Alternative Social Structures and Foster Relations in the Hindu Kush: Milk Kinship Allegiance in Former Mountain Kingdoms of Northern Pakistan*

PETER PARKES

University of Kent

By the side of Gossipred, or Spiritual Relationship, there stood another much more primitive institution . . . This was *Fosterage*, the giving and taking of children for nurture. (Maine [1875] 1897:241)

There is at least one way in which communion of flesh and blood may be established after birth in a way not merely symbolical, *viz. by fosterage.* (W. Robertson Smith [1885] 1903:175–6)

This article is a comparative elaboration of Eugene Hammel's pioneering analysis of "fictive kinship," *Alternative Social Structures and Ritual Relations in the Balkans* (1968). In place of godparenthood, I examine the structurally similar institution of fosterage or "milk kinship" as documented in former mountain kingdoms of the Hindu Kush in northern Pakistan. Comparable structures of interdomestic allegiance and tributary patronage organized through milk kinship are attested more fragmentarily elsewhere in the Middle East and Central Asia, and there is further evidence that such hierarchized foster relations also extended into many peripheral regions of premodern Europe (E. Goody 1982:280–1; Parkes n.d.). Hammel himself mentioned Serbian "kinship by milk" (*srodstvo po mleku*)—"meaning the fictive kinship relationship between

* This essay is indebted to the prior ethnography of German colleagues in the Hindu Kush, especially of Karl Jettmar, my professorial sponsor as an Alexander von Humboldt research fellow at Heidelberg University from 1984 to 1986, who very generously afforded access to the unpublished Ms. of Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.), including his own acute commentary on Chitrali milk kinship. I am also grateful to Jeremy MacClancy, who instigated this article by suggesting a collaborative work on global fosterage, and to helpful comments from Rodney Needham. Comparison of milk kinship with godparenthood was originally inspired by John Davis (1977:236–8), further benefiting from Jane Khatib-Chahidi's (1992) comparative considerations of Eurasian fosterage, while the potential comparability of Arabic and Balkan milk kinship was presciently noted by Soraya Altorki (1980:244 n. 14).

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two children suckled by the same woman, but otherwise unrelated" (1968:31 n.27)—with reference to Filopovich's (1963) earlier survey of South Slavonic ritual kinship. Yet Hammel did not pursue the possible analogies of such fosterage ties with *kumstvo* godparenthood: as structurally equivalent institutions of constructed kinship, once orchestrating transitive chains of interdomestic allegiance and tributary governance in peripheral polities throughout Eurasia.

ISLAMIC MILK KINSHIP IN ARABIA AND IRAN

Despite Robertson Smith's early notice of the comparable significance of fosterage with consanguinity among ancient Arabs, its structural and strategic implications within Arabic kinship—and hence Islamic family law—were only quite recently explicated by Altorki (1980). Just as one of Hammel's informants had outlined a distinct tripartition of alternative Balkan relationships—"we have kinship, alliance, and godparenthood" (1968:4)—so in Islamic shariah law there is a congruent triad of alternatively recognized relationships: "by blood (*nasab*), affinity (*mushara*), and milk (*ridāʿa*)." Like Serbian milk kin, the term *ridāʿa* "denotes the relationship between a child and a woman, not its own mother, who nursed it" (Altorki 1980:233); and like *kumstvo* ties of godparenthood, Arabic *ridāʿa* relationships are considered to impede subsequent marriages as incestuous or forbidden (*narawa*) for a wide range of consanguineal kin thus related:

> In establishing the range of forbidden marriages, a child nursed by a woman is treated as if it were the child of her husband, so that two children nursed by the same woman are regarded as if their milk mother's husband were their common milk-father even if both children have different parents. It follows that a boy and a girl, each nursed by a different wife of the same man, become his milk-children, and milk-siblings to each other. (Altorki 1980:234)[1]

Altorki also outlined several recognized tactical usages of Arabic milk kinship: not simply as an artifice of interfamilial alliance, but equally as a means of strategically obviating extrafamilial demands of honor, or of denying alternative obligations of intrafamilial kinship. Male domestic servants might thereby be rendered prescriptively non-sexual familial kin (*naharam*), freeing household women from veiling in their presence; while milk kinship was also employed to deny preferential claims of patrilateral kin marriage. A prudent father

[1] Altorki examined juristic definitions of such impediments to marriage, comparing these with simpler folk models of fosterage followed by contemporary Saudi Arabians. Despite their discrepancies, a common ideational scheme of Arabic milk kinship is phrased in idioms of male proprietorship: since lactation is instigated by impregnation, it is said that "the milk is from the man." Héritier-Augé (1992) has since ingeniously inferred an underlying somatic scheme of paternal filiative substances transmitted through milk; but this remains to be evinced as a recognized model (cf. Conte 1994:173–6; but see Schacht 1974; Giladi 1998). Notions of milk's conveyance of maternal substance or character influence are quite widely reported in the Islamic world (see n. 5 below), where breast milk is often considered a refinement of maternal blood (as in Aristotelian and Galenic physiology). But such somatic notions do *not* appear to be invoked in any Islamic juristic traditions concerning milk kinship (Khatib-Chahidi 1992:130 n.13).

could thus encourage his child's token suckling with the wife of an unreliable brother or paternal cousin, specifically to preclude claims to marriage between their respective children (Altorki 1980:240–1). Such evasive uses of milk kinship—to obviate suspicions of adultery, or to forestall impending marriages between kin groups—are recurrent features of fosterage that we shall encounter in the Hindu Kush. They also have pertinent analogies in equivalent "affinal blocking" tactics of Balkan godparenthood mentioned by Hammel (1968:87).

Jane Khatib-Chahidi (1992) subsequently documented similar milk kinship (*širi*) among Shi'ite Iranians, whose law interprets such relations of potential incest more broadly than Sunni legislation, extending such ties even to the milk kin of milk kin. This appears to have been associated with more elaborately stratified forms of foster-clientage created through wet nursing (*dayeh*) in earlier Persian society (cf. Widengren 1968:69–80). As Khatib-Chahidi concluded: "we may well be dealing with an institution which had as part of its raison d'être in the past the need to enter into an alliance with a family with whom a link by marriage was to be positively avoided" (1992:124). In developing this conjecture of a milk kinship "alliance structure" between Iranian social strata, Khatib-Chahidi interestingly drew upon comparative historical references to foster allegiances throughout Eurasia. A primary resource here is E. J. Gwynn's erudite article on "Fosterage" in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1913 vol. 6:104–9; cf. also Bühler 1964).

FOSTERAGE AND DYNASTIC ALLEGIANCE IN EURASIA

Gwynn compared historical sources on fosterage throughout Eurasia: in ancient Arabian, Indian, Turkish, Caucasian, Slavic, Mediterranean, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Gaelic societies. Despite their diverse cultural contexts, his survey revealed a recurrent dynastic strategy, employing fosterage as a political alliance mechanism between rulers and powerful but subordinate tribes, clans, social strata, or distinct ethnic groups, whose hereditary fostering services often entailed their collective elevation to nobility or quasi-royalty in a corporate idiom of milk kinship. The political influence of courtiers thus related "by milk" to dynastic rulers is well illustrated in the biography of the Mughal emperor Akbar, who evidently adopted an indigenous Turco-Mongol institution of political clientage through fosterage, as is attested in familial kin terms of suffixed address for such milk relatives (*anka,* [foster]-mother, *atka,* [foster]-father, *koka,* [foster]-brother):

> Akbar had much to suffer on account of the favours which he lavished on his foster-mother, Maham *Anka* and her family. She was for many years the most influential person at his court, and her son, Adam Khan *Koka,* was one of his generals. When this man actually stabbed the emperor's minister, Muhammad Khan *Atka,* it is remarked by the Muslim historian that Akbar's wrath caused him to forget the *nisbat* ["connection," pl. of Arabic *nasab,* "kinship"] which bound him to the assassin's mother, and to order his summary execution. The murdered minister and his son, Aziz, were related to Akbar through another foster-mother. Aziz succeeded his father in power, but proved trouble-

some and contumacious; the Emperor, however, refused to inflict any but the lightest punishment on him, saying: "Between me and Aziz there is a stream of milk which I cannot cross." (Malleson 1890:177, cited in Gwynn 1913:109; see Abu al Fazl 1927: 131f.)

Gwynn also noted the importance of fosterage in political clientage among mountain statelets of the Caucasus, where the role of foster-father (*attalik*) to a chieftain's son doubled with that of tutor, reminiscent of the Scandinavian and Gaelic foster contracts of allegiance-tutelage to which the latter half of his article is devoted. Milk kinship allegiance in the Caucasus has since been treated by Kosven (1936), while Dragadze (1987:166–9) examined its implications within Georgian kinship. Here fosterage also created impediments for marriage identical to those of consanguinity, just as did godparental ties (and milk kinship) in the neighboring Balkans (Hammel 1968:31–2; cf. Lockwood 1972:69–70). Intriguing historical questions therefore arise as to whether an identically structured system of *kumstvo* ritual kinship might have acquired "areal" attributes of Caucasian and Balkan fosterage, operating as its Christianized social calque.[2]

Gwynn disregarded Maine's (1897:241–3) comparative jural and philological hints of an ancient "Aryan" institution of foster-kinship vestigially dispersed among Indo-European speakers (as among ancient Semites according to Robertson Smith 1903:175f.). He rather pointed to its pragmatic advantages in peripheral regions of premodern Eurasia: as a mutual security network in the embodied idiom of kinship, cutting across often fractious corporations and alliances of blood-kin and affines, hence systemically adapted to relatively anarchic conditions of political instability prior to modern state formation. In his concluding words:

> Whatever the origin of fosterage may have been, the evidence here collected indicates that it is most likely to develop and assume importance in a disturbed and unorganized condition of society, where the individual, not being able to rely on a central authority or on corporate social instinct, is led to seek security by laying great stress on family ties, and by giving to artificial relationships the same sanctity as to the natural obligations of blood-kinship. (Gwynn 1913:109)

Such a connection between peripheral political instability and milk kinship might indeed explain its simultaneous demise within the twentieth century, as witnessed in Saudi Arabia, Iran, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Hindu Kush. National state formation then entrenched seemingly stable dynasties or bureaucracies over such regions, which therefore no longer needed to rely upon quasi-familial connections with local power-brokers; while from a local per-

[2] Substitution of godparenthood for foster kinship is actually attested by Smith (1992:20) in early medieval Wales, where specific "milk kin" terms of fosterage were initially transferred to the spiritual relationship. Cf. also Davis (1977:236–8) "On non-Christian godparenthood," including milk kinship. The structural genesis of godparenthood from tributary fosterage, resolving outstanding problems of alternative co-parental templates reviewed by Hermann (1997), is evinced in Parkes (n.d.).

spective, the mustering of extra-kin patronage through fostering ties would then less evidently outweigh its reciprocal burdens (i.e., of permanently committed allegiance, categorical subordination, and excluded future marriage options) in perceived situations of greater overall security. Conditions of insecurity have been plausibly evoked to explain other kinds of institutional clientage in the Mediterranean and Latin America, including godparenthood (Mintz and Wolf 1950; Ingham 1970). But if we might thus account—perhaps prematurely—for an apparent modern demise of Eurasian milk kinship, its former social and political significance remains to be comprehended.

Here I consider that Hammel's triadic conception of systemically interrelated "alternative social structures" in the Balkans—of descent, alliance, and allegiance—may prove to have a broader analytical application in comprehending social formations of peripheral tributary polities throughout Eurasia. Before proceeding to its trial application in the Hindu Kush, however, it is helpful to review what Hammel purported to have discovered in analyzing Balkan godparenthood. This is succinctly summarized by John Davis:

> [Hammel 1968] reconstructs and analyses the most elaborately systematic godparenthood yet recorded: godparenthood, affinity and agnation are mutually exclusive structural alternatives. . . . Agnatic groups . . . might establish relationships either of marriage or of godparenthood with other similar agnatic groups. The godparenthood relationship was certainly systematic in the sense that it was unilateral ("members of one line were godparents of those of a second, who were godparents of those of a third, and so on") and Hammel thinks that affinal relationships may have been so too. (Davis 1977:224)

A primary objective of this essay is simply to demonstrate that "milk kinship" might here be substituted for "godparenthood" in transferring Hammel's analytical framework to the historical ethnography of the Hindu Kush. A second objective is to try to stand on Hammel's shoulders, aspiring to grasp the *sorting dynamics* of such structures of unilateral allegiance in relation to historically particular political circumstances. A final objective—concerning comparable "alternative social structures" of descent, alliance and allegiance in peripheral regions throughout premodern Eurasia—is treated summarily (anticipating Parkes n.d.) in the conclusion.

MILK KINSHIP IN THE HINDU KUSH

As noted by Khatib-Chahidi (1992:111), John Biddulph's *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh* (1880) highlights the centrality of milk kinship allegiance in the mountain kingdoms of this border region of Central and South Asia, lying beyond the settled northern frontiers of British India until the end of the nineteenth century (see Figure 1):

> The custom of foster relations is maintained among all the ruling families, and its ties seem more stringent than those of blood kinship. On the occasion of a son or daughter being born, the child is assigned to a foster-mother, in whose house it is brought up, so that frequently the father does not see his children till they are six or seven years old,

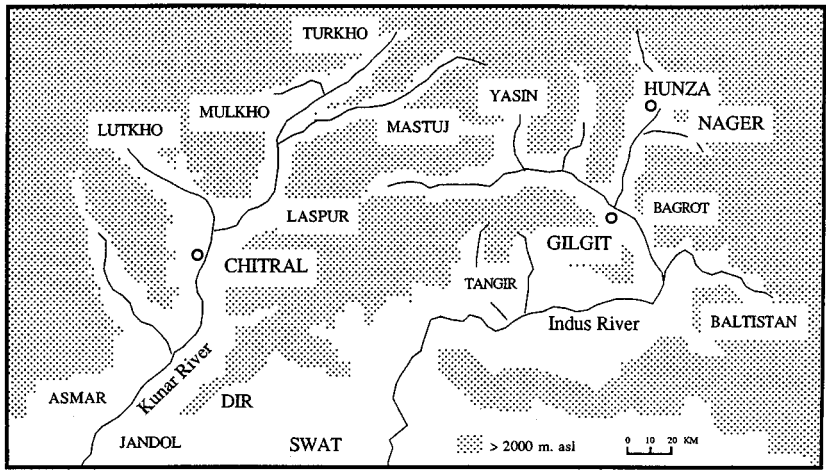

FIGURE 1. Former kingdoms and regions of the Hindu Kush and Karakorum mountain ranges of northern Pakistan.

and the whole family of the nurse place themselves at the disposal of the foster child, with whom, for the rest of their lives, their fortunes are unalterably bound up. Whatever are a man's misfortunes or crimes in after-life, his good and bad fortunes are equally shared. Should exile be his lot, his foster kindred accompany him. On the other hand, if he rises to influence, his foster-father is generally his most confident adviser, and his foster-brothers are employed on the most important missions. (Biddulph 1880:82)

All offspring of rulers throughout this region were thus sent within a few days of birth to noble foster homes. As Biddulph subsequently remarked, local dynastic histories "abound in treachery and murder committed by son against father, and brother against brother" (1880:154); so the affective allegiances of milk kinship emerged as a relational counterpart of often quite literal (parricidal or fratricidal) blood relations among ruling families.[3] Milk kinship between a princely pretender and his noble foster-kin was an intimate mutual allegiance, played for high stakes of reward or destitution in competitive struggles with other royalty and their own supportive milk kin. Such support groups might expect repeated setbacks of punishment or exile in loyally campaigning for their princely milk kin—at least until the assassination of a ruling prince might allow an opportune return from exile, when there would be renewed hopes of gaining estates and court offices at the expense of alternatively aligned local rivals, to be exiled or executed in turn. Such, as we shall see, were the recurring personal dramas of every notable family in this region.

[3] This dichotomy of blood-kin and milk kin was bluntly put to another early explorer of this region: "A real [blood] relative in a high family is a person who God points out to one to kill as an obstacle in one's way, whereas a foster relative (generally of a lower class) is a true friend who rises and falls with one's own fortune." (Leitner 1894, App. II:8–9)

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Biddulph next introduces some ritual extensions of symbolic fosterage in the Hindu Kush:

> The custom of cementing friendship by the milk connection seems a favourite one. Should a woman dream that she has adopted any person as a son, or should any man dream that he has been adopted by a certain woman, the connection is carried out in the same way as the forced adoption [for cases of suspected adultery] and nobody would think of refusing to recognize it. (Biddulph 1880:82)

Biddulph had indeed earlier described the coercive enforcement of such rites of "fictive" milk kinship after adultery: "In cases [of infidelity] . . . guarantee is taken for the future by the accused placing his lips to the woman's breast. She thenceforth is regarded as his foster-mother, and no other relations but those of mother and son can exist between them" (ibid.: 77). Symbolic forms of fosterage establishing milk kinship might thus entail a single gestural act of suckling between adults rather than infant nursing.[4]

Biddulph's treatment of indigenous notions of incest or marital impediment through milk kinship is, however, frustratingly imprecise: "The foster relationship is regarded as so close, that marriage between foster relations would be looked upon as incestuous, and, in spite of the precepts of the Koran, it would be impossible for a man to marry the widow of his foster-son" (ibid.: 83). This at least suggests a filiative extension of the milk-kin tie superseding Islamic law, and we shall find further evidence for a broader patrifilial inheritance and patrilineal sharing of milk-kin ties.[5] Biddulph's final remarks on the institution indeed point to a specific example of such "corporate" milk kinship:

> The formation of these ties is practised in a peculiar way among the Ashimadek clans of Chitral. It is customary for every infant to be suckled by every nursing mother of the clan; consequently there is a constant interchange of infants going on among the mothers, for the purpose of strengthening tribal unity (ibid.).

On face value, this suggests that some clans circulated their infants for suckling from one house to another, which would thereby render such groups exogamous by Islamic *ridāʿa* law. This is not inconceivable. Subsequent ethnographers of this region have noted a "preferential exogamy" of lineal descent groups, ascribed to the persistence of pre-Islamic social values.[6] Collective fosterage might therefore have served to perpetuate lineal exogamy against pref-

[4] Fosterage between adults is also indirectly attested by its jural prohibition among early Muslim Arabs (Schacht 1974:464); while "foster adoption at knifepoint" on suspicion of adultery is similarly documented in the Caucasus by Kosven (1936; cf. Chenciner 1997:81).

[5] Procreational notions of milk relations and ideas of incest are not explicated in subsequent ethnography (but cf. Parkes 2000 on the non-Muslim Kalasha). A general notion of maternal inheritance or influence through milk is widespread in this region, even among Afghan Pashtuns who have no particularly developed institution of milk kinship (e.g., Tapper 1991:55, 70). Pehrson (1966:39) similarly mentioned "incest by milk" among Marri Baluch, where "a woman and her sisters have the same milk," reflected in the common Persian term *ham-šīrā* (same milk) for sisters (cf. Greek *homogalaktes* "siblings" as noted by Weber 1968:357).

[6] E.g., Snoy (1975:131–40). Tahir Ali (1983:73–4) observed clan exogamy persisting in Hunza in the mid-1970s, as it still strictly does among the non-Muslim Kalasha of Chitral (Parkes 1983, forthcoming).

erential endogamy, otherwise encouraged by Koranic precedent, ironically entailing Islamic laws of milk kinship to ensure the survival of a somewhat un-Islamic (Central Asian) kind of "tribal unity" (cf. Lindholm 1988). But an alternative reading, also supported by subsequent accounts, is that the infants circulated within these clans were primarily the *royal* offspring of extant rulers. In other words, this was a classic mechanism of incorporative royal allegiance through constructed kinship, as noted by Gwynn elsewhere in Eurasia.

Apart from Biddulph's uniquely valuable early testament, there are further colonial accounts and many incidental references to milk kinship in this region to draw upon. Col. D. L. R. Lorimer thus had recorded in exacting detail the complex ceremonies for establishing royal fosterage in Hunza, together with all subsequent gift-exchanges at the rites of passage of royal foster children:

> In Hunza, when a son or daughter is born to the *tham* [ruler], they give the child to be fostered. When they take the princess or prince to the foster-parent's house, the foster-father, slaughtering a goat/sheep and taking bread with him, goes along with his brothers and sons and relations and his wife's brother and her father to the palace. The *tham* provides for each of them a robe and a turban and two or three sets of clothes for the man's wife, and give him bedclothes for the princess or prince, and sends them away to the foster-house. . . . When the child has reached the age for marriage they hand it over to the *tham.* The foster-parents having had the trouble of keeping the infant, the *tham* gives them land in return for the laps of their clothes, being rotten. They call that land *uˀušaki* [fostering]. (Lorimer [ca. 1935] 1979/80, I:138–40)

Royal fosterage thus assimilated a Turco-Persian rite of incorporation similar to the court rituals of the Mughal *durbars* of India (Cohn 1983:635f.), whereby the tribute and valuables of a subordinate (*nazār*) were exchanged for an investiture with robes of honor (*khelā't*). But such rituals of allegiance in Hunza were also no doubt materially important transactions. Tham Ghazanfar Khan, in the early decades of this century, reportedly "gave many grazing-grounds and orchards" together with irrigated land as *uˀušaki* benefices (ibid.). Foster-kin subsequently fighting for a successful prince might further gain huge estates seized from exiled rivals, as well as lucrative tax-farming offices at the royal court, which might be subinfeudated to lower-ranking orders of milk-kin allegiance.

Biddulph and Lorimer also recorded special milk-kin relational terms used in the various languages of the Karakorum and Hindu Kush, which were usually words for suckling or milk, prefixed to colloquial forms of address for familial kin. In the Khowar language of Chitral, the term *ṣhir-muž* or "milk-(bone)marrow" thus designated the family of foster-parents, whose foster-son or daughter (*ṣhir-žau/ǰhur*) would refer to them as "milk-father" (*ṣhir-tat*) and "milk-mother" (*ṣhir-nan*), with all children in the household reciprocally addressing each other as "milk-brother" (*ṣhir-brar*) or "milk-sister" (*ṣhir-isposār*).[7]

[7] Khowar terms for milk-kinship are sometimes rendered as *šir-* (showing influence from modern Persian). The translation of the term *ṣhir-muž* as "milk-(bone)marrow" is semantically odd but well attested (e.g., O'Brien 1895:70; Schomberg 1938:225). Rather than being a curious folk-etymological misrendering of the simpler form *ṣhir-muš* "milk person" (Jettmar 1975:416), I suggest it evinces a semantic calque of Turkic *soy, soyak* "bone-marrow, essence," specifically associated with Turkic milk kinship (Gokalp 1994:440ff.).

Other colonial administrators, however, denounced and even tried to prohibit what they considered an unnatural servile tie. This late colonial attitude is typically conveyed by Col. R. C. F. Schomberg, a semi-independent explorer and travel writer of the 1920s:

> Foster relationship is still common, but more among the upper classes than the lower. . . . Originally the object of fostering a child was to ensure its safety. There was less likelihood of its being killed than if it remained in the palace and, when it grew up, its foster parents and all their relations formed a party to support their foster child's interests. If his father were the *mir* [ruler], then they hoped that the child in their care would succeed his father, and they did their best to bring about this happy upshot, sometimes with lamentable results to the peace of the state. . . . This system of fostering children is a thoroughly bad one; it causes more bitterness, intrigue and friction than anything else in the Agency. (Schomberg 1935:190–91)

The strategic allegiances underlying milk kinship had, however, already withered away by the 1920s, after the consolidation of British indirect rule at the turn of the century. With the military backing of Political Officers, safely installed local rulers no longer really needed to ensure the loyalty of feudatory subordinates by farming out their children and attached court favors through fostering. By Schomberg's time, the institution was thus a lingering specter of courtly etiquette, and he was doubtless correct in his assessment that its transactional rationale had broken down: "Foster-parents nowadays receive all the kicks and none of the ha'pence, whereas in former days they enjoyed a highly privileged position" (1938:226). Indeed, the grudges of a decaying stratum of foster-gentry seem voiced behind Schomberg's quizzical observations: in Chitral, "foster-fathers have spent all their substance on some useless brat of the aristocratic class, and in return have received no recompense, no gratitude, and no protection" (ibid.:225); in Gilgit, "there are complaints that nowadays the mirs give nothing . . . for years of trouble, devotion and expense" (1935:191).[8]

In order to grasp the strategic roots of milk kinship allegiance, we should therefore concentrate on the late nineteenth century. Fortunately there is good archival material on precisely this period in Chitral. Yet both colonial and indigenous records tend to focus exclusively upon *noble* milk-kin allegiances to competing rulers and royal pretenders. There is scant information about milk kinship's ramifications at a humbler level, where Hammel's monograph on Balkan godparenthood was so informative. Here the cumulative historical ethnography of German anthropologists working in this region (see Jettmar 1975; Stellrecht and Winiger 1997) helps to fill in missing contextual details.

In the Gilgit region, Peter Snoy's *Bagrot* (1975:140–2) reveals that notions of fosterage (*unilo*) here extended to sacrificial bond-partnerships between covillagers. There was also apparently a politer variant of the symbolic adult suck-

[8] Ironically, Schomberg's travel guide, Abdullah Beg, who no doubt reported these grudges, subsequently used Schomberg's wages to "purchase" his own parvenu milk kinship to the ruler of Hunza (Lorimer [ca. 1935] 1979/80, I:270).

ling of a woman's breast, on which bread was here more decorously placed for the fictive son to nibble. Such bonds of fealty were common between local elders of the outlying valley of Bagrot-Haramosh and the princely houses of Hunza; while there was an interregional milk kinship brotherhood embracing Bagrot, Darel and other Shin ethnic enclaves as collectively allied milk kin with Hunza, and a rival confraternity embracing Nager, Gilgit and Yeshkun enclaves, once apparently accompanied by bans on intermarriage among such foster-allies (Snoy 1975:57–8; cf. Lorimer 1979/80, II:16–8).

In Hunza, terms of milk kinship (*uˀušam*) also designated hereditary classes for purposes of accounting taxes and service dues, including an upper stratum of true "suckling milk kin" (*mamˀue uˀušam*), related by genuine fosterage to the ruling dynasty, and a lower stratum of "clothing-and-food milk kin" (*gaṭˀue ṣapˀike uˀušam*), derived from an idiom of child rather than infant fosterage (Schmid 1997:188). The latter also served as a lightly euphemized property tax on wealthy peasantry, whereby serfs might purchase nominal status elevation by paying maintenance fees for an appointed prince (Flowerday 1998:147–51). Among the pastoral Wakhi of upper Hunza, who had their own indigenous institution of milk kinship (*žarž*), almost a third of the population was thus designated as milk kin to the rulers of Hunza, who appear to have particularly favored Wakhi notables with royal fostering (Kreutzmann 1996:285–7).

Most valuable for comparative purposes, however, is Jürgen Frembgen's (1985:73–80) detailed historical ethnography of the small statelet of Nager, adjacent and endemically hostile to Hunza. This study indicates that milk-kin allegiances extended well below the ruling nobility, reaching at least to members of the upper service classes. Frembgen also noted a distinction in royal milk kinship between infant suckling and later child fosterage "given into the hand" of nobility, although the customary rewards appeared quite similar: twenty to one hundred *čoq* of land (ca. seven to thirty acres) as a fostering estate (*uˀušam bʿaayo*), together with heirlooms, and usually a senior administrative office. Royal foster-parents were selected from noble houses on the advice of courtiers during a queen's pregnancy, and the foster-mother was invited to the palace to assist the mother with suckling within the first week of birth, before conducting the child with ceremony to her own home. But here there was a rule restricting royal suckling to the foster-mother or her close kin—no doubt to avoid the hazards of those corporate pass-the-baby chains observed elsewhere—and it was expected that the milk-father would be appointed chief wazir (*uˀušam ˀaya*, i.e., "foster-father") on a prince's enthronement. Frembgen further describes the political mobilization of milk-kin networks in competitive struggles for the throne where "every clan had its own prince ready to appoint as a new ruler" (1985:75). Indeed, he recounts the pitched battles of rival clans struggling for their respective milk-related princes, whose losers would be banished to peripheral tribal republics or sold into slavery. The intrigues of such milk-kin networks surrounding warring princes are documented in successional

struggles following the death of Tham Jaffar Khan in the 1880s (Frembgen 1985:80–87), precisely foreshadowing those of Chitral in the 1890s.

MILK KINSHIP AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN CHITRAL

Hammel's thesis of "alternative social structures" was particularly concerned with examining the systemic implications of Balkan godparenthood in relation to differential prestige. Inspired by Leach's (1951) analysis of Kachin prescriptive alliance, Hammel argued that an asymmetry inherent in godparenthood—despite its idiom of supposedly equivalent co-parenthood—had an ordinal sorting effect on all its interdomestic networks. Although he hedged his analytical bets, Hammel intimated that godparenthood effectively *constructed* Serbian peasant status relations, through its conjunctive and mutually exclusive interdigitation with filiative descent and affinal alliance (1968:77–9). There was, of course, an inductive dilemma here: in inferring the institution's unilaterality as determinative of, rather than derivative of, differential prestige. In his conclusion, Hammel thus equivocally remarked that "whether the system tends toward unilaterality because of prestige differences or prestige differences occur because of unilaterality is a question we will not try to settle here—the question may not have meaning" (1968:94). In the Hindu Kush, prior social asymmetry was also evidently emblematized in royal fosterage. Yet subordinate relations of milk kinship or "hypo-fosterage"—like alternative unilateral ties of hypergamy—were perhaps not so easily assignable to structurally independent status grades, whose transitive ordering was itself arguably a reciprocal *construct* of strategically-sorted foster allegiances.

The traditional social stratification of the mountain kingdoms of the Hindu Kush is most amply documented in Chitral. Here Biddulph (1880: ch. 3) described its ranked gradations in a perhaps inappropriate idiom of North Indian caste endogamy and hypergamy. Apart from the ruling dynasties, such as the Katore royal house of Chitral, there were several ranked grades of high Adamzada "aristocracy" claiming descent from earlier dynasties; and then further noble Ashimadek "tribes" or clans (*qaum*), supposedly derived from princely interlopers from neighboring kingdoms. These were followed by commoner grades of Fakir Mushkin "miserable poor," including tied serfs, artisans and slaves (Figure 2: I). A later colonial account (O'Brien 1895: vi–vii) outlines a broadly similar threefold stratification: between an upper class of nobility (*adamzā da*, literally "descendants of Adam" or true humans); a middle class of service-provisioners (*arbā bzāda*, literally "descendants of officials"); and a lower class of lumped peasants (*fakir miškin*, again, those "miserable poor")—social categories which are also represented as being defined by hypergamous distinctions of inferior wife-givers and superior wife-takers (Figure 2: II; cf. also Schomberg 1938:213–4).

Indigenous Chitrali accounts, however, reveal that all such classes or "castes" were equally administrative categories, organized for state military du-

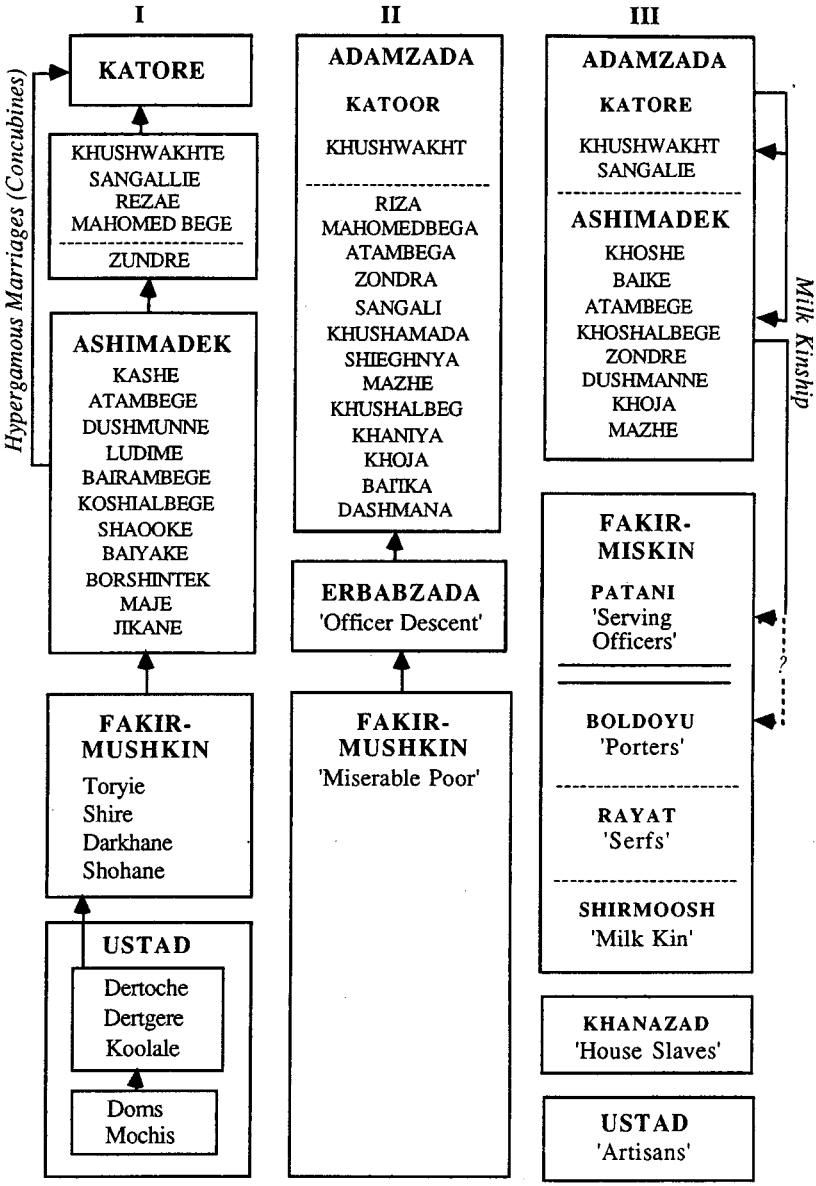

FIGURE 2. Schemes of Social Stratification in Chitral. Column I: data from Biddulph (1880: 62–6), Column II: data from O'Brien (1895: vi–vii). Column III: data from Ghulam Murtaza (1962: 229–32) and Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.), with *qaum* clans of Mulkho and Turkho from Eggert (1990: 53). Ascending arrows indicate reported hypergamous marriages between social strata; descending arrows indicate milk kinship relations (after Eggert 1990: 30–3)

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ties and for the collection of revenues (*thaŋgi*, *qalāŋ*) and corvée labor services (*begār*). Ghulam Murtaza's official chronicle of Chitral (1962:229–32) thus again dichotomized "noble" (*adamzāda*) and "ignoble" (*γalamus*) fractions: respectively those whose hereditary duties were military or courtly, and those who provided tribute and labor. The latter, categorized as either "miserable poor" (*fakir miškin*) or "yoke" (*yuft*), were also subdivided into three further revenue categories: i.e., a "serving class" (*patani*), relieved of taxes but expected to provide local hospitality for a peripatetic royal court; a "laboring class" (*bolḍoyu*), who paid revenues and provided corvée labor for state projects; and an abject "serf class" (*rayāt*) who paid revenues and did portering duties, as well as cultivating state lands (Figure 2: III). These administrative categories are again confirmed by a former Katore prince, Shahzada Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.), who adds, however, an odd fourth category of bonded tenant sharecroppers—a distinct social class of "Shirmush" or milk-kin (i.e., *ṣhir-muž*).

Chitrali status classifications cannot therefore be simply represented as having an ideal-typical "North Indian" hierarchy of castes and hypergamous subcastes (e.g., Parry 1979), as colonial accounts attempted to portray.[9] Nor are these status positions even easily correlated with relative landholding. This is indicated by reconstructed census data on these estates collected by Peter Eggert (1990:133–264) in northern Chitral, where those categorized as peasant "serfs" (*rāyāt*, *fakir miškin*) not infrequently had farmholdings larger than their supposedly "noble" (*adamzāda*) neighbors. Yet land was certainly an *ultimate* source of political power in Chitral, where the ruling Mehtar (*mitār;* lit. "owner") had all of its cultivated territory at least nominally at his disposal, to grant or confiscate at will. Allodial estates were also associated with senior descent lines of the noble *qaum* "tribes" of its semi-autonomous northern districts, while regal estates were attached to court offices at the ruler's fort in the south. But status and power perhaps had less to do with entitled ownership of the means of production than with opportunities to appropriate tribute taxes from the "miserable poor": i.e., feudal income (in convertible kind) was derived from subinfeudated revenue collection on behalf of the state—a simple form of Weber's (1968:259–61) "prebendal feudalism." It was these coveted administrative posts—from Wazir (*diwan begi*) to regional Baramush (*barāmuṣ*), Aksakal (*aksakāl*) and Atalek (*atāleγ* < Turk. *attalik*, "milk-father")—that were the essential spoils of war, which the immediate milk kin of rival princely pretenders, together with their foster-networks of dependants, ramifying to village revenue

[9] Inter-status hypergamy (including concubinage) was probably mainly restricted to the nobility in Chitral, who also began to practice Arab-like patrilateral endogamy by the end of the nineteenth century (for which the Katore royal family and Sayyeds were then notorious). But there is evidence that otherwise typically isogamous Kho Chitrali marriage regimes were formerly more like those of the non-Islamic Kalasha (see n. 5 above), combining lineage and cognatic exogamy (specified by prohibited generations of common patrilateral and matrilateral descent), thus entailing *dispersed alliances*, whereas milk kinship provided more durable, hereditary *allegiances* (cf. Trautmann 1981:359, 425–6).

collectors (*çarwelu, čhārbu*), were all struggling to claim and redistribute (Barth 1956:80–3; Eggert 1990:77–122).

Descent or inherited nobility was also apparently indeterminative of status. Many of the high Adamzada clans could trace their patrilines to earlier Katore rulers or collateral royal branches; but these had widely proliferated, so that many junior lines of Adamzadas were reduced to an ungentlemanly delving of the land, thereby degenerating into smallholder peasants; while others of ignoble descent could be regally elevated to Adamzada status (Ghulam Murtaza 1962:230–1). Yet it should be noted from Ghulam Murtaza's history that there was a small patrifilial fraction of noble Adamzadas who, throughout the nineteenth century, retained key positions of power at court. Their forefathers may have been murdered, dispossessed or exiled; yet their sons and grandsons retrieved, if only temporarily, their ancestral fortunes and positions. The scions of this handful of select patrilines were the key players of Chitrali dynastic history: their baronial "houses" (*xānadan*) were the apical nodes of the whole system of milk kinship allegiances, whereby fostered Katore princes became sacrificial pawns in their inter-"tribal" rivalries for control of the kingdom's revenues. For the *qaum* "tribes" of the Kho heartlands in northern Chitral were independently organized as hierarchical or conical clans, their leading "houses" perpetuated more or less intact by the Adamzada custom of primogeniture, the "share of the eldest" (*loṭhoro baṣ*), contrasting with a normal Chitrali custom of equal male division or ultimogeniture among peasantry (Hussam-ul-Mulk n.d.: 31).

In summary, marriage, property and descent were all significant but each indeterminate indices of status ranking, allowing us to reconsider milk kinship as an alternative structural candidate for sorting out systemic unilateral relations between status grades. With Hammel's due caution, I should emphasize that milk kinship ties could only operate *conjointly* with these other "alternative social structures," being relationally configured alongside them. (Like Balkan *kumstvo* ties, a household's milk kin are precisely where its filiative kin and its affines *are not*). Yet there is both evidential and deductive reason to suspect that milk kinship played a crucial sortative role in structuring differential stratification.

Consider first the permanence of the milk kinship bond between households. Unlike marriage or filiative descent, a milk-brother could not be divorced or disowned: as local accounts reiterate, milk kinship is the one tie that persists through good and evil fortunes. Like Balkan godparenthood, these inter-household and inter-lineal ties also persisted over generations. At the royal court, the foster-father of a successful claimant was expected to be appointed state treasurer, and this top post was ideally inherited by his son, as was a renewed tie of fosterage with the next senior prince (cf. Emerson 1984:118–9). Such perpetual allegiances of fostered lords and fostering retainers were emulated at lower administrative levels, along with the subinfeudation of estates and revenue offices. And for every successful hereditary chain of administra-

tively activated allegiances, feeding off the extracted revenues of the "miserable poor," or the appropriated estates of exiled rivals, there were other latent chains of those very rivals leanly and keenly waiting in the wings. Such milk kinship chains, so far as one can reconstruct them from incidental references, were thus complex or entangled networks of allegiance. Their nodal masters—the chiefs of the rival Adamzada *qaum*—inevitably tried to cover their relational bets of factional support and court intrigue. Yet Chitrali treachery was customarily the betrayal of consanguines and affines, never of proximate milk kin. Indeed, these networks, however politically tangled by plural alliances, appear structurally to be consistent transitive chains (Hammel 1968:76; cf. Hage and Harary 1996).

Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.: 50–5) documented over forty milk kinship connections through some sixty children of nineteen wives of "Great Mehtar" Aman-ul-Mulk (1857–1892). These indicate a coherent strategy of political coordination, spinning a marital and fostering web that covered virtually every major locus of power inside and outside the kingdom (see Appendix). Infant princes and princesses were thus placed in a descending social scale of foster homes, more or less in congruent key with their mothers' social status, ranging from legitimate Katore queens to concubines taken from all major Adamzada *qaum;* and there appears to have been a consistent policy of distributing full-sibling sets of princes and princesses in fosterage among rival *qaum* chiefs in each region. This dispersive "nesting" of successive children with a variety of social strata seems to have been repeated by noble households, themselves the milk kin of the princely senior sons and daughters of Aman-ul-Mulk.[10]

This status-related transitivity of milk kinship ties might appear to be compromised by reports of corporative fosterage: i.e., the circulation of babies for collective suckling among the Ashimadek clans of Chitral, where "it is customary for every infant to be suckled by every nursing mother." (Biddulph 1880:83). The so-called Ashimadek clans, as listed by Biddulph (Figure 2: I), were counted among the great Adamzada *qaum* of northern Chitral. Distinct from "royal" Adamazada, these northern tribes had a tributary duty of provisioning the ruler and his entourage whenever he visited their domains: hence the epithet "provisioners of cooked food" (*aṣimaḍek*). They were, however, effectively independent segmentary micro-chiefdoms under the heads (*sor*) of their ruling houses. As Biddulph suggested, many of these so-called "tribes" claimed origins from neighboring Pamir principalities; so it is conceivable that they had their own distinctive forms of East Iranian milk kinship. His mention of collective fosterage even appears confirmed by Schomberg:

[10] Analysis of these milk kinship networks depends upon still unpublished sources, especially that of Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.; see Appendix), where Jettmar's commentary further mentions another extensive list of the foster alliances of Mehtar Shuja-ul-Mulk, compiled with Wazir Ali Shah. Fieldwork data on the milk kinship networks of other Chitrali princes were collected in the 1960s by the late Dr Audrey Boorne, formerly of Edinburgh University, whose field archives I am presently seeking.

It is not unusual for a child to be passed round a whole village or tribe, enjoying the milk of several dozen different mothers. . . . The object of this communal wet-nursing is to increase the milk-relations of the child. The bond of foster-relationship is very strong, so fifty foster-mothers, foster-fathers, and foster-brothers form a strong nucleus of protection when the child so nurtured grows up. (Schomberg 1938:226)

Again, it is not clearly specified whether such children might be Katore princes, the infant scions of their own senior houses, or just anyone's child. Either of the first two options would retain a principle of asymmetry, and hence overall transitivity; but one cannot rule out a more general practice of reciprocal nursing. The corporate fostering of *royal* children is, however, well attested.[11] Shahzada Hussam-ul-Mulk, third son of Mehtar Shuja-ul-Mulk, recalled his own fosterage by supposedly "one hundred and fifty mothers" of a descent section of the large Reza-khel *qaum* in Drosh, where he was later appointed Governor (Hussam-ul-Mulk n.d.: 39). As he noted:

[Rulers] used to give their sons and daughters to influential people for fostering. These people used to associate as many people as possible in the fostering of the ruler's child. Thus a large number of people became interested in the welfare of this child. If their foster-son came to power, these people were fitted with official posts and other rewards. But if the foster-son was obliged to leave the country, all of them had to go with him. (Ibid.: 38)

No doubt, serial suckling in such cases was again largely symbolic or gestural; yet the categorical relationship of collective milk siblingship with such a prince was also no doubt genuine. Hussam-ul-Mulk himself attempted to rally his widely extended milk family or foster-"tribe" in support of his own abortive bid for the throne of Chitral in 1946 (Staley 1982:251).

Another empirical problem is the potential length and depth of milk-kin chains: both in a numerical sense of their degrees of linkage, and in a social sense of their extension to descending status categories. Here we need to consider Hussam-ul-Mulk's reference to a distinct *class* of Shirmush or "milk kin" (n.d.: 72–73). These are clearly identified with bonded tenants or sharecroppers (*dehqān*) attached to noble landowning households. One is therefore inclined to regard this collective usage of the term as little more than a polite euphemism for a tied serf, with only a metaphorical association with actual fosterage. Hussam-ul-Mulk, however, supposed that they were derived from genuine milk kin fallen on evil times, whose descendants had become indebted and thus enserfed to their ascendant's formerly fostered lords; or else, he conjectured, they derived from the milk-kin supporters of defeated royal pretenders, redistributed as bond-serfs to other noble masters. He also indicated ceremonial exchanges between these fictive "milk kin" tenants and their landlords: e.g., the lord provided a set of fine clothes on the marriage of his "milk kin's" daugh-

[11] As in Caucasian kingdoms (Kosven 1936), where Chenciner (1997:81) noted that "when a son was born to the ruler of Karakaitags [Daghestan], he was sent from village to village to be suckled by all the women who could, in order to make him foster-brother of his entire generation."

ter, receiving in turn a horse or bull as a marriage gift (*pandār*) from her bridewealth. Such seigneurial claims were no doubt more generally characteristic of subinfeudation; but the landlord's gift of clothing seems also a humbler version of the *khelāt* investiture rite of regal fosterage, as described by Lorimer in Hunza.

Eggert also employs the term Shirmoosh (i.e., *ṣhir-muž*) as a distinct *social class* of formerly tied sharecropping tenants in northern Chitral, amounting to almost ten per cent of its population; and he broadly agrees with Hussam-ul-Mulk's supposition that they were derived from the former actual milk kin of Adamzada nobility (1990:69–72). Some even appeared to have stemmed themselves from formerly noble Adamzada *qaum* origins. Eggert also indicates that they were frequently transferred or exchanged between the dominant "houses" of Adamzada "tribes" and even sold as bond-serfs to Adamzada nobility in other districts. He also presents at least anecdotal evidence of regular milk kinship extending from Adamzada to "Yuft" or yeoman peasants, and thence to "Bolḍoyu" or upper service peasantry (see Figure 2: III). So it appears that milk kinship chains did quite possibly reach across all major status categories in northern Chitral.[12] But it must be recalled that the social organization of its Adamzada *qaum* was one of hierarchical or conical segmentation; so that all of these descending status grades (or tributary administrative categories) might derive from successively junior lineal branches of noble Adamzada "tribes" or conical clans.

I would further suggest that milk kinship relations of clientage between such descent segments—entailing a rupture of affinity according to Islamic *ridāʿa* law or broader indigenous notions of milk incest—must have played a formative role in the structural genesis of differential status grades. For they perforce cut off even hypergamous linkages between fostering clients and their remotely collateral Adamzada patrons. Hence junior lines of clan brothers might become first genuine milk kin to their seniors, and then these milk kin became classificatory "milk kin": i.e., tied serfs, ultimately transferable as bonded slaves. Segmentary differentiation was already inherent in the cumulative patrifilial "share of the eldest"—the primogeniture of the firstborn of noble houses—which successively diminished the inherited shares of younger sons in each generation. But a categorical partitioning of such incipient submerged classes of immiserated junior kin, through an impermeable barricade of marriage prohibitions, was precisely achieved through the congenial guillotine of foster kinship. Once irrevocably classed as distinctly unmarriageable dependants, a subordinate administrative reclassification—for tax extraction and ul-

[12] Yet there is little evidence of milk kinship reaching the lowermost orders of *fakir miškin* (miserable poor serfs), concentrated in the southern district of Chitral. Here fosterage ties appear to have been replaced by reciprocal bond-partnerships (Khowar *brar ganik:* "brother adoption"), as among the non-Muslim Afghan Kafirs and contemporary Kalasha, sometimes oddly entailing a symbolic suckling of *male* nipples in "pseudo-foster" submission (Robertson 1896:30–1; Parkes 2000).

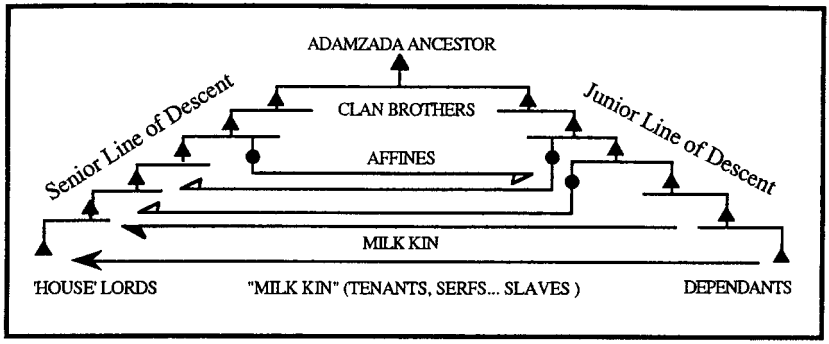

FIGURE 3. Segmentary "Descent": from nobility to serfdom via milk kinship. Each genealogical step of this model telescopes ca. 2–3 generations of patrilineal descent. Horizontal arrows indicate directions of initial marital exchange (outline arrowheads) and of subsequent milk kinship allegiance (filled arrowheads) between diverging junior and senior lines of *qaum* descent.

timate serfdom—would be short and easy steps (Figure 3). Milk kinship created between descent lines of separate *qaum* groups would have similar cumulative sorting effects in demarcating subordinate quasi-caste segments out of previously intermarrying descent groups. Hussam-ul-Mulk's conception of a genetic relationship between honorable milk kin and enserfed "milk kin" therefore seems plausible; indeed, he further mentioned that landed property awarded for lower orders of fostering (*darā̄lī*), unlike the bequeathed grace estates (*meherbani galu*) of regal fosterage, were given as leasehold benefices, thus already introducing a tied relationship of tenancy. Milk kinship would therefore effectively generate cast-off "castes" or subordinate tributary status grades out of former segmentary or "tribal" kin groups.

THE POLITICS OF MILK KINSHIP ALLEGIANCE: CHITRAL 1892–1895

Having explored the articulation of milk kinship with social stratification, we are finally in a position to comprehend its political dynamics as a system of inter-status allegiances in Chitral. This political dimension of fictive kinship was undeveloped in Hammel's formal analysis of Balkan godparenthood. Its transitive lattices of patronage were ingeniously detected; but what actually conditioned these unilateral ties of dependence to insinuate themselves so regularly within Serbian communities? Gwynn (1913) plausibly suggested that such fictive kinship allegiances operated as both safety nets and climbing ropes in peculiar situations of political instability: in what he called "a disturbed and unorganized condition of society." Such was a perennial condition of the peripheral mountain kingdoms of the Hindu Kush.

Political anarchy might be punctuated, however, by periods of constructive consolidation under sultanic tyrants such as "Great Mehtar" Aman-ul-Mulk (1857–1892). Semi-hereditary chains of favored milk kin might then parasiti-

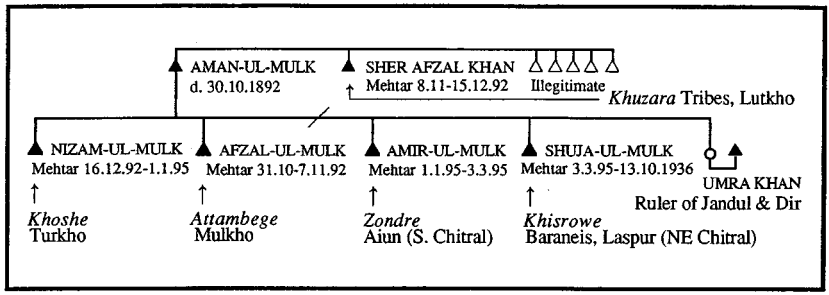

FIGURE 4. Princely agents and foster allies of the successional wars in Chitral, 1892–1895. *Qaum* clans of allied milk kin to princes in italics, followed by regional locations.

cally entrench themselves within the tributary administrative order of revenue extraction. Yet offshoot generations of milk-kin ties were forever emerging with each of the fostered princely offspring of such rulers: these were, so to speak, "alternative social structures *in reserve*" (*pace* Salzmann 1978), awaiting an opportunity to activate their latent allegiances within the chaos that would ensue on a ruler's death. Tensile webs of dynastically-coordinated marriage alliance and milk kinship allegiance would then collapse within an enfolding vortex of segmentary animosities, pulling in surrounding galaxies of predatorial powers. This is what occurred on the death of Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk on 30 August 1892.

The following three years of civil war successively drew in neighboring Pakhtun war-lords, the Amir of Afghanistan, and ultimately the rival empires of Russia and British India, culminating in the famous Siege of Chitral in 1895. These chaotic events are well documented in contemporary colonial records, as well as in subsequent histories of frontier policy and Anglo-Russian "Great Game" competition (Harris 1975; Hopkirk 1990: ch. 35).[13] But indigenous histories reveal another local logic of segmentary rivalries, affinal alliances, and of milk kinship allegiances, hitherto neglected (Figure 4).

Milk Kinship in the Successional Wars of Chitral, 1892–1895

Structural Prologue: Milk Kin Allegiances of Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk

Aman-ul-Mulk masterfully consolidated a centralized state in Chitral, wresting outlying territory (Mastuj and Yasin) in the northeast from the rival Khushwakhte dynasty, and thereby extending his suzerainty towards Gilgit (see map, Figure 1). Having seized the Mehtarship from an older brother, Aman-ul-Mulk first appointed his younger brother, Sher Afzal Khan, as Governor of the northern province of Turkho. There he also sent his firstborn son, Nizam-ul-Mulk, to be fostered in the dominant house of the control-

[13] Eyewitness accounts include Robertson (1899), Thomson (1895), and Gurdon (1933); while confidential colonial records on these events are reviewed by Alder (1963:287–99). My "extended case study" synopsis is compiled from these sources, together with Ghulam Murtaza's *Nai Tarikh-i Chitral* (1962: ch. 10).

ling *Khushe* (Ashimadek) *qaum* of Turkho. *Khushe* chiefs, rallying around their foster princeling, soon threatened rebellion against Sher Afzal Khan, who was driven into asylum in Afghanistan, there to await his revenge.

Aman-ul-Mulk's second son, Afzal-ul-Mulk, was sent to a foster house of the dominant *Attambege* (Ashimadek) *qaum* of the other major northern province of Mulkho, consolidated by the fosterage of his sisters with rival *qaum* in these districts. The two eldest princes were thus being groomed for adult Governorship of these key provinces, to be controlled through their milk kin. Two subsequent princes, Amir-ul-Mulk and Shuja-ul-Mulk, were sent to foster houses of the *Zondre* ("royal" Adamzada) clan at Aiun (in the south) and the *Khisrawe* (Ashimadek) *qaum* at Baraneis in the northeast, again consolidated with parallel fosterage of their sisters with rival Adamzada clans in these areas. Amir-ul-Mulk was subsequently appointed Governor of the northwestern province of Lutkho, where his *Zondre* milk kin also had a presence, while Shuja-ul-Mulk was still being fostered at the time of Aman-ul-Mulk's death in 1892.

Social Drama: The Relational Play of Blood and Milk.

It was presumed that Nizam-ul-Mulk would succeed as ruler upon the death of Aman-ul-Mulk. But Nizam was then away hunting in the outlying district of Yasin, so Afzal-ul-Mulk had himself proclaimed Mehtar in Chitral by his *Attambege* foster-henchmen. Afzal-ul-Mulk immediately arranged the murder of five of his half-brothers (sons of Aman-ul-Mulk's sixth wife), who were suspected to be allied with his elder brother. Then, still in October 1892, Aman-ul-Mulk's exiled brother, Sher Afzal Khan, crossed over from Afghanistan into Lutkho province, where an army was raised by his milk brother, Mahmat Isa. Being chief of Lutkho's Khuzara tribes, Mahamat Isa won over Amir-ul-Mulk and proceeded to Chitral.

In an attack on Chitral fort, Mehtar Afzal-ul-Mulk was shot dead, allowing Sher Afzal Khan to be installed as Mehtar. He in turn set about murdering his predecessor's supporters, many of whom fled to join Nizam-ul-Mulk in Gilgit. Sher Afzal Khan was evidently a nominee of the Amir of Afghanistan (then contesting his frontiers with British India), so British officers in Gilgit offered support to Nizam-ul-Mulk. Equipped with Gilgit levies, Nizam-ul-Mulk marched on Chitral, capturing the northeastern province of Mastuj, where he received allegiance from his own milk kin and allies in Turkho. Thus isolated, Sher Afzal Khan was again obliged to flee to asylum in Afghanistan, while Amir-ul-Mulk fled south to the protection of his brother-in-law, the Pakhtun warlord Umra Khan Nizam-ul-Mulk, the British protégé, was in turn proclaimed Mehtar, ratified by an acting Political Agent, G. S. Robertson, on 16 December 1892.

On New Year's Day 1895, Mehtar Nizam-ul-Mulk was shot dead while hunting, on the command of his visiting half-brother Amir-ul-Mulk, who now had himself proclaimed Mehtar, and who in turn set about assassinating his predecessor's supporters. As an ally and stand-in for his uncle Sher Afzal Khan, Amir-ul-Mulk was also unacceptable to British diplomacy; so Robertson again marched from Gilgit to Chitral, picking up the youngest legitimate prince, Shuja-ul-Mulk, from his foster-home on the way, in order to substitute him as Mehtar. But now Umra Khan invaded Chitral from the south, while his ally Sher Afzal Khan invaded from Afghanistan, rallying the Kho *qaum* against the colonial interlopers. Robertson was obliged to retreat within Chitral fort, arresting Amir-ul-Mulk, and hastily installing the thirteen-year-old Shuja-ul-Mulk as Mehtar. The Siege of Chitral had begun.[14]

[14] *Political Epilogue:* The exciting events of the following forty days, described by Robertson (1899), scarcely concern us here. Indian army relief columns reached Chitral in mid-April, when both Sher Afzal Khan and Umra Khan fled to Afghanistan, and Amir-ul-Mulk was subsequently exiled to India. Chitral was now retained as an imperial frontier post, with a permanent political of-

This necessarily compressed account of an anarchic interregnum of three years—with four Mehtars appointed and murdered or exiled in rapid succession—may give an impression of the recurrent conditions within which the allegiance structures of milk kinship were socially selected. Such successional struggles were by no means abnormal (Robertson 1899:20). Yet indigenous chronicles (Ghulam Murtaza 1962) reveal an underlying logic of more persistent ties and rivalries organizing these dynastic intrigues: i.e., corporate *qaum* ties of milk kinship to princely pretenders, and associated *qaum* rivalries or inter-"tribal" feuds prosecuted through their foster-princes' claims to kingship. In the "Chitral Memories" of Capt. B. E. M. Gurdon, one of Robertson's four fellow-officers in the Siege, these allegiance structures were also partially deciphered with hindsight:

> I was met by Mohamed Rafi, the *Hakim* or Governor of the Laspur district . . . and I was not surprised to learn later . . . that he was not likely to be a trustworthy supporter of Nizam-ul-Mulk, as he was the foster-father of Mohamed Wali, son of the late Mir Wali [the Khushwakhte ruler of Yasin ousted by Nizam-ul-Mulk]. . . . He could not resist the temptation of joining Sher Afzal, and he persuaded his foster-son, Mohamed Wali, to do likewise. The foster-tie is very strong in the Hindukush region, and Mohamed Rafi hoped that his foster-son might become ruler of Yasin, Ghizr, and Laspur, and possibly of Mastuj also; he himself, in accordance with custom, would then become, next to the ruler, the most important person in that part of the country. (Gurdon 1933:9)

Mohamed Rafi and his Khushwakhte milk son, Mir "Pakhtun" Wali, were indeed antagonists during the Siege (Robertson 1899:37, 68). Subsequently expelled to the Kohistani tribal refuge of Tangir, they were later encountered there by Aurel Stein (1928:16–29), having temporarily imposed a miniature Khushwakhte chiefdom on this hitherto acephalous and anarchic village republic.[15]

Chitrali family histories also help to reconstruct the "politics of kinship" of such rivalries and milk kinship allegiances. Such is the testament of Wazir Ali Shah (1983), grandson of one of the few consistent supporters of the British and Shuja-ul-Mulk during the Siege. His was the senior house of a minor Adamzada *qaum*, the Roshte of Mulkho, whose forefather Bapi (lit. "grandfather") had supported the Katore against their Khushwakhte dynastic rivals in the eighteenth century. They were then awarded "the entire tax proceeds" of a stretch of hamlets in Mulkho, together with water rights to two irrigation channels, establishing a sizeable fief for such a small Adamzada clan. This, however, provoked enmities with the dominant Ashimadek *qaum* of the region:

> [T]here are stories of the skirmishes of the Roshte with the Attambege and Dashmane tribes who were not only higher in status but also large in number. They held the [se-

ficer appointed to liaise with a select Council of Regents advising the boy Mehtar Shuja-ul-Mulk. A novel era of stability, established through colonial indirect rule, would render the military might of the Adamzada *qaum* and their scheming chieftains obsolete—and with it, of course, the strategic significance of milk kinship allegiances.

[15] This was even expanded into a micro-"rajaship" over neighboring tribal republics, before the people of Tangir revolted and killed their princely overlord, thus literally restoring their acephaly (Barth 1956:84; Jettmar 1983).

nior] posts of Atalik, Charvelue, Baramush of Mulkho, while the Roshte had only recently become important . . . [as] Aksakals [district revenue officers]. There were, therefore, natural dislike and jealousy and the high-brow Attambege looked down upon them as upstarts. (Wazir Ali Shah 1983:640–1)

Despite these *qaum* rivalries, the Roshte gained further court favours. Fateh Ali Shah, the author's grandfather, was awarded the senior Aksakal treasury post of Chitral by Aman-ul-Mulk, who even gave him in marriage the Katore widow of his murdered elder brother. But this caused further Katore enmities:

Some members of the royal family were hostile to him for marrying the widow of the former Mehtar. The Grand Mehtar's second son, Afzal-ul-Mulk, had been fostered by Attambege—the old rivals and ill-wishers of the Roshte from Mulkho. Afzal and his adherents were, therefore, bent on his destruction. (Ibid.: 641)

Fateh Ali Shah was soon dismissed as Aksakal, his estates revoked, and he fled in exile to Dir. His return to favor was only managed through the clever fostering-ploy of getting a venerable Sayyed *pir* or holy man to request of Aman-ul-Mulk the court favor of choosing his newborn son's milk father.[16] Thereby appointed foster-father to a legitimate prince, the Mehtar was obliged to return his office and estates. But on the death of Aman-ul-Mulk, Fateh Ali Shah was again threatened by his old Attambege rivals:

[Afzal-ul-Mulk] had been fostered by Atalik Nara of the Attambege tribe and was under the influence of his half-brothers Ghulam, Murid, and others, all of whom were hostile to Fateh Ali Shah. . . . To add to this, he had, at the orders of the Grand Mehtar, refused to marry his daughter to Afzal-ul-Mulk. . . . The old Aksakal was therefore on the list of people to be annihilated by the new regime. (Ibid.: 642)

Restored as Aksakal again under the brief reign of Nizam-ul-Mulk, Fateh Ali Shah was thrown into British alliance during the Siege (his daughter having since been married to the British Indian native court adviser to Chitral). With Shuja-ul-Mulk installed, he was then appointed to the Regency Council of the young Mehtar, and his fortunes enhanced with the Governorship of Mulkho, where his younger brother was also appointed Atalek officer. His Roshte clan had thereby entirely displaced the former dominance of their ancient rivals, the great Attambege *qaum* of Mulkho, who were themselves fatefully misaligned through milk kinship with an unsuccessful princely pretender (Afzal-ul-Mulk). Indeed, Mehtar Shuja-ul-Mulk subsequently married the granddaughter of Fateh Ali Shah, appointing his Roshte *qaum* clansmen to all major posts at court: it was said that one rarely got to see the Mehtar in those latter days, only "a prisoner surrounded by Roshte people" (Wazir Ali Shah 1983:645).

[16] This was the fourth son of Aman-ul-Mulk's sixth wife, Sayyed Khonza, who together with his brothers was subsequently murdered by Afzal-ul-Mulk (see above). According to another version of this story related by Jettmar (in Hussam-ul-Mulk n.d.: 42), the crucial act of suckling had already been consummated, conspiratorially arranged by Sayyed Khonza herself to enable Fateh Ali Shah's *wife* to regain her former home and property. This alternative anecdote may give a rare backstage glimpse of private *female* nursing intrigues, which probably quite often practically instigated subsequent "official" male contracts of milk kinship allegiance (cf. Bourdieu 1990:168–9).

The travails of such families—winning all, or losing all, in inter-*qaum* rivalries with each Mehtar's succession—would be experienced second- or third-hand by their milk-kin supporters. Whole descent segments bound by corporate fosterage to an unsuccessful pretender might suffer common exile with their lords to remote tribal borderlands. Lowlier supporters of unsuccessful pretenders were frequently sold into slavery abroad, which was a notorious source of foreign exchange for the prestige goods and luxury imports of the Katore Mehtars (Biddulph 1880:67f.; cf. Müller-Stellrecht 1981). Other lowly losers, their fields and livestock seized and redistributed among local rivals, were enserfed as private house slaves (*xā nazad*) to do the manual labor that noble Adamzadas disdained.

The perennial political instability of Chitral thus had a systemic affinity with milk kinship allegiances. But this was a functional regime of remorseless counterfinality: strategic allegiances created through foster ties with powerful nobility in one generation, securing the hegemony of such rulers as Aman-ul-Mulk, inevitably sowed seeds of discord in the next. Disparaging colonial witnesses like Schomberg might thus reasonably infer that "all the misery, strife, and murder in Chitral are due to these artificial bonds of kinship" (1938:226). Yet milk kinship was just one relational strand of a tight mesh of "alternative social structures" entwined around a meager political economy of tributary extraction. Chitral's arid subsistence ecology was probably insufficient for constructing anything much more than the ceremonial facade of a patrimonial state. It was certainly insufficient to support a quasi-feudal Adamzada nobility—amounting to almost a third of its thinly scattered population of fifty or sixty thousand people—ideally disdaining productive work for the noble arts of war, hunting, and dynastic intrigue.

The coordination of this "Asian segmentary state" (Stein 1991; Kulke 1995) under such skillful tyrants as Aman-ul-Mulk was therefore a miraculous if somewhat inhuman achievement; for the meagerly extracted subsistence of Chitral never even approached its population's basic demands of food consumption, let alone affording court luxuries and prestige goods, even when supplemented by a regular siphoning and sale of that population into slavery (Staley 1969; Haserodt 1989:107–12). As Robertson (1899:21) realized, Chitral was but a high-altitude desert refuge of rivalrous and ever hungry warlords, tenuously commanded by "orchestrating cupidity." But there could never be enough property or produce to go around, without at least long-term state investment in irrigation works, which political instability itself largely precluded. Hence milk kinship, compounded by segmentary rivalries, paradoxically converged into a centripetal nexus of predatory interests in centralized kingship—whereby fostered princes were set against sibling princes like prize fighting-cocks—in pursuit of its meagerly extracted tributary spoils, for competing clan chieftains to seize and redistribute among their own foster-chains of supporters. *Contra* Schomberg, milk kinship thus also arguably held this fis-

siparous kingdom together in pre-colonial times: as one hugely quarrelsome foster-family, a literally "galactic" (i.e., milk connected) polity.[17]

CONCLUSIONS

As promised at the outset of this essay, I have persistently noted the structural isomorphism of milk kinship as an allegiance structure in the Hindu Kush with that of Balkan ritual kinship as deciphered by Hammel (1968). This task was comparatively easy, since the associated "alternative" or complementary social structures of unilineal descent, and of hypergamous affinal alliance interlinking descent groups, were more readily demonstrable (and expected) in highland South Asia than in Serbia. Over half of Hammel's monograph struggled to evince the unlikely presence of such exotically "tribal" features of social organization in a European context (cf. J. Goody 1983). Hammel was adamant that the systemic transitivity of *kumstvo* ties—compared with structurally *un*linked dyads of *compadrazgo* godparenthood documented elsewhere in the Mediterranean—related to their corporate agnatic inflection in the Balkans. Agnatic descent was itself partly constructed through ritual extensions of *zadruga* households as quasi-lineal corporations (1968:21–3), as well as through patrilaterally inflected rules of bilateral exogamy (31–5). This then allowed Hammel to pursue his theoretically audacious formal reconstruction of Balkan godparenthood: as a system of transitive or unilateral relations between local descent lines structurally isomorphic with Leach's model of Kachin marital alliance (Hammel 1968:1).

Following in Hammel's bold footsteps, one is tempted to pursue these improbable Eurasian parallels a little further. Picking up Gwynn's (1913) suggestions on Eurasian fosterage, I have suggested that such "alternative social structures" of transitive fictive-kin relations between households—interlinked by exclusion to those of segmentary agnatic descent and affinal alliance—are also sortative and strategic adaptations to particular conditions of political instability characteristic of peripheral tributary polities. In thus exploring the political economy of foster allegiances—including their formative articulation with social stratification, which Hammel somewhat neglected in his account of Balkan godparenthood—a deeper correspondence with Leach's seminal analysis becomes unavoidable. For it was Leach who insisted that "we need to consider economic and political factors as well as the kinship structure in isolation"

[17] *Pace* Tambiah (1985). Chitral may have been exceptional in its far-flung geography, militating against centralization, and its proportional scarcity of irrigated arable land. The more confined kingdoms of Hunza and Nager were perhaps more easily consolidated, although milk kinship allegiances evidently played similarly constructive—and disruptive—roles (Frembgen 1985). In Hunza, however, there appears to have been a greater ritual respect for royalty, and patrimonial privileges of even indirect milk connections with its *tham* or "divine king" may have ramified more deeply than in Chitral. Greater dynastic stability in Hunza also allowed the fuller development of a classic "hydraulic regime" of state-sponsored irrigation works and terraced cultivation (Tahir Ali 1983; cf. Emerson 1984; Sidky 1996; also Stellrecht 1998 on state control of transmontane trade).

(1961:123). He thus emphasized that asymmetrical alliance regimes typically had *tributary* as well as "solidary" societal functions, where "Kachin type marriage systems correlate very well with political structures of a somewhat feudal type" (ibid.: 103; cf. Lévi-Strauss 1969:266; Heusch 1981). Leach even surmised that such prescriptive regimes might have sortatively emerged from the repeatedly disposed ("preferential") needs of *gumsa* Kachin chiefs to tie themselves to tributary dependants, for whom "the use of marriage as a device for establishing political links becomes obvious" (1954:255). A correspondence with the structuring of milk kinship allegiances in the Hindu Kush—as of godparenthood in the Balkans—also becomes obvious.

In several respects, milk kinship evidently replicates political functions of fealty and tributary allegiance that Leach ascribed to the *mayu/dama* marriage system of the Kachin. Rather than passing one's women down for permanent marriage to dependents, from whom one receives tribute-bridewealth, one passes children down for fostering, thereby also gaining a permanent allegiance relationship, as well as tributary revenue.[18] Like Kachin marriage, asymmetry is also arguably inherent in the fosterage client relationship, as elaborated in the Turco-Persian rituals of allegiance surrounding royal milk kinship. Yet marriage here alternatively constitutes a preferentially hypergamous and dispersed alliance structure, with closer affinities to North Indian ascending "ladders" of hypergamy (Parkin 1990). In combination, milk kinship allegiance and affinal alliance thus conjointly constructed a compositely stratified tributary network, effectively hybridizing features of South and Southeast Asian alliance regimes—as indeed did the "alternative social structures" of the Balkans as outlined by Hammel.

In comparing the social and political organization of the Hindu Kush at the turn of the century with that of post-Ottoman Serbia, we may delineate broader contextual similarities: i.e., more or less attenuated segmentary-tributary local formations of stratified patrilineal kin groups (Hammel 1968:23–6, more clearly evinced in highland Albania by Durham 1928 and Hasluck 1954), these being associated with dominant patrimonial "houses" (*xānadan* in Chitral, *zadruga* in Serbia and Albania; cf. Lévi-Strauss 1987; Klapisch-Zuber 1990), and with hypergamous but dispersed marriage regimes.[19] In such comparable contexts, fictive or constructed kinship—through either fosterage or godparenthood—thus constituted a politically vital regime of *replicable allegiances* between kin

[18] Tributary dues were paid in annual prestations of gold dust from noble fosterers to the ruler of Hunza, and also took the form of customary "endowments" on the marriages of fostered royalty (Lorimer 1979/80, I:27–71, 273).

[19] On the Chitrali house (*xatān*), conceived as a domestic microcosm of the Mehtar's court, see Hussam-ul-Mulk and Staley's (1968) account of the state room (*baipaš*) of noble Adamzada *xānadan*. Its elaborate internal partitioning significantly included a raised platform (*bend*) for seating affinal milk kin, who were hence addressed metonymically at marriages as "those who sit on the *bend*." See also Staley (1982:89–96) and Illi (1991:45–54). On dispersed marriage regimes, see n. 9 above, and cf. Hammel (1968:31–2, 85–7).

groups and houses analogous to that of prescriptive marital alliances among the Kachin of highland Burma.

While independent segmentary-tributary polities comprised of such alternative social structures had been largely effaced in the Balkans by the time of Hammel's fieldwork, their still partially extant local legacies would thus explain the institutional parallels we have noted with the Hindu Kush. As Gwynn (1913) originally indicated, such tributary polities constituted through allegiances of constructed kinship also had a far wider former distribution in peripheral regions throughout Eurasia: most notably in the Caucasus (Kosven 1936); but also in pre-modern Ireland, Wales and Scotland (Kelly 1988:86–91; Smith 1992; Charles-Edwards 1993:78–9), as well as throughout Turkic Central Asia (Gokalp 1994), and perhaps in early Germanic societies as well (Pappenheim 1908:304ff.; Charles-Edwards 1997). In a subsequent article (Parkes n.d.) I shall re-examine these parallel formations of tributary fosterage, suggesting that this formerly pervasive Eurasian institution may have provided a genetic structural and symbolic template for Byzantine and early medieval European godparenthood (cf. Lynch 1986; Herman 1997), as well as for comparable ritual ties of fealty modeled on "fictive" pro-parental filiation (see meanwhile Smith 1992; Lallemand 1988; and Lynch 1998:231). In this present essay, however, I hope to have more specifically demonstrated the broader ethnographic and historical pertinence of Hammel's configurational analysis of *Alternative Social Structures*, pointing to comparably stratified forms of constructed kinship, which also constituted vital ties of political allegiance, in mountain polities of the Hindu Kush.

APPENDIX

SYNOPSIS OF AFFINAL ALLIANCES AND MILK KINSHIP ALLEGIANCES OF MEHTAR AMAN-UL-MULK (1857–1892)

To substantiate my summary comments on the affinal alliances and foster allegiances of "Great Mehtar" Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral at the end of the nineteenth century, including their strategic implications in the successional wars following his death, I reproduce figurative synopses (Figures 5 and 6) derived from Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.: 50–5; cf. Ghulam Murtaza 1962:217). Regional locations are shown in Figure 1, and Adamzada *qaum* may be identified in Figure 2 above.

Aman-ul-Mulk had as many as nineteen recognized marital ties, producing at least twenty-seven recognized daughters and twenty recognized sons. No more than four wives at a time would be legitimate in Islamic law, and his first six wives (Figure 5a) were thus distinguished as *qaum*-designated queens (*xonzā*), as distinct from concubines (Figure 5b) named as toponymical mothers (*nan*) after their place of natal origin or fosterage. The first two senior wives were the daughters of Pakhtun rulers on the southern borders of the state, whose four sons were the fratricidal princely combatants in the successional strife of 1892–1895. These sons of royal mothers were distinguished with regal sobri-

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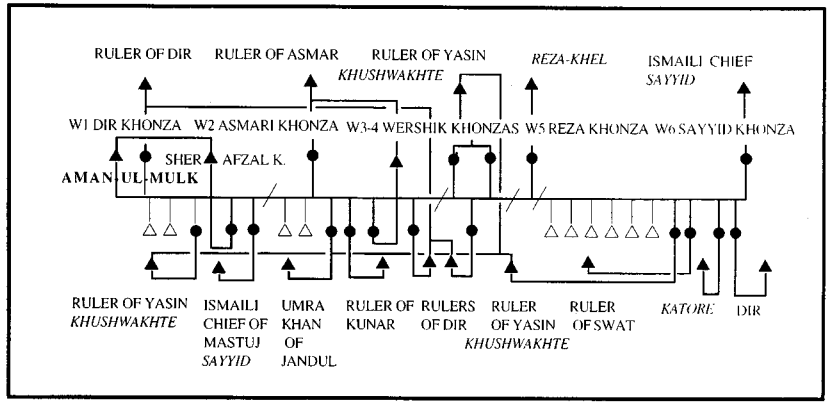

FIGURE 5a. Affinal alliances of Aman-ul-Mulk: marriages of senior wives and daughters. Affinal *qaum* clans in italics. Data from Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.: 50–5).

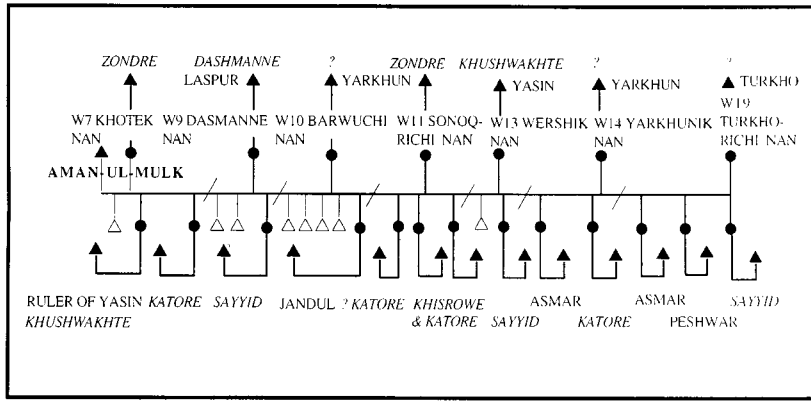

FIGURE 5b. Affinal alliances of Aman-ul-Mulk: marriages of junior wives and daughters. Partial display of junior wives with surviving offspring. Affinal *qaum* clans in italics. Data from Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.: 50–5).

quets, with prefix *Shahzada* (Prince) and suffix *ul-Mulk* (lit. "of the kingdom"). The seven daughters of these legitimate queens, distributed as milk kin with their brothers to all the great Adamzada *qaum* of the district, were married to collateral Katore royalty or else to a second generation of neighboring Pakhtun rulers. The next two wives were princesses of the cadet Khushwakhte royal line, traditionally governing the northeastern provinces of Mastuj and Yasin. One of their daughters was again married to the Pakhtun Nawab of Dir, south of Chitral. The last thirteen wives (partly shown in Figure 5b) were taken from remaining Adamzada *qaum*, and their children were dispersed as foster kin to a

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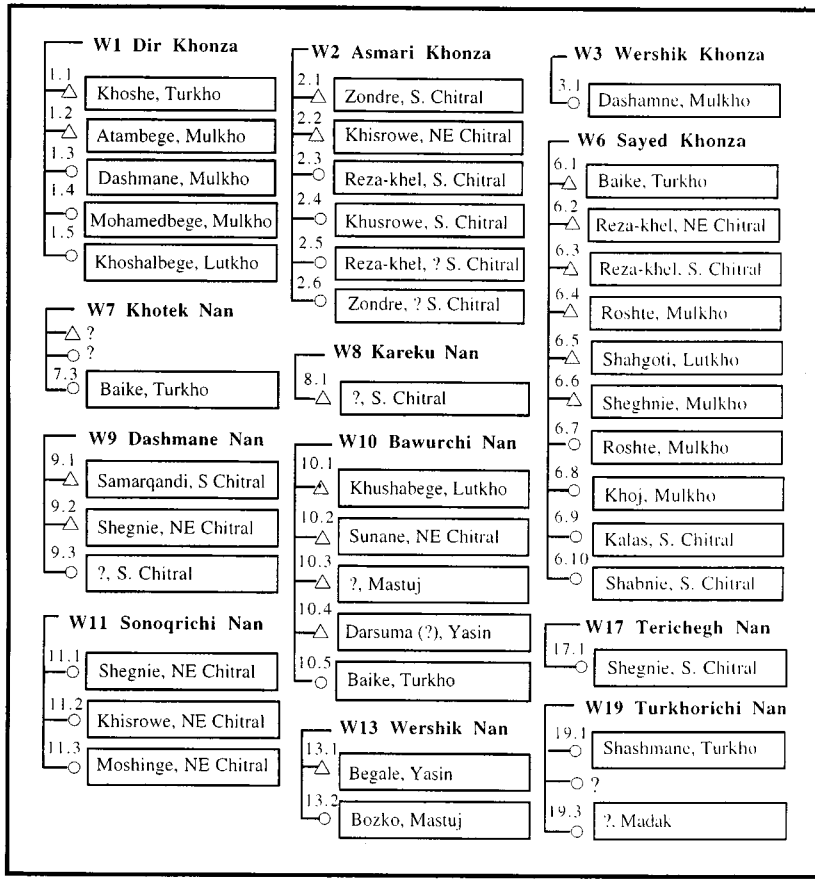

FIGURE 6. Milk kinship connections through children of Aman-ul-mulk. Boxes show *qaum* clans of milk kin to princes and princesses (whose mothers are numbered as in Figures 5–5b), followed by regional locations. Data from Hussam-ul-Mulk (n.d.: 50–5).

variety of other noble (and seemingly also quite lowly) clans, shown in Figure 6: their sons were distinguished from legitimate princes as "Mehtar's offspring" (*mitār-zāu*) without royal title. Figure 6 also indicates the milk kin of the four warring princely successors of Aman-ul-Mulk: i.e., Nizam-ul-Mulk (1.1), Afzal-ul-Mulk (1.2), Amir-ul-Mulk (2.1), and Shuja-ul-Mulk (2.2), as also indicated in Figure 4 above. The fourth son of the sixth (legitimate) wife of Aman-ul-Mulk (6.4), murdered with his brothers at the accession of Afzal-ul-Mulk in November 1892, was the infant prince famously fostered by Fateh Ali Shah of the Roshte *qaum*, who also evidently fostered a younger sister (Figure 6: 6.7; cf. Wazir Ali Shah 1983:641).

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