THE UNIVERSALITY OF INCEST

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Ever since the Greek historians first wrote about the customs of other nations, scholars have compared the habits of different cultures, hoping to discover meaningful regularities in human behavior.

Yet the only universal trait that contemporary social scientists and historians agree has been found in every known culture is the prohibition of incest. As one standard text puts it, "The taboo on incest within the immediate family is one of the few known cultural universals."(1) Kroeber stated, "If ten anthropologists were asked to designate one universal institution, nine would likely name the incest prohibition; some have expressly named it as the only universal one."(2) That "no known tribe has ever permitted incest"(3) has been a truism for cross-cultural studies ever since Durkheim and Westermarck's early books on the subject.(4)

Furthermore, the same authors go on to state that the universal prohibitions on incest are virtually always effective, so that incest itself is rarely found in any society. Even when societies are found that approve of incest, they only "serve rather to emphasize than to disprove the universality of intra-family incest taboos," according to George Murdock.(5) Incestuous societies simply cannot exist, since, according to Talcott Parsons, the effective prohibition of incest is "linked with the functioning of every society."(6) The abolition of incest was accomplished at the beginning of human culture, Leslie White says, since without it "social evolution could have gone no further on the human level than among the anthropoids."(7) As Levi-Strauss concluded, "the prohibition of incest can be found at the dawn of culture … [It] is culture itself." (8)

The certainty with which the effective prohibition of incest has been declared leads one to look for the evidence these authors might have for their assertions. Yet such a search soon proves quite fruitless. Most of them cite no evidence at all, or at most refer to a single cross cultural survey by Murdock in his book, Social Structure. Murdock's study, however, turns out not to be about incest at all, if by incest one means actual sexual relations between family members other than spouses. What Murdock studied was marriage rules. Yet authors continue to assume Murdock proved that a universal prohibition on incest itself exists, not just a prohibition on intra-family marriage.(9)

Indeed, rather than examining the actual occurrence of incest in either historical or contemporary groups, the voluminous literature on the subject instead speculates on why incest supposedly doesn't occur. Many explanations have been proposed: the biological impairments attendant upon inbreeding, the utility of social alliances, the collapse of the family if sexual rivalry is allowed, even boredom with family members. When exceptions have been acknowledged — royal incest in dozens of societies,(10) sibling incest among the general population in others,(11) widespread pederasty in still others,(12) — discussion has continued to focus on why incest is supposedly rare, not on whether it really is.

One begins to realize how odd this is when it is compared, say, with the study of other deviant acts, such as homicide. Although effective laws against murder long preceded laws against incest — and were far more often enforced rather than winked at — no one thinks of writing hundreds of studies on why mankind has a "universal homicide taboo."(13)

This essay is intended to consider the evidence for the opposite hypothesis: That it is incest itself — and not the absence of incest — that has been universal for most people in most places at most times. Furthermore, the earlier in history one searches, the more evidence there is of universal incest, just as there is more evidence of other forms of child abuse."(14)

Two kinds of incest will be considered: direct incest, overt sexual activity between family members other than spouses; and indirect incest, the providing of children by their parents to others in order for them to be sexually molested.

There are two reasons why I believe indirect incest must be included in any definition of incestuous activity. First of all, arranging for children to have sex with other household members or neighbors is usually motivated by the incestuous wishes of the parent; and, in any case, it is usually perceived by the child to be similar to direct incest. Secondly, clinical studies show that contemporary sexual abuse usually involves a parent or guardian, who, if not the direct perpetrator, covertly brings about the incident in order to satisfy their own incestuous wishes.(15)

PSYCHOANALYTIC VIEWS ON THE REALITY OF INCEST

When Sigmund Freud discovered that eighteen of his hysterical patients had conscious memories of childhood sexual seductions, mostly by family members, he faced a theoretical impasse.(16) Since he believed only repressed memories could produce hysterical symptoms, the easily accessible detailed memories of his patients could not be the real cause of their hysteria. He therefore concluded that there must in each case have been an earlier seduction, the memory of which was repressed, generally occurring between the ages of two and five and never later than eight. These early scenes had to be reconstructed from fantasies and dreams, and even when Freud pieced them together for the patient, he admitted, "they have no feeling of remembering the scenes."(17)

These earlier infantile reconstructions, Freud quite correctly decided in 1897, were "scenes of seduction [that] had never taken place. … they were only phantasies which my patients had made up or which I myself had perhaps forced on them."(18) But the clear memories of seduction in later childhood and adolescence that his patients had spontaneously reported to him and about which they had strong reality feelings, he never doubted — contrary to the assertions of critics like Masson and Miller, who claim Freud lost his courage and
For the rest of his life, in fact, Freud reiterated his belief that these clear memories of incestuous attacks were real. In 1905 he wrote, "I cannot admit that in my paper on The Aetiology of Hysteria I exaggerated the frequency or importance of the effects of seduction, which treats a child as a sexual object prematurely ..." (21) Later, he repeatedly wrote such statements as that "the sexual abuse of children is found with uncanny frequency among school teachers and child attendants ... and fantasies of being seduced are of particular interest, because so often they are not fantasies but real memories." (22) Furthermore, he considered the incestuous memories of such patients as Katharina, Rosalila H., Elisabeth von R. and the Wolf Man as reality, not fantasy, saying of such traumatic child abuse "You must not suppose ... that sexual abuse of a child by its nearest male relatives belongs entirely to the realm of phantasy. Most analysts will have treated cases in which such events were real and could be unimpeachably established ..." (23) He even called his own memories "genuine" of having been sexually molested as a little boy by his nurse, who had not only forced him to perform sexually and, he reported, "complained because I was clumsy," but also, he said, washed him in water that contained her own menstrual blood. (24)

Therefore, regardless of all that has been written about the subject, an unbiased reading of Freud's works shows that whenever he confronted clear evidence of sexual molestation, he called it seduction, not fantasy. There was no "great reversal," no "suppression of seduction," no "betrayal of the child," no "assault on truth."

Freud's courage in acknowledging the extent of childhood sexual molestation was not shared by the majority of his colleagues. Most, like Jung, simply avoided the topic. Others, who noted that large numbers of their patients had clear memories of incestuous rape, blamed the victim, saying, like Abraham, that the molestation "was desired by the child unconsciously [because of an] abnormal psychosexual constitution ..." (25)

Analysts since Freud have routinely reported memories of seduction as unconscious wishes, while analysts of children regularly neglected to ask their patients whether their reports were real or not. (26) Psychoanalytic institutes have often taught that all memories of incest were wishes. One analyst recalls, "I was taught in my ... early years in psychiatry, as most of us were, to look very skeptically upon the incestuous sexual material described by my patients. Any inclination on my part, or that of my colleagues in the training situation, to look upon these productions of the patient as having some reality basis was scoffed at and was seen as evidence of our naivete ..." (27)

Even when analysts were presented with evidence of childhood sexual and physical abuse so overwhelming they could not disbelieve it, they usually paid little attention to it in their case histories. For instance, Otto Kemberg rarely reports on child abuse in his extensive studies on his borderline patients. When he was personally told by a researcher that many recent studies of borderlines showed extremely high rates of sexual and physical abuse as children, he admitted that while this was true of his borderline patients as well, "it is hard to know what to make of it." (28)

Freud's view of the reality of childhood seduction was not, however, wholly missing from earlier psychoanalytic literature. Ferenczi not only found that many of his patients had clear memories of late childhood seduction but also described how many of his adult patients confessed to having sexual relations with children, concluding: "The real rape of girls who have hardly grown out of the age of infants, similar sexual acts of mature women with boys, and also enforced homosexual acts, are more frequent occurrences than has hitherto been assumed." (29) Many women analysts, such as Bonaparte, Jacobson, Greenacre and Reich, (30) were able to empathize with their female patients and admit the reality of their memories of incestuous abuse. Rheingold reported encountering surprisingly frequent cases of real incest in his patients, including a great deal of overt maternal masturbation of young children, fathers orgasmingically flagellating their daughters, parents forcing children to handle the parents' genitals, mothers encouraging uncles to rape their children, and so on, wondering why "scant attention" had been given to such material by others. (31) Robert Fless, after a lifetime of psychoanalytic experience in the removal of amnesia from early memories, regularly found real sexual molestation of his patients at the core of their problems, and concluded that "no one is ever made sick by his fantasies. Only traumatic memories in repression can cause the neurosis." (32)

In the past decade, with the growing realization by the public of how widespread childhood sexual abuse is in contemporary society, psychoanalysts have begun to report on the therapeutic necessity of acknowledging early sexual seduction. They have even wondered if the analyst's denial might have prevented cure in those cases where reanalysis discovered incestuous abuse that the first analyst had denied. (33) In a recent study connecting borderline personality disorders and childhood sexual abuse, Herman and her colleagues report that "such patients may show remarkable improvement when the connection between symptom and trauma is recognized." (34)

In recent years, psychoanalysts have begun to report uncovering considerable early sexual abuse that had gone previously unrecognized. One analyst described the analysis of a woman who had been raped at four years of age, saying "it took eighteen years of weekly sessions before there was a complete remission of symptoms ... Would not an earlier recognition of the actual childhood rape have saved us many hours of analysis?" (35) Even the conservative Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association recently concluded a review of the question of the reality of incest by asking "Have thousands of analyses and clinical studies not yet resolved the question of whether adult hysterics had been assaulted or seduced in infancy and childhood? The answer is that they have not." (36)

**CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IN CONTEMPORARY WESTERN SOCIETIES**

In determining the actual incidence of childhood sexual abuse in modern societies, the main problem is that one must rely upon witnesses who have enormous emotional difficulties in reporting what they find — far more so than with any other psychohistorical subject I have encountered.
For one thing, most writers on the subject have themselves previously been advocates of pedophilia. Ever since the early studies of such sexologists as Symonds and Eglington, (37) most writing on incest has been by scholars hoping to justify sexual relations with children by showing how widespread the practice has been. Many openly state, as do Allen Edwards and R. E. L. Masters, that “there is no shame in being a … pederast or a rapist if one is satisfied,” (38) or claim that incest can be a positive, healthy experience,” as does social worker LeRoy Schultz, who writes extensively on childhood sexuality. (39) Even Kinsey wrote: “It is difficult to understand why a child, except for its cultural conditioning, should be disturbed at having its genitalia touched,” (40) while his coauthor in the Kinsey studies, Wardell Pomeroy, wrote that “incest between adults and younger children can … be a satisfying and enriching experience …” (41)

One must use the research of such scholars with extreme caution, since their main motive is to deny the coercion involved when adults seduce lonely, unloved children. Yet the task of digging through the truly staggering amount of literature on sexuality in past and present societies (42) (there are over sixty journals alone with regular articles on the subject) is so overwhelming that, in order to locate the rare primary sources that are available, the researcher cannot avoid consulting the life work of pedophilia advocates.

Statistical studies on the incidence of child sexual molestation in the United States go back to 1929, (43) but these early works were generally ignored by a public accustomed to disbelieving children’s accusations and to the lack of punishment for the occasional molesters who were apprehended. The official incidence figures from the American Humane Association, working from reports from child protective agencies, estimated only 7,000 incidents in the U.S. for 1976. Although the AMA estimates rose steadily to 113,000 incidents for 1985, (44) even these larger figures represented under one percent of American children. Kinsey was surprised to find that 24 percent of his female subjects easily recalled sexual advances by adult males when they were children, but he downplayed their importance since most, he said, were non-contact approaches that he thought unimportant. (45) Except for a single study by Landis in 1956 reporting a third of his sample of 1,800 college students recalling childhood sexual molestation, (46) it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that careful studies began to be reported with samples large enough to warrant careful statistical analysis.

Although these two dozen studies have had somewhat differing definitions of sexual molestation and of the age criteria, their results can be made comparable (47) by eliminating noncontact abuse (such as exhibitionism) from the definition and by requiring either evidence of force or an age discrepancy of at least five years when the victim is over 12. When these adjustments are made, the studies report childhood memories of contact sexual molestation at rates ranging from 6 to 45 percent for women and from 3 to 30 percent for men.

The lower incidence figures in these studies turn out to be due to the method used in compiling them. As one moves from the lower to the higher figures, one discovers that the interview techniques begin to acknowledge the resistances of the respondents to such emotional questions. The lower figures are in response to written questionnaires or brief telephone calls, contacts that were considered intrusive by the respondent, while the higher figures, such as those of Wyatt and Russell (48) were the result of carefully structured face-to-face interviews lasting from one to eight hours. (49) Obviously it takes a good bit of trust before respondents begin to relate memories of childhood seduction to strangers. Using these two studies, then, as the most accurate we have to date, one finds that either 38 percent (Russell) or 45 percent (Wyatt) of women interviewed reported memories of familial and/or extrafamilial sexual abuse during their childhood, almost half of which was directly incestuous.

Figures as accurate as these for men’s memories of seduction are more difficult to obtain. The highest figure reported to date, that of Landis, is 30 percent. Other studies report lower figures because they are from brief questionnaires. Although most comparisons of male and female victimization show molestation of boys only about a third the rate of girls, (50) there is evidence that males are far more reluctant to reveal their molestation, partly because it usually occurs earlier for boys than for girls and partly because victimization may be even more difficult for boys to recall and report than for girls. Because it was conducted by interviews, the 30 percent rate of Landis’ study undoubtedly is the most reliable we have for boys. Therefore, the best estimates for memories of childhood sexual abuse we now have for the United States are 40 percent for girls and 30 percent for boys, almost half directly incestuous for girls and about a quarter directly incestuous for boys. (51)

Yet even these astonishingly high figures are only a portion of the hidden true incidence rates. Four additional factors raise the actual rates even higher:

1. The groups interviewed do not include many people in the American population who have far higher than average sexual molestation experiences, including institutionalized criminals, prostitutes, juveniles in shelters and psychotics (52),
2. the studies only count admissions to the interviewer of abuse, and it is unlikely that no conscious memories were ever suppressed during the interviews,
3. a large percent of each study refused to be interviewed, and these may have been the most victimized of all,(53) and
4. most importantly, these studies include only clear conscious memories of events — unconscious memories, which are usually only uncovered during psychotherapy, would increase these rates.

It is possible to correct the incidence rates statistically for these factors, Although only 11 percent of Russell's respondents recalled being victimized before the age of five, another study shows the most common age of sexual abuse reported to authorities is four years, while other studies report that from 21 to 50 percent of reported sexual abuse victims involve children under five. (54) Since few people consciously recall traumatic events of any kind before the age of five, and since the graph for sexual abuse distribution by age runs roughly level from ages two to sixteen, (55) the incidence figures stated above should be increased by at least an additional 50 percent(56) to account for these three factors, Therefore, the corrected incidence rates are at least 60 percent for Girls and 45 percent for boys. Until someone is courageous enough to directly question the children themselves whether they have been molested — a simple procedure that has never been done in any published study to date — 60 and 45 percent should be considered as the most reliable national incidence rates we now have available for the U.S.

These reports of childhood seduction are considered by researchers to be real memories, not fantasies. Not only do most researchers
Because of such reliability studies, reports of memories of childhood seduction need not be as distrusted as they were in Freud's time. The memories reported to these investigators were not vague images reconstructed in psychotherapy, nor were any incidents counted if they involved just exhibition of genitals to the child or other non-contact sexual approaches. Nor did any of these studies inquire about such common sexualized traumas as the constant giving of enemas or regular sexualized beating, both of which are often equivalents for the child to genital seduction. (59) These figures were limited to clear memories of overt contact experiences such as intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, mutual masturbation, anal intercourse and the kissing or sucking of the child's breasts or genitals.

The circumstances of these seductions have been documented in the large clinical literature on molestation, only a portion of which can be summarized here. Russell found that "most perpetrators lived under the same roof as their victims." (60) Most (85 percent) of the perpetrators were at least five years older than their victims. (61) Of incest cases with females, uncles accounted for 25 percent of the perpetrators, followed in frequency by fathers (15 percent), brothers (12 percent) and stepfathers (8 percent). (62) Women commit incest more rarely — at least in America — although the number may be larger than realized since studies of boys in early childhood are so sketchy (studies have found many mothers quite seductive toward their children even when they were being observed in a laboratory situation). (63)

Contrary to the earlier notion that sexual abuse occurred mainly among the poor, there actually is no correlation between economic class and rates of abuse. (70) Most pedophiles are male, although recent research is beginning to discover more female seduction of little children than previously reported, particularly since, as Lew has pointed out, "sexual activity between older women and young boys is rarely treated as abusive." (71) In all, only about 2 percent of total incestuous abuse is ever reported, and only a tiny portion of these few are ever convicted, even today. (72) putting the notion to rest that society is as yet really much interested in stopping the practice. Finally, the number of molestation incidents per child may be fairly high; while in Russell's study 43 percent of the cases of incestuous abuse are remembered as occurring only once, another study of reported incidents found that the average duration of abuse is five years. (73)

The best evidence for the cause of pedophilia is provided by the clinical reports of the psychotherapists who have written extensively on the subject. (74) The pedophile, similar to other perverts, suffers from severe lack of love and fears of individuation in his or her early childhood, and both desires and dreads merging with the mother because of an enormous need to reinstate mother-child unity. Earlier childhood abuse of pedophiles is commonly found. As an adult, the pedophile must have sex with children in order to maintain the illusion of being loved, while at the same time dominating the children as they themselves once experienced domination, repeating actively their own caretaker's sadism. The pedophile uses the child as a breast-substitute, both in the sense of using him or her for gratification and also as an object for sadistic aggression.

The pedophile's sexual activity is extraordinarily compulsive because it wards off recurring feelings of fragmentation, depression and death. This helps explain why the pedophile's sexual targets are so interchangeable and why an active pedophile often seduces hundreds of children in his or her life. The seduction of children is a desperate defense against fears of personal disintegration. It should not be thought of — as it usually is by historians and anthropologists — as "an outbreak of instinctual sexuality." or as being due to "a lack of impulse controls" or "a weak superego." Adults who molest children have extremely powerful punitive superegos and are often highly religious. They are driven to their acts not by their sexual instincts but by their overwhelming intrapsychic anxieties. Given the seriousness of the perversion, it is not surprising that successful therapeutic methods have only recently become available. (75)

The time when one could deny that sexual seduction is extremely traumatic for children appears to have ended. The more studies that come out on the effects of childhood sexual abuse, the more severe the damage is found to be. The flood of books and articles documenting the emotional problems of victims both in childhood and in later life has to be read in detail to appreciate the profound sense of betrayal and the terrifying fears felt by the child, so that even single incidents have the power to permanently ravage their lives. Severe somatic reactions, depersonalization, self-hatred, hysterical seizures, depression, borderline personality formation, promiscuity, sexual dysfunctions, suicide, self-mutilation, night terrors and flashbacks, multiple personalities, post-traumatic stress disorders, delinquency, bulaemia, and the overall stunting of feelings and capacities have all been documented — the earlier and the more often the abuse, the worse the damage. (76)

Outside the U.S., there has been only one comparably reliable study published: a thirteen-hundred-page report on face-to-face interviews of over 2,000 men and women done for the Canadian government by the Gallup organization, which concludes with incidence...
European countries are about two decades behind the U.S. in interview techniques, and since they still use written questionnaires they usually report sexual abuse rates of under one percent. (83) Most European studies do not attempt to study statistical frequency, though some — such as a series of studies on Scandinavian incest — report considerable public acceptance of incest in some rural areas. (84)

Even though there are no reliable statistics for most European countries, a recent flurry of books, articles and telephone "hotlines" has begun to reveal widespread sexual molestation. A recent BBC "ChildWatch" program asked its female listeners — a large though biased sample — if they remembered sexual molestation, and of the 2,530 replies analyzed, 83 percent remembered someone touching their genitals, 62 percent of the full sample recalling actual intercourse. (85) Official estimates of German children sexually abused and raped each year now number over 300,000, and sexual abuse hot lines are becoming more widespread. (86) The establishment of Italian "SOS-infanzia" hotlines — initially much resisted by the public — have begun to reveal widespread pedophile networks, baby prostitution and Boy Scout/Girl Guide molestation, as well as the widespread sexual abuse of children within families, with a particular emphasis on the pederasty of boys. (87) Finally, the most careful European study to date is a recent unpublished German survey by the Institut für Kindheit that for the first time anywhere dare to ask the children themselves about their sexual experiences. I have been told that these researchers found an 80 percent childhood sexual molestation rate among Berlin school children. (88) The exact details of this study will certainly be revealing when it is published. It may be that direct questioning of children rather than relying on retrospective memory may produce even higher real incidence rates of sexual molestation than our 60 percent and 45 percent estimates for the U.S.

### PEDOPHILIA IN THE EAST AND MIDDLE EAST

However high the rates of childhood molestation may turn out to be in contemporary Western countries, the incidence in countries outside the West is likely to be much higher. Because they have only recently moved beyond what I have termed the infanticidal mode of childrearing, whereby so much as half of the children born were killed by their parents, (89) the use of children for the emotional needs of adults is far more accepted, an attitude that fosters widespread incestuous acts along with other child abuse. Although the evidence is scattered and much remains hidden, enough exists to indicate the dimensions of what eventual scholarship will probably uncover.

Childhood in much of India begins with the young child being regularly masturbated by the mother, "high caste or low caste, the girl 'to make her sleep well,' the boy 'to make him manly ... " This practice has been said to be widespread by many reliable observers, including Catherine Mayo — whose extensive investigations in India in the 1920s led to the first child marriage laws (90) — a physician, (91) an ethnologist, (92) a religious scholar (93) and a sociologist. (94) As is the case with virtually all non-Western cultures, the child sleeps in the family bed for several years and regularly observes sexual intercourse between the parents. The extent to which Indian parents go beyond this and overtly have sex with the child cannot be determined. Rampal, the sociologist who recently did interviews modeled on the Kinsey studies about contemporary Indian sexual practices, concludes that "there is a lot of incest ... It is hidden along with other secrets of families and rarely gets a chance to come out, like seduction at the hands of trusted friends of the family ... To arrive at even a passable estimate of incest cases would be to touch the hornet's nest. No one will ever confess to such a deed, therefore, any attempt to collect statistics may prove to be futile at present." (95)

Boys as well as girls are reported as being masturbated and raped by the men in the family, including fathers, older brothers, uncles and cousins. (96) By the time children are four or five, they are usually taken to bed at night by others in the extended household. "A particular uncle may like her to sleep in his room, which is considered a great gesture of closeness," (97) As one girl describes it: "I hardly ever slept with my parents after I was four. I rotated almost every night between my various uncles and sometimes my grandmother. But it was difficult to have any space in her bed because all the grandsons slept in her bed. So I preferred to sleep in [uncle's] bed, who was very nice and put his arms around me in winter." (98) This practice is similar to the customary sharing of their wives by brothers, who have free sexual access to each other's wives, an ancient practice still approved of in some areas in India. (99)

So acceptable is sex between close relatives in India that uncle-niece and cross-cousin marriages were preferred among certain Indian groups. (100) As the old Indian proverb has it, "For a girl to be a virgin at ten years old, she must have neither brothers nor cousin nor father." These sleeping patterns with relatives who live in common residences continue even after marriage, since husbands are often cold to wives, and sex with the husband's younger brother is covertly encouraged by the family to give the wife someone to be "close" to. (101) Grandfathers often call the little girls "my little wife," give them candy and "play the role of an old seducer," teasing them by saying "Don't you want to marry me?" (102) One observer sums up traditional Indian sexual stimulation during childhood as follows: "The little Hindu girls are deflowered by the little boys with whom they play, and repeat together the erotic lessons which their parents have unwittingly taught them on account of the general promiscuity of family life throughout India. In all the little girls of less than ten years of age the complete hymen is wanting ... Incest is often the rule rather than the exception." (103)

In addition to direct incest by parents, the seduction of little girls who are taken in as wards or servants is quite common. Many older men, Rampal reports, get down to seducing young girls whom they give protection at home for any reason — education, service, relationship, close friendship with father or brother. [They] take full advantage of the girl's innocence and her lack of experience in dealing with men who desire them sexually. The girls generally regret such relationships because of the extreme dualism of calling their secret lovers as 'uncle' or 'brother' before others and indulging in coitus in the privacy of [the] bedroom ..." (104) Fathers sometimes
The sexual use of boys and girls goes back as far as records exist and includes all cases in India. As Mayo says, "For a period so long that none knows it beginning, the Brahmin has been intensively cultivating, and with priestly authority handing on, a passion for immature girl-children in sexual use." (106) Temple prostitution of both boys and girls has a long history, and Mayo reported in 1927 that "the little boy … is likely, if physically attractive, to be drafted for the satisfaction of grown men, or to be regularly attached to a temple, in the capacity of prostitute. Neither parent as a rule sees any harm in this, but is, rather, flattered that the son has been found pleasing." (107) Both priests and visitors used the boys and girls sexually, most of the children being "of good caste." One community of temple prostitutes numbered two hundred thousand members, according to government statistics. (108)

Child marriage has been the rule in India at least as far back as 300 B.C. The rationalization for child marriage — like that for extreme seclusion of girls, purdah (110) — is that it is necessary to protect the girl from the seductive males around her. Indian mothers of higher castes admit that they are "afraid to leave their daughters of [age eleven] at home, even for one afternoon, without a mother's eye and accessible to the men of the family. Far down the social scale the same anxiety is found. The Hindu peasant village's wife will not leave her girl child at home alone for the space of an hour, being practically sure that, if she does so, the child will be ruined." (111) Therefore, the child has traditionally been married off as early as six or seven years of age.

While child marriages are consciously excused as defenses against seduction by males, they also, of course, carry out the seduction, since child marriages have generally been consummated right away and since the groom is almost always decades older than the child bride. As the Mahabharata says, "Let the man of thirty years wed a ten-year-old wife, a naginika (one that has not yet menstruated), or let the man of twenty-one get one seven years old." (102) Since prior to the 1929 child Marriage Restraint Act most Indian girls were married and began sexual intercourse before age 12, they moved from familial incest to sex with older men chosen by the family while they were still children. (113)

Fathers who allowed their girls to reach puberty without being married were condemned by their religion to hell. Therefore, the first child usually was born shortly after the onset of puberty, almost always dying during childbirth because of the physical immaturity of the mother. (114) When attempts to outlaw child marriage were made in 1929, nine volumes of testimony were published by the Age of Consent Committee, most of them defending child marriage. The complaint was that it was the foundation of the Indian family, since "the girl-child must 'get herself disciplined' [raped] through actual consummation of marriage 'to look upon one individual … as her lord and husband … " (115)

Mayo said most of this committee testimony was too obscene to even repeat in its insistence on the necessity for child sex. The Committee was overwhelmed by those who insisted that the children were so oversexed that by the time they were seven years old that child marriage was their only salvation. "Little children, both boys and girls, they lament, naturally develop an unnatural, perverted and exhausting precocity, under the stimulus in which they are steeped" — that is, the family incest during the first seven years. Mayo reported numerous testimonies that blamed the little girls for their rape, claiming that early marriage was an absolute necessity, since "Cupid overtakes the hearts of girls … at an early age … A girl's desire for sexual intercourse is eight times greater than that of males. When there is appetite, it is the best time for giving food … " (116)

The result of this early incest was a society where adult sexuality was considered extremely dangerous, where people suffered agonies of guilt every time they engaged in sex with their spouses, where all sexual intercourse between men and women was considered polluting and where popular movies still frequently need detailed rape scenes to satisfy the male audience. (117) As might be expected, Indian religion has been permeated by perverse sexual fantasies, worship of the penis and extreme fears of loss of semen, including the worship of an incestuous penis-god, Siva — where women were expected to kiss in public the genitals of naked priests. Even today in cults such as the Hindu Sakti sect incest is advocated as "a higher grade of sexual intercourse and an advanced step toward religious perfection." (118)

The Indian subcontinent provides a veritable Galapagos of psychohistorical variations of incestuous behavior, providing examples of a wide range of evolutionary stages that can be useful in comparative historical studies of other societies. In some endogamous Indian groups, such as the Baiga, actual incestuous marriage is practiced between men and their daughters, between women and their sons, between siblings, and even between grandparents and their grandchildren. (118) "My impression is that most of them have little or no innate repulsion towards incest," Says Elwin, their ethnographer, (120) the viability of their society disproving by itself all theories about the impossibility of incestuous marriage.

Variations on the fully incestuous life style of the Baiga are numerous, and regular sexual intercourse during childhood is widespread in many Indian groups. One of the best documented is the Muria, who make their young children a part of their sexual activities in the family bed. Then, when their children are five or six years old, the parents claim they are getting too old to continue to take part in family sex, so they send them to a dormitory set up by the adults for the sexual use of the children by adolescents and older men. (121) The Muria claim it is the children's fault they have to be removed from their homes and sent to the sex dormitory:

"Some children are very good and understand [why they have to be banished from the family bed], but others are stupid and insist on crowding into the parents' room … " The adults supervise and encourage all the sexual activities that take place in the dormitories. Although at times children as little as two years of age are taken to sleep in the dormitories, they are usually not required to be part of the sex activities until 5 or 6, since if they are made to have sex at 3 or 4 they often "wet their beds [and] wake up crying." (122)

When being introduced into the sex dormitory, the children are made to fag for others and are "hammered into shape" by the
adolescents in charge. The young children start their sexual activities by massaging the older children, and are only then "initiated" into actual intercourse. Intercourse begins at age 5 or 6, initiated by an adolescent or adult: "A big girl teaches a little boy by letting him fondle her breasts and hug her. Then she opens and spreads her legs and makes the little boy lie on her breasts. She shows him how to open her clothes and insert the little penis with his hand."(123)

There are two types of dormitories: the classic model, where girls cannot sleep with a partner for more than three days at a time, under threat of punishment; and the "yoking" model, where partners are "married" to each other for longer periods. The children are usually assigned partners by those in charge. Although sometimes a girl can name her own partner, she cannot choose not to have sex, or she will be gang raped:

"Should a girl refuse to come when sent for, a number of young boys are dispatched to bring her by force. When she is brought, should she refuse to elect a mate, a number of older boys violate her one after the other, until she names the boy she would have for her mate."(124)

The children have intercourse in one another's presence, with certain relatives, such as younger brothers, taking over if the older brother is absent for a time.(125) "Everyone belongs to everyone else" is the spirit of these dormitories: "you change from girl to girl just as you change your rings from finger to finger," lest one be "ruined by love."(126) (All these rules, of course, are set down and changed at will by the parents, not the children.) Older married men often visit the dormitories and have sex with the children, particularly when their own wives are having their period and are considered polluted.(127) The sex dormitory system of the Muria — which is similar to that of a number of other Asian and African groups(128) — been highly praised for its "enviable" positive attitudes toward sex both by the ethnologist who studied them and by other anthropologists reporting on his research.(129) The dormitories are called a "happy, exciting world," in contrast, says the ethnologist, to other Indian villages where there was more child rape than in dormitory villages.(130)

Like India, China has only recently emerged from the infanticidal mode of childrearing, but reliable research on childhood sexuality is somewhat more limited than for India. Although parents traditionally sleep with their children until they are adolescents,(131) exactly what happens in Chinese family beds has not yet been much investigated, although some observers have reported that Chinese girls, like Indian, have no trace of a hymen, supposedly because caretakers "clean the sexual organs of the little children during daily washings ... so scrupulously ... "(132)

Like so many early civilizations, ancient China institutionalized pederasty of boys, child concubinage, the castration of small boys so they could be used sexually as eunuchs, the marriage of young brides with a number of brothers, widespread boy and girl prostitution and the regular sexual use of child servants and slaves.(133) Under the popular ancient sim pua system of marriage, parents would adopt a girl during infancy, bring her up as a sister to their son and then force them into a marriage that must be considered as incestuous in every way except genetically. Alternatively, they could adopt a son to marry his sister.(135) Sexual use of adopted girls was said to be common.(135) Parents would send their boys to aristocratic households for sexual use — if volunteered as a eunuch, the parents would have their boys' genitals cut off, which the parents carried with them in a jar.(136) In some areas, male marriage to boys was so popular that there are records of sacrifices to patron deities of pederasty.(137)

As was also common in other early civilizations, extreme maternal symbiosis caused the Chinese to believe that women were so powerful that they depleted men of their strength by taking their semen during intercourse. The Chinese thought women ejaculated a life force (yin) during sex, which a man could absorb and gain strength from, if he could withhold ejaculation himself. Manuals were written describing methods whereby the man could hold back his semen, terminating intercourse — called "the battle" — by inhaling the breath and sucking the saliva of the woman — who is called "the enemy.(138) During adolescence, youths were instructed to have intercourse with young girls who have "undeveloped breasts," but to practice "moderation" by withholding their semen. (139) Rulers had more life force because they absorbed more of it from their many wives and concubines. Whether this led them to believe that men could absorb the life force from their children through intercourse is not immediately apparent, although this might be indicated by the widespread practice of buying (under the rubric of "adoption") children in infancy under the popular mui tsai system — children who were then used by their "adoptive" parents both as domestic slaves and as sexual objects.(140) Boys, too, were often adopted for sexual use, and had their feet bound like girls — bound feet being considered sexually arousing.(141)

Foot binding was a unique Chinese sexual mutilation practice that was performed on girls of all classes. Like other fetishists, the Chinese were so afraid of the vagina as a dangerous, castrating organ that they could only feel erotic toward the woman's foot — mainly her big toe. As a Cheng Kuan-ying described foot binding in the nineteenth century: "When a child is four or five, or seven or eight, parents speak harshly to it, and frighten it with their looks, and oppress it in every conceivable manner so that the bones of its feet may be broken and its flesh putrefy."(142) The girl undergoes this extremely painful process for from five to ten years, crying out in pain each night as she hobbles about the house to do her tasks while holding on to the walls for support.(143) As the bones became broken and the flesh deteriorated, her foot became a perfect penis — substitute, often losing several toes as they were bent under her foot in order to emphasize the big toe sticking out.

The penis-toe then became the focus of the man's perversion and of his sexual excitement during intercourse. "It formed an essential prelude to the sex act, and its manipulation excited and stimulated ... The ways of grasping the foot in one's palms were both profuse and varied; ascending the heights of ecstasy, the lover transferred the foot from palm to mouth. Play included kissing, sucking, and inserting the foot in the mouth until it filled both cheeks, either nibbling at it or chewing it vigorously, and adoringly placing it against one's cheeks, chest, knees, or virile member.(144) Thus even sex with a female could simulate homosexual intercourse for Chinese males.

Although Chinese literature has many descriptions of the screams of girls whose feet are being crushed,(145) the sources are silent as to whether the little girl herself fully understood the sexual purpose of her mutilation. Since she shared the family bed with her parents and presumably observed her father playing sexually with her mother's penis-foot, it is likely that the sexual aim of her painful mutilation
was apparent to her.

Japan began to move beyond the infanticidal mode of childrearing at least two centuries ago. Therefore, reliable accounts of traditional Japanese childhood sexual life are harder to find. Furthermore, there is currently such a taboo on talking about sexual molestation of children that current official figures report only a few hundred cases per year in all of Japan. Although some recent visitors to Japan, witnessing almost everyone reading softcore pornographic comics (manga) that feature young girls "being accosted, surprised, tied up, beaten, knifed [and] tortured," wonder whether the very low official child abuse figures reported are accurate, personal letters I have written to anthropologists, educators, psychoanalysts and others specializing in Japanese psychology have brought nothing but denial that sexual molestation exists in substantial numbers of families in Japan today.

Ancient Japan resembled both India and China in having institutionalized Greek-style pederasty of boys — by priests as well as warriors — temple prostitution of both boys and girls, and widespread child prostitution, including the ancient geisha system. Japanese brothels would start girls in sexual service at 5 to 7 years old. Pederasty (shudo) by the aristocracy and priesthood is well documented since at least the 14th century, with young boys given by their parents to be used anally by samurais and by priests in monasteries — the buggered boys sometimes having been worshipped as gods incarnate in religious cults similar to those of the cult of the Virgin in the West.

One of the most endogenous societies in the world, Japan has approved of incestuous marriages in court circles even in historical times. Preferred sibling, cousin, uncle-niece and aunt-nephew marriages have been so extensive that genetics experts have discovered that the inbreeding has affected their size and health. How often this incestuous marriage system occurred in traditional Japan is still largely unexplored. One indication of what is likely to be found is a 1959 study by Kubo showing that there were still rural areas in Japan where fathers married their daughters when the mother had died or was incapacitated, "in accordance with feudal family traditions." Kubo concluded that incest was considered "praiseworthy conduct" in many traditional rural families. In the 36 incest cases he studied in Hiroshima, he found that there was often community moral disapproval of the families who lived in open incestuous marriages, but that the participants themselves did not think of it as immoral. In fact, when the father was unavailable to head the family, his son often took over his role and had sex with his sister in order "to end confusion in the order of the home." Other members of the family accepted this incest as normal.

In traditional Japan, quite young girls were introduced into sex by older boys who visited their bedrooms at night with the complicity of the girl's parents (called night-prowling, yobai). The boys "assembled in communal huts and instructed slightly younger village males in sex approaches and techniques..." Although they recommended "gentle persuasion," there was no guarantee that all was so gentle in fact, since the parents "looked the other way" in accordance with custom while the older boys had intercourse with their young daughters.

Western observers even today often notice that Japanese mothers still masturbate their young children during the day in public and at night in the family bed — in order, they say, "to put them to sleep." The average Japanese today sleeps with his or her children until the children are ten or fifteen years old. — one recent Japanese study found daughters still sleeping with their fathers over 20 percent of the time even after age sixteen. Even when the home contains a dozen rooms or more, parents and grandparents feel "lonely" if they sleep apart from the children in the family, and therefore go to bed with some child every night (the mean age in one study of children sleeping alone is 12.7 years). Since so many families still practice what is termed dakine cosleeping — with the parent or grandparent sleeping while physically embracing the child, a practice said to be beneficial to the health of the adult — and since most Japanese parents still regularly have sexual intercourse while the child is in bed with them, one wonders how scholars can continue to maintain that nothing sexual usually happens to the Japanese child in the family bed, particularly since none have yet asked the children themselves about their sexual experiences.

This stone wall on information about incest in Japan has been breached somewhat by four recent studies. The first is a Japanese feminist sex survey modeled on those of Shere Hite that reported one-third of the respondents having memories of being sexually abused by relatives or close friends as children, a figure considerably higher than comparable American questionnaire studies. Secondly, other studies show that the majority of urban parents in 1981 reported that they had lately begun to be bothered by the thought that children with whom they slept might be aware of their intercourse — a growing guilt about incestuous activities that was increasingly common in the West in early modern times and which led for the first time to separate beds for children.

Thirdly, two recent books on Japanese incest provide new insights into the subject. The first is a report of a "hotline" set up in Tokyo by a counseling service, which analyzed the hundreds of calls they received dealing with incest. Since official Japanese statistics deny the occurrence of incest, they were surprised to find that their hotline was flooded with such calls. One of their major findings is that, in addition to the usual father-daughter and sibling incest found in the West, 29 percent of the Japanese calls complained about mother-son incest. This is an extremely high proportion compared to other countries, but about what could be expected considering the common frequency with which Japanese mothers sleep alone with their sons while the father is out having sex with other women — extramarital sex still being the rule for most married men in Japan.

The most commonly reported incest occurs when the mother sees her son masturbate as a teenager and tells him, "It's not good to do it alone. Your IQ becomes lower. I will help you," or "You cannot study if you cannot have sex. You may use my body," or "I don't want you to get into trouble with a girl. Have sex with me instead." The researchers found that Japanese mothers and sons often sleep in the same bed and have sex together, although the exact incidence in the population was not investigated. According to the phone interviews, Japanese mothers teach their sons how to masturbate, helping them to achieve first ejaculation in much the same manner as they earlier helped them with toilet training. Most of the sons had no sexual experience with another woman, and became jealous of the mothers' having sex with their fathers, feeling they should have the right to monopolize the mothers — perhaps helping
retribution for the young servants are gets when they are brought to the attention of authorities, "in research by one group of medical self, since she dare not punishment to be meted out, it will always end up by being fellatio and then proceeds to intercourse. "In porter of the house, seduction reported that "most female children are exposed to prevalent. One report experience of the hammam … notoriously a place of homosexuality, the sexual act itself … 'going to the boy and everyone ... have sex with siblings and cousins, to experience sexual By the time of circumcision — a traumatic ritual(178) that is usually circumcision to increase its size and strengthen it," and older siblings have been observed playing with the genitals of babies for hours at a time.(175) As the boy gets older, mutual masturbation, fellatio and anal intercourse are said to be common among children, particularly with the older boys using the younger children as sex objects as a reaction to the over stimulation of the family bed. Pederasty of boys by the man in and near the extended family is said by an Arab sociologist to be common, since "the mere sight of pretty boys is regarded ... as disturbing and terribly tempting."(176) Moralists often find it necessary to issue warnings such as these: "A man should never spend the night in a house with beardless boys" and "Do not sit next to the sons of the rich and noble: they have faces like those of virgins and they are even more tempting than women."(177)

The sexual use of children in the remainder of the Far East follows the pattern of India and China. In Thailand, for instance, a survey in 1990 found that 75 percent of Thai men had had sex with child prostitutes, from 20 to 40 percent of them HIV-infected, so that Asia is about to become what one expert terms "the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic."(171) The rising incidence of AIDS among children around the world is just one index of how widespread their sexual use really is. The sexual use of children in the Middle East is probably as widespread as in the Far East.(172) Historically, all the institutionalized forms of pedophilia that were customary in the Far East are extensively documented for the Middle East during its earlier infanticidal childrearing mode, including child marriage, child concubinage, temple prostitution of both boys and girls, parent-child marriage (among the Zoroastrians), sibling marriage (among the Egyptians, among both royalty and commoners), sex slavery, ritualized pederasty, eunuchism, and widespread child prostitution. Furthermore, as in India, there are parts of the Middle East where customs from earlier times have been maintained intact, so that more detail is available than is usually preserved in historical documents. In the oasis of Siwa, for instance, mothers regularly give their boys to older men for sexual use, both related and outside the family, and fathers regularly lend their young sons to each other, similar to the Central Asian Islamic tradition of bacaboz, where most fathers trade their sons with others for sexual use.(173) Pederastic marriages and pederastic prostitution have been so widespread in Siwa until just recently that everyone is accustomed to the proposition that men normally love boys more than they do women, saying: "They will kill each other for a boy. Never for a woman."(174) Muslim holy men (imaam) regularly have boys available for sex, saying the ingestion of the imaam's semen is necessary for absorbing his spiritual powers, sometimes even extending to formal marriage with the boy. Sex for boys in the Middle East is said to begin in infancy and continue throughout childhood. Parents and others masturbate the infant's penis in order "to increase its size and strengthen it," and older siblings have been observed playing with the genitals of babies for hours at a time.(175) As the boy gets older, mutual masturbation, fellatio and anal intercourse are said to be common among children, particularly with the older boys using the younger children as sex objects as a reaction to the over stimulation of the family bed. Pederasty of boys by the man in and near the extended family is said by an Arab sociologist to be common, since "the mere sight of pretty boys is regarded ... as disturbing and terribly tempting."(176) Moralists often find it necessary to issue warnings such as these: "A man should never spend the night in a house with beardless boys" and "Do not sit next to the sons of the rich and noble: they have faces like those of virgins and they are even more tempting than women."(177)

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By the time of circumcision — a traumatic ritual(178) that is usually performed at ages 3 to 6, whose unconscious purpose is to purify the boy and cleanse him(179) of the molestation to which he has been subjected — the boy is supposed to stop wearing the dresslike shino that allows ready access to his genitals and begin wearing pants. However, since he often continues to sleep in the parental bed, to have sex with siblings and cousins, to experience sexual attacks at school and to attend nude public baths (hammam) with his mother and sisters,(180) his sexual over stimulation often continues into the 7-to-14-year-old phase. Much of the incest may occur in the baths. Bouhdiba reports: "The hammam ... is a highly eroticized place — so much so indeed that the name has come to signify for the masses the sexual act itself ... 'going to the hammam' quite simply means 'making love' ... Every Muslim can relive his childhood in terms of his experience of the hammam ... notoriously a place of homosexuality, male and female ... there the child has all the time in the world to contemplate, examine and compare sexual organs [so that] every Muslim is fixated on his mother ... "(181)

As girls in the Middle East are considered worth less than boys, it may be that their incestuous use during childhood is even more prevalent. One report found that Four out of five Middle Eastern women recalled having been forced into fellatio between the ages of 3 and 6 by older brothers and other relatives.(182) A female Arab physician who recently conducted an extensive study of childhood seduction reported that "most female children are exposed to ... incidents of sexual assault" during their early years by "the brother, the cousin, the paternal uncle, the maternal uncle, the grandfather or even the father. If not a family member, he may be the guardian or porter of the house, the teacher, the neighbor's son, or any other man." (183) The molestation, she says, begins with masturbation or fellatio and then proceeds to intercourse. "In most cases the girl surrenders and is afraid to complain to anyone, since, if there is any punishment to be meted out, it will always end up by being inflicted on her. It is she alone who loses her honor and virginity. The man never loses anything .... " The incidents are termed "frequent, but remain hidden, stored up in the secret recesses of the female child's self, since she dare not tell anyone of what has happened to her .... " Girls are reported to be sexually assaulted at school and in the streets,(184) and child marriage has proved as difficult to stamp out in many areas as it has been in India.(185) The assaults are accompanied by severe physical and psychological damage, according to research by one group of medical experts at the Ministry of Justice in Cairo, and usually go unpunished even in those rare occasions when they are brought to the attention of authorities, "in order to avoid scandal.(186) Since the girl's hymen must be intact when she gets married, surgical repair is sometimes requested in order to conceal the loss of virginity through the assaults. As in the Far East, young servants are particularly favored sexual objects, both for men whose wives are absent, menstruating, pregnant or frigid and for adolescents who sometimes feel less guilty having sex with servant girls than with their sisters.(187)

Arab women, of course, are often aware that their spouses prefer having sex with little boys and girls to having sex with them. Their retribution for the men's pedophilia comes when the girl is about age 6, when the women of the house grab her, pull her thighs apart and explain why one informant told a family planning expert: "We have no Oedipal problems in Japan — there's no competition from the father.(168) Mother recent Japanese book, based on one hundred incest reports, confirms these observations, including the unusually high rate of mother-son incest, although it, too, provides no way to determine true national incidence rates.(169)
cut off her clitoris and sometimes her labia with a razor, thus usually ending her ability to feel sexual pleasure forever.

The custom of clitoridectomy — which is not part of any religious doctrine and is not even mentioned in the Koran — goes back at least to pre-dynastic Egyptian times;(188) even mummies were missing their clitorises and labia.(189) Presently, many Middle Eastern and African countries continue to practice circumcision of girls. A recent survey of Egyptian girls and women showed 97 percent of uneducated families and 66 percent of educated families still practicing clitoridectomy.(190) Nor is the practice decreasing; Hosken says "more female children are mutilated today than throughout history" and estimates that there are presently 74 million mutilated females in countries where documentation exists.(191)

Often the girl's labia are cut off in addition to the clitoris — the so-called "Pharaonic circumcision" or "infibulation" — and the remaining flesh is sewn together, leaving only a small opening for urination. The vagina must of course be cut open before intercourse, and the women often also have great difficulty giving birth and have to be further cut to allow the baby to pass through. The vaginal area is then resewn together after the baby is born "to give the men more pleasure during intercourse" and has to be cut open again during each successive birth. During all of these mutilations the girls undergo excruciating pain, sometimes die of complications, usually hemorrhage, often pass out from the shock (since no anesthetic is used) and often suffer from tetanus, blood poisoning, chronic urinary tract infections and infertility.

The rationalization given for clitoridectomy is that little girls are naturally so sexual that it is necessary "to release them from their bondage to sex" and "to stop them from masturbating." One informant reported that "girls fell from their bicycles because of sexual overstimulation if their clitorises were not cut."(193) Since the operation usually makes the girl frigid, it can be said to achieve its stated aim of reducing girls' sexual pleasure. Men usually do not want to marry women with intact clitorises, believing they will be "oversexed" and betray them. It is the custom in some countries on the wedding night for the husband to be the one to cut his bride's vagina open with a knife, then have repeated intercourse to prevent it from closing again.

The initial mutilation of the girl's genitals is usually done by the women of the family, under the supervision of the mother. The unconscious motive seems to be revenge for the men's sexual abuse of the girl, since interviews so often reveal earlier memories of seduction. One women relates her memory of her clitoridectomy as follows:

I was six years old that night when I lay in my bed, warm and peaceful … I felt something move under the blankets, something like a huge hand, cold and rough, fumbling over my body, as though looking for something. Almost simultaneously another hand was clapped over my mouth to prevent me from screaming.

They carried me to the bathroom … I remember a rasping metallic sound which reminded me of the butcher when he used to sharpen his knife … My blood was frozen in my veins … I realized my thighs had been pulled wide apart, and that each of my lower limbs was being held as far away from the other as possible … I felt that the rasping knife or blade was heading straight down towards my throat. Then suddenly the sharp metallic edge seemed to drop between my thighs and there cut off a piece of flesh from my body.

I screamed with pain despite the tight hand held over my mouth, for the pain was not just a pain, it was like a searing flame that went through my whole body. After a few moments, I saw a red pool of blood around my hips.

I did not know what they had cut off from my body, and did not try to find out. I just wept, and called out to my mother for help. But the worst shock of all was when I looked around and found her standing by my side. Yes, it was her, I could not be mistaken, in flesh and blood, right in the midst of these strangers, talking to them and smiling at them.(194)

Clitoridectomy — like all genital mutilations of children — is, of course, an act of incest motivated by the perversions of the adults who perform the mutilation. Although we are not used to thinking of it in this way, in fact mothers who attack their daughters' genitals with knives are as incestuous as fathers who rape them.

Since genital mutilation is one of the most widespread childrearing practices, its presence alone makes incest a universal practice — despite our habit of denying its sexual motivation by terming it a "rite of passage" (it often involves no passage to a new state at all) or a "puberty rite" (it usually occurs long before puberty). Also, the sexual excitement of the adults attending the mutilation is overlooked, even when — as in Siwa — the mother masturbates the child prior to the mutilation, or when — as in Morocco — prostitutes regularly attend the mutilation ceremony in order to relieve the sexual tensions generated, or when — as in Australia — the mutilation is followed by group rape.(195)

The mutilation of children's genitals is such a important need in humans that whole religions and state systems have been founded upon the practice. Yet when scholars attempt to explain why almost everyone since the beginning of recorded history has massively assaulted the genitals of their children, they assiduously deny that it is a sexual perversion or that those who do it ever mean any harm to the children.

Arnold van Gennep calls genital mutilation a ceremony "whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another," never wondering why parents couldn't celebrate the maturing of their children in a less harmful way." Bruno Bettelheim claims that little boys want their genitals cut — because of an inborn "vagina envy" — and that the mutilation was so "pleasurable" to the victims that they asked adults to cut them, so they could "express their happiness."(197) Others have claimed genital mutilation was done "to enforce social cohesion" (Yehudi Cohen), "to break an excessively strong dependence upon the mother" (John Whiting), to show the child "We love you, but we must rid you of your infantilisms" (Theodor Reik), and to make the penis look like that of a kangaroo (John Cawte). (198)
There is hardly an imaginable form of genital assault that is not regularly performed on children. Girls' genitals are tattooed, cut off, sewn up, burned off, and ripped open with the fingers. Boys' genitals are pierced by objects, sewn up, burned, cut off, flayed, "gashed open [so that] wedges of flesh are removed," and slashed through to the urethra so that "the penis splits open like a boiled frankfurter." The topic of childhood genital mutilation is so rich in meaning that it will have to await further discussion in the next two major sections of this study, "The Cross-Cultural Study of Incest," where the universality of incest in contemporary preliterate groups is documented, and "The History of Incest," where evidence is presented for the historical stages in the evolution of Homo eroticus from incest to love.

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7. Leslie White, cited in ibid, p.36.
23. Freud, Standard Edition. "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," Vol. XVI (1916), p.370. It is true that Freud then went on to say that whether seduction had occurred in reality or in fantasy, "The outcome is the same, and up to the present we have not succeeded in pointing to any difference in the consequences, whether phantasy or reality has had the greater share in these events of childhood." Ibid. Today a psychotherapist would say that it certainly makes a difference whether incest occurred in reality or not. It would be important, for instance, to know whether Freud's father was or was not the "pervert" Freud called him-especially since, like most German children of his time he slept with his parents in infancy. The point here, however, is not whether Freud's every clinical opinion is held today. It is only that Freud didn't deny that real childhood seduction all too often occurred in his patients and in the society around him.
25. Karl Abraham, "The Experiencing of Sexual Traumas as a Form of Sexual Activity." In Selected Papers of Karl Abraham. London: Hogarth Press, 1948. p. 48. Abraham's blaming of the victim is particularly clear in his case of the woman who was raped by her uncle in "On the Significance of Sexual Traumas in Childhood for the Symptomatology of Dementia Praecox." In Karl Abraham,

26. This of course can only be ascertained for certain in the rare cases when the child analyst's full clinical notes have been preserved; the best example is Melanie Klein, Narrative of A Child Analysis: The Conduct of the Psycho-Analysis of Children As Seen in the Treatment of a Ten Year Old Boy. New York: Basic Books, 1960, where Mrs. Klein reports regularly avoiding asking whether the boy's reports of sucking his dog's penis and having his own penis sucked might have been cover memories for real incest, despite the boy's timid suggestion that "perhaps this had happened in the past with his brother." (p. 93) Klein, like Anna Freud, felt real childhood sexual events of little importance compared to internal fantasy.


49. Russell, The Secret Trauma, p.70.


53. Russell thinks her numbers are underestimated since 36 percent of the households in her study refused to be interviewed and these probably had higher vitimation rates. See Diana Russell, lecture, May 17, 1988, Waukesha, Wisconsin, reported in Carol Poston and Karen Lison, Reclaiming Our Lives: Hope for Adult Survivors of Incest. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1989, p.259.

54. MacFarlane, Sexual Abuse of Young Children, p.7; Crewdson, By Silence Betrayed, p.162.


56. The first two factors, the higher-rate populations excluded from the studies and the Suppression of memories, only account for a few additional percentage points. The third factor, the higher rate for households refusing to participate in the studies, is in' possible to quantify, so I have here not corrected for this fact. The fourth factor can, however, be quantified, since the recovery of repressed memories for an estimated 90 percent of the incidents prior to age five and for an estimated 35 percent of the in-cidents after age five would boost the overall rate by almost 50 percent. For a study which concludes that patients "who were abused early in childhood" were the most likely to suffer "massive repression" of memories, see Judith L. Herman and Emily Schatzow, "Recovery and Verification of Memories of Childhood Sexual Trauma." Psychoanalytic Psychology 4(1987): 1-14. The figures I use, therefore, should be con-sidered conservative.

57. Russell, The Secret Trauma, p.35.


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S. N. Rampal, Indian Woman and Sex, p.69.


104. S. N. Rampal, Indian Woman and Sex, p.69.

105. Ibid, p.23.


111. Mayo, Mother India, p.112.


119. Verrier Elwin, The Baiga. London: John Murray, 1939,

120. Ibid, p.193.


122. Ibid, p.358.


125. Ibid, pp.333-338.

126. Ibid, p.343.


138. Van Gulik, Sexual Life in Ancient China, p.147

139. Ibid, p. 194.


144. Levy, Chinese Footbinding, p.34.

145. A typical example, Ibid, p.83: “My toes were pointed, my instep bent down. And though I cried out to Heaven and Earth, Mother ignored me as if she were deaf. My nights were spent in pain. My early mornings in tears! I spoke to Mother by my bed. ‘How you worry when I’m ill, ‘How frightened if I fall!’ Now the agony from my feet has penetrated the marrow of my bones. And I am plunged into despair, but you, ‘You don’t care a bit about me.’”


Ibid.


Ibid, p.188.


Coleman, Family Planning in Japanese Society, p.177, finds most families respond to questions about why they have sex in the same bed with children by saying it would be "selfish" not to do so.

Ibid.


Because of their incestuous childhoods, Arabs are obsessed with purification, and have developed rituals wherein they are constantly washing the genitals and anal areas, including rubbing the penis against stone objects to empty their impure urinary tract; see Bouhdiba, Sexuality in Islam, pp.46-7.


Ibid


187. Ibid.


190. El Saadawi, The Hidden Face of Eve, p. 34.


192. Ibid, p. 15.


[Back to Realities of Race and Discrimination]
These are films that I have seen that cover the topic of incest. It seems to be a recurring subject in many of my favorite films. The Lemon Incest list is another good source for films that I might not have mentioned in my list. Check it out http://mubi.com/lists/6780?from_theauteurs=1. Sleepwalkers. Vagabond Directed by Agnès Varda Watch now. Watch now 26 days left. The incest taboo is and has been one of the most widespread of all cultural taboos, both in present and in many past societies. Most modern societies have laws regarding incest or social restrictions on closely consanguineous marriages. In societies where it is illegal, consensual adult incest is seen by some as a victimless crime. Some cultures extend the incest taboo to relatives with no consanguinity such as milk-siblings, step-siblings, and adoptive siblings. The children of incestuous relationships were regarded as illegitimate, and are still so regarded in some societies today. In most cases, the parents did not have the option to marry to remove that status, as incestuous marriages were and are normally also prohibited. Read more.
Consequently, this focus has somewhat distracted our thinking away from the dimensions of oedipal processes and structures that are-as will be suggested in the course of this paper-indisputably universal. In short, this expository emphasis has fueled skepticism and resistance toward the discipline of psychoanalysis. In terms of skepticism, critics have understandably wondered how Freud, as early as 1897, could boldly announce that oedipality is a "universal event," when he had almost no experience with non-European patients, and had only discovered the distinctive method of psychoana