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Their critics claimed that they used coercion among children and prisoners, a charge that seems warranted in view of the fact that many were castrated below the age of 10 yr, but others were religious enthusiasts who underwent the procedure voluntarily as adults. 1). In the case of all castrated or mutilated male quadrupeds the voice changes to the feminine voice... All animals, if operated on when full-grown, they do not take on any increase of size. Bull Mem Soc Anthropol Paris. The medical consequences of long term castration Because the findings in the various studies overlap and are complementary, they will be discussed together. Enlargement of the pituitary. Most Chinese eunuchs were castrated as adults, but eunuchs castrated before the age of 10 yr were considered 'thoroughly pure' and were prized as personal servants. However, on the basis of published interviews of surviving eunuchs, the surgical procedure appears to have been essentially the same in the later days of the dynasty (14). The complete works of Aristotle, revised Oxford translation. In some instances hemostasis was achieved with hot sand, and the wound was dressed with an extract of wax and tallow. The harem: an account of the institution as it existed in the palace of the Turkish sultans with a history of the Grand Seraglio from its foundation to the present time. In his Istanbul study Wagenseil reported that 2 of 4 skull x-rays obtained revealed enlargement of the pituitary with thinning of the dorsum sella; the average age at castration was 11 yr, and the average duration of castration was 44 yr in these 2 men (33). Archives suisses d'Anthropologie generale :-535.-1934.11 . First, the so-called castrati singers were, in fact, a heterogeneous group consisting of women who posed as castrated men, men with hypogonadism and/or cryptorchidism, men with intact testes who probably sang as counter tenors or falsetto, and a few singers who either had their testes removed or crushed (51). Persecution of the Skoptzys persisted into the Soviet era, and during the antireligious fervor in 1929-1930 they were subjected to sensational public trials and publicity. The subject reclined on a broad bench, and the genitalia were anaesthetized with a secret agent known only to the surgeon. Hikmet and Regnault reported that the prostate became atrophic in the Ottoman court enuuchs (30). The most frequent marriage partners were palace maids; such wives were referred to as 'companions sitting at meals' to indicate a platonic relationship (21). The eunuchs of the Ottoman court The practice of employing eunuchs as palace functionaries in Constantinople (Istanbul) apparently began during the reign of the Emperor Justinian in the latter days of the Roman Empire and persisted through the Byzantine (27) and Ottoman eras (7). in length, and the handle as 2 in. Birds have their testicles inside, and oviparous quadrupeds close to the loins; and of viviparous animals that walk some have them inside, and most have them outside, but all have them at the lower end of the belly. Furthermore, an increased incidence of fractures does not appear to have been reported in the eunuchs, and Wagenseil had not observed kyphosis in his earlier study of eunuchs in Istanbul (33). In men the procedure was of great simplicity; namely, the operator seized the parts to be removed, nails were inserted into the urethra to avoid strictures, and such men were said to urinate while sitting or squatting. c, A urethral plug used to prevent incontinence in the Ottoman Court eunuchs (5 cm long). In antiquity the procedure was performed for several reasons, including as punishment for prisoners of war (2), and by the time of Aristotle in the fourth century BC the physiological consequences of male castration were understood with remarkable exactitude (3). Most studies of castration in men have involved relatively short term experiences (usually men who had been castrated for less than a decade), but in the 20th century the effects of long term castration have been studied in three groups of men: the Skoptzy and the court eunuchs of the Chinese and Ottoman empires (Table 1). The child was restrained on a chair; the phallus and scrotum were tied with a cord which was pulled taught, and the phallus, scrotum, and testes were removed as close as possible with a single stroke of a razor. On occasion, the castration was punitive, as in prisoners of war, but most were performed voluntarily in adults who, because of poverty or laziness, underwent castration to gain employment (usually as young adults, but sometimes in men after having born children under compulsion who were sold by their parents for the purpose of castration (15). Specialists (termed knifers) performed the operation in an establishment maintained outside one of the palace gates in the imperial city, and the trade was handed down from father to son. On the fourth day the dressing and plug were removed, and if the subject was able to urinate the operation was considered a success. It was estimated that there were between 1000 and 2000 Skoptzy in Soviet Russia in 1930, 500 of whom lived in Moscow, but by 1962 none were thought to be alive (11). Paris: Vigot Freres; vol 13, p 226.32. Two assistants held the spread legs, and a third assistant secured the arms. The eunuchs squatted to urinate, and both urethral strictures and incontinence must have been common, because some eunuchs carried silver quills for self-catheterization, presumably because of strictures (7), and others used a removable plug (Fig. We are also grateful to reference librarians at the New York Public Library and at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. London: 28. The palace of Topkapi in Istanbul. Die Russischen Sekten, Zweiter Band, Die weissen Tauben oder Skopzen, Leipzig,. b, A urethral dilator for insertion into the urethra of the Chinese eunuchs (3 cm long and 0.9 cm in the widest portion of the plug) Each eunuch was buried with the preserved genitalia, because of the religious need to be as complete as possible when departments (for looking after gardens, courtyards, kitchens, armory, furniture, etc.) Each department had a superintendent, usually of the sixth grade, and a chief eunuch served over the entire complement of eunuchs. : Oxford University Press; 337-340.21Jay JW. Translations from German were made by one of the authors (C.R.), and we are indebted to Philippe E. Indeed, the Cumming Manuscript Collection of the New York Academy of Medicine Library contains more than 1200 references, abstracts, and documents concerning the early history of human castration (1). The amputated penis, testes, and scrotum, termed "the precious" or "the treasures," were preserved in alcohol and either stored by the knifer or kept by the subject (15, 16). : 3338, , , , Kourides IA. Reprinted from Wagenseil (19). Gynecomastia. These observations appear to have been made before it was recognized that kyphosis is a manifestation of severe osteoporosis in women (40). In the Wagenseil study, men with kyphosis were slightly younger (average age, 54 yr) and had a slightly somewhat shorter average duration of castration (33 yr) (18). Reprinted from Koch (13). Medical studies on the Skoptzy. Birds are castrated at the rump at the part where the two sexes unite in copulation. There is in addition at least one instance in which a large gonadotropin-secreting pituitary adenoma developed 35 yr after a man was castrated for cryptorchidism (38). Skeletal changes. The average age of these men was 56 yr, and the average time lapsed since castration was 38 yr. The congenital growth of hair never falls out, for a eunuch never goes bald. Involvement of the spine is common in men with osteoporosis of various etiologies (41), and in view of the fact that bone mineral density decreases progressively with time after castration, particularly in the first few years (42), it is surprising that kyphosis was not even more common in the Chinese eunuchs and the Skoptzy. Koch obtained x-rays of the skull in 10 Skoptzy men and reported that the pituitary glands were normal in size in 3, enlarged in 4, and "particularly" enlarged in 3 (13). 15Stent, CG. Castration of men and males of other species was almost certainly the first experiment in endocrinology (if not in zoology), and the literature on the subject is vast. Those who had families and children before castration rejoined their families, and others married and adopted children. In the early years of the sect the surgical instrument was a red-hot iron rod or poker (hence the expression baptism of fire), but instruments of castration included pieces of glass, razors, and knives. The average age in this group was 57 yr, and the average duration of castration was 38 yr. Open in new tabDownload slideAnatomical preparation of the external genitalia of a Skoptzy man who had received the greater seal. The eunuchs of the Chinese court The practice of employing eunuchs as court functionaries in China and in other oriental countries goes back into prehistory (14). 1877 Chinese eunuchs. Genitalia retained by the knifers were kept in jars labeled to indicate from whom they came and when the amputation was performed. :-.48 , , , , MacDonald PC. If the answer was yes, the genitalia (scrotum, penis, and testes) were removed with a single cut. Twilight in the Forbidden City. According to other reports many of the boys were castrated at a monastery in Upper Egypt where Coptic priests performed the operation (29, 30). Redrawn from Millant (31). However, on July 15, 1923, the entire staff of eunuchs (with the exception of about 50 household servants of elderly members of the imperial family) was expelled from the Forbidden City because they were suspected of stealing and selling furniture and works of art and were believed to have burned a portion of the edifice as a protest against a planned inventory of the palace treasures (20). 4) (13).: 30Hikmet (no initial given), Regnault F. Gonadotropin-producing pituitary adenoma in a man with long-standing primary hypogonadism. The technique of study involved measurements of height, weight, and a variety of skeletal dimensions, radiographic studies of the skull, and descriptions of skin and body hair. 5). According to Penzer (7) three varieties of eunuchs were removed; and 3) thlibiae, testicles were removed; and 3) the second removed days in monasteries. Owing to the high death rate, the survivors were sold at high prices either to Turkey or to Persia (29). Strict rules of behavior were enforced for the eunuchs' guild. A variety of anthropomorphic measurements were made, and skull x-rays were obtained in some (13). Subsequently, during the German occupation of Romania in the First World War Walter Koch studied 13 Skoptzy men, all between 50 and 94 yr of age (averaging 64 yr), who had been castrated for an average of 46 yr (13). For the following 3 days, the subject was not allowed to drink liquids or to urinate. Evidence for an average of 46 yr (13). For the following 3 days, the subject was not allowed to drink liquids or to urinate. syndrome. Androgen action is required for the development of the prostate gland during embryogenesis (47), and the prostate does not develop in men with mutations that profoundly impair the function of the androgen receptor (48) or of steroid 5α-reductase-2 (49). At the turn of the century Pittard made measurements in 30 Skoptzy men in 1 Romanian village and noted that they appeared to be taller than their peers (10). Hikmet and Regnault reported that the breasts in the Ottoman court eunuchs became large and pendulous (30) Although not commented on by either author, gynecomastia is also evident in 5 of 9 photographs of Skoptzy men published by Koch (13) and in 7 of 14 photographs of Chinese eunuchs published by Wagenseil (19) (Fig. However, in the 1940s, Hamilton and his colleagues did pioneering work in the United States on mentally deficient men who were castrated as a consequence of eugenics laws, quantifying the effects on skeletal development, hemoglobin production, and metabolism (5), and Bremer subsequently defined the relation between testicular secretions and male sexual drive and function in men who were castrated in Norway because of sexual offenses (6). In 1907 Tandler and Grosz examined 5 Skoptzy men in Bucharest whose average age was 30 yr and who had been castrated between ages 5-21 yr (12). Hidden power: the palace eunuchs of imperial China. The mortality was said to be high, only about one in three surviving. In some instances the procedure was performed in stages (taking the lesser seal before the great seal). Commentary Rechercches sur les adeptes d'une secre d'eunuchs mystiques, les Skoptzy. In the latter group, there was also erosion of the dorsum sellae of the pituitary ("sattellehne"). Religion in the Soviet Union. Most lived in the palaces until they were released from service in old age. Consequently, it is difficult to interpret the literature on the subject in medical terms. All eunuchs received a regular stipend as well as room and board. The reason for the apparent discrepancy between the findings in the Chinese eunuchs and those in the Skoptzy and the Ottoman eunuchs is not clear, but it is of interest that the average age at which castration, 18 yr; less than a fourth had been castrated before age 14 yr). At least in the last phase of the Qing dynasty, eunuchs were subject to the Imperial Household Department, which was not headed by a eunuch (20). Asexualization. New York: Prentice Hall Press; 287-294.26, .:-.6. However, the report by Wu and Gu that the prostate was completely impalpable in 21 of 26 Chinese eunuchs (and very small in the other 5) (25, 26) was unexpected and implies that viability of the gland throughout life requires the continued presence of gonadal hormones, presumably androgens. "Some animals change their form and character, not only at certain seasons, but in consequence of being castrated; and all animals possessed of testicles may be submitted to this operation. Another side of Chinese eunuch history castration, marriage, adoption, and burial. Possession and employment of eunuchs as servants in China were reserved for the imperial family and the 8 hereditary princes. 5) (18). . Date of publication . No. of subjects . Average age (yr) . Average duration of castration (yr) . Skoptzy Tandler and Grosz (12) 1910 5 30 18 Koch (13) 1921 13 64 30 Chinese court eunuchs Wagenseil (19) 1933 31 57 38 Wu and Gu (25, 26) 1987, 1991 26 72 54 Ottoman court eunuchs Wagenseil (33) 1927 10 43 34 The Skoptzy (or Skoptzy (or Skoptzy (or Skoptzy, meaning the castrated), also called the White Doves, were a Christian sect whose male members, to attain their ideal of sanctity, subjected themselves to castration. 2a), grasped the scrotum and penis with his left hand, and asked the candidate or his parents to consent to the procedure. A plug made of pewter (Fig. With the support of two assistants the subject was made to walk around the room for 2-3 h. The average age in the latter study was 72 yr, and the average duration of castration was 54 yr. During the first world war Ferdinand Wagenseil had been assigned as a physician to the German Red Cross Hospital in Istanbul, where he took care of a 40-yr-old eunuch from the harem who died after a febrile illness (presumably typhus) and subsequently examined 10 additional eunuchs, most of whom had voiding difficulties (33). The three groups of eunuchs under consideration in this review fall into the castrati category. Subsequently, reactive hyperplasia of the pituitary was described in hypogonadal men (34-36), including men with Klinefelter's syndrome (37). Redrawn from Matignon (17). The reason that gynecomastia develops in some but not all men with primary hypogonadism is not known. Apparent disappearance of the prostate. Cathay. In contrast to China, ownership of eunuchs in Turkey was not limited to the royal palaces; any citizen who could afford the purchase price was entitled. [According to Wagenseil, other castration techniques were sometimes used, each involving the removal of all the external genitalia (19).] Open in new tabDownload slideSome of the instruments used for creating and treating eunuchs. Likewise, Wagenseil observed that 20 of the 31 Chinese eunuchs had kyphosis of the spine (Fig. Comment Hopefully, it will never again be possible to repeat the studies reviewed in this paper, as in more recent times we have used different means of expressing man's inhumanity to man. An autopsy was performed on the man who died; the others (average age, 43 yr; average duration of castration, 34 yr) were subjected to detailed anthropological measurements and physical examinations, and skull x-rays were obtained on four of them. In: Smith L, ed, Women, men and eunuchs. Open in new tabDownload slidePhotograph demonstrating kyphosis and gynecomastia in eight Chinese eunuchs. The procedure by which the Chinese eunuchs were castrated in the late 19th century during the Qing dynasty was described in some detail by Stent in 1878 (15), and subsequent descriptions of the practice, including those by Korasow (16), Matignon (17), and Wong and Wu (18), appear to be paraphrases of Stent (15). Farewell princess. The eunuchs entered the court service at the lowest rank. In the same study the pituitary was normal at autopsy in the 40-yr-old man who had been castrated for an uncertain duration (33). The surgeon stood between the legs armed with a curved knife (Fig. Castrated men exhibit bone loss: effect of calcitonin treatment on biochemical indices of bone remodeling. In 1960 Wu and Gu (25, 26) performed careful physical examinations, including palpation of the prostate in 26 eunuchs (5 of whom had been castrated after the revolution of 1911) who lived in Beijing. It is to the credit of the pioneering physician scientists involved that useful medical information was obtained about the long term effects of castrated men, and it is impressive that all their findings (osteoporosis, failure of closure of the epiphyses, reactive pituitary hyperplasia, shrinkage of the prostate, and development of gynecomastia) have been confirmed subsequently by studies of individuals or small groups of individuals or sm from the available data, namely the issue as to whether the life span of men is shorter than that of women because of the presence of testes or the absence of testes or th suppress the movement, and the theological underpinnings of the religion were described by Pelikan (8), Grass (9), and Pittard (10). In: Biblioteques des Perversions Sexuelles. a, Scalpel used by knifers for the removal of the external genitalia of the Chinese eunuchs (the blade is described as 3.7 in. In hypogonadal men, gynecomastia develops when estrogen formed by extraglandular aromatization of adrenal androgens is sufficient to cause breast enlargement in the face of profoundly low testosterone values (46). 2c) to prevent incontinence (31). Urinary retention was treated with drugs, and if it persisted the surgeon beat the patient on each visit. in length.) Redrawn from Wong and Wu (18). Some 200 eunuchs were said to have lived in the palace of Topkapi in Istanbul after the royal family had moved to other palaces (28), and after the Turkish revolution the eunuchs continued to be devoted servants until the royal family was sent into exile in March of 1924 (32). Medical studies on the Ottoman court eunuchs. Women were not castrated but were subjected to mutilation of the breasts and external genitalia. 5th series: -240 (An English translation of this article is available as Item 3 in the Cummin Collection of the New York Academy of Medicine Library).31Millant R. Zimmern for aid with the French translations.1Cumming ED. These observations of gynecomastia in castrated men are in keeping with the subsequent report by Heller, Nelson, and Roth that approximately half of men with functional prepubertal hypogonadism develop gynecomastia (45). The years that were fat: Peking, 1933-1940. Familial incomplete male pseudohermaphroditism type 1. A string was placed in the eye to prevent it from slipping into the bladder. Many Skoptzys were deported to Siberia, where they formed settlements, and the sect continued to perform castrations as late as 1927 (11). Complications included hemorrhage, infection, and extravasation of urine, but death was rare (estimated at around 2%). According to Penzer, stopping points were used by the slave exporters, and it was during the halts at such places that the castration of the boys took place (7). According to the articles of agreement with the new government, the existing eunuchs continued to be employed in the Imperial Household Department (20). Slave dealers kidnapped some, and some were sold into slavery by their parents. Likewise, in Wagonseil's description of the boys took place (7). autopsy of a 40-yr-old eunuch, the prostate gland was prepubertal in size (16 × 24 × 13 mm, corresponding to a weight of approximately 4 g) (33), a finding that is hardly surprising. 2b) was introduced into the urethra to prevent stricture formation. The physicians to the harem inspected the eunuchs on arrival to be certain that both penis and testes had been removed and reexamined them every few years to be certain that nothing was amiss (7). Alternatively, osteomalacia due to vitamin D deficiency might have contributed to osteopenia in the Chinese eunuchs (and possibly in the Skoptzy). If you burn this twice or thrice with hot irons, then, if the bird be full-grown, his crest grows sallow, he ceases to crow, and forgoes sexual activity; but if you castrate the bird when young, none of these male attributes or propensities will come to him as he grows up. 1931-1937 Eunuchry: a manuscript collection on the history of human castration with notes on the personalities of eunuchs. The wound was washed three times with a solution of boiled pepper and covered with a piece of soft, moistened paper. 1908 Les eunuques: a travers les ages. Tandler and Grosz obtained an x-ray of the skull in a 20-yr-old Skoptzy man, who had been castrated at age 10 yr and observed that the sella turcica was grossly enlarged (12). A journey in search of old China. Furthermore, it has been known since the 19th century that prostatic hyperplastic prostate (50). Some eunuchs of the Ottoman Empire were from Russia or the Balkans, but from the 16th century black eunuchs were in charge of the harem in the Ottoman court, most commonly individuals from Ethiopia or Sudan who had been castrated as children (28). Table 1.Medical studies of men after long term castrated as children (28). Table 1.Medical studies of men after long term castrated as children (28). Imperial Household Department was pervasive. Medical studies on the Chinese court eunuchs. La castration chez l'homme. [George Kates, an American, rented a house in the Imperial City in Beijing from one such couple in the 1930s, the wife having been a maid to the dowager empress (22). History of Chinese medicine, being a chronicle of medical happenings in china from ancient times to the present period, 2nd Ed.: National Quarantine Service; 233-234.20. Second, in the instances in which castration was performed, only boys with extraordinary singing ability were chosen for such a procedure, and it is likely that singing ability would be no different in men selected for castration using other criteria than in the population at large. : Princeton University Press; 981-982.5 Hamilton JB. : 7. Gender in Byzantium. Until convalescence was completed the pewter plug was only removed to allow urination. Medical studies were performed on the Skoptzy by at least three different groups of investigators. The reason for the discrepancy between the Turkish study and the other studies is not clear. The probable reasons for this apparent discrepancy are several. Furthermore, Wu and Gu reported that 9 of the Skoptzy and the Chinese court eunuchs, a nail was introduced into the urethra to prevent the horns remain unchanged in size, and the animal does not lose them... As a general rule, mutilated animals grow to a greater length than the unmutilated (3)."In contrast to the rapidity and sophistication of the early advances, studies of the physiological effects of castration in more recent times have been relatively limited (presumably because fewer castrated men are available for study), and most studies of androgen deficiency focus on hypogonadal states rather than castration (4). Some took to learning and literature and served as tutors to the royal children; others rose to high administrative ranks (28). Reprinted from Koch (13). New York: 27. The prostate in eunuchs. The average duration of castration was the same in the 3 groups studied by Koch (46 yr), but the average age at which the castration was performed (11 yr) was younger in the group with the largest pituitaries. :-.22 .: 14 . With time the opening of the urethra could become narrowed despite the use of dilators, resulting in urinary dribbling or retention, urinary tract infection, and bladder stones. :-. Male members of the sect were encouraged to take either the "great seal" (removal of the sectoum, and the testes) or the "lesser seal" (removal o of testicular secretions as indicated by the effects of castration in man and by studies of pathological conditions and the short life span associated with maleness. EORTC Genitourinary Group Monograph 10. The case is the same with men; if you mutilate them in boyhood, the later-growing hair never comes, and the voice never changes but remains high-pitched; if they be mutilated in early manhood, the later growth of hair quit them except the growth on the groin, and that diminishes, but does not entirely depart. Acknowledgements Cindy Karolikowski, Reference Librarian of the Shiffman Medical Library in Detroit, provided invaluable assistance in the initiation of these studies, and the assistance of Caroline Duroselle-Melish, Reference Library, made it possible for us to broaden their scope. The stoma sometimes required dilatation long after the castration (16-18). Tandler and Grosz described failure of closure of the epiphyses in the skeleton of a eunuch (39) and subsequently in a 35-vr-old Ottoman eunuch who had been castrated at age 8 yr (12) Koch reported that thinning of the bones of the skull was evident by x-ray in all of the Skoptzy men examined and that kyphosis was common (Fig. Byzantine eunuchs: an overview with special reference to their creation and origin. 1876 Gerichtichmedizinische Untersuchungen uber das Skopzentum in Russland (A summary of this book is available as item 12 in the Cumming collection of the New York Academy of Medicine Library). 9Grass KK, Indeed, there are no valid data indicating that castration has any effect on life span of men. It is of some interest that no mention appears to have been made of the relation between castration and singing in any of the literature concerning the Chinese, Ottoman, or Skoptzy eunuchs, whereas there was a long tradition in Italy that associated the castrated state with phenomenal singing by men both in choirs and the opera (2). : 8Pelikan E. In his Beijing study Wagenseil obtained skull x-rays on 27 eunuchs and had them reviewed at the University of Bonn where "enlargement of the sella turcica could not be found generally" (19). . Open in new tabDownload slidePhotograph demonstrating kyphosis in a 54-yr-old Skoptzy man who had been castrated at age 15 yr. It is possible that very small prostates were missed on physical examination by Wu and Gu (25, 26). Alternatively, it is possible that disappearance of the prostate is a function of castration in their study was much longer than that in any other report, recognizing that the duration of castration in the subset of men with barely palpable prostates (55 yr) did not differ from that of the group overall (54 yr). :-.42, ,,, Baylink DJ. This couple survived until the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, the wife dying of malnutrition, and the husband disappearing after being deported to the countryside (23).] After the revolution of 1961 the emperor Pu Yi retained figure head status and continued to reside in the Forbidden City. Les eunuchs de Constantinople The eunuchs were required to show the preserved genitalia to a special court official at each promotion ("inspection of the precious") to document the completeness of the operation, and eunuchs who, through carelessness or misadventure, lost the items had to borrow or rent them for display at the time of promotion. Because they believed that the second coming of Christ would occur only when the number of Skoptzys reached the apocalyptic number of 144,000, they became ardent proselytizers. J North China Branch R Asiatic Soc (New Ser. Ferdinand Wagenseil, from the Institute of Anatomy at Freiburg but then at Tungchi University in Shanghai, conducted anthropometric studies on normal men from northern China (24), and in 1930 he examined 31 eunuchs at the German Hospital in Beijing (19). Scarsdale: New York Academy of Medicine Library (59 volumes).3, ed. Hikmet and Regnault appear to have made the first medical observations on the eunuchs in Istanbul in 1901 (30). 1914 [Quoted by Kolarz (10)].10Pittard E. Urinary incontinence was said to be common and caused a characteristic odor in the unfortunate victims. 11); reprinted in: Humana C, The keeper of the bed. The Turkish eunuchs were somewhat younger (average age, 44 yr), and were either Ethiopian or Sudanese in origin and might have had higher initial bone densities (43). London: Arlington Books, pp 125-153, 1973.18, . A cicatrix formed, with healing in 4-6 weeks (Fig. 3).

