



# Father-daughter rape and other forms of sexual child abuse

A global distributional exploration with special attention to the Pelasgian Hypothesis, to Sarker's data, and to Stoltenborgh et al.'s meta-analysis

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- Cover illustration: ‘Lot and his daughters’, engraving by Lucas van Leiden, 1530; cf. *Genesis* 19:30-38.
- A comment from Comparative Mythology:
  - Although not water but fire is the element of destruction in the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet it has all the trappings of a flood story; and the ensuing incestuous relations between Lot and his daughters, as in the biblical account, are best interpreted as prompted by a classic dilemma of flood stories:
    - *if there are only few flood survivors, usually closely related as parents and children or as siblings (in this case: Lot and his daughters), the incest prohibition is often lifted so as to enable them to repopulate the world*
      - » *In other myths, however, lifting the incest prohibition is apparently considered anathema, and instead the world is repopulated through non-sexual means, e.g. by humans mating with plants or animals, or by plants or stones producing humans without human insemination*
  - In the Bible, the initiative towards this lofty goal (to which, by implication, we allegedly all owe our existence as post-Flood humans!) is attributed to the daughters, and in the strict sense Lot’s actions therefore do not qualify as ‘father-daughter rape’ – yet have often been so discussed, especially in 19th-c. CE Christian theology

# Introductory remarks

1. From Plato (who in Symposium 178 presents sexuality – Erōs -- as the child of Penia – Drive – and Poros -- Fulfilment; although the usual, but unconvincing, translation of these allegorical names is ‘Need’ and ‘Expedience’, which makes little sense) to Freud, sexuality has been recognised as one of humans’ strongest drives
2. But so has the incest prohibition, which the leading anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss even considered to be the key to human social life.
3. One central question therefore is: *under what circumstances are humans prepared to let their primary sexual impulses totally override their responsibilities as parents and their awareness of the incest prohibition?*
4. Human societies past and present display a very wide range of sexual rules and practices, but the vast majority know some kind of incest prohibition – many theoreticians have even counted such a prohibition among the universals of human culture
5. If yet in very many cases fathers, throughout time and space, yet far from universally, have raped their daughters and therefore succumbed to (3) (i.e. *let their primary sexual impulses totally override their responsibilities as parents and their awareness of the incest prohibition*), it is likely that, among other factors, differential cultural factors are conducive, to greater or lesser extent, to such ignoring the incest prohibition and engaging in intra-family sexuality.
- 6.

- Defying time-honoured anthropological traditions, the expression ‘sexual child abuse’, not unlike ‘genital mutilation’, contains a value judgement that deviates from the studied neutrality and distancing typical of classic, mid-20th-c. CE anthropology. One could imagine a cultural context where sexuality involving children would not be abuse by the standards of the actors’ own culture (male paedophilic relations in Ancient Greece are a case in point), nor involve (but this is a thought experiment that seems quite unrealistic) excessive exercise of power on the part of the adult involved. I do doubt whether there could be an ethically defensible, metacultural, neutral and objective position from which to look at, and condone, adult-child sexuality. The continued popularity of child pronography and of Internet sites offering it, suggests that at least in fantasy this kind of sexual practices appeals to millions of people in the modern world – and appeals sufficiently to make them close their eye for the obvious exploitation of the children involved. Yet the point needs to be made that using the term ‘sexual child abuse’ reflects a particular non-neutral, partisan position.
- The point just made, as to the value-laden and culturally specific, non universalising, implications of the term ‘child abuse’, needs not disqualify that term. The value-neutrality and pretended universality of the anthropological perspective is largely a form of wishful thinking. Totally consistent cultural relativism is dangerous, and ethically corrupt. A North Atlantic anthropologist dealing with a society where child killing is under certain circumstances permissible even mandatory, cannot and should not silence the protesting voice built into her by her own cultural background.
- The example is real and personal: For half a century I have been closely engaged with the Nkoya people of Zambia, I speak their language, have published and analysed their oral historical traditions, have often identified as a national-level partisan of this small and often despised ethnic group, have become their principal historian and ethnographer, and even the adopted son of one of their kings; in short, I consider myself Nkoya. Now, under certain conditions Nkoya have felt that an infant should be killed, notably when the mother had not menstruated immediately prior to conception (so that the child will be possessed by Kanga, the anti-social demon of menstrual blood); such may occur when the mother is a very young girl immediately after menarche; or when she conceived prior to her first menstruation after the last previous pregnancy. Another such condition is when an infant cuts its upper incisor teeth prior to its lower ones – normally the upper ones follow only after two months.
- I have often discussed such fieldwork dilemmas in my published work. Anthropological fieldwork is a constant balancing between (a) a perspective that is strictly local, (b) a perspective that is the fieldworker’s home culture, (c) the perspective of the fundamental unity of all of us, humans. Neither of the three perspectives suffices in itself. Together they make anthropology a uniquely human undertaking.

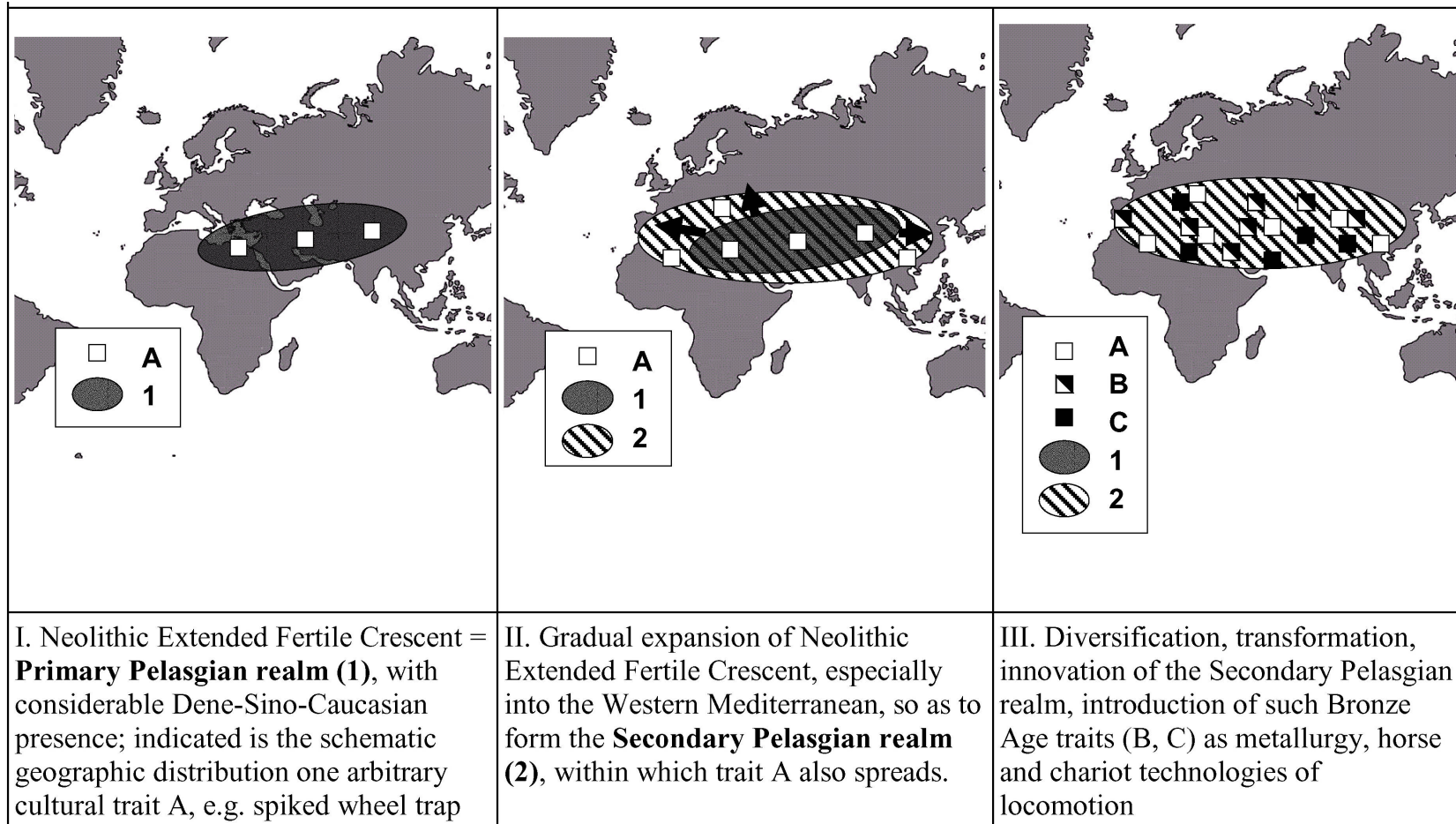
# Introductory remarks

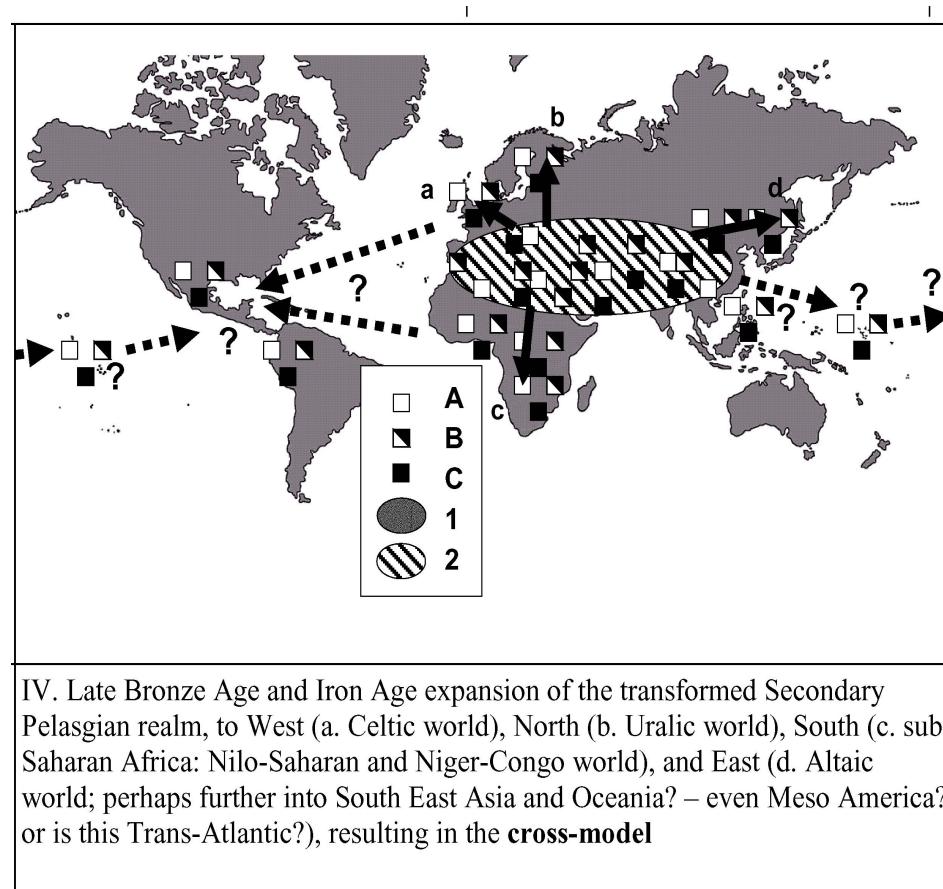
1. So we are in search of a possible, hypothetical cultural factor prompting father to be sexually irresponsible vis-à-vis their daughters.
2. The Pelasgian Hypothesis offers one possible theory for such a cultural factor: the cultural peculiarities of the so-called Pelasgian Complex, emerging in the Neolithic in West Asia, spreading to the Mediterranean in the Bronze Age, and fragmentarily spreading all across the Old World (and even beyond) from the end of the Bronze Age
3. Culture will never be the only factor of such transgressive behaviour, and is never a convincing excuse for practices that are abusive and violent towards the children involved.
4. Since the analysis, in the first part of this argument, in terms of the Pelasgian Hypothesis turns out to lead to conclusions that fail to convince on theoretical and methodological ground, in the second part I concentrate on Stoltenborgh et al.'s (2011) global synthetic meta-analysis on sexual child abuse, of both girls and boys. This may offer more convincing alternative to the Pelasgian interpretation. Yet, although our topic is of the greatest biographical and existential importance to at least a quarter of the present-day human population, we cannot hope for more than to tentatively indicate some direction for further research into the cultural history of child abuse.
5. Stoltenborgh, M.; van IJzendoorn, M. H.; Euser, E. M. & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2011). "A global perspective on child sexual abuse: meta-analysis of prevalence around the world". *Child Maltreatment*. 16 (2): 79–101
6. After decades in which anthropology all but ignored human sexuality, in recent years, a spate of sexuological ethnography has been produced often with an eye on the HIV/AIDS epidemic (and its beckoning avenues of fundability...). These concentrate on prostitution, transcontinental tourism, and other than heterosexual gender identities, and seldom touch on child rape. My recent perusal of only a part of that vast literature has brought little to light that I could applaud as confirmation of my Pelasgian Hypothesis of child sexual abuse. The present paper is intended to state, somewhat more extensively and conclusively, the case for and against the application of the Pelasgian Hypothesis to sexual child abuse. Meanwhile it is important to heed Stoltenborgh et al.'s caveat:  
    'It should be noted that most prevalence studies have not been conducted with the explicit goal to compare prevalence rates across a variety of cultures. In fact, the cultural perspective on prevalence of child maltreatment across cultures is still underdeveloped although recently some progress has been made (Mbagaya, 2010)' (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011: 86).

# A research question: hypothetical Pelasgian sexual culture

- A few years ago, when writing (in my native Dutch) a truncated autobiography of my childhood *Een lekker sodemietertje: Een kind op weg naar de poëzie* (still under total embargo because of family sensitivities), I felt I had to come to terms with the incestuous history of preceding generations of our family over at least the past century.
- Having developed, over the past decade (initially in connection with the Sea Peoples episode of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean; van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011, *Ethnicity in Mediterranean Protohistory*, Cambridge: BAR British Archaeology Reports, 500 pp.), the 'Pelasgian Hypothesis' to deal with the emergence and spread of a particular cultural package in West Asia / the Mediterranean, I formulated, in passing, what might be considered a 'Pelasgian Hypothesis of sexual child abuse'
- What in the Sea Peoples's case I could use the new Pelasgian perspective to interpret the turmoil and ethnic / military mobilisation in the Eastern Mediterranean region at the end of the Bronze Age, in terms of insurgency against state encroachment and cultural domination on the part of the two major states then existing in this part of the world: Egypt and Hatti ('the Hittites'). Pelasgian uncapturedness seemed an important motive, and goal, in the Sea Peoples's concerted actions
- Considering the alarmingly high incidence of intra-family sexual child abuse (in some West European countries, such as the Netherlands, estimated to have affected as much as 10% or more of the adult female population, in their childhood and adolescence) I suggested this could not just be due to the individual psychopathology of the perpetrators
  - But may be considered a submerged cultural trait
  - Somewhat obscured in Modern times because it was brought under control of the state and the Christian church, and because of changing patterns of informal social control,
  - But in ancient times in Western Eurasia frequently attested, and locally discussed as a cultural and religious ideal, among the Hittites, Zoroastrians, Ancient Egyptians, Ancient Israelites, etc. – in short, throughout the West Asian region coinciding with what I have termed 'the Pelasgian realm' and its cultures.
- Would it be possible to substantiate a Pelasgian Hypothesis of intra-family child abuse by reference to present-day distributional evidence? That is the question I now seek to answer using the data in Sarker's report on father-daughter rape.
- Meanwhile one wonders if this particularising, regionalising perspective, narrowing down the incidence of sexual child abuse is not doing injustice to the sheer global nature of the problem – as is brought out by the Stoltenborg data to which we shall turn below

# The Pelasgian Hypothesis, graphical summary





Please note: the ‘Secondary Pelasgian Realm’ will appear below as ‘Extended Pelasgian Realm I’; its subsequent spread in all four directions (resulting in the ‘cross model’) will appear as ‘Extended Pelasgian Realm III’



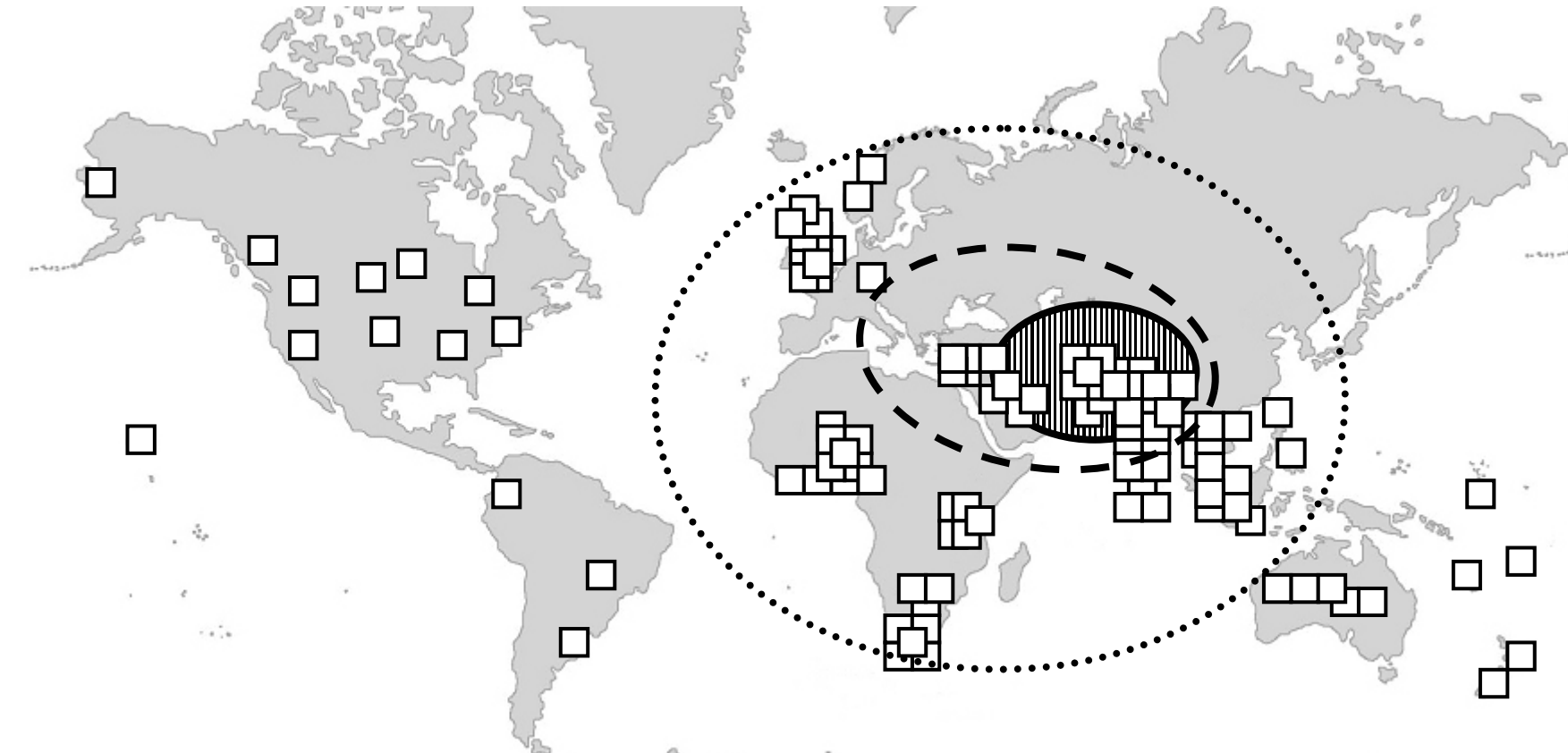
# Part I. Data set 1 (Sarker)

- Our first data set derives from:
  - 'Countries where fathers raped daughters, sons'
  - by Probir Kumar Sarker
  - Publication date: 2015-09-16
  - Which I found at Internet Archive search term 'incest' : collection 'Open Source', at: <https://archive.org/details/FatherRapesDaughterSon>
  - Uploaded by Probir Bedpan on September 20, 2015
  - It is not clear if this is a published text (it probably is), if it is reliable, and where it was first published

# A note of caution

- The data, deriving from Probir Kumar Sarker's report, of course do not constitute a random sample, and do not allow any statistical interpretation – in fact, nothing but the most impressionistic interpretation.
- The perspective is very much from the writer's home, which seems to be Bangladesh; hence South Asia is over-represented.
- Moreover cases have been included in his report which, however shocking, cannot be considered father-daughter rape, e.g. a sports coach raping a 6 year old boy, and judicially getting away with it (Argentina).
- Remarkable (and throwing comparative light on one of the most notorious recent cases of pedophilic rape in the Netherlands, that of the Baltic immigrant Robert M., who raped more than 90 infants entrusted to his institutional care) is that many of the victims are reported to be mere infants, less than five years old...
- Moreover, the reported frequencies should also be considered a function of the national rates of news coverage, literacy rate and civil rights record of the countries in question: of the countries involved – the higher a country scores on these variables, the more likely that such acts, regardless of their actual incidence and frequency, would be made public and prosecuted.
- The cases differ greatly in apparent factuality: some of the cases have been more or less seriously investigated and sentenced in court, while other cases are presented as no more than rumours or allegations – in some cases even acquitted ones.
- These data therefore must be handled with the greatest caution and skepticism.
- In the following initial geographical analysis, I do not differentiate between mere allegations and actual court sentences, but I do not include the homosexual pedophilic rape case(s) which, however outrageous, clearly did not constitute father-daughter rape.
- By and large, this is a very limited, superficial and preliminary treatment of a highly sensitive topic on which especially in the North Atlantic region an enormous specialist literature has been generated, which I cannot begin to do justice to in the present rough sketch, despite my long-standing personal and academic interest in the topic.

Father-daughter rape, conjectural rough distribution based on Sarker's data



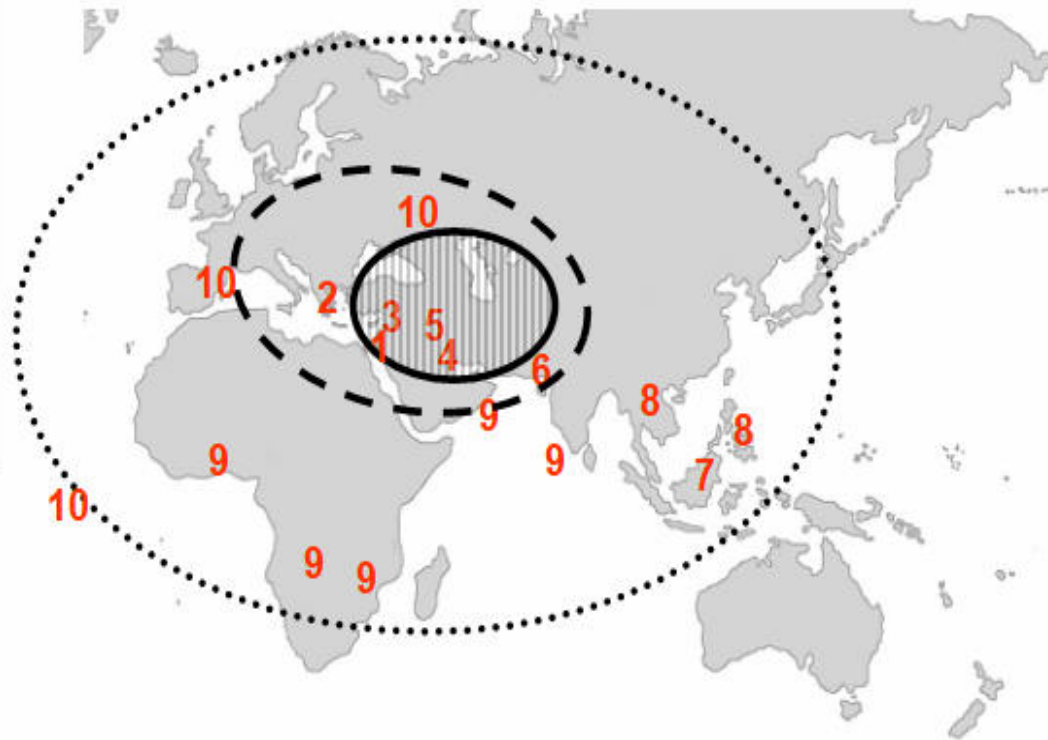
□ one recent case of father-daughter rape (Sarker);  Pelagian realm;  Extended Pelagian realm I, II

- Although the data are too defective to base firm conclusions upon, the hypothesised association of father-daughter rape with the Pelasgian heritage would seem to be considerably corroborated by these data.
- Remarkable is the paucity of reported cases in
  - North and East Asia;
  - in Europe outside the UK and Norway (but the apparent paucity is contrary to more systematic and professional reports from those areas);
  - and in Latin America.
    - Meanwhile, Claudia Llosa's impressive 2006 motion picture *Made-in-USA* deals with an imagined, fantasised case of father-daughter rape in the South American continent, in which the daughter, remarkably, fondly anticipates having intercourse with her father, on a religiously sanctioned festive occasion
- The many African cases (despite obvious obscuring factors such as low national levels of literacy, news coverage, civil rights awareness) are puzzling and will be discussed below.

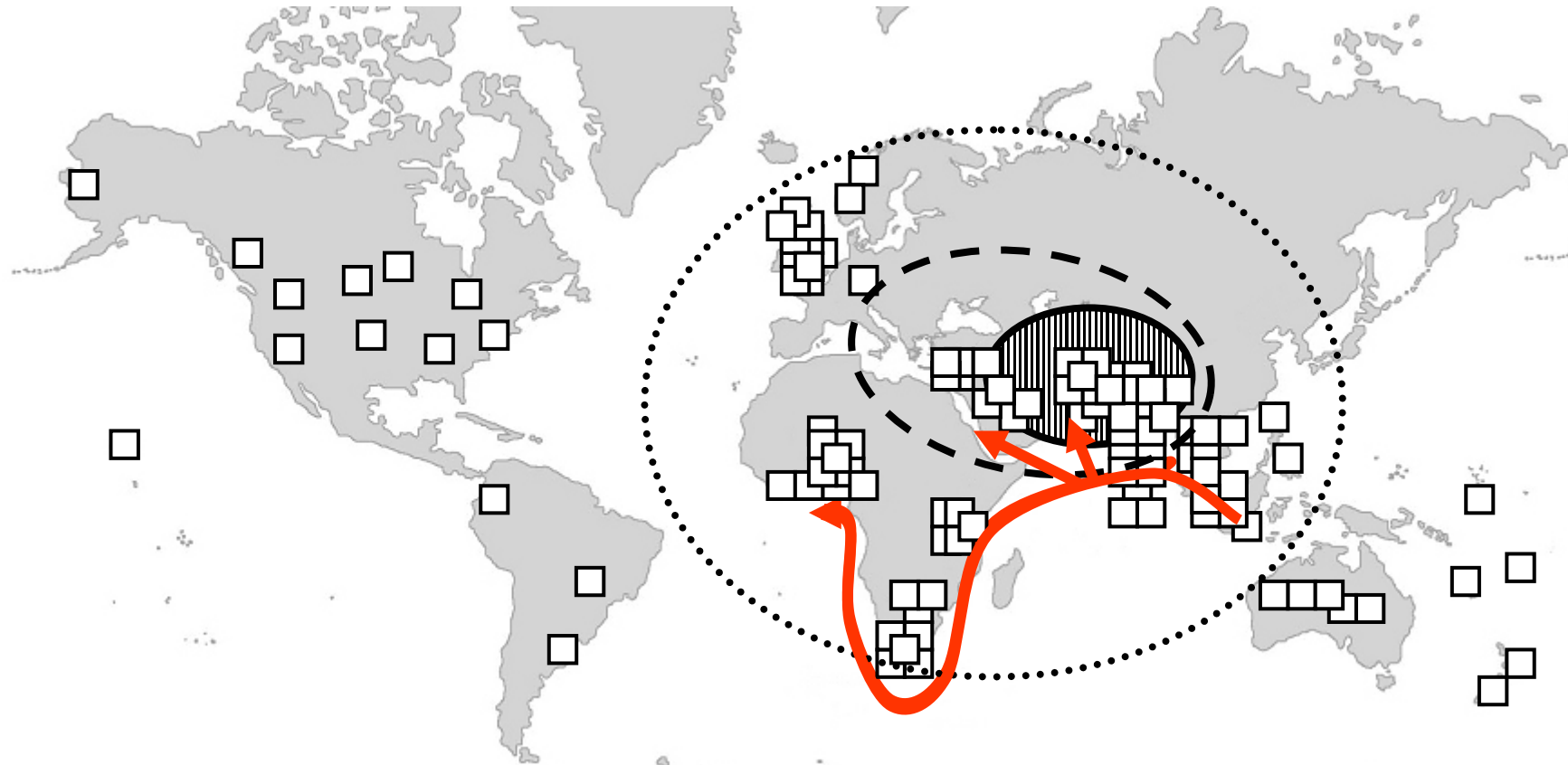
- Despite the unreliability of the data, note that the distribution's area of highest frequency also coincides with the region's of present-day international sex industry and sex tourism, especially in South East Asia – under the Pelasgian theory this may have a long-term cultural basis, as if sexuality has continued to be constructed differently there, more instrumentally and detachedly, less from a caring kinship perspective and less tabooed, then in many other parts of the world
- The African cases are puzzling, and run counter to the widespread stereotype (already largely demolished by recent AIDS/HIV studies) of African sexuality as woman-affirming and cosmologically underpinned
- In my recent work I have often and at great length discussed the Sunda Hypothesis (e.g. my books *Rethinking Africa's Transcontinental Continuities*, 2019; and *Sunda*, 2020) More light may be thrown on the African cases when we seek to interpret them (note their geographical distribution!) in the light of the Sunda Hypothesis, which is a complement of the Pelasgian Hypothesis in stressing South East Asian influence on the rest of the Old World from the onset of the Holocene onward: the Swahili Coast, South and Southern Africa, and the Bight of Benin would be the main regions of postulated Sunda influence on the African continent, see next slide
  - There have been claims by specialists (e.g. Prof. Tauchmann, a German specialist on South East Asia and its African ramifications) that vital sexual traits such as the hierarchical *ius primae noctis*, and the institution of the paramour, have spread to Africa from a Sunda origin
  - Although we must certainly resist the temptation to jump to global sexual stereotypes, there are diffuse indications for a different, more lenient and less restrictive, cultural construction and cultural practice of sexuality in the South East Asian context, both historically and at present; these indications should be made more explicit in a next version of the present argument, and their validity should be explicitly assessed.

- Even the Levantine cases may be considered in this Sunda light – Sunda is a possible explanation for the sudden emergence of accomplished nautical skills and sea harbours (e.g. Joppe, Corinth) in West Asia including Phoenicia in the Neolithic and early Bronze Ages. Through the Persian Gulf (which was alleged in Antiquity to be the origin of the Phoenicians), Ancient Mesopotamia was in close trade contact with the Indus civilisation, and according to Oppenheimer (one of the authors of the Sunda Hypothesis) all along the northern coast of the Indian Ocean indications of Sunda influence may be picked up – spuriously in many cases, but probably genuinely in others – ultimately prompted by migratory movements away from Sundaland when, by the onset of the Holocene, the polar caps rapidly melted, resulting in flooding of Sundaland and the emergence of South East Asia as a subcontinent of myriad islands

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1.  | Joppe                                       |
| 2.  | Corinth                                     |
| 3.  | Phoenicia                                   |
| 4.  | Persian Gulf                                |
| 5.  | Ancient Mesopotamia                         |
| 6.  | Indus civilisation                          |
| 7.  | Flooding /-ed Sundaland                     |
| 8.  | South East Asia                             |
| 9.  | Sporadic possible traces of Sunda influence |
| 10. | Pelasgian Realm I, II, III                  |



# Father-daughter rape conjectural rough distribution based on Sarker's data

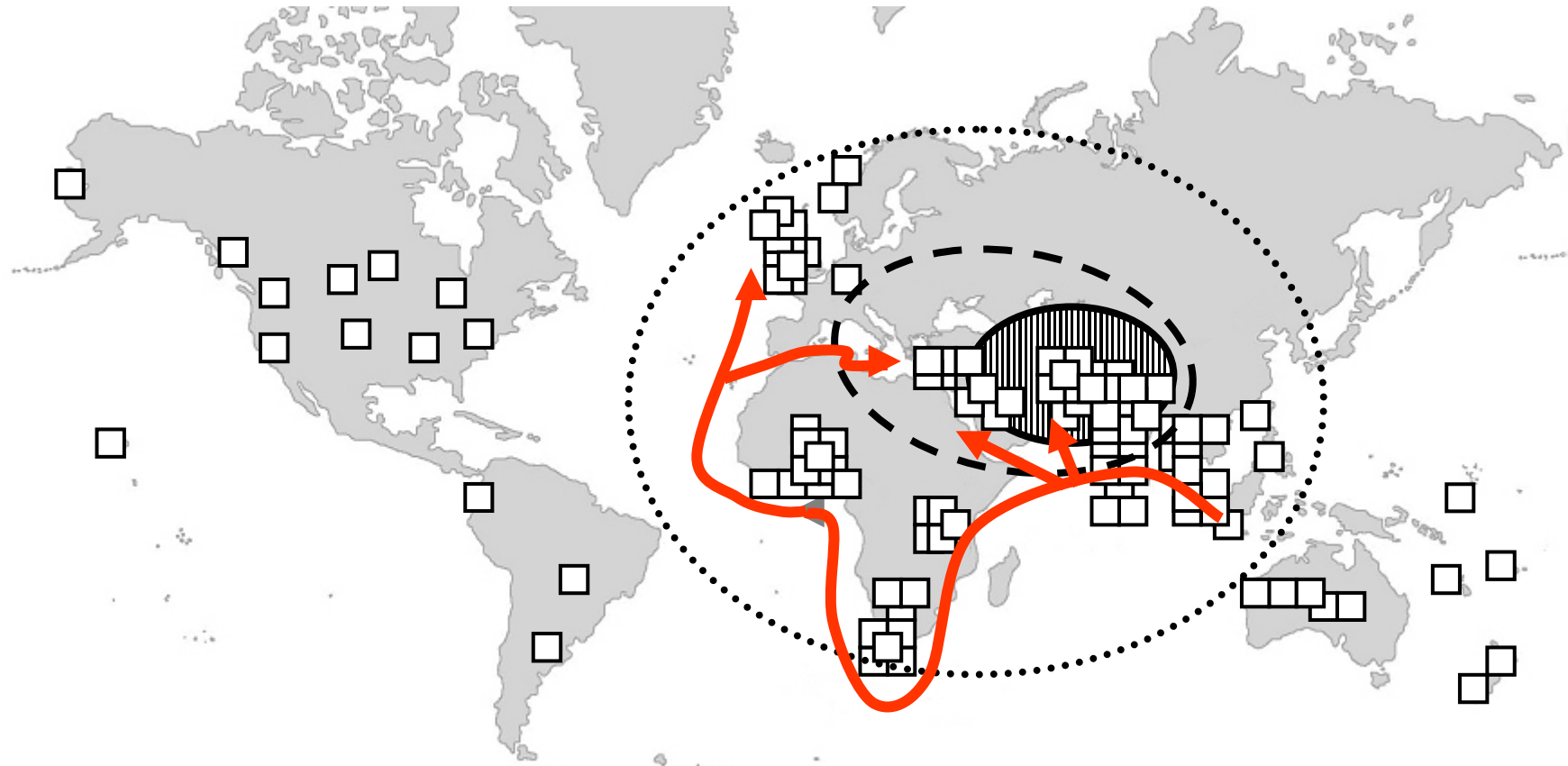


- one recent case of father-daughter rape (Sarker);
- ▨ Pelasgian realm;
- ⊙ Extended Pelasgian realm II, III
- ↪ proposed Sunda influence

- Meanwhile, the high incidence in the British Isles seems scarcely capable of explanation in Pelasgian terms. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE Levantine especially Phoenician influence in the Bronze Age British Isles was emphasised by scholars, with some ground (the tin trade); and, with Egypt, the Levant is clearly a core area of the secondary Extended Pelasgian realm. However, recent genetics analysis, especially by Stephen Oppenheimer, stress the Iberian / Caucasus connections of the circum-North Sea populations, which, while not totally incompatible with the Pelasgian hypothesis, yet is something considerably different.
- Oppenheimer, S.J., 2006, *The Origins of the British - A Genetic Detective Story*. London: Constable and Robinson
- However, in the early stages of my exploring Sunda influence in Western Eurasia, I was prepared (on the basis of some fragmented evidence) to consider Sunda influence entering the Mediterranean not only from the Levant but also via the Pillars of Hercules / Gibraltar. This would make it possible to hypothesise Early Bronze Age inroads of, highly hypothetical, Sunda sexual culture into the British Isles – but admittedly, only by a very far shot. See the next slide.



# Father-daughter rape conjectural rough distribution based on Sarker's data



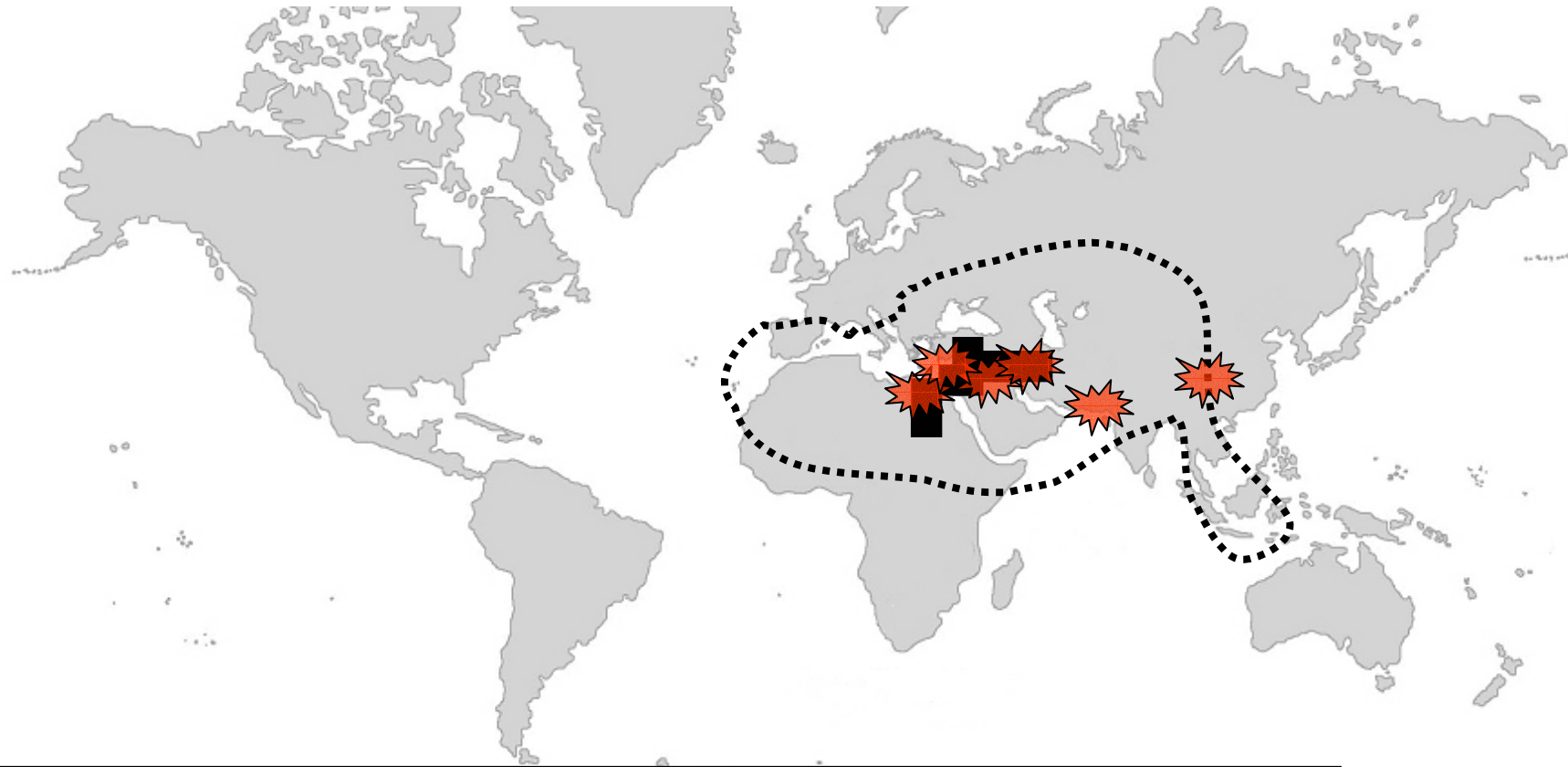
- one recent case of father-daughter rape (Sarker);
- ▨ Pelasgian realm I
- ⊙ Extended Pelasgian realm II, III
- ↪ proposed Sunda influence

- This argument is weakened by its being predicated on an implicit assumption of considerable *cultural inertia*: as if the construction of sexuality that is historically typical of one remote part of the world (South East Asia) could survive lock, stock and barrel across the millennia and across the continents – through the mere mechanism of diffusion; this kind of assumption was popular around 1900 CE, but is since rendered unlikely by the emergence, with classic anthropology, in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. CE, of a more sophisticated culture theory.
- To be precise: we have been familiar with certain cultural traits that have manifested such inertia, but they are of a very special nature: the basic patterns of myth, which have been intensively studied over the past few decades by comparative mythology. What kept them intact and transmitted, is their being built into major ritual complexes that have endured the times and give given firm support to social institutions. My recent books on Durkheim (*Confronting the Sacred*, 2018) and on comparative mythology (*Pandora's Box Prised Open*, 2022) have explored this very rich field, which has also recently been worked by some of my very brilliant colleagues, such as Michael Witzel.
- In a recent analysis (van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2022, Female puberty rites: Global distribution and historical reconstruction – a first attempt, at: <http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/topicalities/FEMALE%20PUBERTY%20RIGHTS%20LONG-RANGE%20ANALYSIS%2012-2022.pdf>) I have found that Female Puberty Rites have a similar antiquity and impact as these core myths of Anatomically Modern Humans; since such rites are implicitly or explicitly about the cultural patterning of sexual behaviour, the inertia chided in the first item on this slide may yet not be totally illusory
- Also another consideration adds credibility to the hypothetical argument presented here. It is an established fact of cultural history that the world religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Christianity) have been instrumental in the transmission of regional cultural traits which, although much older than the world religion in question, could yet seek shelter under the cloak of that world religion and thus spread widely across geographical, cultural and temporal horizons. Circumcision, shamanism, spirit possession, the use of particular musical instruments, are cases in point. I submit that this has also happened with the misogynous, pollution-obsessed, disrespectfull Pelasgian attitude of men vis-à-vis women. This may begin to explain why also regions where West Asian influence has been inconspicuous even dissimulated, such as Western Europe (recently corrected with a vengeance in the *Black Athena* debate!), yet for many centuries have displayed the same disrespectful attitudes, which probably were conveyed by world religions (hailing from the Pelasgian Realm: Judaism, Christianity, Islam) even though such attitudes may have been without much of a detectable historical basis in the regional cultures of Western Europe since the Bronze Age.
- I have argued the possible applicability of the Pelasgian Hypothesis on the basis of Sarker's very defective data on sexual child abuse worldwide. It is time to turn to a really comprehensive and sophisticated data set, and try again.

A problem with the Pelasgian Hypothesis as applied to sexual child abuse; The West Asian societies where intra-kin sexuality and marriage (in other words, close kin endogamy) are or were common, are also the places where world religions / transcendence has emerged!!

- Before we proceed to consider another, much more extensive data set and continue our global distributional explorations of sexual child abuse from a socio-cultural perspective, we must stop to reflect on a remarkable puzzle
- In West Asia, right in the region that belongs to the Pelasgian realm, we find an ancient institutionalised practice of intra-familial sexuality and marriage: among the Hittites, Zoroastrians, Ancient Egyptians, perhaps early Israelites (*Genesis*: e.g. Abram married to his sister Sarah – or was this merely a classificatory (as distinct from literal) use of the kinship term?)
- In recent centuries, the tendency towards intra-family sexuality and marriage has been attested in Arab / Islamic societies as the prevalence, not only of FBD marriage, but (as my extensive research in a North African society demonstrated) on all possible other forms of kin endogamy
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2022, *Religion and social organisation in north-western Tunisia, Volume I: Kinship, spatiality, and segmentation, Volume II: Cults of the land, and Islam*, Papers
- on Intercultural Philosophy / Transcontinental Comparative Studies, Hoofddorp: Shikanda; vol. I at: <https://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/topicalities/TUNISIA%20VOL%20I%20DEFDEFDEF8-gecomprimeerd.pdf>
- Does this reflect the Pelasgian situation in optima forma, or is it a deviation from the Pelasgian pattern?
- And either way: what explains this tendency to intrafamily sexuality and marriage?
  - A common explanation in anthropological writings has been the local actors' conscious desire to restricted the circulation and redistribution through marriage of scarce resources (wealth in cattle, natural resources such as land, pastures, springs and wells)
  - Other existing explanations of the Hittites / Egyptian patterns need to be looked into
  - To what extent can we say that these arrangements amount to a relaxation of the incest taboo?
- THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM: To what extent can we say that these arrangements spring from some form of **uncapturedness**? Or from an incomplete capability of transcendence? They exist smack in the middle of the region where major world religions have emerged! IF THIS DIFFICULTY IS NOT RESOLVED THE PELASGIAN PÉREPECTIVE ON CHILD ABUSE WHICH I AM DEVELOPING HERE, IS NOT CONVINCING AT ALL.
- Clearly, more reflection is needed on these points
- One way to begin to settle this dilemma is ny compiling and perusing a bibliography of close kin endogamy!
- But before we engage in such a systematic but timne-sonsuming approach, let us first try to make the best of available data

## Emergence of transcendence in religion and state, West Asian close kin sexuality / marriage, and Islamic preferential marriage forms



Ancient West Asian society practicing close-kin sexuality and marriage: Hittites, Ancient Egyptians, Ancient proto-Israelites, Ancient Iranians / Zoroastrians



First attestations in history (Early Bronze Age) of transcendence through religion and state



Islamic FBD marriage and other forms of intrafamily sexuality and marriage as ideal and as practiced in the most recent millennia

- As is clear from the previous diagram, we hit on an unmistakable contradiction here. Close-kin sexuality is practiced in the same region and period when transcendence through religion and state emerged. This seems to refute my suggestion as to institutionalised transcendence in religion and state as a major factor in mitigating sexual child abuse
- Further reflection on what constitutes transcendence in state and religion may help us to find a way out of this dilemma.
- Institutionalised religion, as well as institutionalised politics in the form of statehood, consist in a radical departure from the kinship order. I have argued this repeatedly in my studies of African state formation. My analyses seem to converge to the following propositions
- If the kinship order is based on
  - non-violence, reciprocity, equality of adults, and acknowledgment, celebration even, of the essential procreative powers of the female body
- -- then the transcendent religious and statal order is likely to be based on violence, denial of reciprocity, hierarchy, contempt or denial of the essential procreative powers of the female body

- In this connection it is illuminating to remind ourselves of the mythical test which the Babylonian Gods demand from their protagonist, the male solar god Marduk, in preparation of the great battle between the Great Mother Tiāmat and the new dispensation that is to replace her: he is to produce a garment (a typical female product, but also symbolic of life human tissue as given birth to by women) by the sheer power of his word (lacking the female organs of procreation).
- King, L.W., 1999, *Enuma Elish: The Seven Tablets of Creation: Or the Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind*, Escondido CA: BookTree, fascimile reprint of the 1902 edition, London: Luzac.
- Fromm, E., 1976, *The forgotten language: An introduction to the understanding of dreams, fairy tales, and myths*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, first published 1951, pp. 231 f.
- In other words, the transcendent religious and statal domain which emerges with the installation of male solar gods and with the defeat of the preceding kinship-based worldview of the Great Mother Goddess, consist of denial of the kinship order, and the discontinuous installation of a new transcendent order.
- This suggests that, even although
  - (a) the historical insistence on close-kin sexuality and marriage (which I propose to be a Pelasgian trait; but another Pelasgian trait is immanentism!) may be associated with the same West Asian region where, in the Early Bronze Age,
  - (b) the transcendence of organised religion and the state was first attested in human history (along with the emergence of writing and of proto-science),yet we are not dealing here with simultaneous and mutually integrated aspects of the same socio-political constellation.
- On the contrary, the transcendence-generating package of writing, the state, organised religion and proto-science constituted a radical departure from the pre-existing, Pelasgian kinship order, where close-kin sexuality had been taken for granted, and where immanentism was the norm – by Herodotus's account, the Pelasgians knew no gods in the advanced, Hellenic, Olympian sense .
- Henceforth, it would appear as if close-kin sexuality could only be tolerated within emphatically transcendent statal and religious contexts, such as royal marriage in Ancient Egypt, or the prophetic admonitions of Zoroaster.
- Outside such contexts, but under the sway of the newly established state and newly organised religion, close kin sexuality was forbidden – as a sign that the statal order was a radical departure from the kinship order of the past
- **However, where the state and organised religion did not (yet) extend their powers, or had already been eroded by the resilience of the older kinship order, the Pelasgian close-kin sexuality continued to prevail.**

- This would mean that ANE legal codes such as that of Hammurabi, or the Ten Commandments, or the teachings of Echn Aton, are likely to pay some specific attention to close-kin sexuality.
- Such laws are anthologised in Pritchard's well-known collection: Pritchard, James B., 1954, *The Ancient Near East relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 163 f.
- And our hypothesis is confirmed! Hammurabi's law 154 states: 154: *If a seignior has had intercourse with his daughter, they shall make that seignior leave the city.* [ which however seems fairly mild punishment – by contrast, death is a common punishment for other offences under Hammurabi's Code; being chased from the city seems to indicate: *we are aware that for some of our subjects such father-daughter incest is an acceptable practice, but no longer so in the realm of our king and Law!* I take this as a confirmation of my theory
- Other forms of incest are explicitly discussed in Hammurabi's Code and most are severely punished: a man who commits incest with a daughter in law after the consummation of her marriage will be drowned (Law 155); but the same before consummation of her marriage will only be mildly sanctioned (Law 156). A son's incest with his widowed mother will be punished by death for both perpetrators (Law 157); but a son's incest with his foster-mother will only affect his inheritance (Law 158).
- Of course we need a much closer and much more extensive study of the sources, which are available in abundance, but the above will do for now, confirming the general thrust of my argument.

# Part II. Data set 2: Another look at global child abuse distribution from a far better data set (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011)

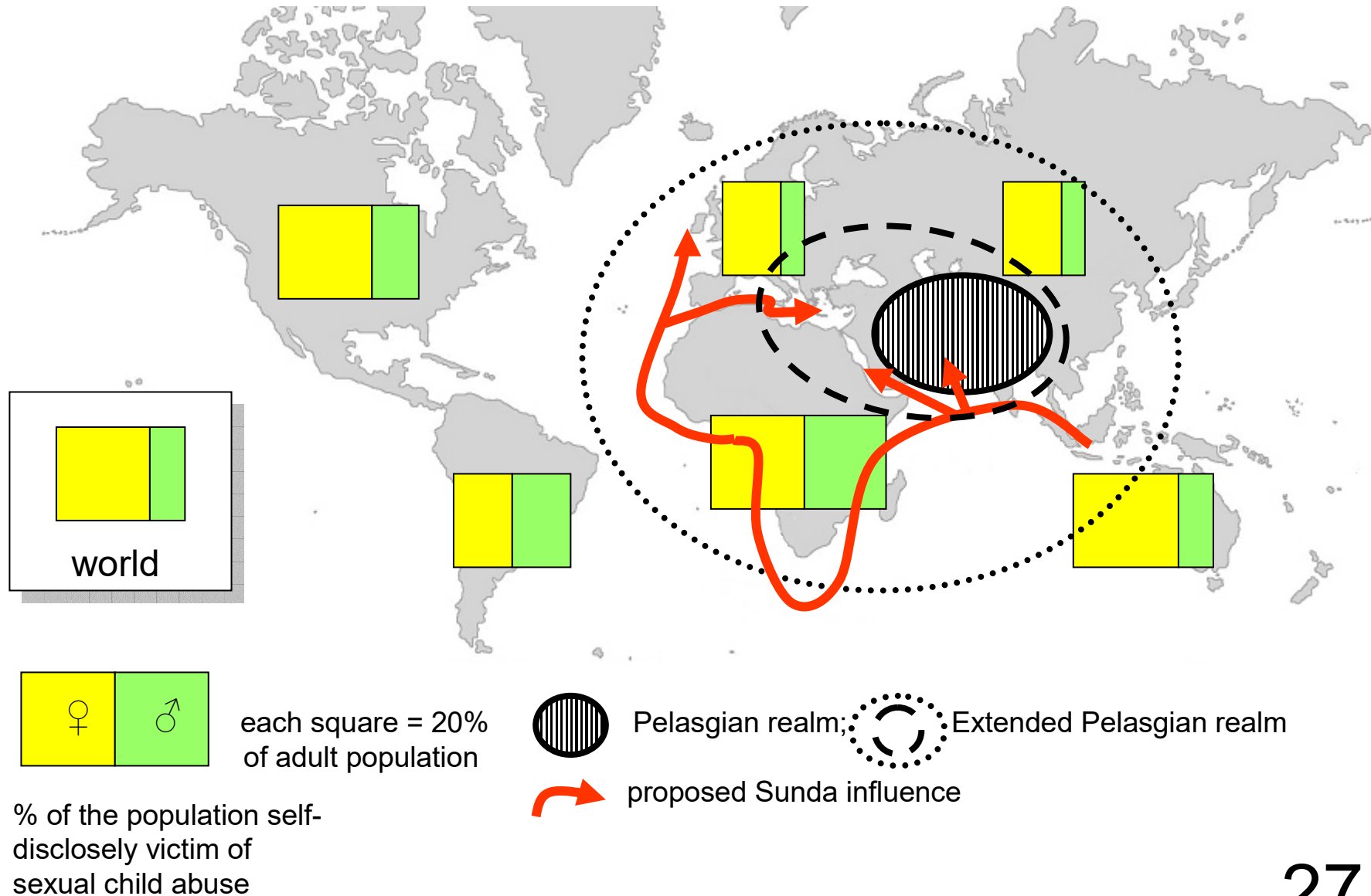
- Based on self-disclosure data, a 2011 meta-analysis of 217 studies involving in total close to 10,000,000 respondents between 1980 and 2008 estimated a global prevalence of 12.7% — 18% for girls and 7.6% for boys – of all adults responding through self-disclosure. The overall estimated CSA prevalence was 127/1000 in self-report studies and 4/1000 in informant studies – which shows how vital methodology is for this kind of sensitive topic. The paper made an enormous impact: to date it was cited by as many as 965 authors – excluding the present one.
- The rates of self-disclosed abuse for specific continents were as follows (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011; cf. Anonymous 2011):

Region	Girls	Boys
Africa	20.2%	19.3%
Asia	11.3%	4.1%
Australia	21.5%	7.5%
Europe	13.5%	5.6%
South America	13.4%	13.8%
US/Canada	20.1%	8%

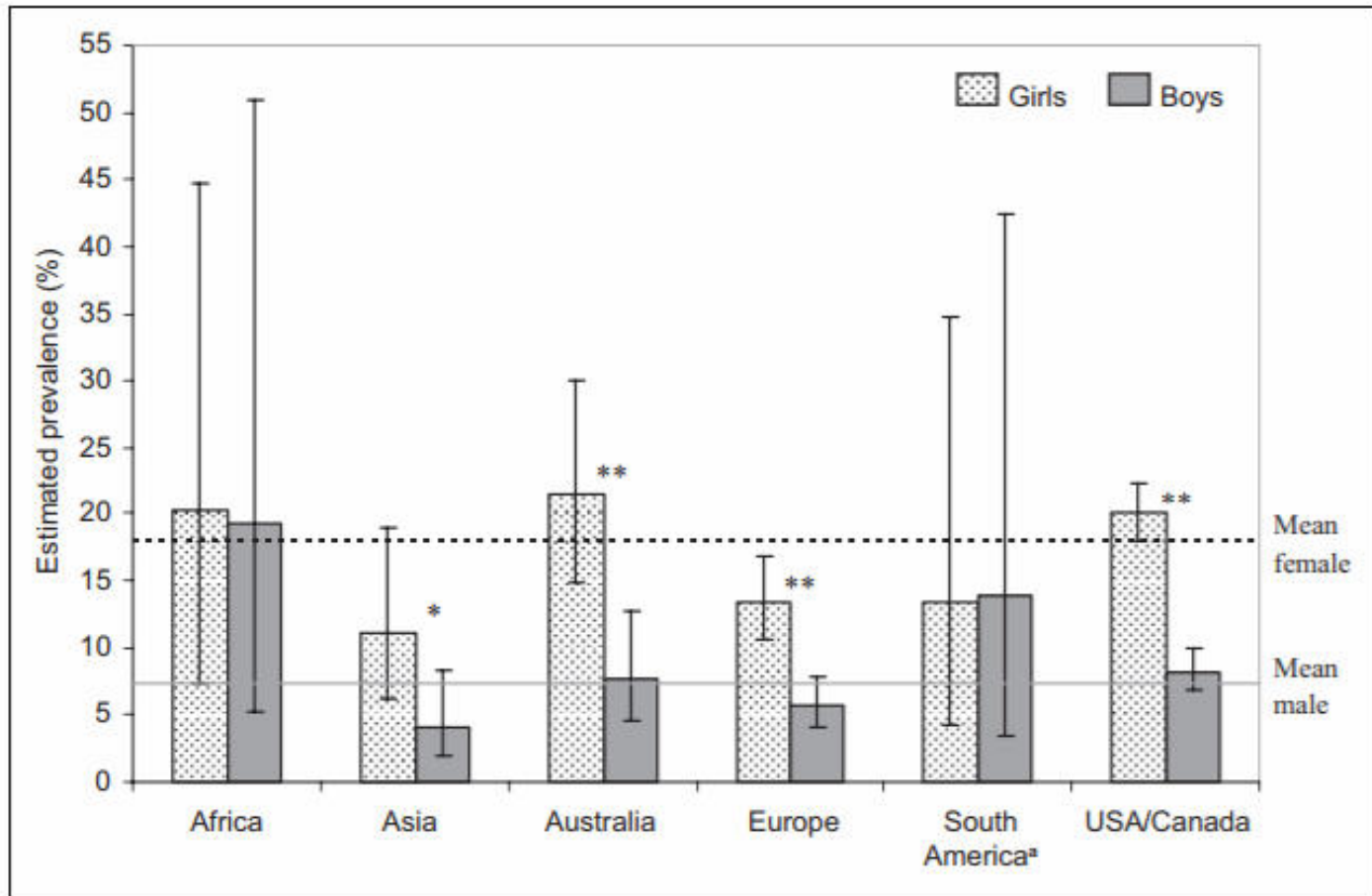
The authors attribute the high African incidence mainly to South Africa! The differences between continents appear considerable, and may be subjected to further statistical analysis.



# Another look at global child abuse distribution from a far better data set



Or, in terms of Stoltenborgh et al.'s own diagrammatic representation (2011: 86):



**Figure 1.** Estimated combined prevalence for self-report studies of CSA, separated according to geographical area of origin of the sample and to gender, including the overall combined prevalence for girls and boys. Stars represent a significant difference between girls and boys within a geographical area of origin of the sample (\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ).

<sup>a</sup>The significance of the analyses on the South American samples could not be tested, due to  $k < 4$ .

- Confronted with these far more reliable and comprehensive distributional data, we are inclined to reject the Pelasgian and Sunda explanations for global and regional patterns of sexual child abuse!
- However, we will come back to these explanations's continued potential below

## SEXUAL CHILD ABUSE WORLDWIDE, FINAL DATA RECONSIDERED

Region (Antarctica with a population < 5,000 omitted from the analysis)	Girls, Reported as abused, percentages of adult respondents	Girls, Reported as abused, fractions of adult respondents	Boys, Reported as abused, percentages of adult respondents	Boys, Reported as abused, fractions of adult respondents	Population	region population as fraction of global population	girls observed absolute figures	boys observed absolute figures	girls expected on basis of global incidence and continent population	boys expected on basis of global incidence and continent population
Africa	20.20%	0.2020	19.30%	0.1930	1,186,178,000	0.1614	119,207,938	115,035,660	80,903,533	45,737,613
Asia	11.30%	0.1130	4.10%	0.0410	4,393,296,000	0.5978	246,986,293	90,510,640	299,645,726	169,400,269
Australia / Oceania	21.50%	0.2150	7.50%	0.0750	39,331,000	0.0054	4,207,047	1,482,250	2,682,580	1,516,557
Europe	13.50%	0.1350	5.60%	0.0560	738,442,000	0.1005	49,596,851	20,779,244	50,365,600	28,473,445
Latin America	13.40%	0.1340	13.80%	0.1380	538,447,000	0.0733	35,896,467	37,337,683	36,724,897	20,761,876
North America without Mexico	20.10%	0.2010	8.00%	0.0800	453,777,000	0.0617	45,377,700	18,241,384	30,949,961	17,497,102
World-wide	13.7%	0.1370	7.67%	0.0767	7,349,471,000	1.0000	501,272,296	283,386,862	501,272,296	283,386,862

Global, girls observed (estimated) versus expected:

$I' = 3.229363E+07 = 32293630$ ;  $df=5$ ; significant,  $p = 0.000$

Global, boys observed (estimated) versus expected:

$I' = 1.309222E+08 = 13092220$ ;  $df=5$ ; significant,  $p = 0.000$

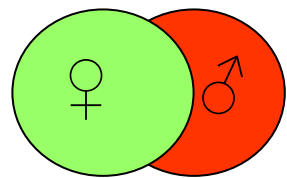
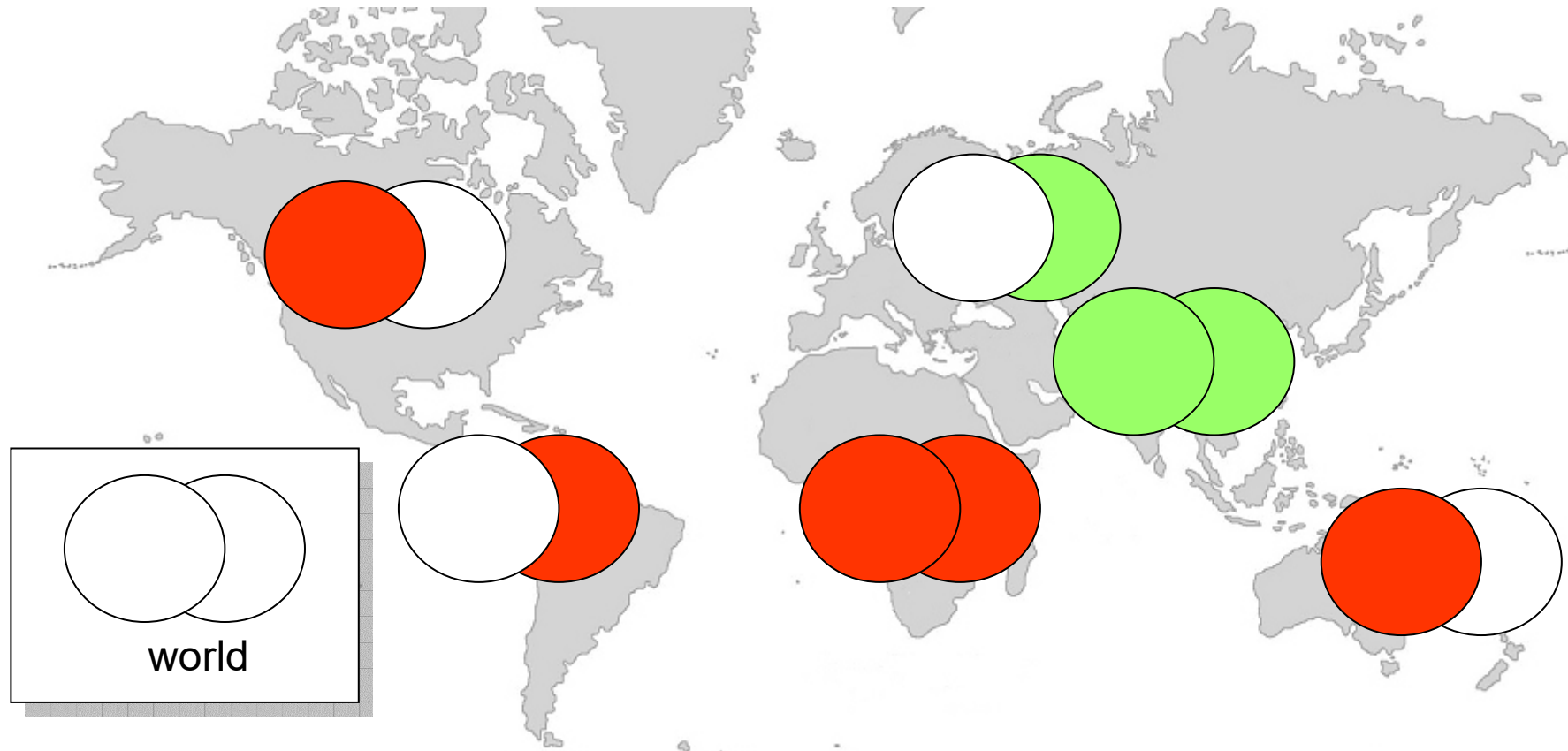
In other words, both for sexual abuse of girls and of boys, there are significant differences between the regions / continents as distinguished in the table

# Preliminary conclusion Part II

- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of both genders appears to be excessive in Africa*; the original, synthetic publication of these data attributes the African outlier mainly to South Africa. (One way to approach such data is by bifurcated statistical analysis, but that will be for later)
- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of both genders appears to be exceptionally low in Asia (including Indonesia)*. (Again, bifurcated statistical analysis, is called for.) Given the extensive impact of Asia (especially South, South East and East Asia) on sub-Saharan Africa in the most recent millennia (as explored in much of my recent work and that of others) one would have expected the African pattern to be closer to the Asian one than is brought out by these data. Also comparative ethnographic data would suggest the reported high incidence for Africa to merely reflect a local, relatively atypical situation, e.g. South Africa, rather than a consistent continental pattern. However, what distinguishes South Africa from the rest of Africa is not just higher degrees of urbanisation, globalisation, capitalism, and viable statal infrastructure, but also a more viable network of modern institutions: law enforcement and child services resembling the equivalent institutions in the North Atlantic region – in other words, the phenomena under study would be much more manifest to formal organisations, and to researchers, in South Africa
- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of girls appears to be exceptionally high in Australia / Oceania, whereas that region reflects the global pattern is so far as boys are concerned (again bifurcated statistical analysis is called for)*
  - the Australian / Oceanian case is difficult to interpret because of its heterogeneity, combining (a) for the Australian continent: the anomic, globalising effects within a former European colony with a modern urban capitalist and statal infrastructure and a predominantly White and (post-)Christian population, with (b) for much of (the rest of) Oceania: numerous scattered island communities where the inroads of the state, capitalism, urbanisation and globalisation may have been rather less extensive, and where traditional patterns of intrafamilial and sexual relationships may still have a considerable impact on the rate of sexual child abuse
- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of boys appears to be exceptionally low in Europe, whereas this region reflects the global pattern is so far as girls are concerned (again bifurcated statistical analysis is called for)]*
- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of boys appears to be exceptionally high in Latin America, whereas this region reflects the global pattern is so far as girls are concerned (again bifurcated statistical analysis is called for)*
- On the basis of these data, *sexual child abuse of girls appears to be exceptionally high in North America (without Mexico), where as this region reflects the global pattern is so far as boys are concerned (again bifurcated statistical analysis is called for)*

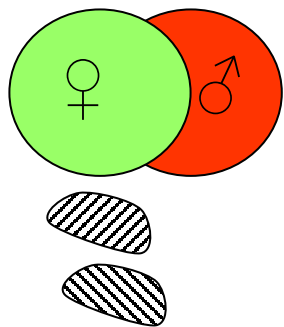
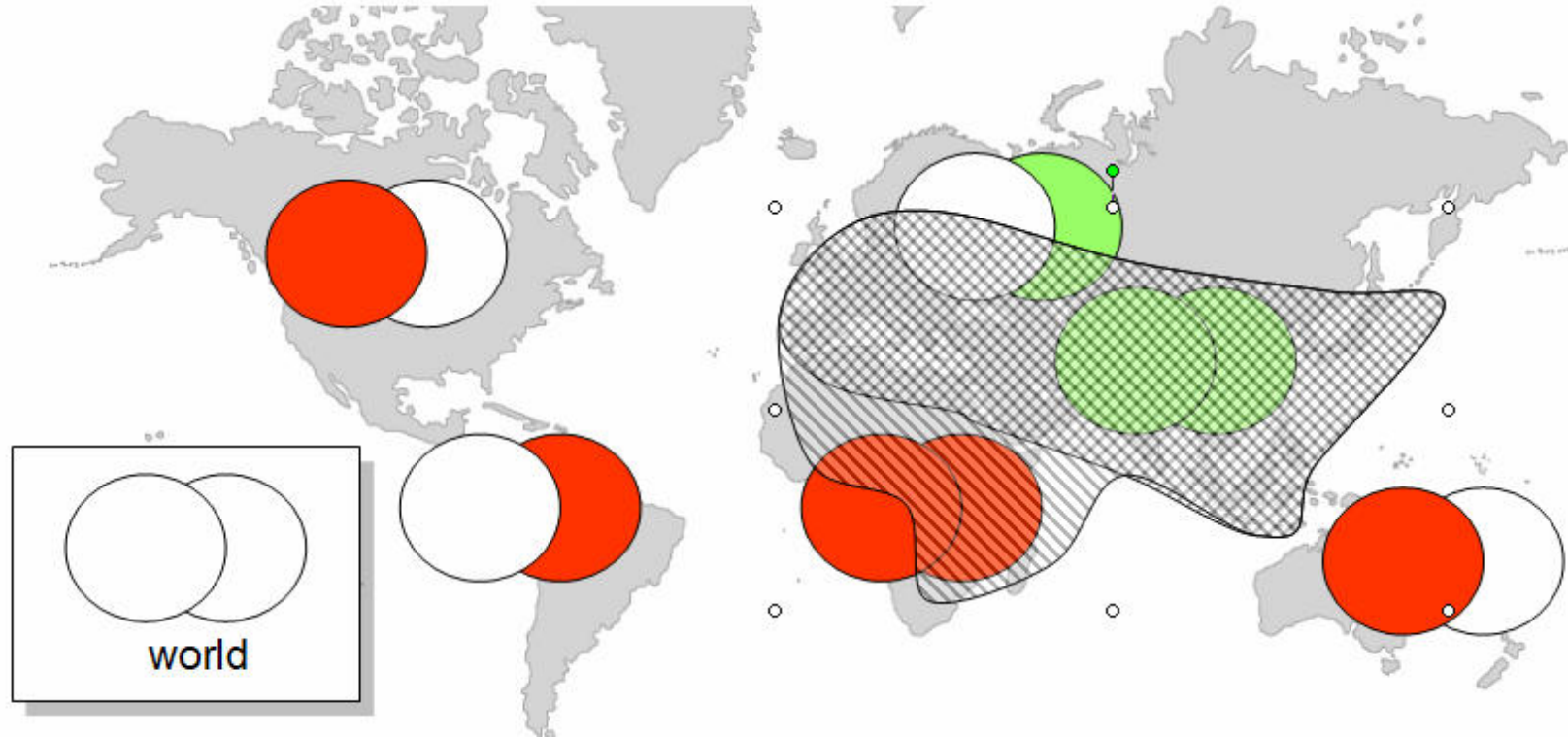
These results are surprising and difficult to interpret.

# Another look at global child abuse distribution from a far better data set



Per continent / region, results for sexual abuse of girls appear in the left-hand circle, and of boys in the right-hand circle; if the circle is white, the continent/region follows the average global pattern; if red, the continent/region has excessive abuse by global standards for the gender in question; if green, the continent/region has less than the global rate of abuse for the gender in question

# Now with historic transcendence considered



Per continent / region, results for sexual abuse of girls appear in the left-hand circle, and of boys in the right-hand circle; if the circle is white, the continent/region follows the average global pattern; if red, the continent/region has excessive abuse by global standards for the gender in question; if green, the continent/region has less than the global rate of abuse for the gender in question

Old-World region of transcendence: writing, the state, organised religion, proto-science – the cradle of world religions

Extended Old-World statal realm including sub-Saharan Africa [ EXPLAIN ]

# Discussion

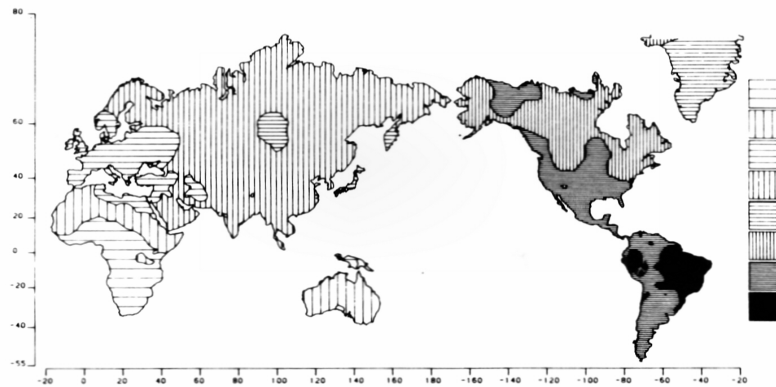
- I must confess that I am rather at a loss as to how to explain the global pattern that is emerging from the data of Stoltenborgh et al.
- In the first place let us consider the Stoltenborgh et al. data from a methodological and knowledge-political perspective. Is their data set, presenting a most favourable picture of Eurasian cultures at the apparent expense of all others, truly credible on methodological grounds?
- It is remarkable that Asia and Europe should form a region (comprising most of the world's population -- ca. 70%) where incidence of both female and male sexual child abuse is relatively low.
- One might seek to explain this finding in terms of a hegemonic or racist bias in the data and analysis of Stoltenborgh et al., but such a serious allegation cannot be made without substantiation. Inevitably (given the global politics of knowledge over the past century), much of the global ethnographic data derive from researchers and research frameworks belonging to the North Atlantic region. That Africa appears in an unfavourable light might also be explained away as a hegemonic / racist research artefact – it is commonly known that, ever since the Enlightenment (cf. the writings of Kant and Hegel, specifically), Africa and Africans have stereotypically served to complacently define, by contrast, Europe's cultural and moral superiority. However, I find such a general insinuation too facile to take seriously. If there was really such a strong North-Atlantic hegemonic bias in Stoltenborgh et al.'s synthesis, one would have expected North America to favourably side with Europe, as against other continents including Asia; and this is not the case.
- I am therefore somewhat satisfied that hegemonic racism is not the principal formative factor in the Stoltenborgh's et al.'s data. *Yet the extremely negative picture that emerges for Africa (excessive sexual child abuse of both girls and boys), is worrying, and needs critical consideration.*



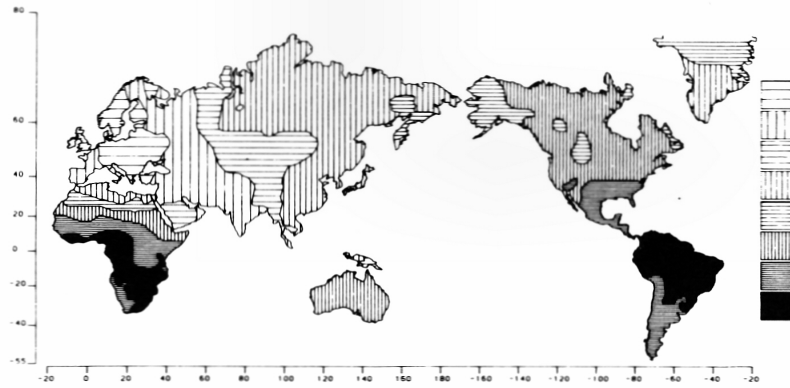
- We are generally inclined to explain differences between continents by reference to broad processes of the *longue durée*, overall geophysical features, massive population movements in history etc. Such factors are not immediately manifest in the present case.
- Although there are broad differences between continents in terms of population genetics (e.g. Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994 for detailed discussions on this point), it would give the impression of yielding to racism if we were to explain our present data in terms of genetic differences between continents
- The following seven diagrams map (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994; synthetic world maps 1 and 2 Fig 2.11.1-7. pp. 135-137) the global distribution of the first seven principal components (PCs) in terms of which the (pre-molecular-biology) distribution of classic genetic markers may be subsumed.
- If we were to find a broad genetic explanation for the regional differences found by Stoltenborgh et al. we would need a genetic pattern that clusters together most of Eurasia as against most of the rest of the world; or one that sets apart Africa especially from Eurasia, and to a lesser extent from the rest of the world. None of the PCs mapped meet these conditions convincingly, least of all the 1<sup>st</sup> PC (linking Africa and western Eurasia, thus blurring the contrast we are seeking), and best of all (but still highly unconvincingly) the third component (which is high for Africa but also for the New World and even for eastern Eurasia).



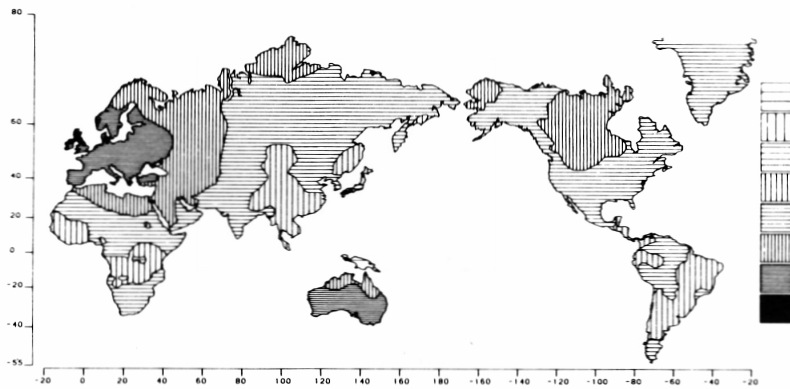
**Fig. 2.11.1** A synthetic map of the world based on the first principal component (PC). Here, as in all subsequent maps (including the following chapters), the range between the maximum and minimum values of the PC has been divided into eight equal classes. The direction of increase of PC values is arbitrary.



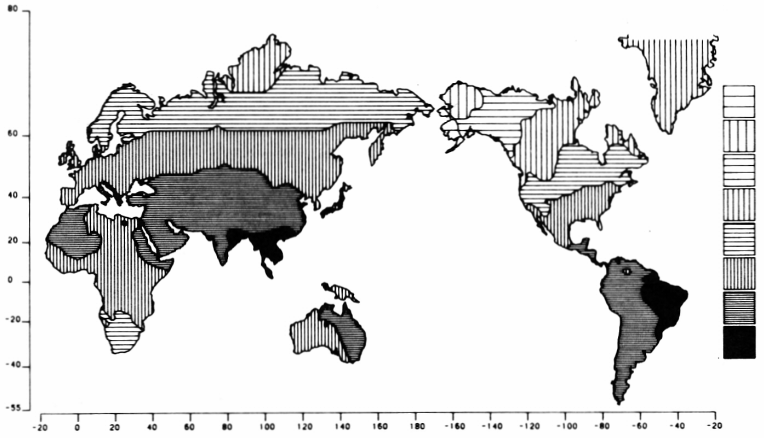
**Fig. 2.11.2** A synthetic map of the world based on the second principal component.



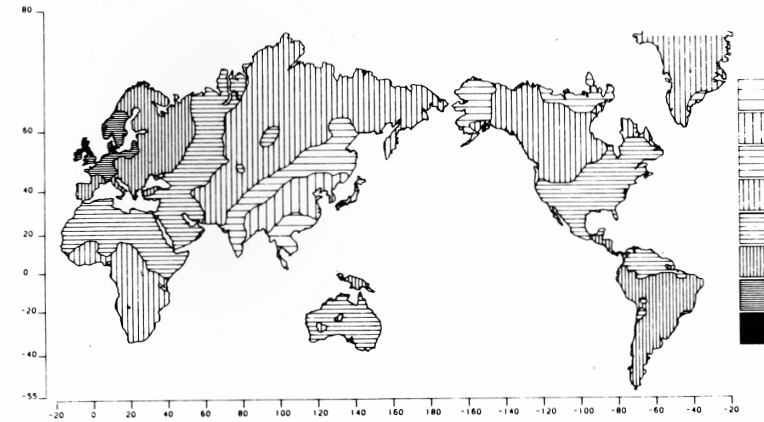
**Fig. 2.11.3** A synthetic map of the world based on the third principal component.



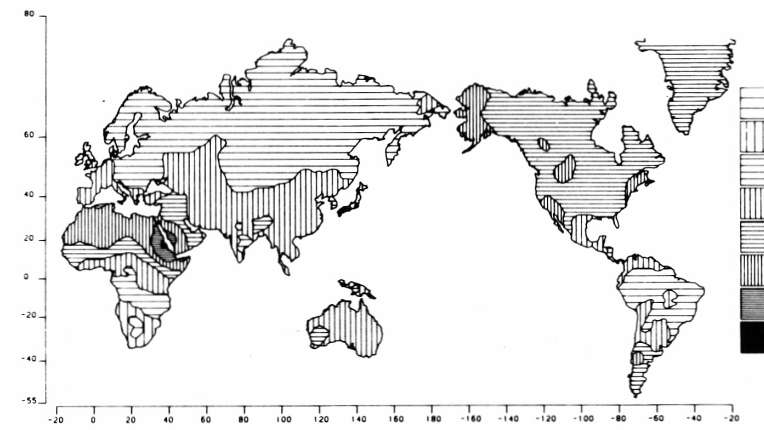
**Fig. 2.11.4** A synthetic map of the world based on the fourth principal component.



**Fig. 2.11.5** A synthetic map of the world based on the fifth principal component.

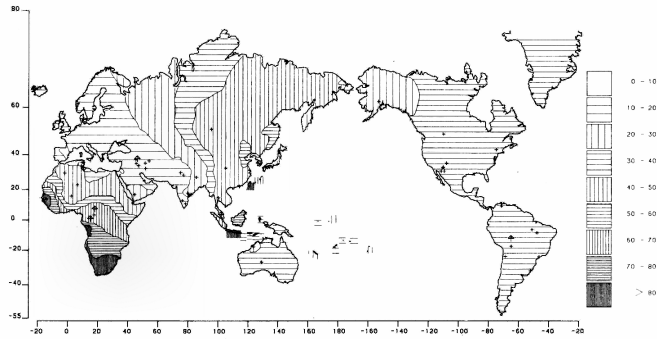


**Fig. 2.11.6** A synthetic map of the world based on the sixth principal component.

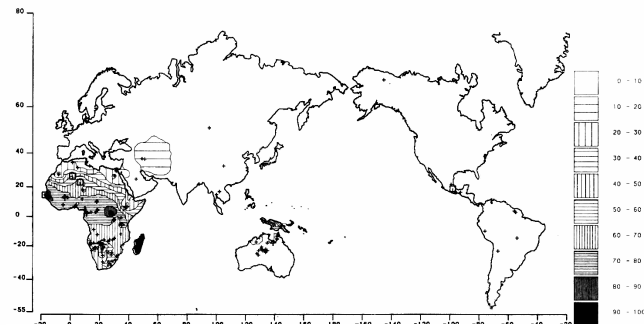


**Fig. 2.11.7** A synthetic map of the world based on the seventh principal component.

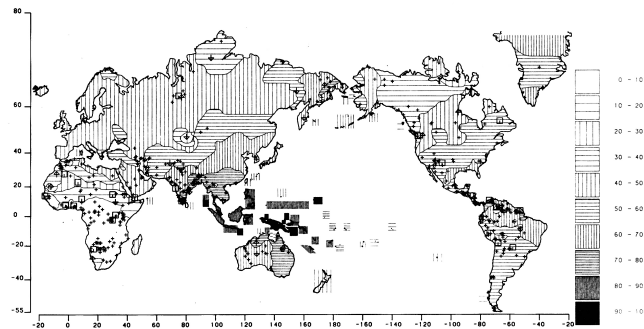
- If factoring the world genetic distributional data in PCs does not lead to helpful interpretations, we might at least be able to identify some genetic markers that display the global distributions matching the Stoltenborgh et al. data. Such a marker setting apart Africa from the other continents and particularly from Eurasia, is GC\*IF; others are:
  - IGHGIG3\*za;b0b1b3b4b5
  - RH\*C, and
  - RH\*CDe
- It is perhaps a coincidence that nearly all four of these classic markers appear to have a considerable Sunda association – as if, after all, the Sunda Hypothesis has some relevance for the interpretation of Stoltenborgh et al.'s data set; we are reminded of Trautmann's claim concerning the diffusion of Sunda sexual institutions to Western Eurasia and to Africa. But even so the relations are far from transparent. When assessing the global distribution of sexual child abuse, is there a component from population genetics which may be interpreted as a Sunda trait diffusing westward to Western Eurasia and the Africa? And does it manifest itself there, in these Western parts of the Old World, as a Pelasgian trait?



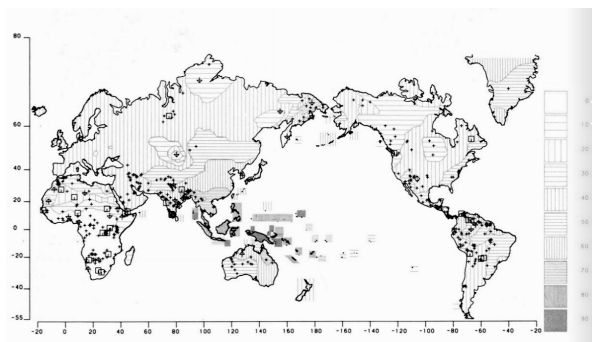
GC\*IF (high mainly in Africa and in Sunda contexts)



IGHGIG3\*za;b0b1b3b4b5 (high mainly in Africa, high also in New Guinea)



RH\*C (low mainly in Africa, high in Sunda contexts)



RH\*CDe (low mainly in Africa, high in Sunda contexts)

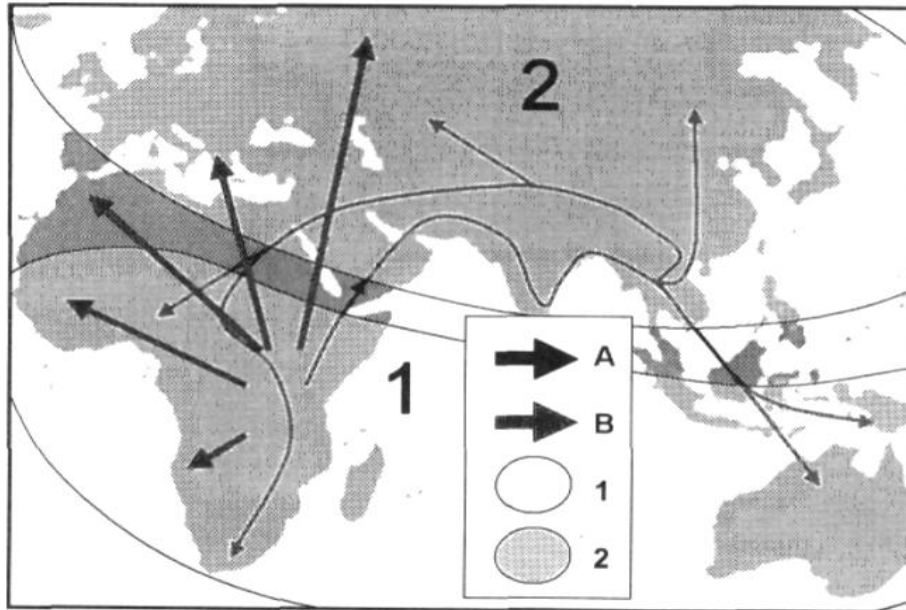
[ conclusion of the previous  
diagrams still needed ]

- Another recent model that seems to go some way towards making sense of Stoltenborgh et al.'s data is one that I have repeatedly and extensively (on my allegations of anachronism, the denial of South-North continuity and hence of the fundamental unity of humankind, and ultimately implied racism) chided in recent years: Michael Witzel's proposal (2012) of a bifurcation of the world's post-Palaeolithic cultures into two broad categories (see diagram on a slide below):
  - the so-called *Laurasian* one largely coinciding with Eurasia (although named after a Mesozoicum (252 to 66 million years ago! N.B. Humanity's age is scarcely a few million years) postulated land mass in its turn named after the St Laurens River in the N.E. of North America); this complex (to which the elaborate mythologies of the Old World belong: those of the Ancient Near East, Judaism, Hinduism, Ancient China etc.) has a mythology with real beginnings of the world and of humanity, a linear progress of time, kingship, and notions of the TRANSCENDENT supernatural
  - The so-called *Gondwana* one (named after the other Mesozoicum postulated land mass), applying to most of the 'South' cultures of Africa, South America and Australia / Oceania, and being the opposites of the Laurasian category on the points specified

Allowing for the possibility that (despite my stern criticism) there is some saving grace, and truth, in Witzel's distinction (in my recent book *Pandora's Box Prised Open*, 2022, I summarise the objections which I have raised over the years), one might argue that it is the presence of a broad TRANSCENDENT cosmological and temporal perspective in the Laurasian group that prompts the mitigation of adults' primary drives for gratification and power, and constitutes a measure of protection of children from sexual abuse; whereas the relative absence of such a perspective may then leave children rather at the mercy of more powerful adults and their sexual and power drives

- However, we should not jump to conclusions. The situation is evidently more complicated, for the oldest textual attestation of gods, in Ancient Mesopotamia, reveals a strong immanentalism; as do the god beliefs in Ancient China and Japan.





A. Out-of-Africa migration and subsequent major migrations of Anatomically Modern Man

B. Local spread of the pre-Out of Africa cultural package.

In order to highlight the basic west-east-west movement, secondary spread and feedback effects have largely been ignored

1. 'Gondwana' mythologies

- No true cosmogony or anthropogony
- From tree
- Other Laurasian traits may be absent, e.g. no Flood myths
- History as cyclical

2. 'Laurasia' mythologies

- True cosmogony and anthropogony
- Cosmic egg
- Father Heaven/ Mother Earth
- History as epic/linear
- Flood myths
- Kings and Heroes

Laurasian and Gondwana mythologies according to Witzel; after van Binsbergen 2006: 321. The thin arrowed lines trace the likely expansion of Anatomically Modern Humans (the subspecies to which all humans now alive belong, and which emerged in East Africa c. 200 ka BP) 'Out-of-Africa' (including the New World, not in diagram) and (since c. 15 ka BP) 'Back-into-Africa'. The fat arrowed lines represent B (see caption above)

This argument and idagram return in more achieved form, but essentially unaltered, in my recent book *Pandora's Box Prised Open* (2022)

Considering the sheer force of the human sexual drive it would be fair to say the following: before sexual violence can be avoided towards children, and can be effectively prohibited by law, children must be in a position to be thought of and spoken of as constituting a distinct ontological category to which specific rules apply. As I wrote in my *Before the Presocratics* (2012: 211):

*‘The capability of transcendent thought is also implied in binary oppositions. In a logic based on ‘range semantics’ [the one applying in the Upper Palaeolithic] , no firm binary opposition and no genuine transcendence can be thought. It is my contention (van Binsbergen 2012a) that not transcendentalism, but immanentalism is the default option of the world-view of Anatomically Modern Humans. Only occasionally, under very specific historical and statal conditions which happened to be met in sections of the Extended Fertile Crescent since the Early Bronze Age, does immanentalism give way to transcendentalism. The typical implication of immanentalism is repetition, when it is fundamentally impossible to escape from the here and now, and all appearances to the contrary are ultimately a disguise of the idea of an Ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen (Nietzsche 1973a, 1973b; Eliade 1954 / 1971).*

If it is transcendentalism that protects children from sexual abuse, we are not surprised that this condition obtains most of all in Asia and Europe, and least of all in Africa, where the four conditions for transcendentalism have been lacking throughout history until Modern times.

- And even so, the emergence of transcendentalism in the Ancient World was only a slow and gradual process.
- As I wrote in *Ethnicity in Mediterranean Protohistory* (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 145 f.):
 

Our two cosmogonic models [ that of the Separation of Water and Land, and of Heaven and Earth, both emerging in the Late Palaeolithic ] have a sound, rich, transcontinental empirical basis in mythical texts and iconographies from the Bronze Age and later; there the transcendent dimension is already unmistakable although usually still in *statu nascendi* – hence the immanentist, ‘down-to-earth’ orientation specialists have detected in the life worlds of Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. [ original note 319: Such statements of transcendentalism as in Akhnaten’s hymn to the Sungod, or in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (246), are far from standard in the Ancient world. Hornung (1971 / 1982) denies the applicability of the notion of ‘transcendent god’ to Ancient Egypt. Also Thorkild Jacobsen (1976) stresses the immanentist world-view of the Ancient Sumerians. However, for alternative views *cf.* Bottéro 1992: ch. 13, ‘The Dialogue of Pessimism and transcendence’; Ringgren 1947. Also *cf.* Hughes 2003. ]
- Shifting our perspective from the Ancient Near East to the most recent millennia including the present, we should not overlook the fact that many competent commentators on the religions of East Asia, especially Ancient China and Ancient Japan, have claimed these to lack true transcendent gods and therefore have cast doubt on whether these two cultures can be said to have any religion at all. [ ADD REFS ] While admittedly this is largely a matter of definition, it illustrates the extent to which transcendence may not be an ubiquitous and permanent aspects of the Old World most advanced cultures – the ones where world religions have found their cradles.

# Discussion cont.

- There is a possible link with the Pelasgian hypothesis. Pelasgians are not just early food producers emerging in Neolithic Western Asia and exerting a westbound demographic and cultural influence during the Bronze Age. They also lack the characteristic package of writing, the state, organised religion and proto-science which, from the Mediterranean to China and India, was the backbone of Eurasia's early high cultures and world religions. The earliest accounts of Pelasgoi, by Homer (*Ilias* 16.233f.), Strabo (*Geographia* 7.7), and Herodotus (*Historiae* 2:54f.), stress their non-religious, non-TRANSCENDENT, non-statal, non-centralised segmentary, orientation – and it is these characteristics which enabled me (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011) to assign a central role to the emerging Pelasgian identity in the crucial Sea Peoples' episode which ended the Bronze Age (and the Hittite Empire). The high incidence of sexual child abuse in certain niches of today's European and Asian societies (despite these continents' generally low incidence of such abuse) might be indicative of a Pelasgian SUBSTRATE incompletely captured by transcendence (as mediated by the state and world religions); if the child is not, not yet, or no longer, sacrosanct, there may be little to stop an adult from abusing it for his or her own sexual gratification.
- Or if dominant institutions declare the child sacrosanct, it could be considered an act of individual or group defiance of these institutions (a form of popular political protest in the periphery) to yet sexually tamper with the child. This might go some way to explain why, in the Netherlands, sexual child abuse appears to be endemic in outlying regions brought under central state control only relatively late (the provinces of North Brabant and Limburg; slums areas in the large cities which have been largely populated in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. CE through migration from the rural areas, including Brabant and Limburg); and why sexual child abuse appears to be rather frequent among the uneducated classes which are generally aloof from state power. But all these are preliminary (and highly stigmatising!) impressions which certainly need to be backed up by proper empirical data before they can be taken seriously.
- A case in point of declaring the child sacrosanct could be Early Modern Holland, which according to contemporary visiting foreigners – cf. Schama 1987 – had elevated both the child and the wife to levels of respect unprecedented in Europe in those times. What has been written on sexual child abuse in that time, especially in Holland? And what caused the exceptionally elevated position of women and children there?

- Perhaps making a connection between sexual child abuse, transcendence, the state and world religions seems a bit far-fetched. Perhaps the following argument makes the connection more acceptable.
- Considering the strength of sexuality as a driving force in human action, one needs strong inhibitions to curb that force, to restrict it to legitimate partners in legitimate situations, notably marriage, and to refrain from yielding to that force in kin situations defined as subject to the incest prohibition.
- Among the main institutions curbing unbounded exercise of sexuality we may mention:
  - strong social and judicial control sanctioning forms of sexuality locally defined as illegitimate
  - state control doing the same
  - world religions doing the same
- Whereas some forms of incest prohibition is found in all known human societies, societies may differ in the extent to which they demand strict and absolute observance of this norm, and are capable of enforcing such demands by strict and absolute sanctions.
- Such absolute strictness may be difficult to realise at the local, more or less informal, level, but is characteristic of institutions such as the state and organised religion, whose essence is that they constitute an impersonal, distance, transcendent level superimposed above that of face-to-face relationships of a kinship nature.

- Here we may also derive additional inspiration from the work in Africanist political anthropology of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Authors like Hyden, Bayart and Geschiere [ ADD REFS ] were then struggling to define that specific nature of politics in twentieth-century, post-independent African societies. To their puzzlement they had to admit that, contrary to the North Atlantic modern situation where the domain of politics appeared to be bounded and not coinciding with the whole of social life, the recent African political domain seemed unbounded. Everything, from students' protest over their campus meals to prostitution to religious sects and movements, managed to attract the attention of state power, and by implication could be taken as an expression of protest and defiance vis-à-vis state encroachment, especially in the part of individuals, groups and communities who were less closely involved in and captured by modern state power: e.g. peasants, the urban poor, the unemployed, migrants, religious leaders notably those founding leading African Independent churches, people working in the informal sector, prostitutes and criminals.
- With the advent of territorial Independence in most of sub-Saharan Africa in the course of the 1960s CE, political studies began to focus on 'state penetration' [ ADD REFS ] : the extent to which Independent central state power and its bureaucracies as inherited from the colonial state managed to actually make itself felt on the grassroots level, and effectively influence peoples' lives and determine their choices. Effective state penetration thus began to feature as the mirror image of '*formes populaires d'action politique*' in which at the local level subjects of the newly Independent states could express their defiance, non-belonging, non-capturedness.
- I now submit that, rather than to be considered as a case of unfortunate, uncontrollable direct yielding to sexuality as a major driving force, often sexual child abuse, in Africa and worldwide, may be interpreted as a mode of 'uncapturedness' vis-à-vis the state and the dominant world religion(s) in regional society. And hence even as a political expression of non-belonging, non-submission, political defiance and protest.

- Also for the African case this is a promising perspective, because in that continent powerful, centralised states, world religions, and transcendence in general happened to have been relatively little developed during the last few millennia; whereas precisely where South Asian influence has been demonstrably strong in pre-colonial times, such as among the Nkoya (see below; and my 2020 *Sunda* book, for details), the rate of child abuse, for both genders, drops to a low as compared to other African contexts.
- But must we seek an explanation by reference to the *longue duree*? Doing so would have been convincing if global cultural history would offer the picture of undisturbed cultural inertia from Late Palaeolithic or from Neolithic times onward – but (outside the field of myth and religion) there is very little to support such a view. The non-Eurasian regions now associated with excessive sexual child abuse in the Stoltenborgh c.s.'s data, are also those that (with the possible exception of Africa) have been most effectively uprooted in recent centuries through mass immigration from Europe, the imposition of European languages, cultures, socio-political institutions, and world religions, urbanisation, globalisation, commoditification. I submit that continental differences in patterns of child abuse might in the first place be explained in terms of culture and of relatively recent cultural history *i.e.* of the last few millennia. Taking recourse to processes extending over nearly ten millennia, the Pelasgian and Sunda Hypotheses might, after all, not really be suitable tools in the present context.
- For further illumination, let us compare the cases of North America and Australia / Oceania, as they emerge from the Stoltenborgh et al. data

## Gondwana' cultural inertia, or recent anomic socio-cultural change? North America and Australia / Oceania compared

- North America and Australia / Oceania emerge as comparable from the Stoltenborgh et al. analysis in that both regions reflect the overall global pattern for boys but show excessive sexual child abuse for girls. What these two regions have in common is that their native, indigenous cultures have been virtually destroyed in the course of the last few centuries, so that any patterns of sexual child abuse that emerge can hardly be attributed to time-honoured local / regional cultural patterns (especially systems of kinship, reproduction, family life and social control) of long standing, but may largely be interpreted as fundamental erosion of such cultural patterns as a result of rapid social change, urbanisation, transcontinental migration, globalisation, world religions. In Australia / Oceania some recourse to the Gondwana category of Witzel's model might still be made, but in North America, where Native American cultures have been largely wiped out or reduced to token identities within a generalised national modern culture, to appeal to Gondwana themes would be utterly anachronistic and unrealistic.



- A fairly similar case could be argued for Latin America. Also here currently active and dominant communities and cultural groups (at the expense of Native Americans) tend to have a local time depth of only a few centuries if even that, and recent change is likely to have largely obliterated any time-honoured cultural patterns (especially systems of kinship, reproduction, family life and social control) of several millennia's standing. But why such changes should have led to a globally average rate of girl abuse, and higher than global rate boy abuse, is not so easy to explain in the Latin American case.
- In many ways Medieval Arabian / Islamic culture, from West Central Asia to Spain, was the heir of the Ancient Mediterranean cultures of Hellenic Antiquity, Hellenism, and Imperial Rome. Perhaps a submerged strand of North African, Islamic and Arabian culture in the Iberian SUBSTRATE of Latin American culture goes some way to explain the emergence or persistence of patterns of Ancient Mediterranean male paedophilia not noticeably emerging elsewhere in the present data set.
- Perhaps more to the point is the military, male-dominated and often celibate male clergy-centred pioneer connotations of early Latin American culture, as it emerged from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium CE. That the male clergy of world religions (especially Christianity and Buddhism) is often a factor in the sexual abuse of male children has become abundantly clear in recent decades as far as the Roman Catholic church is concerned, but the literature reveals parallels in Buddhism. These factors may also have been at work in North America (the literature reveals parallels, for both sexes perhaps, in Protestant Missions in North America) and (perhaps with a penitentiary slant) Australia, bringing the sexual cultures of these continents to deviate from the ancestral Eurasian standards that (with all their immense shortcomings) against the light of our present data set would appear to be relatively benign to both girls and boys, -- and to bring these two continents closer to what was to emerge as the world average pattern.

## Discussion: the case of Africa

- For me as an adoptive African, the peculiar position of *Africa* in the present research context remains the hardest nut to crack. Why should the African continent far exceed the global average as far as abuse of both girls and boys is concerned? By contrast, there is a widely held stereotype about African women as being relatively independent, autonomous, enterprising, and equal to men, as compared to their sisters in other continents. Moreover, among Africanists, the continent of their specialisation hardly stands out, subjectively and colloquially, as a place where boys tend to be abused more than elsewhere on the globe – rather on the contrary.
- To back up these misgivings, let me summarise aspects of the sexual culture of the Nkoya people, with whom I have lived and worked intensively ever since 1972. (For further details also see my recent piece on Female Puberty Rites, and references sited there). After that we will return to the merits of Stoltenborgh et al.'s image of African patterns of child abuse.

# A glimpse of Africa: The case of the Nkoya of Zambia

- I have done intensive ethnographic and historical research with the Nkoya people of Zambia for half a century, and in view of the African findings of Stoltenborgh c.s.'s careful synthesis I can only express amazement. Speaking the Nkoya language, having largely internalised the Nkoya culture, having been an adopted family member and prince, and having been confronted with hundreds of witchcraft cases and other secrets, *in all these years I have never once spontaneously come across a case of sexual child abuse, father-daughter rape, etc.* I wrote extensively on Nkoya sexuality, and have a comprehensive idea of their constructions of incest.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1987a / 2003b, 'De schaduw waar je niet overheen mag stappen: Een westers onderzoeker op het Nkoja meisjesfeest', in: van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., zzz& Doornbos, M.R., eds, Afrika in spiegelbeeld, Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, pp. 139-182; English version: 'The shadow you are not supposed to tread upon': Female initiation and field-work in central western Zambia', paper presented at the Third Satterthwaite Colloquium on African Religion and Ritual, University of Manchester/ Satterthwaite (Cumbria), 21-24 April, 1987; revised version in: van Binsbergen 2003b: ch.3, pp. 93-124, also at: [http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/intercultural\\_encounters/Intercultural\\_encounters\\_FINALDEFDEF9.pdf](http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/intercultural_encounters/Intercultural_encounters_FINALDEFDEF9.pdf)
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2011, 'Shimmerings of the Rainbow Serpent: Towards the interpretation of crosshatching motifs in Palaeolithic art: Comparative mythological and archaeoastronomical explorations inspired by the incised Blombos red ochre block, South Africa, 70 ka BP, and Nkoya female puberty rites, 20th c. CE.', PDF, 70 pp., 4 tables, over 50 illustrations (originally written March 2006; greatly revised and expanded January 2011; draft version), [http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/ancient\\_models/crosshatching\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/ancient_models/crosshatching_FINAL.pdf) [ check this URL ] also as a Powerpoint Presentation: [http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/ancient\\_models/crosshatch/index.htm](http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/ancient_models/crosshatch/index.htm)
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2022, Female puberty rites: Global distribution and historical reconstruction – a first attempt starting from the Zambian Nkoya people, at: [http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/topicalities/Female\\_puberty\\_rites\\_and\\_biblio\\_FINAL2.pdf](http://www.quest-journal.net/shikanda/topicalities/Female_puberty_rites_and_biblio_FINAL2.pdf)
- Among the Nkoya, in ways reminiscent of domestic relations in other continents, the domain of sexuality is not strictly demarcated from other forms of domesticity (cooking, bathing, cleaning, auxiliary reproductive tasks such as child care). To be a wife, or to temporarily replace a wife, involves all these tasks including sexuality as a matter of course – as is perfectly clear to everyone involved when a woman returning to her native village in order to care for her parents or to attend their funeral, asks her kinswoman or friend to look after her husband; in such a connection no questions arise as to illicit sex, and no court cases are initiated – the interchangeable equivalence of (real or fictive) siblings is simply taken for granted. This suggests a fluid boundary which may easily be crossed.
- Among the Nkoya, sexuality is recognised as one of the principal manifestations of life force, and therefore a fact of life, to which one does not say no, unless forced by strong socio-cultural prohibitions. Marriages are shortlived and adultery is common, albeit actionable in court. Girl's puberty rites and funerals are public occasions on which much illicit sex takes place on the side; and there are more such occasions..

- The concept of incest (*ku-luyana*) plays an important and multifaceted role in the Nkoya's construction of society:
  - royal incest is a common theme throughout Bantu-speaking Africa; Nkoya Kings are to engage in sister-brother incest on the night of their intronisation
  - In a common royal-court song, God is reproached for not preventing the speaker to fall in love with his sister
  - Lovers address each other with the kinship term for sibling
  - In the light of the overall notion of sibling equivalence and interchangeability, close affines (brothers / sisters in law) are considered standard partners for extramarital sex, even though such relations are considered *ku-luyana*
  - There is an incest prohibition between clan sisters and brothers, but it is occasionally violated.
  - Luyana is also the Nkoya name for the royal dynasty of their western neighbours, the Lozi / Barotse of the Zambezi floodplain, whose origin is supposed to lie (like the origin of all post-Flood humanity in general) in an incestuous sibling pair
  - The contacts between a son-in-law and his mother-in-law are surrounded by complex prohibitions and avoidance which are generally enacted, but those between daughter-in-law and fathers-in-law are more lenient – the daughter may expect advances from her father-in-law, and is to avoid his toilet site
- With these richly elaborated notions of domesticity and incest, one might expect father-daughter incest to be actually practiced or at least to be attended as a mythical theme among the Nkoya, but to the best of my knowledge, it is not. (However, Mbagaya, 2010 also covers sexual child abuse in Zambia, and might have contained relevant additional data on this point were it not that her close to 200 Zambian respondents were all university students – a category under which the remote and relatively deprived Nkoya minority is scarcely represented)



*Photo: A novice (with headscarf) during the final coming-out ceremony of Nkoya puberty training, facing her mentrix – usually a non-kin woman one generation up; Mukunkike, Kaoma district, Zambia, 1977*

The Nkoya people have an elaborate system of child protection. Whenever a parent is seen to lay too heavy a burden on a child (e.g. making it carry too large a bucket of water), other adults, especially women, protest, ridicule the perpetrator, shame the latter by undressing themselves in public before his or her eyes, begin to sing insulting personalised songs, and exact a fine in cash. The rights of children are thus championed by all adults, and are not easily infringed upon. The Nkoya people also have a system of explicit and extensive sexual training for pubescent girls (but no longer for boys, since ca. 1900 CE). They also have a system of human rights in which women's and sexual rights are remarkably explicit and woman-centred. Any sexual intercourse is considered rape, and as such actionable in court, if the woman has not explicitly and verbatim been asked permission, and expressed her consent. E.g. having sex with a sleeping woman is considered not only rape but also sorcery – as with a corpse – and actionable in court. Against this background the familiar, contested border zone between consent and assault found in sexual cultures all over the world, is remarkably narrow in the Nkoya case. The possibility of a close kinsman *accidentally slipping* into raping his junior kinswomen is *nihil*. The sanctions are in the first place public exposure and ridicule, and (when taken to court, as is usual) a considerable fine. This must also be a factor in the public invisibility, not to say non-occurrence, of father-daughter incest.

- Female puberty training teaches young women (among many other things) to expect unwelcome avances from men, also from their own kin, and their standard response is lenient and complying, even if they feel contempt and indignation; pretending (e.g. by inserting a superfluous pad into their underpants if any) to be menstruating is often their only defence. Much socially-generated sexual energy is effectively dissipated by standard forms of joking, by which institutionalised joking partners (belonging to specific pairs of clans) may both directly allude to sexuality and even touch erotic bodily zones, without the slightest offence, and without any actual sexual acts being supposed to take place. Probably, what most effectively protects a pubescent girl (*kank'anga* – ‘a person possessed by K'anga’, the spirit or demon of menstrual blood), is that without the purifying action of the female puberty initiation rite, to have intercourse with them is considered to be life-threatening, as is sex with a woman who is menstruating, or who has not menstruated since recent childbirth (the child born from such cosmologically forbidden intercourse is to be killed upon birth). Men do fear violence and witchcraft, but they fear little more than the powers of Kanga. Girls during puberty training are taboo, and move about the village completely, from head to toe, covered by a blanket.
- On the other hand, Nkoya girls should not be misrepresented as lacking sexual initiative and as persisting in a pristine state of sexual innocence. From about age 15, girls in the villages tend to have their own dwelling accommodation and to sleep with whosoever they admit there; this may result in court cases and fines since the lover is supposed to infringe on sexual rights that have not yet been transferred, through marriage, from the girl's male relatives. An unmarried girl's child born out of wedlock is a welcome addition to the generally very low-fertility Nkoya families, and not in the least resented. Moreover, one of my oral sources states that (apparently much like pubescent girls of the neighbouring and culturally related Kaonde; Melland 1967) pre-puberty girls, aged nine or ten, would roam the forested countryside not only to engage in secretive collective extension of their labia by pulling, but also to entrap stray adult men and have intercourse with them.
- One of the principal findings of my ongoing Nkoya research in the last two decades has been the recognition of the very strong South Asian socio-cultural-political influence there. This may explain why the Nkoya pattern remains close to the Eurasian pattern and perhaps deviates considerably from what emerges (rightly or wrongly) as a general African pattern from the Stoltenborgh c.s. data
- My specific, deliberate research into Nkoya sexuality did not explicitly extend – so far -- to rape, child rape, father-daughter incest, and other forms of sexual abuse, mainly because these transgressions did not present themselves as issues in Nkoya life as I have come to know it. But I cannot rule out the possibility that my own background as a child from an incest-ridden European nuclear family made me inadvertently close my eyes to whatever cases may yet have come my way. More likely, however, is that that biographical condition has alerted and preoccupied me more, than if these topics could have remained neutral to me since childhood.

- In classic anthropology, marriage has often been considered (cf. Bohannan 1949) to consist in the transfer, to the husband and his family, of several distinct types of rights over a woman, notably the right in uxorem (over domestic services and sexual services, the right in genitricem (over her reproductive capabilities in other words over her offspring).
- Among the Nkoya these distinctions are not made in quite the same way. An unmarried girl's premarital sex is considered her incidental partner's infringement on the procreative / sexual rights which, until marriage and especially until the completion of the agreed marriage payment, are considered to reside with her senior consanguineal kin. Yet the apparent implication that until that time the male relatives have a personal active sexual right over the girl is never enacted, to the best of my knowledge. The offence is actionable in court and the incidental partner is to pay a fine, literally as if he has stolen the senior kinsmen's right. This cultural arrangement in principle makes it very well conceivable that the senior consanguineal kinsmen also consider themselves to have a straight-away sexual right in the adolescent girl, and may occasionally exercise this right.
- However, although I spent close to half a century in close and continuous association with the Nkoya people and made a specific study of Nkoya family law (van Binsbergen 1974, 1977) I have never come across any extended case among the Nkoya, let alone a specific court case, where such rights were positively claimed let alone exercised by the senior consanguineal kinsmen. It is possible that these implications are considered so shameful or taboo that they never entered conversation with a relative stranger / outsider like myself – although, after nearly half a century of Nkoya research, when I made the grade to adopted son and one of the heirs of King Kahare Kabambi, there is little else to highlight such hypothetical continued outsidership.

# Back to Africa in general; methodological and theoretical assessment of Stoltenborgh et al.

- I cannot determine off-hand to what extent the Nkoya case is representative for sexual patterns throughout the immense and immensely diverse African continent. Throughout Africa, transcontinental influences especially from South, South East and East Africa are increasingly revealed by recent research. So in regions (like Nkoyaland) where such influences are particularly strong, more of an Asian than a standard African sexual pattern may prevail, in deviation from the picture painted by Stoltenborgh et al. But even apart from such transcontinental influences, much of the pattern that emerges, for Africa, from their synthesis does not look like the Africa I have incessantly, night and day, engaged with, and studied, (and not just in Nkoyaland) for the past fifty years.
- The intellectual metaspace in which secondary or tertiary syntheses such as Stoltenborgh et al.'s situate themselves, often seems too abstract and abstruse to relate to real-life situations on the ground. It has been a truism in anthropology for half a century that surveys tend to sketch a very different situation than the ethnographic finely-meshed descriptions by the ethnographer on the ground (Leach 1967 with many affirmative responses visible under Google Scholar). I am not in the least against quantitative methods in social analysis, and have used them with some expertise (van Binsbergen 1977, 2017; van Binsbergen with Isaak 2008). A new scion on this stem, Big Data, addressed by sophisticated but virtualising mathematical techniques, may be an interesting tool for future social science research, but as long as the data on the ground remain subjective and selective as ethnographic accounts invariably are, and quantitative surveys tend to be conducted without sufficient attention to the problem of respondent trust and how to establish and verify it, we must fear that such synthesis create and pervert and illusory reality rather than represent social facts.



- Stoltenborgh et al. do realise that their data do not necessarily reflect real life incidence, but are at least socio-culturally filtered to the extent to which in the actual socio-cultural situation in question, a respondent may disclose personal experiences of having undergone sexual child abuse. Thus they suggest that the low incidence of sexual child abuse for both genders as reported for Asia, has more to do with the allegedly 'collectivist' nature of 'Asian' society which makes reporting less possible, than with actual low incidence (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011: 86). The same factor is invoked to explain the unexpectedly low incidence of sexual child abuse of girls in Latin America (ibidem) – but they apparently do not realise that, if this were the actually explaining factor (and it obviously is not), it would apply to boys' abuse as well, and the reported incidence of male sexual child abuse in Latin America is far above global average. By the same token, the high incidence reported for Australia and New Zealand is largely explained away by Stoltenborgh et al. Because these are 'individualistic' countries where inhibitions to speak of sexual experiences are considered to be lower ((Kenny & McEachern, 2000b; Runyan, 1998). The classification into individualistic or collectivistic derives from Hofstede 2001 – a respected colleague but methodologically a crudely sweeping comparativist whose classifications reflect little awareness of the specific subtleties of local culture. For Stoltenborgh et al. it comes almost as an afterthought that the differences between regions as brought out by their meta-analysis may be caused by differences in disclosure culture, and may not go back to real differences – not so much in incidence on the ground, but in 'real socio-economic and cultural differences' (Stoltenborgh et al 2011: 86); for this the comparative study of three African countries by Mbagaya 2010, largely based on questionnaires submitted to university students (hence a very selective, a-representative selection from today's African populations) It is remarkable that in the substantiation of this ambiguous statement (ambiguous because it fails to distinguish clearly between socio-cultural-economic background variables, and actual incidence of sexual child abuse) only African examples are pressed into service:

'On the African continent, initiation rites representing the "transition into adulthood" in early and mid-adolescence may encourage sexual behaviors with older persons (Mbagaya, 2010). Myths associated with HIV cure and avoidance strategies may increase the prevalence of CSA in sub-Saharan Africa (Lalor, 2008). In addition, young partners are considered less likely to have HIV, and are thus preferred as sexual partners (Madu & Peltzer, 2000). Furthermore, Madu and Peltzer (2000) pointed out that the male dominant society in South Africa may be responsible for high CSA rates because men in such societies feel that they have authority over women and children. The socialization of African children to unquestioningly obey older people puts them at risk for sexual abuse by people to whom they are expected to pay their respects (Lalor, 2008; Mbagaya, 2010). Lastly, the rapid social changes in Africa along with increases in urbanization and individualism have led to greater isolation of families. In situations where children are left with biologically unrelated caregivers when parents go to work, the risk of sexually abusive experiences increases (Mbagaya, 2010).'

- Stoltenborgh et al. fall into the familiar trap of this type of global comparative studies, in assuming that socio-economic conditions and national segmentation into ethnic groups – merely because these background variables happen to be available for analysis -- hold an automatic explicatory values for the phenomena of sexual child abuse.

‘With respect to the level of economic development of the sample’s country of origin, significant differences were found for boys but not for girls. *For boys, the combined prevalence was higher in low-resource countries than in high-resource countries.* When ethnicity was used as a moderator on the subsample of studies with samples originating from the United States and Canada, differences between ethnic groups were found for boys but not for girls. *For boys only, the combined prevalence for African American samples was higher than for Caucasian samples.* No significant differences were found related to the age of the respondent at the time of the study, indicating a comparable combined prevalence for studies using respondents younger than 20-years-old, 20–30-years-old, and older than 30 years.’ (Stoltenborgh et al. 2011: 84; my italics)

Nonetheless, my overall hypothesis of non-capturedness (by the state and/or a world religion) appears to be well in line with such findings: people outside the dominant strata of their society seem to be more linkely to engage in sexual child abuse than those more consciously and firmly upholding the norms of their dominant class in society

- Stoltenborgh et al. emphasise the *South African* element in their African findings. In the South African subcontinent, of course, over the past two centuries very much the same factors have been at work which I indicated for Latin America, North America and Australia: the erosion and near-destruction of time-honoured local and regional patterns of cosmological (including gender and sexual) signification and social control, by urbanisation, globalisation, world religions, etc. World religions, especially Christianity specifically Roman Catholicism, may also be partly responsible for the apparent slant towards the abuse of male children in Southern Africa. An additional factor here may be the institution of male initiation camps, where sexual teaching might perhaps have a homosexual component. The recent emergence of a stilted, artificial, intellectual version of *ubuntu* as a societal ideology in South Africa is merely a sign that older systems of internalised social control and behaviour have become destroyed by social change, and now need to be replaced by a new, artificial ideological construct (van Binsbergen 2001). For other parts of this large continent (especially the North-, West- and East Africa) Islam may be considered an important factor. Incidentally, Islam goes through a marked expansion throughout Africa, including Southern Africa.

# Overall conclusion

- What I have suggested so far are only preliminary hypotheses, which should be subjected to further analysis and testing before they can be taken seriously.
- The suggestion made in Part I of this argument, as to the presumed leniency and flexibility of sexual patterns in South East Asia, is not clearly borne out by Stoltenborgh et al.'s data. But since South East Asia is there subsumed (in the somewhat restricted, insular form of Indonesia) under Asia as a whole, this conclusion can only be extremely preliminary.
- To come back to the leading question of my argument: Does the preceding analysis put PAID to the Pelasgian and Sunda explanations of sexual child abuse, advanced in the beginning of this argument?
  - Stoltenborgh et al.'s outcome to the effect that Eurasia (i.e. Asia and Europe in modern times) would have lower levels than world-wide of both female and male child sexual abuse, in principle runs counter to my Pelasgian Hypothesis of female child abuse as a submerged Pelasgian cultural pattern. Admittedly, the Pelasgian Hypothesis stipulates (according to the 'cross' model applying after the Late Bronze Age) considerable Pelasgian impact upon South, Central and Northern Europe (as well as on Central, South and East Asia, on Africa, and further afield) but this immanentist, segmentary, Late Bronze Age influence has meanwhile (as all of Old World socio-political history shows) been overlaid with transcendentalist, statal, and literate elements so as to mitigate the Pelasgian element. *Yet it is very conceivable that such mitigation has consisted, specifically, in the relegation to a SUBSTRATE position. In this form I propose to retain the Pelasgian Hypothesis of sexual child abuse: as a manifestation of the perpetrators' periferal, uncaptured and defiant intransigent socio-cultural, political and religious position – even although genetic, kinship-anthropological and psychological dynamics are likely to constitute additional factors of sexual child abuse which need to be subjected to further research.*

# References cited

- [ still to be compiled; ]