



European versus Arab Developments in Nuptiality: Challenges for Historical Demography

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The Western European Marriage Pattern (1)



Malthus (1798): Only in 'the civilized states of Western Europe' marriage was regulated through 'prudential restraints' (preventive checks).

- Result: Only Western-Europe was characterized by (1) high ages at marriage and (2) large proportions of permanent celibates.



Hajnal (1965). Hajnal drew a demarcation line from St. Petersburg to Trieste. West of this line nuptiality was low; elsewhere in the world, nuptiality was high.

- Causes: Neo-locality forced young people to delay marriage.
- Consequences: (1) System of life-cycle service to bridge the extended period as a single (2) Only in Western Europe population was balanced to its resources.

The Western European Marriage Pattern (2)



“Probably the overall age at marriage of women would in fact almost always be below 24 and indeed usually below 23 years in societies exhibiting a ‘non-European marriage’ pattern.” (Hajnal 1965:109)

“In societies with a European pattern the overall mean age at marriage of women is sometimes as low as 24.5, but usually a good deal higher.” (Hajnal 1965:109).

Proportion of Singles by Age Category

	Year	Country	Men			Women		
			20-24	25-29	45-49	20-24	25-29	45-49
Western Europe	1900	Belgium	85	50	16	71	41	17
	1900	Sweden	92	61	13	80	52	19
Eastern Europe	1900	Bulgaria	58	23	3	24	3	1
	1900	Serbia	50	28	3	16	2	1
North Africa	1952	Morocco	59	28	2	8	3	2
	1947	Egypt	69	35	2	17	7	3
East Asia	1930	Korea	33	10	1	2	1	0
	1920	Japan	71	26	2	31	9	2

Source: Hajnal (1965). 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', 101 & 102

The Western European Marriage Pattern (3)



The Hajnal-Line

The Western European Marriage Pattern (4)



Peter Laslett (1983): Divides Europe in four zones: Western Europe is unique because of the predominance of the nuclear family. Other zones characterized by more complex family systems.



Kathryn Lynch (1991) “Exaggerated version of the European marriage pattern in the cities” due to high turnover of migrants.



Karl Kaser (2001) & Michael Mitterauer (2003): zone of cultural transition between Western and Eastern European family systems



Mikolaj Szoltysek (2007): East-Central Europe is a region with significant sub-regional variation in family forms and marriage patterns: co-existence of different modes of household formation

How unique is the Western European Marriage Pattern? (1)

“The Marriage pattern of most of Europe as it existed for at least two centuries up to 1940 was so far as we can tell *unique or almost unique* in the world. There is no known example of a population of non-European civilization which has had a similar pattern.” (Hajnal 1965:101)

From the Middle Ages until WWII, Western Europe (wherever the borders are...) was the only known region in the world characterized by high ages at marriage and considerable proportions of lifetime bachelors and spinsters.

However, after WWII, nuptiality has gone down in many countries in the world. High ages at marriage are becoming more and more common in several countries in the world and in some parts of the globe universal marriage is in decline.

How Unique is the Western European Marriage Pattern? (2)

Countries which experienced a steep rise in the Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM)*

World Region	Country	Year	SMAM		World Region	Country	Year	SMAM	
			Women	Men				Women	Men
Eastern Europe	Lithuania	1989	22,3	24,7	Carribean	Jamaica	1970	21,1	33
	Lithuania	2008	27,1	29,7		Jamaica	2001	33,2	34,8
	Hungary	1970	20,9	24,8		Bahamas	1970	22,4	26
	Hungary	2007	29,7	32		Bahamas	2000	27,4	29,9
	Romania	1966	20,2	24,5	Asia	Republic of Korea	1970	23,3	27,2
	Romania	2008	26	29,2		Republic of Korea	2005	28,8	32
North America	Canada	1971	22	24,4		Japan	1970	24,7	27,5
	Canada	2006	26,6	28,6	Africa	Japan	2005	29,4	31,1
	United States of America	1970	21,5	23,5		South Africa	1980	25,7	27,8
	United States of America	2000	26	27,8		South Africa	2003	28	30,6
Oceania	Australia	1971	21,5	24,4		Réunion	1974	22,5	25,2
	Australia	2006	29,7	31,6		Réunion	1999	30,5	32,8
	New Zealand	1976	21,5	24	Latin America	Guadeloupe	1967	25,1	28,7
	New Zealand	2001	25,9	27,6		Guadeloupe	1999	31,6	34,2

Source: World Marriage Data 2008

* The singulate mean age at marriage is the average length of single life expressed in years among those who marry before age 50 (United Nations, Population Division, World Marriage Data 2008)

How Unique is the Western European Marriage Pattern? (3)

Countries which experienced a serious incline in lifetime singles

Country	Year	Proportions never-married at ages 45-49		Country	Year	Proportions never-married at ages 45-49	
		Women	Men			Women	Men
Japan	1970	4	1,9	Jamaica	1970	21,1	40,9
Japan	2005	8,3	17,5	Jamaica	2001	48,7	50,8
New Zealand	1976	4,7	7,9	Bahamas	1970	14,4	13,1
New Zealand	2006	10,2	11,5	Bahamas	2000	23,8	17,8
Latvia	1979	6,4	4,6	Réunion	1974	12,4	8,4
Latvia	2008	10,2	11,7	Réunion	1999	22,5	24,2
Slovenia	1991	7,8	9,2	South Africa	1980	9,6	9,9
Slovenia	2006	19,2	26,9	South Africa	2003	17,7	17,9

Source: Calculations on the basis of World Marriage Data 2008

Ruth Dixon (1971): The findings of Hajnal are interesting, but they do not explain why “some non-European population have shown a recent trend toward delaying marriage and in a very few cases toward increased celibacy as well.”

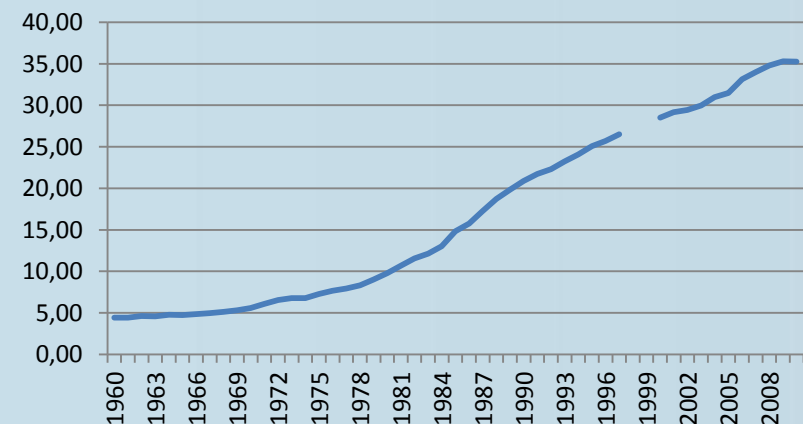
Second Demographic Transition

- The recent decline in nuptiality in Europe and North-America has been put under the header of the Second Demographic Transition:
 - Changes in family formation
 - Incline in consensual unions
 - Rise in extramarital births
 - Increase in divorces
 - Decline of fertility below the replacement level
 -

Crude Marriage Rate, 1970-today

	Around 1970	Around 1985	Around 1995	2000 or later	
				Second latest	Latest
Belgium	7,6	5,8	5,1	4,1	4,3
Canada	8,8	7,3	5,5	4,7	4,7
France	7,8	4,9	4,4	4,5	4,3
Germany	7,4	6,4	5,3	4,7	4,5
Italy	7,4	5,3	5,1	4,2	4,2
Netherlands	9,5	5,7	5,3	4,4	4,4
Sweden	5,4	4,6	3,8	4,9	5
Switzerland	7,4	6	5,8	5,4	5,4
United Kingdom	8,5	7	5,6	4,7	4,5
United States of America	10,6	10,1	8,8	7,6	7,2

Proportion of Out of Wedlock Births in Europe*



Source: World Marriage Data 2008

Source: Eurostat * European Free Trade Zone

The Marriage Revolution in the Arab World (1)

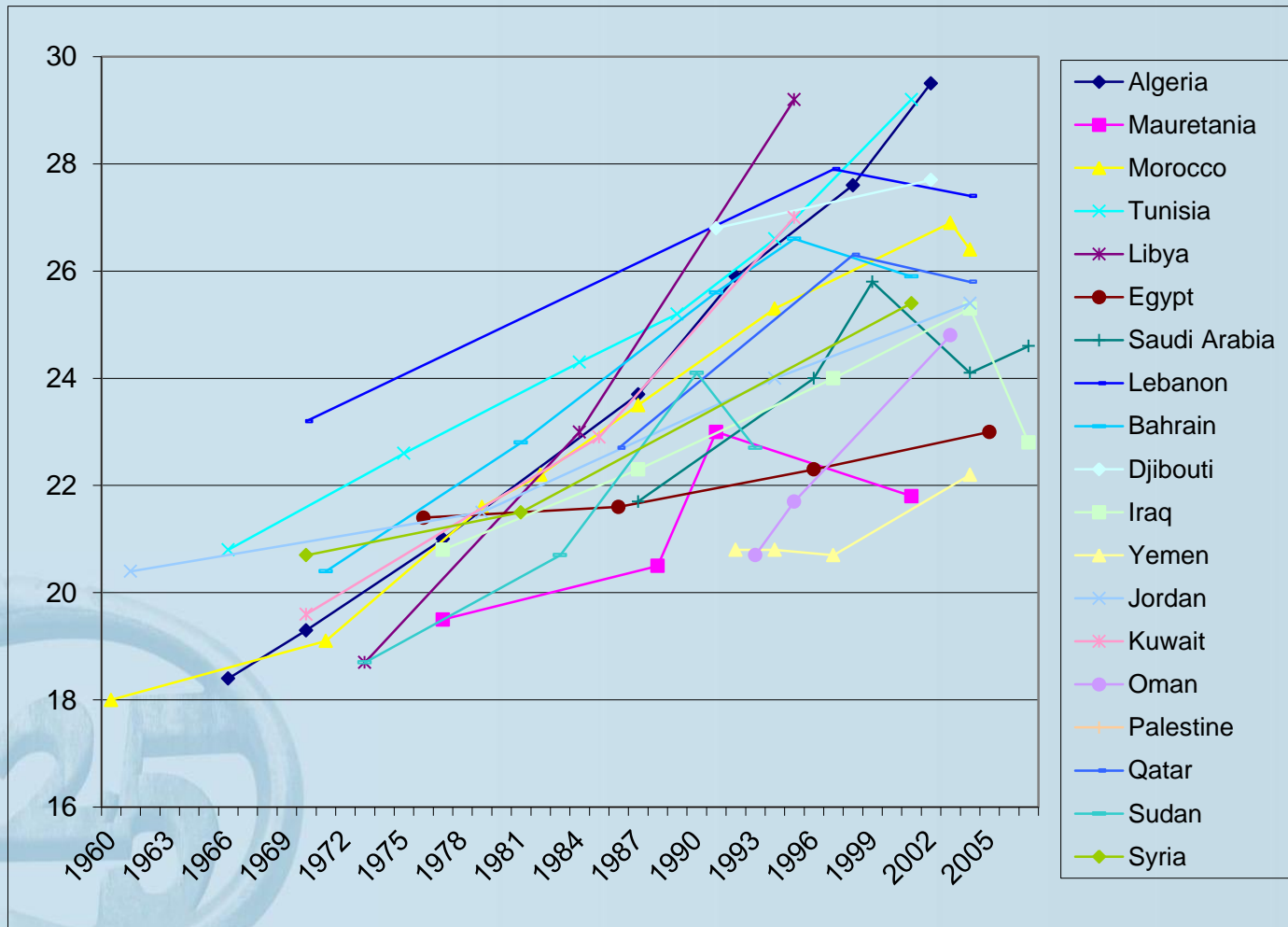
- The steep decline in nuptiality in the Arab World is referred to as '*nuptiality transition*' (Rashad & Osman 2003) or '*marriage revolution*' (Tabutin & Schoumakers 2005)
- The marriage revolution in the Arab countries cannot be put under the header of the Second Demographic Transition:
 - No rise in non-marital cohabitation
 - No increase in extra-marital births



The Marriage Revolution in the Arab World (2)

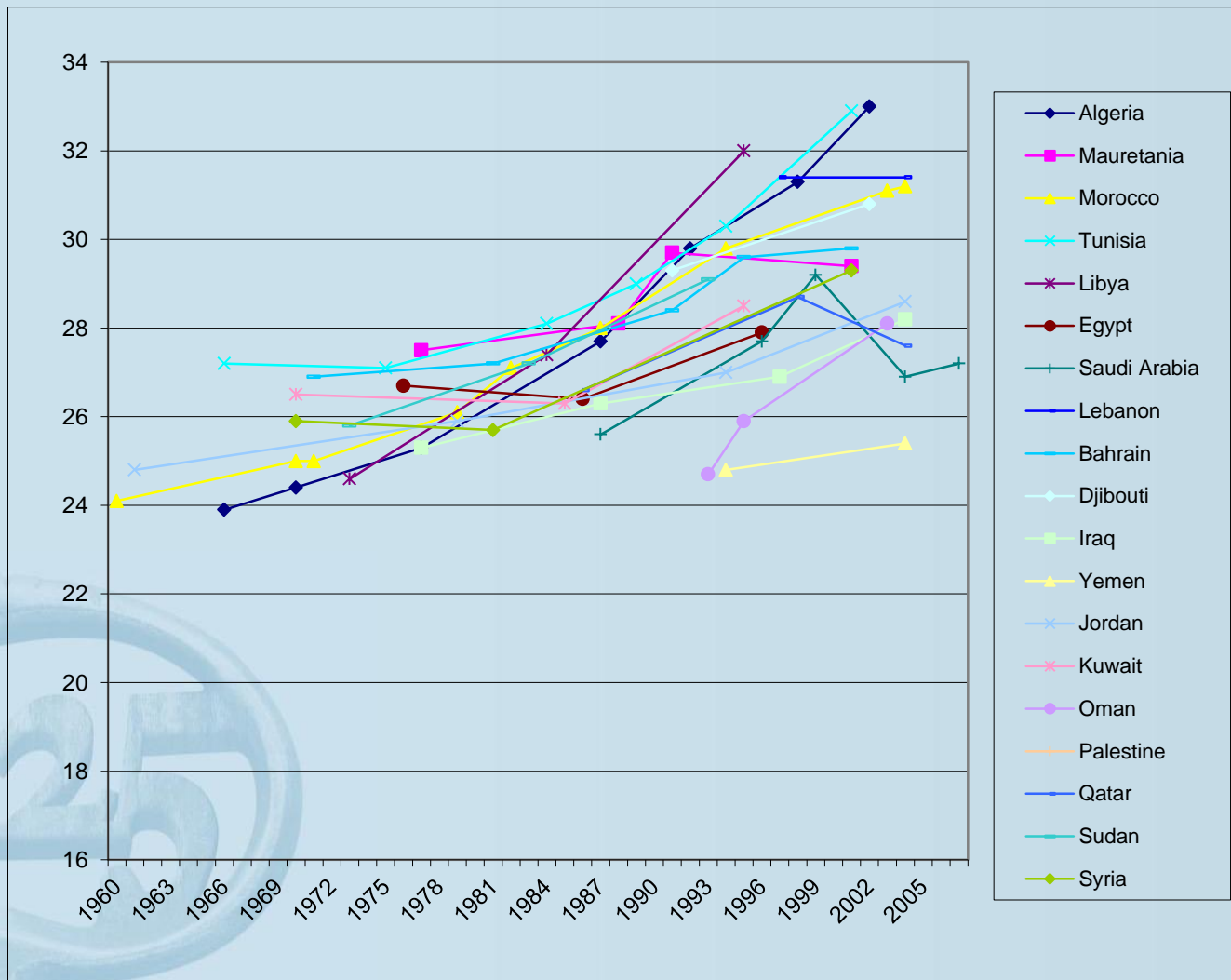
- Until about 1960, the Arab World was characterized by low mean ages at marriage and very few people remained permanently unmarried.
- In countries like Morocco, Algeria, Mauretania, Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, females married on average between 18 and 20. It was not uncommon that females married at an age between 12 and 15.
- Ever since, ages at marriage have systematically increased and marriages under age 18 have become scarce in the region.
- Countries like Algeria, Kuwait and Tunisia have now a singulate mean age at marriage (SMAM) among females of almost 30.
- The development of the SMAM for men follows a similar trend, but is somewhat less pronounced.
- As a result, age differences between spouses have grown smaller.

The rise in the SMAM among Females in the Arab world, 1960-today



Source: World Marriage Data 2008

The rise in the SMAM among males in the Arab World, 1960-today

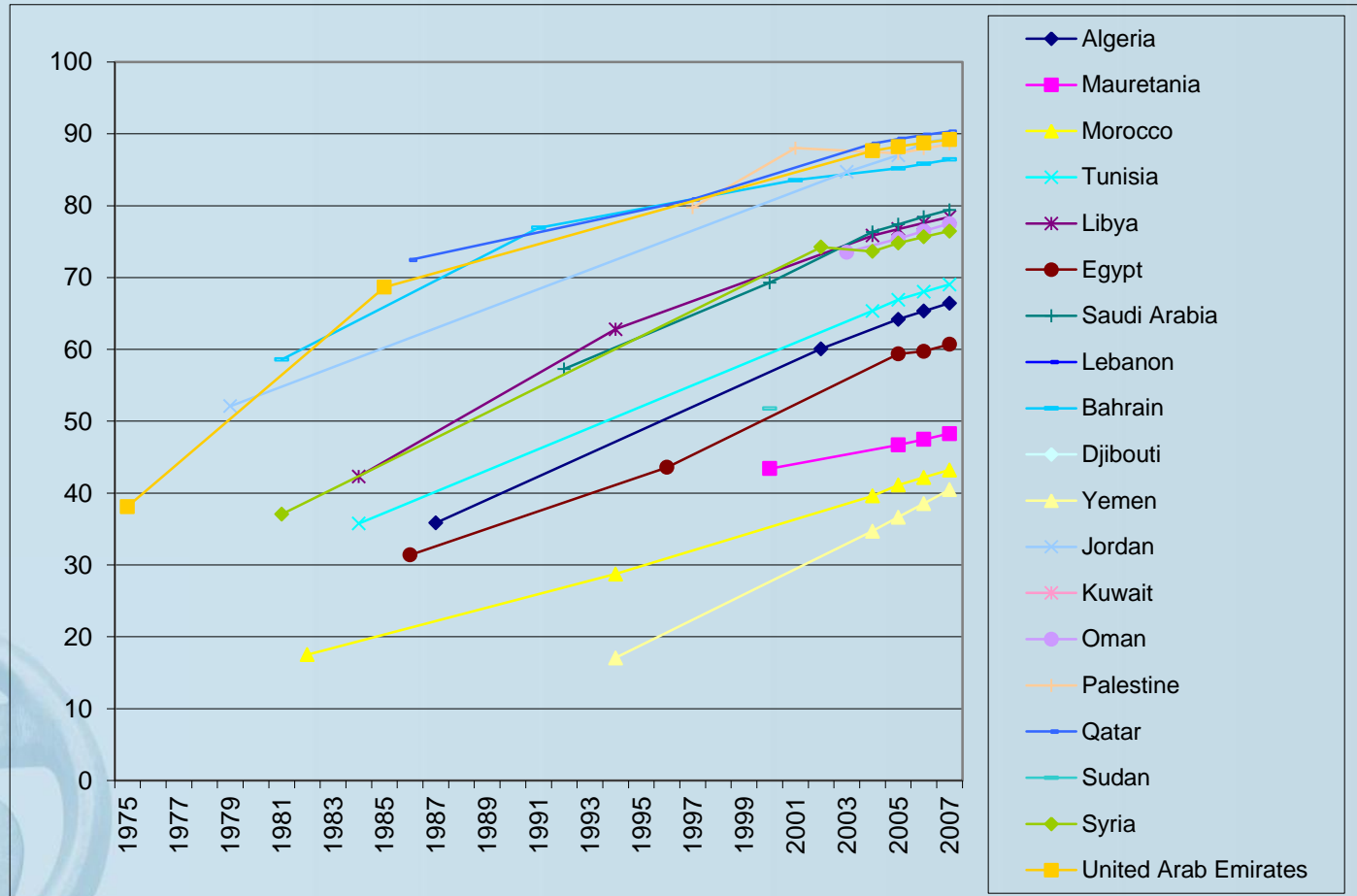


Source: World Marriage Data 2008

Causes of the Arab Marriage Revolution

- Legal changes regarding the minimum age at first marriage.
- Longer time spent in education (Rashad & Osman 2001)
- Improved socio-economic and legal status of women (Shah 2004)
- Declining economic opportunities for young people in combination with higher expectation about the material resource one should bring to marriage (Casterline 2009)
- Pressure at the housing market (Singerman & Ibrahim 2001)
- Shift from arranged marriages to free partner choice (Caldwell 1996)
- Rising costs at marriage:
 - Singerman & Ibrahim (2001): “Contemporary marriage arrangements absorb the highest investment of financial resources that most Egyptians will accumulate through their lives.”
 - Marriage ceremonies have become extraordinarily expensive (Singerman & Ibrahim 2001)
 - Ongoing shift from complex family structures to nuclear households: Young Arab couples have to save money for setting up their own independent household (Casterline 2009; Singerman & Ibrahim 2001)

Percentage of females (15+) able to read and write



Source: United Nations Population Database

Education and delayed marriage

Differentials by Female Educational Status in Delays of Marriage

Country	Year	% female with secondary + education	Proportion of Women 20-24 who are ever married (1998-1995)			
			<Primary	Primary & Preparatory	Secondary +	Total
Algeria	1992	24	39,3	28,3	11,3	29,6
Tunisia	1988	27	43,6	37,8	21	35,4
Sudan	1992/1993	20	57,6	29,1	21,9	39,9
Yemen	1991/1992	7	77,9	59	23,5	71,8
Egypt	1995	43	77,5	68,3	37,5	58,6

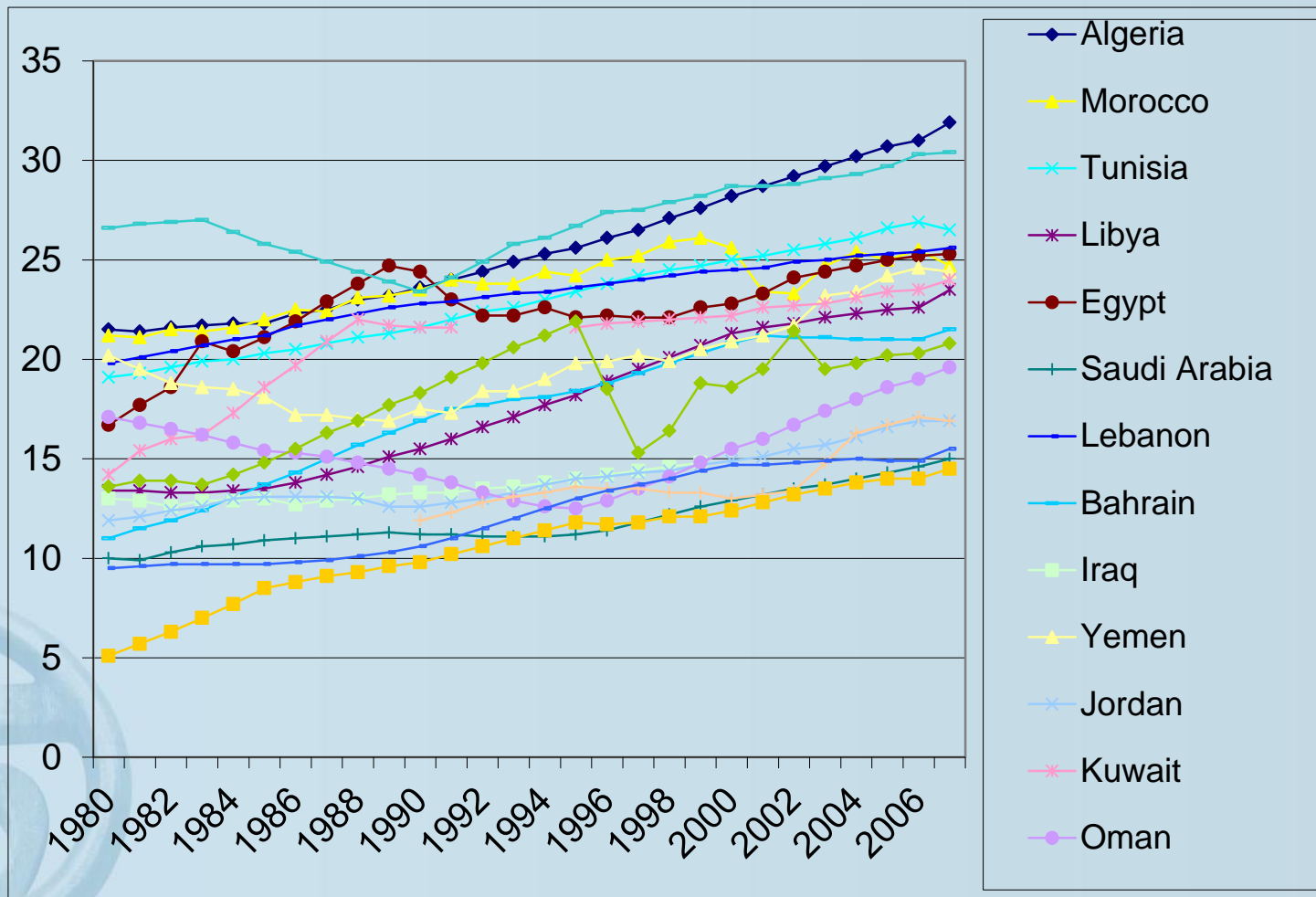
Source: Rashad & Osman, "Nuptiality in Arab countries: Changes and Implications, 23



Consequences of the Arab Marriage Revolution

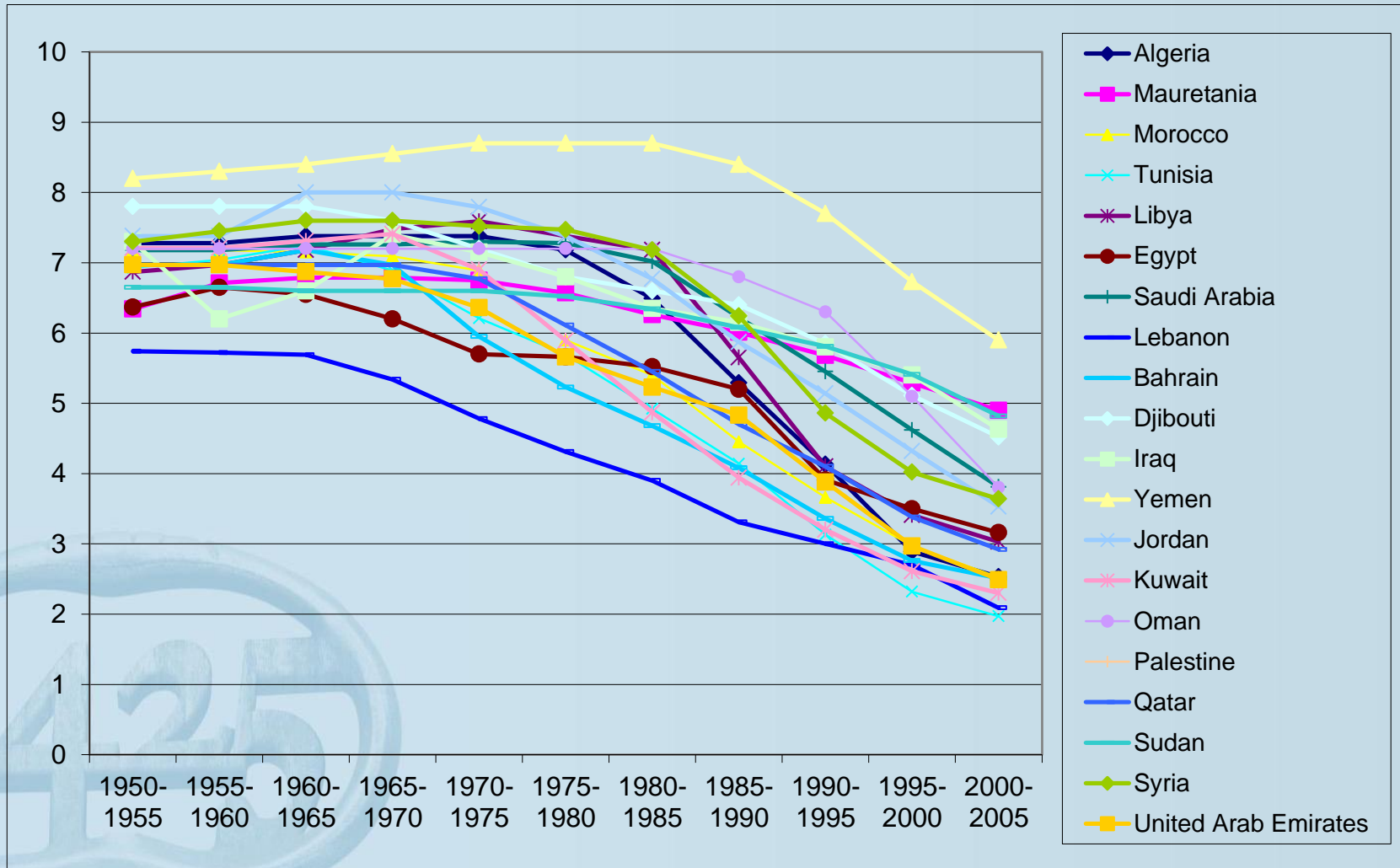
- The life course of women has changed most drastically from a life cycle dedicated to marriage and childbearing to a cycle with an extended period of education and employment as a single (Tabutin & Schoumakers 2005).
- Decline in fertility: Nuptiality decline explains to a considerable degree the decline in fertility (Courbage 1994). Only in a second stage of the fertility transition, birth control started to play a crucial role.
- Trend from patriarchal to more egalitarian relationships: women are older when they marry, spousal age gap has declined, women are often better educated than men → Bargaining Power of Women within Marriage has increased.
- Changing forms of courtship and rising pre-marital sex?
- Higher ages at marriage in combination with an ongoing taboo on pre-marital sex (especially for women) causes tensions.
- Rising number of abortions and surgery's to 'restore' virginity.

Percentage of Females of the Working Population



Source: SESRIC BASEIND

The Decline in TFR in the Arab Countries



United Nations Population Database

Comparing the Historical European and the Contemporary Arab Marriage Pattern (1)

Similarities

- In both societies, marriage is the only accepted form of living arrangement in which procreation takes place.
- In both marriage regimes, ages at marriage are high.
- Neo-locality plays an important factor.
- Nuptiality acts as a regulator of fertility.
- Both marriage patterns arose when the social and legal position of women improved.
- In both societies young single males and females are trying to save enough money to marry and start a family. Finding a niche for a new family is necessary.

Differences

- Lifetime singlehood is still a minor phenomenon in the Arab countries, but it is increasing
- Fertility in historical Europe was only regulated by nuptiality; In the Arab World nuptiality and modern family planning regulate fertility. That is one reason why fertility decline is so much faster in the Arab world.
- The relation between nuptiality and fertility is opposite in the Arab world during the fertility transition

Comparing the Historical European and the Contemporary Arab Marriage Pattern (2)



	Men				Women		
	Year	20-24	25-29	45-49	20-24	25-29	45-49
Austria	1900/1901	93	51	11	66	38	13
Belgium	1900/1901	85	50	16	71	41	17
Denmark	1900/1901	88	50	9	75	42	13
Finland	1900/1901	84	51	14	68	40	15
France	1900/1901	90	48	11	58	30	12
Germany	1900/1901	91	48	9	71	34	10
Great Britain	1900/1901	83	47	12	73	42	15
Holland	1900/1901	89	53	13	79	44	14
Iceland	1900/1901	92	66	19	81	56	29
Ireland	1891	96	78	20	86	59	17
Italy	1911	86	46	11	60	30	11
Norway	1900/1901	86	54	11	77	48	18
Portugal	1900/1901	84	48	13	69	41	20
Spain	1900/1901	81	34	6	55	26	10
Sweden	1900/1901	92	61	13	80	52	19
Switzerland	1900/1901	91	58	16	78	45	17
Algeria	2002	98,4	85,4	2,3	83,4	57,6	3,8
Mauretania	2001	91,9	60,2	0,9	39,6	20,4	2
Morocco	2004	92,1	68,7	6,1	61,3	40,7	6,8
Tunisia	1994	96,3	71	3	72,3	37,7	2,3
Libya	1995	98,7	86,6	1,5	87,7	58,6	1,4
Egypt	1996	88,2	50,8	1,4	43,9	12,9	1,4
Saudi Arabia	1999	90,6	57,8	1,7	65,9	30,9	1,5
Lebanon	1997	95,3	73,2	5,9	74,4	49,7	9,5
Bahrain	2001	86,5	62,2	8,3	65,1	36,2	8,8
Djibouti	2002	93,8	67,9	2,4	74,4	50,2	2,9
Iraq	2004	82	51,5	3	58,6	34	6
Yemen	2004	70,4	29,3	1,4	41	15,2	0,5
Jordan	2004	90,4	56,3	2,2	60,2	31	5,4
Kuwait	1995	79,1	55,2	6,5	58,7	43,2	10,4
Oman	2003	89,4	52,5	3	65,5	25,5	1,6
Palestine	2000	83,3	40,8	1,3	41,3	22,2	7,9
Qatar	1998	90,4	54,9	2,2	67,8	33,2	3
Sudan	1993	85,9	56,8	3,8	44,6	19,7	1,6
Syria	2001	57,2	37,9	4,6	90,9	61,2	1,5
United Arab Emirates	1995	80,1	38,4	1,2	58,3	26,5	0,9
Western European countries	1900	87,6	47,8	10,8	66,8	35,4	12,5
Arab Countries	2000	86,5	57,6	2,9	59,5	32	3,2

*Spain has other age-category: 21-25 / 26-30 / 46-50

Source: John Hajnal (1965), 'European Marriage patterns in Perspective'; World Marriage Data 2008



Challenges: Paradoxes & Uncertainties

- The decline and disappearance of the Western European Marriage Pattern was related to fertility decline.
 - Need of marital postponement declined as fertility was controlled within marriage.
- The rise of the Arab Marriage Pattern was coupled with fertility decline: Decline in nuptiality initiated the fertility transition.
 - Introduction of birth control did not give rise to an increase in nuptiality.
- Ruth Dixon's statement dating from 1971 that 'we know very little about the conditions in different societies or among different subgroups that lead some populations to delay marriage longer than others, and some to contribute much higher proportions than others of bachelors and spinsters who pass through their prime reproductive years without marrying at all' seems still to hold some truth.
- Whereas many countries in the world show a trend towards delayed marriage, the underlying causes seem to be different and sometimes opposite from one world region to the other. Meanwhile a very few societies show an opposite trend towards earlier marriage.
- Why does a country like Mali, situated between Mauretania and Algeria, experience an opposite trend in nuptiality, although the country is culturally and geographically quite similar to these two countries?

SMAM in Mali, 1976-2006		
	Females	Males
1976	18,1	27,6
1987	18,9	28,1
2001	18,5	25,8
2006	17,8	24,0

Challenges: Paradoxes & Uncertainties

- Lack of data (especially regarding family formation and partner selection in the Arab world and regarding the origins of the Western European marriage pattern) makes it hard to test some assumed relationships empirically.
- Qualitative research about the postponement of marriage in the Arab world is needed to reveal the individual reasons for postponing marriage. Since cultural elements are hard to quantify, interviews can lead to a deeper understanding of some of the cultural backgrounds of marriage regimes.
 - Why do young people in the Arab world postpone marriage and why did their grandparents not?
- More comparisons of nuptiality regimes through time and space are needed.
 - Why does nuptiality, for example, stay low in many sub-saharan countries?