

1400 Years of Inbreeding
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Worldwide Muslim marriage practices are now under fire for a spate of genetic problems now in the Western spotlight. The birth defects and anomalies are real and their incidence within Islam is undeniable. The problem is determining if these incidences are all caused by the Muslim preference for first-cousin marriages, a practice forbidden in Judaism and Christianity.

We do not know enough about genetics to determine if this consanguinity is totally to blame, or if there are other factors. Do all first-cousin marriages produce defective children or might some of them also produce a doubling of intellectual capacity and genius? We really do not know for sure.

Since the ability of modern statistic gathering to track some of these problems, we have observed the following: Pakistani Muslims, 70% of whom have practiced first-cousin marriages for centuries (and 55% still prefer them in England) have devastating consequences. British medical authorities report that a British Pakistani family is more than 13 times as likely to have children with recessive genetic disorders. Although Pakistanis comprise 3% of the births in the UK, they account for 33% of children with genetic birth defects. IQ numbers lower than 70 increase by an astonishing 400 percent in first-cousin marriages.

In looking at other inbred groups in history, we also can see some anomalies. Throughout history, from ancient Egypt on, royal families have inbred either through close cousins, or in the case of Egypt, siblings. Outcomes were eventually terrible and could account for the fall of some dynasties. The recessive genes in the cousin marriages of Queen Victoria's children, certainly in the case of Russia, was responsible for passing on hemophilia, a potentially fatal disease in the heir to the Russian throne.

The very small gene pool of Jews living in the European diaspora became genetically noticeable too. In this case, there was enhanced intelligence but also certain genetic diseases, such as Tay-Sachs disease. First cousin marriages were never permitted, but small gene pool had consequences.

What other issues could possibly account for the terrible genetic inbreeding in the Muslim world besides the religious encouragement of this practice? It is markedly worse in rural areas and villages, and in migratory tribes. The breeding pool is naturally inadequate in such places, something the people cannot help. But religion and cultural practice drive the practice of first-cousin marriages in the urban Middle East, in Saudi Arabia (67%), Jordan (64%), Kuwait (63%), Sudan (63%), and Iraq (60%). The worst numbers are found in Nubia, southern Egypt.

The only mitigating factor within the Muslim world is the upper-class practice of polygamy: bearing children to women who are not relatives, along with the offspring of the senior first-cousin wife. Aristocratic Muslim families have a better chance of having some normal children with such wives, and their wealth can provide a better diet and an education, factors that can enhance health and intelligence.

Saudi Arabia is a fascinating test case of the consequences of rigorously practiced first-cousin marriages. Lockheed employees training Saudi pilots on their latest aircraft noticed most had limited night vision and training retention was abysmal. Two British teachers in an upper-class Saudi boys' school told me their students were "rocks and sand," for their lack of retention and inability to learn. The question here would be: is this genetic or cultural?

Pilot trainers years ago training the Taiwanese reported that they were constantly blacking out at altitude. Was this genetic or dietary? When red meat was added to their diet, they stopped blacking out. But pilot trainers of Iraqis and Afghans have the same reports as those training Saudis?lack of retention.

How much of the problem roiling the Muslim world today is because of autocratic family practices, in addition to inbreeding? How much is due to the even lower attainments of poor Muslim women, who suffer from genetic deficiency, diet deficiency, and lack of intellectual stimulation in a secluded world?

One issue alone cannot be blamed for the entire range of problems in that culture. Over time, increasing urbanization and exposure to the world can make a needed change.

682 words

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