

## Western History of Male Infibulation- Piercing of The Foreskin by Paul King

*If enjoyed, this may be the first in a series of articles reviewing the history of piercing throughout the world.*

*This article will discuss the piercing of the prepuce (male foreskin). Other than the ear it is perhaps the world's earliest and best documented piercing. It is the author's opinion that acceptance of, and therefore information about piercing of the ear, including the lobe and cartilage, is widely available. As such, ear piercing will not be discussed in this article. Perhaps lesser-known ear piercings will be reviewed in subsequent articles.*

*This article will explore a subject that has been greatly ignored by all but a handful of scholars – Male Infibulation, Piercing of the Foreskin. Presented herein are some new thoughts and discoveries the reader is not likely to have encountered in any previous lectures hosted by the APP.*

Male Infibulation involves pulling the foreskin of the penis over the glans, and piercing the foreskin through both sides, either vertically or horizontally. In theory, this type of foreskin piercing secures the prepuce like a hood over the glans, making arousal painful and erection impossible. The procedure was usually performed with needle followed by thread until healed. Sometimes the ring or fibula (safety pin) would be inserted directly afterwards or as part of the piercing process.

Ironically, in recent times the male foreskin piercing is usually performed to enhance aesthetics and pleasure. Most modern Piercers find that typical foreskin piercings heal more quickly and with fewer complications when using barbells instead of rings. Clear records on the subject are

found from 12th century BCE through the 4th century AD, then again from 17th century until the present. After the 4th century AD until the 18th AD century no Western reference has been found. The practice fell out of vogue for about 1300 years.

The book Onania published in London in the latter part of 1715 started the journey of masturbation into the dark ages. This is “Patient Zero” in all religious rhetoric on the evils of “self-pollution.” This pamphlet (and the doctoral essays of the following generations that quoted from it) set the misconception that masturbation was injurious and evil and had to be stopped by whatever means, including piercing. The author remains anonymous.

Note that the Arabs, Greeks and Romans were not prudes. They infibulated not for fear of sin, but superstition and control. They believed young singers' voices could be kept pure and unchanged, that athletes and gladiators performed better chaste, and of course slaves' sex members needed to be controlled for breeding, protection from STDs, and the safety of non-slave women.

It seems that the resurgence of infibulation was most widely practiced in Germany around the end of the 18th century. Doctors Campe and Vogel felt piercing the flesh of the foreskin and installing an iron ring, once healed, was appropriate for “difficult cases.” Keep in mind that these operations were performed non-consensually on children.

A few scientific heretics first appeared around 1875. They thought the evils of masturbation were exaggerated and that the medical operations were barbaric and ultimately ineffective. There were those whose rhetoric clung to the past such as Freud and the Catholic Church. However, the final nail was hammered in with the Kinsey Report of 1948, revealing that 92% of the population masturbated. This closed the door on recorded incidences of medical infibulation in the western world. It is known that piercing continued in the S/M (Sado-Masochistic) underground. However since S/M was until recently considered a mental illness and illegal, records remain elusive.

As a footnote, it would seem logical that the “Prince Albert” was first practiced as a form of infibulation on circumcised men. However, a clear cut example describing the practice or of the use of the name Prince Albert, has not been traced prior to The Art of Pierced Penises and Decorative Tattoos, by Doug Malloy. So far, American books on the history of circumcision (where the operation is widely practiced) have yielded no concrete references. Exploration of LGBT archives and the Leather Archives in Chicago, (a museum dedicated to the Leather and S/M communities) should be undertaken for possible references prior to the 1970's. The smoking gun is out there it just hasn't been found.

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## Recession-proofing Your Studio

For some while, we have been hearing that we are about to go into a recession or a huge economic slow down. What does that mean for the piercing industry? Well, like a lot of service oriented businesses, we are not recession proof and will feel the crunch when it happens. I agree with the experts, and in my opinion, a recession will come.

What should you do to help get through at least a slowdown, or an actual recession? Here are some suggestions I have to help you. We have a couple of positive aspects going for us and several things against us, too.

First, if you are thinking about hiring additional employees, take a good look at the situation, to be certain you have sufficient business to do so. Ask yourself this question: "If my business slows down 20% to 30% will I still need that employee?"

Talk to your existing employees. Are they able to work a little harder and are they willing to make a little extra money? Your employees will likely prefer working

a little harder to being laid off. Explain to existing employees the reasons you don't feel comfortable hiring new help. This should boost the staff's sense of security.

Second, spend wisely. If you are thinking about a major purchase, such as a Statim autoclave or a studio air filtering system, consider leasing or renting. This will help keep more cash in the bank to be used if needed, and extend your payments over time. It may also give you a tax break as you will not be charged property tax on an owned asset. The studios that have money saved are likely to come through this slowdown in much better shape.

Third, have a budget! I'm still stunned by the number of studios that don't have budgets. This is one of the easiest ways to monitor the financial health of your company. With a budget you can easily arrange your spending priorities and utilize your capital where it is most needed.

Last but not least, seek the advice of financial experts. Most of us know a lot about piercing but we are learning about running a business as we go. We will all make mistakes and most of use will recover from them. But, it is a lot harder to

recover from a bad business move if your profit margin is down, in conjunction with slow economic conditions. Don't be afraid to consult with your CPA, lawyer, or banker. And don't forget to consult other business owners. Let them be your sounding board and you in turn can be theirs.

One of the good things piercing studios have going for them is that most of our clients are younger and many are in college. They will not be as heavily hit by a recession as their parents. When it comes to looking the way they want to look, and being who they want to be, young people will find the money. Even if it goes against what Mom and Dad want. Body art is very compelling to many people. When it comes to vital decisions such as paying rent versus getting a body piercing, people aren't always practical with their choices. This is to our obvious advantage.

One last word of advice: lowering your prices is not the way to make it through hard times. You will still have the same expenses and overhead you had before, only you will have made it worse by lowering your income. Offer quality products and services, and charge a fair rate.

.....*Male Infibulation continued*

### A General Time Line:

**12th Century BCE-** Per Mensius, Infibulation was in practice at least to the time of the siege of Troy. - Chastity Safeguards, by anonymous.

**Up to 4th Century AD-** Fragmented accounts given in the 2nd Century and after by Celsus and Oribasius, giving descriptions of the reasons and operation. -Male Infibulation, by Dingwall M.A.

**17th Century-** Surgeon, Dionis, describes the "bouclement de garçons" (the male ring), and piercing chastity, during Louis XIV, written beginning of 18th Century. (French) -Male Infibulation, by Dingwall M.A.

**18th Century-** Doctors such as Campe,

Jaeger and Vogel support infibulation as a means to stop masturbation. (German) -Male Infibulation, by Dingwall M.A.

**1822-** A detailed account of Dr. Marx's encounter with a patient who had been infibulated several times appears in the Gazette de Sante.

**1876-1892** – Dr. Yelloweas declared that he performed the operations by passing metal safety pins through the foreskin. (British) - Masturbation, The History of a Great Terror, by Jean Stengers and Anne Van Neck.

**1910-** "Self pollution- when everything else fails we have no hesitation in recommending surgical treatment. This is of various kinds, from repeated blistering to that ancient operation which Latin writers tell was practiced upon singers of the Roman stage, called infibulation." (American) Know

Thyself- Nature's Secrets Revealed, by Bishop Fallows and Dr. Truitt.

**1926-** (regarding prevention of masturbation)- "Other physicians perforate the foreskin and introduce a ring. (American) The Sexual Life of Our Time, by I. Bloch, M.D.

*My usual disclaimer:*

*I am not an anthropologist. From time to time, there will be errors. Please be understanding and forthcoming if you have information you would like to share. Please address any response to the following address:*

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