clientelism, I aim to explore the experience of representative democracy and citizenship from the point of view of citizens themselves. Analysis of citizenship is enhanced if we approach it not solely as a universal status belonging to those who are members of a community,[4] as in T.H. Marshall's definition (1983 [1950]), but as a set of practices through which societies organise political participation and exclusion (whether of workers, women, illiterates and children).[5] Political agency is a crucial aspect of citizenship. In liberal representative democracies today, that agency is individualised, and the citizen's political participation is organised via a set of rights and obligations. Voting is often taken as the archetypal citizenship practice denoting political agency and engagement with the state. Yet in the earliest discussions of citizenship (in Greek city states), the primary citizenship practice was active participation in government, coupled with responsibility to educate citizens for political life (Castoriadis, 1992). This developed into the civic republican tradition of citizenship which emphasises the participation of citizens in politics as an essential part of creating the sense of concord necessary for political life (Arendt, 1998 [1958]; Heater, 1999; Oldfield, 1990). Many contemporary Latin American social movements demonstrate such ideas in their calls for active citizenship. Citizenship has long been a site of struggle, a rhetorical tool used to make claims for greater participation in politics and government.[6] In the process, multiple models and understandings of citizenship have emerged, from liberals who stress equal status and rights (Kymlicka, 1995), to political communitarians who focus more on responsibilities (Etzioni, 1993), and radical democrats and anarchists who emphasise practices of political participation.[7] Rather than assume that Bolivian citizenship will work according to the modalities of liberal representative democracy (i.e., as it is supposed to function), it seems more appropriate to investigate the actual relationship between citizens and state, and the citizenship practices of different political agents.

The smooth operation of representative democracy implies the depersonalisation of both elector and elected, as we become abstracted individual citizens making rational choices at the ballot box. Yet the people of Rosas Pampa destabilise both the abstraction and individuation, principally by following a logic of patron–client relations. Clientelism is used by clients to assert a greater representativity of politics, which they do by developing personalised relationships with politicians.

Although individuals seek personal relations, this co-exists with a desire to gain collective benefits from patrons, and the whole zone is constituted as a 'corporate' client.[8] Clientelism here appears as the means by which citizens actually engage with the state, both individually and collectively. Through it, they seek to overcome the depersonalisation of electoral politics by creating a more direct, less delegative local democracy than envisaged by liberal theorists and political architects.

'Getting People'

Quite early on in the 1999 election, it became clear to most of my informants that the MIR would win in El Alto 'because they had a lot of people'. This referred to the people who had signed up as militants or worked in support of the party. During election campaigns, it is extremely important for political parties to 'have people' ('tener gente'), since the party with most 'people' is the one that voters expect to win and therefore are most likely to vote for. Before examining the slow, incremental process of gaining people, in the sense of gaining their goodwill, in years prior to elections, I shall first discuss what happens during the election campaign itself.

During the final week before the election, I went along to a meeting of the MIR women's group with a 17-year old friend, Angela. I was the 74th woman to register as a militant, even though I cannot vote in Bolivia. At the beginning, about 45–50 women attended the meeting though only some 30 stayed for the whole time. The others left after registering their attendance and collecting the plastic mugs given out to those who had attended a campaign event the previous Sunday. Many went home but returned later to collect the wool they were offered. This was a derisory amount, worth two Bolivianos (about 30 US cents at the time), only enough wool to knit a baby's bonnet, and only available in orange and blue, the MIR colours. Many of those given the violent orange wool felt cheated, but they signed for it anyway. During the meeting I asked women why they came, and some said 'in order to vote'. I then asked if it was necessary to come to a meeting in order to vote and was told that it was, and that they also give you cups and wool. Certainly it seemed that the primary motivation for women to attend was the wool, but many also evidently enjoyed the chance to get together. Political parties usually promise rice, sugar, wool and sometimes toys for children, in return for the work of campaigning. Though amounts distributed are very small, some women if they have time might sign up for several parties in order to gain maximum benefit. Angela herself had signed up for two parties. But this meant attending several demonstrations, which took up whole days, during which time she was on her feet with her baby on her back. For that she received a few Bolivianos worth of wool.

This does not seem adequate payment, and there were many who grumbled during and after the meeting. However, limited short-term gains need to be set against more substantial long-term advantages. Even if immediate benefits do not measure up to the work put in, having what is called aval polı´tico, i.e. a record of involvement in party activity, can lead to a chance of employment. A wide range of jobs depends upon party allegiance, in public administration, public health, education, construction work, and jobs like hospital auxiliaries and school porters. One auxiliary nurse I knew had been fired after 11 years when General Banzer won the national elections in 1997; her replacement was a cafe´ owner with 1 year's training as a nurse. This practice is often regarded as contributing to widespread inefficiency in the public services and lack of trust on the part of their users.

When new politicians take up their posts, they usually fire most of the civil servants, freeze wages and stop redundancy benefits. A job in the municipality may not bring in much money per month, and workers may not be paid for months on end, but it is still a job. If that is lost, then new ways must be quickly found for earning money. In Angela's case, her mother Don˜ a Sofia had worked in the municipality for many years as she was a known Condepa militant. Now she knew that when Condepa lost the election she would lose her job, so she encouraged Angela to sign up for other parties, as a way of spreading her family's forces. Their hope was that after the election Angela might get a job from the MIR, thereby replacing her mother as the family member earning from their political involvement. For them, as for the residents of Buenos Aires studied by Javier Auyero (2001), clientelism brings financial advantage and helps solve everyday survival problems.

The issue of political party-related public service jobs impacts in a very real way upon the strategies for economic survival available to poor residents of El Alto. There is a sense in which jobs are not simply a gift of the winning political party, or evidence of corruption, but rather they are part of the citizens' expectations. Thus some months after the 1999 election, when the winning candidate, Jose Luis Paredes (MIR), had not given as many jobs to militants as expected, people felt cheated (and, of course, those who feel cheated or betrayed may not vote for the same party again). They felt that if you had worked for the party, you should be rewarded as long as you are able to do the job. At the lower levels of public service, as a result of this type of clientelism there is a high level of participation in government. It is almost as if Don˜ a Sofia and Angela were standing for election themselves. This is an intriguing paradox given the usual distance between ordinary people and the political process: at all levels of politics the majority of the Bolivian population are marginalised from the oligarchic, patrimonial traditional parties (Dunkerley, 1998; Gamarra and Malloy, 1995).

The second example concerns a local school. During the run-up to the elections the school held several political events at which parties donated materials. After a ceremony to inaugurate two new classrooms funded by an NGO, with great fanfare the MNR (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, National Revolutionary Movement) candidate arrived, accompanied by a few local militants, to present long-awaited desks. But instead of the two-or three-child desks that most had expected, they only brought twenty single chairs with a resting place for books on the arms. Despite their disappointment, parents and children politely heard the MNR candidate's speech, and eagerly collected the hats, exercise books and posters he handed out. In a vote of thanks, the headmaster rather half-heartedly said that those present should support the MNR because they were demonstrating their commitment to the zone with deeds.

Later, the ADN (Acció´n Democra´tica Nacional, National Democratic Action, party of the president in office at the time) asked leaders of the Parents' Association to organise a convoy of parents to attend a rally, promising more than twenty bags of cement for the school in return. So around twenty mothers went along, to cheer, collect flags, hats, bottles of drink and whatever else they could find. But despite their pains they received only five bags of cement. As Don˜a Emiliana, a leader of the Parents' Association, explained, this had been a serious embarrassment for her since she had made great efforts to get the women out for the ADN on the promise of cement for the school. A mere five bags (cost around five US dollars) was not enough to use for anything, whereas twenty may have been some use to improve the school's buildings. The mothers who had gone campaigning were not happy.

The election campaign strategy of the MNR and ADN had backfired for the moment, at least in Rosas Pampa. Don˜a Emiliana pointed out that the ADN's actions showed they would not fulfil their promises if elected to office. Likewise, the MNR's twenty 'little chairs' were no use to a school with classes of 35–55 pupils. In contrast, everybody knew that the MIR had previously donated ten bags of cement, a typewriter, PA systems for school events, and basketball hoops (painted in MIR colours). When listing the MIR's donations, Don˜a Emiliana remarked, 'they are corrupt but at least they keep their promises'. While politicians are notorious for forgetting poor marginal zones once in power, the campaign period is the one time a school can be noticed and can play parties off against each other.

The Neighbourhood Council of Rosas Pampa tried to emulate the school's strategy during the

election campaign, though they met with less success due to the known affiliation of the main leaders with Condepa, who had fewer resources than the MIR. At one meeting, the President of the Council reported that he had been talking to the architect in charge of municipal planning, a candidate for an offshoot of Condepa. The candidate expected to come to Rosas Pampa and wanted people to be there to welcome him. In return, he offered to speed up official approval for the second phase of paving the main Avenue in the zone. The President had affirmed that there would be residents out on the streets to cheer him, and told the meeting that, 'of course, the vote is secret', meaning that subsequently residents could vote for whoever they chose. But the candidate did not show up, and 10 months later the second phase of paving had yet to be approved.

Clientelism is part of 'the stock of practical knowledge', of everyday politics (Auyero, 2001: 160) for the residents of Rosas Pampa. The examples given above demonstrate the playing out of a set of political strategies attuned to the realities of local administration. In what Robert Albro calls 'sound Andean logic' (2000: 41) politicians exchange gifts for political support in reciprocal arrangements.[9] As Robert Gay (1998: 14) notes:

> The problem is that we have become so accustomed to thinking of clientelism as a mechanism of institutional control – often referred to as corporatism – or the product of 'false consciousness' – often referred to as populism – that we have failed to consider the possibility that clientelism might be embraced as a popular political strategy (1998: 14).

The popular strategies of clientelism during election campaigns can be understood as attempts to substantiate citizenship; the popular sectors use clientelism to redress the normal balance of unrepresentative politics pre-emptively. Obviously, politicians have to deliver before they get the vote and since it is secret, even that cannot be taken for granted. Thus the marginalisation of the poor from political power is less solid at election time, for the system of campaigning brings the possibility of greater face-toface interaction with candidates. Auyero (2000; 2001) notes similar practices in Buenos Aires where people talk of the 'time of elections' or 'time of politics' as a palpably different period in relations between politicians and poor districts. As in El Alto, in the run-up to the elections, residents of poor urban neighbourhoods find that they count, their support is being sought, and politicians visit their zone more frequently in order to court them. This gives an impression that politics is more representative of the poor, politicians more accountable, and consequently citizenship more meaningful.

Face-to-Face Affective Politics: The Campaign Rally

Simply 'having people' through clientelistic networks is not enough to guarantee that a party will win. They must show they have people, and get 'their people', or at least people who look like they are 'their people', out on the streets. Public displays, alongside TV, are the main ways in which politicians stake their claims to electoral success, and the turnout at street rallies are the best way for voters to assess the chances of particular political parties. Street rallies appeal to voters' sense of fun, curiosity, business sense, and at the same time offer a forum for demonstrating the parties' wealth and generosity.

One Friday, Dona Emiliana's children came to my house brimming over with excitement because they had just heard that the MIR candidate, Jose Luis Paredes, would be visiting the school the following day. They wondered what he would bring: hats, flags, cups? The music teacher was a fanatic MIR militant and had arranged everything. Pepelucho was scheduled to turn up at 10:30 A.M. I arrived at 10:20 A.M.to the strains of thumping pop music. A loudspeaker announced that we would shortly be receiving a visit from a very important person. The banner outside the school entrance was prepared, along with awayus[10] and teddy bears. An hour later, Bolivian music was put on the loudspeaker, the children had formed two lines, and the music teacher called everyone to the playground, including parents, 'because it's for the good of the school'. However, despite all the excitement there was no sign of Pepelucho. MIR militants scuttled around trying to reach Paredes' people on their cellular phones, but with no success.

At noon, a candidate from a small political party, the MBL (Movimiento Bolivia Libre, Free Bolivia Movement), arrived; his militants came by bus and he followed by car. They drove to the MBL office, a large house beside the school football field, where a small crowd had gathered. Various people spoke, in Spanish and Aymara, advocating participatory democracy and stressed the fact that the candidate was from El Alto.[11] They sang songs accompanied by Andean panpipes, distributed flags, and drank soft drinks. After the candidate spoke, he drove off though his militants hung around for a bit, chatting until 1:30 P.M. But the MBL had not brought anything for the people, not even a manifesto. The latter was standard. Not even the MIR office in the zone had copies of the Plan Progreso, Paredes' much-touted party manifesto. As one 17-year old said, one gets the sense that politicians can 'invent proposals'; they sweep into a zone, promise what they like depending on their audience and then leave.

A week later, Remedios Loza, Condepa's candidate, passed through the zone riding on a gleaming

green tractor. This was the only big event that Condepa staged in Rosas Pampa during the campaign and it was supervised by Neighbourhood Council leaders. They were out early morning manning a table where people could register as Condepa militants. Only an hour later than scheduled, Remedios arrived with flower garlands around her neck, smiling and waving like a queen. Many people came out to look and to collect the posters and calendars given out. Some went up to her to put confetti on her head and talk to her. When she spotted me with my camera, she waved directly at me. Though I had interviewed her a couple of years previously, I hesitated going forward. Later, many told me I should have gone to talk with her, saying that she is a very approachable person. Remedios' sweeping visit to Rosas Pampa reflects the reverence and respect accorded the most popular politicians, symbolically shown through the garlands and confetti. However, Remedios did not stop to tell people about her proposals, to the chagrin of Dona Emiliana.

Three weeks prior to the actual elections the political parties shifted gear and came through the zone of Rosas Pampa every weekend. Even Pepelucho eventually visited. The final city-wide rallies for each political party were attended by hundreds of activists and onlookers eager to see what was happening and catch any gift that might come their way. The MIR certainly did appear able to convene most people. When they closed their election campaign on one of the two principal roads in El Alto, there was a carnival atmosphere with people selling popcorn, kebabs, sweets, drinks, and a stage show of pop stars and wrestlers. The national leaders of the MIR showed up, demonstrating the MIRs commitment to winning El Alto. They stressed the need for hope, for progress, for a future for El Alto. Jose Luis Paredes declared before the citizens of El Alto, international organisations and the media that his 'star public work' for El Alto would be 'credibility'; he would turn El Alto from the poverty capital of Bolivia into the industrial and export capital of the Andes.

As Auyero (2001) points out, political rallies have high entertainment value. Beyond that, the experience of effervescence (Durkheim, 1965 [1915]) during such spectacles reinforces feelings of solidarity and similarity with others, of being part of the crowd (De La Torre, 1992). They also evoke feelings of personal connection with the leader, in a way that television cannot do. Pragmatically, as a voter you can assess how many others are likely to vote with you, and the likelihood of your party winning. Thus politics in El Alto has an important sensual side to it. Through shouting slogans, singing songs, listening to passionate speeches, politics becomes oral and aural; about gratifying taste when given a soft drink or biscuits; about seeing hundreds of people wearing orange and blue baseball caps and waving orange and blue flags (or whatever the party's colours[12]); about feeling part of the crowds and the performance.

Political rituals have received more attention from scholars recently (Banck, 1998; Gledhill, 1994; Lomnitz, 1995). My purpose here is to highlight the affective side to Bolivian local politics as revealed through ritual. The fact that the expressive and affective dimensions of politics count as much as (if not more than) content perhaps reflects a weakness of the public sphere (Lomnitz, 1995). Certainly it presents a dilemma for a public code of sober, rational, representative democracy, since the one thing that campaign rallies do not allow is that voters soberly assess the merits of different political parties on the basis of their proposals for government.

There is good reason to take account of the personal relations between electors and elected in conceptualising the political. It is not that ideological positions or programmes of government are unimportant to voters in El Alto, but parties and voters alike expect politicians to promise everything, and then for the most part fail to fulfil those promises. In this context, it makes sense to assess the suitability of candidates according to likelihood of them fulfilling just a small part of the election promises. Making one's support publicly visible through attending campaign rallies, and through placing confetti and garlands on favoured candidates are cultural forms of attempting to oblige politicians to return the favour and fulfil their promises, as a reciprocal duty to the electorate.

Affective Politics Before the Campaign: Preparing the Ground

The residents of Rosas Pampa practice citizenship not only during the infrequent act of voting. For years, Jose Luis Paredes of MIR had been carefully manoeuvring himself into the position of leading contender for Mayor of El Alto. He was backed by the MIR's party machine, and to a certain extent by its money, although he also invested his own personal resources[13] to gain favour in the years running up to the elections. Although he often attacked Condepa's use of symbols, he very capably used a number of key symbolic threads in his campaign. In particular, he effectively staked a claim to the 'mantles' of two key populist leaders of the 1990s: Carlos Palenque and Max Ferna´ndez. Paredes made this explicit in an interview with the weekly newspaper, Pulso, in 1999 when he acknowledged his debt to Don Carlos Palenque for 'his sensibility and the way he had of treating people', and Don Max Ferna´ndez for 'his donations of modest public works.'[14]

Carlos Palenque was the founder of Condepa. He rose to prominence in the 1960s as a 'folklorista' musician. His move to more obviously political spheres began in 1980, when he started a radio programme, called La Tribuna Libre del Pueblo (The Free Tribunal of the People) that continues to

this day. Its format is that ordinary people come to the microphone to appeal for help, publicise events, denounce a crime, and so on. In 1985, he bought a TV station enabling him to show the Tribuna on TV as well. Three years later, the TV and radio stations were closed down by the government and he and fellow workers at the channel, including his pregnant wife, famously went on hunger strike to protest. Shortly after this he founded Condepa and contested the municipal elections of 1989, coming first in the department of La Paz, much to the surprise of the Bolivian political classes (Archondo, 1991; Saravia and Sandoval, 1991). Palenque died of a heart attack in 1997 just before the presidential elections, leaving his political and communications empire to be squabbled over by his daughter, Veronica Palenque, his fellow TV presenter, Remedios Loza, and his recently estranged widow. Subsequently, Condepa briefly became part of the national governing coalition from 1997 until late 1998, when the party split. Remedios' faction moved into opposition, while Veronica's 'rebels' continued to vote for the government.

Max Ferna´ndez was a similar figure. Like Palenque, he had risen from humble roots to become a successful businessman, in his case as owner of the national brewery. Using that position, he gained political power by donating beer and community public works, 'obras'. At first this was a business strategy, whereby he would donate obras to protect and expand his market, or regain territory lost to competitors who undercut his prices (Mayorga, 1991). However, it developed a political trajectory from 1988, when he formed the UCS (Unidad Cı´vica Solidaridad, Unit of Civic Solidarity). Although the UCS' main power bases were in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, Ferna´ndez funded obras all over the country. He died in a plane crash in 1996 and the succession passed uneventfully to his son, Jhonny (sic.). The UCS have been part of governing coalitions since 1993.

The deaths of Palenque and Ferna´ndez provoked massive manifestations of grief: newspapers reported scenes of multitudes of crying people at Palenque's funeral, and there were shouts that he should not be buried because he would return from the dead (Lazar, 2002). Palenque was a very important figure for most of my informants. A number suggested that Palenque had been murdered because he defended the poor; others thought that he would have been a great president had he not died, and that he would have helped the poor. Despite widespread cynicism about politicians' motives, many poor people felt that Palenque and Ferna´ndez could have achieved something for them. Or at least, they were the only politicians who might. However, reliance of both political parties on caudillo styles of leadership has meant that successors have found it very hard to maintain support in all but their core areas. And at the 1999 municipal elections Condepa lost its last core area, El Alto, even though the much-loved Remedios was their candidate for mayor. Her

candidacy was a last-ditch attempt to rescue the party from further division, escalating corruption scandals and the gaping symbolic hole left by Palenque's death. In the 1997 presidential elections Remedios herself had filled this, as an indigenous woman and Palenque's most faithful ally. But by 1999 this no longer cut much ice. She had become tainted by rumours about her style of leadership, as well as the notorious corruption of Condepista administrations in the previous decade in El Alto and La Paz.

Although upper class, white and a member of the political classes, Paredes was sufficiently politically astute not to denigrate Palenque (as many of his class had done). His invocation of Palenque, however, was largely symbolic. He appropriated Condepa's campaign songs and slogan – in his hands, the Condepista 'uka Jach'a Uru jutaskiway' became 'ha llegado el Gran Dı́a' ('the Great Day has arrived'), a direct translation from Aymara to Spanish.[15] He combined skilful manipulation of symbol with a great deal of hard work, following Max Ferna´ndez' example of 'civic behaviour' (civismo), defined as a vocation of service to the community expressed through obras (Mayorga, 1991). He claimed that since 1992 he had invested between 2000 and 3000 US dollars a month in building materials and other gifts given to communities of El Alto, handled through the 'social department' of his television channel, Channel 24.[16] During the election the joke went around that there was no school in El Alto without a television set from Jose Luis Paredes.

It is, of course, impossible to disentangle which of the various gifts to different zones came from Pepelucho as an individual, which came from MIR money, and which from Canal 24. The point is that little by little Pepelucho had built personal ties with residents of El Alto, principally by his use of the cultural form of compadrazgo.[17] He provided cement or bricks for school buildings, donated equipment, and for several graduating classes was 'padrino de promocio´n' ('graduation godfather'), responsible for funding ceremonies of graduation and an activity, usually a vacation, for the whole class. Being padrino de promocion does not come cheap. However, it means that you become known as a generous person in the zone, godfather to some 50 young people who since 1994 could vote from the age of eighteen. Furthermore, a padrino becomes compadre to the parents of his godchildren. Donating equipment such as a television can also put one in the position of being a godfather, 'padrino de televisio´n', and therefore compadre to the parents, represented by the leaders of the Parents' Association.

The compadrazgo relationship is very powerful in Andean societies, and the links between compadres can often be stronger than those between godparent and godchild. Compadrazgo serves

to cement friendships and alliances, and can link people of the same class or those where the godparent is of higher status/class than the parent (Bolton and Mayer, 1977; Long, 1984; Mintz and Wolf, 1977). Understandings of compadrazgo shape the forms that clientelist politics take in Bolivia. Notably, Pepelucho had followed Palenque in putting great stress on compadrazgo: Condepa militants were supposed to call each other compadre, and Palenque is still widely known as 'el Compadre' (Archondo, 1991; Lazar, 2002; Saravia and Sandoval, 1991).

Paredes' mobilisation of compadrazgo was also a conscious imitation of Max Ferna´ndez' strategy of 'modest obras'. This had a dual function in the context of clientelist politics, both calling on peoples' allegiance through the personalised relationship of compadrazgo and demonstrating Paredes' willingness to invest in the community. The latter meant that out of a sense of reciprocity, people were prepared to vote for him because he had at least given them something. In addition, people felt that the fact he had put his own money into obras implied that he would be prepared to devote the municipality's budget to even bigger obras. Ferna´ndez had used the same logic, as a statement from the National Directive of the UCS in 1989 makes clear:

If we give the people bread today, when we are the government, we will give them work. If we give them medication today, when we are the government, we will give them health. . . . If we give them bricks today, when we are the government, we will give them houses. If we give them pencils today, when we are the government, we will give them education (quoted in Mayorga, 1991: 84; my translation).

Through consciously imitating models of political action developed by Ferna´ndez and Palenque, Paredes managed to lay claim to the 'warmth' (carin˜o) that voters felt and still feel for these two populist leaders. He turned this important affective dimension of politics to his advantage. As many writings about populism have highlighted, charismatic leadership in Weber's sense has been very important for populists, and Paredes is no exception (Conniff, 1999). In El Alto the trappings of charismatic leadership were extremely important for Jose Luis Paredes, although they resulted more from his conscious association with others than innate personal abilities. Through aping Palenque and Ferna´ndez in highly symbolic ways, he took advantage of some well-established cultural forms of local politics to present himself as a good patron. Alten˜os saw his qualities of wealth and generosity, and rewarded him with their vote.

Conclusions: Personalism, Representativity and Citizenship

The development of a personal relationship with politicians is an important signifier of citizenship for residents of El Alto as they seek to assess the suitability of prospective leaders/patrons and to engage them in a reciprocal relationship where they feel obliged to serve the people in return for their electoral support. As Paredes' activities show, politicians themselves recognise that elections are primarily a character assessment exercise, and that personal contact is central to this. Condepa had built up its power base through the personal contact between Palenque, Remedios and party militants and ordinary people on a daily basis in a TV and radio program. Usually, though, such personal contact is only possible at the 'time of elections' (Auyero, 2000). After achieving power politicians can hide behind multiple layers of bureaucracy and accountability is almost nil.

When choosing a mayor, people not only seek affective connection with a candidate, but also look at practical evidence of individual suitability, more than ideological position or programmes of government. The differences between political parties are less important for voters than the individual characters of the candidates.[18] While assessing candidates' characters, electors will note and reward perceived qualities of approachability, sincerity, honesty, generosity and wealth, all the qualities of a good patron. Local politics is partly about people preparing themselves to become clients, as residents of El Alto, even if not militants of the Mayor's party. The prospective clients try to choose a good patron, one who will have the common interest at heart, rather than someone who will prioritise his individual interests. Voting is a risky transaction between unequal partners, as clients barter their support during the electoral campaign for individual and collective gain at the time and in the future. Politicians' need to 'have people' means that a symbiotic but unequal relationship develops: political parties benefit from visible support, and individuals and zones benefit, or hope to benefit, from jobs and obras later on, or small gifts during the campaign period.

One of the most oft-cited complaints that I heard while conducting fieldwork was that successive Mayors after their election had forgotten about the zone. The attempt to develop a personal relationship with politicians can be seen as a way of redressing the tendency of faceless bureaucrats to ignore the needs of the poor. This tendency is not peculiar to Bolivia. As Gay points out, in Brazil the 'least privileged elements of…society' unsurprisingly 'embrace clientelism as a hedge against what is often perceived not as democratisation but as bureaucratic indifference and exclusion.' (1998: 16). However, clientelism is not just a hedge against social exclusion. This article has shown some of the ways in which residents of El Alto endeavour (and sometimes succeed) in turning the 'time of elections' (Auyero, 2000) to their advantage. The 'popular strategies of clientelism' (Gay, 1998) can be understood as attempts to substantiate citizenship as the popular sectors use

clientelism to redress temporarily the normal balance of unrepresentative politics.

It can be argued that in some ways clientelism makes politics more representative than delegative electoral democracies envisioned by liberal citizenship theory. But the fact that jobs at so many levels depend upon political affiliation does create incentives to corruption and maladministration. However, it also means that there is a sense in which when people engage in campaign activities on behalf of political parties they are themselves standing for election, not for Mayor or councillor, but for office assistant, nurse or school porter. This issue of representativity and democracy is not an abstract theoretical question: one day, as the election was nearing, the Rosas Pampa catechist muttered that 'exactly the most corrupt people' were leading the MIR campaign in the zone in the hopes of jobs afterwards. He recognised implicitly that he was not only voting for Paredes and the MIR councillors, but for people from the zone who would be offered jobs in the public administration of El Alto.

Dismissing personalistic and clientelistic politics as simply dysfunctional and antidemocratic does not do justice to the complexity of people's experiences of democracy. Furthermore, analysing clientelism as nothing more than the antithesis of citizenship highlights a view of citizenship based more upon the abstract rhetoric of liberal political theory than concrete and affective practices. The examples described in this article illustrate some of the ways in which individuals and collectivities in El Alto insist on participating in everyday political processes. This participation is inherent to their experience of political agency and citizenship.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1   Population statistics are taken from the 2001 Census, Instituto Nacional de Estadı´sticas (INE) (Available from: http://www.ine.gov.bo).

2   Rosas Pampa is a middling zone of El Alto, founded in the 1970s. The majority of its adult residents are first or second generation migrants from Aymara-speaking parts of the countryside.

3   See De La Torre (1992), Stein (1980) and Schmidt et al. (1977).

4   Much anthropological work has pointed out that 'community' cannot be taken for granted,

and that communities are under constant social, political, symbolic and discursive construction (Amit, 2002; Anderson, 1991; Cohen, 1985).

5   Kymlicka and Norman make a similar distinction between what they call a 'thin' conception of 'citizenship-as-legal-status, that is, as full membership in a particular political community', and a 'thick' description of 'citizenship-as-desirable-activity where the extent and quality of one's citizenship is a function of one's participation in that community' (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994: 353).

6   Marshall himself saw citizenship as dynamic, and his essay, Citizenship and Social Class (Marshall, 1983 [1950]), is in part an argument for the inclusion of the working class as full citizens, through the extension of social rights.

7   For more radical positions on citizenship, see Fotopoulous (1997), Bookchin (1995), Castoriadis (1992) and Mouffe (1992). Kymlicka and Norman (1994) and Heater (1999) both survey theoretical literature on citizenship. The rights-focus of post-War liberal political theory is exemplified in Ronald Dworkin's book Taking Rights Seriously (1977).

8   The literature on clientelism which emphasizes its anti-democratic aspects tends to downplay any collective elements, viewing it as a means of inhibiting collective organization and atomising the electorate (Auyero, 2001). For an opposing view, see Burgwal (1995), on 'collective clientelism'.

9 Of course, this is by no means confined to the Andes. See, for example, Schmidt et al. (1977) and Roniger and Gunes-Ayata (1994).

10 Woven carrying cloths, used primarily to carry babies.

11   Jose Luis Paredes, in contrast, was accused of flouting the residency requirements for candidates, having rented his apartment in El Alto solely for the purpose of the electoral campaign.

12 ADN, MNR and Condepa, respectively.

13 He estimated US $30,000 of his own money. Pulso 19–25 November 1999, pp. 12–13.

15 The concept of the Jach'a Uru, or Great Day, is a particularly powerful one, appealing to a strong Aymara stress on hope for change (Saravia and Sandoval, 1991).

16 Pulso, op. cit.

17 Compadrazgo is the relationship between the parents and godparents of a child.

18   Many Alten˜os do vote for ideological reasons, and Condepa's strength was more due to the affinity people felt for Palenque rather than the specific candidates in El Alto. For the purposes of elections, the most important differences between political parties are the differences in party structures and their ability to respond to the instrumental and affective demands of clientelism at election time.