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# Mechanisms of Sexual Egalitarianism in Western Europe

Kevin MacDonald

*Department of Psychology, California State University—Long Beach,  
Long Beach, California*

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This paper presents historical evidence on marriage patterns in ancient Sparta, Rome, Early Christianity, and the early Middle Ages. Monogamy occurred in all of these societies but there is a great deal of diversity in origin and function of monogamous mating arrangements. In the case of Sparta, monogamy arose as part of an intensively egalitarian, racially homogenous social structure which fostered intense cooperation and altruism within the group. In the case of Rome monogamy coexisted with pronounced social, political, and economic inequalities, and there was much more ethnic diversity at Rome than at Sparta. The case of early Christianity involved the spread of a more radical ideology of monogamy and sexual restraint among the lower and middle classes of the Roman Empire, but the crucial event in the Christianization of the West was the apparently chance conversion of a single powerful individual, the Emperor Constantine. In the case of the Christianization of barbarian Europe, the movement was spearheaded by a powerful institution and the acceptance among the aristocracy of Christian ideology. The revolution thus proceeded from the top of the society downward. These findings are related to a model of cultural evolution that emphasizes the irreducibility of social controls and ideology in maintaining egalitarian mating practices.

**KEY WORDS:** Egalitarianism; Sexual competition; Monogamy

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**T**he principal aim of the essay is to provide an evolutionary account of sexual egalitarianism in Western Europe. The issue of sexual competition and its suppression is a central one for an evolutionary account of human societies. Sexual egalitarianism implies that reproductive opportunities among males are leveled and the most common form of reproductive leveling has been the social imposition of monogamy. Theoretically, monogamy, by restricting males to one female, has the consequence of dampening the differences among males that are expected if each male is allowed to reproduce to the maximum which is economically feasible.

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Address reprint requests to: Kevin MacDonald, Department of Psychology, California State University—Long Beach, Long Beach, CA 90840.

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As a consequence of basic evolutionary theory, males are expected to compete among themselves for access to fertile females (see Trivers 1972). Females, by virtue of investing much more heavily in reproduction than do males, are expected to become a relatively valuable resource with the result that there is competition among males to obtain access to this resource. However, reproductive competition among males may be dampened under circumstances in which the ecological circumstances favor monogamy. Monogamy is rare among mammals, but it does tend to occur in situations in which both parents must invest heavily in their offspring in order for them to be viable (Kleiman 1981). Monogamy is thus the expected outcome of K-selection processes in which parental investment is equalized between the sexes.

The idea that K-selection processes are responsible for the evolution of monogamy in primitive human groups is argued by Lovejoy (1981). Briefly, humans are seen as evolving toward a lengthened juvenile stage that required greater parental care than could be provided by the female acting alone. By enlisting the support of the male and in return assuring his paternity, females and their partners were able to rear a greater number of highly competitive offspring. This "ecologically imposed monogamy" (Alexander 1979) was characteristic of the great majority of human evolution and is characteristic of contemporary hunter-gatherer societies.

However, human societies evolved to more productive economies and this evolution resulted in the potential for higher levels of male sexual competition (MacDonald 1983, 1988). With increased production, polygyny became economically possible and societies at the intermediate level of economic production are characterized by polygyny, the practice of bridewealth, and male competition for resources (van den Berghe 1979). Wealthy males are able to afford numerous wives and are able to sire relatively large numbers of children.

At the pinnacle of economic production there is the possibility of enormous differentials in male reproductive success and in fact many of the civilizations known to archeologists allowed very intensive polygyny by wealthy males (e.g., Betzig 1986). Classical China is an excellent example (see Dickemann 1979). The evolutionary analysis of a society such as that of classical China presents few difficulties. Resource competition leading to large individual differences among males in access to females and in reproductive success flows easily from evolutionary theory. Males with the ability to control large amounts of resources are able to sire a disproportionate share of the children. The entire social system serves the self-interest of the relatively low number of wealthy males at the top of the ecological and reproductive pyramid, and these prerogatives are protected by elaborate social controls based ultimately on military force. Males without resources are effectively prevented from engaging in behaviors that are in their own self-interest. Thus despite conforming to the general theoretical principle

that all individuals pursue their self-interest, there are vast differences in male reproductive success based on economic inequality and the social and ideological controls which maintain it.

Dickemann (1979) presents the theoretically optimal male behavior in a stratified society (i.e., behavior which optimizes individual male reproductive success): Wealthy males control large numbers of females via polygyny. The system is hypergynous, with the institution of the dowry essentially purchasing inheritance rights for daughters in competition with other women in a polygynous household. There are means of removing upper-class females from the breeding population (infanticide, religious celibacy), whereas many lower-class males are removed from the breeding population by enforced bachelorhood and poverty. In addition, there are methods of restricting the claims of most offspring so that major forms of wealth (especially landholdings in traditional stratified societies) remain intact to form the basis for similarly intensive polygyny by heirs, while other sons are downwardly mobile. This describes a system of primogeniture rather than partible inheritance.

The family system of classical China conforms quite well to this model (see Dickemann 1979). Ebrey (1986) notes that wealthy males could purchase as many concubines as they could afford and these women were expected to bear children. These women came from the lower social classes, their status was inferior to the principal wife who was likely to come from a social class similar to that of her husband. Whereas the man purchased the concubines, marriage occurred with a dowry. The main purpose of concubinage appears to have been to ensure the production of male heirs, and Ebrey (1986) notes that an ancient practice was for the wife to be accompanied in the marriage by a concubine, so that "should the wife bear no sons, she could offer her husband this maid, who was already tied to her as personal subordinate" (p. 13). Women who came into the man's home as wives with dowries could expect that their sons would be heirs; Dickemann (1979) notes that the Chinese system excluded the offspring of concubines from inheriting major real estate. Men who were heirs to two estates could form two legitimate marriages. All of the children, whether by the principal wife, secondary wives, or concubines, were legitimate and could inherit the bulk of the estate given the possibility that the marriage with the principal wife could be sterile or the children could die young. This made it more likely there would be heirs in the first place, and would not entail splitting up the property to an inordinate degree. By legitimizing polygyny, by having wives of different categories, and by restricting the claims of most offspring on the estate, a wealthy male in classical China could ensure a large reproductive success as well as have a male heir who could inherit the bulk of his property.

The central issue in the following is the extent to which the European pattern of reproduction differs from the above model and to provide a theoretical perspective for these differences.

## THEORETICAL ISSUES

### Alexander's Theory of Socially Imposed Monogamy

Alexander (1979; see also Alexander, et al. 1979) provides a theoretical approach to socially imposed monogamy and sexual egalitarianism in nation-states. He argues that monogamy and the sexual egalitarianism it represents is a causal antecedent of societies at the nation-state level of political organization and therefore a general feature of such societies. Socially imposed monogamy, in conjunction with bilateral descent tracing and inheritance patterns, leads to the nation-state level of political organization. Nation-states are said to be characterized by laws that prevent individuals from obtaining too great a reproductive advantage over others, such as laws prohibiting polygyny. The mechanism for socially imposed monogamy is said to be culturally derived (p. 211), and he suggests that "Perhaps bilateral descent and monogamy, leading to nation-states, became the norm in agricultural societies in regions of the world with particular ecological features, and once instituted were maintained by continual balance-of-power threats among hosts of political and economic units of ever-increasing size" (p. 258).

However, contrary to this perspective, the great majority of preindustrial nation-states were in fact highly polygynous. We have already referred to the intensive polygyny of classical China, and similarly intensive polygyny by wealthy males occurred in many of the traditional civilizations of Eurasia and the New World (Betzig 1986; Dickemann 1979; van den Berghe 1979). Alexander et al. (1979) do not deny that large polygynous societies existed, but that "their numbers, sizes, unity and durability have been less than those of large nations with socially imposed monogamy" (p. 433). However, classical China existed as a civilization for 3,000 years with an intensively polygynous mating system and the civilizations of India, the Moslem world and the New World (Aztecs and Incas) were similarly long lived. If China had remained untouched by Western influences there is no reason to suppose that it would have transformed itself into a reproductively egalitarian society after 3,000 years of intensive polygyny. Moreover, there are several instances where polygynous societies have conquered monogamous societies and established very stable, durable societies. Thus the polygynous German tribes conquered the Western Roman Empire, and much of the rise of Islam, which gave rise to polygynous societies, was at the expense of formerly Christian areas in the Eastern Roman Empire characterized by monogamy. It is generally believed (e.g., Fitzgerald 1938) that only the death of the Great Khan Ogotai in 1241 prevented the intensively polygynous Mongolians from conquering all of Western Europe after they had annihilated armies in Poland and Hungary.

There is therefore no reason to suppose that polygynous societies are inherently unstable or that there is an inevitable development toward sexual egalitarianism at the nation-state level. Indeed, the only other example of

monogamy at the nation-state level, apart from the Western European societies described here, is Japan. Van den Berghe states that Japan was monogamous: "there was a lot of dalliance with mistresses in the nobility but there was no polygyny" (p. 173).

It should also be noted that the mechanism for the original development of monogamy is left undescribed by Alexander. Socially imposed monogamy is viewed as a successful cultural mutation which then is able to spread because societies that adopt it are able to advance to the nation-state level of political organization and thus, presumably, obtain success against other less organized societies. However, this leaves out exactly how these cultural processes came about (e.g., just what ecological contingencies led to monogamy) and how they were maintained once socially imposed monogamy occurred. Moreover, in the present essay four quite different patterns for the development of socially imposed monogamy are described. A powerful ecological theory of socially imposed monogamy would have to provide a different ecological rationale for each of them. Clearly, this has not been done.

In addition, the term "socially imposed monogamy" suggests that monogamy was not in the interests of some individuals in the society, presumably the wealthy, but we are left without any indication of who imposed monogamy on whom or how. Given that socially imposed monogamy was established, how was it maintained, given the general finding that males in industrial societies retain polygynous tendencies (Daly and Wilson 1983; Symons 1979) and the existence of large individual differences in control of resources? The purpose of this essay is to describe what is known about both the origins and maintenance of monogamy in Western Europe.

The perspective presented here is quite compatible with Alexander's idea that socially imposed monogamy is a (sometimes) successful cultural mutation. Socially imposed monogamy and the sexual egalitarianism it implies are viewed as analogous to a genetic mutation that becomes more common because the societies that adopt it are more successful. The recent world-wide change toward monogamy would be such an example resulting from European hegemony in world politics and the cultural diffusion resulting from this hegemony. However, there is no implication that socially imposed monogamy is a causal antecedent of nation-state political organization.

### **A Nondeterministic, Contextual Perspective**

The theoretical perspective developed here proposes that socially imposed monogamy in societies at the nation-state level of political organization is not the result of ecological contingencies, but is the result of internal political processes whose outcome is underdetermined by biological theory. In addition, the present perspective is consistent with a role for random, inexplicable events in producing monogamy; i.e., events analogous to genetic

drift in population genetics and that are not explainable on the basis of evolutionary theory.

Just as there is no theoretical reason derivable from evolutionary biology to suppose that economically advanced nation states will adopt socially imposed monogamy, there is no theoretical reason to predict that intense sexual competition among males is an inevitable result of individual males optimizing their reproductive strategy in societies with highly productive economies. Egalitarianism in sexual or social relationships is highly consistent with the principle of self-interest and the other central tendencies of human behavior predicted by evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theory predicts that humans will not only attempt to maximize their own reproductive success but also attempt to minimize the negative differential between their own success and that of others. One way of accomplishing this latter goal is to cooperate with groups that impose egalitarian social controls on the variance in male reproductive success. These egalitarian groups are expected to have higher levels of intra-group cohesion among males because variation in the reproductive success of males is minimized (Alexander 1979, Alexander et al. 1979). Reciprocity rather than exploitation becomes the norm.

Clearly, such a strategy of cooperation in an egalitarian group is expected to be the first choice of a relatively low ranking male. High ranking males are expected to prefer an anti-egalitarian arrangement in which their reproductive success is large relative to other males. This conflict of interest, depending on wealth, is predicted by evolutionary theory, but whether intensive polygyny or socially imposed monogamy will result is underdetermined by evolutionary theory.

Advanced levels of economic production and political organization are thus quite consistent with both egalitarian and anti-egalitarian sexual customs. Social controls supporting either of these alternatives are in the interests of many individual members of human societies, so that their imposition on others is always a possibility and there is thus no biological reason to suppose that one or the other will be characteristic of a given society.

Socially imposed monogamy is therefore hypothesized to be the result of internal political processes or random events rather than externally imposed ecological contingencies. Because the results of these internal political processes are underdetermined by evolutionary theory (see later), it is a nondeterministic theory. It is the thesis of this essay that sexual egalitarianism can occur as the result of a variety of processes and in a number of contexts but there is no way to predict its occurrence by biological theory (MacDonald 1983, 1989). It is a major advantage of the present approach that it is able to accommodate a wide variety of mechanisms leading to monogamy, whereas the ecological approach would have to find different external ecological causes for each of the different mechanisms described in the following sections.

One feature of a society which is expected to facilitate sexual egalitar-

ianism is economic egalitarianism. If males have access to the same amount of resources, there is a strong damper on differences in reproductive success. Females who entered into a polygynous marriage rather than entered into a monogamous marriage would tend to be at a disadvantage because the resources of the male would be divided among the wives. Moreover, if females were controlled by their fathers, the fathers would tend to want to place the daughter in a monogamous marriage rather than a polygynous one. The system, in the absence of coercion, would tend to go toward monogamy. Nevertheless, sexual egalitarianism can evolve without economic egalitarianism. In the following, examples of sexual egalitarianism with and without economic egalitarianism will be presented.

*Contextual variables.* In particular, the present approach emphasizes two contextual variables as crucial in understanding the political processes underlying some instances of the development of sexual egalitarianism: social controls and ideology (MacDonald 1983, 1988, 1989). Social controls can range from subtle effects of group pressure on modes of dressing to laws or social practices prohibiting polygyny or penalizing the offspring of non-monogamous relationships. In terms of human evolution, nation-states are characterized by possibility of very stringent controls on human behavior, Betzig (1986) presents many examples in which high levels of centralized political control (i.e., despotism) are associated with control over the persons and behavior of others.

A crucial issue regarding social controls is the extent to which they are egalitarian or antiegalitarian. Egalitarian social controls limit the extent to which individuals differ in their control of resources, whereas antiegalitarian social controls facilitate an increase in the variance of control of resources. Examples of the former would be socialistic controls on wealth or sexual controls on individuals which institute monogamy as the only legitimate mating arrangement. Examples of the latter would be laws which forced some individuals to give their resources to others, such as in slavery. These social controls may be quite insensitive to genotypic or phenotypic characteristics of the individuals to whom they apply and cannot be analyzed reductionistically (i.e., as a genetic characteristic of individuals): thus, whether or not one supports the idea of welfare payments to poor people, there may be strong constraints on avoiding payment of taxes. As another example, the children of slaves remained slaves independent of their intelligence, their personality, or any other phenotypic characteristic except their parentage.

In addition to being insensitive to genetic variation, it is not possible to predict the existence of social controls or the extent to which they are egalitarian or antiegalitarian on the basis of any biological theory. For example, issues in our society such as the rights of women are resolved by a complex process involving popular beliefs, institutions such as the Supreme Court, the rules governing elections and the rules of legislative bodies, etc. More

relevant to the present discussion, no biological theory could predict the eventual triumph of monogamy in the West after the fall of the Roman Empire. As indicated in Section IV later, monogamy triumphed after a prolonged conflict between the Church and the Frankish aristocracy. An evolutionary theory can describe and predict behavior within a system of social controls or their absence, but cannot predict the form of these controls itself.

A second variable important for thinking about the development of monogamy is that of ideology. While social controls emphasize the idea that behavior is often controlled from outside the individual, personal ideologies emphasize the idea that factors internal to the individual, such as an individual's personal beliefs, norms, and attitudes, often motivate and rationalize behavior.

An evolutionary analysis proposes that individuals tend to believe what is in their self-interest (Wilson 1978), and there is certainly a large main effect of this phenomenon in the psychological literature (e.g., Krebs, Denton, and Higgins 1988). However, individuals may hold beliefs that are maladaptive, i.e., beliefs that lead them to perform behavior which is against their self-interest. Personal ideologies appear to be a potent force in motivating behavior and, as these ideologies are relatively plastic, they are the target of attempts at manipulation by others. Modern totalitarian states, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, have moved quickly to attempt to control schools, the media, and the socialization of children. Personal ideologies are thus viewed as a third type of contextual variable: like social controls, they can be relatively insensitive to individual self-interest and are underdetermined by biological theory.

The main reasons for supposing that ideology often acts in this manner are that ideologies often characterize an entire society and they are often intimately intertwined with various social controls. Like social controls, their imposition is the result of complex, internal political processes rather than the result of external ecological contingencies. To the extent that an ideology characterizes an entire society, it becomes insensitive to individual self-interest and to the extent that it is reinforced by social controls it is possible that individuals who do not benefit from adopting the ideology will be socialized to do so. Ideologies are often promulgated by a larger political and institutional structure that is dominated by individuals who attempt to control the behavior of others. Coincident with the imposition of these social controls is the inculcation of an ideology which justifies not only the behavior of individuals but also the structures of social control which facilitate the indoctrination of the ideology. Thus, for example, Marxist ideology justifies strong social controls on individual behavior and the pervasive teaching of Marxist ideology in Marxist societies is supported by these social controls, and similarly for the Nazi ideology and social controls operating in Germany from 1933 to 1945. In this essay, the Christian ideology of sex and marriage is emphasized including beliefs in strong restraints on sexual behavior and attitudes which support monogamy. As will be seen, historically this ide-

ology has been backed up with a variety of social controls reinforcing these beliefs and behavior.

In all of these cases the individual self-interest of those who are pressured to adopt the ideology may not be served. Thus in the case of Christian ideology, the self-interest of a wealthy male would not be served by adopting an ideology of sexual restraint and monogamy: "socially imposed monogamy exemplifies the essence of societal laws—the restricting of the ability of societal members to exercise fully their different capabilities for reproductive competition and success" (Alexander et al. 1979, p. 423). The following essay will describe the conflicts between the Frankish nobility and the Church over the issue of monogamy.

As in the case of social controls and also because ideologies are so often intricately bound up with social controls, it is not possible to predict which ideology will prevail in a particular society. The historical evidence provided later suggests strongly that the egalitarian ideology of monogamy could be the result of internal political processes, such as the conflicts between the Frankish nobility and the Catholic Church, and that the outcome may be influenced by random, inexplicable events (e.g., the conversion of Constantine [see Section III]). Ideologies may be egalitarian or antiegalitarian. They may promote the deregulation of human behavior or they may foster strong social controls on behavior. Like social controls, personal ideologies are influenced strongly by complex, group-level political processes and thus are not analyzable in a reductionistic manner as solely the property of an individual.

Moreover, although intricately intertwined with social controls, ideologies are apparently somewhat independent of social controls: first, ideology often provides an internal source of motivation for behavior, so that social controls can be less salient or even perhaps disappear if the ideology is effective enough. In addition, individuals often hold ideologies which are in conflict with official ideologies and the social controls they justify, as occurs among revolutionaries. Finally, we have noted that ideology can justify the deregulation of human behavior as well as its regulation, as in the libertarian ideology common in our own society. Thus it is theoretically possible for ideology to act fairly independent of social controls, and to this extent it must be viewed as an independent, nonreducible variable in an evolutionary analysis of human culture.

This analysis implies that individual ideologies are not genetically determined. There is in fact evidence for genetic variation for attitudes in modern democracies. For example, Martin et al. (1986) found genetic variation for attitudes toward the death penalty, although the great majority of attitudes were strongly influenced by common environment, and some, such as religious preference (Eaves 1986) showed no evidence of genetic influence. However, there is apparently much less ideological variation in modern totalitarian societies (Eysenck and Wilson 1978) or in traditional societies. Reflecting these contextual constraints, Eysenck and Wilson (1978) restrict

their claim for genetic influences on ideology to Western democracies and explicitly exclude totalitarian societies. Moreover, independent of the importance of context, a large literature on attitude change (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken 1984; Zimbardo, Ebbeson, and Maslach 1977) indicates that attitudes are a relatively plastic characteristic of humans.

In summary, the perspective adopted here is nondeterministic. Certain societies at the nation-state level of political organization have adopted egalitarian sexual arrangements as a result of a variety of complex internal political processes that can be influenced at times by random events. The success of Western Europe is a matter of historical record but, as indicated previously, there are no theoretical reasons to suppose that nonegalitarian, intensively polygynous societies are inherently unstable or that they are unable to compete for very long periods of time with monogamous societies.

The theory is verifiable and falsifiable: (e.g., historians are able to gather data on the political processes which led to these egalitarian practices, such as they have done for the development of Christianity at Rome and the Christianization of Frankish marriage practices [see later]). Moreover, alternative theories could be developed: Evolutionarily minded historians could 1) develop an ecological theory for the development of monogamy in some nation-states (and not others); 2) explain the variety of mechanisms underlying monogamy, including events, such as the conversion of Constantine, which at present appear inexplicable to historians (see Section III); 3) explain the variation in the mechanisms leading to monogamy and the rather halting, at times tenuous progress in the development of monogamy in Western Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire (see Section IV). In the absence of such alternative theory and supporting data, it is rational to accept the present approach.

## I. ANCIENT GREECE: SEXUAL EGALITARIANISM WITHIN THE TRIBE

### Mycenean and Trojan Marriage

Monogamy was by no means the primitive form of marriage in ancient Greece prior to approximately the 9th century BC. Mycenaean Greece prior to its fall in the 12th century was apparently at the chiefdom level of social organization. Hammond (1986) shows that the society was composed of phratries and tribes that were genetically related kinship groups headed by a princely class.

Flaceliere (1962) and Lacey (1968), relying on evidence derived from Homer's *Iliad*, reconstruct the marriage practices of Mycenaean Greece as characterized by one man having only one legitimate wife but as also living with one or more concubines or slaves. Such a pattern is quite common among the classical civilizations of Eurasia (see Introduction) and is con-

sistent with a high degree of sexual competition among males. In the examples given, it is the high ranking males who have concubines and female slaves rather than ordinary males. Offspring from unions with concubines were apparently legitimate, and male heirs could have concubine mothers if the legitimate wife failed to produce a male heir. Females captured in war were considered the legitimate property of their captors and indeed it was quite common for females captured in war to be sold as slaves and concubines while the conquered males were killed (Hammond 1986). In the *Iliad*, Cleopatra, the wife of Meleager, is persuaded to go to war by being reminded of the sufferings imposed on the conquered people: "they kill the menfolk, fire consumes the citadel and other men bear off the children and the buxom married women" (quoted in Lacey 1968, p. 34).

Bridewealth, another indicator of male competition for females, also apparently occurred in Mycenaean Greece, as Homer speaks of the bride as being worth much cattle. Lacey (1968) notes that this pattern occurs only where the women will be taken to the man's home. Another pattern was for a king to give a dowry to a man who marries his daughter and who then comes to live with the king's family and contributes to the military strength of the family. At Troy, men also presented dowry gifts if their daughters married one of the Trojan king's many sons. Finally, Hercules, the greatest of Greek heroes of the Trojan War era, is described not only as a great warrior, but also as lover of many women. As Plutarch comments, "It would be a labour of Hercules to enumerate all his love-affairs, so many were they" (cited in Flaceliere 1962, p. 54). Although these exploits (including the incident in which he ravished the 50 virgin daughters of Thestios in a single night) are presumably apocryphal, they indicate the ideal of male behavior during this age. Clearly, this ideal was a highly polygynous one.

Although the Mycenaean Greeks of the Trojan War era (c. 1200 BC) are depicted as polygynous, the Trojans are even more so. King Priam had 50 sons and 12 married daughters in addition to his unmarried daughters. Whereas the Greeks could only have one legitimate wife, the Trojan King Priam had many wives, although one wife, Hecuba, was considered his principal wife. This difference would appear to amount to little more than a quantitative difference, as maintained by Flaceliere. Both societies practiced polygyny, although the Trojan pattern resembled more the intensive polygyny characteristic of Eastern Eurasian civilizations.

### The Dorian Revolution

The Bronze Age Mycenaean civilization was overthrown during a prolonged period of war and upheaval lasting from the 12th to the 9th centuries. By the end of this period the dominant tribes spoke a Dorian dialect of Greek and their sexual customs differed greatly from those of the civilization they overthrew. Hammond (1986) interprets the evidence as indicating that this tribe was displaced from Thessaly and then pursued a nomadic lifestyle until

finally settling large areas of central and southern Greece. After the invasions, "[t]he Dorians assumed and maintained the leading position in the Greek world. Their early states were more powerful, and their colonial enterprises were more ambitious than those of other Greeks" (Hammond 1986, p. 79). The following will emphasize Sparta, the most powerful and successful Dorian state.

The political structure of the Dorian states was highly centralized and racially exclusive. At the highest level of organization were the three Dorian tribes which were further subdivided into phratries and *gene*. Despite these divisions on the basis of biological kinship, however, the Dorian states had a high degree of central authority and the orientation of the citizens was expected to be toward the state rather than the family. Indeed, Hammond (1986) notes that these kinship designations lost all meaning except as a means of determining the inheritance of citizenship. This centralization thus was accomplished by minimizing biological kinship with the important exception that citizenship itself could only be inherited. Unlike Athens, which was much more ethnically heterogeneous, Sparta and the other Dorian states retained a sense of racial exclusivity so that outsiders and slaves could never become citizens, and citizenship could not be inherited unless both parents were citizens.

The mechanism for overcoming the potential divisiveness of kinship ties at Sparta was therefore not by the ascendancy of one kinship group at the expense of the others, but by broadening the kinship group to include five villages of the Dorian conquerors. The borders of the kinship group became the non-Dorians who had been relegated to serfdom by the invaders. "For the Spartan state could tolerate no rival loyalties. The elite group of "equals" must stand together in the task of controlling the subject-class" (Hammond 1986, p. 102). At the basis of this social cohesion was a variety of egalitarian practices as well as socialization that produced allegiance to the state and preparedness for a military life. As Hammond (1986) notes, the Dorian state formed "a remarkably compact and almost indestructible community . . . it generated an intense patriotism and dynamic energy" (p. 101). Unlike the other Greek states at the time, Sparta thus avoided the deadly virus of feuding based on the old ties of tribe, phratry and *gene*.

### **Sexual Egalitarianism at Sparta**

These tendencies toward centralized political control, racial exclusivity, and sexual and economic egalitarianism can be seen most clearly in the case of Sparta. Reflecting the predicted cohesiveness resulting from intense egalitarianism (Alexander 1979) combined with centralized political control, the Spartans were known for their self-sacrifice and willingness to give their lives for the state. "[T]he Spartan, from childhood on, has learnt to give his life for his country, without any hesitation. Not only the state, the laws, the leaders, and the comrades expect this of him, even his own mother finds it

natural that her son should be either victorious or dead . . . Nor does she grieve at his death, provided that he has fought valiantly and that Sparta has won victory, for this is why she gave birth to him, and she knows that Sparta has other valiant men" (Tigerstedt 1974, p. 20). Hooker (1980) comments that all activities such as the civilized arts and commerce were prohibited in favor of activities that promoted political cohesion and military prowess. Clearly, the highest form of political cohesion is one in which an individual is willing to give his life for the group.

Another indication of egalitarianism in Sparta in the nature of the political system. Although the state was a monarchy, there were a number of institutional controls on the kings, such as the institution of the ephorate, which dispersed political power so that despotism by one individual was not characteristic of Sparta. Sparta was unique in having two kings descended from two separate clans, thus providing two legitimate sources of power. The legal system attributed to Lycurgus diminished the power of the kings and increased the power of the assembly of citizens, so that the kings became ordinary members of the Council except for their commanding role during war. The members of the *Gerousia* (Council) were elected by acclamation by the Assembly of citizens. By these and other reforms, "Lycurgus overthrew all barriers of racial privilege and prejudice within the community of citizens. In the *agoge* and in the Assembly all Spartans were equal before the state, regardless of family lineage and material wealth; and in the constitution, however strong the powers of the *Gerousia* might be, their voice was decisive in the cardinal issues of election and ratification" (Hammond 1986, p. 104). Although the role of the Assembly was somewhat diminished in later times, the institution of the ephorate continued to be elected by the citizens and was able to exert considerable control over the kings so in later times they dominated the state (Hammond 1986).

Further evidence of egalitarian social controls derives from Plutarch (see Hooker 1980) who claimed that Lycurgus originally made all Spartans equal by dividing the land up equally into 9,000 estates, with one citizen for each estate. (Hammond [1986] also notes that the landholdings of the invading Dorian tribes generally showed less variation than the previous Mycenaean age. This suggests that the tendency toward egalitarianism within the group was a general one.) In Sparta it appears that all citizens were landowners, although later in its history large inequalities in land ownership occurred (Hooker 1980). Nevertheless, "the common education . . . and the common meals produced a genuine equality, and poor and obscure Spartiates could readily rise by merit" (Jones 1967, p. 37). The status of women in Sparta was also much higher than in other cities of Greece (Hooker 1980), so that marriage was presumably more egalitarian. Finally, Lycurgus is also reputed to have attempted to discourage sexual jealousy. "Accordingly he proclaimed that it was perfectly honourable for a Spartiate to share the begetting of children with worthy fellow-citizens. Thus, if an elderly man had a young wife, he might introduce her to a younger man, of whom he

approved, and adopt any offspring of their union. Again, a citizen might admire another man's spouse for the splendid children she bore her husband and for her own wifely virtues; then, if he had the husband's consent, he could beget children upon her" (Plutarch, quoted in Hooker 1980, p. 136). The passage is said to illustrate the idea that children are the property of the state, not the property of the individual. Lacey also notes the persistent and unequivocal evidence for wife-sharing among the Spartans. Finally, Plato, whose ideas on the ideal state often closely resembled the actual practices at Sparta, proposed in the *Republic* that women be held in common by the warrior class, a recognition that jealousy and competition over women pose severe problems for social cohesion.

There is no question that marriage practices at Sparta were strongly egalitarian. Marriage was monogamous and adultery and divorce were rare (Hooker 1980; Tigerstedt 1974). Marriage was also entirely endogamous within the Spartan community of citizens. Moreover, despite the fact that the Spartans enslaved the Helots, there is no record at all of Spartan males siring children by Helot women. Moreover, there is no evidence of bride-wealth, and dowry did not occur until the early 4th century when economic inequalities became common and there was competition for eligible males. Spartan women were famous for their fidelity (Tigerstedt 1974). As an example indicating the extent to which males accepted the ideology of monogamy, a Spartan king is said to have refused a second wife even after his first was barren and even after pressure from the other Spartiates to produce a legitimate heir.

Heterosexual relationships were generally deemphasized at Sparta. The man left his male companions only briefly to be with his wife. The relationship was consummated in the dark and the man sometimes never saw his wife in the daylight until after he had had children. The man's life remained focused fundamentally on his male companions (Lacey 1968; see discussion of homosexuality and misogyny later). Marriage had the function of providing children for the state, but did not serve the emotional functions associated with modern Western marriage.

There is evidence for change in the Spartan system occurring at the end of the fifth century shortly before her collapse as a world power. Lacey (1968) notes the increasing economic inequalities among citizens, dowry competition and a general decline in their discipline. However, the changes did not involve a change away from monogamy and endogamy.

Dorian customs had a major influence on other areas of Greece. Despite some variations, Lacey summarizes post-Mycenean Greek family customs as essentially monogamous, including in this statement the other areas of Greece besides Athens and Sparta but pointedly contrasting Greece with Persia, its neighbor to the East. Thus, although the Dorians, and particularly the Spartans, may have had the most extremely egalitarian sexual customs among the Greeks, it is clear that the pattern in general varied around a

monogamous mean and that there was an enormous qualitative difference with the practices of the East.

### **Dorian Homosexuality and Misogyny in Evolutionary Perspective**

One mechanism that may well have facilitated sexual egalitarianism among males as well as have improved social cohesion in ancient Greece is the practice of homosexual relationships among males. Homosexuality is unmentioned in Homer, and Flaceliere (1962) argues that its presence in Greece as a normative cultural practice coincides with the Dorian invasions described above. In historical times it was most common in Dorian speaking areas of Greece, such as Sparta, and he cites evidence that the Greeks themselves viewed the practice as relatively recent. The suggestion, then, is that homosexual practices contributed to the very high level of political cohesion obtained by Sparta and to a lesser extent the other Greek city-states. By deemphasizing heterosexual sex and encouraging affective and erotic bonds among males, the Spartans effectively dampened sexual competition among males as well as improved the political cohesion that was so important for military strength.

There may be an analogy here with several primate species. Weisfeld and Billings (1988) note that strong male bonding appears in a number of primate species and review data indicating that such bonds improve group cohesion and the transmission of appropriate male behavior to boys. Practices such as very intense group initiation, certainly typical of Sparta, are expected to facilitate a sense of group identity and social cohesion among cohorts of young males—the “common fate” syndrome (Berkowitz 1982).

There were several dimensions of these homosexual relationships:

First, the affective side of the relationship was of the highest importance. Homosexual relationships based on obtaining money or other resources were strongly disapproved, and male prostitution was outlawed at Athens. Greek writers repeatedly note the affection of the older man for the young boy. The homosexual relationship involved educating the young man. Consistent with the idea that the relationship was based on affection, Flaceliere notes that the instruction was personal and intimate and resulted in adopting an exclusively male ideal. The teacher was motivated “by a love of the purest kind” (Flaceliere 1962, p. 91) and the student was motivated by the desire to appear worthy to the older man.

Secondly, Flaceliere cites evidence that homosexual relationships were important for military cohesion. The Dorian states such as Sparta were completely militarized and children were socialized for a military life. Flaceliere notes that homosexuality was most common among the most militarized states of Greece, i.e., the Boeotians, the Lacedaemonians (Spartans), and Cretans. Among the Cretans an older man would develop an affection for a young boy and declare his feelings to the boy’s relatives. If the relatives

approved, he would take the boy away for a two month honeymoon after which the boy would be given a military outfit, a drinking cup, and a bull which he was to sacrifice. The homosexual relationship was thus a sort of rite of passage into adulthood and a military life.

Third, there is evidence that homosexuality in ancient Greece had specific military functions. The ancients viewed it as encouraging bravery and endurance. The relationship began in the gymnasium and continued during military training and in battle. Flaceliere recounts several incidents where homosexual bonds apparently had this function. "At Thebes, when a lad associated with a lover reached the age of enrollment, his protector presented him with a complete fighting outfit. Pammenes, who understood the character of masculine love, drew up his men in accordance with an entirely new principle. He set pairs of lovers side by side in the ranks, for he knew that love is the only unconquerable general . . . They display an ardour for danger and risk their lives even when there is no need for it" (Plutarch; quoted in Flaceliere, p. 85). In Plato's *Symposium* Phaedo says "A handful of lovers and loved ones, fighting shoulder to shoulder, could rout a whole army" (Flaceliere 1962, p. 86).

Fourth, males were not exclusively homosexual, but were also typically married and fathered children. Thus at Sparta a man was required to marry and strongly encouraged to perform his duty to the state by having children.

This emphasis on affective bonding among males occurred in a context of misogyny, and this latter attribute, like the former, may well have contributed to a general lowering of sexual competition among the Greeks. Flaceliere (1962) suggests that misogyny and the practice of confining relationships with women to the marriage bed were the result of Dorian influence.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data from ancient Greece indicate a rather sudden change to an egalitarian social system based on monogamy, endogamy, misogyny, and a deemphasis on heterosexual relationships. This system is clearest in the case of the Dorian states, particularly Sparta, but the same trends can be seen at Athens. The mechanism of the origin of these practices among the original Dorian conquerers is not available, but the implication is that Sparta achieved military and political cohesion by adopting a pervasive economic, political and sexual egalitarianism and by the systematic deemphasis of heterosexual relationships. All of the practices described here have the result of deemphasizing sexual competition among males and promoting political cohesion and high levels of altruism. It is noteworthy that this egalitarianism occurred within an endogamous marriage system. From an evolutionary perspective, Sparta can be viewed as a large, intermarrying kinship group. Despite the deemphasis on kinship relations within the group,

kinship is the critical binding force which separated the Spartans from their neighbors and their slaves.

## II. MONOGAMY IN ANCIENT ROME

### Origins of Monogamy in Ancient Rome

From an evolutionary perspective, the most salient factor to emerge from the study of Roman family history is the persistence and robustness of the tendency toward monogamy. Monogamy survived through different types of government, an enormous influx of slaves and wealth, and enormous alterations of social relationships. At the end, it emerged stronger than ever as an ideal and as an important aspect of the social policy of the Christian church.

Monogamy appears to be primitive among the Romans in the sense that there is no record from historical times of a polygynous stage of marriage. In his work on the Roman law of marriage, Corbett (1930) cites the common opinion that the form of marriage known as *coemptio* was a vestige of the common Indo-European practice of marriage by sale. Part of the ceremony included the feigned purchase of the bride by the bridegroom. The actual ceremony of *coemptio* marriage included the ritual payment of a penny to the bride's father. Balsdon (1963) notes that the engagement ceremony included a ring which was the remnant of a previous practice in which the man provided earnest money to the woman's family prior to the actual sale of the bride in the marriage ceremony.

This suggests a prehistoric phase of marriage in which wives were purchased from their fathers—the institution of bridewealth characteristic of many human societies at the intermediate level of economic production (Paige and Paige 1984). The existence of bridewealth is highly compatible with polygyny and high levels of sexual competition, and indeed, this was the pattern of the Frankish tribes that settled Europe and became dominant after the fall of the Roman Empire (see Section IV below).

The implication then is that Roman monogamy represented an alteration from a primitive form of marriage characterized by bridewealth and sexual competition among males. However, the source of this fundamental alteration in marriage practices is obscure. Unlike the situation with the Greeks described above, there is no historical record of a polygynous phase of Roman history followed by a clear change toward monogamy.

The alteration in the form of marriage may be the result of internal changes among the early Romans or as a result of cultural diffusion. I am aware of no evidence on this point, but the influence of Greek culture during this period in southern and central Italy, and Rome in particular, is well established (Bloch 1960; Grant 1988). Both the Ionians and the Dorians established colonies in Italy as early as the 8th Century B.C. and their cultural

influence was immense: "It was due to them that scholarship, philosophy, poetry, military and civil architecture, and the arts in general blossomed out brilliantly in the south of Italy, often with an original character quite unlike that of the mother country. In this way the techniques, religion and the art of the Italian peoples were decidedly and permanently influenced (Bloch 1960, p. 30). Greek influence on Rome was early and widespread, including art, religion, and language vocabulary.

Nevertheless, there are important differences between Greek and Roman family patterns, particularly the pattern of Greek misogyny, restrictions on women's movement and their lack of ability to inherit property. This contrasts with the "filiafocality" characteristic of Rome (Hallett 1984). Unlike the Greeks, Roman men appear to have highly valued their daughters and formed strong emotional bonds with them and their children, as well as their sisters' children.<sup>1</sup> Women had a measure of economic and social freedom that would be foreign to the Greeks.

There is also considerable doubt that there was a major Etruscan influence on Rome. Bloch argues that Etruria largely assimilated Greek influences and that its own traditions as a non-Indo-European people were too remote from those of Rome to have much influence. Bloch provides evidence that small colonies of Greeks actually lived in Etruria, and Grant (1988), in his commentary on the strong Greek influence on the Etruscans, emphasizes the finding of Greek names in Etruscan graves. Grant states that the early predominance of Greek influence emanating from Chalcis gave way to a predominance of Corinthian (Dorian) influence in the seventh century B.C.

The Etruscans, however, did have some influence on Rome, and there is evidence that they practiced monogamy. Bloch (1958) describes "the archaeological evidence which represents the wife, in death as in life, sitting or lying beside her husband in an attitude of familiar equality" (p. 67). Vaughan (1964) describes the wall paintings from the tombs of wealthy Etruscans as showing "charming family scenes" composed of husband, wife, and young children. Because polygyny is theoretically more likely to occur among wealthy males, these scenes suggest that the Etruscans as a group were monogamous. Von Vacano (1960) also states that "the matrimonial union of man and woman was regarded as an exceptionally strong tie lasting into the grave" (p. 85).

Monogamy is also indicated by the position of Etruscan women. Evolutionary theory generally predicts that polygynous societies will be societies that maximize sex differences and the subjugation of women. Etruscan women appear to have been quite emancipated, especially compared with Greek women and even more so than were Roman women. Vaughan notes that it is only after the Roman conquest of Etruria that wives are depicted at the feet of their husbands in paintings. Eventually, they are

<sup>1</sup> Hallett argues that Roman family patterns show strong traces of matrilineality. The role of the mother's brother was well developed, a phenomenon which Hallett, like some recent evolutionary writers (e.g., Alexander 1979) relates to the issue of paternity confidence.

represented as physically separate from him, and children are no longer present. The Etruscan wife has been "completely Romanized" (p. 64). The earlier wall paintings depict husbands and wives as dining together and are cited as "one of many proofs that in Etruscan life husband and wife were on terms of perfect equality" (Vaughan 1964, p. 65). Von Volcano (1960) also states that Etruscan women "played a full part in public life and were the object of great consideration far beyond the domestic field" (p. 85). Indeed, Hallett (1984) emphasized the differences between the Etruscan emphasis on the egalitarian married couple and the Roman emphasis on the father-daughter relationship within a fundamentally patriarchal and patrilineal system.

Thus, although it remains possible that Roman family patterns were influenced by the Greeks and/or the Etruscans, there are highly significant differences among all three. The Roman family system is thus quite probably *sui generis*.

### Customs and Social Controls Supporting Monogamy

Whatever the source of Roman monogamy, it is clear that monogamy was maintained at least partly by social controls embedded in law and custom. In the following, these social controls will be discussed under the headings of 1) Controls on Sexual Behavior; 2) Controls on Legitimacy of Birth; 3) Inheritance Laws. The total effect of these controls and customs was a highly egalitarian mating system. Unlike the case of Sparta, this egalitarian mating system occurred in the presence of clear political and economic inequalities.

**1. Controls on sexual behavior.** Rome was a monogamous society; bigamous or polygynous marriages were illegal. Laws and customs supporting monogamy existed throughout Roman history, and became even more hardened later in the empire (Gardner 1986). Diocletian in 285 A.D. stated that "A competent judge will not suffer a crime of this kind to go unpunished" (quoted in Gardner, p. 93). In addition, under the *lex Julia de adulteriis*, described later, bigamists could be prosecuted for adultery.

In addition to laws against bigamy, attempts to control adultery were common throughout Roman history. Proscriptions against adultery are by no means restricted to monogamous societies. For example, many polygynous societies, such as Classical China, had strong proscriptions against adultery and seduction of young girls. Nevertheless, within a monogamous society, proscriptions of adultery act to lessen the ability of males to maintain nonmonogamous relationships. Particularly interesting are the laws regulating sexual behavior passed during the reign of Augustus, as their purpose was not to protect wives and daughters from other men, but to increase fertility by shoring up the monogamous family. As a result there was a tendency to lessen the typical double standard attached to adultery.

In the early Republic, as in so many societies, there were strong controls

on adultery, especially by women, as well as the seduction of virgins. Respectable women, whether married or virgins, were expected to have an attendant when in public who functioned to prevent sexual advances (Gardner 1986). Men could be prosecuted if they "addressed unmarried girls (*virgines*) or married women, followed one of them about, or took away her attendant, whether by persuasion or by force" (Gardner, p. 117). These controls, predicted by evolutionary theory (e.g., Daly and Wilson 1983), extended to the husband's right to kill a wife (as well as her lover) if caught in adultery (Balsdon 1963).

Husbands could divorce their wives and keep a portion of the dowry if there was reason to believe that adultery had occurred. At the end of the Republic, divorcing husbands could keep  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the dowry because of adultery and  $\frac{1}{8}$  for each child up to a maximum of 3 children. Family councils consisting of representatives of both families would judge the woman who, if adjudged guilty, could very well be condemned to death. Even after the laws of Augustus, described below, the position of men was still not legally equivalent to that of the woman until the time of Constantine (4th century A.D.) (Balsdon 1963).

The purpose of social controls on adultery changed dramatically with the laws of Augustus. Augustus passed several laws which were aimed at improving the birthrate and reinforcing marriage: "less lust and larger families" as Cicero phrased it earlier (Balsdon 1963, p. 76). The aim of the laws was to increase the fertility of Roman citizens, especially the upper classes, but the perception was that this could be accomplished by reinstating strong social controls on sexual relationships that had existed in the past. The self-perception of Romans at the end of the Republic was that sexual behavior had degenerated since the early days of the Republic with disastrous effects on fertility and family stability. Augustus introduced his law on adultery to the senate by reading a speech on the decline in Roman sexual morality which had originally been delivered in 131 B.C. Livy (quoted in Balsdon 1963, p. 75) decried the "decline in discipline and moral standards, the collapse and disintegration of morality down to the present day." Balsdon states that "Modesty was to be recalled from the distant past, and Virtue was to emerge from neglect. All possible steps were to be taken to ensure that men between twenty-five and sixty should be married men, and women between twenty and fifty should be married women" (p. 76).

As an aid to fertility, the Augustan law legitimized the children of relationships between Romans (apart from senators) and freedwomen. Women who had three children were able to independently administer their property, whereas fathers of three children were given preference in their careers. The laws of inheritance were altered so that unmarried individuals could not receive bequests from nonrelatives over a certain sum. Childless women and spinsters were prevented from receiving bequests after they reached the age of 50. Relief from these laws was dependent first on marriage and even more

so by having children, with complete relief occurring after three or four children.

Marriage during the period of reproductive fertility became a duty for both sexes. Adultery became illegal for the first time, with a penalty of banishment of the violators to different islands and heavy loss of property. The man lost one-half of his property and the woman half of her dowry and one-third of her property. Gardner (1986) states that persons of low status were probably sentenced to the mines or to hard labor. Adulterers were *infamia*; they were not allowed to testify in court, and their inheritance rights were removed or severely curtailed. The woman's father (but not the husband) was allowed to put his adulterous daughter to death. Adulterous women were not allowed to marry again to a free-born Roman, and special courts were set up to deal with adultery and other sexual offenses.

Gardner notes that the laws were intended to be a very serious check on adultery, because slaves could be tortured to obtain evidence against their owners. Men were subject to prosecution if they seduced another man's wife or had relationships with women who were not registered prostitutes. As a result, respectable women began registering as prostitutes, but the loophole was closed by action of the Senate. Indeed, all sexual relationships with free, unmarried Roman women were proscribed. Husbands had a duty to divorce adulterous wives, and if they failed to do so, could themselves be punished as panderers. Informers could also accuse individuals of adultery until the time of Constantine when only the man's relatives could prosecute. Later Augustus prosecuted authors such as Ovid for what he viewed as sexually immoral writings. Divorce was also discouraged by making it a more formal process.

The laws of Augustus are the first attempt in the Roman world to place the family under the protection of the laws. Last (1924) notes that the laws embodied an attempt to place the procreation of children as the most important goal of marriage in an age in which both men and women were seeking pleasure to the exclusion of rearing families.

There is controversy about whether these laws had important effects on behavior. Balsdon (1963) states that "Whether the standard of public morals was raised is doubtful in the extreme (p. 78). Gardner (1986) states that it is unlikely that laws against adultery had much practical effect, even though she also notes that some 3,000 indictments were recorded after the legislation was strengthened by Septimius Severus. However, few of the indictments were followed up. Rawson (1986) states that the Augustan laws failed in their main purpose (increasing fertility) but, nevertheless "continued to have considerable influence on upper-class families:" (p. 8). Last (1924) also believes that the laws had an impact on sexual and family relationships. He notes that the laws endured and were elaborated by later emperors, including Tiberius, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Hadrian, the Antonines, and the Severii. Indeed, he states that it was only the rise of the Christian ideal of celibacy in the 4th century A.D. that resulted in the de-

struction of these laws, and even then it was a gradual process. Unlike the Augustan emphasis on procreation, Christianity revered celibacy. However, Christianity resulted in an even greater disapproval of adultery than was the case under Augustine. Finally, Kleiner (1977) found that the number of family groupings, including children, in funerary reliefs increased dramatically during the Augustan period and attributes the increase to a renewed emphasis on the family brought about during this period.

Whether the result of this legislation or not, there was a shift in sexual morality during the later years of the Empire. Veyne (1987) notes a shift occurring during the second century A.D. toward a more conservative sexual morality that emphasized marriage characterized by affection and sexual restraint for both men and women, not only during marriage but before marriage also. This proposed shift is well after the Augustan laws were enacted, and may well be the result of other reasons. Brown (1987) dates this shift in morality somewhat later: "By the early third century, long before the establishment of the Christian church, aspects of Roman law and of Roman family life were touched by a subtle change in the moral sensibilities of the silent majority of the provincials of the Empire. Respectable wedlock was extended to include even slaves. Emperors posed increasingly as guardians of private morality" (p. 262).

These findings indicate that behavior in harmony with the Augustan laws became the norm in subsequent centuries. In addition, one might argue that merely making the attempt at reinforcing monogamy shows the importance of this institution to the Romans.

**2. Controls on legitimacy of birth.** Other sources of social controls supporting monogamy were legislation and attitudes toward legitimacy. In a sense anyone could marry anyone else in Rome, but many such relationships were not acknowledged by law and many were frowned on socially. Of particular interest here is that the laws and customs on legitimacy resulted in the fact that the illegitimate offspring of wealthy males had no legal standing and no right of inheritance.

At various times in Roman history marriage was forbidden between Roman women and slaves, and between senators and their descendants and freedmen or freedwomen (Balsdon 1963). Men (except senators) could free a slave and marry her, but the practice was frowned on, and concubinage between a man and a freedwoman was a more socially acceptable alternative. Offspring of such unions were illegitimate and therefore not protected by law. Offspring of concubines could not be Roman citizens even if the father was a citizen. Nevertheless there was no great stigma attached to being the child of a concubine. In addition, it was improper for a man to have a lasting relationship with a slave, and the offspring of such unions were illegitimate and inherited the slave status of their mother (Gardner 1986).

These attitudes and legal restrictions surrounding legitimacy support monogamy because they essentially penalize the offspring of such unions. It should be noted that concubinage at Rome was quite different from Oriental concubinage (see Introduction). The children were not only illegitimate, but the relationship itself functioned as a sort of illegitimate monogamous marriage. The man and woman lived together as if married and it was considered impermissible to have both a wife and a concubine (Rawson 1986). For example, soldiers who, until the end of the second century A.D. were not allowed to marry, would live with concubines until they were discharged, at which time they would legitimately marry. Rawson describes one case in which a man had a freedwoman as a concubine and attempted to make the illegitimate daughter of this relationship his heir. The dispute turned on whether the relationship involved immoral conduct, with the implication that immoral relationships resulted in illegitimate, noninheriting offspring.

Balsdon notes that concubinage was a sort of second class alternative to legitimate, monogamous marriage, not something a man did if he were already married. "It seems unlikely that a married man ever kept a concubine; nor is it certain that in the early days of the Empire a man ever lived in concubinage with more than one woman at the same time" (p. 232; see also Gardner 1986). Emperors, such as Marcus Aurelius and Vespasian, who kept concubines, did so only after their wives had died.

Thus it seems unlikely that concubinage functioned generally as a form of polygyny for wealthy males. There were exceptions, however. Gordian II of the third century had at least 22 concubines and each bore him three or four children, and the Emperor Commodus is said by Friedlander (1908) to have had 300 concubines. These examples, which would be a commonplace in intensively polygynous societies such as China during the same period, are the exceptions that prove the rule that at Rome monogamy was the general practice, even in the presence of a few egregious examples to the contrary. Hopkins (1978) notes that masters did father children by slave women, but there is no indication of how common this was. Moreover, paternity by the master did not eliminate slave status and all of the legal and economic disabilities attached to this status, but only mitigated them.

There also appear to have been strong controls on fathering illegitimate children. Balsdon (1963) notes that despite notorious promiscuity there is very little evidence that illegitimacy was widespread. Syme (1960) states that Rome "offered no status or honour for the illegitimate" (p. 511), even though there must have been many illegitimate children. Syme notes that a wealthy male would have had many opportunities to father children, with, for example, slaves and concubines, and even freedwomen would have obligations to their former masters. He recounts the story of Crassus who was provided with two slave girls "for comfort and entertainment" (p. 511) when in hiding in Spain. Balsdon (1963) comments that slave women had little choice but to indulge their master's whims (see also Gardner 1986). Veyne

(1987) states that despite the presumed existence of illegitimacy between masters and their slaves, "it was unthinkable that a master would attempt a scheme to recognize a slave as his own son" (p. 77).

Several authors (e.g., Balsdon 1963; Syme 1960) point out that illegitimacy is a natural way to discredit an opponent during debate and that there is no record of its use, even though every other means were available, including charges of incest. (Nor was adultery a common charge [Syme 1986]). Syme also notes that the subject of illegitimacy escaped the notice of Roman historians, such as Pliny, despite the fact that he writes in a manner of other sexual improprieties. The subject did come up with the satirists Martial and Juvenal, but in these cases it is difficult to say how common the behavior was (Balsdon 1963).

There were some notorious cases, such as Augustus' grandchild, an illegitimate child (who was exposed at the order of the emperor) and the children of Marc Antony. Balsdon comments that if the emperor knew about the illegitimacy of his wife's child, he could divorce her and that subsequently the wife's family would likely encourage her to abort or exposure at birth. Syme suggests that even more important than preventing conception, abortion, and exposure of illegitimate children was the social consideration that it was not possible to confer legitimacy on a child as the result of subsequent marriage. "Nor would the upper class wish it so. Class structure and class feeling prevailed. The bastard child inherited the civil status of his mother. The mere transmission of blood had no sovereign value" (p. 513). Unless they were adopted, which Syme suggests was rare, their social status declined to that of the mother.

**3. Inheritance laws.** Another source of social controls supporting inheritance was derived from the laws on inheritance. Inheritance at Rome was passed on and divided equally among the heirs (see Buckland 1939; Crook 1966; Crook and Nicholas 1969; Schulz 1954; Thomas 1986). Therefore, if individuals wanted to prevent the dissipation of wealth in the next generation, they would have to severely restrict the number of potential heirs. These practices were a strong disincentive against males having large numbers of legitimate children born to several women. Veyne (1987) states that not wanting to pass on an inheritance was a major motive for limiting the size of families in the middle period of Roman history.

In the system established by the Twelve Tables (5th Century BC), if a man died intestate his property went to members of his family called *heredes* who were *in potestate* (in the power of the father) at the time of his death and who became *sui juris* (i.e., emancipated) on the man's death. This included his wife and adopted children. Nicholas (1969) notes that the language of the law reflected a primitive system in which family continuity was assumed: the property in a sense was already owned by the *sui heredes* before the man died. Later the praetor changed the law to include also adopted children who had already been emancipated (even if they had been

away), but the estate was still divided evenly among the children. (Adopted children who had been emancipated were not included.) Crook (1986) notes that the rules of intestacy "seem to imply a very strong feeling for partibility, a feeling that a man's children ought all to have their share" (p. 62).

The reforms of Justinian (6th Century A.D.) continued the idea that the first class of beneficiaries in intestate succession should be the descendants of the deceased and inheritance was again equal. Nicholas (1969) notes that there was no idea of primogeniture in Roman law.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there was no distinction between males and females until late in the Republic, and even then the law did not result in discrimination against women (usually daughters and wives) who were *sui heredes*.

Intestate succession was uncommon but may well be the most primitive form of succession (Nicholas 1969). In historical times it represented a situation which was viewed as unfortunate. By making a will, a man could control the disposition of his assets, but even in this case there were significant ways in which this power was curbed. Whereas in the earliest times testators could disinherit their nearest kin, by the end of the Republic there were limitations on his ability to do so, and these limitations tended to restrict the degree to which a testator could disinherit family members. In essence these restrictions meant that wills more resembled the intestate model of partible inheritance. Crook (1986) notes that the rules which came to surround the making of wills grew up as attempts to defeat attempts at primogeniture.

From the late Republic on, disinherited family members could institute a *querela* against the will and the principle developed that family members could not be left with less than one-fourth of what they would have received under intestate succession—the *pars legitima*. Nicholas (1969) notes that the original idea of the *querela* was justified by the idea that the testator must have been insane to disinherit or give too little to some members of his family, but later the practice was justified as simply the moral duty of the testator to his family. The practical effect of the *querela* was often to give the person bringing the suit much more than the *pars legitima*.

Because of the laws of inheritance, the aim for many Romans was apparently not to have many children, but, like the Greeks (Flaceliere 1962), to have at least an heir for one's property and name. Balsdon comments that this strategy often backfired when war or disease claimed older children with the result that the parents were left with no natural heirs. Garnsey and Saller (1987) note that during the time of Rome's expansion aristocrats were able to provide handsomely for several children, but that during the Empire

<sup>2</sup> The Franks, who became dominant on the continent after the fall of the Roman Empire, also practiced partible inheritance so that, for example, King Clovis (d. 511) divided his kingdom in 4 equal parts for his children. However, by the 12th century, primogeniture had become the norm among the upper classes (Duby 1978; Herlihy 1985), resulting in the phenomenon of the younger son with little prospect of marriage. Partible inheritance appears to be common among tribal societies and it presumably represents the primitive practice of the Romans.

the massive influx of wealth slowed greatly, and the aristocracy responded by having only a very few children. They also suggest that Romans' acceptance of daughters as successors, the norm of adoption, and the favorable attention of legacy hunters for childless aristocrats all played a role in restricting the number of children or even in the decision to be childless. The failure rate of the Roman aristocracy to produce heirs was much more pronounced than later European aristocracies. Garnsey and Saller estimate that "the disappearance rate of the Roman consular families (roughly the more successful half of the senate and the ones we are likely to know about) was about 75 percent in each generation" (p. 145). Although this figure is based on sons actually achieving the hereditary office of the consulship and is therefore inflated (because some sons decided not to pursue a public career), most of the failure is attributed to childlessness. During the Empire the uncertainty of political succession became a major public issue. Lack of biological offspring often led to succession by adopted children and stepchildren. Rawson (1986) notes that in the period from AD 14–200 only three emperors were survived by natural sons, and before this period, neither Julius Caesar nor Augustus left sons as heirs. Among less exalted individuals, property was often left to freedmen and freedwomen, a circumstance attributed by Balsdon (1963) to their failure to have surviving children.

*Roman inheritance: theory.* From an evolutionary perspective, the choice to have fewer children under a system of partible inheritance is an example of K-selection. Parents are opting for a greater amount of resources per offspring rather than large numbers of offspring with few resources. As indicated previously, this strategy was fraught with peril, especially in an age with a very high rate of child mortality (Balsdon 1963), so that many wealthy individuals, including many emperors, were left childless and forced to provide resources to less closely related individuals upon their death.

One might then attempt to explain Roman monogamy and the restriction of heirs in evolutionary terms as a response to Roman inheritance laws. Within this legal framework, wealthy individuals tended to follow a K-selection reproductive strategy because to do otherwise would entail an unacceptable dilution of resources in the next generation.

It is important to realize that although this does indeed appear to be a sort of (very risky) K-selection strategy, it is a strategy that was necessitated (or at least facilitated) by the broader context of sexually egalitarian social controls and ideology. Like the laws on legitimacy described above, Roman inheritance laws depart radically from the theoretically optimal, individually adaptive male reproductive strategy described by Dickemann (1979) (see Introduction). A wealthy male in an intensively polygynous society would feel no need whatever to restrict reproduction, because by means of primogeniture he could greatly restrict the claims of most offspring to the estate.

Thus, although wealthy Romans may be seen as behaving as one might

expect on the basis of evolutionary theory *within the confines of the laws and cultural practices of their society* (though even this is questionable given the very high rate of failure to have natural children as heirs), these laws and practices had the effect of preventing individual males from adopting an optimal reproductive strategy. In terms of the theoretical approach described in the Introduction, Roman inheritance laws were a part of a complex set of social controls and ideology which reinforced sexual egalitarianism and prevented individual males from optimally translating control of resources into reproductive success. These social controls and their supporting ideology are in no way predictable from knowledge of any external ecological factors uniquely affecting Rome or Western Europe, but are the result of the institutionalization of egalitarian ideology and social controls as a result of internal pro-egalitarian political processes serving the interests of non-wealthy males, as apparently occurred during the development of Christianity in Rome (see later). Although the development of this pro-egalitarian political process is hypothesized to have occurred in the prehistoric period of Rome, the results continued to shape Roman family structure and inheritance patterns throughout its history.

***Ideology and monogamy at Rome.*** Besides social controls on monogamy, there is evidence for elaborate ideological structures that supported Roman monogamy. In the case of Rome these ideological structures supporting monogamy appear to have existed from the earliest periods of its history.

There are indications that the Roman state religion was characterized by an ideology of monogamy. The form of marriage known as *confarreatio* was generally quite rare, but it was the normal mode of marriage for several high religious figures, including the Priests of Juppiter, Mars, and Quirinus. In this form of marriage, divorce was very difficult and could only be initiated by the husband. Moreover, one high priest, the Flamen Dialis, could not divorce under any circumstances. This form of marriage may have been restricted to patricians and was the only form of marriage that was allowed for the holders of the highest priesthoods in the state. The holders of these offices were required to use this form of marriage and their parents must also have been married in this manner. These strict controls on the individuals who most closely represent the ideology of the state indicate the degree to which Rome was committed to the ideology of monogamy. Indeed, the Flamen Dialis was in a sense a paragon of monogamous marriage: only death could dissolve the marriage, and if the wife died first, the husband was expected to resign the office.

There are other indications of the idealized place of monogamy within Roman ideology. Women who had only one husband were termed *univirae*, and were highly respected (Rawson 1986). Gardner (1986) notes that some

religious rituals were restricted to such women, and that divorce continued to carry some social stigma even in the late Republic.<sup>3</sup>

As an example from the highest social strata, Hadrian is said to have disliked his wife greatly and would divorce her in any other walk of life. This indicates that emperors in his period (early second century A.D.) were expected to uphold the ideal of monogamous marriage without divorce.

The ideal represented by the Vestal Virgins is another indication of the ideology of monogamy. Until the end of the Republic these women came from the highest ranking families of Rome, so that it was not a matter of exploiting lower class women. Election was a great honor, and resulted in a commitment to thirty years of virginity. Because the girl would be elected between the ages of 6 and 10, this generally precluded marriage and children. Many continued as Vestal Virgins after the 30 year period and it was rare for the others to marry after leaving the service.

The religious function of the Vestal Virgins was to keep a fire lit 24 hours a day in the Temple of Vesta. Failure to do so resulted in a flogging by the Pontifex Maximus, the high priest. A far more serious offense, however, was unchastity, and for this the man was flogged to death and the Vestal Virgin immured alive in a small underground chamber. Vestal Virgins were also expected to behave in a demure, nonsexual, nonflamboyant manner. In 420 B.C. a Vestal Virgin was severely reprimanded by the Pontifex Maximus because she dressed fashionably and spoke in a witty manner. This suggests that an important function of the Vestals, perhaps more important than keeping the flame going, was to be a symbol of an idealized state of chastity and sexual decorum. In addition, there is some indication that the parents of vestal virgins could not be divorced, a further sign that the institution functioned as a sort of ideal of appropriate sexual behavior. In A.D. 19 one girl was refused admittance to the group because her parents were divorced. The other girl, who was admitted, was the daughter of a *univira* woman (Gardner 1986).

Veyne (1987) also notes that Stoicism, which became a very powerful movement among artists, intellectuals and politicians during the Empire, extolled the ideal of the monogamous family based on conjugal affection. Sexual restraint for both men and women was idealized, and adultery was viewed as wrong both for men and women (in contrast to the common double standard in which it is acceptable for men but not women). Even within marriage, sexual behavior was restricted to the intention to have children and "even then with a care not to indulge in too many caresses" (Veyne 1987, p. 47).

<sup>3</sup> Although divorce was certainly easy from a legal point of view, there is not much evidence that it was all that widespread, even among the upper classes. Gardner (1986) notes that the only study of a large sample found 27 certain and 24 possible divorces from a sample of 562 married women of senatorial rank. Twenty of these were in the imperial family and one woman accounted for 5 of them. This is not a very large number. Moreover, there was no divorce at all at Rome for the first 5 centuries of her existence.

Brown (1987), writing of the later Empire, also notes the tendency for philosophers, especially Stoics, to preach sexual restraint for both men and women, as well as extol the ideal of marital bliss. These philosophical writings were then utilized by Christian writers from the late second century on and thereby transmitted to the middle and lower classes. Brown regards this as "the single most important revolution of the late Classical period" (p. 251).

In addition to the dominant Stoics, Veyne notes that Plutarch, who was a Platonist, also emphasized conjugal love and affection. Moreover, even individuals such as Pliny who belonged to no sect, proudly described their own feelings of affection for their wives.

Christianity was also becoming influential during the Empire and it developed the ideal of chastity much further than the original Roman state religion or Stoicism ever did (see later). Like the pagan morality of the later Empire, there was a concomitant emphasis on monogamy and sexual restraint. Indeed, Veyne (1987) comments that there was little difference between the Stoic-influenced morality of the later empire and that of Christianity. The major difference is that with the Christian religion the idealized institution of conjugal affection and sexual restraint had the force of law. The legal restrictions of Augustus on sexual behavior, which lacked an ideological basis other than, perhaps, the patriotic duty of having children, were replaced with a set of ideological and legal strictures promoting monogamy and sexual restraint.

Veyne (1987) comments on a sort of Roman puritanism. "For at least half a millennium the Greeks and Romans lived convinced that their society was decadent" (p. 178). Overindulgence in pleasures, including sex, was viewed as effeminate and the result of indolence. "The Greeks and the Romans subscribed to a kind of machismo, condemning pleasure, dancing, and passion with clerical strictness and casting a pall of suspicion over solitary pursuits. During brief periods, whenever an emperor or public opinion succumbed to an excess of moral fervor, certain types of private behavior were not tolerated" (p. 179).

### III. MONOGAMY AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

#### Christian Sexual Ideology

As indicated above, Christianity represents no fundamental break with the tradition of Roman monogamy. Brown (1987) notes how early Christian writings relied heavily on non-Christian philosophers for their sense of morality: "In moral matters the Christian leaders made almost no innovations. Their contribution was in the organization of the Church through which these morals permeated down to the great mass of people to form a deep sediment of moral notions current among thousands of humble persons" (p. 251). The

supporters of this movement were not the severely oppressed, but were "moderately wealthy and frequently well-traveled" (Brown 1987, p. 257); people of "the middling condition" (p. 265); see also Case 1971; Grant 1960, 1971; Jones 1964; Malherbe 1977; Walsh 1986). Brown states that Christian morality was the "morality of the socially vulnerable" (p. 261), the morality of the moderately well-to-do with a concern for restraints on behavior. Brown particularly emphasizes the importance of sexual fidelity among this group, correctly (from an evolutionary perspective) noting that this is a greater concern for this moderately well-to-do group than for the truly wealthy.

Brown summarizes early Christian sexual morality as follows: "total sexual renunciation by the few; marital concord between the spouses. . . ; strong disapproval of remarriage" (Brown 1987, p. 263). This sexual discipline was the public mark of Christianity—the most salient means by which Christians were identified as distinct from pagans (see also Drijvers 1987; Fox 1987; Walsh 1986). Moreover, sexual renunciation was a mark of status and was the route to leadership within the Church: "access to leadership became identified with near-compulsory celibacy" (Brown 1987, p. 266). The renunciation of sexuality was particularly radical in the Eastern Empire, where monasticism became very influential in the 4th century. In the West, the paradigm was that of a continent clergy presiding over married individuals characterized by a morally imperfect (but not fatally so) engagement in sexual relations. Walsh (1986) notes that marriage was merely tolerated among the Christians, "but only as a concession to man's concupiscence" (p. 215). Fidelity within marriage was a requirement and divorce was impossible. Virginity was a much higher way of life, and attracted a number of wealthy individuals, especially women (Drijvers 1987). Walsh finds that although the practices of the Church increasingly resembled the practices of the society around them, in matters of marriage and virginity, the diversion became even clearer with time.

The Church was thus represented to the world by a group of celibate males. However, in the early Church, these males tended to be middle-aged widowers, so that there is no implication that these men failed to reproduce. Nevertheless, in the Eastern monastic tradition, by A.D. 500 young people were expected to make the decision on celibacy before marriage: "The sixth century is a century of child saints, of infant recruits to the ascetic life" (Brown 1987, p. 303). In the West, the tradition of a celibate clergy and a severe, ascetic celibacy among monks gradually became established, although clerical celibacy continued to be an issue well into the Middle Ages (Wemple 1985). It should be noted, however, that the causes of clerical celibacy may be unrelated to the larger issue of socially imposed monogamy, at least after the Church became an established bureaucracy. Celibacy is a general characteristic of the bureaucracies of many traditional civilizations and appears to function to maximize loyalty to the institution and minimize family ties and the drain of resources from these societies (Balch 1986). In

any case, there is good evidence for an effect on individually maladaptive behavior: Drijvers (1987) comments on conflicts within the families of aristocratic women who wished to adopt a monastic life of virginity and give their property to the Church.

### Early Christianity and Social Cohesion

We have seen in the case of Sparta that egalitarian sexual practices facilitate social cohesion, and this appears to be the case with early Christians as well. Brown emphasizes that the intense level of sexual restraint was consciously identified by Christians as essential to the high degree of unity of the Christian community—their “singleness of heart” (Brown 1987, p. 266). Unlike the Spartans, however, the Christians also deemphasized ethnic (i.e., kinship) differences: the self-concept of the Early Christians was that the Christian community would break down “walls of division”; Paul in his letters recited the traditional catalogues of opposed groups of persons—Jew and Gentile, slave and freeman, Greek and barbarian, male and female—in order to declare that these categories had been eradicated within the new community” (Brown 1987, p. 257).

Brown notes that one of the major shifts in the early Christian era was toward a unitary ideology of the entire community rather than the highly fragmented and individualistic ideologies found within the Pagan community. Christian burial sites show a recognition and acceptance of social class differences, but all classes were within the unified Christian community: “The rows of humble graves, placed at a decent distance from the mausoleums of the rich, represented the care and solidarity of the Christian community” (p. 283). Johnson (1976) also contrasts the early Christian ideology of universalism with the narrow, ethnically based tribalism of Judaism from which it was derived.

Walsh (1986) also notes that economic egalitarianism was not a feature of the Church after its earliest days. There was an acceptance of social class differences, but also a tradition of generosity toward other Christians. “Churches gave financial support to widows, orphans, the destitute” (p. 207). The Christian Church increasingly attracted the wealthy, and the doctrine developed that wealthy individuals should remain detached from their wealth rather than abandon it. Mullin (1943) also notes the hostility of the early Church toward wealth and an increasingly tolerant attitude later. Wealth was later viewed as necessary, but the Christian was expected to avoid lavish displays and to be generous toward the poor.

### The Conversion of Constantine

Christianity did not become a powerful force in the Roman empire until the conversion of Constantine in 312 A.D. The reasons for this conversion remain obscure, but there is no question that the conversion itself was of

immense importance. Jones (1964) points out that at the time of the conversion Christianity was still a small minority within the Roman Empire, especially in the West, and that Christians were people of no importance, predominantly the lower-middle classes. "The senate was and long remained a stronghold of paganism, the vast majority of the upper classes were pagans, and, what was more important, the army was pagan" (p. 81). Moreover, the Church was just emerging from the Great Persecution under Diocletian and was severely divided internally (Fox 1987).

After the conversion, Constantine fostered "a massive program of building and benefaction" (Fox 1987, p. 610). Public money was provided for building churches and the Church was given large estates. The clergy gained in wealth, power, social status, and obtained jurisdiction over many legal matters. The result was that becoming a Christian had many economic benefits: "The result of imperial favor was that converts began to pour in" (Jones 1964, p. 91). Constantine also promulgated Christian social legislation, removing the Augustan disabilities for celibacy and childlessness, prohibited gladiatorial combats, and ordered funds provided for poor parents to prevent them from committing infanticide.

Jones sums up the effects of the conversion of Constantine by noting the precarious position of the Church prior to Constantine and its powerful position thereafter. Prior to the conversion, "no one would have had any motive for joining the Church but sincere conviction . . . With Constantine's conversion, the situation was completely changed. Wealth poured into the Church, and the middle classes began to press into holy orders . . . Converts could not only feel secure but might hope to gain material advantages from their conversion" (p. 96). "But for the chance of Constantine's conversion, Christianity might have remained a minority sect as it did in the neighboring empire of Persia, where no king was converted, and Christianity continued, as in the pagan Roman empire, to enjoy long periods of *de facto* toleration, broken by occasional persecutions" (p. 97).

Constantine's conversion therefore seems a random event, "an erratic block which has diverted the stream of human history" (Baynes 1972, p. 3). Fox (1987) terms it "one of history's great surprises" (p. 609). Markus (1974) comments on the surprise of the Christians: "A vision granted by their God to an emperor before a decisive battle had changed the whole course of their history, and gratefully they exploited the miracle which had transformed them from a persecuted minority to a triumphant elite" (p. 91). Jones (1964) emphasizes that Constantine had nothing to gain personally by the conversion given that the upper classes, the Senate, and the army were all overwhelmingly pagan.

Whatever the exact process of conversion (by his own account it included a vision and a dream), it clearly involved a complex and perhaps idiosyncratic personal ideology of the emperor—a belief that the deity would be on his side. Like many ancients, Constantine was highly superstitious (Fox 1987; Johnson 1976; Sordi 1986). Even accepting the efficacy of belief

in divine partisanship in promoting confidence in battle, there remains no deeper explanation for why Constantine chose to place his faith in the Christian God. However, when Constantine won the battle he clearly attributed it to the intervention of the Christian God and showed his gratitude thereafter. In the present theoretical context, the conversion is a random event, not predictable on the basis of evolutionary theory, but one that nevertheless had major implications for the later history of Western family relationships.

#### IV. THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF EUROPE AND THE SPREAD OF MONOGAMY

##### The Social Structure of the Franks

The fall of the Roman Empire in Western Europe resulted in the establishment of "barbarian" kingdoms in Roman Gaul. In the following, I will be concerned with the Franks, the most prominent of these groups, and the process by which a polygynous, clan-based society of the 5th century developed into a monogamous civilization by the 10th century.

The German tribes that invaded the Roman Empire represented a clan type of society. Clan societies can be characterized, following Paige and Paige (1981), as at an intermediate level of economic production. The social organization revolves around extended kinship groups based on biologically related males. There is a strong premium placed on reproduction and the accumulation of resources. Wealthy males are polygynous and bridewealth is common. War, feuding, and aggression are common features of such societies and sex differences are prominent. Political power is highly fractionated and constantly changing as groups fission and reform.

This general picture fits the findings for the Frankish tribes quite well. As described by Geary (1988; see also Gies and Gies 1987; Herlihy 1985; Rouche 1986), the Germans cultivated grains, but the true measure of wealth was cattle owned by males and, even more importantly, the goods obtained through raiding and warfare. There were large differences among males in their wealth and status, and at the bottom of the society were slaves obtained as spoils of war. Centralized governments had less power and kinship ties were of much greater importance than in Roman times. "War became a private affair owing to the usurpation of state power by bonds of flesh and blood" (Rouche 1987, p. 425). Power was fragmented and concentrated in small kinship groups.

Like many other European groups before Christianization (e.g., the Irish and the north German Swedes [Herlihy 1985]), the Franks practiced resource polygyny. Rouche (1986) notes that Frankish polygyny consisted of a principal marriage with a woman from a closely related branch of the family, secondary marriages with free women (*friedelehe*), and concubinage relationships with slaves. Only the children of the first relationship could

inherit property, unless the first wife was sterile. Such a marriage system conforms well to the theoretical optimum for individual male reproductive success described by Dickemann (1979) (see Introduction).

Polygyny was associated with control of resources by individual males and bridewealth was practiced until the 6th century when it became ritualized. Nevertheless, the main beneficiary of resource transactions at marriage remained the bride, and "bridewealth is the universal rule of marriage throughout the early Middle Ages" (Herlihy 1985, p. 50). In fact the amount of resources transferred to the bride actually increased in this period. Herlihy (1985) mentions that for both the Irish and Germans resource polygyny tended to concentrate females in the households of wealthy males and that there was a corresponding lack of females available to poorer males.

Extended kinship relations were of the greatest importance, and clans (German: *Sippe*) engaged in continuous feuding with other clans. Indeed, Geary comments that the feuding actually defined the limits of clan boundaries. As is typical of clan-based societies, individuals were responsible for actions of members of their clan. Fertility functioned to strengthen one's clan. "Pagan religion and the need to survive both converged on the same goal: the child" (Rouche 1987, p. 460). "Families had to be large if they were to survive and if property was to be transmitted from generation to generation" (p. 464). As in other clan based societies (Paige and Paige 1984), large families meant political and military power, as well as financial help in times of need.

The clans themselves were highly unstable, constantly dividing into new groups or absorbing weak clans. When necessitated by external pressures, the clans were able to develop larger political groupings and mount large military campaigns. However, centralized political control was quite weak: "Obviously the nature of Germanic society, with its military structure, loose kindreds, and weak central organization all contributed to constant instability. Intratribal conflict was the norm and unity could only be maintained through joint hostility against other tribes" (Geary 1988, pp. 56-57).

In addition to this inherently militaristic social structure, there is evidence that there were intensive population pressures from the north and east which resulted in an even greater militarization, resource competition, and, ultimately, conflict with the Roman Empire. "These peoples poured out of the North, the 'womb of peoples,' in a seemingly inexhaustible supply, impelled by a constantly expanding population to search for new lands" (Geary 1988, p. 41). Roman power effectively ended in the West in the late fifth century and the Franks under Clovis and his successors became the dominant group in what is most of modern France and parts of Germany after defeating several other barbarian groups. Unlike the typical German group prior to this time, Clovis achieved some measure of central authority (by no means complete) and his family (the Merovingians) and kingdom endured for several centuries.

### The Christianization of Frankish Marriage Practices

The history of marriage in Western Europe is essentially an internal political process of acculturation (rather than external ecological pressures) in which the Christian view of marriage gradually won out over the practices of the secular powers which displaced the Roman empire (Duby 1978). This process would take several centuries to complete. Clovis became a Christian early in the 6th century and his kingdom represented a mixture of barbarian and the older, Christianized Gallo-Roman culture. According to Scherman (1987), the conversion was due ultimately to the scheming of Catholic bishops to arrange a marriage between Clovis and Clotild, the Christian daughter of King Gundobad of Burgandy. After the marriage, she actively attempted to persuade Clovis to convert. He resisted but, like Constantine before him, became converted when he won an important battle after asking for the help of the Christian God. Scherman points out that politically the results were mixed. On one hand, he thereby gained the support of the clergy, but on the other hand it was a risky move, because half of his army deserted him as a result of the conversion. "Thenceforth he would willingly and enthusiastically subject himself to the Church, the first exponent of the alliance between the kings of France and the Catholic Church . . . his contemporaries regarded him as the spiritual child of Constantine" (p. 114).

Geary notes that the old Gallo-Roman aristocracy was never displaced by the barbarians and that, especially in the south of France, they maintained their economic, if not political, power. From the fifth century the Gallo-Roman aristocracy dominated the highest offices of the Church and Church office became a means of preserving and extending family power: "the aristocracy increasingly focused on the episcopacy as its central institution" (p. 35), and aristocratic families battled for control of the office of bishop. Besides the great wealth which went along with such control, the office acted as the medium by which Roman Christian cultural traditions were maintained after the Fall of the Empire.

Nevertheless, Geary (1988) argues that the complete Christianization of the Frankish aristocracy was not the work of the Gallo-Roman aristocratic episcopacy of the south but rather the result of the successful penetration of Irish monasticism in the seventh century, particularly as a result of the work of the Irish monk Columbanus. Since the time of Clovis the Frankish aristocracy had been Christianized, but in the seventh century the Frankish aristocracy began establishing monasteries under the influence of Columbanus and there was a much more thorough Christianization of the aristocracy. "Columbanus and his monastic tradition provided the common ground around which networks of northern aristocrats could unite, finding a religious basis for their social and political standing" (pp. 171–172). Many Frankish aristocrats themselves became monks and their families supported lavishly appointed monasteries on family property.

This behavior of the aristocracy also facilitated the Christianization of

the countryside. In this case, therefore, Christianization proceeded from the top of the society downwards and became not only the religion of the elite but also of the humbler members of society. This is clearly quite a different pattern for the spread of an egalitarian ideology than that which occurred during the original spread of Christianity within the Roman Empire.

Herlihy (1985) finds that the major influence against polygyny was the ethical teachings of the Christian Church and that the result of this revolution was that the households of the rich and the poor became commensurable for the first time. Duby (1978) attributes the shift in the 9th century to the work of Church moralists and to the success of the Church in imposing its will on rulers (see later). By the 12th century the Church had won exclusive jurisdiction on all matters pertaining to marriage.

Although a detailed picture of the decline of polygyny and concubinage is not available, Gies and Gies (1987) and Wemple (1985) describe a prolonged contest between the Church and the aristocracy over the issue of the idea of marriage as monogamous and indissoluble. Although the Frankish aristocracy had become Christianized during Merovingian times, it was not until the Carolingian era that the Church made major progress in its war on polygyny. Thus the Merovingian King Dagobert I, who was a major benefactor of the Church (Geary 1988) also "repudiated one wife and married three others simultaneously, while maintaining so many concubines that the chronicler Fredegar declared that he could not spare space to name them all" (Gies and Gies 1987, p. 53).

The focus of the conflict between Church and aristocracy was the issue of divorce. The Church's point of view was that marriage was monogamous and indissoluble. Charlemagne had divorced a woman because she was barren, but in the latter part of the eighth century "under pressure from his bishops, he enacted rigorous legislation prohibiting divorce on any grounds" (p. 88) and he himself lived monogamously thereafter (although with several concubines). Gies and Gies (1987) recount several divorce cases from the ninth century that affirmed the principles of monogamy and indissolubility as well as the control of the Church over marriage.

One important case was that of King Lothair who wished to divorce his barren wife and legitimize his offspring by a concubine. Divorce was of the utmost importance to the King because he needed legitimate heirs in order to prevent the division of his kingdom after his death. The case dragged on for eight years with Pope Nicholas I finally deciding that the King must remain married to his wife. The King died without heirs. The Church had rejected the grounds of incest, previous marriage, absence of consent, sterility of the wife, as well as the wife's wish to enter a convent.

Later, in the case of the Italian Count Boso, the Church ruled that adultery by the wife was not grounds for divorce. Even though the wife never returned to her husband, the Count was not allowed to remarry. Finally, Duby (1978) recounts the case of Philip I of France in the early 12th

century, who was excommunicated for marrying a second wife (after the first had borne him an heir) and finally forced to give up his second wife, while standing "barefoot before the prelates of northern France and the abbots of the great Parisian monasteries" (Duby 1978, p. 30).

Rouche (1986) writes that monogamy and indissoluble marriage became general only in the tenth century, first among the common people, later among the Gallo-Roman nobility, and only last among the Frankish nobility. The shift in sensibilities can be seen by examining the penitentials of the Christian Church. Penitentials prescribed punishments for various sins and "resulted in a complete reversal of the values embodied in the Germanic laws" (Rouche 1987, p. 529). Sexual sins (fornication, adultery, masturbation, oral and anal intercourse, bestiality, and homosexuality) were of the greatest importance. Penalties for adultery were gradually increased and no distinction was made between men and women. The penitentials condemn *amor* (unruly sexual passion and lust). Christian marriage was to be based on *caritas* (chaste, conjugal love), sexual restraint, and even chastity. Gies and Gies (1987) recount the story (from Gregory of Tours) of a young noble couple who, though married, remained chaste for their entire lives even though their parents had wanted them to have children to prevent nonrelatives from claiming the estate. Because the couple were the only children in their families, reproduction was the only means of assuring a proper heir.

The application of the penitentials was egalitarian in that the penalty applied independent of one's social status: "Equality before God was genuinely affirmed" (Rouche 1986, p. 529). Penalties for wife-murder became more prominent as monogamy replaced polygyny: a not uncommon response of men to the institution of indissoluble, monogamous marriage was to murder their wives, pay the *wergeld* to the wife's family, and be free to marry again. Recognizing this consequence of its divorce policy, the greatest penalties found in the penitentials were for wife-murder.

In the 12th century, conflict between the Church and the aristocracy continued, but the issues changed. Duby notes a conflict between the aristocratic image of marriage as functioning to maintain property within a lineage with that of the Church concerned to maintain the indissolubility of marriage. The aristocratic ideal allowed serial polygyny (males could thereby attempt to get a more economically attractive marriage), as well as sexual relations outside marriage (property was not involved). The Church on the other hand viewed marriage as "a solution of last resort. Married persons (*conjugati*) were relegated to the lowest rank of perfection. Marriage was tolerated, but only as a remedy against carnal lust . . . the only place for licit sexuality was within marriage. Beyond its confines, all sexual activity was fornication and, as such, cursed. Moreover, the physical act had to be strictly subordinated to the desire to procreate, and all pleasure had to be purged from it as much as possible" (Duby 1978, p. 16).

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings from these four examples indicate that monogamy has diverse origins. In the case of Sparta, monogamy arose as part of an intensively egalitarian, racially homogenous social structure that fostered intense cooperation and altruism within the group. In the case of Rome, however, sexual egalitarianism co-existed with pronounced social, political, and economic inequalities, and there was much more ethnic diversity at Rome than at Sparta even from the earliest times (McDonald 1966). The case of early Christianity involved the spread of an even more radical ideology of monogamy and sexual restraint than was the case among the pagan Romans. The promulgation of this ideology was spearheaded by the lower and middle classes of the Empire, but the crucial event appears to have been the inexplicable, random (from the perspective of evolutionary theory) conversion of a single very powerful individual. Masters (1986) notes that powerful individuals can often have very marked effects on their societies. Although, in general, the actions of such powerful individuals can be reasonably related to evolutionary goals, this does not appear to be the case here. Finally, in the case of the Christianization of barbarian Europe, the movement was spearheaded by a powerful institution and the acceptance among the aristocracy of Christian ideology. The revolution thus proceeded from the top of the society downward.

Overall, the results conform well with the nondeterministic, contextual model described in the Introduction. There is clear evidence for the importance of internal political processes both in the establishment and maintenance of monogamy. Moreover, the conversion of Constantine appears to be a random process with major historical effects, and there is some suggestion of other events beyond the scope of an ecological explanation. Thus Geary (1986) finds that the work of a single monk, Columbanus, had a major effect on the Christianization of the Frankish aristocracy, and the conversion of Clovis, though clearly not as inexplicable as that of Constantine, could hardly be predicted by an ecological theory.

Was the acceptance of monogamy in these societies individually adaptive? It is clear that the practices described here depart radically from Dickemann's (1979) model of optimal individual male reproductive behavior in a stratified society. Surely, many individual wealthy males would have benefitted greatly by being polygynous, but Western society itself eventually became enormously successful and has spread this institution throughout the world. From this perspective, then, successful sexually egalitarian societies are an example of group selection: the group is selected at the expense of individually adaptive behavior.<sup>4</sup> The foregoing makes it clear that the

<sup>4</sup> This would also be the case for a successful sexually non-egalitarian stratified society where reproductive restraint would be imposed via coercion on poor males by the wealthy. As Masters (1986) notes, nation-states tend to involve cooperative behavior for the common good which occurs at a cost to the individual.

maintenance of group selection in this case is not the result of genes for altruism or reproductive restraint by wealthy individuals, but by complex mechanisms involving social controls and ideologies which restrict and channel the sexual behavior of individuals: the conversion of the Franks to monogamy did not involve the spread of altruistic genes among them but was imposed by the process of Christianization.

Although the point is difficult to verify conclusively, sexually egalitarian societies may in general result in greater cohesion, as suggested by Alexander (1979), a greater sense of having a stake in the society, and even in the greater acceptance of social and political inequalities. Historians of a previous generation were fond of contrasting the citizen armies of Greece with the numerically superior slave armies of the (intensively polygynous) Persians, with the point being that the success of the former was due to a superior motivation resulting from political equality. We have also recorded the unity of the early Christian community despite differences in wealth (see Section III).

Although not resulting in the extreme degree of self-sacrifice typical of Sparta, the Roman system was apparently characterized by a fundamental acceptance of pronounced social, political, and economic inequalities, and an acceptance of social and economic inequality has also been characteristic of Christianity after the earliest period. Lacey (1986) emphasizes that the Romans accepted these social and political inequalities and that this acceptance is fundamental to understanding the Roman social system. "In this state of unequals, differing rights could be held by different individuals depending on age, knowledge of the law. . . , the position of their family in the state and the individual's position in the family" (p. 124). Von Ungern-Sternberg (1986) states that the conflict between social orders in Republican Rome "was occasionally fought in revolutionary forms but never became a revolution. For its goal never was to change social conditions radically or substantially to democratize political life at Rome. Certainly, none of the participants thought of introducing the Athenian model of radical democracy" (pp. 354-355).

From an evolutionary perspective, this acceptance of economic and social inequality is facilitated by sexual egalitarianism. Indeed, from an evolutionary perspective, economic inequalities that are not translated into reproductive advantages are of relatively little importance. Moreover, acceptance of social, political, and economic inequalities may ultimately result in a more successful society, especially if upward social mobility is possible, as this allows individuals with talent and ability to take a commanding position in the society. The present day success of capitalist economies and the lack of success of bureaucratically controlled, socialist economic systems is highly consistent with this perspective. Indeed, one reason for the acceptance of social and political inequality at Rome may have been that during the period of expansion, citizens of all classes benefited by the success of Rome as new areas became colonized (Momigliano 1986; Von Ungern-

Sternberg 1986). Hopkins (1978) suggests that the economic disruptions following the large influx of slave labor during the period of Rome's expansion were accomplished without the exploitation of her own peasants and poor, many of whom were resettled to other areas of the empire as the Italian economy became more based on slavery. Slavery "allowed the elite to increase the discrepancy between rich and poor without alienating the free citizen peasantry from their willingness to fight in wars for the further expansion of the empire" (p. 14). Like the Greeks, the Roman army during its time of expansion was a citizen army. Reciprocity rather than exploitation within the body of citizenry was the norm.

Finally, the imposition of monogamy had profound effects on the subsequent demographic and family history of Western Europe. Monogamy was a necessary condition for the development, unique in Eurasia, of conjugality as the basis of marriage and high levels of parental investment in children, lowered reproductive competition, and a demographic pattern in which age of marriage was highly sensitive to economic shifts (see MacFarlane 1986).

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