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Anthropology 121

Quiz #6

The Initiation of a Maasai Warrior

1. Is male circumcision practiced in your family? Why?

(Discussion)

2. When do the Maasai circumcise their males?

Adolescence

3. How is a Maasai male expected to behave during his circumcision ceremony?

Stoic, still, no flinching; bear up to the pain

4. What does being circumcised imply?

Being an adult; taking on the behaviors of a warrior

5. T/F Maasai men are prohibited from engaging in sexual intercourse prior to being circumcised.

T

6. What areas does a Maasai young man shave in preparation for his circumcision?

a. his head b. his pubic hair c. his arms d. his chest e. his legs

A, B

7. Who sharpens the ritual knives?

a. the circumciser b. the young man's father c. the young man's mother d. the young man himself e. his betrothed wife

D

8. What happens if a man fails to be brave during his circumcision ceremony?

He becomes an embarrassment to his family and tribe

9. T/F Circumcision ceremonies can be very emotional for those bearing witness.

T (especially mothers and grandmothers)

10. T/F It is acceptable for Maasai women to cry and kick during their own circumcision ceremonies.

T

11. How does the Maasai circumcision function as a rite of passage?

3 – stages (separation from childhood, transition (pain-transformation), re-incorporation into the world of the adult)

12. What does it mean to be a Maasai warrior?

Be responsible for others...perform tasks involving strength and bravery

13. What happens to young men whose circumcision becomes botched?

He remains in a liminal (marginal) state; never becomes a man or a warrior

14. What do the Maasai believe happens when older and younger people make love?

Older lovers become younger and healthier while the younger lover grows older and sickly

Female Circumcision: Rite of Passage or Violation of Rights?

1. T/F Female circumcision is the partial or total cutting away of the external female genitalia

T

2. What are the three basic types of female genital excision?

Clitoridectomy, Excision (of labia minora), Infibulation

3. What is a clitoridectomy? What might be the male equivalent?

Amputation of the head of the clitoris; male equivalent would be removal of the corona, the head of the penis

4. What does the infibulation procedure involve? What can be the health consequences of this procedure?

Removal of the clitoris and the labia minora and sewing up the outer lips (labia majora) into a tight seam leaving just a small hole for urination. The procedure can lead to infections in the menstrual blood and urine can get backed up. Women who have this procedure may become sterile and have died from its consequences.

5. T/F Infibulation can function to control female sexual behavior.

T

6. T/F In some cultures, a girl who is not circumcised is not considered marriageable.

T – grandmothers have been concerned with this and enforce the procedure on their granddaughters.

7. How is circumcision (both male and female) an identity marker and a rite of passage?

It is an identity markers in that different tribes/cultures impose different styles (e.g. excision, infibulation, etc.) and it's a rite of passage in that adult status (re: able to marry) is realized following the procedure for adolescents.

8. Why might female circumcision be regarded as a ritualized form of child abuse?

Girls do not have informed consent; it is imposed on them with no choice to reject the procedure

9. What is the World Health Organization's 1979 policy on female circumcision?

Governments should work to eliminate the practice

10. When was the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) introduced?

1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt

11. At what age are clitoridectomies performed in Africa?

Ages 4-17

12. Does male circumcision affect a man's sexual pleasure?

Likely, it's difficult to study sensitivity in that there are few males who have experienced sexual intercourse prior to and then after circumcision. (Many are circumcised as infants or in cultures that prohibit intercourse prior to being circumscised.)

13. Does female clitoridectomy affect a woman's sexual pleasure?

Yes, though the clitoral system includes wings down the sides of the outer labia as well as the G-spot.

14. T/F Many African women have considered sex a duty to their husbands rather than a pleasure for themselves.

T

15. T/F Recently Maasai parents attempting to arrange the circumcision of their daughters have been sent to jail.

T

16. Why are female circumcision ceremonies now often conducted in private?

Because they are now banned in many communities (including the Massai) ..parents would risk being sent to jail if it were discovered they had done this to their daughters.

17. What alternative rituals have been implemented to reduce the practice of FGM?

Nicking the labia to produce a tiny spot of blood, but still include prayers, ritual, etc.

18. How has conversion to Christianity impacted the Maasai practice of FGM?

The imposition of sex before marriage being a sin. (No need to impose a surgery in that belief alone keeps girls from having pre-marital sex.)

19. Should anthropologists become activists in the area of female circumcision?

Discussion...do anthropologists just observe and report OR are there procedures so deadly and unfortunate that they ought to intervene?