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Celtic Fosterage: Adoptive Kinship and Clientage in Northwest Europe

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It may be that in the distant past the practice of fosterage was intimately connected with the development of lordship.

———Llinos Beverley Smith (1992: 25)

Historians of Europe may be generally aware of the former significance of Celtic child-fostering, so prominently documented in the law books and legends of medieval Ireland. Yet there is no comprehensive survey of such fosterage from a comparative historical perspective, nor has its archival documentation been collated for analysis.[1] The present essay aims to redress this neglect: it reviews extant evidence of Celtic fosterage in the British Isles, examined with reference to comparable institutions of adoptive kinship documented throughout western Eurasia, which comprised some of its scarcely recognized "elementary structures" of familial clientage and feudatory state formation (cf. Guerreau-Jalabert 1981; 1999; Mitterauer 2006).

Earlier articles in this journal (Parkes 2001; 2003; 2004a) have shown that *allegiance fosterage* was characteristic of many archaic and peripheral polities of western Eurasia.[2] Distinct from the "crisis fostering" of orphans by close

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[1] E. J. Gwynn's (1913) article remains outstanding. A foundational study is Seamus Ó hInnse's unpublished dissertation, "Fosterage in Early and Medieval Ireland" (1943), although this neglects the annalistic evidence examined here. Irish narrative accounts of fosterage (incidentally treated here, but see Parkes 2004a) are referenced by Jaski (1999: 24–28) and comprehensively discussed by Sheila Boll (2002; 2004; 2005). See also Joyce (1903 II: 14–18) and Ní Chonaill (1997).

[2] My term is a modification of Esther Goody's "alliance fosterage" (1982: 114; 1999: 384f.), indicating an asymmetric status alignment in the delegation of children: either of *ciental allegiance fosterage* (child-raising by status inferiors), or of *patronal allegiance fosterage* (child-raising by status superiors). See Parkes (2003: 742–44), which also clarifies my broad usage of

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family kin, cliental allegiance fosterage confirmed affiliations between ranked status grades by delegating infant children for nursing and raising to social subordinates. "Milk kinship" constructed through infant fosterage is documented throughout the ancient Mediterranean (2003: 761), where it became important as a jurally recognized bond of cliental affiliation in eastern Christendom and in Islam (2005).

The regular deployment of infant fosterage in clientage correlates with what I have termed *segmentary-tributary polities* (Parkes 2003: 758–60). These were segmentary states whose tributary administration was articulated through internally ranked descent groups or conical clans. Such polities are well documented in mountain regions of Central Asia during the nineteenth century, notably in the Hindu Kush (2001), and in the Caucasus (2003: 751ff.; 2004b: 344ff.). Serial chains of milk kinship created by infant fosterage constituted factional networks of dynastic allegiance, mobilized as warring parties around rival princes during their internecine succession disputes. Administration was similarly orchestrated through milk kinship connections, whereby fiefs and renders of tribute were represented in a pervasive idiom of fostering gift-exchange: these were, literally, "galactic" polities.

Examining historical ethnographies of these fostering regimes in Central Asia, I noted their structural affinities in other peripheral regions of western Eurasia, such as the northern Balkans (Parkes 2004b: 347–52). Infant fosterage appeared to be similarly deployed there to cement relations of clientage, sometimes combined with converse "patronal" ties of ritual or spiritual kinship, such as *kumstvo* sponsorship or godparenthood. Normally exclusive of agnatic descent and marital alliance, milk kinship operated as an "alternative social structure" of inter-familial allegiance, matching hereditary chains of *kumstvo* sponsorship documented by Eugene Hammel (1968).

Feudatory regimes of infant and child fosterage therefore seemed characteristic of peripheral polities throughout western Eurasia. They were deployed as tributary networks of serial clientage in relatively anarchic conditions, where patrimonial consolidation was typically impeded by fissiparous dynastic succession, inhibiting an intensive agrarian basis for class-stratified state formation. Clientage was rather represented in a "nurturant" idiom of pro-parental kinship, distinct from classic feudo-vassalic relations of *patronal fosterage*—mediated by child-service or youth apprenticeship between ranks or social estates—otherwise characteristic of developed patrimonial states in Eurasia (Parkes 2003: 766).[3]

the term *adoptive kinship* for inter-familial kin relations by delegated parenthood (apart from jural adoption, treated by J. Goody 1969).

[3] On the political typologies used here, adapted from Max Weber, see Parkes (2003: 758f., n. 22 on *segmentary-tributary polities*; 768 n. 31 on *patrimonial states* and on contested notions of "feudalism"). What I term *feudatory* simply refers to serial administrative delegation, reciprocal to *tributary* renders of goods and services, or serial tax-farming. *Feudatory state formation* (or

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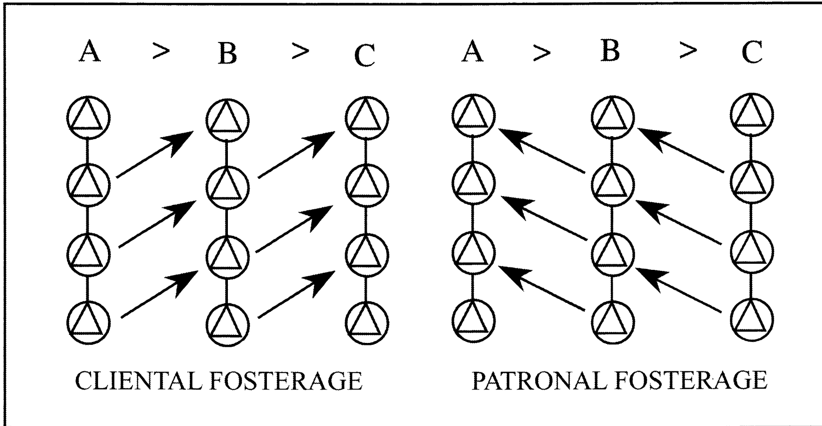

FIGURE 1 Cliental and Patronal Alignments of Hereditary Fosterage: A > B > C denote descent lines of successively subordinate social status, while arrows indicate regular transfers of fosterlings to pro-parents. Serial *cliental fosterage* is evinced in the Hindu Kush and the Caucasus, as well as in medieval Ireland and Highland Scotland; while serial *patronal fosterage* is evinced in continental Europe and England from the ninth century onwards. Cf. Parkes (2003: 744, Fig. 1).

Apart from comparing such configurations of allegiance fosterage in Eurasian tributary polities, transformations in their status alignment should become discernible in peripheral polities undergoing patrimonial consolidation: notably, *from cliental to patronal pro-parenthood* (see Fig. 1), corresponding with a temporal shift from infant to child fostering (cf. Parkes 2003: 767, Fig. 2). These are among the comparative conjectures posed by my earlier surveys of this topic, which the present essay aspires to substantiate and elaborate in northwest Europe. It further points to an unnoticed historical significance of Celtic fosterage: as a transformational template of feudatory vassalage, when fostering became remodeled as an adoptive institution of educational patronage and spiritual sponsorship in the early Irish Church.

ALLEGIANCE FOSTERAGE IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND

Early Irish fosterage appears to be well attested in the *Cáin Íarraith* "Law of the Fostering Fee." But it must be acknowledged that its original text, possibly stemming from the seventh century, survives only in fragmentary phrases,

tributary state formation) simply refers to the elaboration and consolidation of these reciprocal relations by covenants of patronage and clientage (also known as *vassalage* in medieval Europe). Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984: ch. 4) review the comparative sociology of clientage, while Althoff (2004: ch. 4) surveys its historiography in early medieval Europe.

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supplemented by glosses of uncertain date prior to its surviving manuscripts of the sixteenth century.[4] Like other early law-tracts, *Cáin Íarraith* is preoccupied with social ranking: it specifies graded fees of fosterage in *sét* units of value, corresponding with the honor-price or "face value" (*lóg n-enech*) of a fosterling, which determined the child's appropriate training.[5] References to nursing-clothes and breast-feeding indicate that fosterage could be undertaken within a few days of birth, so a child would be suckled by its *muimme* foster-mother before being trained by its *aite* foster-father.[6] A normal duration of fosterage lasted from infancy until marriage—fourteen years for a girl, seventeen for a boy—although separable duties of nursing and education could be subcontracted to successive fosterers.[7] An *aite* foster-father finally awarded his *dalta* fosterling a parting-gift or "valuable of affection" (*sét gertha*) glossed as equivalent to the "son-stock for dutiful support" (*maccshlabra gaire*) given from father to son in anticipation of old-age maintenance, while a similar parting-gift was contributed to the dowry of a female fosterling (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* II: 190–93; Kelly 1988: 89).

These stipulated conditions conform with narrative accounts of early Irish fosterage (Boll 2002), and they are matched by customary regulations of foster-tutelage elsewhere in western Eurasia.[8] An idealized depiction of lordship, however, may have masked more mercenary transactions attested in later

[4] *Ancient Laws of Ireland* II: 146–93; *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* 1759.6–1770.14. The only adequate translation and exegesis of this law-tract comprises Part I of Ó hInnse's dissertation (1943: 1–137). For a useful synopsis, see Kelly (1988: 86–90).

[5] Sons of royalty were taught horse riding, archery, and courtly board games; their sisters were instructed in sewing, dress making, and embroidery. Humbler freemen were taught cottage skills of animal husbandry and cereal preparation; their sisters learned to grind flour at the hand-quern and to knead dough in the trough. Rank also entitled infants to sumptuary adornments of clothing and graded rations of cereal porridge after weaning (*Ancient Laws of Ireland* II: 148–54; *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 1760–1764).

[6] *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 1762.18. Another tract refers to a "foster-brother of the same cradle" (*comalta óenchléib*; Thurneysen 1931: 20, §21; *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 439.16), while ninth-century literature refers to *comaltai* milk-siblings raised "at the same breast" (*óenchích*; cf. Charles-Edwards 2000: 83, with n. 57). The verb *ailid* (hence *altram* "fosterage") had a focal denotation of breastfeeding (cognate with Latin *alere*, *alumnus*). Boll (2002: 9f., 24f., 52f.) thus corrects an erroneous but common assumption that Irish fosterage normatively began at an age of seven years (e.g., Patterson 1994: 242; Jaski 1999: 22; Charles-Edwards 2000: 116): an age of inception otherwise characteristic of monastic education (see note 27 below), and of "patronal (child) fosterage" in medieval England and mainland Europe (e.g., Shahar 1990: 210f, 217; cf. Parkes 2004a: 592 n. 6).

[7] Thurneysen (1931: 19 §20). Jaski (1999: 25f.) notes the appointment of a principal fosterer (*ardoide*) at birth, who might deputize duties of education to sub-fosterers (*frithoide*). Ó Córrain (1977: 77) observed, "the institution [of fostering] was used by great dynasts, particularly in the form of multiple fosterage, to acquire a political following of lesser nobles." A legendary example was the plural fostering of Cormac mac Airt by dependants of the Uí Néill (Ó Córrain 1986: 147–52; Charles-Edwards 2000: 581; Boll 2002: 70–83).

[8] For example, fosterage among Ossetes of the northern Caucasus was similarly inaugurated by infant nursing followed by a period of training in martial arts and courtly skills up to an expected age of marriage, when fosterlings were returned to their natal parents with an equivalent

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medieval accounts. While mentioning that fosterage might be undertaken without a fee or "for affection" (*altram serce*), the law-tracts are silent about substantial bribes tendered to secure the fosterage of children of influential kings and warlords: these could amount to scores of cattle, outweighing any stipulated foster-fee.[9] The *sét gertha* "valuable of affection" appears to be another euphemized exaction demanded of fosterers: it later comprised a "child's portion" of livestock, detracted from the inheritance of the natal children of foster-parents, conceded in return for expected protection by their superior foster-siblings (*comaltai*).

Irish law-tracts indicate that fosterage was thus insinuated with clientship (*céilsine*). The delegation of children to subordinates would be accompanied by the grant of a fief (*rath*), normally accounted in cattle, awarded by lords in exchange for allegiance from their clients, as well as stipulated renders of annual yields of livestock, together with military services or hospitality dues to a lord among noble grades of "free clients" (*sóer-chéile*), or food-renders and labor services from "base clients" (*dóer-chéile*).[10] An early tract on these reciprocal fiefs-and-renders specifies conditions whereby cattle-fiefs could be granted collectively to *fine* lineages, but it notes that the fosterers of a lord's children would receive separately apportioned fiefs of cattle (Patterson 1994: 169, citing Crigger 1991: 342, 351). This may indicate the privileged responsibilities of appointed fosterers to act as trusted representatives for *fine* lineages bound in collective allegiance to a *flaith* lord. Fosterage would thereby play an intrinsic role in underwriting corporate clientship in early medieval Ireland, underpinning the whole hierarchy of rank-grades that organized the internal differentiation of *cenéla* conical clans comprising its *túatha* petty kingdoms (Charles-Edwards 1986).

Within their close-knit local networks of consanguinity and affinity, fostering clients could have been related as either patrilateral or matrilateral kin to their fostered patrons. A common but uncertain presumption is that the mother's brother or mother's father were preferred foster-kin (Bremmer 1976: 70; Jaski 1999: 29f.), as is indicated in early legends, as well as by

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parting-gift of valuables from *atalyk* fosterers (Kovalevsky 1893: 189–92). See also Parkes (2004b) on Abkhazian *atalyk*s.

[9] Edmund Campion (1591, in Ware 1809: 19) even remarked, "commonly five hundredth kyne and better are given in reward to winne a nobleman's child to foster." Equivalent endearments to secure dynastic fosterage are reported in the Hindu Kush (Parkes 2001: 11f.) and the northern Caucasus (Parkes 2004b: 345).

[10] On clientship and cattle-fiefs, see Gerriets (1983), Kelly (1988: 29–36), Charles-Edwards (1993: ch. 8), Patterson (1994: ch. 6), and Dalle Carbonare (2003). On the politics of clientage, see Simms (1987: 96–115), who indicates that early Irish contractual clientship (*céilsine*) became replaced by either warrior services (*óglachas*) or villeinage (*bíatachas* "food-rendership," originally hospitality dues) in a more militarized and class-stratified era after the Viking invasions of the ninth century.

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phrases in law-tracts that seem to imply an identity of maternal kin (*máithre*) with fostering (*altram*). Yet these passages generally refer to the jural rights of maternal kin to supervise the raising of their sisters' children by other fosterers.[11] Literary accounts of the avuncular fostering of such mythical heroes as Bres or Cú Chulainn (Jaski 1999; Parkes 2004a: 599ff.), on the other hand, may reflect oral influence from early Germanic epics or proto-*chansons de geste*. There, the mother's brother would certainly become a preferred sponsor in "patronal fosterage" or knightly commendation (Schubert 1906: 37–44; Farnsworth 1913; Kullman 1992: 88–92). But this was a distinctive institution of patrimonial polities on the continent (Nolte 1995), all too often confused with converse "cliental fosterage" by social subordinates in Ireland.[12] In any event, early Irish legends relate almost as frequent (or as infrequent) fosterage by recognized patrilateral kin as by matrilateral kin (Boll 2002: 64–69, 97).

Although kinsfolk were therefore not precluded as fosterers, close agnates of equivalent rank would normally have been improbable choices: in view of internecine competition for kingship and chiefly office within dominant status groups, and similar contests for the allegiance of clients or control of corporate lineage property (*fintiu*) among lower ranks of freemen. Homicidal agnatic rivalries and fratricidal treacheries notoriously characterize Irish legends and chronicles throughout the middle ages, matching the dynastic violence of Merovingian Francia (Ehlers 2004) and segmentary-tributary polities elsewhere (Parkes 2003: 760). Their competitive outplay is vividly depicted by Donnchadh Ó Corráin:

Irish dynasties ... were polygamous from the earliest period until the collapse of the Gaelic system. As a result, and in consequence of an inclusive law of legitimacy, the royal dynasty increased rapidly in numbers over a few generations, and ... it resolved

[11] See Mulchrone (1936: 198) and Kelly (1988: 15); cf. Smith (1992: 7–9). Boll (2002: 13–15) alerts skeptical attention to a passage of the *Di Chetharshlicht Athgabála* law-tract on distraint (*Corpus Iuris Hibernici* 1712.1–3), adduced to infer an identity of fosterers with maternal kin (Bremmer 1976: 70), pointing to its semantic ambiguities. Early chronicled instances of foster-kinship conversely indicate that matrilateral kin of high rank might be taken *in* as fosterlings (e.g., *Fragmentary Annals*, § 443). Separate from allegiance fosterage was the quasi-adoption of a sister's child by an heirless maternal kinsman (see Ó Cathasaigh 1986: 137 on *gormac*; and cf. Jaski 1999: 17–20). But fostering by maternal kin is otherwise indistinctly evinced in medieval Irish annals (as referenced in notes 15–18 below).

[12] Normal identification of fosterers as subordinates (of high rank for royal offspring) is attested in such phrases in later medieval chronicles as "supporters, fosterers, adherents, and tributaries" (*iomchair & oilemhna, cendaigh & comhadh*, in *Annals of the Four Masters* 1562). Boll (2002: 20f., 83–87) pertinently criticizes a related assumption that medieval Irish fosterage operated as a kind of hostage-taking, which also mistakes this *cliental* institution for "patronal fosterage" or the seigniorial maintenance of vassal children and youths (e.g., Richter 1988: 14). In pacts of submission, hostages were taken by the dominant party, whose children might be conversely given in fosterage to the subordinate party (e.g., *Annals of the Four Masters* 1554.4); but although hostages (*gíall*) often included children, these were never confused with entrusted fosterlings (*daltai*). On hostage-taking, see Simms (1987: 96–100), Kelly (1988: 173–76), Parks (2000: ch. 4), and Kosto (2002: 137 n. 71).

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itself into a number of royal factions or segments, based on close family connections . . . Each segment contended for the kingship to the best of its ability and, when it obtained the kingship, it made every effort to retain it and to exclude all other segments. However . . . within a few generations this segment produced a whole new set of segments, each contending for the kingship and each diametrically opposed in its interests to the others. . . Put simply, succession was determined by family power-politics: the strong succeeded, the weak went to the wall (Ó Corráin 1972: 38f.).

It was in this often brutal context of dynastic competition—replicated at lower levels of cadet rank and affiliation within *cenéla* conical clans—that allegiance fosterage with vassals became a crucial political resource. Fostering was "a solemn contractual relationship and formed a primary bond between families and individuals so related—a bond, for obvious reasons in a segmentary system, on occasion more reliable than the bonds of actual kinship, since supporters acquired in this way could never become one's rivals for office within one's own lineage" (Ó Corráin 1977: 77). The strategic fostering of offspring was an obvious way of consolidating clientship in competition with rival patrons, where the size of one's clientele determined a man's rank and honor-price. Obtaining fosterage of a lord's child, on the other hand, could be a prudent investment for a freeman's social advancement: particularly if he could secure the supremacy of his royal or noble fosterling against the latter's dynastic rivals, earmarked for slaughter. Hence the exclamations of Gerald of Wales in the twelfth century, echoed by many subsequent English writers: "Woe to brothers among a barbarous people! Woe to kinsmen too! When alive, they pursue them to death; once dead, they wreak vengeance on others. If they have any love or loyalty, it is only for their foster-sons (*alumnis*) and foster-brothers (*collactaneis*)" (*Topographia Hibernica* III, c. 23, ed. Dimock 1867: 167f.).

Irish chronicles confirm this dichotomy of homicidal dynastic rivalries counterposed with enduring allegiances of fosterage, often perpetuated between *fine* descent lines of lords and clients over successive generations. The foster-fathers and foster-brothers of ruling dynasts could then expect to be appointed as henchmen to their fostered lords, often serving as their *rechtaire* seneschals or "mayors of the palace" (Simms 1987: 16, 80f.).[13] Fosterage was similarly used to cement allegiances of dependant sub-lords (*airrí*), equally encouraged to support and promote their royal fosterlings against dynastic competitors, with the hope of gaining captured fiefs in

[13] A classic example was the hereditary fostering of the O Neills of Ulster by the O Donnellys, their traditional marshals, prior to the formidable Shane O Neill of the sixteenth century, distinguished by his foster-cognomen *Donnghaileach* (Nicholls 1972: 79). See *Annals of the Four Masters* 1531.18 and 1567.2 on the death of "Dubhaltach O'Donnelly, O'Neill's own foster-brother, and the person most faithful and dear to him in existence." See *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland* (1509–1573: 158ff., 194, 211, 383, 438) on another foster-brother, "Terence Danyell" (O Donnelly), Shane O Neill's trusted emissary with Queen Elizabeth (Ó hInnse 1943: 169f.).

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reward. A descent segment of Uí Cáellaide, fosterers of the famous Leinster king and warlord of the twelfth century, Diarmait Mac Murchada, was thus granted dependent kingships, while his foster-kin godfather/confessor (*pater spiritualis*), Áed Ua Cáellaide, was appointed bishop of Louth (Ó Corráin 1977; Byrne 1987: 27). Allegiances of hereditary fosterage by MacDermot chiefs to O'Connor rulers of Connacht can be traced to the end of the thirteenth century: Feidlim Ó Conchobhair, an expected royal successor, was then ousted by his agnatic cousin, Ruaidri Ó Conchobhair. But his foster-father, Máelrúanaid Mac Diarmata, sub-king of Mag Luirg, rallied his forces "to uphold the kingship and rule for his foster-son":

> Maelruanaid Mac Diarmata, seeing the exclusion of his foster-son from his patrimony and the heavy exactions on each *túath* about him, and much resenting the action of the Galls [Anglo-Normans] in restricting and diminishing his power—for the Galls felt sure that if this one man were weak the whole province of Connacht would be in their own hands—determined, like the warrior he was, to take his foster-son boldly and make him king by force ... (*Annals of Connacht* 1310).

Fifty years later, a tract on the hereditary rights of the MacDermots proclaimed, "No king is entitled to be inaugurated king of Connacht except he who is inaugurated by Mac Diarmada" (Ní Shéaghdha 1963: 164; Simms 1987: 29f.; Watt 1987: 320ff.).

Irish dynastic rivalries might, however, result in uneasy coalitions between competing dynastic segments, when these were evenly matched in power and cliental support. Such compromises encouraged segmentary rotas of rulership, bridged by oscillating fealties of fosterage and circulating benefices (*tarastal*) that connoted temporary overlordship or dependence among alternately ruling segments (Ó Corráin 1971; Smyth 1982: 79). Hence arose the custom of "tanistry" or deputized rulership: the nomination of an expected successor (*tánaise* or *rígdomna*) to an appointed *rí* king, who "was usually the leader of the most powerful segment out of power," signifying to his competitor that "he and his segment will get the next bite of the cherry" (Ó Corráin 1972: 40, after J. Goody 1966: 14). These were conditions where intra-dynastic fosterage among collateral agnates might prove a prudent policy of temporary conciliation, albeit liable to result in murderous treacheries among agnatic foster-kin when serious competition ensued on the death of a ruler.[14]

[14] For example, *Chronicon Scotorum* 1103: "Amalgaidh, grandson of Aed son of Ruaidrí, was killed by his father and mother and brother in vengeance for their fosterling, Conchobor son of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobuir [king of Connacht], whom he had killed." Narrative cases of fosterage by patrilateral kin (*aithre*) are cited by Jaski (1999: 24, notes 96–98), and Boll (2002: 67–68). But I have found relatively few cases of agnatic kin additionally identified as fosterers in medieval chronicles, apart from among O'Connors of Connacht (e.g., *Annals of Loch Cé* 1244.4, where Fedlimid Ó Conchobhair fosterered Tadhg Ó Conchobhair). Intra-dynastic alliance among close agnates was otherwise sealed by ritual kinship or *gossipred* (see note 29). On Irish regnal succession, see now Jaski (2000), Ó Corrain (2001), McGowan (2004), and Warntjes (2004).

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Loyal allegiances of fosterage, linked with endemic assassinations within ruling dynasties, are copiously attested in medieval Irish annals.[15] As in early legends (Boll 2002: ch. 3), violent retaliation for murdered foster-kin was common:

MacGillachoinnigh Ui Uradhain, foster-brother (*comalta*) of Murchadh Ua Briain, was slain by the Clann Choscraigh... and thirty persons, both women and men, were killed in revenge of him (*Annals of the Four Masters* 1098).

Áth Truim in Mide [Meath], including church, people, and cattle, was burned by Conchobar, son of Mac Lochlainn, in revenge for the undeserved slaying of his foster-brother by Ua Caindelbáin (*Annals of Inisfallen* 1128).

Irish laws decreed, "avenging the foster-son of the kin" as one of "four blameless killings" (Kelly 1988: 89). One-third of the honor-price of a fosterling was payable as *éraic* blood-compensation or as *díre* honor-injury to a foster-father or foster-brother (Thurneysen 1931: 19–20, 25).[16]

Dependent foster-kin also frequently appear as substitute hostages (*gíall*) for their lords, rendered as personal pledges in pacts of submission, and not infrequently executed or maimed in the event of broken alliances.[17] This occurred to a grandson of Úa Cáellaide, during the disturbances following Mac Murchada's fateful invitation of the Anglo-Normans under Strongbow in 1169:

The hostages of Mac Murchada, namely, his own son and his grandson ... and the son of his foster-brother (*mac ... comhaltha*), to wit, the son of Ua Caellaide, were killed by Ruaidri Ua Conchobair [king of Connacht] through the suggestion of Tigernan Ua Ruairc [king of Brefne]' (*Annals of Ulster* 1170).

Yet treachery among foster-kin is also occasionally recorded in Irish annals, as in contemporary legends.[18] Such duplicity seems to have escalated during an anarchic late medieval period, when paramount warlords battled for provincial hegemony with hired "galloglass" (*gallóglaigh*) Hebridean mercenaries:

[15] References to annals indicate their given yearly entries: all may be easily consulted at the CELT website of University College Cork (http://www.ucc.ie/celt/publishd.html). On dependent foster-brothers slain or captured as loyal escorts of their lords, see *Annals of Connacht* 1227.5; *Annals of Ulster* 1491.24, 1508, 1531.9; *Annals of the Four Masters* 1246, 1508.6, 1567. Assassinations of rulers resident at the houses of foster-kin indicate that these may have served as secondary royal courts: for example, *Annals of Ulster* 1129.6 (cf. *Annals of the Four Masters* 1129.10), and *Annals of Connacht* 1463.23.

[16] For example, *Annals of the Four Masters* 1554: "A great fine in cows, namely, three hundred and forty cows, was apportioned upon and obtained from Delvin-Eathra by the Earl of Kildare as an eric [*éraic*] for his foster-brother, Robert Nugent, who had been slain by Art, son of Cormac Mac Coghlan." On vengeance by foster-kin, see *Annals of Ulster* 604.3, 1396.1; *Annals of Inisfallen* 1128.7; *Annals of Loch Cé* 1186.12, 1536.15; *Annals of the Four Masters* 1098.25, 1396.5, 1554.7; *Annals of Connacht* 1463.19.

[17] Cf. Watt (1987: 327f.). On foster-kin as hostages, see *Annals of the Four Masters* 1101.11, 1167.11, 1170.16, 1246.6, 1531.18.

[18] On treachery by foster-kin, see *Annals of Ulster*, 1179, 1476.9; *Annals of the Four Masters*, 1243.8, 1409.8, 1484.8, 1490.32, 1497.3; *Annals of Loch Cé*, 1314.9, 1522.10. The narrative motif of treachery by foster-brothers is examined by Boll (2002: ch. 4), and treated comparatively by Parkes (2004a: 602–5).

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Mac Donnchaidh of the Corann... was captured in treachery by the sons of Concobur Mac Donnchaidh... on being put out by his own foster-brother from the castle of Baile-in-muta (*Annals of Ulster* 1476).

Teige, the son of William, son of Hugh, son of Brian O'Kelly, was slain by Brian O'Kelly, his own brother, and by William O'Murray, his own foster-brother, who were afterwards hanged by O'Kelly for their misdeeds (*Annals of the Four Masters* 1484).

During this late medieval era, culminating in the Tudor reconquest of Ireland, outside information on everyday practices of allegiance fosterage becomes available, albeit from hostile witnesses. Fostering with alien incursors, such as the Vikings in the ninth century, was a long established practice, and assimilation by fosterage was soon adopted with Anglo-Norman colonizers.[19] Longstanding colonial fears of the moral degeneration of fostered Anglo-Irish settlers, and their resultant disloyalties to the English crown, were overtly expressed in Clause II of the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1367. This proscribed "fostering of children" (*nurtur de enfantz*) together with alliances by "marriage, gossipred (*compaternitie*) ... concubinage or amour" as treasonable offences (Hardiman 1843: 10f.). But these oft-repeated decrees proved impracticable: even the viceroy who ratified them, Gerald Earl of Desmond, required a royal license permitting fosterage of his own son by Connor O'Brien, while other Anglo-Irish earls continued to make "*alterage* [fosterage] and alliance with Irishmen to strengthen themselves against others"; so by the sixteenth century, this nursing and raising of Old English children by Irish fosterers was perforce tolerated, as long as they swore an oath of supreme fealty to the king's officers.[20]

English accounts of Irish fosterage in the sixteenth century confirm its common institution at birth, as had been indicated in the early law-tracts:

Women, within six days after their delivery, return to their husband's bed, and put out their children to nurse. Great application is made from all parts to be nurses to the children of these Grandees, who are more tender to their foster-children than to their own ... nay, though they think it a disgrace to suckle their own children, yet for the sake of nursing these, man and wife will abstain from each other, and in case they do not, they find another nurse at their charge... The Foster-fathers take much pains, spend much more money, and bestow more affection and kindness upon these children than their own. From these they take, or rather unnaturally extort, cloaths, money and portions, to carry out the designs, buy the arms, and gratifie the lusts of

[19] Entries referring to the ninth century in the *Fragmentary Annals* (§§ 247, 260, 408) deplored a hybrid, re-paganized Norse-Gaelic population assimilated by fosterage. Overseas fosterage also encouraged immigration: the *Annals of Loch Cé* in 1290 records the fosterage of Domhnall Óg O'Donnell by Clann Suibhne of the Hebrides. He subsequently married into this clan, and returned with a troop of "galloglass" mercenaries under his father-in-law, Eoin Mac Suibhne, who settled in Ireland, founding the MacSweeny clan at Tyrconnell (Ó hInnse 1943: 161; cf. Nicholls 1972: 88f.). Three centuries later, MacSweeny chieftains were still fostering children of the O'Donnell earls of Tyrconnell (see note 24).

[20] After Ó hInnse (1943: 164–68), citing *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland, King Henry VIII*, viii c. 8: 28. The quote is from *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts* i: 3. Cf. *Annals of Ulster* 1499.2.

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the others; even driving away their Cattle for them (William Good 1566, in Camden 1722, vol. ii: 1418).

This report suggests that nursing the infant of a social superior might require passing on children to subordinate fosterers, entailing serial chains of foster-kinship between successive status grades, as occurred elsewhere in western Eurasia.[21] It also indicates competitive tenders to gain fostering contracts with influential magnates, and exactions of property deducted from the legacy of fosterers' children. A manuscript tract further exposes such collusions of graft at baser grades of fostering:

The ffirst is miltch nurses, that fostereth upp our children with theire breastes, and any chylde that is so taken with must have as good a porcion (landes excepted) as any of the fosterers children . . . The seconde kynde of fosterers are of the meaner sorte of people, and these beinge poore tenantes, cloaze in with theire landlordes, and to curry favour with them take with one of the children, and promissieth him a chyldes porcion, and this is called a dry fosterer, of which sorte one chylde may have a dozen; theise looke also for some extraordynary kynde of favour at theire landlord and foster sonnes handes . . . (H.C. 1599: 121–23).[22]

Despite its crude diatribe, details of this tract are confirmed by contemporary accounts or can be corroborated by comparison. The setting aside of a "child's portion" of moveable goods to be inherited by a fosterling recurs in Highland Scottish fostering contracts (treated below), while simulations of nursing and child-raising implied by "dry fostering" have equivalents in tributary dues of child maintenance, contracted in a similar idiom of foster-kinship, documented elsewhere.[23] Hereditary and corporate linkages of foster-kinship are attested in other accounts of the sixteenth century (O'Curry 1873 ii: 355, 375), when it becomes possible to reconstruct enmeshed networks of plural fostering ties uniting all chieftains of dominant Gaelic clans of the north—O'Neills, O'Donnells, MacSweenys, and O'Cahans—orchestrating their internecine struggles and shifting coalitions of rebellion under Hugh Roe O'Neill.[24]

[21] Thus in Georgia, "royal children and the children of ruling princes were normally given out to and fostered by leading *eristav* chieftains; *eristav* chieftains and princes used to give out their children to noblemen; while noblemen would give their children to peasants" (Tsereteli, cited in Parkes 2004b: 342). Cf. Charles-Edwards (1993: 81) on serial fostering in Ireland. Abstention from sexual intercourse during lactation was a normally stipulated condition of wet-nursing in pre-modern Eurasia (Fildes 1988: 8f.; Parkes 2005: 317 n. 25). On the Jesuit missionary William Good, see Quinn (1966: 28, 172 n. 29). Good's account of Irish fosterage is largely repeated in Fynes Moryson's "Itinerary" (1592 in Falkiner 1904: 318, quoted in Quinn 1966: 84).

[22] *London PRO Ireland State Papers* 63/203/119, edited for publication by Hiram Morgan and Kenneth Nicholls. Fiona Fitzsimons (2001) valuably reproduces and discusses this tract's account of fosterage and *gossipred* (see note 31).

[23] See, for example, Parkes (2001: 13) on "clothing-and-food milk kin" as pseudo-fostering clients of ruling dynasties in mountain kingdoms of the Hindu Kush and Karakorum.

[24] Significant in the Nine Years War was the plural fostering of O'Neill's brother-in-law and ally, Hugh Roe O'Donnell (Earl of Tyrconnell 1592–1602), who had at least four foster-fathers: "two potential supporters, O'Cahan and MacSweeny na dTuath, and two potential [agnatic] opponents, Conn MacCalvach O'Donnell and Hugh Dubh O'Donnell" (Morgan 1993: 124), thereby "uniting the support of three of the strongest clans in the north" (Gwynn 1913: 108).

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But this cliental fostering of chiefs was shattered by a colonial counter-policy of imposed "patronal fosterage" (or child hostage-taking) inaugurated under Henry VIII and vigorously pursued by Elizabeth I (Ó hInnse 1943: 177–80). Children of Gaelic nobility were then taken away from their native fosterers to become "pledges of dutiful obedience" or royal wards, sent for alternative education within the Pale at Dublin, or shipped overseas to England. Billeted with English gentry, the children of Irish aristocracy soon crowded out such boarding schools as Westminster, where they were indoctrinated in English language and manners.[25] Yet lingering ties of cliental fostering somehow persisted into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the nationalist leader Daniel O'Connell, born in 1775, was typically fostered out in infancy to a tenant herdsman and his wife, from whom he supposedly acquired his skills of demotic appeal to peasants and rural laborers (MacDonagh 1988: 7f.). The social ideology of cliental fosterage was even later perpetuated by Irish wet-nurses and nannies (Tait 2003), as evoked in the romantic novels of Maria Edgeworth and Walter Scott (Trumpener 1997).

IRISH ECCLESIASTICAL FOSTERAGE AND SPIRITUAL KINSHIP

Fosterage in medieval Ireland had an equally significant and long-lasting deployment in ecclesiastic and monastic dynasties (Ryan 1931: 209). François Kerlouégan (1969) showed how early Celtic saints were often represented in hagiographies as being fostered from infancy, the male *nutritores* and female *nutrices* of the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* being identifiable with the *aite* and *muimme* foster-parents of vernacular legends. But Kerlouégan intriguingly pointed to semantic transformations of these Latinate terms of fosterage in Irish monasteries: when abbots or senior monks—often the lineal descendants of founding saints—adopted the fostering title of *nutritor* with respect to their novices and lay pupils, their *alumni* or *daltai* fosterlings. Modeled on lay fosterage, the early development of Celtic monastic schools introduced a novel template of adoptive kinship tied to literate education, spiritual affiliation, and ecclesiastical advancement.[26]

Ó hInnse (1943: 159) notes other reiterated ties of corporate fosterage documented in contemporary State Papers, notably "the O Donellys as fosterers to the O Neills, and the O Gallaghers to the O Donnells," also attested in contemporary annals (e.g., *Annals of Ulster* 1531.9).

[25] Ó hInnse (1943: 177ff.), citing *State Papers, King Henry VIII* (1834) iii: 291, *Calendars of the State Papers Relating to Ireland* (1588–1592: 500), and Moran (ed., 1874: x). Cf. Quinn (1966: 154f.), and Fumerton (1986: 257f.).

[26] This "educational fosterage" was conceivably derived from pre-Christian Celtic druidical schooling (Ó hInnse 1943: 144–51; cf. Kelly 1988: 91 on *felmacc* pupillage conflated with fosterage). But I suspect it was more significantly grafted with Gallic episcopal legacies of Roman patronal fosterage (Parkes 2003: 761f.) and senatorial-patrocinial commendation (Illmer 1976: 140ff.; Riché 1978: 236–46). Another kind of "literary fosterage" was that of the Brehon (*brithem*) law schools (Kelly 1988: 242–63) associated with clerical education.

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By the ninth century, many children of nobility were also being sent to monastic schools at an age of seven years, interrupting their former nursing and training by lay fosterers. But within ecclesiastical hierarchies, fosterage now denoted clerical apprenticeship to a prelate, often intimately related to an adjacent lay ruler (Ó Corráin 1973). Celtic monastic fosterage thus foreshadowed an historical shift from "cliental" to "patronal" alignments of allegiance fosterage that would characterize all feudo-vassalic relations in patrimonial polities of the high middle ages, when princes and lords similarly adopted a nurturant idiom of "fosterer" (*nutritor, altor, patronus*) to their dependent vassals and retainers (*nutricii* or *nutriti*, Old French *nourris*: de Jong 1996: 209–11; Guerreau-Jalabert 1999).

Irish chronicles corroborate Kerlouégan's hagiographical conjecture. Written by monks, they devote equivalent attention to the promotion of bishops and abbots as to the succession of kings and warlords. Relations of ecclesiastical fosterage do seem peculiarly indicative of patronage in the early middle ages:

Cellach, abbot of Í [Iona] ... resigned the office of superior, and Diarmait, fosterling (*alumnus*) of Daigre, was appointed in his place ... Blathmac fosterling (*dalta*) of Colgu, abbot of Inis Bó Finne, died (*Annals of Ulster* 814; see Clancy 2004: 217).

Maelciarain ... abbot of Cluain-Eois and Mucnamh [Clones and Mucknoe], died. He was the foster-son (*dalta*) of the archbishop Fethghna [of Armagh] (*Annals of the Four Masters* 912).

In these cases, the *aite* fosterer can be identified as superior in noble descent to his *dalta* fosterling, in distinct contrast to lay fostering by vassals and clients in these chronicles.[27] But in other respects, ecclesiastical fosterage served a similar affiliative function: as a supplement to the familial inheritance of such lucrative monastic offices as "coarb" (*comarbae* "heir" to a saint) or "erenagh" (*airchinnech* "superior"), otherwise transmitted by natural or nepotic descent within ecclesiastical families, which were often the politically displaced branches of royal dynasties (Watt 1987: 336ff.; Ó Corráin 2005: 585–90). Relations of foster-tutelage among episcopal and abbatial *familiae* (Irish *muintir*) also helped to integrate their feudatory networks as confederations of dispersed dioces and *paruchiae*, which were even represented in an institutional idiom of foster-kinship (*eclais-daltai* "fosterling-churches,"

[27] For cases of ecclesiastical fosterage, see *Annals of the Four Masters* 868.10, 889.17, 912.2, 951.8, 971.2, 981.7, 1125.2; *Annals of Ulster* 893, 935; *Annals of Inisfallen* 980, 989; *Annals of Loch Cé* 1221, 1244.4 (a "spiritual foster-son" or *dalta Dé*, adopted as a foundling according to *Annals of Connacht* 1244.5). Saints' Lives show, "the general rule was that the child destined for a religious career was in lay fosterage up to an age of five or seven, when he was handed over to a cleric or hermit" (Ó hInnse 1943: 153): a pattern exemplified in the *Life of Abban* (i–ii), where this son of a king of Leinster was fostered from birth before being sent for clerical instruction (under his maternal uncle, Bishop Iubar) at an age of twelve (Plummer 1922 II: 3–4).

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subordinate to an *eclais-andóit* or *eclais fine érlama*, "the head-church of a patron saint's descendants"; Etchingham 1999: 228–38).

Kerlouégan showed that the infant fostering of early Celtic saints was often combined with their baptismal sponsorship. In the *Life of Ninnoc*, for example, this daughter of a Breton king and an Irish mother was baptized by Saint Columba of Iona, her appointed godfather (*patronus*, sc. *patrinus*) and godmother then taking her into fosterage and maintaining her for a further fourteen years (Kerlouégan 1968: 120f.).[28] But spiritual sponsorship–normally connoting the patronage and status superiority of godparents–was more commonly *reciprocated* for cliental services of fostering by subordinates, as occurred elsewhere in Europe (Parkes 2004b).

Spiritual kinship in the annals is denoted by the term *cairdes Críst*, "kinship in Christ." This is usually glossed by the archaic Middle English word *gossipred* for godparenthood (cf. Lynch 1998: 136, 148ff.): one of those treasonable alliances, together with fostering, proscribed by the Statutes of Kilkenny, where it translated an original French *compaternitie*. Sir John Davies similarly rendered Irish *gossipred* as "compaternity" or "spiritual affinity," again paired with fosterage, in his diatribe against these "two customs proper and peculiar to the Irishry, which being the cause of many strong combinations and factions do tend to the utter ruin of a commonwealth" (Davies 1612, as cited in Parkes 2004a: 588f.). Irish chronicles also commonly pair "fosterers and gossips" (*altranda & a chairde Cris* in the *Annals of Connacht* 1522.15) as comparable or identical allies:

Ruaidrí Ua Conchobuir, king of Connacht, was blinded by Flaithbertach Ua Flaithbertaigh and by Fagurtach Ua Fagurtaigh, and he was his fosterfather and his godfather seven times over, and his lord (*ase a altra & cairdius Críst fo secht & a thigerna*) (*Chronicon Scotorum* 1092).

Many cases concern close agnates, indicating spiritual kinship being used to heal dynastic competition.[29] But Gaelic *cairdes Críst*, or Anglo-Irish *gossipred*, may have had looser extensions to ritual partnerships apart from baptismal sponsorship (*baithes*), even being associated with blood-brotherhood pacts:

Brian Ruadh O'Briain, king of Muma [Thomond], was apprehended, in treachery, by the son of the Earl of Clare, after they had poured their blood into the same vessel, and

[28] Saint Columba (Colum Cille) was himself baptised at birth by a Pictish priest of noble descent, Cruithnéchan, who took him into fosterage until late childhood (Adomnán's *Life of Columba* iii.2, Reeves ed., 1874: 104f.). Hagiographical accounts of infant fosterage are listed by Ryan (1931: 207f.), Ó hInnse (1943: 151f.), and Charles-Edwards (2000: 123 n. 193).

[29] On *cairdes Críst* "gossipred" pacts, see *Annals of Tigernach* 1138.5; *Annals of Ulster* 1275.9, 1509.6, 1514.10, 1537 (among O'Neills, broken 1538.6), 1538.7, 1538.15, 1539.4 (all among agnates, and all breached by treachery); *Annals of Loch Cé* 1256.3, 1514.13; *Annals of Connacht* 1365.8, 1463.18. On diplomatic *cairdes Críst* with Anglo-Irish justiciars, see *Annals of Connacht* 1225.16, 1524.8; *Annals of the Four Masters* 1236.3, 1524.4. Adoption of Anglo-Irish names in Gaelic chiefly families is a likely index of baptismal sponsorship (cf. Tait 2006).

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after they had formed gossipred (*iar ndenum chairdessa Criost dóibh*), and after they had exchanged mutual vows by the relics, bells, and croziers of Muma, and he was afterwards drawn between steeds by the Earl's son' (*Annals of Loch Cé* 1277; cf. *Annals of Ulster* 1275).

Such conjurational extensions of *gossipred* beyond its canonical prototype of co-parenthood by spiritual sponsorship—reminiscent of folk deployments of *kumstvo* ritual kinship in the Balkans, or *compadrazgo* in Latin America—were indicated by the Elizabethan tract-writer "H.C.," whose deprecations of fosterage were earlier cited. Like Sir John Davies, he considered Irish *gossipred* "a moste pestylent monster to a comonwealth" in its successively debased and heretical varieties:

> The first and moste tollerablst is at the fynt stoane [baptismal font], wherein is a shew of Christianytie ... The seconde gossipride is by breakinge of breade betwene partie and partie: and in this is concluded some smack of mischief intended ... The thirde gossipride is by severall oathes voluntarie taken ... The fourth and last poynte of Gossipride cannot be thoroughly effected but by abusinge the holy sacrament of the comunion ... (H.C. 1599: 123f.).

The last *gossipred* presumably refers again to blood-brotherhood consecrated with the Eucharist, depicted by Gerald of Wales as a blasphemous "covenant of compaternity" (*compaternitatis foedera*) four centuries earlier.[30] But the tract-writer indicates that what he calls "Publique Gossiprid," or co-parenthood through baptismal sponsorship, would be an appropriate occasion for confirming these pacts of alliance (*cairde*). Yet it is conceivable that *cairdes Críst* covenants in the annals sometimes refer to sworn brotherhoods in the absence of godparental sponsorship, connoting ritual confraternity rather than spiritual compaternity.[31]

In either event, such pacts of ritual or spiritual kinship appear in the annals more often honored in the breach by foul treachery, compared with usually enduring allegiances of fosterage. So although one suspects that spiritual kinship and foster-kinship could have been easily assimilated as reciprocal patron-client relations of co-parenthood, Charles-Edwards may be right in his assumption that "the importance of fosterage ... made it difficult for spiritual kinship ... to make much headway" in medieval

[30] *Topographia Hibernica* III, c. 22 (Dimock ed., 1867: 167). This passage is cited and discussed by Brown (1997: 366–69). Gaelic blood-brotherhood was examined by Hodges (1927), and treated comparatively by Hellmuth (1975: 57, 123ff, 162f.).

[31] See Fitzsimons (2001: 148f.). Du Cange (1887: 69), quoting Gerald of Wales' account of the *compaternitatis foedera* rite (note 30 above), even suggested an emended reading of *compaternitatis* as *confraternitatis* (Brown 1997: 367 n. 37). Medieval Irish "gossipred" may have stemmed from an Anglo-Norman conflation of spiritual co-parenthood (*compaternitas*) with ritual alliance (*amicitia*). Pre-Norman Gaelic godparenthood alternatively connoted filial relations of tutelage (*anamchara*) under a confessor (*pater spiritualis*), often associated with fosterage. Medieval Irish spiritual kinship is untreated by Lynch (1986); but cf. Lynch (1986: 192–201; 1998: 136–39, 203f.) on co-parental alliance in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England.

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Ireland (1993: 78f.).[32] Only within the Irish Church, where baptism at birth would be mandatory for intended novices and clerics, is spiritual kinship discernible as a significant tie of affiliation, and notably one of godparental *patronage*. Often conflated with ecclesiastical fosterage, it again foreshadowed a general transformation of adoptive kinship towards "patronal fosterage" in patrimonial polities elsewhere.

FOSTERAGE IN CELTIC BRITAIN: WALES AND SCOTLAND

Welsh fosterage and adoptive kinship are well covered in Llinos Beverley Smith's foundational essay on "Ritual and Fictive Kinship in Medieval Wales" (1992). This shows that cliental fostering was commonplace in the twelfth century, confirming Gerald of Wales' account of the "frightful disturbances" caused by princes fostering out their children with nobility, who "each plots and plans to enforce the succession of his own foster-child" (*Descriptio Cambriae* II, c. 4, ed. Dimock 1868: 211f.). Mentioned in several tales of the *Mabinogi*, such fosterage is also indicated in the *Llyfr Cyfnerth* law-tract of Gwynedd, which specifies that the son of a nobleman fostered with a bondman was entitled to a "child's portion" of his property (Ellis 1926 I: 385).

But Welsh chronicles rarely mention foster-kinship (e.g. *Brut y Tywysogyon* 1106), so it is possible that its practice was less prevalent than in Ireland, as is argued by Katherine Anderson (2004). Smith (1992: 20) also indicated that Welsh terms of foster-kinship (*alltraw*: *tadmaeth*, foster-father; *mamfaeth*, foster-mother) were transferred to spiritual kinship in the middle ages, before a distinct lexicon of godparenthood (*tad bedydd*, *mam fedyyd*) emerged in early modern times. So one may again be witnessing semantic traces of a reconfiguration of adoptive kinship: from early medieval cliental fosterage (attested in an infantile lexicon of nursing), toward spiritual sponsorship combined with fosterage (conflated as bilateral co-parenthood), before patronal alignments of adoptive kinship predominated in the later middle ages. Patronal fosterage is certainly indicated by the commendation

[32] Delayed baptism seems to have been common among early Irish Christians: for example, in the *Life of Ciarain of Saighir* (c. 3) this saint was fostered from birth, but only baptised when thirty years old (Kerlouégan 1969: 132 n. 112). There appear to have been no early Irish penitential tariffs ensuring lay baptism within a few days of birth, as in Anglo-Saxon England (Foot 1992); so infant baptism in medieval Ireland may have been mainly restricted to monastic communities and their "paramonastic" *manaig* clients (Etchingham 1999: 251f.; cf. Sharpe 1992). Yet Sir John Davies later remarked: "of *gossipred* or compaternity ... there was no nation under the sun that ever made so religious account thereof" (1612: 297). An entry for County Kildare in *Lewis's Topographical Dictionary* (1837) even concluded: "The customs of gossipred and fosterage are closely adhered to. Gossips will fight most pertinaciously for each other; in all conversations they call each other by the endearing name; and not to have gossips at baptism would cast a deep reflection on the parents." See Tait (2003: 17–19) on gossip-feasts, and especially Tait (2005) on early modern Irish godparenthood.

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of freeborn children to local lords by an age of fourteen—apparently marked by a ceremony of tonsure—when youths were trained in arms at their lord's court, forming a retinue of real or figurative *cyfaillt* foster-siblings (Ellis 1926 I: 384). Cliental fosterage was further undermined by English colonial policies of "patronal fosterage" established under Edward I: as in Tudor Ireland, children of nobility were to be sent as wards (or hostages) of the Plantagenet court for raising in England (Smith 1992: 13 n. 62, 26f.). Yet Smith demonstrates with the evidence of court rolls that "the practice, followed by freemen in medieval Wales, of fostering children with bond families evidently survived ... well into the fourteenth century and even beyond" (1992: 28).[33]

Cliental allegiances of fosterage equally survived into early modern times in the Gaelic Highlands and Islands of Scotland. These are recorded in notarized contracts from the sixteenth century (see Fig. 2), which elucidate otherwise unwritten conditions of Celtic fosterage:[34]

1510. Obligation by John McNeill Vreik and his brother Gregor of Stronferna to receive Coleyne Campbell ... heir of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy in fostering and to give him a *bairn's part of gear* [a child's endowment]; and giving to the said Sir Duncan and his heirs their bonds of *manrent* [fealty] and *calps* [heriot] that is the best *aucht* [bequest] in their houses at the times of their decease: the said Sir Duncan and Coleyne his son being bound to defend the saids John and Gregor in the lands of Stronferna ... (*The Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. Innes 1855: 179, no. 2).

1580. Contract of Duncan Campbell, fiar of Glenorchy, and his native servant Gillechrist MacDonchy Duff V'Nokerd and Katherine ... his spouse, [who] bind themselves to take in fostering Duncan Campbell, son to the said Duncan ... the said father and foster-father giving between them of *Makhelve* goods [< *mac-shealbh*, a livestock endowment] in donation to the said bairn ... the value of two hundred merks of ky [cattle] and two horses worth forty merks ... and being bound to leave at their decease a *bairn's part of gear* ... (ibid.: 223f. no. 72).

Similar contracts show fosterage among Highland lairds deployed to cement dynastic alliances with dispersed cadet branches or clan rivals. A son of Archibald Campbell, seventh earl of Argyll, was thus placed in fosterage with Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy, leading to their intimate correspondence (Innes ed. 1855: xviii–xxii) and the boy's inheritance of 6,000 merks from Sir Colin in 1640 (ibid.: 84). The Campbells

[33] Smith even cites an Elizabethan state memorandum urgently demanding the registration of Welsh foster-kinship (1992: 28). Cf. Owen (1964: 5) on "discord and lawlessness... attributed to maintenance of foster-brothers" by Welsh gentry of the sixteenth century.

[34] See Skene (1880 III: 321–25) and *Collectanea de Rebus Albanicis* (1847: 20–21). These contracts transcribed verbal agreements that were doubtless also characteristic of Gaelic fosterage in Ireland. On earlier medieval Hebridean fosterage, embracing ruling families of the Isle of Man and Galloway as well as Irish Gaeldom, see Barrow (2003: 131). MacCoinnich (2004: chs. 3.44, 4.46; appendices 6.9, 9.4–9.44) documents similar linkages of foster-kinship among "Chlann Choinnich" (MacKenzies) and their Highland allies in the sixteenth century.

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FIGURE 2 Contract of Fosterage (1614) uniquely written in classical Gaelic script. Contract of Sir Roderick MacLeod of Dunvegan in Skye, giving his son Norman in fosterage to John "son of the son of Kenneth" (*mac mic cainnigh*), who may be identified as a John Campbell of Hushinish in Harris. A stock (*shealbh*) of four mares is to be given by the foster-father, and four mares by the father, along with three mares "promised when he took the child to his bosom." The fosterling (*dalta*) will also inherit a son's share of the foster-father's livestock. Dated 8 October 1614, and witnessed by the ministers of Duirinish and Bracadale. Original document in the National Archives of Scotland (RH.9/17/35). Facsimile image from James (ed.) 1872 III: no. 84, held in the University of Michigan Hatcher Graduate Library. See Appendix to this essay for transcription, commentary, and translation.

of Glenorchy were themselves repeatedly fostered by subordinate Campbell lairds of Duntrune (ibid.: 228–30). But an earlier Archibald Campbell, fifth earl of Argyll, more adventurously fostered his son Colin with rival MacDonald's of Sleat, whose resurgent enmities resulted in the

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boy's temporary retrieval from fosterage before the contract was renewed in 1571.[35]

Another series of fostering contracts from the seventeenth century was published by the Scottish antiquarian Alexander Curle (1896). These also indicate, "The foster-parent was always of lower rank than him whose child he fostered." Again, "When the child went to its foster-parents there was handed over by its father a certain number of cattle, to which were added a similar number by the foster-parent ... the small herd was called the 'Makallow,' 'Macalive' or 'Mcheliff goods' and was the absolute property of the child," although fosterers were allowed the milk of the cows (Curle 1896: 14f.).[36] These contracts also stipulate the fosterling's inheritance of *a bairn's part of gear* or "a child's legal share of his father's free moveable estate."

Such contractual conditions of cliental fosterage were still memorably extant in the Hebrides in the late eighteenth century, when Samuel Johnson toured the Islands with James Boswell:

A laird, a man of wealth and eminence, sends his child, either male or female, to a tacksman or tenant to be fostered. ... In Mull the father sends with his child a certain number of cows, to which the same number is added by the fosterer ... and when the child returns to the parents it is accompanied by all the cows given, both by the father and by the fosterer, with half of the increase of the stock by propagation. These beasts are considered as a portion, called *Macalive* cattle ... (Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands* [1775], ed. Lascelles 1971: 135).

Edmund Burt similarly recorded that "When a son is born to the chief of a family, there generally arises a contention among the vassals which of them shall have the fostering of the child when it is taken from the nurse" (1754 II: 161).[37] In the final years of the eighteenth century, the Rev. John Lanne

[35] Wormald (1985: 186f., no. 44); see Cathcart (2006: ch. 2) and Murdoch (2006: 34) on these well archived Campbell contracts. Serial fosterage among lairds of the Hebrides was later noted by Samuel Johnson (1775, ed. Lascelles 1936: 135f.): "The young [*Maclean*] laird of Col was fostered by *Macsweyn* [laird] of Grissipol. *Macsweyn* then lived as a tenant to Sir James *Macdonald* in the Isle of Sky; and therefore *Col*, whether he sent him cattle or not, could grant him no land. The *Dalt* [fosterling], however, at his return brought back a considerable number of *Macalive* cattle [foster-endowment], and of the friendship so formed there have been good effects..." Johnson had earlier related that the Maclean lairds of Col were hereditary fosterers of Cameron lairds, having undertaken this duty in settlement of a feud over forfeiture of their estates (ibid.: 133f.). He thus indicates a feudatory chain of unilateral relations of fosterage among Hebridean lairds (*viz.* Macsweyn > Maclean > Cameron) that may have been more extensive throughout the Highlands. Cf. Boswell's *Journal* (ed. Pottle and Bennet 1936: 259f.).

[36] These later bonds specify annual payments to foster-parents, itemized in "merks" or "bolls of meal" equivalent to £20 Scots currency (Curle 1896: 15).

[37] Burt continues: "the foster-brother, having the same education as the young chief, may in time become his *hanchman*... This officer is a sort of secretary, and is to be ready, upon all occasions, to venture his life in defence of his master; and at drinking bouts he stands behind his seat, at his haunch (from which his title is derived), and watches the conversation, to see if anyone offend his patron" (1754: II: 162). Burt's folk-etymology of a Scots variant of English

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Buchanan wryly disparaged these lingering Hebridean customs as an extortion of *tacksmen* tenant-landlords:

The moment that the child of a great tacksman is nursed, the most substantial of the subtenants is pitched upon as the most proper person to foster the child, and this the tenant must look on as a piece of great condescension in the master ... The child is not only well fed and clothed by the foster-mother, but she must also attend the foster-child with more care and attention than any of her own... By the time that the child is 10 or 12 years old, and generally well fostered, the parents carry him or her home, to send them to their education; and instead of paying any board wages for all this expense... it will all be lost labour unless their foster-child is accompanied home with a present of cow, sheep, or goats, and clothes, in proportion to their respective abilities (Buchanan 1794, cited in Curle 1896: 16f.).

The matched *Macalive* livestock endowments (Gaelic **mac-shealbh* "son-stock," Matheson 1940) resemble the "cattle-fiefs" of early Irish law-tracts, which had demanded similar returns of yields in livestock together with allegiance from clients. But the scant return to foster-parents in these later contracts—consisting of mere dairy products in the sixteenth century—seems indicative of less congenial conditions of clientage in the Highlands.[38] Protection by a powerful laird, including his "kyndnes" or favorable prosecution of law suits against enemies, would be a primary motive for entering into such fostering contracts, as with similar "bands of *manrent*" or covenants of fealty (Wormald 1985). The award of inheritance rights to fosterlings at the expense of natal children—the *bairn's part of gear* equivalent to the "child's portion" in Ireland and Wales—also occurs in other Highland "bands of *manrent*," despite there being no mention of child fosterage.[39] Here foster-adoption seems to have been an implicit idiom of such covenants (similar to the "dry fostering" of agreed child-maintenance in H.C.'s tract on contemporary Ireland) that had become regularized as a customary exaction on clients.[40]

henchman (< Middle English *hengist-man*, "horse-man" or equerry) is fanciful; but the role of foster-brother as bodyguard is well attested.

[38] These conditions were exacerbated by an increasing insolvency of Highland lairds as "feu-ferm" (fee-farm) tenants-in-chief of the Scottish Crown after forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493. See Skene (1880 III: 299f., 326, 346–49) and Dodgshon (1998).

[39] Wormald (1985: 205–49, Appendix A: Manrent and Maintenance from the Breadalbane Muniments) lists many cases with *bairn's part of gear*: nos. 2 (with fostering), 5 (foster-adoption), 6, 7, 10, 12, 13 (fostering), 59, 60, 66, 73 (fostering), 94, 116, 117, 120–22, etc. Wormald furthermore excluded from the "Buke of Bandis" in *The Black Book of Taymouth* (Innes 1855: 175–262) "bonds only promising bairn's part of gear." Several bonds show that this formula implied quasi-adoption (*tanquam filio adoptivo*) by real or symbolic fostering (e.g., Innes 1855: 205, 209).

[40] This is indicated in a curious indenture of 1538 between John Campbell, fifth laird of Glenorchy, and John Macgillespie: the latter was to take the forty-year-old laird "as his awin sone and tuk him on his knee calland him *filium adoptivum*, that is to say his chosin sone, and in the meantym he beand on his knee gef to the said Johnne the half of his gudis movable and onmovabil" (Innes 1855: 182f.; Curle 1896: 12). This "knee-sitting" had been a rite of instituting child-fosterage in Celtic and Germanic societies a millennium earlier (Thurneysen 1930; Roeder

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Reciprocal ties of godparental sponsorship are more rarely documented in these *manrent* contracts of fealty: as in an indenture of 1520 between John Campbell, laird of Cawdor, and Alexander of Clan Donald, latter-day Lord of the Isles, entailing an exchange of estates and a promise that "both agree that when either has a child, the other will stand *gossep*" (Innes ed. 1855: 133f.; Wormald 1985: 225, no. 11). Mutual godparenthood was here intended to cement a bilateral alliance between fellow lords. But medieval Scots *gossiprie* may otherwise be a metaphorical extension of familial terms of spiritual kinship to sworn confraternities, or more informal partnerships, like its Irish equivalent.[41] By the late sixteenth century, these *gossiprie* pacts, whether or not accompanied by baptismal sponsorship, could have survived only in the Gaelic Highlands; for spiritual kinship elsewhere had been radically pruned and moralized according to Calvinist tenets of the Scottish Reformation, although it persisted long afterwards as a significant tie of patronal sponsorship in Scotland (Dawson 2003: 89ff.), as in England (Coster 2002). Relics of traditional fosterage also had a formative afterlife in the radiant metamorphosis of early modern Scottish society, not least in providing adoptive kinship networks of assistance among its emigrants overseas.[42]

FOSTERAGE AND GODPARENTHOOD IN ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

Allegiance fosterage in northwest Europe is often presumed to have been a distinctive institution of Celtic-speakers, only matched by Norse-Icelandic *fóstr*-kinship, itself possibly shaped by early Celtic influence (Parkes 2003: 753f.). Romano-British cliental fostering may be evinced in an anecdote of Gildas, mentioning the murder of two princes under the protection of their *nutritores* or foster-guardians, similar to Irish *aite* foster-fathers (*De Excidio Britanniae* 13, 3 c. 28; Kerlouégan 1969: 103f., 145f.). Yet there is little trace of such cliental fosterage among western Germanic speakers, so it has been assumed that it disappeared in England under the Anglo-Saxons.[43]

1907). But the Highland rite was evidently used to legitimize seigniorial inheritance of a client's property to the jural exclusion of natal kin: compare other "adoptions" in Innes (1855: 184f. no. 9, 191 no. 10, 193 no. 94, 204 no. 43, 205 no. 46, and 209 no. 51).

[41] Dawson (2003: 88) notes *gossip* as a term of address in written correspondence between Campbell lairds, but she remarks that "it is not clear whether the term 'gossip' was describing a relationship created by godparenthood or more loosely to indicate a close personal friendship."

[42] This is a topic of Steve Murdoch's *Network North* (2006: ch. 1). Highland fosterage of lairds was again fractured by state policies of enforced schooling in the Lowlands under the Statutes of Iona in 1609. Reports of its persistence into the nineteenth century are dubious; but its legacy might be discerned in familial relations of adoptive kinship characteristic of Scottish wet-nursing (Marshall 1984).

[43] Dorothy Whitelock even denied "any general habit of letting [Anglo-Saxon children] be fostered away from home, though youths of noble birth might be brought up at court" (1974: 94). Compare Charles-Edwards (1997: 179) and Lynch (1998: 91).

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However, in a rarely cited lecture, Fritz Roeder (1910) presented a plausible case for the cliental fostering of West Saxon royalty. In William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum Anglorum* (II.139), an apocryphal tale related how Edward the Elder visited an outlying village to pay his respects to the wife of a royal bailiff (*villicus*), who was accustomed to nurse the king's infant sons (*quae regis filios nutrire solebat*) and whom he had known as his own foster-mother (*nutrix*). Edward's son Athelstan was similarly fostered, apparently nursed and raised at the same foster-house as his father. He was then knighted in early childhood by his grandfather King Alfred, invested with a purple cloak, a jeweled belt, and a gilt-sheathed sword—a rite of regal adoption legitimating his future succession—before being sent at an age of seven to be fostered at the Mercian court of Alfred's son-in-law, the ealdorman Aethelred (ibid. II.133). Athelstan himself became foster-father to Hakon, son of Harald Fair-hair of Norway, when the child was placed on his knee, to be raised and baptized as Athelstan's fosterling (*Adalsteinsfóstri*; cf. Parkes 2003: 764). And Edgar, son of Athelstan's successor Edmund, was nursed and raised by Aelfwyn, wife of the East Anglian ruler Athelstan "Half-King," becoming a devoted milk-brother of their son Aethelwine, ealdorman of East Anglia and Mercia, and founder of Ramsey Abbey.[44]

So a regal tradition of cliental fosterage persisted in Wessex until the end of the tenth century. But there are signs that infant nursing (*fedan*) was then more commonly deputed to mercenary wet-nurses, whose foster-fees (*fosterlean*) were reclaimable in bridewealth (Whitelock 1979: 467). There are also signs that out-fosterage was now normally instituted at an age of seven years, anticipating commendation to a lord—as with Athelstan's investiture by Alfred, or Hakon's foster-adoption by Athelstan—whence child-fostering became indicative of patronage rather than clientage. This "patronal fosterage" may have been earlier established among continental Saxons: the legendary fostering at an age of seven of Beowulf by his maternal grandfather Hrethel, over-king of the Geats, would become exemplary of vassalic child-commendation to seigniorial lords in patrimonial polities of Europe up to the end of the middle ages (Bremmer 1980). Already at Alfred's court in the ninth century, Asser observed its halls crowded with the children of his subjects, whom Alfred "loved no less than his own children," taking personal care over their Christian education (*De rebus gestis Aelfredi*, c. 76; Bullough 1972: 455f.). Like abbots and bishops in Ireland, the patrimonial ruler, whether Saxon or Carolingian, now regarded *himself* as a fosterer: the *nutritor* of his vassal children and thegns.[45]

[44] After Roeder (1910: 10–20). On the significance of King Edgar's infant fosterage, see Hart (1973: 123–24, 133–37). Compare Stafford (1981: 21 n. 58) and Crawford (1999) on Anglo-Saxon fostering.

[45] This idiom of the Christian monarch as *nutritor* or nurturant "foster-father" of vassals (*nutriti, vassi dominici*) stems from the early Carolingian era, plausibly derived from Irish abbatial

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As Joseph Lynch shows (1998: 214–28), the ninth century was an era in which godparental sponsorship evidently superseded fosterage as an adoptive tie of political allegiance in Anglo-Saxon England, as in Carolingian Francia (cf. Wielers 1959: 47–59; Angenendt 1984). Alfred thus sponsored the baptism of the defeated Viking Guthrum, and the catechismal confirmation of the Welsh ruler Anarawd of Gwynedd. Athelstan sponsored the baptism of a son of the Scots king Constantine, lifting the child from the font "for the sake of their pact of submission" (*in cuius pacti gratia*), and taking back his godson as a hostage-fosterling seven years later. Athelstan similarly sponsored and fostered Alan, Duke of Brittany, restoring his godson to rule after driving out Viking incursors. The Laws of Ine had already established *wergild* injury compensation for spiritual kin (*Institutiones* 76), conceivably modeled on Irish *éraic* payments due to foster-kin, now conflated with spiritual kin (Lynch 1998: 196–99; Charles-Edwards 1997: 177). Attenuated forms of cliental fosterage, demoted to honorary "milk kinship" by wet-nursing, doubtless survived far later in medieval England.[46] But the political future lay in *patronal* fosterage.

ELEMENTARY STRUCTURES OF FEUDATORY STATE FORMATION

This survey of allegiance fosterage in Ireland and Celtic Britain confirms our earlier conjectures of its structural parallels with equivalent fosterage in segmentary-tributary polities of Central Asia (Parkes 2003: 759, Table 1). Cliental fostering by subordinates similarly constituted a primary tie of political allegiance, represented in familial terms of adoptive kinship connoting infant breast-feeding.[47] Fosterage was comparably associated with conical clans or stratified descent groups, its networks of loyalty configured by the segmentary rivalries of ruling dynasts, replicated at lower orders of dynastic affiliation and agnatic competition. Foster-kinship thus comprised equivalent "alternative social structures" (Hammel 1968) of serially linked and inherited allegiances between ranked descent lines, filling in the social interstices of

models of patrimonial sovereignty conveyed by Columbanian missionaries to Francia (cf. Enright 1985; Clarke and Brennan 1981; Charles-Edwards 2000: ch. 8; and see note 51). Terms of clientage, such as Gallo-Latin *vassus* or Old English *thegn*, conversely characterize the vassal as a retained "fosterling" (Bloch 1961: 155f.; Meier 1976; cf. Mitterauer 1996: 303).

[46] In fourteenth-century Hertfordshire, a manorial court roll recorded the donation of an estate to a tenant "for the sake of nurturing the child" (Homans 1942: 193), matching the bequest of an estate by the aethling Athelstan to his *fostermeder* in the tenth century (Charles-Edwards 1997: 179 n. 10). In 1135, humble retainers of Henry I refused to transfer allegiance to Stephen since Henry's daughter Matilda was their co-raised milk-sister (*connutritiae suae*; *Gesta Stephani* I.12, ed. Potter, 1976: 15). For an earlier Carolingian parallel, see McKeon (1974: 437f.) on archbishop Ebbo of Reims, the son of a royal serf promoted as the co-raised milk-brother of Louis the Pious.

[47] See note 6. Richard Stanyhurst actually glossed Irish terms of fosterage as literal milk kinship, where "foster-brothers (*collactanei*)... are even prepared to risk their lives in all manner of dangers for the safety of their 'milk-brothers' as they call them" (*pro lacteorum fratrum, ut appellant*; 1584: 48). Cf. also Parkes (2004a: 589f.).

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natal descent and marital alliance. Fosterage in these peripheral regions was also insinuated with clientage, serving to attract loyal support and to extract valuable tribute or child-legacies in a congenial idiom of adoptive kinship and familial gift-exchange. There are therefore grounds to consider allegiance fosterage an "elementary structure" of rudimentary state formation in these segmentary-tributary polities: a construction of post-natal kinship that cemented serial relations of vassalage and so consolidated tributary rule in the short duration; yet which also helped replicate their segmentary devolution by fissiparous dynastic succession (Parkes 2003: 760).[48]

Fears of family violence being done to children—by jealous brothers and agnatic cousins or uncles, as by step-mothers promoting their own offspring—were commonly supposed to explain the out-fostering of heirs in Ireland and Celtic Britain, as in mountain kingdoms of Central Asia. But a more pragmatic motive was simply to use children as pawns for the construction of familial clientage. Dynasts and warlords in these segmentary-tributary polities tended to be polygynous husbands, accumulating huge harems of wives and concubines, or passing through a rapid succession of legitimate and illegitimate unions; so dozens of infant offspring might be fostered out to cement relations of clientage and political alliance.[49] The eschewal of defined jural principles of elective or hereditary succession also had a pragmatic advantage of ensuring that all fostering clients had a vested interest in maintaining loyal dynastic allegiance on behalf of their entrusted wards– until their succession was murderously contested on the death of rulers, whose reigns were all too short (cf. Parkes 2001: 22ff.). Vested interests of cliental allegiance thus perpetually replicated these segmentary states, whose dynastic struggles rarely permitted any cumulative consolidation of patrimonial rule beyond the lifespan of hegemonic warlords.[50]

[48] See note 3 on *feudatory state formation*. There are obvious analogies between these "elementary structures" of adoptive kinship constructed through child-delegation in western Eurasia and regimes of asymmetric marital alliance in segmentary-tributary polities of Southeast Asia, as among the Kachin described by Edmund Leach (see Parkes 2001: 27ff.). Cliental allegiance fosterage thus formally corresponds with serial *hypogamy* (the marital delegation of kinswomen to social subordinates, characteristic of prescriptive matrilateral cross-cousin marriage), whereas patronal allegiance fosterage might be compared with serial *hypergamy* (the marital delegation of kinswomen to social superiors, characteristic of caste regimes in northern India). See Parkes (2003: 743–45, 769; 2004a: 606).

[49] See Mulchrone (1936: 187) and Charles-Edwards (2000: 112). On concubinage and serial marital unions among medieval Irish dynasts, see Nicholls (1972: 73ff.), who noted: "Turlogh O Donnell, lord of Tirconnell (died 1423) had eighteen sons (by ten different women) and fifty-nine grandsons in the male line. ... Philip Maguire, lord of Fermanagh (died 1395), had twenty sons by eight mothers, and we know of at least fifty grandsons" (1972: 11). This *almost* matches such prolific rulers in the Hindu Kush as Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral (1857–1892), with nineteen wives and over sixty children, all fostered out to milk-kin clients (Parkes 2001: 18, 29–31).

[50] See Ó Corráin (1971), Gibson (1995) and Maund (1998) on dynastic civil strife in medieval Celtic polities. But compare Ó Corráin (1978) and Simms (1987) on emergent state formation by provincial warlords in twelfth-century Gaelic Ireland.

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Yet we have observed incipient transformations of these adoptive kinship structures of feudatory state formation. In the early Irish Church and its monasteries, traditional cliental fosterage became reconfigured as an institution of patronage and preferment. Initially conflated with baptismal sponsorship, as Kerlouégan discerned in Celtic hagiographies, patronal fosterage would become a prevalent institution of administrative succession and affiliation in all Irish ecclesiastical confederations. Diffused by missionaries to Christian establishments throughout western Europe (Guerreau-Jalabert 1999: 271–75; Brusotto 2004), it then provided a spiritual paradigm for feudo-vassalic relations wherever patrimonial polities were consolidated (de Jong 1996: 198–204; Guerreau-Jalabert 1999: 275–77). The revolution of the Pippinids in Francia dramatizes this metamorphosis: the usurpation of sovereignty by former palace mayors and *nutritores* or official "foster-tutors" of Merovingian princes (Hlawitschka 1965). They would then institute under Charlemagne a more securely regularized system of vassalage among nobility (Barbero 1999): now rooted in patronal fosterage or knightly commendation, consecrated by transitive chains of spiritual sponsorship stemming from the Pope's patronage of Carolingian royalty (Angenendt 1980), but which still retained a traditional idiom of child nurture (*nutritura*, Old French *norriture*).[51] A similar but less radical transition occurred in the West Saxon courts of Alfred, Edward and Athelstan, where we witnessed lingering relics of cliental fostering supplanted by patronal fosterage or vassalic child-commendation, again accompanied by baptismal sponsorship as an alternative means of adoptive affiliation.

In Ireland and Celtic Britain, however, this patronal transformation of fosterage and adoptive kinship remained marginal. It was mainly restricted to monasteries, which were civil islands of relatively stable patrimonial administration within ever-turbulent seas of segmentary strife: "cities of refuge" (Etchingham 1999: 167f.). Embryonic patronal formations of adoptive kinship doubtless emerged in Celtic lay polities, particularly under Anglo-Norman colonization, as in medieval Wales.[52] But their development

[51] On Merovingian *nutritores*, see Illmer (1976), Riché (1978: 236–38), and Parkes (2003: 765; n.d.). On the patronal fosterage of children and youths in the Carolingian *schola palatii*, see Dette (1994) and Innes (2003: 61–65). Its practice may have been conveyed by Irish missionaries appointed as *nutritores* to Carolingian princes (Riché 1982), together with other Celtic Christian institutions of patrimonial lordship and ordained sovereignty (Moore 1996; and see note 45, above). On ecclesiastical *nutritores* in Francia, see Sot (1978: 442) and Brusotto (2004), as well as de Jong (1996: 211f., 215) on the possible influence of Irish fosterage on Carolingian practices of child oblation (*oblatio puerorum*), the parental dedication of infants to monasteries.

[52] Cf. Down (1987). Archaic "patronal" alignments of fosterage are indicated in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and related legends of Cú Chulainn's foster-adoption by King Conchobar and other lords of Ulster (see Parkes 2004a: 599, Fig. 3). Conchobar's "boy-troop" (*macrad*) at Emain Macha is also intriguing, since these children were accompanied by their *aite* and *muimme*

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would be stymied by the counter-finalities of segmentary-tributary replication, which allegiances of cliental fosterage parasitically fed upon and reproduced, even assimilating foreign colonizers and clerics.[53] Spiritual kinship seemed significantly undeveloped in Gaelic Ireland and Highland Scotland; or else it was co-opted into unstable confraternities of *gossipred* alliance, whether or not rooted in baptismal sponsorship. Patronal alignments of allegiance fosterage predominated in these Celtic societies only as an alien imposition of English imperial conquest, when its powerful affinities with child hostage-taking became all too apparent in Tudor colonial policies of enforced wardship.

Tudor wardship was an autumnal efflorescence of alternative feudatory formations of adoptive kinship by tributary child-delegation that had been inaugurated by Anglo-Saxon rulers of the ninth century.[54] It was the culmination of an elaboration of pro-parental patronage that had, ironically, emerged from a chiasmic transformation of traditional Celtic fosterage: for its clerical and monastic realignment had readapted this ancient institution of adoptive clientage into one of pledged apprenticeship and educational sponsorship, effectively underpinning patrimonial consolidation in northwest Europe.

CONCLUSION

This highly schematic narrative of feudatory state formation, apprehended through its relational inflections of pro-parenthood and adoptive kinship (after E. Goody 1982; 1999), clearly needs critical qualification. Determining whether cliental allegiance fosterage may be evident in other Celtic or Germanic societies—apart from Anglo-Saxon England, Merovingian Francia, and Old Norse polities in Iceland—takes us into uncertain realms of proto-historical conjecture (Evans 1997: 118–20; Karl 2005). But in all these historically attested societies, parallel formations and transformations of adoptive kinship through delegated parenthood, accompanying noble class-formation and patrimonial

foster-parents, conceivably court tutors and nurses (O'Rahilly 1976: 136f.). Yet there is scant evidence of court services by *maccoím* pages outside of legendary narratives, nor of its identification with *altram* fosterage (Charles-Edwards 2000: 113ff., with n. 153). On legendary representations of princely fosterage in Gaelic narrative literature, which may reflect clerical conceptions of an idealized patrimonial order retrojected into a heroic past, see Boll (2002; 2004; 2005).

[53] By the late middle ages, dynastic fosterage had re-embraced an embattled Irish Church: for example, Patrick O Sgagnell, a Dominican friar who would become bishop of Raphoe and primate of Armagh, fostered a daughter of the king of Tyrconnell, Godfrey O Donnell. By 1453, the synod of Limerick was obliged to forbid such cliental fostering of nobility by clergy without a bishop's license (Nicholls 1972: 79).

[54] In addition to Hurstfield (1958) on the Court of Wards, see McCracken (1983) on "The Exchange of Children in Tudor England," and Fumerton (1986) on "The Elizabethan Currency of Children." On the earlier medieval history of wardship, see Orme (1984: 46f., 50f.). On ambivalent literary representations of Tudor child-fosterage, see Woodford (1999), documenting its impending denunciation as an archaic relic of medieval clientelism under Stuart bureaucratic government. But on the revival of wardship in Ireland as a policy of colonial patronage under James I, see Treadwell (1961).

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state formation, do seem discernible.[55] The consolidation of segmentary-tributary polities as patrimonial states correlates with *a transposition of adoptive parenthood and filiation between patrons and clients* (Fig. 1), associated with elite educational sponsorship and spiritual kinship in northwest Europe, as instituted in the early Irish Church.

Similar transformations, typically associated with the sponsorship of clerical education by patrimonial rulers and their ministers, are perceptible in medieval Islamic Asia (Parkes n.d.; Mottahedeh 1980). But there, as in Celtic Britain, cliental allegiances of infant fostering or "milk kinship" (Arabic *rida'a*) also persisted into modern times (Parkes 2003: 746–51; 2005), and so survived within living memory in mountain polities of Central Asia and southeast Europe (2001, 2004b). Their historical ethnographies have lent us illuminating insights into similar social practices and networks of adoptive kinship, whose structural and diagnostic significance has been neglected in historiographies of Eurasian state formation. Their prosopographic reconstruction and processual comprehension are promising projects for regional historians and ethnographers conjointly to explore: further uncovering those "hidden structures of kinship" by fosterage, quasi-adoption, and ritual sponsorship (J. Goody 1983: 191, 68–75) that formed crucial feudatory networks of affiliation and allegiance in tributary polities throughout western Eurasia.

APPENDIX

CONTRACT OF FOSTERAGE OF SIR RODERICK MACLEOD OF DUNVEGAN (1614): TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION OF FIGURE 2.

Original document in the National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh (RH.9/17/35). Transcription after James (ed. 1872: III: no. 84), with restored tironian notes (*7* = *agus* "and," *.i.* = *iodhon*; "i.e., namely") and emended English translation. MacKinnon and Morrison (1969 ii: 25–30, iii: 255–58) plausibly identify the foster-father (*oide*) of Sir Roderick's third son Norman, "John son of the son of Kenneth" (or John son of MacKenzie), as an alias of John Campbell of Hushinish in the Isle of Harris, a minor laird or tacksman from a family of Presbyterian parsons subordinate to Sir Roderick MacLeod (Ruairdh Mór Mac Leòid) of Dunvegan in Skye. After fosterage, Norman (later Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray) proceeded to the University of Glasgow in 1631, taking possession of the island of Berneray in 1633, where he died in 1705. This unique contract in classical Gaelic script appears to have been written by the first signatory, Toirdhealbhach Ó Muirgheasáin, a *file* poet and scribe from a distinguished Gaelic bardic family, who were still in the employ of the MacLeods of Berneray a century later (Bannerman 1980: 21;

[55] See Guerreau-Jalabert (1995; 1999), Jussen (2000); Parkes (2003: 763–67); Althoff (2004: 62f.); and Mitterauer (2000: 35; 2006).

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McLeod 2004: 73f.). See MacKinnon (1912: 296–97) and Cameron (1937: 222ff, 246f.). (I am grateful to Dr. Alison Cathcart of the University of Strathclyde, and particularly Dr. Aonghas MacCoinnich, Department of Celtic Studies at the University of Glasgow, for advice on these biographical details).

Transcription

Ag so an tachd 7 an cengal ar affuil macleoid ag tabhairt amhic .i. tormoid / deoin mac mic cainnigh 7 ase so an tachd ar affuil se ar affuil se ag / eoin .i. an leanamh do beth aga mhanaoi no go ttugaidh si fein fear . ma / se eoin is girra saoghal . achd fearachd sul in leinimh do bheth ag aonghus / mac mic cainnigh in fad / abhias si gan fhear da tabhairt 7 comhluath / 7 abhear fear hi an leanamh ag aonghus fein osin amach lena bheo fein / 7 madh he abhratair .i. domnall mac mic cainnigh is faide saoghal / an diaigh aonghuis . ata in leanamh ag domnhall mar in gcetna . 7 ata / cuid duine chloinne do dhilib ag mac leoid go re triuir .i. e fein 7 / a mac eighre .i. eoin mac mic leoid 7 tormoid in / daltasa eoin mac mic cainnigh ar eoin 7 ar aonghus mac mic cainnigh / 7 ar domhnall mac mic cainnigh 7 ar da mac domhnaill mic murchaidh .i. ruaidri / 7 murchadh 7 ar da mac donnchaidh mic domhnaill .i. eoin 7 domhnall 7 ar bhrian / mac mic muiredaigh 7 ar ghillechalaim mac affhearsuna 7 ag so an / tshealbh do chuir eoin mac mic cainnigh ar seilbh an leinimh / tormoid .i. ceithre laracha 7 a ceithir eile do chuir mac leoid ar / a seilbh le cois tri laracha do gheall se dho anuair doghlac / se ina uchd e 7 coimhed 7 fearachd sul na seachd laracadh sin / tug mac leoid don leanamh abeth ag eoin mac cainnigh da / gcur ar biseach da dhalta 7 coimhed 7 fearachd sul na / gceitre laracha tug eoin mac cainnigh da dalta abeth / ag mac leoid da gcur ar bisech do mar in gcetna 7 ag so na / fiaghnadha ata airsin .i. maighisdir eogan mac suibhne minisdir / dhiuirinnisi 7 domhnall mac pail duibh 7 eoin mac colgan minisdir bracaduil 7 toirdealbhach / omurgheasa anos an tochdamh la doctober aois an / tigearna mile 6 . c . a 4 x .

S R MACLEOID

Toirdelbach o murgeasa	*Jo^{n} m^{c} colgan w^{t}nes*
mar fiaghnaisi	*Donald mak quein witnes*
M^{r} ewin m^{c}quein witnes	

Translation

This is the condition and agreement by which MacLeod is giving his son, namely, Norman / to John son of the son of Kenneth. And this is the condition in which he is to be / with John: namely, if it be that that John die first, the child is to be with his wife until she gets a husband for herself; but the guardianship of the child is to belong to Angus / son of the son of Kenneth, so long as she is without a husband. / And when a man marries her, the child is to be with Angus from then onwards in his life. / And if his brother Donald son of the

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son of Kenneth should outlive / Angus, the child shall be with Donald in like manner. And a son's share of / stock is to be with MacLeod during the lifetime of three: namely himself, / and his son and heir, namely, John son of MacLeod, and Norman this / foster-child of John son of the son of Kenneth, as against John and against Angus son of the son of Kenneth, and / against Donald son of the son of Kenneth, and against the two sons of Donald the son of Murdoch, namely, Roderick / and Murdoch, and against the two sons of Duncan the son of Donald, namely, John and Donald, and against Brian / son of the son of Murdoch, and against Gillecallum MacPherson. And this is / the stock which John the son of the son of Kenneth shall put in possession of the child Norman: / namely, four mares, and another four which MacLeod put / in his possession, along with three he promised him when he took him / to his bosom. And the charge and keeping of these seven mares / which MacLeod gave to the child shall be with John son of Kenneth, so as / to put them to increase for his foster-son; and the care and charge of the keeping of the four mares which John the son of Kenneth gave to his foster-son / shall be with MacLeod, to put them to increase for him in like manner. And these are / witnesses to this: namely, Mr Ewen McQueen, minister of / Duirinish, Donald MacPhail Dubh, and John McColgan, minister of Bracadale, and Toirdhealbhach / Ó Muirgheasáin. Now the Eighth Day of October in the Year of / Our Lord One Thousand Six Hundred and Fourteen.

S R MACLEOD

Toirdhealbhach Ó Muirgheasáin
as witness
Mr. Ewin McQueen, witness

John McColgan, witness
Donald McQueen, witness

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